Round the World

in

80 Years

A H H Poyser

Contents

FOREWORD

The years roll by; they have added up to four score years and plus. I was born in the reign of Queen Victoria, lived through the reign of King Edward VII, King George V, Edward VIII the uncrowned king, King George VI, and now as I write, Queen Elizabeth II is on the throne.

I have often thought it would give me pleasure to write of the things I have seen come to pass through the years gone by, and to record a little of the journeys I have made throughout my lifetime. I have no wish or desire to aspire to the height of a literary giant, even if it were possible, because great things I am unable to do, and it may be small things I don't want to do, and again, it could be that I do nothing.

I would ask forbearance of any who may read this book, because I am very conscious of many shortcomings, among which is a lack of knowledge in the matter of English grammar.

When I was discussing these writings with my grandson, Hugh, one day he said, "*Grandpa, what are you going to call them?*" I told him I had not yet seriously thought of a title, whereupon. He replied, "*There is a story already published which is called Around the World in 80 days'. As you are now 80 years old and have travelled the world, why not call your story 'Round the World in 80 years?*" It is true that I have had the opportunity pleasure of seeing a lot of the world, and it therefore appropriate to give my writings this title.

A. H. H. Poyser

A.H.H. Poyser
1976

MY VERY EARLY DAYS

All things have a beginning, even life, but as regards my own beginning I have no remembrance of that event. However, it is recorded that I was born at Ashby-de-la-Zouch in the County of Leicestershire, England, on March 9th, 1892. I was given the names of Albert Henry Henworth.

My father's name was Middlemore Charles and my mother was Annie (called Nona). My paternal grandfather was David Poyser and my grandmother Jane Poyser (nee Pilkington). My grandparents on my mother's side were Henry and Ann Homer.

It would appear that when I was three my father and mother left Ashby-de-la-Zouch (hereafter called Ashby) and went to Hertford in the County of Hertfordshire as the accompanying photograph shows; it was taken at Hertford and there my father worked in a skin yard and leather manufacturers.

MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

The first memory I have is living in West Street, Hertford, and it was there that my sister was born in the year 1896.

”*When we are born, we weep and others rejoice. When we die, we should have so lived that others weep end we rejoice, because going to a better place*”.

It would appear that I neither wept nor rejoiced when my sister was born. I was just angry that another should be in house! It is said that I raised a storm!

The name my sister was given was Audrey Claudine. I don't how that name was chosen; the second name is most unusual.

SCHOOL DAYS

Soon after the birth of my sister we moved from West Street to an estate by the River Lea called the "Folly". It was from there that I first went to school in 1897. The school was in a district called Cowbridge, and was connected with the Congregational Chapel, which was adjacent to the school.

Most schools in those days were controlled by church or chapel authorities, but they were also under the supervision of the local council. Children attending a Church school became members of that particular church; likewise a child attending a Chapel school became one of the members of whatever denomination controlled the chapel. It wasn't so in every case, but it was the general pattern of religious life then. There is a saying "Like father, like son" but as regards the religious world in those days, a child was like clay and whatever mold the clay was put into, it was the mold's shape when it came out! I went to a school attached to the Congregational Chapel, and so I was of that denomination!

The "Folly" estate at Hertford consisted of ninety-nine houses and one public house! Had there been one hundred houses there would have had to be a second public house according to local law. It would appear that public houses were a necessity; perhaps they were for some persons, especially those members of the local councils who were also members: of the brewing trade!

The year 1897 was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year; she had reigned for sixty years. Celebrations were held all through the Empire. Hertford gave a special treat to the children on Hartham Common. There were races for the children included in the festivities. One of the races was a "Piggy Back" race - a child on a man' s back. I was on the back of one of my father’s work colleagues, a man named Freddie Whiting who was also a local sportsman. Freddie won the race and I received a pocketknife. There were no prizes for men! I remember this Jubilee Day very clearly.

In 1899 England declared war on the Boers of South Africa and this ended in 1901 with a British victory. It was an exciting day when the school children went down to the old Great Northern railway station to welcome Hertford's soldiers returning from the war. Queen Victoria died in 1901 just before peace with South Africa was declared, and King Edward VII reigned in her stead.

At the turn of the century the motorcar began to appear on the roads. Today it is a pleasure to see in a parade of vintage cars those models that ventured on the road in the early years of this century. Not many people possessed a car in 1900, nor even in the decade, which followed. When a car was seen on the road it was an unusual sight. During the early years of the car era, I have seen cars leaving the town in glory and I have seen some returning not so glorious, being towed by one horsepower, having lost its motor traction of four or five horse power! The owner under those circumstances would be less than happy, especially when he passed some children who would give a cheer!

It wasn't everyone who desired one of these horseless carriages, even if it could be afforded. When something is desired, and because it is desired, it is sometimes acquired, but even so, having acquired something which is desired, this does not always bring happiness - as the little lad found out when he wanted to catch a wasp!

In 1904 I saw and heard a phonograph - a contraption that had not long been invented. The one I saw was at the Chequers Inn, TicknaIl, Derbyshire. I was with my parents on holiday at Ashby, and visited my Aunt and Uncle who were licensees of the Chequers. They had the phonograph for the entertainment of their customers. It appeared a miracle that a voice could come out of a box through a horn!

When we returned home from Ashby my father had a desire to acquire a phonograph. There was an advertisement in a newspaper offering a phonograph for eight shillings and sixpence; this could be obtained by sending a sixpenny postal order, and then one shilling a week for eight weeks! A sixpenny postal order was sent, and back came a receipt, but no phonograph! An advice note said that the machine would be sent when payments were complete! Father wasn't very pleased about this, but he sent the eight shillings and the machine was duly received.

When it was unpacked, a record was included, the record being cylinder form. The machine was a cheap model, unlike the one we saw at Ticknall. It consisted of a three-cornered iron stand about 10 inches by 6 inches, and on this was a socket to hold a pin connected to a horn. There was a clockwork motor, which provided the power to drive a catgut belt attached to the cylinder, which held the record. The belt wasn't fixed, so father to fix it, but not before he found that the catgut belt was too large! Then, having shortened it and put the record in position, he started the machine. The horn with reproducer attached should have travelled over the record from right to left. It would only travel in the opposite direction, and of course it played the

record backwards. It was a terrible noise! The record was a piece of band music by a well-known composer. When the thing wouldn't play properly, father looked at mother and mother looked at me, and including my sister we all looked at each other.

No one had the answer, so father packed it up. I thought he was going to return it to the maker, but it wasn't for that purpose he packed it; he took it to grandfather Poyser for advice. Father was no engineer; Grandfather was. I cannot recall what grandfather said but it would not be very complimentary when he told father that all he had to do was to cross the belt and drive the cylinder in reverse! Of course, the belt being already shortened there had to be some improvisation in order to lengthen it again, but this was done the record then played satisfactorily! A model of this phonograph is on view at the Science Museum at Kensington.

At the age of twelve in 1904 I got a job as: houseboy with Mrs. Ginn of Queens Road, Hertford. The work was out of school hours and entailed cleaning shoes and cutlery, filling the coalscuttles, and doing any errands. The wage was one shilling and pence per week. The work had to be done before going to school and an hour or more after school. Most boys did jobs during their school days.

Schooldays were happy days, but school was not liked very much. The headmaster of Cowbridge School was named Richard Turpin, and called by all pupils "Dick" Turpin! Headmaster Turpin did not resemble another of the same name, the highwayman, except perhaps in one particular. Whereas the highwayman roved the roads, "Dick'" Turpin the schoolmaster had roved the high seas, for he had sailed round the world in sail and steam three times, teaching during stops on his journeys in various English-speaking countries of what was then the British Empire.

Boys at his school reaching standards six and seven came under his tuition. "Dick" Turpin lectured the boys a lot on the various countries where he had been, and it evidently had an effect on many after leaving school at the age of 14. Many boys from Cow ridge joined the Army, Navy or the Merchant Navy. One boy named Burt became a Commander in the British Navy. Another boy named Ide became Chief Steward on the Titanic; he had just been promoted when the ship hit an iceberg and sank with over a thousand lives lost. Ide went down with it. Another boy became a ships' purser. Many did well in the Army. Many others' migrated to the Colonies, as Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand were called then. One other boys' school (Cowper) in Hertford was noted for its boys getting into the local councillor shops, and some into solicitors' offices.

It would appear that in those days boys were influenced by whatever teaching they received from their headmaster. Scholarships that would take one into college were unknown, but for the Grammar School there was one scholarship a year to be won. I remember only one boy ever winning it! This boy, after he had finished his schooling at the Grammar School, got a job as a clerk at the local leather works!

During the years of my schooldays, 1897 to 1906, I saw the motorcar become a more frequent sight on the roads, the phonograph became a household word and the cinema had arrived. Aircraft had just got into the experimental stage. The first cine picture I saw was in a traveling funfair on Hartham Common, and the first air flight made was of not many yards. I didn't see that; it took place in America.

At school I was not very brilliant. I didn't excel at any subjects - except one, geography - and I expect it was because of the teaching of Headmaster "Dick" Turpin that I did get top marks in this subject! Geography was something that impressed me and gave me a desire to travel. But unless one joined the Navy, Army or Merchant Navy, how could one travel without the means financially to do so? Nevertheless, the desire was there, and as I have mentioned before, when we desire something we generally acquire it! Having desired travel, I have acquired a good measure of it – which some later chapters will relate.

I became of school-leaving age in 1906. A few years previously we left the "Folly" and were now living in Bullocks Lane, Horns Mill. Also in the vicinity was the leather works of Webb and Company, at which place I got employment at the age of 14.

WORK DAYS FROM 1906 TO 1914

It was at 6 o'clock on a cold morning in March 1906 when I started work in the skin and leather works of Webb and Co. Ltd., of Horns Mill, Hertford. My father worked there, and my grandfather Poyser worked there; both were tradesmen.

I will here tell the story, as told by my father, of how it came to be that we moved from Ashby to Hertford some years before. In those days it was normal practice to apprentice a son to the same trade as his father. It mattered not what position the father held, even to owner or manager. The son of the manager of the works at Ashby was an apprentice at the same trade as my grandfather and worked in the same shop. My grandfather had a daughter named Nellie, who was course was my father's sister, and she used to go into the works with her father's lunch. The son of the manager, named Archie, became friendly with Nellie through meeting her frequently in the workshop. When the friendship became known to Archie's father, it was not accepted with good grace. He was very concerned that his son, the son of the manager no less, should become friendly with a workman's daughter. The atmosphere between the two men became so strained that grandfather Poyser decided to leave and go on the road. This he did, and journeyed south seeking work in leather until he found a job at Horns Mill, Hertford.

After working there for a while, and the work being plentiful, he sent for my father, and so it came about that we left Ashby. A year later, so the story goes, Archie left Ashby, got work at Webb's and married Nellie in Hertford!

The manager at Ashby was named McRae, a name, which has been known the leather trade for many years, and was still known up to the time I retired in 1959. A firm by the name of McRae was a customer Webb's. These people had family connections with the McRae's who lived at Ashby.

My first job at Webb's entailed laying skins out on the grass to bleach. The hours were 6a.m. to 6 p.m., which included half an hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner. It was a sixty-hour week which, of course, included Saturday working, and the wages were five shillings a week - which worked out at one penny per hour, and if overtime was necessary, the rate was still one penny per hour. I had one year in the bleaching fields, and another year working in whichever department needed help. This was good training as it gave me a general knowledge, even if small, of what went on in the various departments.

Mr Webb, the general manager of Webb and Co., had six sons who were all tradesmen, but at this time each son was managing a different department. Lewis, the fourth eldest son, spoke to me one day and asked if I would like to work with him regularly. He would pay me seven shillings and sixpence a week, which meant a rise of one shilling and sixpence above what I was then getting. I accepted his offer, and forthwith worked for Lewis Webb. He taught me much I the methods of leather finishing, but the main work consisted of selecting the qualities and grading the skins after they had been and bleached.

One day Lewis Webb told me that he was getting married and going to Canada, which he did in the year 1908. I was left to carry on the work where he left off, and I had the help of a senior foreman.

In the year 1908, a maid came to work at the Mill House where Lewis Webb's father and mother lived. She remained in service there until the end of 1909, and by that time I had become friendly with her. The maid's name was Elizabeth Dedman, and she came from Braughing, a village nine miles from Hertford. She was later to become my wife.

Territorial Army 1911

In 1910 I joined the Ware Gymnasium, which I attended two nights week. Then in 1911 I joined the Hertfordshire Territorial Army; this entailed one evening a week. Elizabeth (from now on called Dids was working at Braughing and so, with gymnasium, Army, and going to Braughing twice a week, there was not much time left for other things.

At work, I had by this time control of all leather of a sheepskin nature that was being processed for various orders. From the firm, orders were sent mainly to Northampton and Norwich, boot and shoe towns, and also to Yeovil in Somerset, a glove-making town.

It was a common thing for tradesmen to call at the works for employment. All sorts of characters turned up! One named Wally Lasell, a leather "layer-out", was also an acrobatic comedian. He did a musical turn at the Music-Hall-cum-Picture-Palace in Market Street, Hertford. Another character was a racing cyclist of renown! One other tradesman, a "grounder", was an amateur dramatic actor. Another had a good tenor voice. All took part in local entertainment.

Webb and Company arranged an annual outing, and paid all fares. A special train was run for several firms on that day. The two photo s show groups taken at Yarmouth and Margate. I am at top left in the Yarmouth picture, and at top right in the Margate picture. Also in the Yarmouth photograph (last on the right of the “top hats”) is an old friend of mine of very many years standing Arthur Pratt by name. Arthur and I have been friends for over 70; also his father and mother were friends of my parents. He also had several brothers and sisters.

In 1912 my mother had cancer of the breast. After she had an operation, she had to attend the London Hospital once a week for treatment. Two of Arthur's sisters took turns in taking my mother to hospital each week. This was a kind service, which they did for some months until mother died in 1913. I have always felt grateful for the kindness of the Pratt family. There is a saying “*It’s never too soon to do a kindness, because we don't know how soon it will be too late*".

There was one occasion I remember which was most amusing. I was cycling at night on my way back from Braughing after seeing Dids when I caught up with the horse-driven Royal Mail van making its delivery to Colliers End - but it had no driver! The horse was just trotting along by itself, and fearing something serious had happened to the driver, I got off my bike and stopped the horse. The van had not been interfered with, and the doors were locked, so I led the horse and van to the village post office and left it in the charge of postmaster! I then continued my journey home. The next time went to Braughing I stopped and asked the postmaster at Colliers what had happened. I was told that the post mail driver had stopped in Puckeridge for a drink and while the postman was in the pub the horse had decided he wanted to go home!!

My grandfather Poyser had by this time retired and lived in Ware. He had left the leather trade some years before and had become licensee of the "Old Mill Stream" public house in Priory Street. It was great fun for us when we were children to visit him at the pub. At the rear there were stables with a loft above, which at one time had been a bowling alley. It had ceased to be used by customers, but it did afford children great times.

In 1914, or by that time, much had come to pass that had been in the minds of men. The motorcar was being seen on the roads often. Omnibuses had taken the place of horse-driven buses in London. Flying machines were beginning to be seen in the air. The animated picture-shows had got beyond the fairground stage, and were now being shown in buildings.

The first cinema in Hertford was on the site where Boots Cash Chemists is today. Wireless had been invented, but messages were sent in Morse Code. Passenger-carrying balloons were very often seen, as also were motor-driven airships.

I had an experience in London, which today as I write not many other people still living would have had. In those days, when Tower Bridge was raised to let ships pass through, it was possible for people to climb up the tower on one side, walk over the Thames by the footway, and descend by the tower on the other side. I was able to do this, but for various reasons the facility was later stopped. This was 60 years or more ago.

With the coming of August 1914, war was declared by England on Germany, and with this, the world entered into a new era. On the 4th of that month, both regular and territorial armies were mobilised war, as also was the Navy. As I was serving for a four-year term, in the Territorials, I had to leave work and report to the Headquarters, which was at the Drill Hall at the bottom of Port Hill, Hertford. For the next few years I was in khaki, serving King and Country so it was said - and I expect it was. It was said "*This a war to stop wars*" - and we all hoped it would be!

WORLD WAR I - 1914 TO 1918

Hertford, the county town, was a very quiet place, but it did show a little movement on Mondays, when the cattle market was open, and on Saturdays. The town would have shoppers in from the surrounding villages to buy their bargains in the street market. For the rest of the week, there was a stillness in the atmosphere that made the town appear as if it were slumbering. There was no hurry.

In Fore Street, where the Blue Boy public house is, a high wall ran along the street and, in fact, protected the Blue Coat School as it was then called, but which is now Christ's Hospital. Sitting on the pavement there under the wall, used to be a pavement artist displaying pictures which he had drawn with crayons. The artist sat clothed in a great coat which entirely covered his body; even his legs were never seen, and we doubted whether he had any as he sat there with his cap on the pavement to receive alms. His solitude added to the stillness of Hertford. He had been in that position during the day for a long time. His pictures portrayed events of the day and were very interesting.

When war was declared by England on Germany on August 4th, 1914, mobilization of His Majesty King George V' s forces, both military and naval, were the order of the day. Hertford was aroused from its slumber; even the pavement artist was not in his usual place. Hertford became the centre of mobilisation for the 1st Battalion of the Hertfordshire Regiment. Buildings, even the Corn Exchange, were taken over to billet the soldiers. The wide part of Fore Street, opposite the Blue Coat School, was used as one of the assembly points. I wondered whether that was the reason the artist had disappeared.

The Regiment spent several days in organising for a war standard and when we became fully equipped, we were given 48-hours leave to say farewell to relatives and friends. During that time I saw Dids and wondered when I should next see her. On returning to the Regiment we entrained for Romford, Essex, where billets were found for us in a school. We were there a week, in which time a Brigade was formed consisting of the following Regiments - Herts, Essex, Cambridge, and Northants. Our Colonel was Lord Hampdon, and the Captain of my Company was Captain Page, of Hertford.

We were now fully-equipped for war service, and when we were dressed in full marching order the weight of equipment was 90 lbs; no little weight to carry when marching. We soon realised

AHP 1914

1st Hertfordshire Regiment

this after a start was made on a four-day march to a destination, which proved to be Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk! At Bury, we were camped in tents and did intensive training until the end of October. Then we were given overseas leave of four days, and on the night of 5th November, 1914, we embarked at Southampton for Le Havre in France arriving there at dawn on the 6th.

The Regiment camped at Le Havre for two nights, after which we for a destination unknown, but which turned out to be a village near St. Omer. We did a few days training there, after which we boarded omnibuses which were open-top double-deck London buses. I had a seat on top, and the journey was terrible as we travelled about 30 miles to Poperinge, most of it in heavy snow. At Poperinge we alighted; it was our journeys end so far as mechanical transport was concerned. The Regiment was formed up, the battle front being five or maybe six miles away on the outskirts of Ypres. We advanced this distance to Ypres under enemy fire all the way sustaining a few casualties. Passing through Ypres, buildings were burning through German bombardment. Horses of the artillery lay dead in the streets, and guns were shattered. We eventually reached the line held by the British and it was our lot to relieve the Scots Guards, which we replaced, and became a battalion of the Fourth Guards Brigade. This Brigade consisted of the Coldstream, Grenadier and Irish Guards and the 1st Battalion of the Hertfordshire Regiment. The date of entry into battle with the Guards was November 11th, 1914, and from each individual position, which was just a hole the ground, we kept up intermittent fire with support from our artillery for ten days and nights. During this time we suffered losses by death and wounded. We were relieved on November 23rd. Getting food and drink to us during that 12 days wag a problem, but supplies did get through to us. I should record one special event that was when Captain Page visited us one night in the very early hours with flasks of water, biscuits and corned beef. This was very welcome!

Having been relieved by another battalion we had orders to make our own way back to Meteren, a village 20 kilometres or so behind the line. We were a sorry sight - unwashed, unshaven,

hungry and weary. We found billets in barns at Meteren and rested for quite while, almost a month.

On the 24th December 1914, we again took up battle positions, this time at Festubert. The rest of the Brigade was around Meteren. The Brigade at this time was led by the Prince of Wales, (he later became the uncrowned King Edward VIII), who was an officer in the Guards. Next morning (Xmas Day) a message from the Prince was passed along the line by word of mouth; the message was "A Happy Xmas' from the Prince of Wales. It was received in the spirit it was given.

I am not going to dwell on events that happened during the war, not to any great extent anyway, but the experience of Ypres was, to those who survived, to be our lot many times before the war ended. I will just mention here the battles I went through - Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Loos, Somme, Thiepval, and the River Ancre. By the end of the war on November 11th, 1918, the Hertfordshire Regiment had suffered losses in killed numbering 44 officers 850 other ranks.

As I have already stated I joined the Territorial Army in 1911 for a 4-year engagement; this meant that my time expired while I was at the front - January 1915. Normally I would have been entitled to my discharge, but regulations said that when war is in progress a serving soldier must serve an extra year, then take his discharge, and so I could not take my discharge until January 1916. Then, an offer was made by the British Government that any serving man entitled to discharge could have £20 and one-month's holiday if he would re-engage. Here was a tempting offer, which had to be considered.

The following story is one I like to tell, not in any form of boasting, or trying to do those great things, which I have said I cannot do. But I like to tell this story because it is unique – to me anyway! It is a case of telling a Colonel what he has to do! It was quite in order for those under authority to be told what to do, but here was a Colonel going to get his orders from a mere Corporal! After January 1915 my thoughts were continually on discharge "*to be or not to be!*" - and in September of that year I had made up my mind. I would re-engage, but on my own terms. I asked to see the Colonel, who at this time was Colonel Croft, later to become Lord Croft, Under-Secretary for War. I was granted an interview and when he knew the purpose of the interview, I was met with such comments as: "*the greatest ever", "never had he met with such patriotism*" "a fine example to other comrades whose time had expired" and I'm sure that had it been in his power, he would have doubled the reward! Colonel Croft was an outstanding

Commanding Officer; he would not ask for something to be done that he would not do himself. I told Colonel Croft that I would sign the necessary papers to re-engage on the condition that I could have my leave when I asked for it. He told me that as soon as I signed I would be due for leave, and could leave for England immediately. My reply was that I didn't want it until early December 1915! He was surprised, and said I was foolish! December was three months away and in that time I could be wounded, or even killed. I said that was when I wished to take my leave. He saw that I was determined on that point, and these are the words he said, "*Corporal, the day you come into this orderly room and ask for your leave warrant, I will give it to you*". I said "*Thank you, sir*" and told him that I was hoping to be married during that leave. He wished me well and hoped I would survive the next three months. I returned to the Company; the boys thought I was mad not taking my discharge when I had the opportunity.

I continued in and out of the front line - day after day, week after week, month after month - and when December came I was still in one piece! I asked for my leave warrant, which was given me, and away to England I went! My first job when I got home was to go down to the Drill Hall and get fitted out with a new uniform and also new underclothing.

I was married at Braughing on the 20th December, 1915, to Elizabeth Dedman. I received my £20 gratuity and together we spent a most happy month! It passed much too quickly, and eventually I returned to the Battalion, which was by then on the Loos battlefront.

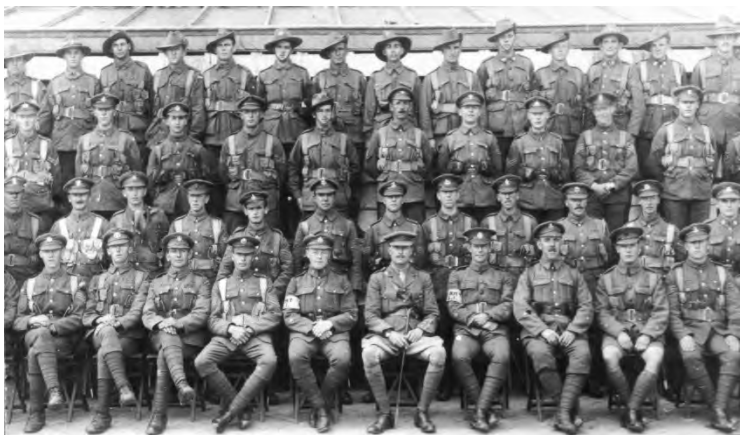
We were married at Braughing
on 20 December 1915

AHP left – Front Line, 100 yards from German lines. Taken while off duty by a Sergeant Major

Loos after bombardment

1914 Ypres Belgium

Ruins of Morlancourt, France 1915



With the ANZACS 1917 St Omer France
AHP 2nd Row, 3rd left

AHP, Harding and Willey at rest behind the lines at home of the French boys' parents

As I have said, I am not going to write much of war experiences; The photographs will tell the story of what a battlefield really is. At the moment my mind is not so much on the war but on the individuals I met in that war. It was customary to replace casualties by sending out drafts

of men, and on one particular occasion, when I was a Sergeant, I spotted in one draft a face I recognised. I asked this man for the usual details concerning his home address, name of wife if any, religion, trade, etc., so that he could be identified should he later become a casualty. When it came to describing his trade, this particular man said he was an artist. I said "*Surely not a pavement artist?*" He said "*Yes*" I said to him "I thought I recognised your face. Were you on the pavement at Hertford?" He replied "Yes". I said "*I have often seen you sitting there with pictures, and I thought, as did many other people, that you were legless"'!*" He then told me that the purpose of being draped all over with a cape and greatcoat was to give that impression and thereby attract the attention of passers-by!

Another draftee said he was a comedian. He thought I doubted him, and to prove his point he put his left hand (he had his rifle his right) to his nose and his forefinger completely disappeared up his nose! And with it he pulled the funniest face I have ever seen. I later found out that this comedian had in fact no forefinger, and it was this that gave the illusion of it disappearing up his nose! He was truly a professional, and turned out to be an acrobatic comedian. He didn't stay with us long, but was sent to join the army Entertainments' Corps. We were resting one time at Poperinge, and there was a show arranged in which he took part. I saw him; he was very good!

Of course, some of the soldiers were funny and perhaps didn't know it! The photograph of the Sergeants reminds me of one who, when he was in charge of the church parade, gave the order for the men to parade by saying "*Church of England on the right, John the Baptists and Wesleyans on the left, Roman Catholics in the rear, and if there are any with no place to go to, they can go to h*** and peel spuds!!*"

Then there was the cartoon of "Old Bill" who represented the English, or should I say British, soldier and this was true to life. The scene showed two soldiers taking shelter in a shell hole, and Old Bill was saying to his mate, "*If you can find a better hole, go to it!" This was typical of the Tommies' sense of humour – a sprit which "saved our bacon*" more than once!

The picture of two others and myself was taken by a Warrant Officer. The photograph shows the trench in the front line. Beyond this was “No Mans Land" so called and a hundred yards or so further on were the German lines. Snow can be seen, and for our protection we have greatcoats. When I look at the barricade of sandbags, I am reminded of the soldier who, on being asked 'had he travelled much over Belgium and France' replied "What I haven't travelled over, I've put in sandbags!" The front line being a maze of trenches and barricades built of bags

full of earth (called sandbags) and the battle line extending from the North Sea or English Channel to Switzerland, there must have been millions of them!

The 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment was in the Fourth Guards Brigade until mid-1915 when it was transferred to another Brigade. The other three Regiments of the Brigade went to the Italian battle front, but we remained on the Western front (Belgium and France). When the 1st Herts joined the Guards Brigade it made news for the local press, who gave much publicity to the honour that the Regiment received. But many times I have wondered about the reason for us joining that famous Brigade, which no doubt it was. The Brigadier of the Guards Brigade was the Earl of Cavan, and the Colonel of the Hertfordshire Regiment was Lord Hampden - both Hertfordshire men, with estates not far removed from each other! I have often wondered if the powers that be made it possible for the two commanders to be neighbours still in wartime. Whether that was so or not, it is certain that there would have been no place for the Hertfordshires had they had not been efficient!

During 1916 and again in 1917, I had 10 days leave, which was very welcome. In 1916 conscription was introduced in England and I saw many return to the front who had taken their discharge and were now recalled to the Army. In 1917 an Order came out that the Australian Army had invited two soldiers who were considered war- worn to spend one month's holiday at a base in France. I was fortunate, not in being war-worn, but in being chosen as one of the two (the other was an officer) to spend this month with the Australians. We were sent to St Omer in France, some 30 miles behind the line, where we had a moat enjoyable time - no parades, except for personal cleanliness. At dinner in the evenings, music was provided by the Band! It was lovely to live like a lord for a month!

On returning to the Regiment I went home on leave again, and from leave back into the line again, and so on until March 1918, when the Germans prepared for a big attack. This was preceded by a terrific bombardment of the British and French lines. We were on the Somme, in the Albert area, and I had a platoon of about 30 men with which to supply three outposts, consisting of a Lance Corporal and three men, between the nearest German lines and ourselves. It was my duty to visit them every two hours throughout the night and at 4 a.m. on the 6th March 1918 I was wounded by a shot in the arm near the shoulder. I was attended to by first aid stretcher-bearers, but couldn't leave the line because of the terrific gunfire until 8 a.m. I was then moved down to the first aid dressing station, and from there to a casualty station where I was operated on to extract the bullet. After that I was moved to hospital at Rouen on the River

Seine, where I lay until March 9th when I was booked for England! Strange that I should be wounded March 6th (my mother's birthday) and be booked for a return passage to England on March 9th (my own birthday)! Eventually I found myself in hospital at Huddersfield, and when I became well enough to leave there, I went to Blackpool Convalescent Camp. I was there five weeks and had a glorious time! After I had been there a week, I booked a room for Dids and she was able to stay with me until I was discharged from convalescence and had to return to duty.

I then had four days leave, during which time I received orders proceed to Tipperary in Ireland. I was in Ireland 3 months, which included one leave in England, then I was sent to an Army base at Felixstowe. From there I was sent to Norwich to a young soldiers battalion. All were ex-Borstal boys, and the job there was to help train these boys for war service. Whilst at Norwich I was on duty the unveiling of the memorial to Nurse Cavell, who, had been shot the Germans in Belgium.

It was now 1918, and the war was beginning to proceed in our favour. Eventually, on November 11th, 1918, the Armistice was signed. I was still at Norwich and remained there until I received my discharge from the Army in March 1919.

Before I proceed with another chapter, I would like to touch on few things that happened during the war. While at war in France I met Jack Ball, my wife's sister's husband; unfortunately he was later killed. I also met my old mate, Arthur Pratt, twice, and on both occasions we were out at rest, just behind the front line. During the four years I was at the front I had, besides the month's holiday when I married in 1915, three other leaves of ten days each. These were in 1915, 1916 and 1917, and then on discharge we were given a month's pay and a gratuity. And what a gratuity it was! - ten shillings for each month spent at the Front, and five shillings for each month while in England! My total gratuity came to £29-10-0 - hardly a fortune!!

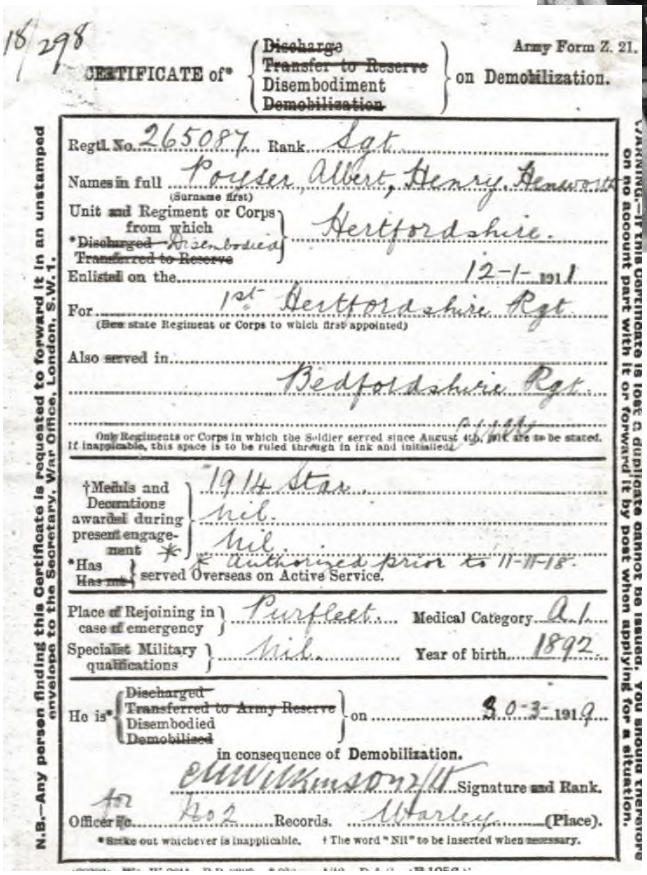
While at Norwich training the Borstal boys, we did meet with some exciting moments although, on the whole, the boys did well. Most were eventually sent to Germany with the Army of Occupation, but some of course did not make the grade in good conduct, and they were returned to Borstal. The reason for the Borstal boys being at Norwich was this - the boys, on reaching the age of 18, were given the opportunity of freedom if they joined the Army. It was a wartime measure and many accepted, but the authorities thought it better to keep them a] 1 together in one battalion rather than posting individuals to different regiments. A Case of keeping all the bad eggs in one basket.

Now came the time for me to think of other things, the greatest of which was to settle down with my Dids. But before that could be, a home had to be provided, and this was going to be a problem! When I look at the same thing today, I recognise that it is still a problem for those who need homes.

I was demobilised on 30th March, 1919.

At rest in War Zone AHP top left
Joe Gladdings, (cavalry heavy-weight boxing champion) middle right

In Huddesfield Hospital
AHP top left



18/298

CERTIFICATE of* ~~Discharge~~ / ~~Transfer to Reserve~~ / Disembodiment / ~~Demobilisation~~ } on Demobilization. Army Form Z. 21.

Regtl. No. 265087 Rank Sgt

Names in full (Surname first) Poyser Albert Henry Benjamin

Unit and Regiment or Corps from which *~~Discharged~~ ~~Disembodied~~ ~~Transferred to Reserve~~ } Hertfordshire.

Enlisted on the 12-1-1911

For 1st Hertfordshire Regt (Here state Regiment or Corps to which first appointed)

Also served in Bedfordshire Regt

Only Regiments or Corps in which the Soldier served since August 4th, 1914, are to be stated. If inapplicable, this space is to be ruled through in ink and initialled.

†Medals and Decorations awarded during present engagement * } 1914 Star. / nil. / nil.

*Has / ~~Has not~~ } served Overseas on Active Service. * Entitled to 11-11-18.

Place of Rejoining in case of emergency } Purfleet. Medical Category A.1.

Specialist Military qualifications } Nil. Year of birth 1892

He is* ~~Discharged~~ / ~~Transferred to Army Reserve~~ / Disembodied / ~~Demobilised~~ } on 30-3-1919 in consequence of Demobilization.

for E. W. Wilkinson Lt. Signature and Rank.

Officer i/c A.O.2 Records. Harlow (Place).

*Strike out whichever is inapplicable. † The word "Nil" to be inserted when necessary.

N.B.—Any person finding this Certificate is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, War Office, London, S.W.1.

WARNING—If this certificate is lost, a duplicate cannot be issued. You should therefore on no account part with it or forward it by post when applying for a situation.

Demobilised 30 March 1919

30 March 1919 Middlemore, Albert & Dids

BACK TO WORK - 1919 - 1924

The finding of employment on my discharge from the Army was no problem to me since I was re-engaged by Webb end Company. I took over the department, which I had left in 1914, and also had the added responsibility of another Section of leather treatment, which had been, until then, under the control of Mr Fred Webb, the managing director of Webb and Company.

The finding of houses to rent in those days was very difficult, but I was fortunate in getting one at Horns Mill, Hertford. It was not a very good one, in a terrace of six, but it was a start and our happiness at being together enabled my wife and I to overlook many things. The house had two bedrooms upstairs, and downstairs there was a parlour, or front-room, or as it is called today, a lounge, and a kitchen which was also the dining room. The yard was completely open, and the water tap was communal being in the centre of the yard. There was also a shed, which was the coal-shed, in the yard, and a wash-house containing the copper for boiling clothes. It was lacking in privacy, but the house was well-furnished and we were quite comfortable.

On the 27th June, 1919, a son was born to Dids - he was born one day or perhaps only a few hours before the Peace Treaty of the First World War was signed. We gave our son the names of Henworth Charles Homer, his place of birth being at Braughing in Hertfordshire. Charles was the name of his grandfather Dedman, and Homer was the maiden name of my mother.

On 26th February 1922, a daughter was born at Horns Mill. She was given the names of Annie Rosemary, but was called Nona, a name by which my mother was always known.

Work at Webb and Co. Ltd. was plentiful, and we were producing high-class suede from sheepskin, a good quality chamois leather which was made from the lining of the sheep pelt, also a superior leather from buck-skin. The Company was prosperous, and employees were doing very well. Even so, the desire to do better is ever present, and sometimes desire leads to that which is not so very good or honest. There was an example of this in an incident at the firm which caused concern. It was what I will call "The Great Clock Fraud", the clock being the machine, which recorded the time at which employees arrived at, or left, the premises. There was a man who had recorded on his time card a daily record that he had "clocked in" at 6 o’clock every morning, but it was known by the bosses that he was never on the premises at 6 a.m. The puzzle was how to find out how e was 'manoeuvring' the clock to suit his own ends!

Investigations started, and on the man's own admission, the following account explains how it was done.

Prior to 1910, a man was employed to record the starting time of each employee as he entered the gates, but when the Gledhill Brook Time Recording Company, of Huddersfield, brought out a time-recording clock for the purpose, Webb and Company readily changed over to the new procedure. The clock was a simple fair - a time card was inserted, a lever pressed, and the hour and minute was automatically stamped on the card. It was difficult to . e how a fraud could be perpetrated, but as the man concerned was the maintenance engineer, who also did repairs to the typewriters, it was thought at first that he was using a type which he had made. His ruse, however, was much more simple than that! The fraud on the clock entailed the time card being inserted in the clock twice - once before the hour and again after the hour. The e would arrive at the clocking-in office at about 6.58 a.m., but before putting his card in the clock he would stick a piece of cigarette paper over the minute figures so that only the hour (6) printed on the card. Then he would wait until the minute figures just turned the hour, and then he would stick a piece of paper over the hour figure so that only the minute figures (01) were stamped on the card. Thus, by careful alignment of the card, the man could with two operations of the lever achieve a time of 6.01 on his card without difficulty - and as a result, he would be paid for nearly an hour’s work each day which he never performed! The man admitted all this before the directors but it didn't save him from dismissal there and then!

Immediately Mr Webb, the managing director, got on the telephone Huddersfield and reported to Mr Gledhill that his clocks were not fraud-proof. Mr Gledhill came down to Webb's, and he was given a demonstration. He said that all clocks would have to be called for alteration and it was eventually found that, by the inclusion of cutter which 'notched' the card, and other internal adjustments to the mechanism, it became impossible to repeat this type of fraud.

I might mention here that it was not common knowledge among the employees how the fraud was carried out. It may also be asked how we knew! Well, it came about that when the fraud was first discovered I was asked if I would help in the investigation. I just didn't know how I could help, and I certainly wasn't willing to check up on a fellow workman, but after considering the matter I decided I would try to help for this reason. In recognition of a certain method in leather production, which I had introduced, I was given 50 shares of £1 in the Company, and these shares yielded 5% interest. This was a fair amount of money in those days. The thought of being a shareholder made me feel that I had a responsibility not only to the

Company, but also to myself. If the Company was being robbed, so was I! So I decided to help. Although I couldn't report much, I had noticed that the man was using cigarette papers and tearing them when he was at the clock. This made me suspicious, and I therefor e made it my business to be in the clock-house when he was!

Beyond that I knew nothing, but having been connected with the case, when it was over I was shown by Mr. Webb how the fraud was done! Some years afterwards, I mentioned the incident of 1922 to a man who was of the apprentices, and I said that at that time I felt sorry that the culprit had received instant dismissal. The man told that I need not have felt bad about it because on hearing of his dismissal, a cheer had gone up in the machine shop! No tears had been shed. The men remembered that during the war, when they were apprentices, if their machine needed attention, he as the maintenance engineer always demanded a tip to do the job! I felt a bit better after hearing that!

During the 1914 - 1918 war, Webb's had engaged in the leather finishing machine shop four or five apprentices:, all boys of 15 years of age or so. I didn't know any of these apprentices until I returned to the factory in 1919, and by then they were well-grown youths who had finished their apprenticeship of 3 years duration. One day, soon after rejoining the firm, I passed through the machine shop and noticed that the boys were not on the machines. They were trying out some physical exercises, which included standing on their hands, but up against a wall. I told them that they should be on their machines and I also asked what they were doing or trying to do! "*Something you can't do*" I was told. "*You think so?*" I said. "*I think I can - and what's more, I don't need a wall to help me with a handstand! And while I am making that handstand I will walk around this machine shop on my hands - not on all-fours either!*" One boy said, "*Bet yer a packet of fags yer can't!*" Another said, "*Me, too*", and two others said the same. From memory I believe there were 4 boys, and all obviously thought they were on to a good thing! To their astonishment, I did just what I said I would do, and more! - I walked around the machine shop twice! And I collected the fags!! Many years after that, when one of those apprentices was approaching retiring age, he reminded me of the time I collected some packets of fags from them!

In the year 1922, there was another general incident at Webb and Co. – a leather workers' strike. It was a tragedy for those who were involved. Up to this time, the firm had not become implicated with Trade Unions, but some employees became members of the Associated Leather Workers Union and a local branch was formed with its own Chairman and Secretary. The

headquarters of the Union was in London, with its National Chairman and Secretary. The local branch at Webb's negotiated with the Directors of the firm to pay Union rates (many were already getting more) with all fringe benefits, whatever they happened to be. The Directors offered to meet the demands of the Union, except in one particular item, which was that the Directors meet the National Secretary (as matter of prestige probably). The Directors were willing to receive the local officials, which they did, and also agreed to terms relating to wages, etc., but beyond that they were not willing to go! The directors received an ultimatum from the Union Headquarters in London demanding to meet the Directors of Webb and Company. This: the Directors refused to do, so the Union called out on strike all its members.

The strike dragged on for weeks and then into months, and after nine months each employee on strike received a notice terminating his employment. Not all employees: were affected; some did not join the Union and were therefore not on strike. I expect there were various reasons why men did not join the Union; some had no time for Unions anyway, while others had various reasons for not joining, and this category included myself and my mate and friend, Arthur Pratt. We did not join; in the first place we were never asked! The Union was actually formed before the war was over, and when the men returned from the Army and other services, they were invited to join. Although the Union was in existence there were not many members, but as the men returned the membership correspondingly increased, and the Union felt strong enough for action. When Arthur Pratt and I returned, as I have said, we were never asked to become members - we don't know why! However, if we had been asked neither of us would have joined, and we knew the reason. We had no faith in the one chosen be Secretary. Arthur and I knew the Secretary for many years; he was a likeable fellow: - a hail-fellow-well-met type - but we felt that to put him in a position where he handled the contributions of members, was not the thing to do. But the Union members did do it, much to their regret, because when they did go on strike the local funds were considerably short! Contributions had been received, but not paid in. I think someone came to the Secretary's aid, and made up the shortage. After the strike collapsed, some men got other work and some returned to Webb's. The local Secretary obtained a job as a conductor with a bus company, which had just started, and very soon he became an inspector. Something happened again, probably do with money, and he had to leave the buses. The love of money is the root of all evil, not that money in itself is evil, but the love of it is the root of evil!

The last we heard of him was that he was picked up on the road (he was walking) to Royston, and given a lift. That was in 1922, and nothing was heard of him nor was he seen again in

Hertford until 1945. Then one day at work at Webb's was at my table when a man came into the room. It was the very same man and it was a great surprise to see him well-dressed, and looking quite fit. I asked him where he had been all these years. He said "*Albert, for 20 years I've slept in barns, under hedges, and under the threshing tackle. I've just been with a threshing outfit from farm to farm in the Eastern Counties!*" I said "*For the whole time?" He said "Yes, but now I have my pension and am making do!*"

The year 1922 is also remembered because of my mate and friend, Arthur Pratt, getting married. I was best man at his wedding, and he married a dear girl, Emily, whose home was at Deptford. Dids and I went to the wedding and stayed overnight at Emily's mother's home. In 1923 a baby girl was born to Arthur and Emily and was named Joan. Today, Joan is happily married and has three lovely daughters, one whom is married.

We were very comfortable in our home. Henworth was running around, and Nona just starting to. But there were other children playing in the yard, which was quite open, and this created a problem, which neither Dids nor I could bear - so we decided to look for another place in which to live. It was, however, a hopeless task, and we had to be content with the place we had. While living there, Henworth got on to the road one day and wandered to the river 50-70 yards away. Auntie Emily Pratt, who lived near, saw him going towards the river and ran after him, but Henworth got into the water before she reached him. Fortunately, she was able to pull him out and he was' safe. We were very glad of the fact that Arthur and Emily lived so near, and Dids and Emily became wonderful friends.

The year 1923 was advancing to its end, and we still could not find a house that had a little privacy. If we could have found something with just a little bit, we would have been satisfied but this- place had none and we could not settle. The time came when we had a thought of moving out of the country, and as I had spent some time with Australians during the war, I thought that we would try to emigrate there. I rather liked what I heard from those Australians, more about the climate than anything else. We eventually made up our minds to go, but, of course, much had to be done in the way of getting our passages fixed, selling of the home chattels, and packing. However, all was done and we were notified that we would sail on the 20th January 1924, on the ship Moreton Bay, and our destination would be Fremantle in Western Australia.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA - 1924 – 1934

When we said goodbye to Hertford, Arthur and Emily Pratt saw us off at the station, but we weren't going to Tilbury, from which we were due to embark, just yet. I had already said goodbye to my father and sister, and now we were going to Braughing to bid farewell to Dids' mother, father and sister. From Braughing, we went to London to spend a night with Dids uncle, Johnny Flaxmore, also to accept an invitation to visit in Portman Square the town house staff of Longman's, the publishers. At one time, Dids worked for Longman's at Upper Hall, Braughing; in fact, when Henwoth was christened in Braughing Church, Miss Sybil Longman was his godmother. Eventually the time came for us to embark at Tilbury. Uncle Johnny Flaxmore came to Tilbury with us. We soon found selves on the ship and leaving the shores of England.

It was very pleasant on the ship; food was good and everything interesting. Dids and I had no sickness. The ports of call were Port Said, Aden and Colombo, and everything was exciting, especially the native traders surrounding the ship with their little boats. The passage through the Suez Canal was very interesting, and fortunately it was made in daytime. I thought it was wonderful looking from the deck of the ship out into the desert at a string of camels with their drivers. I don't know where they heading for; it looked as if they had no 'come from' nor 'goto'. I suppose they knew!

Exactly a month after leaving, the coming of 20th February found us entering the port of Fremantle. Disembarking, arrangements were made for any immigrants to have temporary accommodation in a hostel. It wasn't luxury, but it was fair. We had a nice room, and the meals though very plain were wholesome. It was very hot being mid-summer, and I remember finding a tannery in Fremantle. I walked round the block on which it was built, but it was so hot that I decided I could never work inside, especially in a leather works, and I put the idea of factory work right out of my mind. I had to do something, of course, because after a week, money began to get low. I didn't have much to start with selling the furniture brought in a few pounds, and Webb's gave me the £50 which I held in shares with them. This £50 was waiting for me at the Post Office in Fremantle when I arrived. However, we had a good time in Fremantle, and a few visits to Perth.

Then I applied to get on a scheme of land development in the south, and was eventually directed to proceed by train, leaving Dids, Henworth and Nona in the hostel, to Denmark, a place about

300 miles south. There I met up with seven other men, and after having a meal a restaurant, a Government guide took us out 20 miles along a track by a lorry, which was loaded with axes, spades, mattocks and other equipment.

The 20-mile point wasn't the end of our journey! With our personal belongings, we started, under the leadership of the guide, to proceed north on foot, following some 'blaze' marks' on the trees through the she We eventually came to a camp made by the surveyors who had blazed the trail. We had travelled a distance of 5 miles, and beside creek we made camp, the sky being the roof. Next day, we threaded our way back to the 20-mile point, finding it easy to follow the trail 'blazed' through the bush. We had already given an order at the store in Denmark, on the day we arrived, to send food out to 20-mile point, and this we found waiting for us when we returned to that point. In addition, there had also been sent out a horse and dray, and other things, and so, instead of journeying back to our camp on foot we had transport - a very welcome horse and dray for 8 men and a guide! It was a good job that others could drive! I couldn't at the time, but I had to afterwards, of course, and we did have many exciting trips into town - but more of that later!

Our first task was to build a culvert over a creek so that the dray could be got over, then after a little organisation and planning we started to build. The building consisted of the framework of shacks made of bush timber, and there were nine of these; eight for the gang and one for the guide, who now was the foreman. Having completed the framework of the shacks after a few days, we had some corrugated iron sent out from Denmark and with this we completed the shacks. They were each 12 feet by 12 feet, and this was to be our dwelling place when wives and children arrived two weeks afterwards!

It so happened that when we arrived at this particular spot (there was no name to it) a gang of surveyors had just completed a survey of the country round about, also the banks of the Kent River which was about 2 miles from our camp, and had moved on. Their outfit consisted of buggy and horses, and 4 men (one surveyor, one cook and two linesmen whose job was' to carry the instruments, make a clearance for the surveyor to get his sights through and when the land was surveyed they had to put in corner and angle pegs). I have said they had moved on - actually they were still there with just a little final work to do, and so I saw them at work for the last days or so. Now when a survey is made and completed, the Lands Department does not accept that survey as final. Another surveyor is sent along to check and re-check on the previous survey. So, within a few days, another surveyor, alone this time, came to check the previous

one. He had no gang, but he hired labour from our group, and I had the job of helping in that re-survey. I enjoyed my time with this surveyor; he was most interesting.

Our camp was about 2 miles from a place called "Hell's Hole", which was a ravine. Many years ago, there was a lumber company in Denmark, which worked the forests for twenty miles out, but on reaching this ravine work had to stop because it was impassable for the machinery of that day. The place was called Hell's Hole since early in the 1900's and the locals call it that to this day.

The surveyor also told me why a small tributary running into the Kent River was called the "Styx River". I think the name derives from a Greek legend meaning Hades, or infernal, the hell of beyond, gloomy, dismal, and this is how the country appeared to the surveyors. So they named it Styx River, and this is shown on the official ordnance maps. The distance between Hell's Hole and the Styx River would be 10-15 miles and such was the land that surrounded me and in which my family and I were to spend the next 10 years. When the surveys were completed, during which time my income was three pounds per week, the land was divided into 'blocks of 150-300 acres for future farms. I was given a grant-free site of 138 acres, then given a loan month by month to clear the land ready for the plough, but much hard work had to be done before it could be ploughed, as can be seen in the photographs. Each block had forest, land with sections of so-called swamps. I don’t know why they were called swamps, since I have never seen water on them, but they are treeless and the soil is sandy so perhaps they were water-covered at one time.

Our first meeting with a swamp was on our trek the first day from Denmark. We followed the blazed track already mentioned and after we had gone a mile or so we came across one of these treeless swamps. I can’t remember how we picked up the trail on the other side, but we did, and before moving on we put a stick in the ground with an empty salmon tin (we had had a tin of salmon for a snack). This marked the way! It so happened (I am writing of 1924) that in 1961, I was again in this district and the area is still known as: "Salmon Tin Swamp". Place names come about through peculiar circumstances!

I began clearing the land and after some weeks started to plough, laid some pasture, and eventually had a cow. Vegetables also began to grow, we had a pig and chickens, and altogether we lived well. There was a supplementary diet of kangaroo, wallaby, and quogga, (which belongs to the kangaroo family), all of which are excellent eating. We also ate cockatoo, parrot and emu. A young emu is the nicest poultry I have ever eaten. Yes, we lived well, but of course

money was short. Nevertheless, we were able to get into town once a month. I suppose the settlement by about 1926 comprised a dozen families an area of as many miles, and so the question of a school arose.

I was asked by some settlers if I would write to Government Office in Perth, making a request for a school. I did, and was told that school would be considered if a site were found, an attendance of 8 children a day was assured, and a guarantee that toilets would be tended to twice a week were given. We called a meeting of parents and I was instructed to go ahead. My block of land happened to be central in the settlement area. It was also beside one of the main surveys for a road, and so, with the agreement of the other settlers, I wrote to the Government offering half an acre from my block for a school site. Another and myself guaranteed the attendance to toilets, and I also submitted a list of children for school. There were 23 names, not all of school age but they would be one day! We eventually got the school, which included teachers' quarters, and attendances did average 8 per day.

Very soon social life began to be enjoyed, the school being the centre. Various religious denominations started to visit the school for services, but before this even before the school was built, we did have an open-air service and the preacher was a Presbyterian named Mr Livingstone. He said he was the grandson of Doctor Livingstone of Africa. The photograph shown is most interesting; it will be seen that a tree stump is the pulpit!

Development of the site went ahead, and by 1930 the block was developed enough to have cows and pigs. We had a dairy for the purpose of separating milk, and the cream was sent, by a lorry, to a butter factory in Denmark. As the children grew, and more settlers arrived, the need for a recreation ground had to be considered. We had formed a committee to promote social

activities, and the time had come to give the district a name! A special meeting of all the settlers was called and of the many names put forward the one chosen was KENTDALE. The name was arrived at from the fact that the Kent River ran through the district and the course it took was through hilly country, or dales. This name was submitted to the Lands Department and the General Postmaster's Department and was accepted. The reason for it being submitted to the Postmaster General was to see if there was another district of the same name, in which case it would have been rejected. I was chairman of the social committee and also of the meeting that chose the name Kentdale.

These meetings had a funny side to them at times. I may have contributed to them in that respect and didn't know it! - but I remember the conversation or discussions would often wander away from the subject being discussed! One member said once that he had been unfortunate in the sexes of his calves being born. Dairy farmers don't like bull calves; they prefer heifers because of future milk and cream supplies. This particular settler told us that he had had twelve bull calves in "concussion" - meaning, of course, succession! I do not mention this: in any way to belittle one, but just to recount one of the many humorous incidents that occurred! As I have said, I have probably made some bright contributions myself with not much understanding.

The social life began to enlarge; especially after five acres adjoining the school was surveyed for the purpose of providing a public playing field. It was in 1930 that I saw a car stop on the tread near my block, and out of it got a small party headed by none other than Sir James Mitchell, the Premier of West Australia! He had with him, I assume, other Ministers and a secretary. Sir James asked me much about the district and to him I put the proposition of a playing field. He agreed that it was necessary and should be granted. I then told him that I had been in touch with the Lands Department regarding a survey, but they wanted a fee of twenty pounds. This, I told Sir James, was altogether out of the question! Notes were made of the discussion, and I was told that the matter would be taken up when the party returned to Perth. It eventually was, and five acres were surveyed for a cost of only three pounds, which pleased the community very much. The land needed clearing of light scrub, but all the settlers helped in this and we were able to have outside activities within a short time.

Denmark, a township 25 miles east of Kentdale, was the local government centre, and the district was controlled by a Roads Board, something like a Rural Council. Members were elected by popular vote, and they were probably practical people, because of their understanding of the countryside and its needs. Nevertheless, some funny stories came out of

the council chambers, and here again, I am not belittling anyone. I just mention them because they are humorous. There was a certain member (I knew him quite well) who generally had a lot to say in the council meetings and it was always in opposition, but on one occasion he had nothing to say about some question, neither for nor against. The Chairman, Bill Morgan, (I knew: him also) asked the member if he had anything to say. "No", the member said, "I am putrid" - meaning, I suppose, neutral_!

By 1933, proper roads had been built, and even the railway was extended from Denmark. I had erected on my block, next to the school, a store, which was taken over by the Denmark Co-operative Society.

By this time, my farm was producing and I also cultivated a few acres of vegetables. I used to take a load by horse and cart once a week to the Kent River siding, 8 miles away, from where it would be sent 600 miles by train to the Kalgoorlie Goldfields. Many times have I gone to Denmark with this transport, going in one day, staying the night in town and returning next day with, perhaps, young pigs, fowls, cales, and anything I needed for the farm.

Dids used to manage the Store for the Co-operative, but I would relieve her in the morning after milking. She would then do the separating in the dairy.

During the years from 1925 to 1937, there would occasionally come to the school different representatives of the various religions Baptists, Church of England, Wesleyans and others. Dids always went to the services in the school; I didn't, as I couldn't see any comparison, with what was being preached, or with those that were preaching, with the teachings of the New Testament. From my youth I had had this thought. Even when Dids and I were in our teens', she would go to church and I never hindered her. Although I thought it was wrong. I didn't know what was right, except that which was in the Bible, and I didn't know much about that either, and I still don't. However, one day I was in the store and two ladies' came in. They had cycles, which they had left outside. I was surprised to see two strange women in the district and I just couldn't understand it! One asked me if I could supply two pennyworths of flour, bran, and sugar, which came to sixpence! I was used to selling to settlers – a month’s supply of flour, sugar, etc., generally by the bag. However, politeness is a virtue, and so I supplied them. I then asked them if they were passing through or perhaps visiting someone? I must admit I was rather inquisitive, but it was extremely unusual to see two strange women in the district, especially as roads were only tracks in many parts and not very good for cycles. Then they told me their business. They were preachers and they hoped to get the school for some Gospel

meetings. If they were successful in getting the school, would I let settlers know when they came into the store that there would be some meetings? I said I would, but what religion or denomination shall I tell them? They said they were not of any religion, except Christians, and they go forth two by two preaching the Gospel, as in the New Testament. I said "You have no name except Christians? Now, I have no time for the churches. We have had many clergy at this school, they come and go, and we don't hear any more of them. I cannot reconcile their work with the Scriptures. Then I told them that my wife would be interested, and if they cared to follow a bush track a few hundred yards they would come to a dairy where she would be separating milk. She would enjoy meeting you I assured them. They went away, and were gone for about an hour. Then they came back, and said that if there was a meeting my wife would be there! They got the use of the school and had a meeting at which about 15 settlers attended. They had a folding organ for music, and both spoke. I must say I had never heard preaching like it; they had no notes, just the Bible, and their faces to me literally lit up as if some power was with them. I didn't know them, or where they came from, or where they were going to; but this I knew, that they had power with them to enable them to preach as they did. When I got home that night, I said to Dids' "If I have never met or heard angels before, I have seen and heard two tonight! If you want to follow any religion, I am sure they are right". Dids said to me "I think the same as you". The meetings continued for a few weeks, the two preachers cycling to the school from their lodgings some miles away. I will close this by saying that Dids did decide to follow in the way that was revealed in those meetings.

At this time, 1933, we had distressing letters from England. Dids' father had died, and her mother was going blind, so much so that she couldn't write and others wrote for her. It worried Dids, of course, and we felt that someone should be with her mother. It was decided to ask Dids' sister, Rose, who was in Melbourne, if she would go back to mother. Dids, Henworth and Nona made a trip to Me1bourne by ship in January, 1934. I took them to Albany, 60-70 miles away, and they embarked there. The trip was a failure as far persuading her sister to return to England was concerned; she refused to go: Dids and the children were in Melbourne six months; they made many friends of the same faith that Dids had met with through the two preachers at Kentdale. Then they returned to me in the west in June 1934. Within three months I sold up, and made arrangements for us to return to England so that Dids could be with her mother at Braughing. During the last weeks on the farm, I was kicked by a cow: She should have been tied before milking, but that morning I omitted to tie her, and when I was about to sit on the stool she kicked my thigh. The pain was terrific, but it soon went. After seeing to

passports; etc., we sailed from Fremantle on 3rd November, 1934, for England. We spent a few days in Perth before sailing, and some of the friends of the same faith as Dids bid us farewell.

Before writing the next chapter I will relate a little more of what happened between the years 1924 and 1934. We were living as I have said about 25 miles from the township of Denmark. This name had no connection with the country of Denmark but derived its name from a ‘Doctor Denmark’ who settled there many years ago. I used to go into the township about once a month, and got to know the townspeople very well. One person I met in the hotel had what appeared to me like a pugilist’s face! I asked him who it was that flattened his nose, and he told me that it was someone who I wouldn't know. He mentioned one by the name of Joe Gladding, who was in an English Cavalry Regiment, the Hussars, and was the heavyweight-boxing champion of the cavalry regiments of that day. I was astonished and said, "I don't know you, but I knew Joe Gladding!" I didn't expect him to believe me, but I told him that Joe, on the outbreak of war, had completed his reservist service (and had then been free to join any regiment. He had chosen to join the 1st Hertfordshire Regiment, and was on a draft, which joined us in France early in 1915! When we were withdrawn from the front line to rest for a few days, I saw Joe on several occasions in an improvised boxing ring.

Another memory, which remains with me, is of the time when I went into Albany, the seaport, to meet Dids and the children on their return from Melbourne. I stayed with a friend in an hotel; we had motored in from Kentdale (in 1934 there were perhaps half-dozen cars around). The ship was due in early on Monday morning, but while in the hotel on the Sunday evening, we had the car commandeered by an Inspector and Sergeant of the police! Not only did they commandeer the car, but they told my friend that he had to drive them under their direction! I went with them, and we were directed to a point about 20 miles from Albany, where the Sergeant got out of the car and went into the bush. He was away about ten minutes, then he returned and said to the Inspector "I have the seals, sir". We returned to Albany, the Sergeant went into the police station, but we were invited by the Inspector, to a restaurant for supper, and over the supper he told us what it was all about! Evidently they had received word that some strange men had set up camp in the bush, and as there had been a mailbag robbery, they thought they would investigate. They found no suspects, but they got a clue through finding the mailbag seals! I asked why wasn't a police car put on the job. "Car!” the Inspector said, "we have no car. We only have horses”!

On another occasion I remember the police being action. I think this happened more than once. There was in Denmark an annual agricultural show, and in addition to the showing of cattle and produce, entertainment was provided which included a tent for refreshments of all kinds. Of course, by late evening many lay-abouts had also gathered, and the grounds had to be cleared. This was done by the police, who loaded the lay-abouts into a van, and took them out of town and dumped them in the bush! In the morning they would be sober, and there was no police court job! The district around Denmark had much work going on, including new roads being made and bridges being built over the Kent river. The work gangs consisted of all types who lived in camps, and when a job was finished, they moved to another spot and pitched camp there. It was a rough life, and the men were rough, but I never heard of a case where a man had lost anything from his tent! Dids and I did lose eight pounds cash on one occasion. We used to supply eggs, butter and vegetables to a caterer who did the catering for the men in one camp. As they received one lot of produce, they would pay for the last, and therefore always owed for one lot! When we went to collect our money after a few weeks, we found the camp had moved and the caterer had fled with his debts!

I won't write more about these things, but I will just mention two other things, which to me are important, the latter being the most important of all in my life. I was always interested in politics, and at Kentdale took an active part in them, such as introducing the candidates when they spoke in the school, but I belonged to no party. Then one day I met a man who was advocating a theme called "Social Credit" evolved by a certain economist by the name of Major Douglas. I studied this theme, or doctrine, and was convinced it could cure the world of its financial ills, which were caused in the main through booms and slumps. "Social Credit" told us that whatever is humanly, physically and materially possible, should be and ought to be financially possible'. This was the basis of the theory, and also that money in circulation should equate with production. Under the present economic system, it never is! Hence you get a boom when plenty of money is around, and a slump when money is short. I believed this theory then, and still believe it.

Now the most important thing I have met with in my life is the True Gospel that was brought across my pathway in 1933 by those two women preachers that came into the Store. When the twelve disciples were told to go forth two by two without script, without purse, etc., and preach, they did. Then the eleven were told to go and preach to all the world. Christ said, "As my Father sent me so I send you. His Servants were so commissioned. The two women I met were doing exactly that - preaching the Gospel, which is the Truth of God - and they were doing it by faith,

just as the disciples had done 1900 years earlier. The fundamental principles of the Truth of God as written in the New Testament are the Homeless Preacher and the Church in the Home. In the Old Testament, Exodus. 12, we read about the Passover, which was taken in the homes of the Israelites - probably tents.

In the New Testament we have its parallels in Luke 22, where Christ and the disciples had the last supper - it was in a home. Those two fundamental principles, the homeless preacher and the church in the home, are still being enacted today by those who are willing to leave all and go forth to preach the Gospel to all the world. And this will continue until the end of time.

To continue with our journey from Fremantle on 3rd November 1934 aboard the Hobsons Bay, it was good that Cora Bayley was' on the ship. Dids and Cora had fellowship meetings together in Cora's cabin, and the days passed pleasantly until we reached Colombo in Ceylon. It was nine days' journey from Fremantle, and a lonely one so far as the sea voyage went in that we met no other ships. At Colombo we bid farewell to Cora; she was spending a few days there, then proceeding to Burma where she was labouring in the Gospel. Henworth, Nona and I (Dids preferred to remain on the ship) went for a tour to Mount Lavinia, visiting various places of interest en route. There was one interesting thing of note - we found on arriving at Mount Lavinia, in the grounds of the hotel, an orchestra was playing that had been passengers on the Hobsons Bay. The hotel had engaged them for the season.

On returning to the ship we found Dids writing in the lounge; she wrote many letters on the voyage. We passed through the Indian Ocean without any incident, but through the Red Sea we had a shower of rain - an incident which was, apparently, most unusual. I happened to be talking to the Captain at the time and he told me he had passed through the Red Sea many times, and it was the first rain he had seen in that area. When we got to the Suez Canal he told me to go up on to the bridge and take snaps of the Canal, which I did.

On reaching Malta, the weather was bad and the sea rough, so much 'so that nobody was allowed on deck. We were battened down! We could not enter the harbour at Valetta, Malta, so the captain changed course and went to Sicily for shelter. The sea was still too rough for us to anchor, so we returned to Malta, taking shelter in St Paul’s Bay, the bay where Paul the apostle was shipwrecked. We stayed one night there and next day, the sea being calm again, we entered Valetta Harbour. Dids', myself, Henworth and Nona went ashore and bought a few things, then we returned to the ship and set sail for Southampton. This part of the voyage was interesting, especially to Nona, Henworth and I, but maybe less so to Dids. First, Nona was

invited with one or two other girls to have tea with the Captain at his table. Then, Henworth end I were invited to the Chief Steward's cabin in the evening for a coffee. While we were there, a seaman came to the cabin and asked the Chief Steward what should be done about a certain passenger. The seaman was given an order to lock the man in his cabin until we docked at Southampton the following morning. I asked the Chief Steward who the man was and I was told that he was a deportee from Sydney. He had served a prison sentence in Australia for forgery, and on his discharge was to be deported to England and handed over to the police at Southampton. If they had nothing against him, then he would be free. The Chief Steward then told me that the man had had freedom to walk about the after--deck between ports, and I was given a description of the man. I was surprised, for I had had many conversations with that forger. I had no idea that he was a forger, his conversation was generally on the car business. The Chief Steward then showed us a menu card with the Chief Steward's signature on it, and alongside was a signature written by the deportee. The Chief Steward had asked the deportee to copy his signature, just as a matter of interest, and there was no difference! The landing at Southampton was without incident as also was the train journey to London. It was 3rd December - exactly a month's sea voyage since leaving Fremantle in mid-summer! The first impression I had of England was its greyness and the heavy mist but being winter, it was hardly surprising! We had a taxi from Victoria Station to Liverpool Street Station, and took train to Braughing. On arrival at Braughing Station, Uncle Arthur Barley and Betty were there to meet us and they accompanied us to Dids' mother's bungalow.

It was very cold, but very nice to walk around the village and talk to the many villagers whom I once knew. After a few days I went to Hertford and then to the tannery at Horne Mill to see the workmen I knew. There were many I didn't know! On leaving the works Mr Webb, the governor of Webb and Co., saw me and asked me to come and see him in his office on 18th January. This I did, and the next chapter will commence with that conversation or rather, the effects of it!

ENGLAND - 1934 – 1939

On 1st January, 1935, I had an interview with Mr. Fred Webb, the Managing Director of Webb and Co. Ltd., with whom I had started work in 1906 when Mr. William Webb, his father, was Manager. Mr Webb asked me if I would start work again in the tannery. The country was still feeling the effects of a terrible trade depression, which had begun in the early 30's. Between two and three million men were out of work. At the tannery they were working a short week, and Mr. Webb said he couldn't give me any particular job, but he desired me to be in the works helping out a the dry leather departments (although eventually I did a job in the "wet" - that is, before the skins became leather. It was a simple job, sorting the skins roughly so that they could be turned into various' qualities of leather separately).

I didn't really like that suggestion; the workmen were on short time and I felt that they might resent an extra one added to the number. However, it was arranged that I would start work immediately, and I had a good reception from the men whom I had known for many years. The apprentices whom I knew were now fully qualified leather workers, and one reminded me of the time I won the cigarettes! This has been mentioned many times since!

The time unfortunately came when it wasn't a question of walking on hands - I found I was not being able to walk at all! I had started work in January, 1935, and in August of that year I had a terrific pain in my right leg. It was the most severe pain I have ever experienced. I reported to the doctor at Puckeridge (we were still living at Braughing) and he sent me to hospital for X-ray. This revealed that I had Osteomyelitis of the right femur, which necessitated me going into hospital for an operation. I was in hospital until the middle of December, having had two operations. I was very ill, but recovered sufficiently to be discharged. My leg had no strength in it, so I was fitted up with callipers and I was able to walk with the aid of two sticks. While I was off work, my old friend, Arthur Pratt, did me good turns I shall never forget; first, he supplied us with vegetables from his garden, then he got me an allowance (weekly) from the firm's benevolent fund. Starting work again was out of the question; until the time came when I was forced to work in order to live! There is a saying that some people "eat to live" while others "live to eat" - I had to work to enable me to eat, which enabled me to live! It was a hard time. However, I did start again at Webb's, going to work on callipers and two sticks! I continued to do this for a long time, and also attended hospital as an outpatient, but the disease was not cured. Dids continually extracted dead bone as it protruded through an open wound,

which the surgeon had left for that purpose. I was never able to bend my leg again, but I gradually learned to overcome the handicap.

Travelling to work by train from Braughing to Hertford, and then by bus to Horns Mill, was a great strain, and I was very grateful when a house became vacant at 36 Cross Street, Ware. We took that house on a weekly rent basis, and I continued traveling to work from there. I remember coming home one night when my calliper snapped! As I passed a garage in star Street I noticed welding being done, so I went in and asked if they would weld my broken calliper if I took it off! I was told they would, and they did an unusual and excellent job!!

Unemployment continued to be a problem throughout the country, and was at its worst in 1935, numbering almost three million. Henworth and I saw hundreds of unemployed men march through Hertford on their way from the north of England to London to stage a protest. It was difficult to get Henworth a job, but I did succeed in getting him introduced to the trade of glove-cutting with Webb and Company on a three year apprenticeship. In view of the deep industrial depression the country was undergoing it is understandable that it was difficult for people to get jobs and yet it was surprising the number of people who were ignorant of the employment situation. However we were fortunate as a family, although I was not at all well Henworth had a job and so did Nona who also worked at Webbs. My grandfather had worked there, also my father and then myself, and now Henworth and Nona, which made four generations working for the same firm – quite an achievement. I is on record that the Poyser family had four generations working for the same firm. I continued working, but still under medical treatment which was to go on for a long time. At the time of writing this, 974, Webb and Co Ltd exist only in name, the factory and tannery have been demolished and the site is earmarked for housing.

We had Dids' mother living with us at Cross Street, Ware, by this time. She had been willing to leave Braughing and come to Ware to make her home with us.

As the years advanced, the peace of the world was again disturbed by the rise of Germany. This is recorded history so I will not dwell on that except to day that war broke out again and England became involved on 3rd September 1939. For the next few years life in England was anything but easy and I will record a little of the war years on the following chapter.

WORLD WAR II - 1939 TO 1945

It is an amazing thing that in peacetime there is unemployment, and with it poverty because of a shortage of money; but when war breaks out, money isn't short! The theory that I wrote of earlier is put into practice. If a country has the manpower and material to work then money is created to put the manpower and material to work, and so it was in 1939 - when war came, so did employment! It was a cure for unemployment!! It still amazes me that this cure for employment cannot be used in peacetime, but I suppose this will not be possible until a new financial structure is devised to replace the present one which, in my view, is antiquated.

To make sure that food and clothing was available to everyone equally, ration books were issued and also identity cards. At night, all lights in houses had to be blacked out as a safeguard against air raids. Conscription was in force, but I, not being one hundred per cent fit, was not called upon to do anything toward the war effort, apart from daily work at Webb and Co., who were engaged in producing leather for the Government.

Henworth was of military age, but he appealed against military service. He won his appeal and was directed to do farm work, which he did for the duration of the war. Nona continued nursing, Alan served in the Air Force, and after training became a Flying Officer. Alan continued with the Royal Air Force in Bomber Command; he did his allotted number of air raids (30) over Germany and was then grounded. During the war he won the Distinguished Flying Cross. I am not able to record any personal experience of the war because I had no part in it.

Alan and Nona married in February, 1943, and the reception was held at Cannon' s Hotel, Ware, and although food was rationed, an excellent table was provided by the hotel management. There were fifty-three guests, including Alan's flying crew. Grandmother Dedman (Did_' mother) lived long enough to be at the wedding, but died later in the year and was buried at Braughing in the grave of Dids' father.

Air raids continued over England, bombs being dropped on Hertford, two miles away, and also on Ware. Much damage was done, besides casualties. Cross Street, where we lived, escaped serious damage, but houses were shaken, and our bungalow had ceilings and walls cracked and the lounge light shattered. I saw air battles over Ware and Hertford, with some German planes being shot down. Work during the day was frequently interrupted by air raid warnings. Travel on buses during the dark hours was very awkward, because lights inside the buses were

dimmed. One rather amusing incident happened to me one dark morning going to work on the bus. Having a stiff leg, when I sit on a bus seat my leg protrudes under the seat in front, and the person on that seat looking down would see my foot, or rather, my shoe! On this occasion, a lady sitting in front of me looked down as she got up off her seat to alight from the bus, saw my shoe and said to the conductor as she stooped to pick it up, "Someone has left a shoe behind! Imagine her surprise when I said, "Excuse me, madam, but that is my foot!" On another occasion I was given in my change by the conductor a bronze coin covered with silver paper to represent a two-shilling piece! - I expect someone had given him it. I returned it to the bus office, and told them to put its correct value in their orphans' box! I wasn't greatly annoyed over this, because I had seen similar dirty tricks played in France during the First World

I haven't recorded them in my war experiences, but will mention one now. When the troops were having a rest period, they would seek refreshment in local cafes', all of which gold wine. If German planes came over the village, lights would go out, and I have known Soldiers take advantage of the situation by handing over in the darkness a jam tin label for payment instead of a one franc!! Money for jam in reverse!

Eventually the war ended in 1945, to the great relief of all! After Alan was demobilised, he and Nona got a house in Croft Road, Ware, where Malcolm was born on April 15th of that year. It was a most beautiful day with brilliant sunshine, but later when Nona came home from Hertford Hospital with her new son, it was a day not to be forgotten - cold, and heavy snow! Malcolm was given two other names - Alan Henworth.

Celebrations were held to mark the end of the war - to rejoice in a victory for the Allies and the defeat of Germany. I continued to suffer with my leg, but was able to continue working. The fellowship meetings were at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Baker, who lived at Cheshunt, and although travel by bus and train was difficult, we managed to get to Cheshunt on most Sundays throughout the war.

Now that peace was declared, we looked forward to better things or would there be a repetition of the period between 1918 and 1939 with its world unemployment problem? We could only 'wait and see' as Mr. Asquith said when Prime Minister years before in reply to a question about a certain matter! And with this I will conclude this chapter and go on to the next.

ENGLAND - 1945 - 1959

Much came to pass in this period, but I will not give much detail - just a brief report of events as they occurred.

It was in 1945 that Dids extracted the last piece of dead bone from my leg. The open wound started to heal up, but the pain did not cease entirely. In 1946, another boy was born to Nona and Alan on 20th November, and he was given the names of Christopher David

In 1947, there was a very cold winter, and snow lay about until May. The fields at the top of Widbury Hill, being on a slope, were used for much skiing.

In 1948, we experienced the longest and hottest summer for 20 years. Henworth was now back at glove-cutting, with Roger and Company in Ware, and for investment he bought a plot of land in Gypsy Lane, Great Amwell. House building could not be carried out without a building permit. Nevertheless, Henworth succeeded in getting one and had a chalet bungalow built in 1950, which was named "Nornalup". This name was given because Nornalup was the nearest known place to where we settled by the Kent River in West Australia in 1924. It is an aboriginal name meaning someone’s waterhole or well. All names ending with "UP" in West Australia mean waterhole, and Nornalup therefore means the waterhole or well where the aboriginal tribe of Nornal used to camp. Henworth thought that the name would be a very appropriate one to give the house in view of the family's experiences in West Australia

The village of Amwell, in which Gypsy Lane is situated, is named in the Domesday Book of 1066. It was called Emma's Well then, but through the years it has been corrupted to Amwell. We moved from Cross Street, Ware, to Amwell in 1950, and an extraordinary thing occurred. My leg was giving me a lot of pain again, although I could get around with difficulty. Dids and I had planned to go to convention at Debenham in Suffolk, but after going to see the doctor, we had to cancel those plans. He sent me to Hertford Hospital as an out-patient, and I then had to have l4-days injection_ of penicillin, but after the treatment I was able to go with Dids to Curry Rivel convention instead. After a time I felt better; the penicillin appears to have killed all the germs in the bone. Up to the time of writing this in 1975 my leg has been good for 25 years. Of course, it is still stiff and straight, but there is no pain, for which I am very thankful.

The year 1952 was one of mixed experiences. I reached my 60th birthday, but in the celebrating of it, my wife Dids was to suffer a very serious illness. At the time, there was meeting with us

a young lady named Edwyna Lock, who was a nannie to the two young children of Mr and Mrs Collingridge at Bishops Stortford. Edwyna's home was at Reading, where her father was living; her mother had died five years before. Her father had remarried, and Edwyna had decided to work away from home. Nornalup was the nearest meeting place to Bishops Stortford, and so she met with us. After a time, she and Henworth became attached to each other, and one evening it was suggested that the four of us (Henworth, Edwyna (called Dween), Dids and myself) should go to London to celebrate my birthday. We decided to have dinner at the Aldwych Restaurant in the Strand, and arranged to go on 9th March. We travelled to town by Green Line coach and spent an enjoyable evening together, but on the return journey, when alighting from the coach at 11 p. m., Dids collapsed in Gypsy Lane. I thought she had died.

I called on Mr Brown, who lived next door to Nornalup, to phone the doctor. The doctor arrived very soon by which time we had got Dids into bed. She had regained consciousness, but her heart condition was bad, and that unfortunately was the end of real activity for Dids. She was, however, able to be at the wedding of Henworth and Dween on 27th July, 1952, at Reading, and we were glad for that. Unfortunately Dids did not live to see Hugh Mark, who was born on 3rd August, 1953. Dids died on 6th April, 1953, (Easter Monday). The funeral service was in the home and burial was in Great Amwell churchyard. Eddie dePradine took the service and there were also four sister workers and about 30 friends present.

I continued to live with Henworth and Dween, and then David Lock, Dween's brother, came to live with us. On 28th January, 1958, a girl was born to Henworth and Dween, and was named Penelope Jane.

Unfortunately, the baby wasn't very well; she had an excess of acid and although she was treated by the doctors in Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, they could not help very much. One doctor suggested that sunshine might help, and so Henworth and Dween decided to migrate to Australia. David and I decided to migrate with them, and we booked our passage on the Fairsea, Sitmar Line, arriving in Melbourne in March, 1959.

MELBOURNE - 1959 - 1963

We had a pleasant trip to Melbourne, except for Dween, who was poorly all the way. At Fremantle, we were met by an old friend, whom I had met many years before, when I lived in West Australia. We spent a day in Perth at Fred and Florris Gibbons' home. Returning to the ship, we then journeyed on to Melbourne, where we were met by Dids sister, Rose, who had been. in Melbourne since 1925. We took up temporary residence at Box Hill, near Melbourne, and eventually moved to a house which Henworth had built at Doncaster, 9 miles out from Melbourne.

In 1961, I took a trip across Australia by train to Perth, calling at Adelaide, South Australia, for convention. I had two months in West Australia, visiting Kentdale where I had pioneered 1924. I had two conventions in Perth, then on the return journey spent a month in Adelaide. In 1962, Alan and Nona finished their tour of duty in Kenya, returning to England by way of Australia spent three weeks with in Doncaster. Malcolm and Christopher were also with them, and was very nice to have them with us although the time was short. They left Melbourne on the ship Southern Cross for England via the Panama Canal, and arrived in England in the summer-time. The following winter was the coldest in England for many years.

In 1963, Alan and Nona asked me to come to England and live with them at 19 Milton Road, Ware, Herts. I decided to make the trip and booked on the sister ship of the Fairsea - called Fairsky. The age took six weeks, calling at Sydney, and Wellington in New Zealand, where we spent one day at each port. Then we steamed up the Queensland coast, past the Barrier Reef, to Thursday Island, where the ship stopped to put a stowaway ashore. We then proceeded past New' Guinea and Indonesia, and saw many islands' which were very near. On one island, a volcano was smoking! The captain said he had passed that island many times, but it was the first time he had seen the volcano smoking. We called at Singapore and were there for two days. Some of the friends were at the port to meet me, and on both days- I was taken around Singapore. I knew one of the Chinese friends - Impy Seow; she had stayed with us in England when Dids was living.

From Singapore, the ship went on to Colombo. Harry Morgan, a worker, met me there and took me out to the convention grounds - a most interesting day! The next stop was Naples. I didn't expect anyone to meet me there, but Rosemary Hawkes (from USA), a worker in Italy, met me. I was taken to Pompeii, the city that was buried in volcano lava nearly 2000 years ago. The city

is being excavated; it was a wonderful sight to see. The friend in Naples invited me to stay overnight as' the ship wasn't leaving until next day, and I gladly accepted.

I eventually arrived at Southampton after a most glorious six weeks sea trip. Alan and Nona met me and took me to their home in Milton Road, Ware, which was in a nice part of the town. The house was a good one, with 3 bedrooms, 2 lounges', dining room, kitchen and laundry, and beautifully centrally heated. It was lovely to be in, especially in wintertime. I busied myself in the garden, which was a pretty one, and I gradually settled in England again with Alan and Nona.

The fellowship meetings were in Islington, North London. This entailed a long Green Line journey every Sunday, but I usually spent the day with Joe and Millie Hanstock and returned at night. Although I had up to now travelled to Australia and back twice, I had still not made a round-the-world trip. My journeys on both trips had been north to south, and vice versa - not east-west, or vice versa.

BACK IN ENGLAND - 1963 – 1967

My time at Ware was enjoyable, and the days were spent in gardening, shopping and taking walks. I also made visits to Birmingham (Leslie and Nellie Baker), Isle of Wight (Percy and Daisy Piper), Wix in Essex (John and Margaret Hampton), and to Corfe Mullen in Dorset (Frank and Eileen Ferrett). I made several visits to each and so the time passed pleasantly.

In 1966, I decided to return to Australia again - but not for another year! At that time, I had a message from Alan Webb, my late governor at Webb and Co., asking me to come and help them out, as they had lost by death suddenly one of their experienced employees. I accepted the invitation; but said I could only be with them for 12 months as I was hoping to return to Australia at the end of that time. When my son, Henworth, heard of my impending return to Webb's, he compiled the following verses (see page 46) in commemoration of that illustrious event.

I continued at Webb's for a year, and eventually got a booking on the Ellinis, of the Chandris Line. This ship was calling at Athens, so I got in touch with Anton Kouralis the elder worker in Greece. Anton met me and I had a good day there, meeting many Greek friends. They could not speak English, but Anton interpreted the conversations and so little was lost! Apart from Athens, it was a long weary journey as we didn't call at any other places, except Fremantle.

We berthed at midnight. I was met by Jim and Mary Graham, who took me to their home and then back again to the ship, which sailed at 5 a.m. I eventually arrived at Melbourne on a most beautiful morning. Henworth, Dween, Hugh, Penny, David Lock and his wife Beverly met me, and we were soon on our way again to Doncaster.

So here I was, back in Australia, having made another trip of 12,000 miles in a north-to-south direction! My thoughts were tar from completing a round-the-world trip, but one never knows what the future holds - as the next chapter will show!

ALBERT POYSER'S RETURN TO WEBB'S

Part I

You're on your way to Hertford
From Australia's sunny plain,
Back to the smell of leather
And the mill called "Horn's" again,
You'll see that mighty chimney
Pouring forth its' smoke,
That rises from the furnace
Jack Stamford used to stoke.

You'll climb the spiral stairway
(You first climbed years ago)
And walk into the warehouse
To see the goat and doe,
You'll talk with Leslie Bilton
And yarn with Arthur Pratt
Before you see Bert Goodland
For yet another chat.

Looking from the window
Away up Bullocks, Lane,
The memories of years now gone
Will soon return again.
You'll stroll across the bleaching field
Over by the Lea
Past pi t yard, Drum and Dye Shop
All working busily.

Down across the river
Thro' into the mill
Where Charlie Platt was mill-man
And the stocks were never still.
Out into the Colour Shop
Past the heaps of pelts

Past engine room and turbine
Pulley wheels and belts.
Over to the office
Where "Mr Allan" sits
Up to see Bert Darby
The "Lammies" and the mitts,
In to see the cutters Bigmore,
Vowles and Crane,
Back into the warehouse
To Arthur Pratt again.

There's just one other visit
To a building filled with dust
Where Whitticks', Parrot, Newnam
"Finish" off the crust.
It's here they shave the buckskin
To make the finest suede
That sells up in Northampton
Where boots' and shoes are made.

And when its "knocking off time"
You'll hear the old bell ring
(no more does Sammy 8arton
On the bell chair swing
Hark! now the bell is ringing
As it has these hundred years.
(To modernise this factory
Would bring you nigh to tears).

So, you're going back to Hertford
Dovm to the dear old mill,

A place that hasn't changed much
Since you left for North Box Hill,
The same old drums and Dye Shop
The same old bell and chain,

I'm sure it won't be altered
When you get back again.

ALBERT POYSER'S RETURN TO WEBB'S

Part II

I hear you've gone to Hertford
Back to your Dear Old Mill,
Sorting goat and buckskin
With the same old craft and skill.

And working there beside you
Is, your old pal Archie Pratt
(He gently lays a skin down
Saying - "Remember Charlie Platt").

"Ah! Yes" you answer sadly
"Now! when he was in the mill
The crust was soft and supple
This is too hard - still".

The other day, they tell me
You cleaned the office out,
Turned out files and ledgers
From fifty years, about.

And there among the rubbish
You found a sample shoe,
Exactly like the shoes worn today,
Which shows - there's nothing new.

Now you're back in Hertford
Back with your Dear Old Mate.
With whom some fifty years ago
You first passed thro' the gate

You Started at the bottom
Of a rusty spiral stair,.

Working at the bleaching
A bright ambitious pair!.

Then slowly up that stairway
You've worked from shop to shop,
Until at three score years and ten
You're both right at the top.

IN AUSTRALIA AGAIN - 1967 TO 1970

It was good to be again at Doncaster, 9 miles from Melbourne, and I just wondered if this would be my last place of residence. Thoughts of this increased as weeks went by, especially when it became necessary for me to be hospitalised for a prostate gland operation! I hardly expected that within two months of disembarking from the ship Ellinis in April I would be in hospital! However, the operation was successful, but I lost a lot of blood and was given five blood transfusions. There were some anxious moments when I spent a period in the intensive care ward. One night when Henworth and family arrived at the hospital to visit me, they were not given permission right away, because I was very low. They were told that the climax would be in 12 hours, and after a long wait they were allowed to see me. I remember very little of the visit! I spent six weeks in hospital, and was very glad when the day came that, although very weak, I could go home. With good care and good nursing from Dween, I soon became strong and so was: able to be around again.

Soon after my arrival at Doncaster, building was started at a four-way crossroads known as "Whites Corner", a project which was to be a shopping town, with 120 air-conditioned shops all under one roof and a car park area for 5,000 cars. The project was finished in 20 months, and when opened, it had the additional facilities of gardens, pools and fountains, also an area in the centre for free entertainment. It also had a tower, which boasted a good-class restaurant at the top, and gave a view of 20 mile or so in each direction - in all a very good attraction to both shoppers and tourists alike. The developer of "Doncaster Shopping Town", to give its official name, got the idea of building a tower from a previous structure built 80 years before as a tourist attraction. The present tower, however, is made of brick instead of wood and is unlike the previous one which was after the pattern of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and which was of iron construction. When the shopping town was opened to the public, the tower was not quite ready for use; it still needed some decorations to be completed. In charge of the lift was a member of the Commissionaire Corps. He was an ex-soldier, and looked the part in his uniform with a row of medals on his breast. I thought it would be good to have a chat with him about the campaigns he had been in. My thought was that he would be more interested in that than in the shopping town when it came to conversation. It proved to be so, and after an interesting chat about the war, he invited me into the lift and took me to the top of the tower - a very great privilege as the tower was not yet open to the public. I would think was one of a very few members' of the public able to go to the top of that tower before it was opened! It is

said that to get favours it isn’t t always- "what you know" but "who you know" that counts - it certainly was: so in this case!!

Nona and Alan were now very well settled in Nassau, Bahamas, where they had been since 1967. They had gone there soon after I had left for Australia. Then Nona wrote me asking if I would come to Nassau, and I replied that I would. I had not heard of any friends being there, and I was a little concerned about this, so I asked Willie Donaldson, who had spent 32 years in the work of the Gospel in the West Indies' and also knew the Bahamas, if any of our friends lived there. Willie gave me the address of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Saunders, and so I wrote to Nona saying that I would book a sea passage on the Australis, sister ship of the Ellinis of the Chandris line, and that I would sail on the 6th January 1970.

In the meantime, Nona got in touch with Mrs. Saunders, whose address' I had given her, to say that her father was coming to Nassau and would be meeting with them. She gave the name Albert Poyser. "Oh", said Mrs Saunders, "I have met him!" Nona told her that I had never been to the Bahamas before, but Mrs. Saunders continued to _ that she had met me! So Nona, in writing to me said "I leave you to sort that one out, Dad!" - which I was able to do. I remembered that about 25 years earlier I was at Suffolk Convention with Dids, and walking across the convention ground a worker came up to me and asked my name. I told him Poyser. He said "We have a Poyser in Jamaica, but he is black!!" The worker was Tom Law, who had been preaching in the West Indies many years. The Poyser that he knew was the same person that Mrs Saunders knew!

My date of sailing arrived, and I had got my passport, visas, ship and air tickets all in order. The voyage was to take me this time east three parts of the way round the world via Fiji, Acapulco (Mexico), through the Panama Canal and up to Miami, where I was to disembark and then take a plane to Nassau. It was to many people a dreary trip across the Pacific Ocean, but the monotony was broken at Fiji, where the passengers went ashore to a musical welcome by the Fiji Police Band! I enjoyed the few hours I was there, although I didn't think it a great trading place for tourists, such as Singapore or Aden. I also noticed that most traders were not Fijians but Indians', who in many lands are in the forefront as merchants and next only to the Jew, I would think, for trading. The Fiji Police Band gave us a musical farewell as we left!

Then the trip continued without incident to Acapulco, and there it was rather an exciting time disembarking the 2,000 passengers. The port authorities at Acapulco have no dockside convenience to anchor large ships, and so the ships anchor a mile out of harbour. They then

have to use small boats to take passengers ashore from the ships. The captain of the Australis thought this would take too long, so he gave orders for the ship's crew to man the lifeboats for that purpose! Within the hour, all who wanted to go ashore did so! When the time of sailing drew near, the ship's boats were again used to take passengers back from shore to ship!

The passage through the Panama Canal was interesting, but to me not so interesting as the Suez Canal. The Panama Canal is a wonderful piece of engineering work, with its system of huge locks, the gates of which are the largest in the world. The USA commentator on board who gave a running commentary all the way through the Canal gave us this information! - and I can tell you, if the lock gates are big, so is the commentary!! The same kind of lock system, but on a much smaller scale, can be seen on many waterways in England.

At the end of the Canal we were allowed ashore at Cristobel, and told over the ship's loudspeaker system to go ashore in groups and not to go down side streets but to keep to the main streets. This advice was for one's safety. While ashore, there were no unpleasant incidents and all returned safely. Purchases by passengers at Cristobel were not as heavy as- at Acapulco in Mexico, and I didn't see natives wearing boleros or those large Mexican hats. However, when aboard again, hundreds of passengers were wearing both the hat and bolero; where they obtained them, I just don't know!

The Australis eventually made dock at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on 29th January 1970, and my next chapter tells the story of my sojourn of 4 years in the Bahamas.

THE BAHAMAS - 1970 TO 1972

When the Australis docked at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the early morning of 29th January, 1970, officials of the USA Immigration Department came on board to check passports and visas of those passengers who were going ashore, whether it was for the day or termination of voyage. I was to disembark, and so had my passport endorsed for a la-day stay, had I wished. Passengers started to disembark at 8 a.m., I among them. I was expecting Alan and Nona to meet the ship, and as I was walking through the dockyard, I noticed Alan and Nona at a barrier; they were looking up to the ship's decks to see if they could spot me at the rails, and here I was standing in front of them! Naturally, they were surprised, but I could not get through to them as the exit was via the Customs Shed, and so I said I would go and get cleared by Customs first, and would see them later.

I went to the Customs Shed, and spoke to the Customs Official on duty, and asked about baggage, whereupon he asked me where I was from! I told him I had just arrived from Australia by the Australis. He then said that I ought not to be ashore, to which I replied that I had to land at Fort Lauderdale in order to take

a flight to Nassau from Miami Airport! He replied by saying that he would have to take me back to the ship! On the way back, I passed, and acknowledged, several passengers whom I had got to know on board, including two from my cabin. I don't know what their thoughts were, seeing me returning to the ship with an official in uniform! But I knew what mine were!! I felt as if I had been arrested!

We got on board, and I was handed over to the Chief Purser, who asked for my Green Card. I told him I had not got one. I was then taken back to the USA Immigration officials, who asked me the same question I replied that I had not got a Green Card, and so far as I knew, had never had one! The purser said that when I collected my passport there was in it a Green Card. I disputed this, and the argument went on for quite a while until one of the Immigration officials said "Oh, give him another one" Apparently I won the argument, for I went back to the office where the purser issued me with the necessary Green Card. I then learned that these cards are issued to those whose voyage was terminating. However, holders of cards could not go ashore until given permission over the ship's loudspeaker! The reason for this:' was that passengers in transit who were going ashore just for the day had priority in landing over those who were staying! As I saw it, I was both! My voyage was terminating and I was also in transit! However,

I went ashore again this time with my precious Green Card - feeling as' if I had defeated a nation. I went direct to the Customs Shed, where I was cleared without difficulty. I thought Alan and Nona would wonder where I had got to, as the time was now 11 a.m., but I soon found them, and with my baggage we took a car-ride to Miami Airport. After seeing to our air tickets, we rested in the waiting room, but after a time, a pilot came into the room and apologised because there would be a delay in take-off due to the plane having a flat tyre. On hearing this, a lady who I assumed was American, said in a loud voice "I am not travelling in a plane with a flat tyre to which the pilot 30 very nicely replied "Neither am I, madam_!" There was some laughter at this, which was good; it helped to make the wait worthwhile! And I must tell you this - whilst waiting, I decided to have another look in my wallet to check that my air ticket was intact, and there to my surprise was the Green Card that had caused all the bother earlier on! Apparently it was in my passport, and I had taken it out, put it in my wallet, and then forgotten all about it! Was my face red!? I am glad now that I didn't produce it when asked; I would have looked foolish, which indeed I was! So the victory I thought I had won over officialdom turned out to be phoney!!

The flight to Nassau was good, and we arrived in the early evening of the 29th January 1970, at Alan and Nona'& home, which was 4 miles out of town and named "Alanon". Alan decided on this name, being a nice contraction of the names Alan and Nona - but he didn't realise how humorous this was to become, until he found out that the name was also a short version of Alcoholics Anonymous. ! However, the name was retained until they left the Bahamas!

The next day being Saturday, I just rested, and then on Sunday I went to the home of Mr and Mrs Saunders for fellowship meetings. Alan had found out where they lived, which was in Nassau town. There were 5 friends in Nassau - Mrs Donaldson, with 10 grown-up married children; Mr Arthur Wynns, a hotel doorkeeper; Frank and Eules Saunder - Frank has a one-man taxi business; and Miss Eugene Roache, whose home is on another island called Exuma but she spends periods in Nassau with Mrs Saunders.

There are approximately 700 islands in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, to give the correct name. It is not a part of the West Indies. Of the 700 islands, 23 are populated - some with just a few hundred people, others with thousands. New Providence, which is the governing centre, has almost 80,000 population out of a total of 175,000. It is governed by independent government, which does its' job well. Parliament is multi-racial, but the governing body is black. Procedures in the House of Parliament are the same as at Westminster. I have been in

both Houses when debates have been going on. The Bahamian Members of Parliament are better dressed than those at Westminster, who, in my opinion, look a rabble through being dressed any old how! In Nassau, each Member of Parliament must be dressed in morning suit. In one debate I listened to, one Member of Parliament was not dressed correctly and the Speaker chastised him! A similar discipline applies in the schools, where the ruling is that children, both boys and girls, must be dressed in uniform. The reason for this equality is' that the poor can be dressed as well as the rich - a theory that not everybody agrees with!

Although Nassau is: a holiday resort, there are no casinos – but there are some on a little island called Paradise, which is' connected to Nassau by toll bridge. Bahamians work in the casinos, but are not allowed to work as croupiers - nor are the residents of the Bahamas, whether black or white, allowed to play on the gaming tables; it is, an offence. Casinos are for tourists only! No begging is allowed, and no hawkers are allowed by the ship's side in the docks, nor on the ships, as at Port Said, Aden and elsewhere. These are good laws, but of course there are people who think differently, especially over gaming where the thought is that one should be able to do as he or she likes with his own money! There are those, too, who think that school uniforms, are unnecessary, and that school dress should be decided by the parents! Freedom is good, but it can be abused, and some of the laws of the Bahamas are designed to prevent it from being abused. Another good law is that foreigners must have work permits for business, and residential permits for residing in the Bahamas. The fee for the former is $500 per year, and for the latter $100 per year. This is a means of getting revenue, and it might not be a bad thing if Westminster took a copy!

In June, 1970, I took a flight to Kingston in Jamaica, a distance of 500 miles south of Nassau, at the invitation of Norman Henderson, who was in Jamaica preaching the Gospel. I was in Jamaica 10 days, and attended special meetings in Kingston and Mandeville. In between the meetings I had several invitations to the homes of the friends, and saw quite a lot of the island. It is good when one goes into the homes of people who are of another colour and race, and finds the same spirit prevailing as in the British Isles or any other country where the Gospel is preached, exactly in the same way as it was 2000 years ago. This is because we are one family, and have, or should have, the same spirit as our Heavenly Father, and as Christ said to His disciples "As my Father sent me, so I send you".

I returned to Nassau and enjoyed the days as they came and went, spending time in the garden which I enjoyed very much because of the climate. I also enjoyed the times of fellowship with

the friends', and visits to interesting places with Alan and Nona. Then in September, 1972, Alan had leave from his work at the Post Office and we booked a flight to England. We stopped at Bermuda to take up passengers, but as we were there for lees than an hour we saw only a little of Bermuda outside the airport. I did notice that cars were small, whereas in the Bahamas and USA they are very large (Frank Saunders taxi is an eight-seater plus driver), but I understand the size of cars in Bermuda is limited, and also the speed limit is only half of what it is in England or USA.

We arrived at Heathrow Airport, London, where a hired car was awaiting Alan, so we journeyed to Ware, and then to Bournemouth for a 2-week holiday. Alan's Dad and Mum went with us. Now this trip of 6,000 miles from the Bahamas to England concludes a round journey of 24,000 miles. It was started from Southampton in April 1967 when I went to Melbourne, and continued in 1970 with a trip from Melbourne to Nassau via Panama Canal and USA, and completed in 1972 with the last journey from Nassau to London. Of course It didn’t take me 80 years to do that, but it took me 80 years to accomplish it!

I suppose if a globe had corners, I have been in the four corners of it! - Stornoway in the north; Albany, West Australia, and Melbourne in the south; Singapore in the east; and the Bahamas and Jamaica in the west. To put it another way I did four journeys half way round the world, and one journey round the world. The former were from Southampton to Frementle, West Australia, and Frementle to Southampton; then Southampton to Melbourne, and from Melbourne back to Southampton, the latter was from Southampton to Melbourne, then from Melbourne across the Pacific by ship to USA and on to the Bahamas by air, and then by air from Nassau to England.

Now this really concludes the first 80 years of my story, but as I returned to Nassau after 5 weeks in England to spend another 2 years in the Bahamas I will add an Appendix telling of some of the other things that happened from that time to the present day

APPENDIX 1 – THE BAHAMAS – 1972 to 1974

In October 1972 I returned to Nassau with Nona. Alan had a request to stay another week in England for and on behalf of the Post Office Conference, and he flew out then. The flight was without incident. On arrival we found Carol's Mum and Dad at Alanon. Chris and Carol had, in 1971, got positions with Barclays Bank, Nassau, and lived with us. They of course stayed in the house while we were in England. It so happened that our return to the Bahamas coincided with a visit to Nassau from Cornwall by Carol's parents, Mr and Mrs. Brooks, but we had an enjoyable week with them, and Alan arrived in time to have a few days with them also.

Life in the Bahamas for me was much the same as it was previously, although I suppose there were more happenings. One was that on 29th December, 1973, I went to Jamaica again, but this time to conventions there. Frank Saunders and I travelled together. We were privileged to be invited to stay to two conventions, and in between had invitations to the homes of some of the friends. There was an interesting conversation in one home. I asked if there were any tanneries in Jamaica and was told that there used to be several, but all closed down except one. I asked the reason for the closure, and I didn't think it would be for the lack of supplies as I had noticed that there were huge numbers of goats roaming around. They were everywhere along the roads, and goat-skins are first class for leather making. When I was in the trade we used goatskins for making some of the best quality suede for Northampton shoe-makers, among them being Church's, a well-known maker. I was told that employees found out that skins made good eating!! - and, of course, I was amazed as I never knew that, even though I had spent the greater part of my life among animal skins! So I asked for particulars, and it appears that when the pelts came into the tannery, the employees would help themselves to the pelts, not by taking the whole pelts but by slashing pieces off them! Of course, this would ruin the pelt for value. Employees then would, at home, wash the pelts, take off the hair if it was goat or the wool if it was lamb, boil the skin, press it, and make it into a roll by tying. Then, when they made soup or a stew, they would cut the roll in slices and add it to the stew! I was hoping I wasn't going to be offered any, for I didn't fancy it, but I was told it was very nice! Then when I thought about it, I had to admit that it could be nice, because when we have roast pork we eat the crackling - and that is pig's skin! Perhaps I should advise readers to watch out when in a delicatessen - do not be tempted when you see those rolls of smoked meats hanging there! Things may not always be what they seem!!

In 1973, Chris was transferred to Barclays Bank in the Grand Cayman Island, and it was there that Suzanna Elizabeth was born on 5th October; she was my first great grand-child! I often think of the great blessing grandparents have in having children around to love, and to be loved by them, but without having the responsibility of them. But as parents, of course, they did have the responsibility of children at one time! That is one of the blessings of old age, and it is increased when one becomes a great grandparent – which reminds me of an incident that came my way one day in Nassau. I had been down by the dock area. There is a lovely square nearby where I just liked to sit and watch tourists coming ashore, mostly from USA. The sights of the tourists was as good as watching a pantomime; - it would be impossible to describe the outfits some were dressed in, but a short description would be "clowns"!! I was walking home one day and I passed a musical instrument shop. A man came out to me and asked me to step inside and hear him play the organ. I told him I was' not interested - actually I was, but I suspected a sales gimmick - but he pressed me, and said that he would play anything I asked for; he was an expert. I still told him I was not interested - then he said "I will play for you "How great thou art!" "Ha, ha" I thought, "I see a connection here!" and then I said to him "I know I am going to be a great grandfather soon but I don't want it played on the organ!" - and with that I pushed on.

Nona went to Cayman to help Carol when Suzanna was born. Then, when Nona returned, Alan, Nona, and I all went to Grand Cayman in the middle of November. Alan and Nona stayed two weeks, but Chris' and Carol asked me to stay until 23rd December, which I did. It was lovely to be on the island, and I enjoyed meeting all the 17 friends who lived there. An interesting industry on the island is the Turtle Farm, the only one in the world to produce turtles for human consumption, and the shells for jewellery. The farm is situated on the seawater's edge, and it is a magnificent sight to see turtles of all sizes - some of 2 ozs and others of 500-600 lbs!

Georgetown, the capital, is a Bankers' town with about 120 banks. There is no income tax, and no property tax; it is an investor_ paradise, or tax-haven as it is called. Georgetown does not possess, a good harbour, so big ships cannot get in to anchor, which means that small ships have to be used to bring in supplies. Shops, therefore, have plenty of empty shelves, and shopping is difficult for housewives.

I returned to Nassau on 23rd December, 1973, with Chris, Carol and 3-months old Suzanna. The next day was exciting and near-tragic. . Nona was at work at the Ministry of Education, whose offices were quite close to where we were living (we had moved from

Alanon into the town). When Nona left for work in the morning, she told me to put two trays of pastry in the electric oven - one each of mince pies and sausage rolls. There were three trays, but she told me which were the selected ones. I put two trays in the oven as requested, and then went into the lounge with Alan. After a while, Alan noticed some smuts flying across the room and they gradually increased! I noticed they were coming from the kitchen, so I went to investigate and there w_ the cooker on fire! I opened the oven door and the contents were burning fiercely! The rooms were filling with smoke, and I thought immediately of Suzanna who was upstairs. We had no phone, but there was one next door, so Alan went and phoned the fire brigade while I went upstairs' to get Suzanna. I put her head under my cardigan and came downstairs. The lounge by this time was full of smoke! Alan had called the fire brigade and then put a lead on Sooty, the dog, and brought him to me at the front of the house. Within minutes the fire brigade arrived; the road was full of fire brigade vehicles, but by this time the stove, or its contents rather, had burnt itself out and there was no fire!

When the firemen came to the house, Alan said he was sorry but the fire was out!! The firemen disconnected the electricity and went probably glad there was no inferno to get under control!

By this time, Nona had left her work and was on her way home. She saw the fire brigade leaving the road, and couldn't understand what all the commotion was about! - but she soon knew when she arrived at the house and saw me outside with Sooty and Suzanna in my arms! I told her we had had a fire! She had a shock, and more so when she went in - the place was black! What had happened was that I had put a wrong tray into the oven; I had picked up a plastic tray by mistake and, of course, the smoke from that was terrible! Chris and Carol were in town at the time this was going on, and Carol said afterwards that she had a feeling that something had gone wrong.

The incident spoilt my Christmas' Day, which was the next day. I felt really ill over it! However, we had the usual Christmas dinner, which was cooked on a neighbour's stove, and soon the incident was forgotten.

On 29th December 1973, I went to Jamaica again, this making my third visit. At convention I was pleased to meet a number of preachers from other lands, some of whom I met in homes to which I had been invited. Alan worked in the Post Office as a Training Officer, the job he went to do in 1967. At that time, the Bahamas Head Post Office in Nassau was not under one roof - one had to go to one building for stamps, another one for postal orders, and yet another place for parcels - all in different areas! Rather like a donkey's breakfast all over the place! The British Government was in process of granting independence to the Bahamas, and they

provided the finance to build a new Post Office, which was to have all its services in one building and which would serve New Providence and the Out Islands, as the other inhabited islands were called. Part of Alan's work as Training Officer was to organise the purchase of the internal fixtures and fittings. The Post Office was officially opened in 1971.

The Bahamas had their Independence in 1973. The day it was granted was a great day, and the orderly manner of the people during celebrations was admirable. Prince Charles handed over the Independence papers to the Prime Minister, and around 50,000 people saw the Union Jack lowered and the Bahamian flag hoisted in its' place. Alan was working, but Nona and I were very fortunate to have a front seat within 50 feet or so of the Prince and officials. The Bahamians took Prince Charles to their hearts; his opening speech was very impressive and he spoke without notes. The decorations in Nassau were a pretty sight. There were fairy lights in all the streets, but this is not exceptional because at Christmas' time all the streets and private houses have coloured lights, and gardens have lights in the trees.

By 1974, Alan's contract was nearing expiration, and arrangements were made to return to England, which we did in April of that year. I suppose I should record the fact that during my sojourn in the Bahamas I made four trips to Florida, USA, but they were of short durations; usually of one or two days. I was sorry to leave Nassau, and more 30 to leave the friends there, but of course it had to be. This time we flew in a Jumbo jet - a very large aircraft. I prefer the smaller planes because there is far too much activity at night on a Jumbo, but I expect some travellers like it.

On arrival in London it was bitterly cold, and we had no English winter clothing to wear, but next day we got fitted out with warm clothing. Alan and Nona first went to Ware, and then to Bodmin in Cornwall where Chris and Carol had an empty house ready for them to take over. I stayed a while in London, then spent a few days_ at each of Hertford, Bedford, Southampton and Corfe Mullen, until I finally reached Bodmin a month after arriving at London Heathrow Airport.

So now I am settled down in England, with no more trips abroad in view. I would just like to thank Jack Griggs for his help in producing this book, and I sincerely hope that readers will have as much joy in reading of my adventures as I have had in writing them

APPENDIX 2 – DAD'S DAY

Today, they say is Dad's Day

When you're held in high esteem

Given lots of presents

(If your children aren't too mean)

So here's a little something

For you – a real "Grand Dad"

Well – today that's what we call you

But this, I find, is sad

Tomorrow – Dad's Day's over

And once more – you're just plain Dad.

Henworth Poyser