

"THOSE WHO ARE GONE" "THOSE WHO ARE STILL HERE"

By the last of the Lavenham Risby's



"You have left it a bit late Uncle Joe", my sister's boy Pat has asked me time and time again to write of my past, also about my Father and Mother, Grandparents, Uncles and Aunts. Pat's brother Peter said to me over the phone, "You've left it a bit late Uncle Joe", anyway late or not, I'm having a try.

I am seventysix come October, a chicken compared to some people, but I hope you will excuse my grammar and bad spelling, "That Expression" You've left it a bit late, makes me hesitant in reaching for the Dictionary.

I was born Charles Joseph Risby on the 26 October 1911. This will probably be my first and last attempt at writing a book. I have got a remarkable memory, prior to the war the furthest I had travelled was London to the Zoo as a small boy and later on as a twenty one year old, in search of work, but was unsuccessful.

In the 1950's I tried three times to join the army, once at Bury St Edmunds, two days later at Colchester and then about two years before the war I tried to join the territorials at Lavenham, each time I was rejected, the cause, nearly blind in left eye.

Eventually war broke out and I was conscripted into the Royal Army Medical Corp's serving my rookie days at Crookham, near Aldershot, then moving on to Ash Vale to the Army School of Hygiene, Keopth Barracks, only a few miles from Aldershot. It was near here that I was to see Rudolf Hess, Hitler's Deputy. After eighteen months there I moved on to Colchester Military Hospital. From there to Leeds Holding Depot and eventually to Grennock in Scotland boarding the one time peace time liner "Empress of Canada", 22,000 tons displacement. Traveling 'via the Gold Coast, Freetown, Cape Town and then on to turban, where I was to see my sister, about six weeks there and then on to India in the "Arundel Castle", another peace time liner. One fortnight there and away in the same ship to Iraq, Basra, Bagdad and then by rail to Terheran in Persia. After a time back to bagdad and then across the Shaiba Desert to Haifa, Palestine. From there by rail to Egypt. Then back to England and Liverpool and then to Portmadoc in North Wales, these are just a few of my travels, but more of that later.

I was born at number 42, Prentice Street, Lavenham, Suffolk. The youngest of a family of six, four sisters, one brother. My Father as a teenager worked at Ropers Coconut Matting factory in the High Street, Lavenham. Later on to become a peace time soldier in the Suffolk Regiment. He served throughout the "Boer War", 1899 to 1902, where he was to win the Distinguished Conduct Medal, next medal in merit to the Victoria Cross. With that war over he was placed on reserve and was called up on the outbreak of World War One.

My mother was a horse hair weaver, working the looms. Both my parents were Lavenham born. All my sisters and brother left school at the age of thirteen. Myself I was born in 1911 and went to school in 1915 with the War just over a year gone. I can remember one or two incidents regarding the War. The German Prisoners, with the patches on their behinds and jackets, marching through Lavenham on their way to pull flax at nearby farms. Another time was when one Sunday night my Mother took me to Chapel, I was about five years of age. The Service -was about half way through, when Mrs Omilly-Long bursted into the Chapel shouting that the Zeppelins were bombing Lavenham. Everybody rose as if to go, until the Reverend Seabrook called for calm and the last Hymn was played, "The Day Thou Gavest Lord is Ended", the congregation were told to go quickly home. In the confusion I left my little cap behind, this was picked up the next day. In the event a Bomb had dropped just outside Lavenham, but nobody was hurt.

I used to enjoy the time when my Father came home on leave, I would sit on his lap and he would draw pictures of a German, complete with helmet. For one period of the war he was stationed at Stowmarket. There was a Gun Cotton Factory there and Stowmarket being only 12 miles away my Dad was able sometimes, to get weekend leave, and in that day and age Soldiers and Beer went well together, of course making it a bit lethal was a drop of Home made Wine, and my goodness they could certainly make it in those days. Three pints of Trumans Bitter and a half pint of home made wine would start to make you rock. This particular time Dad was home on week-end leave and he had had his share of beer and wine. When it was time to go back to Stowmarket on the Sunday night, on a bicycle he had borrowed, he went down Prentice Street, but he could not turn round the corner and finished up in Prentice River. There was ructions between Mum and Dad as his uniform was soaking wet.

Another thing I can remember as a little boy, I had a tape worm inside me, it was terrible, I had it, it seemed like weeks before Doctor Hudson, the Lavenham Doctor, got it away from me. I believe it was due to malnutrition. I was four years old when I started school. My first teacher was Mrs Boby, a big buxom looking woman, with ginger hair. We were all scared of her, but she could be kind as well as stern. In the afternoon if you got tired there were hammocks to rest in, we had slates and chalks to draw anything we liked. When school was over it was a case of waiting for Mother to come home from the looms. Father of course was in the Army as the first World War had been on over a year. My young sister Ivy would have directions from Mother as to when to pop the dumplings in the big saucepan. I used to manage to be there when this operation took place, we used to pinch a cup of rabbit broth and then replace it with two cups of water. Mother would prepare the rabbit

stew the previous evening, when she came home dinner time she would place it on the oven and about 6 o'clock at night all of us would sit round the table, we had two big dumplings each, this was served separate from your piece of rabbit, swede, greens and potatoes, second course was unheard of in those days. At mid-day meal you had to have anything what was going. About twice a week a soup kitchen would be runned from the Church School. My mother would send me with a huge jug, it must have held at least three pints, it used to take all my strength to carry it home. It was delicious soup with all the best ingredients in it. My jugfull would cost me about tuppence, this was really for those in need. I shall never forget one day, I had got my soup and was crossing the road from the Doctors towards the Swan, intending to go up Lady Street. As I crossed the street, my eyes on the brimful of soup, I walked right into Jackie Walker, he was on his bicycle loaded with bread, bread and soup flew across the road. Jackie and myself were unhurt, he picked the bread up, brushed the dirt off with his hand and mounted his bike, not one word of reproach. Myself I was terrorstricken, I daren't go home, I wandered about Lavenham all day after coming out of school. At 8 o'clock at night I summoned enough courage to go home, there was Mother waiting for me. No questions asked, she gripped me by the back of the neck, rattled my ears and pushed me up the stairs, I had had no food since breakfast time.

I was seven years of age when Dad came home from the War. He went to work on Manor Farm, Preston, belonging to a Scotsman, Mr Gray, he was a nice man. We used to hold our Sunday School treats on his lawn in front of the house, they were very enjoyable times.

I once asked my Father why he walked all that way to work, it was over a mile, "To keep your bellies full" he replied. He would set snares every night on his way home and in the morning he would pick up the rabbits. Mr Gray would permit him to take a couple of swedes from the field. Every night I had the job of watching for Dad coming round the corner at the bottom of Prentice Street, he would enter the Anchor Inn and have his pint of Bitter, as soon as he came out I would tell Mum and out would come the lovely dumplings. Father would be the first one to be served, when we had finished eating rabbit, swede, spuds and greens we were full up, I am now nearly 76, I would not swap that dinner for one at the Savoy Hotel.

Round about this time my Mother was subjected to sick head aches, it seemed terrible as a small boy to watch my Mother so much in pain. She used to soak a bandage in vinegar and tie it round her forehead. I don't know if it made any difference, but it would eventually pass off. My Mother at times could be very sulky. Sometimes she would go a whole day and not speak to Dad. I felt so sorry for him as it wasn't his fault, and I was so glad when things altered and we were all happy again.

Before I went to bed I always kissed my Mum and Dad, and then in bed I would always say this little verse:-

God bless Mother
God bless Dad
Make them happy
Make them glad
God bless all the people and I

and then to sleep. I could not bear to be in the dark, so I had a little oil lamp. My bed was near a dormer window. That window is still there seventy years on, as I go up Bolton Street I still gaze across the gardens at that window. My sister Ivy who is nearly three years older than myself, occupied the bed at the other end of the room, this was near a dark open cuboard which we called the hutch, and we could imagine all sorts of ghosts in that hutch. My sister Ivy used to tell me story's and sing to me to get me off to sleep. One particular story was about a amphibious machine which flew in the sky and today that story is all to true.

That little room oozed happiness, especially at Christmas and Easter, on Christmas Eve I don't think I slept a minute waiting for Father Christmas to hang a stocking on the corner of my bed. Father would creep in about five o'clock am, with the stockings, I would pretend to be fast asleep, as soon as he had gone I would quietly slip out of bed. I had to be careful as my elder brother, George, shared my bed and he would create if I woke him up, I would just feel of the bulging stocking and back quietly into bed, waiting for my brother to wake up so I could explore the stocking. It was wonderful to contemplate what was in that stocking. The most beautiful present I had one Christmas was a toy castle and some lead soldiers. I seemed to play with them for years, until I was eventually told that I was getting a bit old for those sort of toys. Those remarks saddend me. In those days you would cling on to your childhood as long as possible.

Easter was another lovely time. If you was lucky you had a lovely big Easter egg wrapped up in silver paper, you would keep it for hours before you unwrapped it.

Another favourite passtime of mine was to catch a big meat fly and keep it in a match box. I used to imagine it was a Tiger or a Lion, I would play with it for hours.

These were the days when you respected your elders, nearly everyone knew each other in Lavenham, I would say "Good morning Mr Brown" and Mr Brown would reply "Hullo 'young Slave'. (Young Slave was a nickname given to me by the elders. My Father was called Slave).

When there was a death in the village, the body remained in the front room, the coffin resting on two trestles with just a sheet covering the body. The idea was that anyone who knew the deceased could have a last look. The lid was only closed down on the arrival of the Burial Party. A bottle of beer each was also given to the five members, after drinking it the Undertaker would ask if anyone wanted a last look and then the lid was screwed down and the coffin placed on the "Bier", then sometimes a long haul up to the Church and Cemetery. In the street where the death was all blinds would be drawn until the Cortage had gone.

As a little boy I enjoyed my life, I had a lovely Mother and Father, Sisters and Brother. During the 1914 - 1918 war we children would gather cowslips in the meadows (cowslips and foxgloves were used as medicine to reduce the pulse rate in World War One), generally Preston meadows owned by a Scotsman Mr Gray who my Father worked for when the war was over. When we had gathered a big bunch we would take them to the Lavenham Guildhall, where they would be weighed, you generally got a penny or tuppence for them. You then headed for Polly Knowles sweet shop, or Mr Mitchel's down Prentice Street, what you got with that tuppence was unbelievable, a stick of hard toffee, sherbet fountains and a bag of boiled sweets also a long strip of liquorice all for tuppence.

At school in the playground, a wall in the centre divided girls from boys. There was a lot of games going on at the same time, rounders, jump back, leap frog, cock birds and other games. Jump back was a dangerous game, but suprisingly I never knew anyone to get hurt. As the boys got older, one was included in a Rota. It concerned ringing the school bell, you would do this job for one week, starting at 8.50am, you would ring the bell for five minutes. Everyone was supposed to be in school by nine am. The Headmaster was Mr Davies (Nobby) and these were the teachers time I was at school. Mrs Bobby, Mrs Warren, Mrs Cobetta, Mrs Burroughes, Miss Parker, Mr Sawyer, W. W. Dent, Miss Wright. Nobby Davies, only a small man, commanded great respect, he kept every pupil in line, a slight indiscretion and you had the cane. No half measures, you had six of the best. The teachers also would rattle your ears just for nothing. Woe betide a pupil who was a bit backward, he or she had one hell of a life and prayed for the age of fourteen to arrive when you would leave. Myself I wasn't a very good scholar, but I did excell at Dictation and Composition, I did manage to top my class exzam once in my school days, that was only because I had been left down the previous year. After going through a period with Mrs Bobby and Mrs Warren, it was on to Mrs Burroughes, we used to do quite a bit of modeling with cardboard and glue, making little houses, this was very interesting. Painting and crayon drawing, one enjoyed this, but as one got older the more serious aspects took over. The games were finished, learning started in earnest. Books would be given out with simple words and storys, but to us children they were a big hurdle to surmount. Mrs Burroughes would say "Risby open your book at page three and read down from the top". At the first attempt I made a hash of it, but you were not let off all that easy. A fortnight later it was "Risby open you book at page three and read down from the top". This time I done better, but no words of encouragement from Mrs Burroughes.

Learning to tell the time was another lesson dreaded by most pupils. You had about a quarter of an hour of this a day, on the wall would hang a replica of a clock, the hour and minute hands you could move around. I had been fortunate in that my sister Ivy had helped me a lot at home to tell the time, so when my turn came "Risby go and put the clock at twelve fifteen", and I could do it. After they came out of Mrs Burroughes class there were very few who could not tell the time. The next class was Miss Parker, we were learning fast. The next one was Mrs Cobetta, her husband had been Headmaster of Lavenham School, but was now dead. Mrs Cobetta was getting on a bit, she was a good teacher. Then it was on to a class everyone dreaded. Billy Sawyer was the teacher. He was a terror. He would wear a thimble on his finger and for a slight indiscretion on the part of the pupil it would descend on the head of the luckless pupil. Thank goodness he never stayed very long. He was replaced by W. W. Dent who had just come out of Cheltenham College. Mr Dent was a fine figure of a man, at least six foot tall and weighing thirteen stone. He could keep discipline by just looking at you. I became a favourite of Mr Dent. When the class was on dictation or composition, he would call out "Risby", I would reply "Sir", "come out side", I would go out side into the cloakroom, Mr Dent would then alter his talk, "Joe go and get me a half pound of broken chocolate and a half pound of dates at Mr Tatum's". His shop was on the corner of the entrance to Hall Road, opposite to the Greyhound Pub. Most of the other pupils were jealous of me. When Mr Dent was playing for Bury Town the "Lily Whites", he would take me with him on the train at Lavenham to Bury, I would take care of his watch and money. William Walter Dent was a great athlete and footballer. Joe Dent, as he was called, was feared by all AAA athletes in East Anglia, and competed against such athletes as Lord Burghley and Donald Finlay ex-champions at the 120 yards hurdles, (Lord Burghley and Donald Finlay were both British Champions). He held, I believe, four Suffolk championships. He played football for County School Old Boys, Lavenham Town, Bury Town and finally Captained Colchester when they were an amatuer team. (Colchester competed in the Amateur Sparten League). William Walter Dent finished up as a Headmaster at Colchester, he is about 81 and still living at Colchester today.

As I have said if you were a bit dull you got your share of clips on the ear, and on occasion a parent, generally the Father would come to school and remonstrate with a school teacher for hitting their boy or girl. This was quite a diversion and we children enjoyed the confrontations.

As time went by and the war over, we children began to realise the enormity of the task ahead for our elders. There was the celebrations of Armistice Day, November 11th 1918. I was seven years of age and had been at school three years. Between seventy and eighty young men had died in Lavenham, some with arms and legs off. I have seen hundreds of men lined up, three deep, stretching from the Market Place down Market Lane into the High Street. Men were brought before tribunals when they persisted in their claims for more money. Some finished up at Melford Court. Men who had fought at the battles of "Mons", "Verdan", the "Somme" had reacted strongly to questions put to them by people who had waxed fat on the proceeds of the war. There were a lot of Widows in Lavenham, who before the war were only just getting by on about 20 shillings a week, they were now existing on only a few shillings a week. They had to rely on relatives or friends to bring them something. It was not a question those days if you lost your husband one week and married again the next week. A woman was loyal and devoted, there were very few who married again. I was fortunate that my Father returned after the wars only with a leg wound suffered in the "Boer War". He had to attend a tribunal once a year at Cambridge, the night before he went he spent hours shining his medals, he received a pension for his leg wound, also sixpence a day for his DCM Medal. So he was worried stiff that they would knock his pension off. My Dad gave all his farm wages to Mother and kept his pensions himself, so he was understandably worried. But he kept his pension until he died.

Money was short in those days, on rare occasions a truck load of sprats would arrive at Lavenham Railway Station. All we boys were alerted. We would descend at night on the station, armed with any sort of bag or basket. Two of us would keep watch while the others filled the bags, there were ten ton of sprats in the waggons, a lot were still alive. When I took mine home my Father got on to me and scolded me, "You should never pinch anything" he said, but I noticed Mother soon had them in the pan. We were living on sprats for a fortnight. The truck load was for a local farmer for fertilisers to spread on the fields, so I don't think we were breaking any laws.

Nearly everyone had a few chickens in their garden and that meant gleaning in the fields when a field had been cleared of corn, one shock of corn would remain in the centre of the field, when that was removed it meant you could pick up the stray corn. Two of us children and Mother would glean for a couple or three hours, we would gather quite a bit of corn, enough to last the chickens for a long while.

When I was a small boy Lavenham had a good football team, they used to call them the Little Village. Their shirts were black and amber. I can remember some of the team - Goal Keepers name was Galtenstall, an ex-professional goalkeeper. He was manager of either the Swan or the Greyhound, I cannot remember. Harold Baker was also a goalkeeper - he was the youngest son of the flour miller and farmer, John Baker. There was (Peuter) Poulson, Tomfrey Fisk, (Agun) Brabrook, Charlie Turner. Charlie was the local railway station goods clerk, later on to become the Station Master. (Toody) Faiers, (Weary) Faiers they were brothers, then there was (Kipe) Simpson, he was a rum fellow, plenty of goal keepers finished up in the back of the net, not by a fair charge, but by a left hook delivered by Kipe. One player I almost forgot, Herbert Copping. Westgate Brewery team would arrive in a beer dray (lorry). When the game was over we boys would stand outside the Lion pub waiting for the team to go back to Bury, and that was a signal to be ready for the pennies that were thrown down on to the street, talk about a rugby scrum, it wasn't in it. Children would get their fingers trampled on in an effort to get a precious penny. If you were lucky and uninjured you would make a bee line for Polly Knowle's for a bar of toffee and a sherbert fountain. The team who were nearly always to good for Lavenham were the Old Comrades, or Sudbury British Legion. When a winger proved too good for the Lavenham defence a spectator, Lavenham of course, would shout out "Break his leg" and other bad comments. The referee would come in for his share of criticism, such comments as-"You want to get your eyes tested ref". One day a referee from Sudbury called Tiny Allan was thrown in a pond by Kipe Simpson after the match, that was after hiking from Sudbury and only getting about two shillings for his trouble.

There were four teams in Lavenham. There was Lavenham Town, Lavenham Sports Club, Lavenham Wednesdays and Lavenham Ockerals, but they were of no consequence (the Ockerals were a hit and miss team).

Some of the Lavenham players were a bit nasty. Kipe Simpson and Joe Beeton were repeatedly being sent off. They had to appear at a Football Court and at one of them they were threatened with the ground being closed. Mr Roper, factory owner and the big noise of Lavenham told the Court "You close it and I will buy another ground". But it never happened. Home Field continued to be the hub of sporting activities. Mr Roper's interest in the football club was influenced by his son, who when he was home from University, played centre forward, and what a player, unorthodox, built like a tank, he would receive a pass, put his head down and charge for goal just like bull. A lot of players let him go through and not to blame them. But eventually two players stood up to him. The Prigg brothers, of Exning near Newmarket. Both men stood over six feet tall and well built. Roper and one of the brothers clashed, the result, Roper's leg was broken. That finished his career with Lavenham Town.

I used to earn pennies running errands or fetching water. There were three sources of water in Lavenham. The Potling, to the west of Lavenham and near Mr Wolton's farm at the rear of the Church. The Cistern, to the

south in Water Street and thirdly the Pump, to the north east, not far from Prentice River and where Holloway's factory is now. To fetch the water you had a square wooden frame which you rested half way on each pail, it prevented the pails touching your legs. At one stage of my childhood I believe the pails of water were heavier than myself and carrying them up Prentice Street was really a task. One of my best customers was the Lavenham Station Master's wife, Mrs Johnson, she always gave me tuppence. Mary Brabrook, her son Agun Brabrook played football for Lavenham Town, she would give me a penny.

Soft water was a vital commodity which you caught off the roof. Many a row would happen between neighbours if one thought one was getting more water than the other. This was the water one used for washing up and washing your face. Father, brother and myself washed outside, winter and summer with cold water. You had a mug of hot water for shaving. The Closet or toilet as it is called now was nearly at the bottom of the garden, any old paper you could lay your hands on was used for toiletry. When the big pail got full Father would dig a hole at the bottom of the garden and empty the pail in it. This was emptied about once a week. As the years went by a Horse and But or like a tank came round once a week to empty the pails. The job of emptying the pails was carried out late at night. Sometimes people would be caught on the seat. Two men done this job. At one stage one of the men became ill and chucked the job up, this left only one man, Brassie Long, he said he would carry on alone provided he got two men's pay, and the Officials agreed until they got another man.

Brassie could drink beer like a lorry using up petrol. One tale I would like to relate here about Brassie. He worked for Mr Bert Death, farmer. Brassie asked his boss for Friday afternoon off so he could go to the Point to Point meeting at Alpheton. His boss had paid him 25 shillings, and off to the races Brassie went. There was some Londoners at the Point to Point, three of them running a Crown and Anchor board. Brassie got involved, the Londoners cheated him. His 25 bob was gone and when Brassie remonstrated with them they threatend him with a hiding, he was lucky to get back to Lavenham with limbs in tact. In the pubs at Lavenham they collected money for him to give to his wife and family.

We talk and practice hygiene today. There was very little sickness in those days, all I could remember was my Mother's sick head aches and my tape worm. There was no appointments at the Doctors, no receptionists, you sat down in the waiting room, waiting your turn. Mrs Brown would say to Mrs Smith, "I think it is your turn to go in", you identified yourself when you went into the surgery and he would invariably shake your hand. Sometimes he would tell a patient to go home straight away and I will call on you. Sometimes only one Doctor in a village of 1,500 inhabitants, or there abouts. He would also visit the surrounding hamlets. Certain doctors employed a chauffeur who also was odd job man and gardener.

The Doctors I can remember in my life time, starting with Dr Hudson, Dr Payne, Dr Clouston, Dr Le Good and his wife and partner Dr Ruth Le Good. They all lived in the big house opposite the Swan Hotel. Nowadays there is a consortium of doctors based at Long Melford and the doctors surgery is at the other end of Lavenham at the bottom of Bolton Street.

There was one doctor now retires who practised quite a lot from the Lavenham surgery. He was a gentleman of the first order, he had a tremendous lot of patience. I had been a very fit man right up to retirement age, and when I started to get aches and pains, which are quite common when you are getting older, I found myself going very frequently to see Dr Stewart. Years previous I had had a hernia operation. Then my hips started to give me a lot of pain and I was walking like an old man of ninety. One day down the surgery Dr Stewart said to me, "We will put you right Mr Risby, you will walk nearly as good as ever". How right he was. Before I went into West Suffolk Hospital I was unable to go out into the street. A six inch step seperated me from my toilet, I was unable to go. So I had a night commode in my front room.

It was a year before I was addmitted to the hospital, under the care of a South African doctor, Mr Nesor. I was in the ward F5. Sister Sturgeon was in charge, she was a lovely Sister. My first operation was on my left hip, it was a great success, but my other hip was in a bad way. After about a fortnight I was ready to go home, until Mr Nesor came to see me. "Mr Risby" he said "Would you like your other hip done?", Dr Stewart had told me it would be at least a year before I had the other one done, so I was really taken aback. It was friday morning, he said "Don't make any desicion now I will come to see you this afternoon". At about three o'clock my nephew, Peter Finn from Sheffield, visited me. I told him what Mr Nesor had said. "You have the other hip done" he said "It might be years before you have the other one done". Mr Nesor duly came that afternoon, "Well what is it?" he said, "I'll have it done Mr Nesor". "Right" he said "I am sending you home this afternoon and I want you back here Monday morning at 9am". As he walked away he suddenly stopped, retraced his steps and said "Remember things can go wrong", but didn't go wrong and I was home sweet home three weeks later a new man.

On the Saturday afternoon Dr Stewart came to see me, "I've come to see your wounds", I think there was about 100 stitches in both legs. Within a few months I was walking miles. Dr Stewart was the man who prompted me to have them done.

Returning to my childhood, especially during the war, there were a lot of incidents which stood out in my mind. The big artillery horses which were based at the old sugar beet factory, now belonging to Holloways

Cosmetics, it was used to bale straw and hay to send to France. The horses also went from there. These horses would come up Prentice Street, rearing and plunging three abreast, it was an awe inspiring sight. If you were sensible you went quickly indoors.

Relatives of our family were a Mrs Barrell and her son Bill (Gunner Barrell). Mrs Harriet Barrell had brought up my mother as a little baby, as her mother, Mrs Barren's sister had fallen down the stairs and broken her neck.

Gunner Bill, worked as a stockman for Mr John Baker, Flour Miller and Farmer, I called Mrs Barrell Granny and Gunner Bill Uncle. Gunner Bill, besides looking after his stock, had quite a few sheep to look after. On Saturday, away from school, I would go to Nether Hall Farm. I would go in the fields with him and his sheep, he had a dog, it was useless, I nearly runned my legs off running after dog and sheep.

I can vividly remember one Saturday morning, I was helping Gunner Bill grinding swedes and mangols, he was sitting on a swill bin smoking his clay pipe, when suddenly round the corner came Mr John Baker, a big man by any standards, easily six feet four inches, wearing a long black coat, top hat and stick crooked at the back of his arms. He looked a formidable figure. He said to Gunner Bill, "What do you think you are doing?", "I was just having a blow sir", replied Gunner Bill. "I don't employ men to have blows" said Mr Baker "Don't let me catch you sitting down again". Granny Barrell was a dear old soul. Cooking, darning and sewing, that was her life. As she got very old my sister Elsie looked after her, until she died. My sister said "come and look at your Granny". I had seen people asleep, she did not seem any different.

On a Saturday morning, still nearly dark, I have helped Gunner Bill picking brussel sprouts to be put on the train for Covent Garden. I was only a thin little boy, he would tye a sack round my waist and rub my fingers till they got warm again. As the years went on Gunner Bill was left alone, the old age pension was ten shillings a week for a single person and when he died, I'm pretty sure it was through malnutrition.

School holidays were very welcome. I used to look forward to the big summer break from school, harvesting would be only a fortnight away. The boys used to go round the farms to see if anyone had started cutting. If one had started the news would travel like 'wild fire' and we would arm ourselves with good stout sticks, if I managed to get a rabbit I would go proudly home with it.

When Father was busy pitching and loading the corn Mother would send me to Manor Farm where Dad worked with two pints of beer which I carried in a brown earthenware bottle. When I reached the farm, it was a good mile and a quarter away, I would enquire where Dad was and that meant sometimes another half mile to go. I would get to the field just before foursies, time when the men used to have food and drink, that had got to last them until 8 o'clock at night. Dad used to enjoy his beer, he would leave one pint until about 6.50pm, that would help him to carry on until 8 o'clock. But what made my day was the ride on the horse. Dad would place a sack over the back of the horse and lift me on, it felt wonderful. I would have about half an hour on its back. Then Dad would say its time you went home. Away I would go skipping and jumping through the meadows on my way home.

When the harvest was over the Farmers settled up with the men. It did not matter how big or small the farm, each man got the same, twenty five shillings for their weeks work and five pounds for the harvest settle, so they went home with six pounds five shillings in their pockets. On the following Saturday Mum and Dad and some of us children would board the two o'clock train bound for Bury St Edmunds. I used to love this, I would put my head out of the window, never mind about the smuts and steam hitting your face, this was lovely watching the fields and houses flashing by. Arriving at Bury meant a long walk to the centre of Bury. When we got there Mum and Dad went in a Pub for a quick pint and glass of stout, we children got a big bottle of gingerale to share with each other. Then it was away to Sneezams for a big plate of lovely ham, with lovely brown crumbs on it. But the main thing what my parents had come to Bury for was to fit us up with boots and shoes and a pair of trousers and for the girls button up the leg shoes and probably a little dress for them. I always had a yearning for a pair of plimsoles and a soft collar and tie, but I had to wait a few years before I got them.

Lavenham Congregational Chapel down Station Road, the British School on the Market Place, now pulled down, were the centre of religious activities. On Sunday morning most children went to Chapel, on Sunday afternoon you went to the British School for more religeous instruction. The man in charge of these things was the Sunday School Superintendant, Mr A R Heeks, he was a great worker for us children. He kept the village store on the Market, it is still managed today by his grandson and Daughter in law. He would organise anything from School treats to outings to the sea side. He was really a wonderful man. Then we had Mr Tom Parker, one of the local coalman, he was the man in charge of the Band of Hope Temperance Society.

A sea side outing was a rare occasion. Mother would dress me up in my Sunday clothes. All the children would assemble on the Market Place waiting for Mr Jordans charabancks to arrive. Mr Heeks and Sunday school teachers would pin a lable on our chests with our name and the Lavenham Congregational Chapel on it, so nothing was left to chance. On the arrival of the charabancks, which was open at the top but had a hood at the back which could be quickly drawn over the top in the event of bad weather. Nearly every child had a Taxi

Case, a miniture suite case which held some sandwiches, and other little items which you might need and then on to the Charabanck. Nearly every child wanted to be near a window, Mr Heeks and his helpers would then check everything and away we went.

Clacton-on-Sea was genraly the destination. We would depart Lavenhain about 8 o'clock and arrive at Clacton about 11 o'clock. Probably the first place we would go would be the pier and watch the ships in the distance. Come about 12.30pm we were all assembled on the sands to have our sandwiches and small bottle of gingerade. The rest of the afternoon was spent laying on the sands watching the ships and motor boats carreering about, the antics of the swimmers, little children with their Mother's and Father's walking into the sea up to their knees and sandcastles being built. All this added up to a lovely day. Then about for thirty we were all assembled again and marched like soldiers to a restaurant, where we were regaled with lovely cakes, buns and ham sandwiches. It had been a lovely day and all too soon it was time to go home armed with our little taxi case with a couple of sticks of rock, we again boarded the Charabancks tired but happy and on our way home to Lavenham.

Then there was the 'treat', we generally held them at Manor Farm, the farm where I tooks my Dad's beer, it belonged to a Scotsman, Mr Gray, this event generally tookplace in mid-summer. A staunch Congregationalist, Mr Webb of School Farm Acton supplied the horses and waggons. Horses and waggons were trimmed up with bunting and flags. When everyone had got on the waggons, a final check from Mr Heeks and we were off to Preston. We would urge the driver of the horses to make them trot and they would do it for a little while.

We engaged in races, egg and spoon, blind fold, three legged races, all sorts of races. The prizes would be three pence 1st, tuppence 2nd and one penny for third. Come late afternoon it was back on to the waggons, back to Lavenham and the British School with tables laden with cakes and buns, there was enough for everyone and more. With tea over the room was cleared for games, everyone enjoyed themselves, I know I did.

'The Band of Hope' a temperance organisation under the leadership of Mr Tom Parker, one of the local coal merchants. This was another nice do confined to the British School, there again we were treated to a lovely tea and games afterwards. After it was all over Mr Parker would stand at the door and give each child a big orange and a shilling.

During the school break it was traditional for work to be carried out in the school and playground. All the Lavenham Master Tradesmen were engaged on the work. Mr Alfred (Lump) Turner was the local builder, Mr Tom Garrad, joinery and Mr Burroughes painter and decorator and glazer. Sometimes the playground would be tarred, they would spend weeks on this work. When the playground was finished it seemed a pity that anyone should spoil its lovely surface and I longed for the time to start school again.

The last class to go in was Miss Mary Wright's. Out of that class emerged a small band of boys and girls. The Headmaster would take them for an hour each day and out of that small band there would be two or three go to Grammer School.

Teenage Years

With school days over on reaching the age of fourteen, unless you were highly gifted and gained a place at Grammer School or County School things looked very bleak indeed, three million unemployed. The means test was the order of the day. I was lucky, I was out of work about two months, until I got a job with a local farmer, Mr Bert Death. The job was straw baling and very dusty. I was advised by Mr Death to contact Mr Philip Head who was working on the same job. I went to Mr Head's house to ask for instructions, "You be outside my house at quarter to six 'boy'" and I was, well before that. Mr Head would come out of his house, he was an ex-peace time Marine, a big tall man, he took big strides and I had to run to keep up with him. The other side of Alpheton was our destination, at least three miles, arriving there I was soon acquainted with the other men. There was Mr Faiers (Hawkie), George Sadler, Victor Blofield, George (Rub) Long also (Spiers) Welham worked on this job, my cousin and myself. I did not last long at this job, I would arrive home as black as a nigger, my eyes and hands sore. Father said to me one night "You pack it in Joe" and I put my weeks notice in. MrDeath was eager to keep me, what about Joe helping Brassie Long look after the stock, but my Father had got a job lined up for me. It was for Mr John Baker, Flour Miller and Farmer, he owned Nether Hall and also Brights Farm. I was about fourteen and four months, a thin little boy, my job was to help Gunner Bill Barrel looking after stock. My first morning I was the first person at the farm, but the others soon arrived. Their names were Jarvis Smith, Head Horseman, Bob (Molly) Poulson second Horseman, George Spite, Chiver Welham, his son Fred Welham Gunner Bill Barrel and myself. The foreman was Mr Sam Fayers. After a chat with the men Mr Fayers said to me, "You see that field up there Joe, go there and get a wippletree". I did not know what a wippletree looked like but I was afraid to tell him so, I was afraid he might say to me I was no good, so I went looking for something that I didn't understand what it was. I came back looking very embarrassed. If the ground could have swallowed me up I would have been happy, instead all the men laughed at me, "Where's the wippletree?" Mr Fayers said, "I don't know what it is" I replied, there was another ripple of laughter from the men. George Spite said to me "come on Joe I'll show you what a winpletree is". So I was

quite pleased when that incident was over.

Next day when Mr Fayers had given the other men their orders, he turned to me, "have you got your food and drink?", this consisted of a wittles bag with cheese and onions and bread and a bottle of cold tea, "yes" I replied. "Now" he said "do you know what this tool is I have got in my hand?" He had an iron thing in his hand with a little arm on it a foot from the bottom, "this is a dock iron" he said, "come with me", I followed Mr Fayers nearly half a mile, or so it seemed, until we stopped in a field, he then looked for a dock. "Lets see you take that dock up by the roots". I succeeded "well done Joe", he said, "I want all the docks taken up in this field", he then produced a knife, got in the hedge and cut two stout sticks, we then walked to one side of the field, he stuck a stick in the ground, "now" he said "when you get to the other side of the field you put the other stick in the ground so you will know just how much ground you have covered, now I'm leaving you now" said Mr Fayers, "you know what time to finish, five thirty", and away he went. There I was a thin little boy in this big field, only the birds and sometimes a rabbit would spring out of the ditch and then back again to keep me company. When nature took its course, you would get in the ditch and wipe your behind with a dock leaf. I had a pail to put the docks in, there was a lot in that field.

I had not got a watch so I had no idea when it was dinner time, anyway I felt hungry and sat on the brew, undone my wittles bag, my Mother had packed me a hunk of crusty bread with a big lump of cheese and a big onion. It never took me long to demolish the lot and then it was on to the field again, taking the docks up. The afternoon went on, time seemed to drag, until I heard some shouting in the distance, I looked in the direction of the shouting, it was Mr Fayers, waving his arms about, I runned towards him, "do you know what the time is?" he said "it's nearly six o'clock, you get no over-time you know, tomorrow you come back to the farm in mid afternoon.

When I was working with Uncle Gunner Bill Barrel on the farm I would go home to dinner. One day after dinner Mr Fayers said to me "come on Joe we will put the harness on a horse, I want you to go up to the Mill and get some sacks of meal, I'll let you take old 'Short'", he was an old shire horse, he had a irritating habit of tossing his head about when I tried to put his collar on. I think the collar was as heavy as me. Also putting the bridal on was a job anyway, Mr Fayers helped me do this. I led 'Short' out to the cart shed and backed him into a Tumbrill shaft, "well done Joe you're doing well" said Mr Fayers "now don't forget to keep on your left side of the road, and go up Prentice Street to the Mill". I arrived at the Mill to be greeted by the foreman, Mr Hyde-Smith, "and what do you want Joe?", "I have come after some meal Mr Smith" I replied, "right" he said "back your Tumbrill up to the chute, I done that, climed in the Tumbrill. Mr Smith put the slide down to the Tumbrill, he then slid a sack down to me, it hit me in the stomach and nearly knocked me out of the Tumbrill, the sack weighed twelve stone, I doubt if I weighed six stone. Mr Smith came down looking angry, "Get out of the way" he said, I jumped out of the Tumbrill, Mr Sam Leeks slid the remaining sacks down and then it was back to Nether Hall. I knew where some of the meal had to go. Gunner Bill was out in the fields with his sheep. The first sack I got on my back I fell down, it was easily twice as heavy as me. But then George Spite came round the corner, he had been ploughing in a nearby field and had seen me come, back to the farm, "You must not try and carry those heavy sacks, you are only fourteen", he said "You should have been told about it". My Dad had repeatedly told me about lifting something that was too heavy, "You will get ruptured" he said.

When work was finished it was down to the Lavenham Sports Club, we had a loft loaned to us by Mr Godden. This was where the teenagers spent their nights. On summer nights we would run round Brent Eleigh and Preston twice a week and then the older boys would put on the boxing gloves and knock each other about. Mr Walter Turner of Clay Hill Farm was the President, later on we moved to a better place, a little factory which had closed down. It had previously been a Horse Hair weaving factory, in fact my Mother spent several years of her life working there. At this present day it is a light engineering factory owned by 'Stocko' Limited in Barn Street. A property developer had moved from London to Lavenham and had bought the dererlict building, Mr Green was a good and kind man, he not only gave us the use of the factory, but he bought us two large sized billiard and snooker tables. In the centre of the room was a tortice shell stove with a pipe going through the roof. I have spent some happy hours in that factory. After expending our energy snooker/billiard playing, boxing, table tennis a couple of boys would go up to Mr Rudd's Fish Shop and would come back with fried fish, welks or shrimps. We would sit round the stove and listen to each talking about the days events, in those days people seemed more contented and happy, and then it was home to bed.

Up at 6am and be at work at 7am, Father's and my food were packed up at night by Mother. One night we had just finished work when Mr Fayers said to me "Joe, I want you to take a load of pigs to Bury Market, but don't worry I am coming with you, don't forget to bring your dinner with you". I don't think I slept much that night. The next morning Mr Fayers gave the other men their orders, he turned to me "Joe boy, have your food?", "yes" I answered, "Right" he said "We will now load up the pigs", with the help of two men they were loaded with a net over the top of each tumbrill. It was then away to Bury St Edmunds Market. It was 1925 and you did not want to worry about the traffic, there was very little on the roads in those days.

Having got rid of the pigs Mr Fayers had a long chat with the other journeymen. He then turned to me

"Come on Joe boy, lets get away". Outside Bury we called at a pub called the Spread Eagle, put the nose bags on the horses heads, which was full of oats, and we both went into the pub. "Come on Joe you are going to have a pint of beer", "No thank you Mr Fayers, I would rather have a bottle of gingerade". But Mr Fayers insisted that I had a pint. How I drunk it I don't know, it tasted horrible. When my Father saw Mr Fayers he told him "Don't you give my boy any more beer, he don't like it".

As time went on Mr Baker got rid of the farm to a Brent Eleigh farmer, Mr Wyart, I worked for him a few weeks and then got the sack together with three other men. So I was unemployed, but not for long.

Mr Dewar who my Father worked for wanted a third boy to help look after chickens. Fred Day was number one, Freddie Hunt was number two and I got the number three job. Mr John Dewar my new employer was a Scotsman, he addressed his employees according to their skill. I was spoken to as Risby, Freddie Day as Fred, and Freddie Hunt as Hunt, the other men on the farm were Earnie Hollex, who was foreman, was addressed as Earnest, the Head Stockman, Walter Alterdan was called Walter and all the others were addressed by their surname.

One particular man Mr Dewar thought the world of was Mr Robert Poulson, a Salvationist, he was addressed as Robert.

This was the time when the transition between horses and tractors took place. A tractor with one sweep across the field could plough more soil than two horse ploughs put together, hence the adulation Robert received from Mr Dewar.

On a Wednesday, Market Day at Bury St Edmunds, Mr Dewar would take a precaution, although he was a good car driver, on Market days he was inclined to over indulge and Robert would drive him home.

Mrs Dewar was a lovely lady, she was kind to the extreme. Her sister Miss Macfarlane, the Macfarlanes belonged to the Biscuit people, was in charge of all the chickens, the little chicks were raised by the heat of oil lamps, thousands of them. There were thousands of pullets and laying hens. During the day I would gather up the eggs, the other two Freddie's would also be on the same job, at the end of the day thousands of eggs would appear on the scullery table of the Dewar household.

Sometimes I would be called on to help with getting the hay in. I can remember one year I was on this job and I was suffering from pain in the bottom of my feet, in fact my feet were bleeding, at the end of the day I could not walk to my bicycle, Korris Poulson, who was assistant Stockman, brought my bike up to the hay stack so I could get on and bike home. I could never understand what caused this condition to my feet, sometimes I would put dock leaves in my boots to sooth the pain, but the condition went as quick as it came.

At this time I was getting to an age where I was getting around. Sudbury would be the venue, the Gainsborough Picture House. Sometimes if there was a decent film on the place would be packed. Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Laural and Hardy, in that day and age they were great characters, sometimes we would bike to Sudbury or go by Mr Booth's bus, a Mr Fred Marsh driving, it was one shilling return.

I was sixteen when tragety struck our family. My brother George, who was nearly eight years older than myself, got accidently drowned in the River Stour opposite Little Cornards Public House 'The Brook'. My brother had gone to work that day as usual, it had been very hot, he had his evening dinner and then got on his bicycle to go to Sudbury, his intention was to train for a running race called the Sidnell Cup Race. He runned about five laps round People's Park. Then he cycled up to Little Cornard, he went across Sharford Meadows to the River Stour and mingled with some more Lavenham men. My brother could not swim. It had been so hot that he could not resist to having a little dip. He borrowed a swimming suit of a Cornard man, waded in up to his chest, it was thought afterwards that he thought that was the depth right across the river which was only a few yards wide, so he struck out but there was a hollow in the middle twelve feet deep. He went down and never came up. It was a long while before they could find him and only then by using drags on the river bed, he was covered with weeds. Artificial resperation was carried out but to no avail. He was then taken on a gate to the Brook Inn, and was laid in a garage. I shall never forget that night. Dad had gone to bed, there was just my Mum, sister Elsie and myself up when a knock sounded on the door. Sister Elsie answered it, a Lavenham man, a Mr Smith, wanted to see my Father. My sister told him that he was in bed and could she take a message. Mr Smith insisted on seeing Dad. After a couple of minutes talking Father came in to Mum, Elsie and myself and told us that brother George had had a very bad accident, although he had been told by Mr Smith that brother George was dead. Father got on the back of Mr Smith's motor bike in the ride to Cornard. Poor old Dad had to identify my brother. My Mother took it very badly. I had seen Grannie Barrell dead, and when Mr Fred Jarvis, carpenter for Tom Garrard, brought my brother home I helped carry him up the steps and the coffin placed on trestles. Fred said to me "Can I use your privy?", which was down the garden, "And would you like to see your brother?", he took the lid off the coffin and then went down the garden. I looked disbelievingly at my brother. He looked just like Granny Barrell, in a lovely sleep.

After the Inquest a verdict of Misadventure was brought in, a Pathologist told Doctor Wisdom of Sudbury, he in turn told my Father that brother George was one of the most fittest men he had examined, dead or

alive.

Poor old Mother was in a dreadful state. She never really got over it. A few days after the Funeral which was attended by a lot of people, Mr Maxim the local Newsagent came to see my Mum and Dad. Brother George had taken a daily newspaper, the 'News Chronicle and Westminster Gazette', after a time he got fed up with paying for it, but Mum had paid the money so when he died it was still in his name. Mr Maxim said they were entitled to some money and they eventually got two hundred and fifty pounds. They spent ninety pounds on a lovely stone with an angel on it.

Before brother George had died he had bought a lovely Gramophone. I shall always remember it coming as there was nobody at home, so it was left next door at a Mr and Mrs Frederick Davis. It had arrived in a big wooden crate, I could not wait to see this magnificent machine. Everyone gathered round brother George as he knocked the wooden bars off and pulled all the straw away, this was all done in our front room. At last the Gramophone and the big horn was assembled. There were four records and a tin of needles with it. We watched with bated breath as brother George wound up the machine. Everyone was telling him to be careful not to break the spring. The first record put on was Jerusalem the Golden, it sounded lovely. From then on the Gramophone was on nearly every night, one of the other records was Will the Angels Play their Harps for Me, the other two I have forgotten. In the 1920's nearly everyone played Hymns on a Sunday, it was considered Bad otherwise.

I enjoyed some very happy occasions in our front room. One particular occasion was when my Uncle Johnny's daughter Elsie got married, the reception was held in our front room. We had plenty of beer and home made wine. My Dad was chief waiter and myself was his assistant. We had a great time singing and dancing and of course brother George's gramophone worked over-time.

When Dad was getting well oiled, he would get hold of the broom and pretend it was a rifle, he would march up and down the room shouting "Who goes there?", "Queen Victoria's Keys", "Advance Queen Victoria's Keys and be recognised". As a young man my Father was a peace time soldier, he had enlisted in 1894 and was many times on duty at the Tower of London, every night this ritual was performed called 'The Keys'.

When we had a spring clean in the front room this work was carried out in the evenings by some relations of ours, Mr William (Honey) Long and his wife Emily. You never saw such a mess of paste and paper, but old Honey could make a good job of it. It would take Honey and Bully about a week. Father gave them ten shillings, five shillings for Emily and five shillings for 'Greene King', Honey was the quickest downer of a pint I ever saw, but the room looked lovely when everything had been cleared up. The Grandfather clock on the wall and the lovely pictures.

I could never understand Dad walking all that way to work for he was a good Horseman and could have got a job nearer home. During his time with Mr Dewar he told me a tale, it concerned the Village Policeman, Police Sergeant Blofield. Father had picked up two rabbits which he had snared the previous night, also he had got two swedes in his bag. He went into Lavenham Anchor Inn for his pint, when in came Sergeant Blofield, "Hullo George" he said "And what have you got in your bag", "I've got two rabbits and two swedes", my Father replied. "And have you had permission to have these?", said the Sergeant. "I have had permission to have the swedes but not the rabbits". This worried my Dad no end, he was the proud possessor of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, next in merit to the Victoria Cross, being taken to Court and convicted would mean the loss of this precious medal and the sixpence a day that went with it. The Victoria Cross was worth nine pence a day. In the morning when he went to work Mr Dewar was waiting for him. "And what have you been up to Risby?", Sergeant Blofield was up here last night, he found two swedes in your bag, but I told him I had given you permission to have the swedes and I would forget about the rabbits". So that was a big load off Dad's mind that day.

Before my brother's death he used to race pigeons. On Saturday afternoon all was quiet, until brother George's voice could be heard all over Prentice Street, "Open all the doors", the next minute brother George would come charging up the garden path with the rubber ring from the pigeon in his hand and then run to the High Street to Mr Bullivants Harness shop where Pigeon Officials would take the ring and also write down the time you came in the shop. This was quite an occasion.

The Bullivant family were a rum lot. The old man used to wear three or four waistcoats all different colours. Sometimes there would be quite a few young men and boys talking to Johnny the pigeon man and Ben the football referee. If the old man was in a bad mood he would produce a whip and clear the shop in seconds. Another time he would say nothing. When the Fox Hunt met, sometimes in the High Street outside Mr Bullivants shop, old man Bullivant would emerge resplendant in his pretty waistcoats and jacket, with a large bottle of Whisky in his hand and glasses, of course he knew what he was doing, he was looking at the trade ahead, which could mean an order for a complete set of Harness to be made.

I can remember when I was quite a small boy the Hounds would meet on a Saturday morning. This was the morning I had to do certain jobs in the house. One of them was cleaning the knives, forks and spoons, never mind about the fox-hounds. Somehow it seemed to me that Mother was more regimental than ever over the

cleaning of the cutlery. I would keep looking at the clock, I knew the time the Fox Hunt would assemble. "There you are Mother" I would say, "All finished". "Oh no they are not" she would answer, "You will have to do them all over again". Time I had finished the Hounds had gone. As I have said the Bullivants were a rum lot, there were four boys and one girl. One of the boys, Sidney, (they were young people at this time) would work his way to America, he would remain there about six months, come home and try and speak the America dialect. A favourite expression of his was 'Gor damn'.

On one morning there was one hell of a row, Sidney rushed out in the street firing a revolver in the air frightening everyone in High Street, fortunately no one got hurt in these incidents, they would soon make up their differences, and all would be well again until the next time.

Time went by I had got used to the job of looking after the chickens. They had lovely meadows to wander at will and portable chicken houses which you could move from meadow to meadow. The eggs would look lovely, brown and white, there were thousands of chickens, sometimes they would panic at roosting time and a lot would be suffocated. I have opened a hut in the morning and found twenty dead. Freddie Day would say to me, "Take a couple home Joe, they are fit to eat", I only done it once, my Father played up old "Nic". "Who gave you permission to bring these home?", "Freddie Day" I replied. "Alright" he said "Don't bring anymore home". I think he was still worried about the swedes and rabbit episode with Sergeant Blofield. So I did not take anymore home.

During my time with Mr Dewar I bought a second hand cycle, the only thing wrong with it was a bent crank, so when I rode to work I had to be careful I did not catch my leg on the bike. I bought it off a Mr Robert Munns, who was stockman for Mr Webb of School Farm Acton, for Severn and sixpence (37 pence). I eventually got the crank straightend. There was no stopping me on that bike I would bike miles. My foot condition had gone completely, I really felt fit. Sometimes I would work on a Sunday, the two Freddie's would have a Sunday off. Miss Mac Farline would help me gather the eggs, you would then go home to tea, and back later to shut all the chickens up. This was a job you had to be careful about, there were quite a few foxes in the vicinity, leave one slip up and there could be a lot of hens dead by the morning.

One day I was getting water for the poultry. I had a horse and water cart, I had backed it up against a pond and was pumping the water into the water cart, when I suddenly noticed a paper bag being blown by the wind coming in the direction of me and the horse. I did not know what to do, leave the horse and get the paper or hold on to the horses head, I held on to the horses head, the paper carried on right straight to the horses head, the horse reared up and went back, with both horse and water cart in the pond. The horse took one frantic leap out of the pond snapping the shafts in two. I thought I was in for a rollicking from Mr Dewar. Instead he said it was a good job I didn't get hurt.

But one day I did really get him angry. I wasn't far off my twenty first birthday. I was moving a hut from one meadow to the other also an iron hurdle which had two wheels on front and back, taking the hurdle through the gate way Mr Dewar was near me with his Scotch Terrier dog, this kept barking round the hurdle. I was watching hurdle, horse and dog, when suddenly the hurdle crashed over giving the dog a glancing blow, he runned wimping away, but not hurt much. Mr Dewar was furious and blamed me. I think this incident was the prelude to my sacking a few months later.

My twenty-first birthday arrived. Today it would be celebrated with a lovely dinner in a restaurant or pub, and a good old knees up afterwards, but in 1931 it was a totally different matter, you viewed your twenty-first birthday with trepedation. A lot of young men got the sack on reaching that age. On the Friday afternoon after my birthday I saw Mr Dewar and told him I was Twenty one and entitled to mens money. "I can't afford to pay you that so I'm afraid you will have to go", I was given a weeks notice, on my last day at work for Mr Dewar I was called into the house. Mrs Dewar wanted to talk to me. She said she was very sorry that Mr Dewar had sacked me, gave me my stamp cards, shook my hand and wished me good luck. A week later a Norris Poulson who worked for Mr Dewar as an assistant stockman got the sack, he was also twenty one. I saw Norris during the following week, he was standing opposite the Swan, a favourite place to stand to have a chat. If there happened to be half a dozen of you, if a policeman was around he would move you on, you would not be causing any trouble but you would have to move. I asked Norris what he was going to do, "I don't know" he replied "There are no jobs going, what are you, going to do ?", "I think I'll join the army" I said, "I'll come with you" said Norris. We arranged a day to go to Bury the following week. The morning arrived, we had agreed to go on the eight am train. I waited on the Market Square for Norris. It was quarter to eight. I runned down Lady Street into Water Street and knocked on Norris' door. Mrs Poulson answered my knock, "Where's Norris?" I said "We are going to join the Army". "He has changed his mind, he is not going now". I turned round and sprinted up Lady Street across the Market down the Alley and away to the station. I arrived at the station just as the train pulled in, got my ticket, settled down in an empty compartment for the eleven mile journey to Bury St Edmunds. I took a short cut to the Gibraltar Barracks. I was greeted by a Sergeant who wanted to know what I wanted. I said "I want to join the Army", he asked me a few questions and twice he asked me if I had been in the Army before. I had a very short haircut which made him think like that. Anyway he led me to a room where

there was two more potential soldiers. He sent us to the cook house to get some breakfast and we had some rissoles. We hang about waiting for the doctor to examine us, afternoon came still no doctor. The sergeant came and told us that there was no doctors available that day, so we could either go home and come the next day or stop the night at the Barracks, we decided to stop. Evening came, I said to the two fellows "Lets go to the pictures". The Central in Hatter Street. At that time I believe that was the only cinema in Bury. We had just enough money to get in, although we had a front seat which was not good for eyes. Walking all that way from the Barracks was worth it, there was a lovely film on featuring Jack Buchanon in Good Night Vienna, at this time this tune was on everyones lips. In the morning I came in front of the doctor, I just had my trousers on, he tested my heart, blood pressure, dropped my trousers to test for rupture. I was passed A1 physical, but when he tested my eyes that was a different matter. I was nearly blind in my left eye. So I was rejected. I was given money for my journey home. One of the other men was rejected with a hammer toe, he went back home like myself. I think Mother was secretly pleased, but Dad was sorry for me. Any way I never gave up that easily. Two days later I got on my bike and went to Colchester. I found the recruiting office with a solitary man inside, he told me he had seen a sergeant but there would be no doctor available for at least two hours. As we sat talking to each other, I told the fellow that I had tried to join up two days previously at Bury St Edmunds, but being blind in one eye or nearly blind I had failed to pass, I told him my other eye was one hundred per cent "We can get over that" he said "There won't be nobody here for a couple of hours". Where we were to be examined were some eye sight boards, one on top of the other. The fellow took the one that was on top and brought it into the waiting, room, "Now" he said "You've got two hours to learn the board, but only learn half way down, starting quickly with the big letter and slowly coming to a stop half way down, if you try and learn the whole board you will forget the lot". I agreed with him. I found a piece of paper and I had got a pencil on me. I wrote down the lines and my friend went and hung the board in the same place. I learnt it perfect. By the time the Officer doctor arrived I had got it to perfection. My friend was the first one to be ushered in, he was in there about ten minutes, emerged smiling broadly, he had passed. Then it was time for Joe, before I knew what was happening something was held over my good eye, all I could see was a big smudge of black and white. There was no retreating now. "Read the board" the doctor said. I never missed one letter. I done it perfectly just as I had rehersed I read it the first time. My hope rose when he said "Will you read that again". He then said "I'm sorry lad those letters you have been reading are not on that board". He tested my other eye which was one hundred per cent. My little ruse had failed, this was the time when a bad tooth could fail you. Anyway I got a bit out of them. I got five shillings out of them (25 pence). I told them I had lost a days work, but I was unemployed. I had hiked all the way from Lavenham, about forty miles return. So my army aspirations were over, it was to be several years before I had another try.

A few weeks went by until I got a job in a Stone Quarry belonging to Mr Webb of Bassetts Farm Acton. He also owned a farm. He was brother to Mr Webb of School Farm Acton, our Congregational friend. This was hard work, sometimes loading up lorries with sand and stone, two men each side. There would be 'Harkie' Bean, Bill Sargent, Jack Davies and myself. I loved it, I would measure my chest and biceps every night. My only trouble was I had thin legs, this would make me very sensitive when I used to go running. For my age I was above average in my chest and arm measurements, even in my late twenties I was thirty eight round the chest and weighed one hundred and thirty six pounds.

My mates at work were good men and Mr Webb a good employer. In spring time we would go on piece work hoeing sugar beet, threepence halfpenny in old money (one and a half pence in decimal currency), this was singling plants six inches apart for one hundred yards, you had got to keep that hoe agoing to earn six shillings (thirty pence) a day. In the winter time if we were not busy in the quarry, we would pull and knock and cut off the leaves for four pence halfpenny in old money (two pence in new). This work made me feel good.

My Mum and Dad kept a good table, puddings every night, meat pudding, suet pudding, onion pudding, yorkshire pudding, dumplings and my favourite, rabbit pie, you could not go wrong. All these meals were served at night so you could lean back and let it digest. But for me as soon as I had swallowed that last mouthful it was down to the sports club.

Weekends would come along and sometimes an excursion would run from Lavenham to Liverpool Street on a Saturday for five and sixpence. (twenty seven and a half pence) return. There would be Fred Cady, Charlie Hunt a boy Eady who we called Hosses Eggs, he lived down Shilling Street. The first time we went there were several Lavenham men took advantage of this excursion. There was George (Brake) Sutton, Jack Allen, Johny Parmenter just a few I can remember. When they arrived at Liverpool Street they just walked about the station, into 'Dirty Dick's' pub only a few yards from the station, they never moved from there all night.

My three pals and myself went some distance, we enquired of some bystanders that we wanted to go to the Stratford Empire Theatre, we were told to get on a numbered tram, it was crowded. My pals were seperated from me, we travelled some distance .and I thought it was time for me to get off, which I did. To my dismay my pals could not get by the people to get off, and they had never been to London before. The tram bell rung and away they went. I took my cap in my hand and runned behind the tram for all my worth. After about half mile

the tram made a stop and my pals were able to get off, when they spoke to me I could hardly speak I was so much out of breath. Anyway after making further enquiries I found that Stratford Empire was only just up the street. Not knowing much about London Theatres we went for the cheapest seats called the "Gods", fourpence to go in. We soon realised our mistake, we were looking straight down on the actors and actresses. This particular night Flanagan and Allen and Kate Carney, her daughter and granddaughter were on stage together, the band played lovely and we all enjoyed it. Our train did not depart from Liverpool Street until round about twelve o'clock, so we had plenty of time to get back to the station. When we did get on a tram I asked the conductor if he would tell me when to get off, which he did. Jack Allen, Brake Sutton and Johnny Parmenter were on the platform half drunk, they had seen nothing of London, but had made friends with some of Dirty Dick's customers and were making plans to return again. Sometimes the excursions would run on a Sunday, same price twenty seven and a half pence, or five and six pence in old money.

I went up one Sunday with my Father, my sister Elsie and her husband, Harry Simpson lived at Trinity Street, Canning Town Uncle Cully and his wife Minnie lived upstairs and Elsie, Harry and daughter Ivy downstairs. Harry was down at Liverpool Street to meet us. So we went to Trinity Street by tram. With greetings over it was bound to be a question of what pub we went to. It was a pub up the Barking Road, I think it was called the Golden Fleece, but I'm not sure. It was a big place. All our relatives at 77 Trinity Street were glad to see us, so Dad Uncle Cull, Harry and myself went to this pub, there seemed hundreds of people in there, we were in there two hours. Apparently as a young man Uncle Cull was a bare knuckle fighter, eager for any rough and tumble. As we sat round the table he was talking about the fights he had had in the late eighteen hundreds, he was now about in his middle fifties and he added "I'll fight anyone now, my age or ten years younger", my father told him to shut up, he reminded him he was no longer a young man. My Father was to tell me later on about Uncle Cull. He first went to work for Mr Tom Baker a farmer at Alpheton and brother to John Baker flour Miller and farmer. He was looking after cows and was about fifteen years of age. One night out in the Lavenham Streets with his mates, he spotted a courting couple making love in a shop doorway, the man was the local rough handful, lets call him Mr X, he chased Uncle Cull, caught him and gave him a good hiding. As Uncle Cull runned away he shouted at Mr X, "I shall not forget this, I am not strong enough for you now but one day I shall be". About two years later Uncle Cull went to London and got a job at the East India Docks and lodged with his brother, Uncle Abraham who was married and lived in Plaistow. He had not been up there for about two years when he had been involved in two or three fights and had come off best. So one weekend Uncle Cull thought he would visit Lavenham to see his Mother and Father. But his real visit was to put things right with Mr X. On the Saturday night he made his way to the White Horse in Water Street, he was greeted by his old mates of years ago, "Hullo Cull, haven't seen you for years", he sat down with his beer, looked around looking for Mr X, his ears were still smarting as he remembered the beating he had as a young boy. "Where's Mr X?", Cully asked his mates, "He will be down here soon" they replied, "And be careful of him, he is the rough house of Lavenham". In due course Mr X arrived "Hullo Cull" Mr X said and they both exchanged greetings, the beer flowed, and Uncle Cull's memory sharpened, he deliberately picked an argument with Mr X. Uncle Cull was nineteen and Mr X about twenty five, it developed into a quarell. Mr X invited Uncle Cull to step outside, this was what Uncle Cull wanted. They had a tremendous fight with Mr X being laid out with a broken jaw. Uncle Cull was happy, he returned to London having redeemed himself.

At one period he was working at Chingford near London and one Sunday when they were resting a man came to the door of the hut wanting to see Uncle Cull, on seeing him he said "They tell me you can fight". "I can look after myself" replied Uncle Cull, "I would like to have a go at you" the stranger said, "Alright" Uncle Cull said "Give me time for a wash and a slash", a slash meant going to the toilet. They eventually got at it, two total strangers who had heard of each others proess at fighting, and this man from the north of England could certainly fight. I was told that the fight lasted nearly an hour with Uncle Cull finishing the fight by throwing the man over his shoulder. Another time he was had up for manslaughter, what happened was Uncle Cull would spend as long as possible in a pub before they closed. The pubs the Canning Town side of the river closed half hour earlier than those the other side, so Uncle Cull would be where he got the longest drink, he had an argument with two men, at closing time the two men got up and went. Uncle Cull supped up as long as he could. Then it was time to go, the two men were waiting for him, Uncle Cull knew the ring leader, he grabbed him and threw him over the bridge, it had been a very dry summer and very little water in the river, after a while the man died, but Uncle Cull got away with it, it was two against one. Another time when Uncle Cull was lodging with his brother Uncle Abe. Uncle Abe had gone out early one Saturday night for his usual pint, a wedding party was on and one of them had dropped a carnation. Uncle Abe accidently stepped on it, one of the wedding group struck Uncle Abe unawares in the eye, he went home. Uncle Cull was there, he was furious, "Who done that to you?", Uncle Abe explained. "Come on Abe" said his brother, and back to the pub they went. The wedding guests were still there, "Who done that to my brother?", shouted Uncle Cull, no answer, "I'll take all of you on one at a time", but, there were no takers. Uncle Cull died at about the the age of seventy two, cancer of the throat.

As I have departed from my story, I will continue to relate the activities of my Uncles and Aunts. I had six Uncles and four Aunts. Uncle Fred was the oldest and I knew him. As a young man he worked as under

gamekeeper at Kentwell Hall, Long Melford, later on to move to Reigate in Surrey to work for the Mustard King Colman. When He retired he was head Game Keeper. I can remember him coming down to Lavenham when I was a little boy. Mother said to him . "What sort of food do you like?", "Sausage and grunTERS" he replied, he meant peas. I was too see him twenty years on, but more to that later. Then came Arthur Risby (Big Bonca), a horse dealer, he was a rough diamond always mixing with the wrong people. He was my second oldest uncle. He would go from Lavenham to the Horse Fairs all round, always drinking heavily. When he was broke he would come home and try to get money out of his Mother and Father. Sometimes this resulted in a row and Uncle Cull would get to fighting with his big and older brother, and sometimes would beat him.

Uncle "Big Bonca" eventually married and settled at Chingford, near London. At an early age he got kicked in the stomach by a horse and died. Uncle Abe was only a little man, he had moved from Lavenham to London as a married man in a house in Plaistow and worked at Beckton Chemical Works. As a young man he was a very good runner, he never ceased to relate about the time when he runned against a man called Bacon, English mile champion, he finished sixth, but was very proud of it. One weekend he had come to Lavenham on his bicycle to visit his Mum and Dad. During his short stay some rich people had a bet on Uncle Abe, some said he would beat the train, the others said he would not. This was about 1867 and the railways were very much in their infancy, single tracks and so on. The bet was far from onesided as it seemed, because Uncle Abe beat the train back to Liverpool Street, from Lavenham Station to Liverpool Street. Obviously his part of the bet he received in beer. About six years before he died he took part in an old age pensioners race in a meadow opposite Lavenham Church. It was a hundred yard race and Uncle Abe received fifty yards start, he was eighty seven at the time. His daughter Abigail Risby could not bare to watch him race, she thought he would have a heart attack, so she went to look at the Church time the race was on. Uncle Abe won the race, but he was in bed for three days afterwards. Uncle Abe died from water trouble at the age of ninety four.

Then there was Uncle Bill (little Bonca), he worked as a farm labourer for Strutt and Parker, he was another Uncle who loved sport. He trained a young relation of his wife Susan, Ivan Bradley. Ivan was a good runner and won the mile race at Lavenham several times. One tale about Uncle Bill went like this. There was some sports on at Acton and a hundred yard race was for a certain age. Uncle Bill betted my Dad half a crown that he would beat him, five shillings to the winner.

Uncle Bill beat Dad and also won the race. They celebrated in no uncertain terms, time was getting on my Mother got worried, "Go and see where they are" she said. When I got up Church Street I could see them coming, they were going from one side of the road to the other. I runned back home, "They are coming Mum" I said, but I did not mention that they were under the weather. When they did arrive home they blamed their condition on the strong beer at Acton 'Crown'.

Uncle Little Bonca and Aunt Susan lived in the same house as Granny Barrell and Uncle Bill Barrell, it was a lovely little cottage, a very small and trim front room, a little corridor led to the kitchen. Aunt Susan was a very pretty woman. Dark haired, eyes like sloes. In that little front room hung some lovely pictures. One I can remember even now, a little boy leaning over a wall on a river bridge, with an angel hovering over him. Aunt Susan never had no children. They finished up in an Almshouse at the top of Church Street. Aunt Sue died first then Uncle Bonca, they were both in their eighties.

Uncle Walter Risby, he was always called by my name, Joe, he never married and lodged with a married couple a Mr and Mrs Manning, they lived just next door to the Church School, he stayed with them all his life. Uncle Joe was a farm labourer, working for Mr Walton, he was also a poacher of the first order, kept a good dog and gun and also kept a good stocked pantry for Mrs Manning. Uncle Joe had a very gruff voice, you had a job to know what he was talking about, he wasn't all that old when he died.

I have covered as briefly as possible my Uncle's lives, now I will turn to my four Aunties. Aunt Alice was the oldest, a most handsome woman, she lived at the bottom of Lady Street, she had a big family, but her husband died more or less a young man. What happened was this. In the middle of the night one of the children wanted some water and Aunt Alice's husband went down stairs to get it, he stepped on a tin toy cut his foot and later on it developed into gangrene and he died. Aunt Alice was left with a big family to bring up. She done it well. She had three sons and five daughters, two of the sons joined the Royal Navy and reached the rank of Cheif Petty Office, the youngest son, Edward, worked some years at A R Heeks on the Market Place, eventually he became a head salesman for Crawford Biscuit firm, and one of the daughters done well. She was working in London when she came into contact with a South African who was visiting this country. He got her to go with him to South Africa. His family turned out to be very rich and cousin Lily married her South African friend. Aunt Alice had a struggle and as the years went by they took its toll. Aunt Alice was taken away and wasn't all that old when she died.

Then came Aunt Charlotte (Aunt Lottie) she was my favourite Auntie, I used to like her ginger cake and ginger wine, no matter what time you called at her house there was a bit of cake and glass of ginger wine. Aunt Lottie was very deaf, she was a happy old soul. She had three sons and three daughters, there again she lost her husband at an early age and was left on her own, her sons and daughters gradually drifted away in their search for

work. Aunt Lottie was pretty old when she died.

Auntie Flo was the most sophisticated of my Aunts, she was very trim and proper. She had served in the households of some rich people, and if anyone visited Auntie Flo everything would be just right. Her husband, Frank Sturgeon, was farm Foreman for Mr Walton, they only had one child, Harold, he went to work in London at Fortnum and Masons until he retired and he came back to Lavenham. Auntie Florrie and Uncle Frank were pretty old before they died.

Then there was Auntie Minnie, the youngest of my Aunts and Uncles. Auntie Minnie was born in 1882. She married a farm labourer, a Mr Poulson (Skinny Poulson). They had one daughter, Ivy, she was born within an hour of my sister Ivy. Auntie Minnie had a very peculiar mannerism, she would walk very fast and seemed to shake her head as she went along and once more she lost her husband at an early age, like Auntie Alice and Auntie Lottie.

When my Father died Aunt Minnie would take over sorting out the things to keep and those to go. Auntie Minnie was quite old when she died. I have covered all my Uncles and Aunts on my Father side.

Now I will turn to my Mother, she had two brothers, Uncle Hatty and Uncle Johny and one Sister, Aunt Polly. I can remember all of them well. Uncle Hatty had something wrong with his leg, I think one was shorter than the other, his wife was a strikingly good looking. I think she came from Romaney background. I think they had seven children. There was Drawer Welham, Cock Welham, Spiers Welham. The girls Tense Welham, Dol Welham the other two girls I forget their Christian names. They wasn't all that old when Uncle Hatty and his wife died. Then came Uncle Johny, he was a farm labourer who married a Mrs Collins whose husband had died. She had no children by her first marriage, but had two daughters by Uncle Johny. Uncle Johny worked at Mr Thorpe's farm which was situated north west of Lavenham and roughly about a mile away. All the farm workers at that time walked to work. Uncle Johny tread the road out of Lavenham on to Bury Road veered to the left and on to Mr Thorpe's a thousand times and more. I think he was a tea totaler. I never heard of him going into a pub. One of his daughters married and lived at Chelmsford, the other one, Elsie, married a Cavendish man and lived just outside Bury. Elsie came to a tragic end, one day while shopping in Bury she collapsed in a shop and died.

I would go and visit Uncle Johny and Auntie Florrie right up to the time they died. My Mother's sister, Aunt Polly lived next to the old Lavenham Co-op. She had lost her husband and was living with her daughter Emily and husband William (Honey Long). She had another daughter, Maud, who lived at Ilford. Aunt Polly was one of the old brigade, cooking, darning and sewing. When I was a little boy I would go to their house on some pretext. I knew what time they sat down for their evening dinner, about 9 o'clock, I had already had mine at 6 o'clock. I would knock at their door, the door would open and a lovely smell would pervade my nostrils, they all sat round the table, Emily, her three sons, William, Fred and Reggie and the girl Rosie and old man Honey. Aunt Polly would be supervising the meal. "Come on in Joe" she would say, "Have you had your dinner?", "Yes Aunt Polly" I replied, she would take no notice of that remark but would go to the pantry and emerge with a big basin and fill it up with pea soup, it was lovely. Her daughter Emily died early in life leaving Aunt Polly in charge of the Long household. The years went by poor old Aunt Polly became old and ill and was taken to Walnutree Hospital (The old Sudbury Workhouse). She wasn't there long before her daughter Maud took her back with her to Ilford, where she died. I have covered briefly the details of the lives of my Uncles and Aunts and now I will relate about my sisters and brother.

Sister Minnie

Sister Minnie was born in 1897. As she was about fifteen years older than myself I cannot remember much about her as a young girl, but when the 1914 war broke out she was conscripted into a Ball Bearing Factory, it was Hoffman's Ball Bearing factory at Chelmsford. We had some relations living there, Dash Welham so sister Min lodged with them. This was where she was to meet her future husband, Jack Roston, a native of Sheffield, Waddlesley was the area he lived in. By sheer coincidence my Father was stationed at Chelmsford, guarding German Prisoners of War, and he kept an eye on his daughter Minnie. He was worried about the officer's dances. But he wasn't so worried when she cast her glances at a Sheffield Private. They eventually married at Lavenham Church. I think Minnie was about twenty two when she married. Herbert Copping, a Bury St Edmunds man living at Lavenham drove them to Church in horse and carriage. Sister Minnie had two daughters, Betty and Ivy and one son, Ken. Sister Minnie lost her husband Jack during the War. He had gone into hospital with stomach ulcer trouble, and while waiting for an operation he suffered a heart attack and died. At the time son Ken was in the Navy serving aboard H M S Nelson. So Minnie was alone with two little daughters. But she coped alright her children gave her inspiration to carry on and she is alive today at the age of ninety.

Brother George

I have previously talked about brother George, so there is nothing to add to what I have already written.

Sister Elsie

Another devoted sister, she looked after Grannie Barrell and Uncle Bill (Gunner Barrell) as a young girl. As the years went by she courted a Lavenham man Mr Harry (Pudding) Simpson. I think Elsie done the courting because on a Sunday night Harry and my brother George and other Lavenham boys would go to Hadleigh in search of girls. Poor old Elsie was worried stiff. Harry at the time was working at Byford's farm as third horseman, but there was big money to be had in London, his sister and her husband lived there and Harry got a job at Harvey's in Grenich. It wasn't long before Elsie followed him. She got a job in a public house. They got married and lived in a house in Trinity Street, Canning Town, London. Uncle Cull and Aunt Min occupied the upstairs and Harry and sister Elsie downstairs. I have had some good old times with Harry, he loved the atmosphere of a pub, but he never forgot his home, he was a good husband.

When War broke out Harry volunteered for the Royal Navy, he was cut out for the job, he had that swagger when he walked, but he was turned down because he was on War Production, Skilled Work. They had one daughter, Ivy. As a young girl she was not all that strong and a doctor advised Harry and Elsie it would benifit her if they moved into the country. This they did moving to Welwyn Garden City and Harry commuting between Welwyn Garden City and King Cross daily to get to his I work at Greenwich. Harry saw some terrible sights as he volunteered for night work. After his night shift was over he would take a bus or underground to Kings Cross railway station, on arrival at Kings Cross he would see some terrible scenes of carnage. Poor old Harry developed diabetes and then tubercolosis and eventually died. Sister Elsie carryed on with daughter Ivy, who with change of air improved her health. She got married to a Bill Latchford of Birmingham, cousin to the great England footballer Bob Latchford. They had three boys, Paul Mark and Clive. Sister Elsie married again to a Mr Bill Lougheed, one of the best, but Elsie never got over losing Harry. She tried to lose her thoughts by working hard, she worked for the medicene people, Roches and was an overseer. She neglected her meals and developed stomack ulsers and one day she collapsed at work with a perforated ulcer, but after the operation she had a stroke. But Elsie battled on and visited Lavenham in a wheelchair and Bill Lougheed looked after her well. Sister Elsie is gone. Bill her husband is still around, but not enjoying very good health.

Sister Maud

As a young girl sister Maudie worked as a servant for Mr and Mrs Goddard, farmers. The farm was about one mile from Lavenham on the Bury road. On her afternoons and evenings off my Dad would go home with her, until I was old enough to escort my sister. Poor old dad had been ploughing all day and did not relish a two mile walk, so I stepped into the breach. I begun to like the trips because Mrs Goddard would invite me inside to partake of a big rock cake and a steaming hot mug of cocoa. Until one night, it was pitch dark winter time, I was about twelve and Maudie severnteen, I had my usual rock cake and mug of cocoa and was sprinting across the fields until I was suddenly rooted to the spot. There ahead of me was something moving about in white, I was spell bound, I had heard about ghosts, this looked like the real thing. I summoned the courage to dash by, talk about Roger Banister and the four minute mile, he wasn't in it. I regular flew across the field and on to the Bury road and then I didn't stop until I got home. My father had a good laugh, "It was a bullock or cow you saw with its white face", after that I was prepared for this to happen again, but I knew what it was.

Maudie left the Goddard household and got a job in the Cornard road Sudbury, where she was to see her furture husband Basil (Banger) Wright, they married and took over the public house 'The Angel Inn' at Glemsford. Maudie was very talented, give her a sewing machine and she could make anything, from a wedding dress to a costume, and she loved cooking. War broke out and Basil joined the RAF, by this time Maudie had a little daughter Jean, so she had a full time job looking after the pub and little Jean. With the War over Basil returned. They left the 'Angel' and took over the Glemsford 'Lion'. Years went by and Basil was crippled up with arthritis. They retired from the pub and got a nice little council bungalow. They were not there long before Basil died. The strain of the years began its toll on Maudie, she had a stroke was admitted to the West Suffolk hospital, where I visited her nearly every day. One day she said to me "Joe, I shall come out of this place in a box", but she was reprevied for about a year. She had another stroke, her proffersy of a year ago had come true, she came out of Bury in a box. She was a good sister, she could never do enough for you.

Sister Ivy

Sister Ivy was nearly three years older than myself. I have already told of the times when Ivy and myself were little children. Ivy on leaving school went to the same farm to work, Mr Goddards, she was not there long before the Goddards daughter Mabel got married to an officer and went to live at Crookham near Aldershot and sister Ivy went with them. Later on she changed Households and went to Chiselhurst. It was quite an occasion when sister Ivy had to leave home and journey to Crookham, Dad took a day off work, he accompanied her to London where she was met by her future employer. This was the parting of the ways for his little girl. The last he saw of her was going down the escalator tears streaming down her cheeks. After quite a time she moved to Chiselhurst, and then on to Wanstead Flats, where she was to meet her future husband, Victor Finn, he was in the Royal Corp of Signals, he had joined up as a boy soldier at the age of fourteen, this was about 1935 Victor was cut out for the Army. As a young soldier he had worked in a Post Office at Bristol. This was all part of the Army's education in the Royal Corps of Signals. Ivy and Vic eventually married and shared a house in Stratford

with an elderly couple. As always in the Army you are continually on the move and Victor was posted to Prittlewell, Southend and living in the Drill Hall Ivy was a bit frightened, as there was an armoury of weapons in the building. Sometimes she would be completely on her own, but nothing untoward happened.

Time Vic and Ivy were there Vic had become a sergeant, and was recruiting sergeant wandering around Southend trying to get recruits, for every recruit he got meant an extra five shillings in his pay packet.

When Vic and Ivy came to Lavenham I can remember one time I was on holiday, I hired a bike for Vic and we went on a pub crawl, starting at Preston Bells and then we made our way to Brent Eleigh Cock. On our way we had seen some soldiers in the distance on maneuvers and passing on a narrow road we were pounced on by a party of soldiers, who wanted to know if we had seen the 'enemy', meaning the soldiers we had seen. Vic was in civilian clothes and when he replied in Army jargon they looked stunned. We had a couple of pints at the Cock and then it was on to Lavenham Cock finally finishing up at Lavenham Angel. I shall always remember one night we had been up to the Angel and we were well oiled on Truemans bitter, when we came out Vic said to me "You watch this Joe", he walked towards Heeks Shop on the Market Place and shined up the drainpipe, he went right up to the roof, I could vision the pipe pulling out from the wall, but thank goodness nothing happened and he went back to Southend with all his limbs intact.

By, this time they had two young children. Pat three and a half and Peter two. Then Victor was posted again, this time to Catterick Camp, Berkshire and was made up to Warrant Officer, by this time Hitler was making quite a name for himself. War was mentioned but it was still some time away. A lot of the Officers Cadets from Sandhurst Military College would find themselves at Catterick and Victor would take them in hand. I have heard sister Ivy mention that some evenings some Officers would arrive at sister Ivy's and Vic's billets to learn what they could from Vic. Vic was asked time and time again to take a commission as a Lieutenant, but he had refused, he was better off money wise as he was. But the moment arrived when Vic was posted abroad. Ivy was a bit hesitant in making a decision whether to go or not. My Father soon settled the issue, he said to Ivy "Your place is by your husbands side", and Ivy Vic and the two children sailed in the troopship 'Dunera' for Abbassia Egypt. This was about 1938 and War was over a year away, but eventually it happened, all women Army personal were told to be in readiness for a move. Vic was given sixty hours leave, he was on maneuvers in the desert and he joined Ivy before she and the children embarked on the Empress of Britain, bound for South Africa. Burlington Court, South Beach, Durban was to be her home for the next two or three years, just before she left Vic had been made an Officer. I was to see Ivy, Pat and Pete a few years later, but more to that later on.

I will now return to my story of my young life. I was still working in the stone quarry, sports club at night and weekends at Sudbury, sometimes going in Mr Booth's bus driven by a Mr Fred Marsh, one shilling return. We would go to the pictures, or walk aimlessly up and down the street, at around the age of twenty or twenty one I was involved in a boxing match. As I have said previously we used to knock each other about down at the sports club. Anyway I came home from work one night with my Mother telling me that Dr Clousten had called and wanted to see me after surgery hours, I went to see him that night. He told me that the local Nursing Association were putting on a 'do' to raise funds and would I take part in an exhibition of boxing and could I find an opponent. I told him I did not know much about boxing, "That's alright" he said. I thought I had the measure of a Mr Harold (Piggy) Andrews although no one said that to his face. So Piggy agreed, the venue for the fight was in a meadow at the back of the Hall Farm, owned by Mr Wolton. Dr Clousten had a nephew, Randolph Clousten, he; was a University boxing champion, two amateur champions from the north of England, Andy Newton an ex-professional boxer, he was blind and was to give a punch ball display. Piggy and myself completed the set up that summers evening. On the evening of the fight Piggy arrived at my house saying "No hard hitting you know Joe", I agreed, I told him we had got to show the little skills we had, that was all Dr Clousten wanted. The time arrived, Andy Newton the blind boxer was the first to show his skills, they brought him into the ring, he got hold of the ropes and went round the ring, and then he got working on the punch bag. It was an education to watch him. After a few minutes he sang a parody of Flanagan and Allen, of Underneath the Arches, I cannot remember all of it, but it went something like this.

Knocked out when its raining,
And knocked out when its fine,
I hear the count of ten,
Canvas is my pillow, no matter where I fall,
Underneath the Referees Hand,
I dream my counts away.

Randolf Clousten had brought a friend with him from University and they gave an exhibition. Then the two northerners had a go, amateur champions in their day. Then it was time for the two locals, Piggy and myself. Getting into the ring we both acknowledge the plaudits of the crowd. Little did they know they were in for a blood thirsty treat. Reg Pryke an ex-battalion champion of the Suffolk Regiment was in my corner, and one of the amateur boxers friends in Piggy's corner. Piggy wore the white knicks and white singlet, myself in

white knicks with a red singlet. The stage was set, the bell rang. This was supposed to be an exhibition, it was far from that, we really let go at each other, no quarter given. The first round ended, Reg said to me "I'm afraid you lost that one". The bell rang for the second round it was more fiercer than the first. Piggy's nose was bleeding, my left eye half closed as I went to my corner at the end of the second round. Reg said to me "That was about equal". The bell sounded for the third and last round. Talk about a couple of wild cats, we fitted the bill. Piggy's white vest and my red one were covered in blood. The fight ended with some official walking to my corner and raising my arm as the winner, Reg said to me "Go and congratulate Piggy", which I did, and then another official came to me and told me they had made a mistake and Piggy was the winner, his extra weight, eleven and a half stone, six feet one inch to my ten stone five feet nine inches made all the difference. After it was all over I walked down Hall Road with Reg he said to me "I've seen in a lot of fights and seen a lot, but your fight tonight was one of the best I've seen". Piggy was a good scrapper in the street, he once had a fight with three brothers, the Cresswells. and knocked out all three. The Cresswells kept a greengrocery shop in the High Street. The old man was an Eastern Counties Bus driver. It was the intention of Dr Clousten to give a silver medal to the winner, but because we had put up such a good fight he gave us one each. Piggy and me saw the two amateur boxers that evening, they told us that we didn't know much about boxing, but that we would certainly be able to look after ourselves. They left us a couple of pints each, so ended that summers evening.

By this time the big transition from silent films to the talkies was taking place, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Four Horsemen*, *Ben Hur* were just fading memories.

Mr and Mrs Sam Leeks of Lavenham were wonderful people. If they could help others they would. When the Black Lion closed as a pub they took it over. They catered for some of the Theatre people who were thrown out of work. It was tragic to see these people who a few years previous were performing in the biggest Halls in England, were-now reduced to playing in front of a handful of people and some of those were not appreciative of the talents of these people. One particular group were called 'The Wallamalacker Lucy Group', they performed the play 'Maria Marten and the Red Barn' several times also 'Doctor Crippon' and other murder plays. They had a lovely girl Top Dancer, I could have watched her all night. One night a very embarrassing incident arose, a fellow from Monks Eleigh, who had served throughout the 1914-16 War sat in the front seat and he continually kept taking his shoes and socks off and he would smell his socks, the audience were laughing more at him-than at the players. No one realised he was shell shocked and when the stage manager suggested he was getting more attention from the audience and would he step up onto the stage, to the amazement of every one he did. Any way it ended happily. Mr and Mrs Leeks looked after these people well. They earned very little money and Sam and Mrs Leeks kept them going with good wholesome food inside of them. They liked it so much they kept coming back.

The Home Field at the rear of the Lion belonged also to Mr and Mrs Sam Leeks. In getting to Home Field you had to pass through some gardens, on one side was a quoits bed. This was a lovely game, a mud patch with a feather stuck upright, the quoit was an iron ring about six inches in diameter, the idea was to get as near to the feather as possible and sometimes the player with an underarm throw would encircle the feather. Entering the Home Field itself on one side was a tennis court surrounded by wire netting ten feet high then the football field. Nearly all festivities were carried out on this field. I will always remember the Abdication of King Edward and the Coronation of King George. It was a lovely day, there were sports and other activities, one of them was a push ball contest. The ball was about four feet six inches in diameter you started from the centre of the field, the idea was to push the ball over your opponents goal line, fifteen minutes each way. My team was Fred Cady, Fred Jarvis, Len Offird and myself. The opposing team were George (Lander) Rampling, Bill his younger brother, Len (Frickle) Howe, their fourth member of the team I can't remember. We won it and received a biscuit barrell, which I have to this day. The pubs were open all day. Plenty of food on the field, Alfred. (Rugger) Steward, Fred Cady and myself got our mouth organs out and marched round the field playing lusterly. When we had runned out of wind Johny Parmenter came up to us and said, "Come on lets go to the Greyhound, I have collected quite a bit of money", apparently he had been following up cap in hand and money had been thrown into it. We got in the pub and Johny counted the money, fifteen shillings. Johny, Rugger and myself had a pint of 'stingo', very strong beer. Fred Cady a shandy, he never drunk anything stronger. We got the mouth organs out, the pub was crowded, when suddenly the door opened, a Lavenham man well known in Suffolk circles and a Justice of the Peace approached Johny Parmenter, the conversation went something like this, "And who gave you permission to collect money? and who was you collecting it for?", Johny was at a loss for words, then he said "For the festivities Sir", "How much have you got left?", the gentleman enquired "Five shillings" Johny replied, "Alright lets have it" and Johny put it in the mans hand. "You have broken the law, but because this is a day of rejoicing I will say no more about it", and the gentleman departed, Johny gave a wink and a laugh and ordered some more 'stingo'.

Sam Leeks as well as owning the former pub premises and Home Field, runned a fried fish shop on the Market Place. As little boys, in the winter time we would stand outside and smell the lovely fish frying. Mr Leeks sometimes would call us inside and wrap us up some fritters, we got these for nothing, anyway they would have been chucked out, if we had not had them, they tasted lovely. After eating these we would dash

down to the Cinema at the bottom of Barn Street and stand there for half an hour hoping that Mr Cook would let us in. Sometimes he would. There would be serials on, 'Elmo the Mighty', 'Eddie Polo' and 'Charlie Chaplin', so much for nostalgia.

Rugger, Fred and myself had played so much together with the mouth organs that we became well known, in fact we were called 'The Lavenham Harmonica Trio', and would go to various Womens Institutes and perform. When Wilfred Pickles came to Lavenham Swan to make a Radio recording of the Lavenham Handbell Ringers we were invited to take part. Fred was too shy to take part so we did not go out on air, but we did one night meet some famous people. It happened one night about a week before Christmas, Rugger, Fred and myself were playing our mouth organs in the Swan, we had been playing for some time, when Mr Mills (Hoppy) the barman came into our room and enquired who was the leader of our band. "I am said Rugger, "Well you are wanted in the Saloon Bar", Rugger was gone about five minutes, came back, "Come on bandsmen we have to play in front of some celebrities", Rugger had apparently been told who they were, we went into the room. There were three men and two women. One man I recognised, it was Giles Guthrie of Brent Eleigh Hall. His Father was a shipping magnate. Giles owned a blood red coloured aeroplane. He would scare the life out of the Lavenham inhabitants by his low flying. I believe he had some secret women admirers in Lavenham. Rugger asked the three gentlemen what they wanted us to play. "Play what you have been playing in the other bar, it sounded lovely". The songs we had played were Roaming in the Gloaming, I belong to Glasgow, I love a Lassie, When you Played the Organ and I Sung the Rosary, I Don't care what you used to be, I Know what You Are Today. By this time our friends were very happy, we were being regaled with beer, Fred with shandy. Then it was time for our hats to go round. They had done us proud, they called for barman Mills, "Now barman" Giles said, "You see these three man, give them all the beer they want from Christmas Eve until Boxing night, nothing stronger, and send the bill to Brent Eleigh Hall". The two men with Giles Guthrie turned out to be 'Scott and Black' the first men to fly from England to Australia.

Rugger was in his element, Christmas Eve could not come quick enough, we had to assist Rugger home on two occasions. He used to love to get on a table in a pub and tap dance and playing the mouth organ. He was one of the best mouth organ players I ever knew, Fred Cady was not far behind him. I can remember Rugger, Fred and myself going to Melford Fair. We left our bicycles at Melford Hare, when it was time to go home Rugger found one of his tyres flat, so we had four and a half miles walk home. Rugger insisted that we come to his house for something to eat. Maudie his wife was still up, he explained about the bike and said he was hungry, Maudie brought out jam tarts, this was twelve o'clock at night. Rugger, Fred and Maudie are all gone.

Factories, Mills, Blacksmiths and Pubs The Tradesmen, Shopkeepers, Butchers, Barbers

Lavenham like any other small towns and villagers had its characters and eccentrics, but above all they had great loyalty to their customers. Many big families have been helped from near starvation by these people. Mr Howlett, Butcher was one of those. All the slaughtering was done at the rear of the premises, it was good meat then, a bit of taste in it. Mr Howlett loved to have a bet on the horses and customers would have a weekly flutter, sixpence each way. Mr Wheeler, Butcher, had the shop now owned by Mr Newman, but I think all the slaughtering was done up Bears Lane. Then came Butcher Hardy, he had a shop down Water Street, opposite Barn Street. On the Market Square were two more Butchers. Mr Jim Mills and near the alley way Mr Prentice, that completed the Butchers in Lavenham. Somehow they all got a living.

Fish shops, Mr Rudd was the leading one, he delved in wet fish, fried fish, poultry, welks, winkles, shrimps, lobsters the lot. Some of the happy hours we spent down the sports club was due to Mr Rudd's fried fish and welks. Old man Mr Rudd, Herbert's Father I am talking about was a nice old man and kept strictly to his business, he had two sons and one daughter. One son was killed either before or after the 1914 war. It happened round the Bottoms, the road leading from the Common. Apparently both brothers were riding in a horse and cart and were cantering round a bend, mounted the bank, the cart turned over and the brother was killed. Then it was on to another fishmonger, 'Distant' Fearman, his shop was near Hardy's Butchers shop. Mr Fearman was quite an unusual character. I would sometimes go there for an orange or sometimes something for my Mother. Every time he served you he hummed a little ditty, like this, "La de da de da", Mr Fearman could also get rid of an unwanted orange, one what was just slightly going off he could put his hands on it without looking at it, singing his little ditty, la de da de da, sometimes some boys would try and imitate him and he would chase them out of the shop. One of Mr Fearman's relatives married my Aunt Alice.

Mr Sam Leeks had a fish shop, I should say fried fish shop, I think he done very well. Mr Bob Lambert worked for him. You could go there up to eleven o'clock at night and be served. Later on when Mr Lambert took over from Mr Leeks, I used to send a sack of winkles from Portmadoc, North Wales to Bob, this was during the war. It would cost me six and a tanner to send them to Lavenham. Bob would send me a pound note, not bad for an afternoons work, thirteen shillings and sixpence, nearly as much as I was getting a week. There was a fried fish shop opened later on opposite Lavenham Cock. Now there is no fish shops at all, if you want fish and chips you have to journey to Long Melford or Sudbury.

Turning to the General Stores was the Star Supply Stores, the earliest Manager I can recollect was a Mr Cox. The old Co-Op, which was next to my Aunt Polly's. In that day and age this was the working mans and womens shop. I can remember a Mr Mills as Manager, assistants were Fred (Prykie) Pryke, he lived up Market Lane with his widowed Mother until he married Fred (Sootie) Lambert's daughter and went to Bury to live. Poor old Prykie never gave much warning before he died, his wife Lorna went downstairs to prepare a cup of tea, when she took it upstairs Prykie was dead. The other assistant was Leslie Boyden, he was a good footballer and played for Lavenham Town. A R Heeks was another store, you could buy anything from there, from a pound of best quality bacon or ham to a mouse trap, and it is still the same today. Mr Heeks and son Clifford are both gone, but daughter-in-law Mrs Heeks and son John ably assisted by a devoted employee, Eric Walker, carry on the good work. There was other various little shops just managing to scrape through.

Then there was Lingard Ranson and his wife in their little shop on the Market Square. How they scraped a living I don't know. Lingard a great historian. What he didn't know about Lavenham wasn't worth knowing. Armed with tripod and black sheet he could be seen taking photographs of the old buildings. His shop sold anything from a pair of trousers to a packet of pins and in the early stages when I was a boy, he would make anyone a suit, he was a first class tailor. Sootie Lambert's son Fred was apprenticed to him. He used to love his little jokes, I would go into his shop to buy a cap, "And what can I do for you Joe?", "I would like a cap Mr Ranson Please", I would reply. Within seconds two tiers of caps would appear on the counter. I would fit several on and then say "I'll have This one Mr Ranson please, and how much is it?", Mr Ranson would look furtively round the room and then he would say "As you come from aristercratic stock I will knock a tanner off, to you my aristercratic friend two bob". I had been told that one of my ancestors was Lord of the Manor at Thorpe Morieux. Kitty and Lindgard, his son and daughter, still carry on the same little shop.

Then at the bottom of Market Lane just round the corner was Mr Diaper's grocery and drapery shops, Mr Moore managed the grocery department, as a little boy I would buy Locusts, they were ever so sweet. I used to go there for my Father's tobacco. It was most intriguing to watch him weigh it, he would take a bit of tobacco away no thicker than a human hair, next door was the owner of the two shops, Mr Diaper, there was something wrong with his leg as he wore a thick shoe. He would measure you up for a suit, but some outsiders would do the work. There was a good selection of boots and shirts. Mr Diaper was the Lavenham Congregational Chapel organist for several years and a good one at that. I pumped the bellows of the organ for Mr Diaper two or three years, one night I busted them, we were playing a Hymn, my eyes were fixed on the leaden weight as it went up and down, when suddenly the effort to pump was easy. Mr Diaper peered round the corner of the organ, "Pump up Joe" he shouted, the congregation must have heard him, I furiously pumped the handle up and down but to no avail "I have busted the bellows". They pulled my leg and said it was my fault, but of course it wasn't. It was mended at Cambridge and cost forty pounds.

There were other small shops. There was Mitchels down my street, Prentice Street. There trade was done mostly in sweets. Polly Knowle, he had a parrot in cage hung outside his door. You would say to it "What's the time Poll", "Half past nine" it would answer. This was another little shop that relied on selling sweets for a living. Then came the cobblers shops with the 1914-1918 war over several men learnt a trade and cobbleing was one of them. Bert (Shirty) Long mixed the job with a part-time job as Postman. Zincie Durrant was fully employed as a cobbler. All these small businesses earned a precarious living. It was marvoulous how they got a living.

Roper's Factory

Mr Roper was the Top man of Lavenham, he lived up Church Street in a big house, Mr Len Offord as a teenager was Footman to Mr Roper, he looked a dapper little fellow in his uniform and shinning buttons. Mr Roper mixed with the elite on shooting occasions, he used to shoot with Royalty at Brettenham Park. He was a very overpowering man, his word was Law. He had two or three sons, one of them suffered from T B., Jack Ropers, he built a magnificent model of Lavenham Church, he died at quite an early age. One of the other sons played football for Lavenham Town when he was home from university.

Mr Mellis was the manager of .the coconut matting factory and Mr Jack Jarvis was foreman over the men. A Hooter would sound at dinner time and again one hour later. Jack Jarvis was one of the first men in Lavenham to make a wireless receiving set, (Cats Whickers) with earphones. One day he had, gone home to dinner, he had put his earphones on and heard that snow had fallen in Wales, Jack could not get back to the factory quick enough, "What do you think men, what I have just heard? snow has fallen in. Wales", This seemed incredible that news could travel so fast. Roper had another factory down Water Street. Then there-was Paynes Factory down Barn Street, both were horse hair weaving, when the recession came in the 1920's the factories started to grind to a halt.

Baker's Mill

Nearly seventy years ago I would lay in my bed at 42 Prentice Street, the time would be six o'clock in the morning. The chug chug of Baker's steam engine would sound, George Bradley was .preparing the flour mill for the start of the working day at seven am. George was pretty clever, he kept that mill agoing for a lot of years.

When he retired his son Ivan took over. Later on the steam engine was replaced by a deisel engine. Mr John Baker employed three or four men to run the mill. The foreman was Mr Hyde-Smith, second man was Mr Sam Leeks and third Nubby Long, as time went by they added to the workforce. The noise of the engine told me. I had another couple of hours in bed. Then in the distance I could hear the sound of clanking railway trucks being shunted into position. This happened every morning except Sunday. In status John Baker was second to Roper and probably on a par with Mr Wolton. Mr John Baker was a big man. In addition to the Mill he owned two farms, Brights Farm to the west of Lavenham and Nether Hall to the north east, he would generally visit these farms in his landeua and horse, he nearly always wore his black top hat. Mrs Baker was also a big woman. She dressed like the old Queen Mary, if those two had stood side by side you would have not known the difference. They had four sons I think, the oldest one was a peace and war time serving officer. In the last war as a Lieutenant Colonel, he commanded the 1st or 5th Suffolk Regiment on their ill fated journey to Singapore. He was a great leader of men. On one occasion the Japanese force marched Colonel Baker and his men to the point of endurance, several men had beri beri including Colonel Baker, only through his leadership were they able to get to their destination. Another son, he had a wooden leg. I don't know how he lost it, but I think it was in the first world war, he worked for Ridley's the paint people at Bury St Edmunds. Then came Arthur Baker he spent most of his time looking after the two farms. In fact when he got married we had a good old 'do' in the Malton Buildings facing Prentice Street. It was a sad time for me as in that week my brother George got drowned in the river Stour at Cornard, but my parents insisted that I went to this 'do' as I worked for Mr Baker. Mr Baker carved the meat and there was plenty of beer for everyone. People who kept chickens came to the mill for the corn, and those people who kept a pig, and there were several of them, got their sacks of meal from the mill. The farmers in the vicinity of Lavenham brought some of their corn to the mill. Sometimes on a Monday morning one could see a big long waggon full of sacks of flour, four horses being driven by Ernie Poulson, coming out of the mill yard on their way to Bury St Edmunds, winter and summer this happened. If the roads were icy Ernie would take his four horses down to Huffey's the Blacksmith to be frost nailed. Ernie was entrusted with this big load and four horses all on his lonesome with sharp hills to negotiate, but Ernie always got there. My brother George worked for John Baker at Bright's farm, which was about a mile from Prentice Street, two or three times a week he would get a puncture. Instead of buying a new tube and tyre he would spend his money on chocolate and sweets, brother George never smoked and seldom drunk beer. One of his working friends was the stockman Trump Steward, he would walk all the way home to dinner and back again in the space of an hour, despite being double ruptured, he was also very deaf. My brother would shout when he was at home thinking he was still talking to old Trump.

There were two Blacksmiths in Lavenham, Huffey, the old man and his two son's, Fred and Bert. The other was Mr Welton. Mr Huffey's work place was down Water Street. I used to love to watch them shoeing the horses. The lovely smell when they burnt the horses feet to fit the iron shoes, and also when they had rogue horses to deal with, the horse would rear up and go right into the street, Bert could put them right by putting a twitch on their nose. This was a small leather noose fixed onto a small wooden pole, as you twisted the pole it would tighten on the nose, the Huffey's could then proceed in comfort. I think Bert was the most skilled workman of the lot. I have seen some lovely ornamental gates made by him, he would make me an iron hoop in a matter of minutes for one shilling. Bert was very religous, as a lay preacher he would travel to a lot of Chapels in the area. His brother Fred was closely connected with the Foresters, a Brotherhood Organisation and club, I joined this when I was only fourteen. The venue for this club as it is today was the Angel Hotel. When I joined there was quite a ritual to go through. I was told to stand outside the room knock on the door three times, a little hole would appear in the door and a voice would say "How many members?" and I would reply "One million members", only then would I be admitted to the room. There were men there with pretty coloured sashes round their bodies. Mr Alfred (Lump) Turner, his son's Charlie and Frank, Fred Huffey and other men who I just can't remember, one of them got hold of one of my fingers and I had to repeat what they said, then a sash was put round my waist and I became a fully qualified member, this was sixty two years ago and it is still runned today.

Blacksmith Welton was not as prominent as the Huffey's. Their Blacksmiths shop was situated just off the High Street and now the premises of the Co-Op. Bob Welton was quite a likeable man, I have seen him, Zincie Durrant and some more tradesmen well oiled in the Angel, their favourite song. Keep right on to the end of the road.

BARBERS

There were three Barbers in Lavenham. Bill Parker, he lost his leg in the first World War, but he was a part time Barber he used to run the Bureau or Unemployment Exchange as they call it today. The time when I was a little boy I would stand outside his shop waiting for some one with horse and trap. I would ask the man can I look after the horse while you are in the Barbers, most of them said the horse would be alright. There was one man I used to watch for, he was estate agent for Sir Courtney Warner Baronet. About once a fortnight on a Saturday morning he would draw up on the Market Place outside Bill Parker's, "Can I look after your horse mister?", "Certainly boy", he would go inside for a shave and hair cut, about half an hour later he would emerge, feel in his pocket and give me threepence. I would look forward to the time he would come again. Fred (Sootie)

Lambert was one of those men who found themselves out of work when Ropers Factory closed down. He was a full time Barber. I would often get a free hair cut with some one who wanted to get away quickly taking my place. The third Barber was Mr Newby Bulmer, he worked mostly nights, as he was a plumber for Mr Bouroughes, he was a funny man in more ways than one. Bill Parker was my number one Barber, Sootie Lambert number two, but sometimes if both were ill you were forced to go to Newby Bulmer. You would go in his shop, "I would like a hair cut Mr Bulmer please", "And who done it last time?" he would say, "Sootie Lambert Mr Bulmer", I would reply, "I have a good mind not to do it", then he would relent, "Get in the chair", he would say in a sharp voice. Newby was the head man on pumps in the village, there were some of them in the gardens of some of the villagers, but they were always going wrong.

I can remember eight Public Houses in Lavenham. Lavenham Cock managed by old Maud Wells, she was a widow and son Archie helped her out also looking after a few pigs which Maud kept. She was a good old gal. She never worried about hygiene, anyone going in the Cock would rattle on the counter, Maud would come out, her hands covered with flour, and draw a pint. In the later days of her life in the pub she was fortunate that a gentleman farmer with pots of money stayed at the Cock for long periods.

I did not know much about the White Horse, in all my life I don't think I went into the pub four times.

The Swan, this pub had only two rooms, saloon and public bar. They also had a snooker and billiard table across the yard. I can remember Mr Bert Death, farmer, and Mr Herbert Rudd, fish monger and poulterer, playing a game of snooker the prize at stake, a motor car.

Then came the Greyhound, this was managed by Mr Saltenstall ex-professional goalkeeper for Norwich City, he also played for Lavenham Town. A Mr and Mrs Sant spent several years there.

Just across the road was the Black Lion, this was the pub used mostly by the Lavenham footballers and their supporters.

Then came the Lavenham Angel Hotel, the largest pub in the village and also had a snooker and billiard table. My earliest recollection of the Angel was Mr and Mrs Goodhew who were the managers. Mr Goodhew, an ex-army R.S.M., a short rotund figure of a man, his wife, Mrs Goodhew was a handsome looking woman, dark with black hair swept back always a comb in her hair to complete the hair style. They had three children, Lionel, Billy and Bessie. As I have said Mr Goodhew was an ex-army man, very disciplined, also Mrs Goodhew. You played the game in that pub or else you were out. In certain ways they were kind. My Mother and Father would take me to the Lavenham Angel on a Sunday night after they had gone to chapel or church. I would be about eight years of age. We would go in the pub about eight o'clock. Mr Goodhew would turn a blind eye. Father would buy me a bottle of gingerade and some biscuits, shove me under a seat with the orders "Keep quiet or else". For two hours I sat there drinking my gingerade and eating my biscuits. As I've said Mr and Mrs Goodhew had two sons and one daughter. Lionel was a peace time soldier like his Father, but he done better than his Father, he became a Lieutenant Colonel, and he served in the Indian Army. Billy the younger brother served in the 1914-1918 war. He joined up at a very young age as a Bugler Boy. He was in Belgium at a place called Albert, when that town was demolished by the Germans. Billy was wounded, but he came home to help his Father and Mother to run the Angel Hotel, he also was a good footballer and played for Lavenham Town. Bessie the daughter took after her Mother in looks, dark and handsome. She married a peace time and war time soldier. Police Seargeant Blofield's son William, a Major in the Military Police.

I can only remember Mr Sweeting keeping the Black Lion.

Now we come to the Anchor Inn at the bottom of Prentice Street. The earliest inn keeper at the Anchor was Mr Twitchet, he only had one leg. I don't know how he lost it, it could have been in the 1914 war or it could have been an accident, I don't know. Mr Twitchet was a nice man, he had one son and daughter. The son was a signal man at Lavenham railway station. I have seen some ups and downs at the Anchor. When we had consistent heavy rain Prentice River would flood and the water would rise up Prentice Street and Mr Twitchets beer barrells would be floating in the river. Mr Twitchet only had one leg but he kept his garden well cultivated.

Finally the Blackbirds Pub. I have only a hazy recollection of that pub, at the time I was a little boy and the horse fairs were going out of fashion. Alfred (Lump) Turner's Father kept the Blackbirds. I've heard my Father say that the Blackbirds would open at six a.m. winter and summer, some agricultural workers would call in for tuppence worth of gin to warm them up for the days work. Those were the days when disagreement broke out in a pub and it was settled in a sporting manor, if a man was knocked down he was allowed to get up and continue the fight, it would only be finished when the loser acknowledged his defeat. My Dad told me a story of when he joined the Suffolk's at the age of nineteen, he was stationed at Warley, Brentwood. He had been in the Army about six months and was home on leave, as Horse Fair was in progress on the Market Place together with a Boxing Booth. My Dad was watching the Booth Boxers parading on the platform. One Eyed Eliett was the proprietor of the Booth, Ruff Smith's brother married One Eyed Eliett's daughter, he was a good boxer. The Proprietor of the Booth waved the gloves in Dad's direction, "Come on Soldier" he said "you should be able to fight", but my Father had doubts, some of the Boxers were double his age and were over the hill. But urged on

by the Lavenham people with "Come on George you aint afraid of them", so he accepted the challenge. He new he was on a hiding to nothing if he stood toe to toe with his opponent. The prize was half a golden sovereign. It was a three round fight, to get the money he had to stay on his feet for the three rounds, but Dad back pedaled for the three rounds with the crowd cheering him to stand up and fight. Anyway he remained on his feet for the three rounds and he got his half sovereign.

The Railway Station

In the nineteen twenty's Lavenham Railway Station was a busy little place. Mr Johnson was the Station Master. Charlie Turner was Goods Clerk and also assisted sometimes at the Passenger Booking Office. The Signal men were Mr Twitched, son of the Anchor Publican, and a Mr Harding, they would demonstrate their expertise with a steel ring with a pouch attached, as the train entered the Station this ring would be interchanged at speed. There would be four plate layers, Mr Walker, Jim Ford, Bert Eady and a Mr Mills, they would patrol from Lavenham to the halfway stage to Melford and also to Cockfield. Coal and Sugar Beet were the main movements and Charlie Turner was kept very busy. Lorries were very few and far between and it was some years later before they presented any challenge to the Railways. Sir Courtney Warner, Baronet of Brettenham Park would arrive in his Bently, two chauffeurs in the front dressed in their full livery. They would arrive at the station at one minute to eight for the eight o'clock train to London. The driver was Mr Tuck of Lavenham living on the Market Place, his co driver was Mr Frank Jarvis, he is still alive today. Royalty would be entertained at Brettenham Park, many a time Kings and Queens have been at Brettenham Park. It was a regular thing for Sir Courtney to travel to London. He did not like waiting a few seconds for a train and would run his car into the station just as the train runned in, but he cut it fine one day, the train left without him, he was furious, that was the last time he travelled to Lavenham Railway Station. It was Colchester for ever afterwards. I have seen the train packed on a Wednesday, Bury market day, people from Sudbury and Long Melford had nearly filled the train. At the six p.m. evening train Mrs Lisa Bercham would be seen collecting the evening news. She would go all over Lavenham with this newspaper shouting out the news, "Child found murdered in London", this was indeed news, very few murders happened in England, Pierpont the executioner spent more time in his pub than hanging people. Lisa Bercham got very little money, winter and summer she would meet that six o'clock train, she received about five bob for the six evenings work.

Now I will return to my original story. I left the employment of Mr Webb of Bassett's Farm Acton and got a job as labourer for Mr Alfred (Lump) Turner of Lavenham. Honey Long was instrumental in getting me the job. I had no regrets in leaving my previous job although Mr Webb was a good employer. Mr Turner was to prove an even better one. This job was one where you met a lot of people. The first bricklayer I went with was Mr Fred (Chalker) Pryke, he was a strange sort of man. One day he would be all over you, the next he would be sulky, he was a good bricklayer and had picked up the trade from a labourer to a bricklayer.

My employer was a good man, he had two sons and two daughters, there was Charlie and Frank, Gladys and Muriel. The two girls were the prettiest you could come across, there mother was also a very handsome woman. In the winter time when building was impossible owing to frost, Mr Turner would do his best to find you a job, some he would send in his garden to dig but it would be a job to get a spade in the ground, Mr Turner knew that. Honey Long, Sammy Boyden and myself were sent to the Lime House to make mortar, but as soon as the Greyhound opened at eleven a.m. Honey was inside. Sometimes the three of us were in there. Frank would come over to the pub, open the door and say "Will one of you go and attend to Jack Allen, he wants a peck of lime", not one word of reproach, he knew we were just whiling away the time till the frosts went, there was enough mortar in the lime house to last nearly a year.

Every Saturday morning I pumped the water up into the tank for the baths of the Turner household at Perseverance House, High Street. This was a regular job which would take me about half an hour, I knew roughly how long it would take and also you could go by the Tell Tale or Overflow. This particular Saturday morning the weather was very severe, anyway it seemed ages before the Tell Tale told its tale, well it didn't, the next thing I knew was the front door opening, Mrs Turner, Gladys and Muriel rushed out of the door shouting "Stop Joe, you are flooding the house", water was pouring through the ceiling and running down the stairs. Water was coming over the top of the tank. When we got things under control and mopped up the water I was worried stiff, to the extent that Mrs Turner gave me tuppence halfpenny to get a small packet of Woodbines from the Co-op. Another more serious incident happened at Preston, we were re-roofing Harry Wightman's roof, it was Good Friday, we had the so called scaffold up. Two ladders, one each end of the house with a hanging trestle hooked and tied to each ladder. A thirty stave ladder would span from the two ladders, two long pieces of four by two made up the guard rail, then another ladder in the middle was the means of entry. There was four of us on this job. Lump Turner, his son Frank, Sammy Boyden, Honey Long and myself. I had just took up a couple of pails of mortar and Frank and Sammy were laying the half tiles, when there was one almighty crack, one ladder snapped in the middle, the whole lot disintergrated, we fell luckily on garden soil, as I lay on the ground I saw a ladder suspended in mid-air, within seconds it descended towards me, all I could do was to lay there helpless, it smacked me full in the face but it didn't knock me out. Mrs Wightman came rushing

out of the house "Oh you poor dears" she said, "Yours face is terrible Joe", my face was lacerated, a piece of wood was sticking in my nose, "You ought to go to Hospital you know Joe", I told her I would be alright. They baved my face and bandaged me up. Frank and Sammy had hurt their backs a little but not much, I cycled home with Frank telling me not to come to work for a few days "And what ever you do don't tell my Dad about it". I don't think he ever knew. When I did go back to work old Lump was there to greet me, "And what have you been up to?" he said "I got hit by a tile Mr Turner", "Serve you right" he said "Look what you are doing on next time". I enjoyed my time with Lump Turner and his son Frank. The work was varied, there was a lot of roof repairing, I didn't mind climbing about, you were doing something good stopping the rain going onto someones bed.

There were three bakers in Lavenham, Mr Dick Turner at the top of Bolton Street, Mr Robinson in the High Street and Mr Mills up Church Street. Sometimes we had the job of relining the oven floors for them. This was not a very welcome task and was always done on a Sunday. Don't forget distance from floor to roof of the oven was about fifteen inches. The floor seemed red hot, you laid sacks on the floor to soak up the heat, you could not remain in there for more than ten minutes at a time it was so hot. Provided you finished the job on Sunday, and you always did, you could have what beer you wanted at a given pub. Your stomach was imprinted red for days afterwards through the hot floor.

Time I was with Lump we built several council houses, some private houses and bungalows. All mixing of cement and mortar was carried out by hand. It was really hard work digging the footings, about two feet wide and two feet six inches deep. All the concrete, as I've said had to be mixed by hand. Nearly all private houses and bungalows were built with red brick. All the joints in the brickwork were raked out. If a bricklayer laid four hundred bricks a day he done well. When the joints were half dry I would get the job of raking them out, so at the end of the day all the joints were raked out and brushed clean until all the brickwork was done. Generally when a bungalow was being built during the summer I would put four hundred bricks in a big tank filled with water, this was my last job at night. In the morning I would get them all out, in a matter of half an hour they would be dry. My bricklayer, Chalker Pryke, would spread the mortar on the wall of the bungalow, Chalker would press the bricks down on to the mortar. There was no need for him to hit the bricks with the trowel, the soaking overnight had done the trick. When all the brickwork had been completed Chalker would say "Mix up a big pail of pointing", this would last him all day, he would start from the chimney and work down. I would start the procedure of pointing by vigourously brushing the brick work clean and then pouring water all over it and then Chalker would start pointing. These movements were carried out until the bungalow was finished. It was either done in black or white painting.

The first time I drove the horse and van to Jordan's lime pit situated just off to the left to the entrance of East Street. I had orders to get half ton of lime, but before I went there I was told to get a hundred weight of black sand, Frank Turner gave me the order, I thought it seemed strange, 'black sand', I had never heard of it, and to make it seem stranger still was that it was April the first. I was to go to a factory called Brunton's. I thought to myself someone is going to have a good laugh out of me. I got to the factory, "Could I have one hundred weight of black sand please", I fully expected the man who greeted me as to what I wanted to burst into laughter, "Come with me" he said, he took me toward a big heap of black sand. I did so feel relieved. It turned out this was the factory that made the ship's propellers and the sand had been burnt black in the moulds. Then it was on to Jordans to get some lime and then for home after stopping for a pint at Acton Crown. This lime had to be slacked or in other words a big ring of sand, lime placed in the middle then water gradually sprinkled over it, after you had put enough water on it you would cover it with sand. It would get hot and, steam after a short while the lime would appear like flour, then you would mix it up for mortar.

The same procedure would be adopted when making hair mortar, except you would have to 'tip' the hair, you would get on your knees and put some bullocks hair and knock it about until it was all nice and loose. The hair would be placed in the ring of lime and sand, you would then use a rake to mingle it with the lime and sand. After a while this mortar, after much buffeting with the shovel, would handle just like a big lump of butter. After a few days it would be used for plastering ceilings and walls. The ceilings would be covered with wooden laths, the first coat would be put on with the surface left rough, then the second coat which would be floated off with a wooden trowel. Then finally a pure lime putty would be spread over the ceiling and smoothed over, when finished it felt like marble. This also applied to the walls.

As I have said there were three bakers in Lavenham, Robinsons, Turners and Mills. Mr Robinson served in the 1914 war and one period he served in Mesopotamia, or as we call it today Iraq. Most bread was took round in a handcart, to outlying hamlets by bicycle with a large basket on the front. Dick Turner would do my Mother's Christmas chicken and charge about sixpence in fact he would bake anything for you, he had two helpers, his son Dick and Potchie Eliston. Tom (Tally) Mills, his premises were up Church Street, he was a plump red face little man. One day I was working for Lump Turner down Baker's Mill, when in came Tally, Mr Baker and Tully had much in common, they liked a little tipple. Mr Baker would come out of his house with a glass of whisky in his hand, "Come on Tully have a drink with me", Mr Baker would say. Tally would grasp the

glass and then say "I can't really take it from you Sir", at the same time drawing the glass closer to his mouth. This was the time of the day when you didn't have to go far for excitement and pleasure, once a fortnight Mr Booth's bus, driven by Frederick Marsh would take us to Bury Corn Exchange. I used to look forward to those outings, two hours of boxing and in the interval a Brass Band would entertain. Fred Cady, Charlie Hunt, Piggy Andrews and myself would go into Everards Hotel for a quick pint. There were some good Boxers came to Bury Corn Exchange at that time. I have seen Larry Gains, Harry Mason of Algate London, Eric Boy Boon, Ginger Sadd of Norwich, Fred Clements of Swaffam Norfolk, Taffy Furse a Newmarket Stable boy. Tiny Woodhouse of Ilford, just a few names to grace the portals of the Corn Exchange. Eric Boy Boon of Chatteris was to go on and win the English and British Light Weight Title. The promoter at the Corn Exchange was a Mr Wally Dakin of Ipswich, an ex-army Middleweight Champion. At the end of the evening Fred Marsh would halt the bus at Sicklesmere and we would go in for fish and chips and eat them on the way home. The evenings entertainment had cost us about six shillings. I was to see Eric Boy Boon later on on television.

It happened this way, television had just broken through in England, I learnt that a certain Mr George Boar, a stockman for Sir Richard Hyde-Parker, had got a television. This was news indeed, it was said at the time that he was the first man in England to have it. His name was in all of the National Newspapers, *News of the World*, *The People*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Herald*, infact George had five hundred proposals of marriage and he did eventually marry one of these people, a nurse, but once the novelty of the television wore off the lady was away. So on a certain evening my mates and myself mounted our bikes and away to Long Melford, Mr Boar lived opposite the Hare public house. We leaned our bicycles against the wall of the house and knocked on the door. Mr Boar answered the door, "Come on in" he said, there was about a dozen seated on chairs and boxes and some people sitting on the floor, we joined those on the floor. Mr Boar went to the television twiddled the nobs and said "The church will soon come on", when it did it was St Pauls Cathedral. We saw Boy Boon fight Arthur Danahar the Irish Champion, Boon stopped him in thirteen rounds. Before we came away Mr Boar went round with his cap, he just asked for sixpence to help with his television.

Time was going on, a certain Herr Hitler was making his presence felt in Germany, in this country a Sir Oswald Mosley was forming a party called the Black Shirts and he and his supporters were keen admirers of the Nazi Germany. Fred Cady and myself were foolish enough to buy these Black Shirts and a white tie, we did not realise the impact that the Mosley Party was having on this country. So one night we cycled to Sudbury resplendent in our BlackShirt and white tie, we put our cycles up at the White Horse and wandered down to the Market Hill, we had not been there five minutes before we were surrounded by a group of young men and they didn't seem all that pleased, they asked us if we belonged to the Fascist Group. We told them we didn't know anything about them, which was true, anyway we managed to break away from them, we got our bikes and it was back to Lavenham. From then on the Black Shirts were kept in moth balls.

My sister Maud and her husband Basil kept the-Angel Inn at Glemsford, Maudie fell ill with Yellow Jaundice so I would cycle over to Glemsford to fetch the dirty washing for my Mother to do. Sometimes Fred Cady would come with me. This was where I was to meet my future wife. Lily.

One Sunday after dinner I prepared to go to Glemsford, my Mother said to me "Surely you are not going in this weather", it was winter time and the ground was covered in hard icy snow. I was alright until I went round a bend before entering Bull Lane, my cycle went from under me and I landed heavily on my shoulder. I knew I had done something serious to my arm. My arm was set fast and I had a terrible pain in my shoulder. With my good arm I guided my cycle to a nearby cottage, a Mrs Wheeler came to the door. I asked her if she could help me by looking after my cycle until I was well again. She said she was sorry she could not help me and her husband was at work feeding cattle. She explained to me where the Doctor lived at Melford. I rung the bell but nobody answered it. So I turned round and begun the long journey back to Lavenham, hoping I would get a lift in a car or something, and there were very few of them about in that day and age and also being a treacherous winters day didn't help matters. I called again at Mrs Wheeler's and told her it would be weeks before I collected my cycle. The poor woman was distraught with worry, "Will you be alright?" were her last words to me as I went down the garden path to the road. That four and a half mile journey was to be the most painful in my life. To make things worse an east wind was blowing into my face and snow was beginning to fall. No motors came by and the pain was dreadful, every two or three hundred yards I would have to stop and put my head in between my legs, nothing in the way of cars or lorries came along, I reconciled myself to the fact that I would have to walk all the way home. How I done it I don't know. Anyway I got to the Lavenham Doctor's, I knocked on the door with my free arm, after a time the big front door swung open and a servant enquired as to what I wanted, I said could I see a Doctor, the servant replied "This is Sunday you know", "I know it is" I replied "But I have broken my arm or shoulder", while this discussion was taking place Doctor Ruth Le Good was in the background listening, she came to the door, took one look of me and asked me inside. After another examination she said "You have dislocated your collar bone, who brought you here?", "I have walked all the way from Long Melford" I replied. "Never Mind" she said, "I should send you to hospital but as you have been in such pain walking all that way I will send for the District Nurse and we will put your collar bone back into position. After about half an hour the District Nurse arrived, gas or cloriform was given to me, I

was out for a couple of minutes, when I came to it seemed marvelous all the pain was gone. Doctor Ruth placed my arm in a sling with orders "Keep it there for three weeks". It was six weeks before I was able to go to work again. By this time the War had broken out. In the words of the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, "We are at War with Germany, God Save the King".

I was now married to Lily and lived at the bottom of Prentice Street near the Anchor Public House, and I was still working for Lump Turner. Sammy Boyden and myself were working at Brent Eleigh Hill Farm doing repair work for Mr Peter Dewar, farmer, we had travelled by horse and van from Lavenham and I had put the horse in a meadow to graze. We were working in a bed room plastering a ceiling, when Sammy said to me, "Go and have a look at the horse and see if it is alright", it was alright but while I was out there I saw an aeroplane high up going towards Lavenham, the noise sounded funny to me, it seemed to be travelling very slow. I hurried inside of the house shouting to Sammy to come out. Sammy took one look and listened, "It's a German" he said, he had hardly got the words out of his mouth when I saw an object come out of the plane it was tipping about, "They have thrown something out" I said to Sammy, "Don't be so silly it's a bomb" he said, we waited for the bang, but it never happened, it landed in Bolton Street, in the centre of the street. My cousin Drawer Welham was just going in his front door when he heard a thud and a bit of earth hit him up the behind. Drawer Welham was sensible, not for him to gaze at the firm shape tail of the bomb like some people who gazed at this terrible thing which could have went off at any time. Thankfully it did not. But Drawer Welham was taking no chances, he was away taking the shortest cut to safety, going through people's gardens shouting and warning people about the bomb.

Sammy said "Get the horse harnessed up and in the cart, I'll wash up the tools", within minutes we were on our way. Sammy took the reins touching the horse up with a whip, until it was at full gallop. Up Water Street we went until we arrived at Perseverance House, Lump Turner's headquarters. Little knots of people were gathered here and there obviously only one topic to talk about. The Bomb. We soon heard all about it, apparently people had rushed to look at this terrible thing. What a blessing it did not go off. If it had Bolton Street would have been wrecked. The inhabitants of both Bolton Street and Prentice were ordered to evacuate their homes, immediately my wife went to her family at Glemsford. My Father and Mother and Myself went to stay with Aunt Polly, Mum's sister, in the High Street. We had plenty of hot pea soup provided by Aunt Polly, what memories that stirred up for me, as a little boy going to Aunt Polly's at night just when they were having their evening meal and out would come a basin of pea soup. We stayed at Aunt Polly's for about forty eight hours. That was the time that elapsed before the bomb disposal team rendered it harmless. The bomb was later on view in the Swan Hotel yard. It was about ten feet six inches long and weighed over half a ton. When I got back to forty two Prentice Street Lily was still at Glemsford. The air raids seemed to intensify. There was one long roar of German Planes coming from the east, it seemed to last for hours, they were on their way to London. Besides 'Bolton Billie' we had other bombs which fell in the vicinity and the bangs were deafening. Father, Mother and myself got under a table, I don't know how many times Mother said "Let me die". There was a land mine landed in a field near 'Money Hole' on the Preston Road, barely a half a mile away. It shattered some windows in Lavenham, Father's Landlord, Mr Burrough's windows were smashed, also Mr Knock who lived next door to us had some windows broken, we escaped unscathed. With Air Bases all round us it was remarkable that Lavenham got away with it so lightly.

By this time Lily was suffering the first pangs of ill health, we had moved into a better house down Shilling Street owned by the Baker Dick Turner, but Lily was spending a lot of time at Glemsford. This was the time when the evacuees were coming from London. Dick Turner said to me one day "Joe you want to spend more time in your house, Government will take it over". And eventually they did. Time went by and my conscription papers arrived. I had to go to Ipswich for a medical, this was a different matter to when I had tried to join the Army on three occasions those years ago, when I was told we only want men of the Gold Standard'. I was passed A1 physical, B2 vision. I wanted to go in the Suffolk Regiment, but that was out of the question. The Royal Army Medical Corp was to be my home for the duration. After a few weeks my papers arrived, I was to report to Crookham near Aldershot, the R.A.M.C Depot. The great day arrived and on the twelfth of December 1940, Lily waved me goodbye from Lavenham railway station, Mr Twittchett, signalman, wished me good luck, with some giant puffs of steam the big engine was on his way to Marks Tey changing there it was over the bridge for the London train. This was the first time in my life that I was alone. Arriving at Liverpool Street, I was advised to take the easier way "The Underground', I had travelled once or twice on this before the War, it was better than the trams, arriving at Waterloo the platforms were crowded. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen. I thought to myself I'll never get on the train. It was jam packed, in the corridor you couldn't hardly move. I was near a window looking out for the names of the stations, Wimbledon, Surbiton, Woking, Brookwood and on to Crookham. Arriving there I noticed I was not the only one for Crookham, there was quite a few of us. A couple of lorries arrived with a sergeant in charge, "Get in lads" he said. I thought to myself if that's the way they talk to potential soldiers it aint gonna be too bad, how mistaken I was going to be. Arriving at the Depot, 'Boyce Barracks' we were taken to a nisson hut and told to report to the Company Office, Names and all details were taken and we were told to go to a Blanket Store where we were issued with blankets and ground sheets. Then on

to another place where we were measured for our uniforms and boots. After we had got everything we set to make our beds, which were on the floor. That night I went in the Naffi and had some cups of tea and rock cakes. I settled down in my so called bed surveying the scene, we were a motley lot. Cockney, Northerners, Somerset but none from East Anglia. Everyone was trying to tell everybody else what they done back home, some had very important jobs or so they said.

Morning came, we heard the bugle 'Revelie', it did not apply to us that day. A Corporal came in the hut and told us to be ready in an hours time for breakfast. We formed up outside, it was dark, "Quick march" the Corporal said. I could just discern some more soldiers marching by, when I heard a shout "Hello Joe", surely there was no one here who knew me, there were thousands in this camp and probably hundreds of 'Joe's'. We entered a huge building called the dining hall. There were rows upon rows of tables. Hundreds of soldiers were eating. I was hungry, we were served porridge and egg and bacon. In a matter of ten minutes I had devoured the lot. A Corporal looked at me "Have you finished?" he said, "Yes" I answered. "What are these?" he said pointing to his two stripes, "Corporal to you in future, get those plates into the kitchen", another fellow was told to help me. Then a soldier came up to me, he was Harold Rogers of Lavenham but living in London before being called up. He was the man who had shouted to me earlier in the semi-darkness. This was a thousand to one chance. We arranged to meet each other that night. By this time we were all rigged out in our military attire, Puttees, this was a form of khaki webbing about four inches wide which you wound round your leg and looked good when done properly. Later on gaiters were introduced, we wore the old peak cap which they wore in 1914, later on to be a 'Forage Cap' and finally a beret. I saw my Lavenham friend later in the evening. The next day we were shown how to lay our kit out, everything what you wasn't wearing was laid in an orderly manner on the bed, or on the floor bed space. We were told our duties as soldiers would start the next day. We were fully prepared at six am the following morning, the bugle sounded 'Revelie', fifteen minutes later a Sergeant came storming in with this greeting "Hands off your cock's and put on your socks". Every one was on their feet in a matter of minutes, then away to the ablutions, six washing bowls for over thirty men. I shaved without a mirror, everyone was crowded round them and then we were formed up and marched to breakfast. You walked up to the tables in single file, the first two men were detailed to fetch the food from the kitchen to the table. There was about twenty five men to a table and when breakfast was over you had to take the empty plates away. We got back to our hut only for a Corporal shouting at us, "Outside on parade", we all had to line up outside our hut and marched off to the square.

We drilled so much on that square that we got to hate it and its Instructors. All the Instructors were little Napoleons, arrogance seemed to ooze out of their bodies. Our Squad was duly formed, we were lined up and a Sergeant Pye, I shall never forget his name, he was pompous to the extreme, he came up to me, "What is your name?" he barked, "Risby Sergeant" I replied, "when did you last clean your teeth?" he said, "Last night Sergeant" I answered, "Liar" he said to me, "Go to the ablutions and clean them", I started to walk away, "Double" he shouted, I broke into a run. I had no tooth paste so I just rinsed them in water and runned back to the Squad who were waiting for me. Our little Goliath was having a 'Ball' putting over his expertise to the 'Rookies'. On seeing me get into line he came up to me, "Open your mouth wide, that's better" he said, "Tomorrow I want to see them regular shine", before the war eating apples was my method of keeping my teeth clean, my sisters would use salt and water. He explained to us how we were expected to march, swing our arms and so on. On that square in the next few weeks we were going to see some funny happenings and not quite so funny.

Then it was off to the Gymnasium, there we were prancing around like a lot of idiots, but it was a relief to get rid of that man 'Pye' for a while. Then it was back to our huts. After dinner we were to have a kit inspection and a medical inspection or as the lads called it an FFI. We were to stand naked, only covered by our Army Overcoat, this to be discarded on the approach of the all 'important'. We all helped one another in laying out our kit. Nothing was left to chance. The big moment arrived, everyone stood by their bed, a loud crack on the door signaled the arrival of our tormentors, two Officers followed by the Sergeant Major and bring up the rear was a Sergeant. One Officer looked at our kit. Then the RSM told us to take our overcoats off. This entailed your princible organ being lifted with a stick and the medical officer gazing at it as if it was a shining jewel. We had to suffer these indignatias throughout the war, anyway we got over the ordeal, as indeed it was one.

I used to dread the morning regime, Revele, shaving and washing everyone crowded round the wash bowls and then off to breakfast and as I said you approached your table in single file, one went one side of the table and one the other and those first luckless two had to fetch all the plates with porridge and bacon and egg and when breakfast was over you had to take the emptys back to the to the kitchen. The draw back was you was probably the last ones to finish eating, and parade time was drawing near and 'Sergeant Pye' had no time for slackers. Boots had to have their final shine. Cap Badge, Brasses on Belt had a final quick rub then off to the parade ground. We lined up in our Squad with 'Sergeant Pye' slowly walking along looking from your cap to your boots. After the teeth episode he seemed to ease up on me.

I could march pretty well, but one or two could not and he vented his wrath on them. I was using

Macleans toothpaste on my teeth and every time I cleaned them they would bleed, they had never had such hostile treatment before. I had never had tooth ache in my life, but from the time on of cleaning them I did, one or two in the Squad could not march at all, as they brought their right foot forward they would bring their right arm forward. Sergeant Pye nearly went into a convulsion, a torrent of abuse came from his mouth and the luckless victims nearly had a heart attack. In fact in our hut a young fellow actually did have one, he was eventually demobbed. These men were formed into what they called Awkward Squads, it was really amusing to watch them. Their Instructors at their wits end to know how to cope with them.

As day followed day I got more effiscent. I was not the tallest in the squad but I was picked out as leader of the squad. When the order was given to form line my job was to march forward four paces and then mark time until all the others had wheeled round in line with me. There would be a lot of squads drilling at the same time and the Drill Staff Sergeant named Bryant an Irishman, would strut about the square weighing up each squad's performance. He came up to our squad Corporal, Sergeant Pye had apparently taken the rough edges off us and had handed us over to the Corporal. The NCO halted us. Staff Sergeant Bryant came up to me, "And what's your name?", "Risby Staff" I replied, "Your drilling is very good, I noticed your mouth moving counting the steps you had to take", he added "Very good and by the way how do you manage to keep you boots so shining?", I told him I was using my Father's velvet pads, I was ordered to take four steps forward and about turn so everyone could see my boots. I had the micky took out of me for the time I was at Boyce Barracks.

My Lavenham friend, Harold Rogers, did not fare so well as me. Our squad was at ease, Bryant went up to Harold to ask him a question, poor Harold forgot to come to attention, he was ordered to run round the square twice, easily a mile and a half, he joined the squade in a state of collapse.

Time went on, Harold his friend and myself used to go into Fleet and Famborough, there would be YMCA's, generally Canadian, you could get what chocolate you wanted at these places. I don't know for shore if it was Famborough or Fleet that I saw Tommy Farr, the Welsh Boxer in a Burlesque featuring Welsh Miners. We also went to see a Lavenham couple who lived at Crookham and runned a bakery shop. Mr and Mrs Tom Elision, Tom had worked at Dick Turner Baker's before the war, they were supplying pastry and so on to Boyce Barracks.

By this time we had graduated to good soldiers, our drilling was excellent, even the redoubtable Sergeant Pye now cast an admiring glance at us, we were now ready for other stations. We had not long to wait, orders went up. Private Risby to be posted to Army School of Hygiene, Keogh Barracks, Ash-Vale, not very far away, my Lavenham friend was posted somewhere else, I was not to see him again until after the War at Lavenham, Harold is no longer with us.

Arriving at the Barracks I could see that I had left the discipline behind, no ground sheets to lay on but nice single beds with sheets to go with it. What a change from Boyce Barracks where we laid on the floor a mouse running over your body. This was home from home. The floors of the rooms were highly polished. A full Corporal was in charge of one floor. This was the Barracks that taught the hygiene to thousands of soldiers during the War. In this place there were classrooms enough to cater for a thousand men. These men would come in once a fortnight. I was at Ash Vale only a few days when I was told to report to Company Office the RSM was there "How do you fancy being a Lance Corporal?", he said, "I really don't know Sir", I answered, "Shall I get paid for it?" I asked, "You will eventually" he answered. He then went on describing what the job entailed, "You will be responsible for getting all classrooms, models and charts in position for Officers to take over, a thousand men will come in once a fortnight, you will have an Inventory of twelve hundred chairs, tables, charts and models, now what do you say?", "I'll take it Sir", "It's not such a worrying job as it appears" he added "Here you are", he handed me my stripe, "Get it sewn on right away". That night I could not sleep, this was the first time in my life that responsibility had been placed in my hands, how would I cope?. I thought if things went wrong how would I cope. Anyway morning dawned and at ten am I was again summoned to the Company Office, a Sergeant was there, "Risby" he said "You have to take charge of your Barrack Room B10, you will be responsible to see that the room is kept clean, each man to have his job in maintaining this, and also he added "It's lights out at ten pm, all noise and activity will cease". That day I was acquainted with the Lance Corporal who I was taking over from, his name was Barley from the North of England. He shew me all he could in a short time as he was being posted.

That night in barrack room B10 I prepared for ten pm and lights out, when all noise should cease, on the contrary at that hour it seemed to increase, card schools were at full blast, another man was playing the accordeon, at eleven not ten I called for calm and they gradually went to their beds. I felt very relieved, my first day in charge was over.

Then came the day when I really was in charge. I was responsible for ten classrooms, one hundred soldiers to a room, charts and models to be in position at a certain hour. I had five men under me to do these duties and they were some of the best. Every classroom had a different subject and model. At the beginning of each intake on Monday morning I would receive a chart with the whole weeks programme, so I had time to plan ahead. Midway through the morning we had a quarter of an hours break and one of them would go for a large

jug of cocoa. Once I had got used to things I began to like my life as a Lance Corporal. My pay was ten shillings a week, but two and six stopped as a voluntary allotment for married men, so my pay was seven and six, all my money was gone by Monday, then began the long wait for Friday morning, pay day.

After a few weeks being a Lance Corporal my pay was increased to fifteen shillings a week, that was quite a big jump, so I had twelve and six for myself, every thing was going well, I had no complaints.

An inventory was taken every so often, my first one I was four chairs missing, not bad out of twelve hundred. The Sergeant Major told me not to worry about it, "We will put that right on the next invent". One weekend in the summer I was canteen Corporal, I was in charge of the Privetes billiard and snooker room and also the Sergeants and Corporal. There was nobody around, I was knocking the snooker balls around on my own when in came three men, one of them I recognised, he was Staff Sergeant Stan Cullis, the great England and Wolverhampton centre half. "Will you make a foursome Corporal?" he said, "Certainly" I replied. Over the radio they were relaying the scrap book of sport of years ago. They were giving the highlights of England versus Scotland at Hamton Park, Cullis' name was frequently mentioned, he would raise his cue over his head. I was to see a lot of Stan Cullis the time I was at Ashvale. He was billeted at some private houses taken over by the Government, they were just next door to the Railway Hotel, Ashvale. Cullis was a PT instructor, instructing potential PT instructors, men and women.

One day I was running round a track, Cullis was on his way to the gymnasium. He stopped, looked at me and said, "You will never make a runner", "But I can run the mile in five minutes" I replied, "I could do that ten years ago" and he went away.

Aldershot was a good football team. In the War there players were called guest players and there were probably two million Army personnel there, so they had the pick of good players such as Stan Cullis, Joe Mercer, Cliff Brittan, Jimmy Hagen, Tommy Lawton, all the cream. One day I was watching them play Fulham, I looked at the programme and the Fulham's Goal Keepers name was Duke. In pre-war days he played for Orwell Works, an Ipswich team, also Sudbury Town, later on to play for Ipswich Town, Norwich City and Bradford City. He was a big fellow and a great goal keeper, he was at one period on the verge of International Honours but he was too fond of his beer, anyway I stood behind his goal with Aldershot railway station just over the fence. A penalty was awarded to Aldershot, while Tommy Lawton was getting ready to take the penalty I shouted "Good old Orwell Works" Duke turned and waved his hand in my direction and then concentrated on the penalty kick. Lawton nearly broke the net. I used to look forward to these Saturday afternoons you had a little money in your pocket having been paid on the Friday morning. On a Friday, Saturday and Sunday night I would go to a pub in Mitchet 'The Anglers Arms', I would always go with a friend if I went to the pub, there used to be some rough goings on in some pubs. One night at the Anglers Arms there were some French Canadians and they could be real nasty when drunk. One drunken Canadian insisted on treating a young married woman who was in the pub with her husband. The woman did not want to become involved with him and she politely refused the drink. The Canadian then poured the beer over the woman. The husband remonstrated with him and got hit in the eye for his pains. The Canadian's friends fell out with him, they didn't agree with the assault on the couple. Anyway one of the locals, a bit of a rough handful, hit the Canadian and knocked him over a table, he then dragged him outside in the road and gave him his just deserts, while his friends just looked on. Another incident was outside the Ash Vale Railway Hotel, a lot of Scots soldiers were having a free for all with some civilians, it was one hell of a fight, only broken up by the arrival of Red Caps, Military Police. Another time one Sunday night my friend was on duty and I had been to the Anglers on my own, coming home I took a short cut along a canal path. I saw half a dozen French Canadians coming towards me, they were the worse for drink. I thought I heard one of them say "Chuck him in the drink", I never stopped to argue, talk about Roger Bannister, I got a move on and took a round about journey to get back. I later learned after the war that a lot of Military Police finished in the bottom of the canal.

On my afternoon or evenings off I would walk out and on my journey I would pass a house called Mitchett House, this belonged to Lord Gort, and was loaned to the Home Office. We at Keogh Barracks had heard about Herr Hess being at Mychett House, even children would gather outside the house and sing "Hess, Hess you are in a hell of a mess". So one day passing the house I climbed on my mate's shoulders and was just able to look over the wall, I saw a civilian with two, as I thought Military Police, obviously the civilian was Hess. No sooner had I had a peep at them when one of the soldiers came running towards the wall and we had to get away, it turned out that the soldiers were not Military Police but Scots Guards.

After the War I wrote up to the Daily Mirror, they said they had no recollection of Hess being at Mytchett House, but at Abergavenny in Wales. About a week later in the Old Codgers Column, headlines 'History Repeated', in it an ex-company Sergeant Major said that the man from Suffolk was indeed correct, Herr Hess was at Mytchett House, Surrey for a period of time and he added it was there that Herr Hess tried to commit suicide by throwing himself over the balustrade, breaking ribs and doing other injuries. Later on the Polish underground got to hear of his whereabouts and he was taken to Abergavenny in Wales for his own safety. He was to be taken later to Nuremberg in Germany to stand trial. The Company Sergeant Major wrote to me

personally of his involvement with Hess. He told me he was sent to Mytchett House with a guard of Officers and men comprising thirty men, the Company Sergeant Major was in charge of the prisoner escort. On moving to Abergavenny he was shewn most of the beauty spots in that area.

I was now on the staff at Keogh Barracks and well in with some Corporals and Sergeants. There was one Sergeant Green from the north of England, he was a Champion runner and on a Sunday morning him and about six others including myself used to go for a ten mile run before breakfast. I was well behind Green at the finish but I had a lovely breakfast, that was the reason I runned the ten miles, a big plate of four sausages two eggs, tomatoes and four big rashers of bacon, Sundays could not come quick enough for me.

In barrack room B10, I was in charge, there was only one man who gave me any trouble, and he was Private Joe Allen. His job in the barrack room rota was 'Give floor final polish', he done that alright. On a Friday night his pockets replenished with his ten shillings, he would go on a bender and would return as drunk as a fiddle just before midnight and this was the time he would deliver his final polish, he would urinate over the floor. Of course I had to report him to the Sergeant Major, a Lance Corporal could not put him on a charge, he would get about fourteen days CB, but that dind worry Joe Allen, he saved his money up and when he was free to go out again he would go on another bender and arrive back to barracks to give his final polish. With that behaviour it wasn't long before Joe was posted so he could polish somebody elses barrack room floor.

We had one old Staff Sergeant at Keogh Barracks, a pre-war soldier and getting on a bit, all we Rankers loved him. Officers and Sergeant Majors was scared of him. Roll Call at ten o'clock at night, we would be formed up in the Fore Court waiting for the Staff Sergeant, he would come down the stairs, sometimes he was a bit tidly, he would have his stick under his arm, getting to the bottom of the stairs he would sumon all his courage to remain upright, he would then smartly walk the few steps to the front of the Assembly, come to attention and shout out "Roll Call dismissed" and then he would nearly fall over.

KEOGTH BARRACKS 30TH JULY 1942

BARRACK ROOM B-10

694	L/CPL	Risby J	NCO L/C
450	PTE	Bills R	Polish floor by door
333	PTE	Somers GM -	Polish floor '
715	PTE	Windever P	Dust lamp shades
042	PTE	Harrison TW	Clean mat and mat well
437	PTE	Robinson F	Polish centre of floor
864	PTE	Allan J	Give floor final polish
697	PTE	Rogers J	Sweep corridor
409	PTE	Smythe JJ	Scrub and clean bumper broom
657	PTE	Singleton EK	Polish Brass
579	PTE	Winters G	Dust all bunks
233	PTE	Jenson WH	Dust all bunks
875	PTE	Russell H	Clean windows
690	PTE	Coommes L	Clean Windows
022	PTE	Brown EJ	Dust locker tops
472	PTE	Swinton G	Dust under radiators
930	PTE	Waters T	Dust window ledges

I had been at Ash Vale nearly a year, when my wife. Lily became ill again and I was constantly going home on week-end leave, sometimes with a pass and sometimes without one, I knew most of the Sergeants and Corporals at Keogh Barracks. One Friday night as I was going home to Glemsford I caught the Underground to the Bank and then to Liverpool Street, arriving on the platform I looked round for the indicator board for my departure time, a big Guardsman approached me, he had a Military Police Armlet on his arm, his peaked cap was well over his eyes, "Where's your pass" he shouted at me. I had not got one, but I pretended to search for one in my tunic. The soldier lifted his peaked cap "You don't know who I am do you Joe" said the soldier, "No I don't" I answered, "Well I'm Tommy Dent of Lavenham" he said, I could have fell through the floor. We had a long chat and he saw me off on my train, with the parting words "Don't forget to come again pass or no pass".

I travelled scores of times from Ash Vale to Glemsford. On one journey I was able to see my sister's husband, Harry, he was very ill and in Barnet Hospital, he was suffering from Diabetes and TB, poor old Harry said to me on my departure "Joe never be a lunger", I never forgot those words and by the end of the war Harry was gone. Harry was one of the best, he enjoyed life, he liked no better than to get in a pub and enjoy a game of

cards or darts.

Lily was now admitted to Essex County Hospital, Colchester, and I was going home very frequently. I had never borrowed money in my life, but one weekend I was forced to, one of my working mates did drink or smoke, and he would save a couple of bob out of his pay and he lent me ten shillings. I could not go on like that, so I went to the Company Office and saw the RSM and I asked for a Compassionate posting to Colchester Military Hospital. He said to me "You had better see the OC". I saw the Captain, he said to me "Don't be so silly Risby, you have got your wife's Mother and Father, Sister's to look after her and you can get home now and again, and besides you will be a Sergeant in the space of a year", but I was adamant and I was earmarked for Colchester Military Hospital.

COLCHESTER

Although Lavenham was only sixteen miles or so from Colchester, I did not know much about the place. Crossing the Abbey Fields I came to the Military Hospital, I had missed things as soon as I saw the place, there was a lot of red tape, in fact it seemed nearly as bad as Crookham, although I was able to see my wife more often. I was beginning to regret my move. I was put on the wards, I did not mind that, but I did not like the arrogant manner of some of the Sisters. If they could find something to find fault with they. There was one Sister who persistently pulled me up over making beds. Anyway the RSM was on the ward one day when the Sister was ticking me off on a trivial matter and I noticed him listening, he never said anything. But two days later I was crossing the Square when he called to me "Risby", "Sir" I answered, "Would you like another job off the ward?" he said, he went on to say that the soldier working the disinfectant was being posted and would I like the job. As much as I wanted to get off the wards that did sound a very nice job to me. I would have to handle clothes of men suffering from scabies and other skin diseases, "Come to the Company Office tomorrow morning and give me your verdict". I went to bed that night a worried man. The RSM had told me I would miss a lot of parades and he had added "You're a fit man Risby, you won't catch anything", so in the morning I presented myself at the Company Office and I agreed to take the job.

I had a fortnight with the Soldier before he was posted so I knew how to work the giant steam disinfectant. I would start lighting the boiler about seven am, this involved getting a lot of newspapers and balling them up all over the grating and then a little coal and finally stoked up with coke. A detention Barracks nearby would send some offenders with clothes, I had to be careful with these men, they would sidle up to you, "Have you got a fag mate?", I had been warned that it was a serious offence to give these men fags or money, so when I did part with a fag I kept an eye on anyone in the vicinity. Some of these offenders were a nasty piece of work and you had to watch your step. While at Crookham I had been sent in a working party to Aldershot 'Glass House' to pick up fire wood. Any offender entering those gates were kept running all the time on the Square with full pack on their back and gas masks just under their chin, all meals were taken with gas masks on and always standing up. So I knew what to expect when they brought their clothes to be disinfected, I was on my guard. One Sunday morning I got into hot water, I had been asked to give a hand at the mortuary nearby, they had brought in an Officer from Woodbridge Battle School, he was a huge man about six feet six inches tall and weighing about seventeen stone he had been shot accidentally, he had a very small wound in his chin and at the back of his neck a gaping hole. While I was away the boiler had got up steam and had passed the 'Red Danger Mark'. The building backed on to a road, I released some steam, the next thing I knew was a Sergeant came storming through the door, "What game are you playing at?", I did not know what he meant. "You have just let off steam in front of a Church Parade" he said, he was furious and took my name and number. On Monday morning, sharp at nine o'clock, my cap was plucked from my head and into the Company Office. The OC was very angry with me, fourteen days confined to Barracks, anyway I had some good suppers during that time.

I had not been at Colchester very long before Lily was able to go home, three months had elapsed since I came to Colchester and my compassionate posting was up, one morning I was summoned to the Company Office, a Sergeant told me to lay out all my kit and the RSM would inspect it later on as I was being posted overseas. I was told that day that on the morrow I would go on embarkation leave, arriving at Glemsford I found Lily much better, and I also saw sister Maud and daughter Jean. Then to Lavenham to see Mum and Dad, they were quite well, still living at number forty two Prentice Street. Time went all too quickly and on Wednesday January six nineteen forty three it was back to Colchester. It was ever so cold and the ground was covered in snow. I caught the twelve fifteen pm train for Colchester, arriving there I sought out a fried fish shop. When you are on these moves it pays to have a good feed when you can as you don't know when you are getting the next. Back to the Hospital I was told to lay out my kit again, and to be ready early in the morning. Six of us were told to have breakfast at five thirty am, ready for moving off.

It was still dark as we travelled by ambulance to North Hill station, our destination Leeds, Yorkshire. It seemed such a long way, in fact when we got there it was getting dark again. We stood outside the station over an hour before a lorry came to pick us up, it was bitterly cold. We travelled through Leeds, when we came to a very big building, 'Leeds Holding Depot', after we had some food we were escorted to a street a short distance

away called Moorpark Drive, we were told that is your Billets until further orders. I was never so cold in my life, it was January and freezing sharp, there were fire places in the house but no wood or coal to burn. At night eight of us would lay in the room, overcoats and boots on huddled together to keep warm. We complained to our superiors, but to no avail. Thank goodness in a few days we were to depart. On the Saturday we were warned that we would be on the move on the morrow, Sunday at two am. At one o'clock we paraded for Tropical clothing, we had previously been measured, we had been warned to keep as quiet as possible. At one thirty one hundred of us paraded in the street with a Sergeant bawling his head off, to the extent that people were opening bed room windows wondering what all the noise was about. We eventually boarded lorries en route to Leeds railway station, arriving there there was a train waiting for us, we had the train all to ourselves. Our next port of call was Grenock, just the other side of Glasgow, we were taken in tugs to a big ship called the Empress of Canada, twenty two thousand tons displacement. I was told later that there were four thousand men on board, soldiers and crew, we were jam packed. I was among those who were taken down to a lower deck. There were hammocks and I was lucky to get one, or so I thought, but we were to stay motionless for nearly a fortnight. The troops got restless, some even wanted to get off the ship again, but that was out of the question. The food we had was terrible, dehydrated potatoes, rice and a little mince. When I left Colchester I weighed ten stone six pounds at the end of my voyage on this ship I was to lose over a stone in weight.

One morning we started to move, everybody gave a big cheer, we were off, to where we did not know. Night came I got into my hammock, but not for long, it started to sway, I felt dizzy, I fell off it and starting vomiting I laid on the floor, men were baling out of the hammocks wholesale, there was vomit all over the deck. Just to look at the food was enough to turn your stomach, mince, dehydrated spud and rice, it was a most monotonous diet.

We passed through the Bay of Biscay, it seemed as if everyone had sea sickness, hundreds had diarrhoea, at one period there was seven hundred who reported sick. Hospital quarters were full up, gangways and toilets were full of men groaning and vomiting. I was beginning to congratulate myself on keeping fit, but not for long, I had stomach pains and made a bee line for the toilets, if you were lucky enough to get in. It was really everyman for himself. I believe our diet was responsible for our condition. As time went by the climate got warmer, we wore our life belts all the time, they were made with some sort of linen. There was fire drills twice a week. One night we got really frightened, most of us did not know what a depth charge was, so when we heard a muffled bang and the ship shuddered we thought a torpedo had hit us. We were escorted by a Warship, I believe it was the Warspite, and Cruisers, there were a lot of ships in our convoy.

It started to get really warm, we would lay on the top deck listening to ships band, playing bingo and so the time went by. We sighted land, it was Free town on the Gold Coast and it was the place to bring on more food and water. We stayed there one day and night. It was amusing to watch the natives dive in the sea after a penny had been thrown in. They were taking a chance because there were a lot of sharks about, but these boys were like quick silver.

The Empress of Canada was to see Freetown only once more, that was its lot. After we were disembarked the ship took on a lot of displaced persons, mostly Jews. It sailed back the same way as it came, intending to go back to Scotland, but it never got any further than Freetown, an Italian submarine was waiting for it. They gave the ships crew half an hour to get all women and children off. There was a lot of men drowned. I saw a crew member later on another ship he said it was dreadful, the screams as some were attacked by sharks. It could so easily have been us.

After taking on our food and drink, we were on our way again. I only saw one burial at sea, and that was after we had just left Freetown. I spent a lot of time looking out to sea, most of the time thinking about home. When I saw like a chute sticking out of a ship's side, then a coffin came sliding down draped in a Union Jack, that was the only burial at sea I had seen in my life. Time went by, days and weeks so it seemed, and we did not know where we were going, until a rumour was whispered around and there is never smoke without fire, we were heading for Cape Town, South Africa. I could not conceal my joy, was it possible we could sail on and go to Durban and see my young sister Ivy. She had gone away abroad to Egypt in nineteen thirty eight. One morning dawned and it was possible to see, faintly, land in the distance, it turned out to be a mountain. Table Mountain, Cape Town. My joy turned to despair, if we docked at Cape Town it would be as bad as being at Lavenham, Durban was hundreds of miles from Cape Town, not a hope in hell of seeing Ivy, but fortune was on my side, we went by Cape Town and there could only be one place for us to go to, Durban, I gave a little cheer all to myself. I was going to see my little sister after all those years. In the meantime poor old Ivy had had bad news, her husband Victor had been reported missing. Victor, a staff Captain in the Royal Corps of Signals attached to Intelligence. I had heard this news while in England. Poor old Ivy with two little children to look after, Patrick and Peter and six thousand miles away from home, at least my seeing her would help a little. About two days later we sailed into Durban harbour. We were greeted by a woman dressed all in white singing 'When the lights of London Shine Again', it was an awe inspiring sight. From our convoy there were thousands disembarked. I was detailed as one of a baggage team to get our luggage out of the hold, about two hours on

that and I was told I could go, but to be back on board ship before midnight. Although I had not got Ivy's address written down I remembered it, Burlington Court, South Beach, Durban. I asked one or two people the whereabouts of Burlington Court, they didn't have a clue, but one person helped me, "Go right along West Street as far as you can, and you will come on to South Beach", I was now really on my way. Arriving at South Beach I thought the best thing for me to do was to walk from one end to the other. I asked one or two people if they knew where Burlington Court was, they were very vague about it, anyway, I kept my eyes skinned as I slowly walked along. I was looking for anyone standing outside their door and there was one young woman standing on her own just outside a door. She was looking intently at me, I went towards her, yes it was, it was unbelievable, it was my little sister Ivy, still looking as pretty as ever. It was a wonderful reunion, only saddened by the news of Vic. The two little boys came along, Patrick and Peter. Ivy took one look at me and decided I was definitely on the thin side and Patrick was sent on his way to the butchers, coming back with a one pound of rump steak. Ivy put on a tremendous meal, steak, onion and chips, what a difference from the mince, dehydrated spuds and rice. As soon as the opportunity presented itself I weighed myself, I had lost one stone since leaving England six weeks previous. That night went all too quick, I had to report back to the Empress of Canada. Ivy was worried about me as a lot of soldiers had been attacked and robbed. I left Ivy's in good time to get back to the ship. I made a dreadful mistake, I had forgotten the code for the ship being so happy at seeing Ivy and the boys again, it had completely gone out of my head, what was I to do we had been forbidden to mention the name of our ship to anyone. I passed several Navy Officers, I was afraid to ask them. I was passing big ships they seemed all like one another. I summoned up a little courage and asked the next Navy man I met, "Can you tell me where the Empress of Canada is please?", I said it almost in a whisper, he almost jumped down my throat with his reply, "Don't you know your code?", he hissed at me, "I'm afraid I've forgotten it Sir", I did not know what rank he was, but I thought it best wider the circumstances to do a bit of crawling. I don't know if the 'Sir' business had effected his ego, but he suddenly became very helpful. "The third ship from here" he added "And next time don't forget your code". I arrived back on the ship at about ten fifty pm.

I learned that on the morrow we were going to a transit camp called Clairwood, I was to spend about six weeks there. I used to go and see Ivy as much as possible. Things didn't look very good for Ivy, some possessions of Victor's had begun to arrive. All those six weeks I was at Clairwood she never let on and kept as happy as possible. I even spent some week ends with her, we went to Cinemas and other places. One place we went to I was distinctly uncomfortable. It was a gathering of Zulus in the Bantu Sports Ground at Durban. Ivy seemed to be the only white woman and me the only soldier. The Zulus were dressed in their traditional Garb with the Witch Doctor getting them all steamed up by running up and down uttering blood curdling screams. I was more worried than Ivy. One day we had our photos taken sitting in a rickshaw with the Zulu in all his splendour. The Americans had to go one better of course, they would put the Zulu in the rickshaw seat and would get hold of the shafts of the rickshaw and go galloping along the street yelling and shouting to all and sundry. The Zulu didn't mind, he was rewarded, sometimes handsomely.

Clairwood Camp was about ten miles from Durban, there was thousands of soldiers there billeted in tents. One day the rain teemed down. I never knew it to rain so hard in my life and the thunder and lightning was frightening, we had not been laying down on our ground sheets long before the lot came on top of us, the rain was still pouring down, we tried our best to put it up again, but to no avail. Other tents were going down wholesale. Soldiers were swearing as they tried, fruitlessly to put them up again. Morning could not come quick enough.

One day I was visiting Ivy, I got off the bus to walk the few hundred yards when a service man came up to me, he said to me "Don't you salute an Officer when you see one, "I'm sorry Sir but I didn't recognise you as one" I replied, "Well I'm a South African Army Officer, what's your name and number?". He took my paybook and looked at it, took other details and walked off with the parting words "You will hear more about this". Two days later I was in front of the OC, when I explained to him that South African Officers were dressed different to English Officers, that argument didn't carry any weight with the OC. Ten days confined to Barracks was his verdict. The previous day I had seen Ivy and told her all about the incident. Ivy knew a lot of Officer's wives. I had only done one day confined to Barracks when a Company Runner came to tell me that I was to appear in front of the OC the following morning at nine am. I was the first on the list of offenders to go into the office, he said to me "Risby, I have gone into your case and I am rescinding your sentence forthwith, make sure you salute all Officers in future". Ivy had done her homework. She was at this time suffering badly from backache, they wanted her to go into hospital, but she was worried about the two boys. I was friendly with a Welshman from Tonypandy, in South Wales, his name was Evan Parry, he was one of the best. I shall have some more to say about Parry later. Ivy provided us with some good dinners and teas. The two boys used to like to get on my back and pretend I was a horse. I would rear up and they would laugh hilariously as they beat me with a little stick. I thought to myself it would be lovely to be stationed here for the duration. One morning our draft was lined up. A Staff Sergeant walked along the ranks "You Risby and five others are detailed for duty with the South African Police". This was a new one on me. We had been told, in fact Ivy had told me about the Indians, they would cause a lot of trouble at their weddings and other events and sometimes the Police needed a bit of

help. Arriving at the Police Headquarters we were escorted up to a room and given a Police Baton, I thought to myself "Joe boy, if you hit anyone with that they will never get up anymore", in the yard I could see big iron cages with a little building built on to them more like London Zoo. During the night some one brought us a cup of tea, we would sometimes nod off to be awakened by shouts and screams. The police were interrogating some natives, but we got through the night without being called out. I had one more stint with them time I was at Clairwood, but without any incident. I done Fire Piquet or Guard Duty two or three nights time I was at Clairwood.

The Valley of a Thousand Hills, the home of the Zulus was not many miles away, and if the wind was right you would hear them singing and beating their tom tom drums, it sounded lovely. Those nights to me seemed peaceful and relaxing. Then one morning we were told we were moving to a fresh camp, Steela Park the other side of Durban. This was a dangerous area, several soldiers had been stabbed while on Guard Duty. We were particularly told to give a place called Umbilo a wide berth. I was still able to go to Ivy's, but rumours started to circulate that we were on the move. One morning in the dining hall a notice was up, a German Communique read that the Empress of Canada had been sunk. This turned out to be all too true.

Then came the final goodbye to Ivy and the two boys, she had been a brick to me. She watched the ships as they sailed away, to where we did not know. I was on the Arundel Castle, a bit smaller ship than the Empress of Canada, but the conditions on it were much better. It was nothing near so crowded, the food was a lot better, we sometimes got eggs and bacon for breakfast. By now we were becoming hardened sailors, rarely was one seen being sea sick. Entertainment was superb considering the limitations. Little shows were put on by first class entertainers. Boxing shows, housey housey, and the ships band supplying the music. There were several ships in the convoy escorted by destroyers. The sea was lovely and calm with beautiful sunrises and sunsets. Here we were in the Indian Ocean thousands of miles from Lavenham at the behest of His Majesty's Government. Then came the day when we crossed the 'Equator'. There was a ceremony and someone had there head shaved then flung into the ships pool, with all these activities going on time passed quickly. Word went round that we were heading for India, Bombay. What had I seen in my life, London Zoo, Madam Tussauds that was the lot, but now I was really seeing the world. Early one morning we could see land in the distance, Bombay, we arrived early in the afternoon, but it was next morning before we disembarked. With full packs on our backs it was off to Colaba Barracks, about six miles from Bombay. It was stifeling hot and the smell made it worse. There were the big domed Mosques, bullocks pulling little carts. There were little lean to's of sacking projecting from the buildings sheltering the natives from the intense heat. We had never experienced heat like this, it must have been nearly one hundred degrees. There was a couple of ambulances following us in case anyone of us dropped out, but nothing happened until we reached the main gates of Colaba Barracks, my friend Evan Parry got just inside the main gates, he fainted and fell on his face, his face looked terrible. Evan Parry, a painter and decorator in peace time, Rhonda Valley, South Wales could take no more. He was taken to hospital where he spent about seven days. We were shown our billets, lovely little places with charpoy's (beds) and air ventilators, we had not settled down long before a Indian came round with cigarettes, Victory V's, you had to be a strong man to smoke them, but there was nothing else. We were informed that evening that we were to parade in front of some big noise at nine am the next morning. There was hundreds of us there, comprising of Drafts. I was the only survivor of my small party of six from Colchester. I had made friends with Parry on the Empress of Canada. Morning dawned, dressed in our Tropical shorts and shirt, buckles on our belt shining and my shoes thanks to dad's velvet pads were just as bright. We formed up on a big Square at nine am. Our big wig dind show up until ten fifteen, we stood in the searing heat, several in the ranks fainted. He came along on a white horse, galloping backwards and forwards, he certainly tried to impress us, particularly on saluting and general behaviour, until he finally galloped off. This particular Officer was called some funny names by the lads, this was all so unnecessary. We had already learnt how to behave at the Depots, although myself had slipped up on the question of saluting. We had plenty of route marches while at Colaba and Parry and myself went into Bombay once or twice. We went down the den of vice and corruption. Grant Road, Prostitutes in cages were on show all the way down the road, then we entered into a little street market. I brought a lovely pair of brass vases and a bell from an Armenian dealer. I have still got the vases on my mantle shelf, the bell I let my sister Elsie have.

We had been at Colaba about two or three weeks, when we were suddenly told we were on the move again. This time we were taken by lorries down to the docks, our old ship the Arundel Castle was waiting for us. The ship was pretty full as we sailed away, and once again we did not know where we were going. About a couple of days out of Bombay a rumour went round that we were going to one of the hottest countries in the world, I thought to myself it can't be much hotter than India. How wrong I was going to be proved. It was not long before we were told we were heading to Iraq. It became hotter and hotter, we passed into the Persian Gulf and later the Upratees River, we passed numerous little shacks dotted here and there on the mud banks. We went by a certain spot and an Officer told us we were looking at the original 'Garden of Eden', and then we came to that great oil port Basra. We stopped there for a couple of days. The heat, I never knew anything like it, one hundred and twenty six in the shade, it was unbearable. We had our meals on the ground, flies, there were

millions of them on your food, eyes and ears, I thought. Joe Boy you're not going to stick this, but I did and then one morning we were away in lorries, we travelled about twenty five miles, I saw my first camels. Tents were provided for us, it was more or less a transit camp. I told Parry and a couple more of my mates that I was going after some fags, they also wanted me to bring them certain things. I got in this big marquee, you could buy beer, fags and other stuff. I bought some beer and the stuff for my friends, the only trouble was the beer was warm. When I eventually went out of the marquee it was getting dark, I had a job to find my tent as there seemed hundreds of them. I found out later that it got dark in a matter of minutes. Night came and I felt tired, put my ground sheet down and made my bed, it was still hot, I divested myself of everything except for my pants, slid between the blankets and away to sleep. I awoke to feel bitterly cold, everyone in the tent was awake, we put on our trousers and socks and once more got in between the blankets, but I could not get to sleep, it got colder and colder. I put my boots and great army overcoat on, everyone was doing the same, we got no sleep until about four o'clock in the morning when it started to warm up again. Reveille was at six o'clock, breakfast at seven o'clock. Arming ourselves with our mess tins, our Topee on, it looked more like a policeman's helmet, we made our way to the so called dining hall, a big marquee. One morning we made the mistake of going to the dining hall without our topee on, we had not got far, the heat was intense, and I bolted back for my topee. It was a punishable offence to deliberately expose yourself to the sun. Several men went down with the symptoms of TB.

Apart from my friend Evan Parry from Tonyandy, I had pulled up with two more chaps, a fellow from Peterborough called Shepherdson and a fellow from Midhurst, the place where they play Polo, Gordon Boxal, Gordon was a real nice chap, his pre-war job was working in the shoe shop in Midhurst, tall and blonde he was a nice looking fellow, the nurses would run after him. Gordon was married and he never wavered, he was a good genuine man.

Again one morning we were on the move again across the desert, this time the Officers told us where we were going. It was Bagdad, as a young boy I had read about Alibaba and the Forty Thieves, here I was going to the very place. Arriving at Bagdad, again it was a transit camp and we were billeted again in tents, we were about a mile from the suburbs. One day I was warned I was for guard duty that night. The Duty Sergeant accompanied me to the place where I had to patrol, I was armed with a Baton and torch. "There" he said pointing to a tent, "Your job is to guard that" then he said "Come on just have a look inside", he pulled the flap back and there on the ground on stretchers were a couple of bodies. Apparently they had just been brought in and would be burned the next day. The Sergeant departed telling me I would be replaced at a certain hour. It was dark, I had been sauntering backwards and forwards by the mortuary tent for over an hour and feeling very frightened, when I heard a rumbling noise, I became more frightened, was this the approach of a thunder storm. What had I got to do, go inside the tent with the two bodies or remain outside, I chose the latter course. The noise came nearer and nearer, then I heard the patter of hundreds of feet, they were Jackals, they swept by me and after a while I heard them howling in the distance. A man came to replace me accompanied by the Sergeant. When I told him about the incident, he just laughed. Jackals won't hurt you but if you had not been on guard they would have been in that tent in a shot and eaten the bodies. I paid several visits into Bagdad, with my friends. There was a services club there, but we never kept late hours, it was uncommon for a soldier to be attacked. So we would go home pretty early and spend the rest of the evening in our Marquee canteen. And then another rumour persisted that we were going to Teheran in Persia or Iran as they call it today. All the rumours I had heard in the past had turned out to be true and this one was no exception.

One morning we entrained at a railway station, I shall never forget the journey, the first night we settled down, there was eight of us to a compartment, we drew lots as to who would have the best seating. Four occupied the best seats, feet to feet, two on the floor, feet to feet, and yours truly in the luggage rack and another man in the other. It was useless to try and get to sleep the iron supports were torturing me. And then it happened, within seconds everyone was awake gasping for breath until someone had the sense to shut the windows, we had entered a tunnel and all the steam and fumes was coming in. The next two nights we kept the windows shut, we did not want a repeat of that.

The train stopped at various places so you could relieve yourself during the day, men were doing what comes naturally anywhere. After half an hour we would be on the move again. It was a long journey from Bagdad to Teheran, but we arrived safe and sound. Outside the station a lorry was waiting for us, we passed through the city, reached the suburbs and entered the grounds of the twentieth British Hospital, had our wanderings ceased? It was a lovely hospital the only thing lacking was lifts, it had been built only a few years before the war under German supervision. Hitler had done his homework, he thought Russia would collapse and the Germans would take over the oil-fields, so he had the hospital built with the co-operation of the Shah of Persia. The Iraqis and the Iranians were extremely hostile towards the allies, there was a lot of trouble time I was there. I got fixed up with a tent together with Shepperson, Parry and Boxall and a dozen more men. Morning came, we were summoned to the Company Office. When you come out on a draft you pick up some of the worst jobs going. We were confronted by the RSM, "Parry you will report to the Officers Mess as Mess Orderly", "Shepperson you report to Sister's Mess and Risby you will report to the Senior Sister, your job Sister's Batman". Three times before the War I had tried to join the Suffolk Regiment as a fighting man. Now

here I was under the clutches of women again, I had escaped them at Colchester, but these Sisters were some of the best. It may have been because they were a long way from home. I can remember the names of some of the sisters now. Sisters Kearsy, Hayes, Walker, Ballisty and Beckett. Sister Ballisty a red haired woman and Irish and inclined to be rather snobish, my job entailed taking the Sisters their early cup of tea, this was just for one floor. Make up all beds and the few weeks I was on this job I never had one complaint. Unlike at Colchester where I was pulled up several times in making beds and then clean the rooms, clean and polish the corridor and that was the lot. Next to our hospital was another smaller affair, it housed displaced persons. A lot of Poles were in there and there was an epidemic of dysentery, and I was roped in, the main job was giving-enemas, I had been learned how to do this at Crookham so it was no bother, but it was a bit messy job, but I dind mind. These people had got no homes to go to. Generally these peoples own doctors and nurses looked after there own, but this was a one off occassion. Time I was away my job had been taken over, I was quite happy about that. My new job, stretcher bearing. This was comparatively an easy job, as I've said there was no war going on in Iraq or Iran, they were all medical or accident cases. The only thing was you had to carry the cases up the staircases. It did not mean much to me, before the War a builders labourer carrying hods of bricks up the ladder, working in the Stone quarry, it was chicken feed to me. One night I went to bed feeling rotten, I got up the next morning feeling even worse as I crossed the forcourt of the hospital Sister Kearsy stopped me, "Whats wrong with you Risby, you look dreadful", I went to the MI room. The doctor took my pulse, "My goodness he exicaimed 105, report to Ward A straight away". I was put into bed and diagnosed as having sandfly fever, this is in no way a serious malady, very few people die from it. I was also suffering from boils, I had one on my behind as big as an egg, another one on my neck. I was in hospital about a fortnight. One afternoon when I was better and off duty I ventured into Teheran. By the way the heat was quite bearable 80 to 90 was the norm. I walked up to the main C Square in Teheran, there were crowds of people gathered there I asked one or two service men that I met what was happening, they dind know. I had plenty of time so I just stood and watched proceedings. I had not long to wait, a Hansom cab pulled by a horse pulled up, three men got out, I moved nearer to see what was happening, one of the men was struggling, he was struck violent blows in the face, he was then blind folded, legs tied together and pulled up on a rope fixed to a lamp post, where he slowly strangled to death. The Persians were ruthless in their discipline, just a minor thieving offence could mean one finger chopped off your hand, with succeeding offences you could finish up with only one hand. Outside the Town Hall was a big pole not unlike a barbers pole in this country, fingers and hands would hang from the end of this pole. If you dropped a wallet with money in it and you came back a quarter of an hour later it would still be there. The time I was in hospital there had been trouble in Teheran, as it was a neutral country there were all sorts of people there, Germans, Japs, Italians. On Saturday nights there would be some meetings organised by Iranian adjitators and there would be trouble in the City and troops would be called out. Invariably it meant a curfew, soldiers confined to camp after six pm.

I could understand the behaviour of the Iranians, they were treated shamefully. I have seen them those who were working for the hospital, searching for food in the rubbish bins, finding biscuits among surgical dressings, it was all so unnsecary. When I used to report to the MI room I felt guilty, you would see one or two Iranians who were obviously dying, but they would have to go to the end of the queue. It was not uncommon to see a British NCO to aim a kick at these people.

I made a point of seeing the Shah of Persia's Palace, a fare distance from the City. A big white building, it was easily a quarter of a mile from the gates to the building, but one could see it from the distance. It was surrounded by a very high wall. This also applied to the rich and powerful in Teheran. They made sure they would not be robbed. The hospital was a four storey affair and one day while on the top floor I was looking out of a window, when an officer approached me and said "Can you see those mountains in the distance" I looked for a few seconds before I could discern them, "Do you know what you are looking at " the officer said "No I don't Sir", I replied, "Well" he added "you are looking at the foothills of the Caucason mountains, Russia". By this time Russia were receiving aid from the allies, about once a fortnight along convoy of tanks passed by the hospital heading for Russia. We were not in Persia very long before we were on the move again. It was back to Bagdad, we knew what to expect this time and were prepared for the tunnels and the 800 or 900 mile journey, back to the overbearing heat. It was quite bearable in Iran 80 to 90, somtimes it would reach 100. After three days travel it was back to the same place where I had guarded the two bodies. A few days there then we were told that our next move was Palestine. This was another long trek, I will never forget it. The morning arrived, revelie was at three am. We had food and drink, water bottles filled up. A light pack to carry, bed roll made up, mosquito net, socks, long slacks, our heavy packs went into other lorries. Our water bottles held about a quart of water, this had to last you from one stage of the journey to the next, one tip I had given to me was invaluable, that was to slip a nice smooth pebble into your mouth, it worked wonders with me, during the stages of the journey I would finish up with some water left over.

In addition to Parry my welsh Tonypandy friend, I had Shepperson from Peterborough, and a con objectoer called Handcock, but he was a gentleman, I admired his guts. Time I knew Handcock he was involved in some verbal exchanges with other soldiers. If anything had happened physical I would have been on his side.

Handcock was very tactful and done his best to avoid confrontations. At five am we were away, it was a journey in a million. The first day we stopped at about three pm in the afternoon, we had been travelling about eight hours, it was a treat to stretch my legs, all round you as far as the eye could see was desert.

On our journey we had seen five camels, dead camels. As I bedded down for the night I found a big stone, I rolled it into position, it made a good pillow with something soft on it. Revelie was at three am, water bottles replenished we were away, we all kept to the same lorries. We had not travelled far, one lorry had knocked down a small boy, he probably had not seen a lorry in his life and he was dead. The Arabs came as from no where, there was hell to pay, women were wailing and weeping. We were held up for two hours until an Officer speaking Arabic managed to calm things down producing an official looking document with the promise of money. We were then allowed to go. We came to the mountain passes, it was terrifying round and round, up and up we went, on one side sheer cliff the other side certain death if you went over. Our Indian drivers were wonderful, they only had about a yard to spare. As you got near the top it made you feel dizzy just to look down. If a lorry broke down and it could not be mended quick enough all the soldiers were ordered off it and it would be pushed over the side. The soldiers would board other lorries which were following in the rear. Our convoy was lucky, only the death of the little boy marred our journey. In an Arab funeral all the men are seperated from the women. The men go first and the women last.

We encountered a sand storm and were prepared for it, we just sat down with a cape covering our head, it was just like being whipped and lashed and stung. After what seemed half an hour it ceased, each soldier was enshrouded with sand. In the morning it was away again. It was on through Trans Jordan. Jordan, that biblecal place, Nazareth, that I used to read about in the Sunday School. And then the green pastures of Jordan met our eyes. It seemed incredible, days of sand nothing but sand. The River Jordan loomed ahead and we crossed the bridge, we were in Palestine, our destination a village called Benjermein. We spent a few days there. There was some nice little cafes where you could get a lovely feed, eggs, bacon and chips and a lovely bottle of port wine. If I remember rightly it was about three shillings in English money, some of us took a bottle home and laid outside our tent drinking until the bottle was empty.

Benjermein was a lovely place, orange groves everywhere, they were not ripe enough time I was there, but sour or not I used to eat them. And then it was on to Haifa, whenever would our wanderings cease, and then on to Egypt, a place called Ismalia and we settled down in a camp just outside the town. The second day we were there I heard that there was a cinema about a mile away, my mates suggested to me that we went. It was a lovely night, stars and the moon, there was a road to the cinema, we had not gone about a quarter of a mile when I heard music coming from the cinema. It was incredible, the tune I was hearing was my favourite song, Bing Crosby's hit song 'Sweet Lilarney Heavenly Flowers' and when that finished it was the lovely Bing Crosby hit 'Please'. Those two songs were food and drink to me. I sat throughout the performance continually humming the songs to myself. There were no blackouts so we forsook the road and took a short cut across the desert. This could have proved disasterous, we had not gone far when we heard voices, we just carried on, the voices became louder more of a command, two soldiers came into view carrying rifles, they pointed to the road, we found out later that they were Greek Soldiers and we were out of bounds. We stuck to the road in future.

At night in the tents it was torture, the mosquitos were terrible. I made a mistake in having a. few pints of beer, I had the mosquito tent over me which meant lifting it up and then those sods flew in, back from the toilet and another lot would fly in as you lifted it to creep back into bed, no more sleep that night, it learnt me a lesson.

We were told that seven days leave was in the pipe line. My friend Handcock, the con objector was no longer with us, but Parry, Shepperson and Boxal was. The seven days leave came about and we went to a place called Timsah, it was lovely, a nice bed you could lay all day if you wanted to. The Egyptian workers in the camp were kept on their toes by a huge hulk of a man wielding a large whip. It was there where I tried to learn to swim, but to no avail, I had tried earlier in Durban in the swimming baths with Ivy and the boys. The leave went all too quick and it was back to Ismalia.

Then another rumour circulated, we were going back to England. It dind seem possible we had only left England in January 1943, but the rumour, as all the others, turned out to be right and we boarded the Duchess of Richmond. Hovering the vicinity of the Suez Canal were a lot of ships escorted by destroyers, little did I know that sister Ivy was in one of them, the Orduna. Passing through the Canal the Duchess of Richmond got jammed and it was nearly a day before we got freed, and then to the high seas again. Passing by Scicily we saw that big volcano mountain 'Mount Etna'. We were heavily escorted, the German U Boats had took a hiding and there was not many around. To home we went, Malta, Gibraltar passed by and eventually we docked at Liverpool. It had been about a year since we left Grennock in Scotland in the Empress of Canada. It seemed like ten years. Getting off the ship we passed through some sort of corridor, each of us were given a big bar of chocolate and lead to a platform where a train was waiting for us. And now where are we going I thought. I dind even know what station we were on. I think I was told. Nobody told us where we were going. I settled down in my compartment and was really relaxed for the first time for weeks. Changing at Crewe we now knew we were

heading for North Wales, passing through Chester, Conway, Llunduno. We were travelling a very long while, according to the rumours it was Portmadoc we were heading for and we eventually drew into that station. Forming up outside in the forecourt of the station we could see a civilian Band and a large crowd, what was going on, we got lined up and with the band in full blast away we went up the main street, arriving at a big building we passed into and through its big doors to be met by a scene we, or I had not seen for years, tables covered with table cloths, plates laden with food, beer, wine the lot. Why all this hero worship I thought. We were all seated and then the Lord Mayor asked and gave a Toast, "To our Eighth Army heroes", we could have dropped through the floor, we were no more entitled to that honour than the Lord Mayor himself. Our CO tactfully whispered into the ear of the Lord Mayor and all was saved. After that we were shown our billets. About twenty of us occupied the vestry of a chapel, others were placed in other buildings in Portmadoc. After a couple of days it was home on leave, I had only been away about a year but it was lovely to be home again. Wife Lily was much better, time I had been away Lily's brother George had been reported missing, presumed dead. Sister Maud and daughter Jean still looking after the Angel Inn with Bangor in the Air Force, and then it was over to Lavenham to see mum and dad and sister Ivy and the two boys. Pat and Pete. It was a great reunion only marred by the loss of Ivy's husband Victor, Ivy still believed he was still alive. The fourteen days passed all too quickly and it was back to Portmadoc.

The people of Portmadoc were wonderful to us. The only ones who were indifferent were the older type. If you went into a pub they would withdraw, some would talk Welsh, but as I've said the majority were good. I enjoyed myself there. I enjoyed a game of snooker at a Conservative club, I was far from being a Conservative, but the club was nearby. I made friends with a farm agent also a fishmonger's son, one was continually invited out to tea. Poor old Parry had to come to the wrong part of Wales, his home Tonypandy, South Wales, at least he had his leave at home. The farm agent said to me when he knew it would not be long before we started wandering again, "Joe, when the war is over you come back here with your wife, I don't care what skills you have got, I will gladly find you a house and a job on the estate", I thought it was a wonderful gesture.

We had a nice lot of lads in the chapel vestry, one was an old soldier. Private Jarvis, we called him Colonel Jarvis, he was only a little fellow but he oozed with importance, a first class nursing orderly he knew his job, but the Colonel liked his beer, Friday night, his pocket replenished with money, he would stride out all on his own and come back just before twelve o'clock as drunk as a fiddle by Sunday night he was broke. Well we had a game with him, on Friday night and Saturday night everybody abed except the Colonel. The door would be left slightly ajar with a tin of water resting on the top. Everybody would be asleep or pretending to be, then we could hear the Colonel approaching the building singing at the top of his voice, the door opened and the tin of water crashed down on his head, a torrent of oaths came from his mouth, after a few minutes he would start to sing again until someone shouted to him to shut up. Another incident concerning the Colonel involved using some empty winkle shells. What happened was, I was friendly with a fish monger's son, his father also owned some oyster beds, he told me where I could get some winkle shells, there were loads of them on the sea wall when the tide goes out. I thought to myself "Joe boy you can make some beer money", so I wrote home to mum and dad and Ivy, they saw Bob Lambert one of the Lavenham fishmongers, yes he would take all the winkles I could send to him. I got a sack from the fishmonger's son and one afternoon when off duty I went to the sea wall. It took me about two and a half hours to get a big sack of winkles, it weighed about one hundred weight, I had about a quarter of a mile to walk to the station, I didn't put the sack down in case I could not lift it back on to my shoulder. The baggage clerk charged six and a tanner and it left Portmadoc round about six pm, my winkles arrived at Lavenham next day at twelve noon. Bob Lambert sent me one pound so I had earned thirteen shillings and sixpence, and with beer about four pence or five pence a pint I was in clover. I think I sent about two lots and then we were moved to a place called Vaynol Hall, near Bangor, there was a crowd of Italian prisoners of war convalescing there, they were having the time of their lives, good food and they were of no trouble so ever. Anyway I have got before my time, the time we were in the vestry at Portmadoc the lads asked me if I would boil them some winkles, there was a big copper in the corner of the room, I boiled some winkles but they did not like them, they had other ideas in regards to the winkles involving the luckless Colonel Jarvis. One Friday night his pockets once more replenished by the Friday morning pay day, he would frequent more than one pub and on this particular night more tanked up than usual he returned back to the chapel. The tin of water was perched on the door and his lovely clean white sheet was covered with winkles in his bed. Just before twelve o'clock at night the Colonel's voice could be heard singing lustily, the door opened, down came the tin of water, this was a place of religion, but the words coming from his mouth were unprintable. He came to the side of his bed, once more breaking into song, everybody else was quiet. They knew what was coming, he undressed everyone was wide awake as the squeaking of the springs as the Colonel was getting into bed, he then bellowed like a bull as he laid on the winkles. He made a bee line for me, he knew I was the one who gathered the winkles, I was dragged out of bed together with all the others. Our little games with Private Jarvis were over.

Our next move was a place called Vaynel Hall, about a mile and a half from Bangor. It was used for convalescent Italian prisoners of war. I felt sorry for them, they were quite docile. I paid visits to Carnarvon and Bangor, you had to watch your step in Carnarvon on a Market day. Pubs were open all day. Fights between

dealers were quite frequent. I managed to gain admission to a murder trial, I think it was Carnarvon Castle, I wished afterwards I had not gone, a little gypsy had killed his wife, I saw the Judge put on a Black Handkerchief on his head. His words "To be taken to a place of execution to be hung by the neck until he is dead".

And once again our wanderlust took over, our next station was Riegate in Surrey where we stayed a while. The first Sunday I was there my mates, Evan Parry, the Welshman, Boxhall from Midhurst were still with me, went for a stroll. I had not gone a hundred yards from the camp, but who should be coming towards me was a Lavenham man, Charlie Fayers, a bricklayer before the war with Tom Garrard of Lavenham. I left my mates and went back with Charlie, took him to the company Office and then reported to the blanket store for bedding. He was given a pass and we both went for a little stroll. Apparently Charlie had been on a ship which had hit a mine and he was lucky to be alive.

I received a letter from Mum and Dad and Ivy, they told me they believed my eldest Uncle, Uncle Fred lived at the top of Riegate Hill. So the following Sunday I set off for Uncle Fred's, it was quite a long walk. Uncle Fred, as a young man had been Under Gamekeeper at Kentwell Hall, Long Melford, and later on had moved to Reigate as Under Gamekeeper for Colmans, the mustard people. I went to one house, it was the wrong one but I got directions. I knocked on the door, an elderly little woman with a white pinefore on answered the door. It was Aunt Nellie, I had never seen her in my life, but when I told her I was George Risby's son she grabbed me by the hands and kissed me. The first thing she wanted to know was had I eaten, I told her I had my dinner before I set out but she insisted that I have some more before I went back. She was a lovely little old lady. "Now" she said, "Young George", I did not correct her until I left, "If Uncle Fred asks you for money don't give him any he has plenty". And sure enough after speaking with him for a few minutes he said, "I wonder 'Young Slave' (my father was called slave), if you could let me have enough money to buy an ounce of tobacco", "certainly Uncle" I replied, it was about eight pence or ten pence an ounce, I never mentioned it to Aunt Nellie. Later on Uncle Fred took me to a part of the house where he had a neat hole in the wall, leaning by the hole were two double barralled shot guns secured to a rack, "There Young Slave, if those buggers Germans show their heads on the Hill I Will blast them to hell", both guns were fully loaded. I stopped for tea and had a lovely piece of Pheasant. Time went quickly, both Aunt Nellie and Uncle Fred were getting old, over eighty, "Come and see us next Sunday", but things happened and I never saw them no more. I can remember Uncle Fred when I was only a little boy, he came to stay with mum and dad, and mother asked him what he liked in the food line, he said "I like sausages and grunters (peas)".

While at Riegate the Doodle Bugs were coming over, terrible things, you could hear them miles away just like a powerful motor bike. One day I saw one, its engine had stopped before I saw it, it would travel some distance, it then took a dive, a pair of houses isolated from others a mile away was hit right in the middle. It seemed as if it had been hit by a giant cheese cutter, the houses opened wide and then came together again then a huge explosion of fire and smoke came from the building, four people died. Time went by there was talk of invasion of France. We were told we were on the move again. This time it was Chichester, our billets Goodwood House, the property of the Duke of Richmond, loaned to the Home Office for the duration. It was a magnificent building, it had one hundred rooms. The big Ball Room where some of us slept, seemed as big as a football pitch. I sorted out a nice little pub. The Duke of Richmond, it was situated near the entrance of the drive up to the house. We were in clover in that pub, on a friday or Saturday night we paid for very little beer, Gordon Boxal, my friend only lived about ten miles away at a place called Midhurst, the home of the Polo players. As we were on alert leave was suspended, but there were men going as far as Liverpool, so we told Gordon if they go without leave you should go. Weekends went by and still no move from Gordon, and then one weekend Gordon decided to go, he came back as happy as a sandboy, he said "Next weekend you are invited home", next weekend arrived Gordon, Parry, Shepperson and myself, I'm not sure about Charlie, anyway we met Gordon's wife and mother at his mother's home. They done us proud, there was beer on the table and when the dinner came in it was my favourite, 'Rabbit Pie'!! Apparently Gordon had told her that I loved Rabbit Pie, and it was lovely, it was quite a change from the monotonous Army meals. Then rumours started again our next port of call was Portsmouth, with all this moving about we were earmarked for something big, arriving at Portsmouth we were ushered into a barbed wire compound comprising of little buildings and tents. We learnt on our arrival that the invasion had taken place, of course we knew then that France was our destination. We were not allowed out during the time we were there. We had a canteen so we whiled the time in there. Then one night we were told we were on the move in the morning at three am. We marched to Portsmouth harbour and boarded an American boat. The American crew looked after us like lords, chicken, strawberries and ice cream. Our journey lasted about six hours, we got a little sleep, then a glimpse of France in the distance. Arriving there we saw this big floating harbour 'The Mulberry Harbour'. It was marvelous as we walked on it it dind seem to move, it was a tremendous invention. Arriving on the beach, full packs on our backs, we approached a lane, we were at Arromanche, the lane was sunk between high banks, either side there were some French civilians and they were none too polite, they were obviously telling us to go back to England. I could understand their feeling they had been four years without War, now it had started again. We were told by our officer to ignore them. It was mid-moming as we marched up the lane and getting warm, we entered in to the Bayeue Caen Road, then

down a bye road entering a lane before coming to a meadow. A Sergeant Rogers shouted 'Halt', and then most of them fell down like a lot of cows glad to get rid of their heavy packs. The C O was furious, Lieutenant Colonel Fletcher-Barrett could not contain his anger, he shouted "Get up, you are like a lot of roving lunatics". There were no snipers in the trees, but there could have been. Someone called the Colonel a very rude word, this set Sergeant Rogers in motion, "Who called the Colonel that word?", he shouted, he pranced up and down the ranks like a man demented. How I kept from laughing I don't know, if I had laughed I would have been hauled out. We had not been in the meadow barely ten minutes when we heard a plane coming towards us, a machine gun rattled out, the plane appeared, a German with its black crosses under its wings. One of our men shouted that he had been hit. We fully expected the plane to return and kill us all, but it kept straight on. Our friend only suffered a simple wound. Despatch riders got into contact with the Colonel, we had to go forward again and came to another meadow, we had not been there five minutes when two Military Policemen rode up on motorbikes, "Get back" they shouted at us "There are snipers in those trees. We then went back to the first meadow we were in and that night we really slept rough. I laid in a ditch, I never slept a wink. Early in the morning you could hear a crescendo of guns firing in a half circle, the noise was continuous it kept on all day. The fighting was at Caen about twelve miles away and a lot of our Naval guns were firing from out at sea. Our tents and marques and equipment had arrived so it was all hands on deck. We soon had the marques and tents up, we had practised this at Bagdad so we knew every move, every man had a number and the tents went up in record time, beds were placed in the tents, all made ready with white clean sheets. Operating tables and equipment in the marques. It was not long before we were fully operational. There was an Air Landing Strip nearby and really urgent cases were flown back to England taking only a matter of minutes. In our tents we had to wear our tin helmets as shrapnel was coming through the tents, you could not get much rest although most of the noise had subsided. We never got a lot of rest at night because the bugle could go at any time summoning you on parade and then a convoy of wounded would arrive for us to unload. Some men would be detailed for operation duties, taking men into the operating theatre. There were German casualties, walking wounded and so on. I was detailed one evening to escort German walking wounded into the next meadow to ours as they arrived in the ambulances, myself and others led them into the reception tent. Sergeant Rogers would be there feeling all over their tunics and if he found anything he flung it across the tent in a most arrogant manner. Then I was detailed to escort six of them to their tents. They could easily have killed me if they had wanted to, but they were glad to be out of the war. At night it was lovely to hear them playing mouth organs and singing. A favourite tune they would sing was 'Drink, Drink Brothers Drink Raising Your Glasses on High', I could play the mouth organ myself so it was quite interesting to me to listen.

We had been there a few days when I had the odd moment off so I had a look round. There was an apple orchard next to our meadow. I saw a little man leaning on a gate and he beckoned to me, I went up to him and he spoke to me in French, which of course I did not understand. Then he pointed to some pigs and put his hand up to his mouth indicating food for the pigs. So off I went to the cookhouse, "Could I have some swill please" I asked "I'm sorry you can't" the Sergeant in charge replied, I'll tell you what I said, "I'll get you some Cider", I knew where there were apple trees there was Cider. They gave me about four pails full of swill. The little farmer nearly kissed me, he took me down to his cellar where there were big barrells of Cider, filled up four litre bottles with the promise of more when I brought some more swill. I gave two of the bottles to the cookhouse Sergeant and kept two for my tent. Old Parry and Charlie were in their element, myself I could not care less about it, today I marvel at the price of it, over a pound a pint.

I got on well with the little farmer, about every two days I would take him at least four or five pails of swill. In addition to the Cider he gave me pork chops, he would have given me butter but I didn't want it as we were eating mostly dog biscuits. His little wife would spend hours turning a big barrell making butter, while the old man sat on his seat drinking his cider.

Evan Parry my Rhonda Valley Welsh friend was in paradise, he was Officers Waiter, last thing at night we would be settled down on our ground sheet, tin hat on and Parry would appear at the tent opening, he was well under the weather and would make a dive for his ground sheet. Charlie became ill, I think he had influenza, but he did not want to report sick, he feared he would be parted from me and his other mates, so I kept Charlie supplied with hot milk and the occasional pork chop on morning Reveille, Convoy Bugles and roll call at night I stood as stooge for Charlie. I always managed to get in the back row, it would be "Private Fayers C", "Sergeant" I would answer. "Risby C J", "Sergeant", and I got away with it. With our mess tins and little methalated burner I got Charlie well with hot milk and pork chops.

Arromanches village was only about a mile away, but I never went there, but I did manage a couple of visits to Bayeue, about a couple of miles from our meadow. I went into the famous Cathedral. On the verges of the road side were improvised graves of German soldiers with their rifles stuck in the ground and steel helmet on top, I could not resist taking one of them and it resided in the bottom of my kit bag until my discharge. I also later on obtained a belt on it it said 'Gott Mit Eiens', 'God is with us'.

The Caen battle was a severe one. The dead and wounded were numerous, but the Germans were

eventually pushed back. We pulled the marquees and tents down, packed beds and equipment. My little farmer friend was nearly in tears when I told him we were on the move again.

Our next place was a place or town called Eckloo in Belgium. A big convent which had been converted into a hospital, the place was huge with scores of rooms, but there was no lifts in the building and if I remember rightly four storey high. In the grounds there were a lot of graves, Canadian and German. There had been quite a battle there. There were Belgian civilian stretcher bearers, who were helping us, it was hard work. I sorted out a big fellow from Cornwall, I think he was a tin miner, anyway we both got on well together, we took turns in which we changed from the head to the foot, being at the foot end you carried the heaviest weight going up the stairs.

While we were at Eckloo the Belgian stretcher bearers went on strike, it didn't seem right in war time, but I had great feeling for them. Their pay was a mere pittance but the authorities would not give in. Eventually they compromised, at the end of the day they were given a bowl of soup and some bread and jam sandwiches and they returned to work.

Each patient when they entered the reception room was hurriedly examined and a sealed envelope pinned to their chest. One day me and my miner friend took up an ATS girl, the number of the ward was on the envelope, a hospital Sister came out of the ward opened the envelope, I saw her face change, "Get off that stretcher" she shouted at the girl, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself letting these men carry you up these stairs", the girl had venereal disease, it was hard work, my arms really ached but the girl had probably been ordered to lay on the stretcher.

My friend Parry still had his job as Officer Waiter and Batman, anyway when we were off duty we would head for a little entertainment, or public house as they call it in England. The beer was terrible, all foam, but the Brandy was out of this world and cheap, there was a barrel organ in the room, it was lovely it seemed to play all the old fairground tunes, and the customers were very polite. As the war was dragging to its close so the people were coming home from the concentration camps. I'll never forget one evening off duty, I had heard that a train was coming to Eckloo with concentration camp survivors, I made a point of being at the station when the train arrived. Women on the platform were waiting for their husbands, but they had brought home women with them and there was hell to pay, women fighting each other, pulling each other by the hair and rolling about on the platform and then the men would walk up the street, they knew the people who had given them away to the Germans, mostly middle class, they would make their way to a certain house, bang on the door, faces would appear at the window, but the door would not be opened. The occupants knew what was happening and they would try and escape by the back way, but they got caught. The man of the household got one hell of a hiding, he was lucky he didn't get killed, most of the furniture was pulled out of the house and set on fire, you could see these fires all over Eckloo, it was terrible. This happened every time a train pulled in with concentration survivors. You could not blame these people, they had suffered for years in the camps all through people who wanted to curry favour with the Germans. The Belgian police were powerless to do anything, they just stood by and watched. You could see girls who had been with German soldiers, the men folk had shaven their heads. The Belgian men were very much the boss over their women folk, I have seen the women in a cinema queue get their face slapped just for looking at a British or American soldier.

Then came the big day when war was over!, we had a bit of a do, a dinner was held in celebration. Parry and myself went to our favourite entertainment, the Landlord was nearly drunk, he insisted that everyone drink Cognac at his expense. The barrel organ worked overtime and by the time we reached the dinner party we were well oiled. Parry and myself went on our hands and knees to get to our seats, getting on our chairs Parry fell off and I dragged him back on. The Colonel was just about to give a speech so I shouted out "Three cheers for the Colonel, three cheers for Colonel's wife", someone shouted "Knock him down". It was all good fun everyone was happy, the war with Germany was over. Within a couple of days of the war being over an advance party was detailed for hair cuts, it went a bit further than that, the barber layered our heads and shaved them, we looked like Buddhist monks. When it was all done we were lined up and inspected by an officer. When we looked at each other we fell about laughing, there wasn't a single hair on our heads, and then we were told the news, we were going to a concentration camp called Belson, we had never heard of the place before. We were soon to learn. The morning dawned and we boarded the lorries for our journey to Belson, Captain Fanner was in charge with a Captain Deutch, Medical Officer. Captain Deutch was a naturalised Englishman, German before the war. We passed down the main street of Brussels with the statue of a man peeing down into the street. As we passed through towns and villages I had glimpses of 1914 war cemeteries, my mind went back to the days when I was a little boy and to all the women who had lost their husbands, sons and brothers, nearly eighty men folk from Lavenham, some of them were probably resting in these same cemeteries I was watching as we passed by. We passed through the Siegfried Line and stopped on the Dutch border for the night, sleeping in a school. That night we were allowed out, but were warned to be careful going in pubs because there had been a few fights between Dutch civilians and British and American soldiers, so my mates and myself were careful. Morning came and we were away early, after a few hours we arrived at the Dutch German frontier, it said on a board 'You

are now entering Germany'. Although it was Sunday the first German I saw was a man ploughing in the field with a pair of horses, I had a good look at him, he didn't seem no different to my Dad with pipe in mouth. Travelling on we came to a place called Belsen Bergen, people were going to church, it looked a neat and tidy village, totally unaffected by war. We carried on another ten miles, a nasty smell, a sweet sickly smell hit our nostrils, the cloying stench of death. The first clue we had that we had reached Belsen was the high barbed wire fences, sentry boxes high up about every hundred yards. We came to a side entrance, the gates were opened for us. Driving inside a big placard confronted us, on it it said 'Five Thousand Jews Buried Here', driving on we came across a lorry loading up dead bodies just dressed in what appeared to be pyjama suits, it seemed unbelievable, I pinched myself, was I dreaming? Then a loud speaker sounded, someone speaking in a foreign language, our medical Officer Captain Deutch translated the message, it was "Bring out your dead", they were loading them up in the lorry just like sacks of corn. The camp had been taken over about two weeks previous, the Rifle Brigade being the first inside. Tents were provided for us, after getting rid of our kit we were called on parade, Captain Farmer addressed us. Colonel Fletcher-Barratt was still at Ecklo, "You have a very difficult job to do, very few will be able to speak your language, but, do your best to help them". In the fortnight that the British troops had been there hundreds of Jews had been taken to hospitals throughout Germany. In the three months we were there we did our best for them. It was pitiful to see them. Legs and arms no thicker than broom handles, staring at you as if you were someone from Mars. If I remember rightly Belsen Bergen was the nearest railway station and I helped hundreds on to the trains carrying their pitiful possessions. The first week we were there there were more people dying than before we came in, their stomachs could not take in the good food, even milk made them vomit. When anyone died they were put in a sack, our unit supplied the sacks, this was generally done by their relatives or friends. Food was there in abundance, chicken, beef, pork but these poor dears could not eat it, they preferred to eat as they had been over the last three or four years. At night you could see little fires scattered about over a wide area cooking potatoes. One night I came across a couple of them, they were digging up a piece of meat which they had previously hidden, I warned them that it could be dangerous to eat it and that there was plenty of good food for them in the camp, but they just unheeded me.

In the camp was a big building, I think it was brick, it was called the Human Laundering. A lot of the Jews had Tuberculosis and Typhus along with Typhoid. There were very few who were fit people. I helped carry a lot into the laundry, they were scrubbed and that was about as much as they could take, they keeled over and died.

There was a cinema, more like a marquee or tent, when the Rifle Brigade went in about a fortnight before I went in they were met at the main gates by the German Commandant, Colonel Kramer and then the cameras started to whirl. After they made the film of the first fortnight all or most of the villages in the surrounding hamlets were rounded up by British Soldiers, put on buses and brought to the camp and they were made to watch the film. I saw it two or three times when I had the chance, on one occasion the Germans laughed at it, they were made to watch it all through again.

At the main entrance was big iron gates and in iron letters on the gates were these words, 'Alles Macht Arbiten Heir', 'All who enter here Must Work'. Just inside of the gates was Colonel Kramer's house, a round one further down the road was the SS barracks, then came the cookhouse, the Cinema and then the camp itself with its rows of huts, like our nissen huts, all segregated, men from women. One day I was in the road near the SS barracks when I saw two of the camp people chasing a nurse. The nurse managed to get into a hut. The two camp people tried to open it, but she had secured it from inside. If they had got hold of her they would have killed her. It turned out that these two camp people had previously been at a concentration camp in Poland, apparently the nurse was an overseer at this camp and they recognised her. When the war was over the Allied Forces issued an appeal to Germany for nurses to come forward to help these camp people. This was a good way out for a lot of them by volunteering as nurses and they got away with it. Military Personnel were soon on the spot and the nurse and the two camp people were taken away, I never heard anything more about it. If it had not been for that little hut I could have been witness to a killing.

Another incident involved my Lavenham friend Charlie Fayers, both of us were off duty as things were now under control, we walked by some houses, no more than a mile from the camp, when I saw curtains at the windows being drawn and people staring at us, we walked on another half mile, I said to Charlie "I think we ought to turn back, I didn't like the suspicious looks from behind those curtains", as we came back towards the houses there was half a dozen men and women blocking the road. I said to Charlie "Just ignore them". They didn't say anything to us, but tried to humiliate us by trying to stop us going by. Anyway we got back to camp. It seemed ironical that in this dreadful camp we fed on the fat of the land, chickens, ham, pork, tons of it were coming in. At night off duty Corporal or NCO would come round with a big brown earthenware jug full of rum, and when I say rum I mean rum, it was the real stuff, undiluted, your tea mug was about quarter full, perhaps a quarter of a pint, talk about the entertainments in Ecklo, they weren't in it. Private Colonel Jarvis would have been in his element, but now he wasn't with us. We were given free cigarettes some we bought we were encouraged to smoke, you were bending over people who had tuberculosis and other diseases. If I remember properly we had the best fags. Senior Service, what a far cry from the Victory V's, we also had lovely bread, not

the dog biscuits we got at Arromanches.

At this time we were given small books with German and English sentences, I learnt a little but I gave my book to a young Polish Jew Doctor, but shortly after wards I obtained another one.

I had trouble with my teeth, I caught a gum disease called Gingervitus, your gums grew over your teeth. Down in the basement of the S3 barracks was the Dentists, I was told by a sergeant to report at a certain time next day. The next day arrived, I was there at the appointed time. I knocked on the door and a man in a white coat opened the door, "Come" he said, there was nobody in the room only him, "Sit" he said, like you would talk to a dog, then he got to work cutting my gums, no injections nothing, I never in all my life experienced pain like it. The Dentist said "Tic it", "Stick it", I then realised he was German. I saw the Sergeant later and told him about it, "They are saving the drugs for their own people" he said. By this time a lot of the camp people had been taken away, some to hospital and some who were just about able bodied to find haven in Germany or other countries.

I never in all my life saw so many coat hangers as there were in the huts, hundreds of them. We were told that a top American General was to perform a ceremony at the burying down of the first hut. A big flag with Hitler's picture and a swastika on it was draped over a hut, at a given signal by the General a flame thrower hit the hut and it was ablaze. That was the start of destroying this terrible camp. I spent about three months in this Belson camp and Mary Churchill, daughter of Winston Churchill visited Belson. Time I was there a preliminary trial was to be held at a place called Cella, not all that far from Belson, Kramer, Goebels, Irmagrese, Goering and others were tried, some of our boys were lucky and they went to it.

We had done our share at Belson and it was time to move on again. We had seen some terrible sights and heard some terrible tales, tales about ' what happened in the fortnight we wasn't there. Apparently when the Rifle Brigade went in they were to see some terrible sights, some of the huts were full of dead people, bull dozers swept them into deep trenches, I had seen them on my first day at Belson. Anyway the Sergeant Major in charge of the Rifle Brigade was so incensed at what he saw he ordered some SS soldiers to load up a lorry with the dead, he then made them pull the lorry with ropes, with the brakes on. When they had put the bodies in the trench one of the SS soldiers called the RSM a 'Swine Und', 'Pig Dog', the RSM kicked him in the trench and shot him. The poor fellow was Court Martialed, I don't know what happened to him. There were other tales nearly as gruesome.

Now I was to make my last and final move, Hanover, this was the best hospital I had served in during the war, even the toilets were modern. It had lifts, it was a big place, I think it was about twelve hundred beds. Although the war was over it was a very busy place, it covered a big area. Scores of accident cases came in night and day and also still war casualties. I was stretcher bearing most of the time. Sometimes you would be put on fire-piquet at night, it dind matter that you had worked all day, that dind count. Fire Piquet meant that you could be a replacement nurse, ambulance orderly or mortuary attendant. I was ambulance orderly one night when two Land Rovers had crashed head on with each other. The driver of the ambulance and myself took two, they appeared to be dead and two more were dying, it was a gruesome journey to the hospital. Arriving at reception the Doctor took one look, "There are two dead and the other two will be gone in a few minutes, it's a waste of time to take them into the wards, let me know when they die and I'll have a look" he said. He had only been gone a few minutes when they gave a last final gasp, four men for the mortuary.

Several men came in unconcious through drinking snapps, a good drink when made properly, but it had been interfered with and was dangerous to drink, some died, it was pitiful to see these young men in the spring of their youth dying.

One Sunday I was on stretcher bearing duty when a case was brought in with a letter pinned to his chest. Things were quiet and I had to wheel the stretcher about a hundred yards, there was a lift nearby and it said in big letters 'FOOD ONLY', I had been up this before without being caught, I got in the lift and pressed the button, patient and me went up, getting out on the floor I runned right into a Sister, "And what do you think you are doing, can't you read", "Yes Sister", "Right your name and number?", I was in front of the OC on Monday morning. He gave me a ticking off, "Don't you know it's not hygienic to carry sick cases up a food lift, seven days confined to barracks".

There was a German civilian, he was about sixty and a nice old boy, he helped look after the boilers. I felt sorry for him, he liked a smoke but there was no tobacco, but I was able to get an ounce now and again for him, he was as pleased as punch, he said one Sunday "You come to mine for dinner, I only live one hundred yards away", and he added "I always keep a pig, half of it should go to the Government, but I make sure they don't get any, so you some Joseph", and so one Sunday I did. Hitler would have had a fit to see the lovely dinner on that table, kartofelm (potatoes), sauerkraut (cabbages), cauliflower and pork, in the centre of the table was huge jug of beer, it was lovely, his wife, about his age and myself, we three sat round the table. Not knowing a lot of German there was a lot of gesturing going on. When it was over I gave my thanks in German, "Danke schein es ist iein schoner mittag essen" (thank you so much, it has been a lovely dinner), I had learnt some bits of German from the book which we had issued to us and I would practise it on some Germans

working in the hospital, I would say "Und wo gehen sie heute abent" (where are you going to tonight). They would reply "Ich gehen in die stadt, kommen sie mit" (I am going to the town would you like to come). Sometimes in the street I would ask an old German whereabouts was the railway station was, "Wo ist der bankopt bittle", "Es ist um die ecke" (just round the corner). It was no use talking to a youngster, "Nicht Verstehen" they would say (I do not understand). I sorted out a nice little pub about two hundred yards from the hospital, I swatted up my little book, walked up the road, entered the door of the pub, a few old gentlemen who possibly served in the 1914 war looked up as I entered "Und was wollen sie mein Herr?" the barmaid said, "Ein glasa dankles bier bitte" (and what do you wish mister) (A glass of dark beer please). I sat down for a quarter of an hour with the old boys eyeing me up and down. As I went to leave I said "Guten abent und aufwedersehen und slafen gut", (goodbye, see you again and sleep well). The Germans nearly always give this goodbye when they take leave of one another. I went to the cinema the other end of Hanover, the Victoria, but they were German films, I only went about twice but I enjoyed the Beer Gardens much better, although the beer was terrible all foam and gas. One night I sat round a table with my mates when a crowd of youngsters, about a dozen, approached us and started taking the mickey out of us, the oldest was about fourteen, it was very embarrassing, "Go back to England" they were shouting. A man and woman sitting nearby told them to shut up, the man eventually got up, siezed the elder boy by the collar and threatened him with a good hiding, they then cleared off.

I was due for leave, I had been looking forward to it. The morning arrived and lorries took us to Hanover railway station. I was surprised to see crowds of German men, women and children on the platform begging for food, biscuits were being thrown on the platform by British soldiers, and the Germans were going down on their knees to pick them up. The train was full and away we went passing through the German countryside, some towns and villages seemed unaffected by war, others blasted, chimneys down and roofs off. I had never heard about the City or town of Arnhem on the borders of Germany and Holland, as we passed through some houses appeared leveled to the ground. I heard later that there had been a big battle at Amhem. A brain wave of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery which sadly went wrong. On through Nymegon, Rotterdam, this place had certainly copped it. We stayed the night here. Early in the morning it was away again, we boarded a small ship bound for Harwich, arriving there I was not far from home, Colchester and then Sudbury and home to Glemsford by bus. By this time my sister Elsie's husband, Harry, had died. Harry was one of the best, but now he was gone. Back in Glemsford my wife Lily was much better, she even talked of starting work again at Arnold and Gould, Horse Hair Factory, but it dind happen. After I was demobbed I did fix a bench up for her at home so she could do a little work, but that became too much for her. After my ten days were up it was back to Hanover. Soldiers were now being demobbed. They were placed in two categories A and B. A were tradesmen and B the lower grade, I was in this latter group. Charlie Fayers being a bricklayer was out before me. Eventually it was my turn. This time I came a different way home passing through Paris and eventually on to Calaise, I can remember that ship plainly. We had not sailed and were given a lovely dinner including Christmas pudding, although it wasn't Christmas it was lovely. As they were taking the pudding back I remarked to one of the catering staff what a lovely dinner I had had, he said to me "would you like some more pudding?", "Yes please" I answered, he gave me a big bit on a plate, I sat on the stairway and ate up every bit. That old adage 'Eat when you can' took over, because you don't know when you are going to get the next meal, my goodness me did I suffer although I deserved it. The ship started to move and so did I towards the toilets. It seemed like hours I was sick. I kept repeating to myself, "Serve you right you old hog" and "Never no more". The old White cliffs of Dover came in sight, my wanderings were nearly over, disembarking at Dover it was on to Reading to hand in our webbing equipment and finally on to Northampton to get rid of our Army clothes. I had had no food since the incident on the ship involving the Christmas pudding, my appetite was getting sharp again. After fitting us up with a suit, trilby hat, a macintosh and I forget about the shoes I don't know if we kept the old army shoes or not. The last move was to collect your gratuity money, I received seventy five pounds and then the final meal in the British Army. A cockney Corporal served me, "What do you want me old china?", "Eggs and bacon" I replied. Had four eggs and four or five rashes of bacon. Then away to the railway station and home, my wanderings had finished. I had travelled thousands of miles, ship train truck and desert. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel Fletcher-Barratt, "You are probably the most travelled unit in the British Isles". I was called up on December the twelfth 1940 and came out January twelfth 1946.

Arriving home I found Lily had got a better house, it belonged to her late employer Arnold and Gould, Horse Hair weavers, it was nearly opposite the Prince of Wales pub and near Glemsford Church. Lily was feeling much better. Sister Maud's husband Basil (Banger) Wright was home. Ivy was of course home and living with Mum and Dad in Prentice Street, later on to move to Bolton Street, where she had a house on her own. So it was back to civvy street. I gave thirty five pounds to Lil. I had been home only a week when a knock sounded on the door, a man stood there supporting a bicycle, "Hullo Joe" he said, "I'm afraid I don't know who you are" I replied, "Well I'm Stan Perkins from Long Melford and I'm foreman of a job down at Stafford Allens and I work for Wakelin and Rampling, builders, would you like a job working with me?". "I'm afraid I don't know at the moment, I've only been home from the army a week, so I must have a little time to think".

Another week went by and Stan Perkins came again, would I start right away, I was in a dilemma, there were training schemes going on at Letchworth and Hitchin in Hertfordshire, one had got to spend the whole week there and come home at weekends, Lil said "You have been away all those years, now you are going away again". So that decided it, I was going to work for Stan Perkins, Foreman for Wakelin and Rampling. I was destined to finish my working life as a labourer. I spent several months down Stafford Allens, it was quite handy for me only about a mile and a half from home. When that job was done it was to Sudbury to do a job at Sudbury Maltings, Edmes Limited, belonging to Mr Bearman who at that time was chairman of Tottenham Hotspurs, he was a nice old gentleman. He addressed nearly everyone as "Hullo young man" regardless of your age. One day I was working outside the building digging down trying to find a drain, there was a slight drizzle of rain, not enough to get wet, when Mr Bearman came on the scene, "And what do you think you are doing young man?", "I'm trying to find a drain Mr Bearman", "What in this weather" he said, "Haven't you got a job inside", "No Mr Bearman", "Well go inside and stand on your head", that was the sort of man he was, he was a very thoughtful and understanding man I liked him very much. The Sudbury Maltings was a very high building and we put another floor in. It took hundreds of concrete slabs to cover it, covered by four inches of cement and sand. This was the job where I managed to give up smoking. It happened like this, we were digging holes nine feet square and nine feet deep, these holes were to be filled with concrete with iron bolts in the centre to receive big iron stanchions. The Maltings were at full capacity and it was very hot. Six of us were engaged on this job, Joe Mumford, Bill Inch, Charlie Warner, Stan Mayhew, Bertie Leader and myself. Four of them had to pack it in, leaving just me and Stan Mayhew to carry on. When I smoked it made me feel dizzy, I thought to myself pack the smoking in and I did. At the top of the road, Kings Street was a sweet and tobacconists shop belonging to Mr and Mrs Dolly, it had been there for donkey's years, this was about 1947, the war had been over two years. I entered the shop, Mrs Dolly, a lovely woman, was serving, "And what can I get for you Mr Risby?", I had been a regular customer of hers since working for Wakelin and Rampling, "I would like five shillings worth of chewing gum please Mrs Dolly", "Five shillings worth" she repeated, "My goodness what are you going to do with that lot?", "I'm trying to give up smoking" I replied, "You will break your jaw", and it nearly did, but I won the day, I am now nearly 77 and a cigarette has not entered my mouth since that day in 1947 which was a very severe winter.

I was next engaged on a job building council houses at Cats Lane, Sudbury. The winter was dreadful although buses got through to Sudbury the roads were terrible. Ice and Snow, it froze everyday it seemed like for weeks, but you had to attend in case you could do something, round about two o'clock you could go home, the only trouble was you only received half pay. We used to spend from twelve o'clock until two o'clock in the Mauldon Grey pub, runned at the time by old Bill Webber and his daughter Grace, it was frequented by dubious characters. One man in particular a Cruci Josling, during the war he had been put into prison after a fracas with some Americans. A timber Faller by trade, it was said that when he entered a pub all the customers left. The incident involving the Americans happened like this, Josling's brother in law was in the services and an American was trying to knock off his wife, Josling's sister, a fight ensued between Josling and the American, with the American getting one hell of a hiding. The next night the Americans were out in force intent on revenge, poor old Josling was knocked about terrible, but Josling did not forget, about a fortnight later his wounds healed, he armed himself with a four ten gun, he got information that his adversary was in the pub, he entered and shot the American in the legs, for this he got six months imprisonment. Josling died in Newmarket hospital with TB in the 1950's.

All through that terrible winter of 1947 I mostly cycled to work, the times I have fell on my back going to and from work. Time I was working at Cats Lane, Bill Webber the landlord of the Mauldon Grey became ill. I was having my dinner as usual when Grace, his daughter, said to me, "Joe when you have had your dinner come and look at my Dad, he looks very ill, and the barber is coming to cut his hair this afternoon", I went up to the bedroom, I took one look, poor old Bill was on the way out.

The Doctor had already been. "If anything happens what have I got to do?", "You come over to the site and I will see if I can help". About three, three thirty pm Grace appeared shouting to me to come. A Melford bricklayer 'Coggar' came with me, we entered the bedroom, just one look and I could see that old Bill was dead. "What do I do now" Grace said, "Well I don't expect the doctor will come again but you will have to inform him. In the meantime have you got anything in the way of bandages, bring them along with some hot water and I will wash him down". Coggar and me prepared Bill for the box. Poor old Grace was ever so grateful, time I was working at Cats Lane she gave me several rabbits and free pints of beer.

Lily being of delicate health came to the front in regards to a new council house. Lily became pregnant but lost the baby, it was born dead and only weighed one pound. We then moved to School Field, Glemsford, a lovely house with a big garden. An Arger Stove provided all the cooking and heating facilities. I forget what the rent was, but I had very little in my pocket after paying Lily. I have been to work with bits of cardboard in my shoes covering up the holes, even in winter time. They seemed hard times. I developed Pnuemonia and Pleurisy, in the words of a chest consultant Mr Arden Jones "How ever did you catch that?", I was in the old hospital. While I was in there they brought in a man from Coolidge, near Clare, also a Baker called Mansfield

from Clare. The man from Coolidge was placed next to me, his Christian name was Joe, the same as mine, he was a tractor driver. He walked into the ward and into the bed next to me and within a few minutes was talking to each other as though we had known each other for years. He said to me there was no need for me to come in here all I wanted was a couple of teeth out and I would have been alright. My jaw had been aching for a long while. After about half an hour a Doctor came he never bothered to pull the curtains round the bed so I saw everything. The Doctor produced a half crown, two shilling bit, one shilling and then took his spectacles from his pocket, Joe had to name these things, but it was some seconds before he did. Then finally the Doctor scratched the underneath of his foot, poor old Joe, not me, was dead within a fortnight. Tumour of the Brain. I was in Bury hospital about five weeks. When I came home I was a further five weeks on the club. Our next big job was for Mr Bearman and his maltings at Mistley near Maningtree Essex. This job lasted nearly a year. We had to build a big grain store, and also a canteen. Our foreman Albert Kilby was a tip top tradesman. His only draw back was his like of a drop of beer. Of course Mr Bearman did not mind that, it was a good advert for his malt. I can vividly remember one day, the previous day Albert had been congratulated by Mr Bearman and Wakelin and Rampling for the progress he had made. So Albert made hay while the sun shone. Albert had been down Mistley Thorn and was still under the weather, the arkitekt came on the job looking for Albert, I knew he was in his office. He came up to me, "where's Mr Kilby?", I had to think fast, "He is over the other side of the road with Mr Beannan's manager, Mr Jackuline". As soon as he had gone I removed the window of the office, there was Albert spreadeagled on the floor, his head to the door, I knelt beside him, "Albert, Albert" I shouted at him, he woke up, "Whats the matter" he grunted, "The arkitekt is looking for you" I said, "Get me some water" he said, I runned after some water. Time was running out the arkitekt could return any minute, he splashed the water over his face, "Now Albert" I said "When he comes back avoid talking to him as much as possible". Anyway Albert got away with it. The years were rolling by, murder was still a very rare occasion, especially in East Anglia Albert Pierpont was the British executioner and Allen his assistant, Albert hung the last woman to be hanged in England, Ruth Ellis, a blond beauty, she had shot a motor car racing driver by the name of Blakley. Ruth Ellis was pregnant at the time and her lover had deserted her, she waited for him as he came out of a pub and that was his lot. Albert Pierpoint kept a pub in a village called Much Hoole near Preston, Lancashire. It was said he had a notice over his bar which read 'No Hanging Around These Bars'. As far as I know he is still alive in 1988.

Being in a new Council House did not improve Lily's health and once again she was addmitted to Addenbrooks hospital Cambridge. I would bike to Cambridge on a Sunday, starting out about eleven o'clock, when she was moved to Newmarker and then Bury I would also bike there. I could see that the end was coming, I had spent five years in the Medical Corps and had learned a little. One morning she woke up and complained that she could not see clearly. I knocked the next door neighbour up. She stopped with Lily while I got in touch with the Cavendish Doctor Stevens. He came pretty quickly, he took me to one side, "She will be dead before noon", and she was. I think the funeral cost about thirty five pounds, after everything was paid I had about three pounds ten shillings, that was my total assets in this world. I spent nearly another year in Glemsford, in the meantime my Mother and Father were gone. Sister Ivy said "Come and live with me and the two boys" which is what I did. After only a couple of years a Mrs Howe living next door died. Ivy got into contact with the Land Lady, Miss Lily Mills, she was a lovely lady. She agreed to let me have the house. She finished up at Walnutree hospital after a spell in Hazel Court. The two houses passed to Dinkie, Mrs Colman, of Leyton, London, another wonderful lady. I used to try and see Lily Mills at least once a week. I never heard her complain once right up to the time she died. Her Father, who I knew, used to deliver coal altbugh he only had one arm, he would also keep a few chickens on the Frogs Hall Road. Mr Mills died suddenly. So now I had a house all to myself. Ivy cooked for me and I done the garden, a good arrangement. Dick Smith, my cousins wife offered me a radio gram, three pounds ten shillings, it was a treasure. I acquired some records, mostly Jim Reeves, I had a nice little coal fire. I papered the house out and it looked lovely. I had had some chickens at Glemsford, they created a sort of hobby so what was I to do now? Pigeons, what better I thought, I had raced them with my brother since so I spoke to sister Ivy, "Why not" she said. I was working at Acton School, building an extension, the old toilets were pulled down and there was some good boards. When I asked Albert Kilby if I could take some home "Certainly you can" he said. So every night I tied a bundle on the back of my bike. I had to buy some two by two and some two by one and a half studs and hard board from Bill Deacon, Builder, it took me about three weeks to build it. Now for the pigeons. I purchased a racing pigeon book and looking through it I saw the name of Mr Burns of Birmingham. I bought two off him for ten pounds and six for nine pounds, nineteen pounds in, all, today that money would not buy the cheapest pigeon. One of the five pound ones I called Princess Marina, the Grandparents were great pigeons. I joined the Lavenham Racing Pigeon Club, after attending two meetings I was roped in as Secretary. I done a lot of work during my period as Secretary, anyway I had my eight pigeons, they were very young. I had them for about a fortnight, one Saturday morning the weather was perfect blue sky, no wind. Ivy was in the garden when I let them out for the first time. After about a quarter of an hour one bird clapped its wings and it was away, the others quickly followed suit, they simply dissapeared, after about five minutes I spottted them in the sky like eight little dots. "You've seen

the last of them" said Ivy as they disappeared to the east, they were only seven weeks old. I looked inside my place, all this work I've done for nothing, the time was nine thirty am, looked and looked, nine thirty went on to eleven thirty, they had been gone for two hours. I had practically given up hope, I went indoors, at twelve o'clock I went outside again no sign of my pigeons. I looked at my empty loft, all that struggle of carrying the boards on the back of my bike, the nineteen pounds I had spent, I could have cried, my neck ached, my eyes were seeing black spots – and then it happened, I spotted some pigeons high up, they passed over Lavenham. "Could they be mine" I thought. Five minutes went by, back they came again although still high they started to circle above me, my pigeons were back. They eventually landed on the loft and went inside. These eight pigeons done me proud, one of them a blue bar cock won me second prize from Lerwick in the Shetland Isles, five hundred and sixty two miles, another bird Princess Marina a mealy pied hen, won me a second and third and I didn't have them until May, but Mr Burns of Birmingham had told me to race them. The blue bar cock went to fly Lerwick again as a three year old. I enjoyed my hobby, as I have said I was made secretary within a few weeks of contact with the club. My work started on the Friday afternoon by cleaning out the baskets and putting fresh sand and saw dust in them, then in the evening I would take the money for the entries, sometimes I would go to Bury railway station with them but I loved doing it. My sister Ivy was a brick, no moaning about the time I had my late dinner. She would say "Joe your dinner will be ready by nine thirty pm", but if I was later than that she would not worry.

Time was going by. Wakelin and Rampling who I worked for were getting old and jobs were getting scarce, or they weren't bothered about getting any. Old Albert had a good time, spent quite a lot of time in the Acton Crown pub. At Acton school they were all small children, there was one boy about seven or eight years of age, he had no football shorts, shirt or boots, so we workers clubbed together and bought these items for the little boy. He could not conceal his joy. The children were only allowed to wear their football gear for one day a week, but this little boy would wear his every day until eventually he was sent home to change. That job finished and things were looking grim, a few more small jobs and Wakelin and Rampling were no more. So Albert Kilby got a job on the maintenance staff of Edward Baker, Miller, Great Cornard. Stan Mayhew, Fred Tayler and myself decided to sub-contract. It was the worst move in my life, how I worked keeping two good bricklayers supplied with bricks and mortar on the ground or up ladders. This was about nineteen sixty four. The first job we done was for a builder at Pentlow, Vic Turner, we built two houses for some farm workers working for a Mr Byford on the Melford road, we done other jobs for Vic at Glemsford and Stansted. Also for a certain Mr Hore of Cavendish, he robbed us of a lot of money. We built half a dozen bungalows and the same number of houses, our money worked out at about twenty five pounds a week, the cheapest bungalows were sold at about ten thousand five hundred pounds. Our money for building the shell of the bungalow came to about two hundred and forty five pounds, this was sweated labour indeed. The best man we ever done work for was Bill Deacon of Lavenham, a most sincere and genuine man. We built a bungalow for him, Stan argued about the price so Bill said to Stan "How much do you want then?", Stan did not know what to say, "I'll give you another twenty pounds" Bill said, and that was accepted. Time we had finished it worked out about thirty five pounds per week, to us this was marvellous money, never to be equalled.

We then done some work for Bert Butcher, another one in the same mould as Bill Deacon. He had got a lot of jobs putting bathrooms on to houses, the Government paid a percentage, this was lovely work, no climbing and old Bert paid us twelve and six pence an hour, good money by any standards. Then one night Stan told me that he was going to do some more work for Mr Hore of Cavendish, I told Stan I wasn't interested, he nearly went on his knees imploring me to stay with him, and at last I gave in. Our gang increased, Stan's brother, Adrian, and their young nephew joined us as bricklayers and an old friend of mine, Allan Theobald a labourer, helped me, we were still badly paid by Hore.

I was sixty years of age and my hips had started to play me up, but I still got on my bike and cycled to Bury to release my pigeons, not bad for a sixty year old, but my body could take only so much. I developed a hernia, a Consultant, Mr Taylor operated on me and done a good job, so after that I called it a day and got a job at Holloway's comb factory, the former Baker's Mill. Sweeping up and filling the machines with oil. I think I was about three years there. Then my hips really started to play me up. Mr Holloway told me not to work so hard, and not to help unload lorries, I used to enjoy this the bags were only fifty six pounds, different to bags of cement, which weighed one hundred and twelve pounds, but my hips got so bad I had to pack it in. I went down to see Doctor Stewart, he gave me some tablets which relieved the pain a bit. I think I revealed earlier in my book how Doctor Stewart fixed me up for a Consultation with the South African Orthopedist Mr Nesor and I had the two hips done, total replacements in a matter of three weeks. A nurse said to me while giving me a bath that Mr Nesor toyed with the idea of giving one operation for the two, but it didn't come to that. It was wonderful to feel free of pain, after a few months I would walk miles, on one walk I'd done easily four miles, of course all work was finished with employers, but I painted up my house and Ivy's and one day I climbed on to the roof to put a slate on, but realised I was pushing my luck. I painted up Pat's bungalow, it took me some time to do it. I was a new man. By this time Pat and Peter were married.

I gave up being Pigeon Secretary, but continued to clean the baskets out ready for the racing on Saturday.

I done this job for about fifteen years, all baskets cleaned and labled up.

Years were going by. Sister Maud, the strain of running a pub for all those years and looking after Basil began to take its toll, she became ill and was addmitted to the West Suffolk Hospital suffering from a stroke. Ivy, Pat, Peter, Sister Min and children had gone to Tenby in Wales, so I was free to have my meals any time I wished, so then I could visit Maud every day. I would catch Chambers one forty pm bus to Bury, get off at the crossroads or roundabout and walk the mile to the hospital. I did feel so sorry for Maudie that she should suffer like this. What a wonderful woman she had been, not one word of anger to anyone, if she could help any one she would. She would be proud of me, everytime she saw a nurse she would say "This is my brother nurse", I think they got fed up with it. Maudie told me "Do you know Joe I shall come out of here in a box", but she was reprevied for a time and went home, but had a second stroke, she battled bravely for three weeks and then it was all over. I stopped with Maudie the night before she died. In the mddle of the night she fixed her gaze right on me, I think she knew who I was, I had lost a lovely sister, but I had sister Minnie and Ivy left. When sister Minnie reached her ninetieth birthday she put on a big do at a pub-cum-restarant. Ivy's Pat drove us up to Sheffield for this big do, the only trouble was the Disco played ever so loud music , none of the songs I knew, anyway it was lovely of sister Minnie to put this do on and we enjoyed a lovely weekend, and then home again.

The old routine continued, A Mr Doughty of Elton near Peterborough wrote in the Bury Free Press about a Sergeant Major who claimed to have won a Distinction in the closing stages of the War. Mr Doughty denied this, he also asked of any reader or relatives had won any Distinction, he only wanted to hear genuine claims. So I wrote to Mr Doughty of Minden House, Elton near Peterborough telling him about my Father winning the Distinguished Conduct medal in the Boer War. Back came a letter in double quick time telling me would I mind if he contacted the Bury Free Press. I next had a letter from the Bury Free Press would I be prepared to meet a reporter and photographer, I wrote back telling them I would be only too pleased. So two or three days later they presented themselves at number five. I was ready for them. Medals, Paybook and photos, all of my Dad, Private George Risby DCM. The Reporter was a woman, she made a complete hash of it, instead of Private Risby DCM she wrote Private Risby DSM, a Naval medal anyway, at the end of the report they corrected themselves. A Miss Hardie living opposite to me and a Lavenham Guildhall official came over to my house saying would I like a photo of my Dad and myself exhibited in the Guildhall, so they borrowed some photos of my Dad and newspaper photos of myself. They have been on show for about two years.

By this time one of my legs was playing me up. When I got out of bed during the night it was like a board, no life in it at all. I stuck it as long as I could. I saw Doctor Stewart and he arranged for me to see Mr Nesor the Consultant who had operated on me in nineteen seventy seven. I saw him at Walnutree hospital, I had an X-ray, he then told me that I had got a loose joint, I asked him if I could have an operation to put it right, "I'm afraid not Mr Risby, it's too big a job". So I came home a bit dispondent. Anyway the leg seemed to act very funny, sometimes it would be all right, sometimes all wrong. Anyway Doctor Stewart retired from the Lavenham Surgery and a Doctor Peniston took his place. I went down one night to see the Doctor about some tablets, he said to me "You are walking very bad, I'll see if I can fix you up to see an up and coming Orthopedic Surgeon, a Mr August, he has got modern ideas, come and see me next week". I went and saw the Doctor, he told me that he had been in contact with Mr August and that I would receive a letter in due course telling the date and time of the appointment. Eventually I received a letter from West Suffolk Hospital giving me a date for my appointment. Ironically my leg seemed a lot better. Anyway I saw Mr August, a medium built nice looking man. He was with an Indian Doctor when I told the Doctor or as I should say Mr August that me leg was a lot better, "Yes it has probably stabilised itself, anyway I'm sending you for an X-ray and then come back here", a nurse pushed me in a chair to the X-ray room. I had the X-ray, they gave me the picture of it and I was wheeled back into the presence of Mr August and the other Doctor. They studied it for five minutes, then Mr August said to me "Mr Risby your thigh bone is extremely thin and I would advise you to have an operation before the thigh bone breaks, but Mr Risby don't give me an answer right away, think about it and inform your Doctor of your decision". As soon as I got home I had made my mind up, two days later I told Doctor Penlstan, he said it could be several months before I had the operation. Eventually the great day arrived, an ambulance picked me up and it was away to the West Suffolk Hospital, Ward F3 was my destination. The same Sister was there as she was twelve years ago. Sister Sturgeon seemed unchanged still as pleasant as ever, I got fixed up with a bed right at the bottom of the ward (bay). Evening came and Mr August came to see me. It was Monday evening, he said to me "You will have your operation on Wednesday morning at eight o'clock, now I'm going to tell you what- I am going to do to you. In getting your surgical fittings out of your hip and thigh there is a slight chance that your thigh bone could break, but I don't think it will happen, we are also going to lengthen your leg which is an inch short. So what do you think about it now, do you still want me to carry on?", "Yes thank you Mr August". The next day I had three baths, the idea is to soften the skin for cutting. I had not been to the toilet to do my pops since leaving home on the monday morning, but they didn't seem unduly concerned about that. A Staff Nurse came to me on Tuesday night, she said to me "Tomorrow morning at seven am you will have to have a bath", Wednesday morning arrived, a great day in my life for me, make or break. For a start the Nurse never had time to bath me, so they placed a half bowl of water on the bed telling me to sponge my leg for about fifteen minutes,

after that it was back into bed and given a pre-op jab. I had had these several times, but they didn't seem to have any effect on me, as they wheeled me down to the theatre I was as wide awake as the people who were wheeling me. They pushed me into the annex of the theatre, there seemed to be a lot of people milling around, unlike thirteen years ago when there were just two persons in gowns and mask and with the surgeon looking through the little window of the swing doors at me. Eventually they grasped my hand and I faded into oblivion, this was round eight am. I didn't really come round until seven pm with Pat Finn standing at the foot of my bed, he just said "Hullo Joe, are you alright", I think I then went to sleep. Morning came, my legs were encased in a contraption with my legs in a duct and tied down with tapes. Then I realised what Mr August had told me, "You will lay on your back for fourteen days and nights", not a very pleasant fortnight to look forward to. There was only two patients in the bay including me, but later in the day they brought in a big fellow from near Cambridge, he had been involved in a car crash, smashed his knee in, he was a bit self-opinionated, full of importance or as I thought he was obsessed with the accident he had had, and blamed the other fellow. His daughter came to see him and he reduced her to tears one day, all about a photograph of the car, eventually a woman Police Officer came in to interview him about the accident, I was listening and I came to the conclusion that he was in the wrong. The day after my operation I could not eat anything, the food was all mashed about and so it was all through my stay at the Hospital. Going to the toilet was a tiresome task, a shallow bed pan was placed under you, nearly everytime nothing happened, a lot of grunting and groaning going on, then one day I really wanted to go, I had the bed pan under me, but the stool was so stiff that I was suspended over the top of it, the Nurse cut it off, and then I let off a tremendous release of wind, talk about a nuclear explosion, it echoed round the ward, the laughter of the patients was unstoppable, anyway I felt a lot relieved. Then I was moved to another bay where I made friends with a farmer by the name of Frank Laflin, living at Brockley only about four miles from the hospital, he had come in via casualty with a lot of pain in his back. Frank was one of the best, I would sit by his bed and tell him some tales, he used to rock with laughter although in pain. By this time Mr August had gone on holiday leaving his deputy, a Mr Mackinly in charge. One day as he was seeing the patients in the ward he noticed that I had got a War book on my bed, on seeing it he exclaimed "That's no good, you want to get a book called 'Overlord', dealing with the invasion", he asked me what I was in, I said "The Medical Corp, Third Class Nursing Orderly", I told him that I could give enemas, had given scores of them in Teheran in Persia, he turned to Sister Sturgeon and said "Get this man out of bed as quickly as possible, we need him here". Then I got into trouble with a Staff Nurse, my bed was at the end of the bay with an air fan right over my head. The Staff Nurse took my temperature and said it was high, so she put the fan on, I told her "You can put that off, I don't want pneumonia, I've had it before", so she went and fetched a little black Doctor, he stood in front of me grinning, nothing was said. Sister Sturgeon came along later on, she remarked "No Mr Risby we don't want you to have pneumonia", so the fan stayed silent.

By this time I was getting about well, walking as I should walk. They took me down the hospital steps and up again. In our bay there was one old character, a Mr Powel, a very big man, a Gamekeeper for Lord Iveigh, I should say about eighty years of age. He had had a new hip replacement but for the first time. Mr Mackinly said to him one morning "Mr Powel what do you think of the food in this hospital?", "What do I think of the food?" replied Mr Powel, "What do I think of the food" he repeated, "Bloody awful, that's what I think of it", the Doctor could not conceal his mirth. I don't know what happened to Mr Powel after I came out of hospital, he had gone off his food and also dislocated his new hip. I spent my last few days in the hospital talking most of the time to Frank Laflin, he seemed to be on the mend. And then it was time to go, I told Frank to come and see me at five Bolton Street and we could have a glass of wine together.

Pat Finn picked me up and when I got home there was steak and new potatoes for me. But within fifteen minutes of being home I collapsed through sheer fatigue, hardly any sleep while in hospital. Poor old Pat and Gregory laid on the floor that night to look after me. It was wonderful and so thoughtful. In the morning I felt much better. I was so glad there was no after effects. At night I laid on my back but my heels played me up. Last thing at night Ivy would powder them, although I had been told I could lay in any position in bed. The day before I came out I said to Mr Mackinly "I want to ask you an important question Doctor", "And what's that" he replied, as he leaned over my bed winking slyly at Sister Sturgeon, "Can I lay on my side Doctor?", "You can lay where you like and how you like", he answered, "There's one other thing Doctor, in October I shall start lighting my coal fire, is it all right for me to go on my knees to rake the ashes out", he hesitated to answer for a few seconds, then he said "Why not get a skivvy to do it". I read through his answer and that meant don't go on your knees Joe, but I continued to lay on my back with Ivy powdering my heels last thing at night. Eventually I plucked up enough courage and laid on my side, it was wonderful, my heels got better and I got a better night sleep, unless interrupted by cars late at night then I would have a disturbed night.

Before I left the hospital I saw the blood clinic Doctor Jones, a really nice old boy. He said to me "I am putting you on Warfarin tablets indefinitely, and don't forget to take them, they are to thin your blood and prevent clotting, you will have your blood tested periodically, your first appointment will be on Wednesday five days after coming out of hospital, do you want to go to Bury or Sudbury?" I preferred Sudbury, it was not so far away. Wednesday came, no transport arrived. I phoned up Bury and Sudbury, they said they were sorry they

had not booked me in, could I go on Friday. I was up Friday morning early, an ambulance came facing up hill with the doors opening at the back, how I got into that ambulance I'll never know. I thought at the time I had done myself real damage. Coming home there was a young woman in charge of the ambulance, she said to me "Come on climb the steps", but I said to her "You have got a Hydraulic lift", "But you climbed into the other one did you" she answered. Eventually she put the lift down then it was easy for me to get in. When I got into bed that night I was very careful as I rolled over, I thought I was going to get a lot of pain after my excersises in getting into the ambulance.

A month after I came out of hospital I had an appointment with Mr August, and I runned into Ward F3 Nurse who was going off duty, I enquired of Frank Laflin, "I'm afraid hes going behind fast" she told me, about a week later I heard from some Lavenham friends that he was dead. They had moved him from F3 to another ward, he had cancer of the Pelvic bones. Frank was buried in Brockley Cemetary.

I think I have had six general anesthetics, (spelled wrong) but I think you know what I mean, I've had pneumonia and pleursy, bumps as big as small apples took out of my head, two hernia operations, three hip operations, total replacements and a exploratory examination, this was the worst of the lot. The nurses involved were not very nice at all. I think at that time, 1985 the nurses were grossly overworked and consequently this reacted on to the patients. Anyway I was given a clean bill of health. As Mr Mc Brian said to me "You have been a very fit man". I have survived three men all younger than myself who had operations like me and are all pushing up daisies, and I can only thank Ivy for the good old fashioned food. Although the three men had good wives who looked after them as good as any one they did not survive.

Mrs Hambrook my next door neighbour had an accident during the winter, she slipped and fell on a icy paving stone and done herself serious injury, she had to have a silver plate fixed in her lower arm. The accident happened so simply, I spoke to her over the fence, she turned to see where the voice was coming from and down she went. She spent several weeks in hospital, it worried me a lot as I felt indirectly responsible. Anyway she is a lot better but unable to use her hand, she is one of the best neighbours I've ever had, so it is such a shame that this should happen.

On July 17th I had another check up and I was supposed to see Mr August but saw his deputy a dark skinned Doctor. I had to have an X-ray before I saw the Doctor, I had to lay on my left side on the X-ray table, I had not laid on my left side for at least a couple of years, so when the young woman asked me, I wondered what was going to heppen. I had a job to roll over and when I did I thought I was laying on something sharp, it only lasted about thirty seconds, but I was glad to lay on my back again. I never said anything to the young woman, but I think the steel.in my hip was the trouble. Then I had to see Mr August's deputy he said "I am very satisfied with your X-ray, but we are going to keep an eye on you, we will see you again in a years time, but if you have any problems go to your Doctor". So it was home again feeling on top of the world. Sister Ivy and myself had a visitor from Canada. She was staying with Mrs Beryl Holmes on Lavenham Common. She introduced herself by announcing that she was a Risby and her Grandfather was over one hundred years old, he married a Poulson and he worked at a factory in Lavenham. I presumed it was Ropers Coconut Matting Factory. We had a good old chat, she had a tumbler of water slightly dosed with whisky, she took Ivy and me together in front of our house and photographs were taken. She had a lovely bicycle, sixteen years old and she said before she went home to Canada she was going to travel all over Europe. Holland was her next move and of course her husband was with her and they had a car. A fortnight later we had some more visitors, from Sheffield, Yorkshire, friends of sister Minnie's daughter Ivy, four of them stopped for about an hour, it was very interesting.

One morning Ivy's phone rang, they wished to speak to Mr Risby, they identified themselves as Radio Suffolk, would I prepared to travel to Ipswich, I told them it was out of the question. So they asked if I would mind if they came to see me. "Certainly not" I replied, so I supposed they would drop in any time and record my conversation.

One night I went to bed and was woken at about one am in the morning, something shuffling about, I was going to open the door, but something told me don't do it Joe. About two years ago in winter time a knock came on my door at about two o'clock in the morning. It was pitch dark, I opened the door right away thinking there was some one hurt laying in the street, but a big drunken Irishman confronted me, he was sorry he had woken me that time of the night but he wanted to know the way to the Swan Hotel. I was told never to do that again. So in the morning I went into Ivy's for breakfast, she said to me "What sort of night did you have?", I said "Not bad, but I was awakened between midnight and one am by someone moving around". Ivy said "Richard King has had his car pinched". The previous day Miss Hardie living opposite to me had her handbag snatched from her arm as she turned to go in the direction of Bolton Street by the School, all done in about five seconds by a single man in a car. So in Mrs Thatcher's reign, of over a decade Law and Order has been at its worst for the last century.

This weekend Pat, Gregory, Samantha and Jessica, Jessica is the first Grandchild of Pat, it is only about five weeks old, but they are all going up to Sheffield for sister Minnie's Grandson's wedding. Our cleaning lady, Daphne Hartley is also going up to Coventry to spend a week with her Mum and Dad. I think Ivy and me are

really stuck now, but never mind we are happy and that's all what matters. What relaxation I enjoy now is a glass of wine and my radiogram, I also go up the Street and sometimes sit on the seats on the Market Square. There are thousands of people visit Lavenham during the summer months and some of them love to talk to me, they like me to talk about the old days when I was a small boy. One tale they love to hear was about my Grandfather and Grandmother, they had twelve children, the was this. Grandpa and Grandma would go to Bury Market in a horse and trap, but before they went they would lock all the children up in a barn which belonged to them, leaving them with a couple of pails of water and two large loaves of bread, so they were kept out of trouble, but when their Mum and Dad came home the door would be unlocked and the children would rush out like a lot of sheep. Also in the spring and summer the girls and boys would be made to run a mile round a meadow. That paid off because four of the boys graduated as good runners, especially Uncle Abraham Risby, also William Risby, Little Boned as he was called.

My Dad was no mean exponent of the running track, he joined the Army in 1874 at Bury St Edmunds, he took the Queen's shilling. Queen Victoria, was on the throne. Dad would come home on leave at about twenty years of age. He was very well developed, this particular time there was some sports on at Rayden and Shelley and soldiers were barred from running events but dad went in civilian clothes and competed in the one mile event, which he won easily, he was presented with the prize of a half sovereign, but he was immediately surrounded by the locals who had discovered that he was a soldier on leave. My Dad's brother who was there told my Dad to be off with his half sovereign, "I will look after your clothes". So Dad already had runned a mile had another eight mile run to Lavenham. Cully Risby was a fighting man afraid of no one, he was to prove that in later years in Canning Town, London. Other tales I told these tourists and they were really interested, were about my Uncle Arthur Risby, Big Bonca, he was a horse dealer, a really rough man and could be nasty when in drink. When the Horse fair was held in Lavenham Bonca would get really drunk and he would ride a donkey round the Market Square. I have heard my Dad say he was a really big man, bigger than his brother Cull, when young these two often had a fight. So as I have said the tourists drunk in every word.

Nearly two years ago sister Ivy had an ulcer operation. One sunday dinner time or should I say twelve noon, I was getting ready to go up to the Angel for my usual drink, Sunday dinner drink was the best on my calender. Just as I was going out of the door Ivy complained of severe pains to the stomach, I thought to myself "Joe boy you keep at home", it was a good job I did, I got her up the stairs and she was rolling about in pain. Margaret Walker phones up the Melford Doctor and Doctor Chambers was along in no time, an ambulance came and Ivy was whisked away to the West Suffolk Hospital where she had an operation for an ulcer. Ivy had complained for years about niggling pains in her stomach, she would complain to me but not to anyone else. Times I implored her to see a Doctor but to no avail, if she had went early to a Doctors she would not have wanted an operation. When she came out of hospital she was stricken with diareah, constantly going to the toilet, this was a very worrying time, anyway the Doctor was concerned and Ivy was subjected to an internal examination. Ivy could not forget it, she had a steel tube put up her rectum. Ivy never forgot it she said "Never no more, I'll die first", but anyway Ivy come through with flying colours. Her boy Pat and myself went with her to a final check up, the Doctor's verdict "We can't find anything wrong". Ivy came out of the room her face beaming with delight. On the way home I had a good mind to suggest that we stopped at the Spread Eagle pub, the place where as a young boy, just gone fourteen years of age, I drunk my first pint of beer after driving a tumbrell load of pigs to Bury Market, but I decide to keep quiet. Ivy was only too pleased to get home, so as I passed the pub I was left with my memories.

The other night I thought I would phone up Joe Dent, my old school teacher whom I have mentioned briefly in these pages, Joe was delighted, his words "How wonderful to hear your voice again", we had a long chat, he told me "I'm gone blind now Joe, but otherwise I'm alright", he spoke about the old days when our class was put on composition, or was it dictation, he would call me out of the class, "Risby I want you outside". I would go into the cloak room, "Now Joe" he would say "I want you to go to Tatum's shop and get me some broken chocolates and dates". He would always say that they were good for the young to strengthen your heart. I would return with these and wait in the cloak room until he came to collect them. Another time he recalled was during the early stages of the War, one of my former school mates, Wally Smith was a butcher and slaughterer for the butchers Drake and Sons of Bures. A shell was fired either for real or practice, the firing sadly went wrong and the shell hit the slaughter house and killed a man and a bullock, and Wally was carried from the scene unconcious with multiple injuries. Wally survived a lot of years before he eventually died. I last saw him at the funeral of Frank Turner, my late pre-war employer, he looked the same Wally, fat chubby face, the mischevious grin, but that terrible incident at Drake's butchers, Bures had taken its toll. Round about that time one of my street pals of boy hood days Albie Spite of Prentice Street passed away, old Albie never ever married, he stayed with a relation of his a Mrs Cady - Fred Cady's Mother, and when she died Albie got a house up Tenter Piece, Lavenham and lived alone. He was content to have his fag on and playing the one armed bandit in the Greyhound in his later and retirement years. I don't know if I've mentioned in my book about his mother who during the 1914-1918 war worked at a factory formerly a sugar beet factory. Straw bales were stacked there ready for movement to France. Some of these bales fell on Rebecca Spite, I can remember as a

small boy seeing the poor woman being carried up Prentice Street on a field gate, right until her dying day Rebecca Spite had a humpty back and was full of pain, not a penny compensation.

I have nearly come to the end of my story, I have gone through two World Wars. I was three years of age at the outbreak of World War one and twenty eight at the outbreak of World War two, now as I put pen to paper we have in the past witnessed in two decades the appalling loss of life in Vietnam caused mainly by the Americans, millions of people died. The Americans developed a Scorched Earth Policy intending to starve out the Commies, Communists, They went into villages shooting the inhabitants, in one instance one village was decimated, old men and women, children and babies were killed. An American Captain was imprisoned for this atrocity, but only served three years. We have seen the intrusion into El Salvadore, Panama, Grenada and that little country was our Colony. And now we see the Americans after lurking in Libyan waters for the past two years waiting for some excuse to attack that little country of four million people on the verge of war with Iraq. To my mind this trouble spot is purely a domestic issue. Mrs Thatcher is following President Bush like a hound following a fox, even talking about a Nuremburg style trial after driving Hussien from Kuwait. What a cheek when she authorised and agreed to America, sending their bombers from Lakenheath, Suffolk to bomb little Libya killing hundreds of men, women and children. When anti-Gadaffi protesters broke into the Libyan Embassy the Police made no efforts to stop them. Police Woman Yvonne Fletcher was shot. The result was America and this country were outraged by this atrocity and war was openly talked about, in fact it seemed certain at one stage. To my mind it was anti-Libyan gunmen under the orders of the American CIA and MI5 who shot that young innocent Police Woman to create hatred against Gadaffi. Mrs Thatcher could not get a statue up quick enough.

Today, Tuesday the second of October was the reunification of East and West Germany into Greater Germany and once again the Black, Red and Gold flag is flying from the Reichstag, the German Chancelory, it only seems like yesterday way back in 1945 when the Russian Boy Scout climbed that building to put the Russian flag up and Hitler was dead.

I wonder what the few old ladies who are left think of these things that are happening in Germany today, the same applies to the War Widows of the 1939 - 1945 debacle. The women who lost their husbands, brothers and sons who served in France in 1914-1918 and those in 1959-1945 war the former war was terrible.

	Officer	Other Ranks
Killed	37,876	620,829
Wounded	92,644	1,959,478
Missing and Prisoners	12,094	547,051

Those few old ladies who were once young who attended the first Cenotaph Service on November 11th 1920 and also at the Burial in Westminster Abbey of the Unknown Warrior. To determine the Unknown Warrior four Burial Parties were sent to four Battle areas. The Aisne, The Somme, Arras and Ypres. One body was exhumed from each Battle area. On November 7th 1920 these four bodies were laid side by side and the Burial Parties departed back to their units leaving just a Brigadier General and a Colonel to select a body from the four to be placed in the coffin shell. The three remaining bodies were re-buried at a nearby Military cemetery at St Pol. The two officers had no idea what Battle area the body had come from. It was then taken to Boulogne Quay where a British destroyer was waiting with six barrells of soil from the Ypres Salient were put on board to be placed in the Tomb at Westminster Abbey so that the body should rest in the soil on which so many of our troops gave up their lives. Why I have recalled this poignant story is that young people should realise what war is all about. In the schools today children are not taught history, if they are it is only to glorify it. Television and Radio has taken over, children and teenagers spend hours watching American and violent films, even football had its violent era. At one game at Hillsborough, Sheffield Wednesdays ground nearly one hundred people died. In Belgium nearly forty people died, both games involving Liverpool. Now the Epilogue of all I have written will start. Thank you all.

EPILOGUE

The pages I have written in this cheap exercise book are true, but very unorthodox. I shall mention things in this epilogue what I have not mentioned in my book, if you can call it a book, time will tell. History will be repeated, it is about two years or more since I first put pen to paper and a vast amount of history has gone by. Prentice River still rolls along, it has a job to get by the reeds and other obstructions, the river which used to be kept clean by John Baker, Flour Miller and farmer. Gunner Bill Barrell a relative of ours would keep on clearing the river with three other men, Javis Smith, Molly Poulson and Chiver Welham, as a little boy I felt sorry for them as they heaved jet load after jet load on to the tumbrill and mud is very heavy stuff. When that was all done the river could sail merrily on its way. That the time when we boys got our tins out. They were our racing boats, half a dozen of us would put our tins in at the Pop Hole near the Railway station, they would then pass along by the side of the Old Road under the roadway into Prentice Rive. The finishing post was at the bottom of Clay Hill Lane by the bridge, this was great sport, when one race was over we started another one. Today that pleasure is all finished.

The old farm Nether Hall owned by John Baker is still intact, infact the building what the tumbrills were kept under cover facing the road don't seem to different as it was nearly seventy years ago. Of course the fields are still there. Prentice Hill field where sister Ivy and myself would go stone picking on a Saturday, starting nine o'clock and finish at four o'clock and paid one shilling each. But John Baker paid us out in twelve big pennies.

Now I will go to the other end of Lavenham. The Cemetary of course is till there, with a few bungalows facing it. Brother George's Angel just inside the small gate is still intact, minus the finger which was knocked off just after the grave stone was put up, over sixty years ago.

The old cottages at Pygtle Terrace are still there unaltered one little bit, coming to Lavenham the old Rectory, just the same as it was when I was a small boy, or when I worked for Lump Turner and we used to go over the roofs every year doing minor repairs. The Reverend Cuningham was the Vicar then. The old Church standing as majestic as ever is flood lit at various times of the year. Then there is the Almshouses, those in the main road facing the Church have been altered a bit, the one next to the Cock going out of Lavenham was occupied by my Grandmother some seventy five years ago. Big heavey curtains divided the room into living and bedroom quarters where my Granny Risby would cut me a slice of swede and sprinkle some salt on it, this was when my Mother and Father had gone to Church and Gran would look after me. Coming down the street three more Almshouses still there. Across the road where when Father was in the 1914-18 war I would go and get a mug of soup, the Church School. The School and almshouses still unaltered. Further down Mr Ropers grand house, one time emperor of Lavenham, it is still the same outside, no longer with Len Offord as a very young man dressed in his Livery as a Page Boy or Footman. Across the road the building and work shops where over seventy years ago old man Mr Deacon runned his carpentry and wheelwright business. That is no longer. The building has been tiedied up and looks a posh place ocupied of course by people with pots of money. Going further down on the corner of Water Street is old Tom Fisk's greengrocery shop, old Tom a great footballer for Lavenham Town, his wife and son Dennis runned the shop for years, but the shop itself looks exactly the same as it did when I was a little boy, but now empty and desolute. Across the road the big majestic building which was once the Doctors, where if you wanted to see a Doctor no appointment was needed. You just took your turn in the waiting room. The last occupant of this building was a Brigadier, he has since died. Then we go across the road to the Swan Hotel, which when I was a teenager could only boast two rooms. Saloon bar and Public bar with a billiard room across the yard where Fred Cady, Rugger Steward and myself, the Lavenham [remember to use the Rugger photo]Harmonica Trio as we were called, used to entertain the customers with our mouth organs. We even entertained the first two flyers to fly from this country to Australia. It is now one of the best hotels in the country, catering mostly for people with deep pockets, it has over the years extended its premises down to the corner of Lady Street. Now crossing the road from the Swan to what was old Mr Wheelers butcher shop, unaltered and still a butchers shop owned by a local boy, Peter Hobbs. Going up High Street on the same side is the old shops of Mr Dawson's Bicycle Repairer and seller of new bikes, where as a young boy I hired out a bike for six pence an hour and where I bought my first new cycle. My first new bike cost me six pounds ten shillings, I had it on the never never and it cost more. Now these shops today are antique and porcelain selling high quality stuff. Old Mr Tatums shop opposite the old Post Office is still there, no more broken biscuits, and broken chocolate it is now an antique shop. Across the road is the Greyhound Inn, still an Inn, unaltered outside. No longer the old barrell organ wind it up for a penny a tune. Skidder Jarvis a little short man, would play his bones or clappers and he could realy rattle them. The Americans loved him and kept him up with mild beer, four pence a pint, Bitter five pence a pint and stingo seven pence a pint, a nearly lethal beer. Up towards Market Lane Mr Diapers two shops. Drapery and Grocery are still shops one a green grocery and one a flowerist. Mr Diaper was the organist at the Lavenham Congregational chapel, I used to pump the organ for him Sunday mornings and evenings and infact busted the bellows one Sunday night. The chapel is now an antique place. Moving across the road, the Lion Inn no longer a pub, where as a little boy after a football match the visiting team, if they won the match, would throw a coin or two, penny or half penny on to the ground from

a beer dray, talk about a rugby scrum, many a time I have had my hands and fingers trampled on, but it was worth it to go to Polly Nowleys and his parrot to get some sherbert fountains or a stick of liquerice. The place is now a residential house. Lets go back to the old post office what was, where Charlie 'Ugun' Pearman telegraph boy also Fred Hartley who graduated to become a postman, if they were boys they would stand outside the post office with uniforms and pill box hats on their heads, they would run miles with telegrams, no bicycles then, this place is now occupied by a top judge. Across the road old Charlie Buroughes Paint and Decorating Business what was, is now an Art Gallery some lovely pictures and hand painted and sold there, some up to a thousand pounds. The building on the top side of the Grey Hound Inn was the Officer dealing with births and deaths and runned by Mr and Mrs Beaumont. Mrs Beaumont was a most handsome looking woman, today it is a small restaurant called the Bank Tea Shop, now along the High Street a bit we come to the old Star Supply Stores, Mr Cox was the Manager, assistants were Brink Hamilton, Tunney Jarvis and George Long, no longer the Star Supply Stores, but a Boutique selling fashionable womens clothes, only a few steps away we come to Mr Copseys old Bakers shop and also dabbled in Bric-a-brac where as a boy I would buy a penny worth of marbles, also a German Hohner mouth organ for six pence. This now is the Post Office. A dozen yards along we come to old Hynie Abbotts who repaired clocks and watches. Today it is an antique shop. Now just, next door is the old Co-op. I can remember the manager, Mr Mills and assistants Les Boyden and Fred Pryke. Today it is a newspaper shop. We will now travel another one hundred yards on the same side and we come to Ropers Coconut matting factory, no longer the sound of mid-day hooters with men and boys scurrying home to dinner, it is now a luxurious complex with lovely houses only the rich could buy, it is called Ropers Court. Next door Mr Howletts butchers shop is still there but is now a printing and stationery shop owned by two lovely old people Mr and Mrs Kemp. Now we will take a long walk down to the old railway station, no longer the scene when old Tom Parker used to kick the guts of a horse to get it to move ten ton of coal and where as a little boy I would pinch some sprats off a wagon which were to be used as fertilizers, when Mr Johnson was the station Master and Charlie Turner the booking clerk. For the last thirty years it was a cosmetic factory belonging to E R Holloway, owing to the recession it is now standing derelict. We will now walk right back and go down Water Street, Mr Rudds shops Poulterers and Fishmongers is owned by the Swan Hotel. Old Mr Rudd who used to have a display of pheasants and Partridges hanging from the top of his window. This is now inhabited by the rich and elete. Going further down on the left hand side old Mr Huffey's Blacksmith shop where I used to ride a horse from Mr Baker's Nether Hall Farm to be shoed, this is now a dwelling. Further along and on the corner of Barn Street is the old cinema where as a little boy I have waited outside in the bitter cold for the Manager to let us in free of charge to see Elmo The Mighty, Eddie Polo and the Masked Rider. This building now belongs to the Swan Hotel and houses some of its workers. Down at the bottom of the Street the old Gas Works still stand silent and derelict. Coming back to Shilling Street, the big house Shilling Old Grange looks more the same as it did years ago. Along to Barn Street, nothing much different as to years ago. Now along to Lady Street, the old Fire Station is gone, in its place is public toilets. We will now go on to the Market Place. Commanding Pride of Place in all its Majesty is the Guildhall now the centre of attraction from people all over the world. My picture and my Dad's photo has been seen by people as far away as China and Australia. My Uncle Joe Risby is also there standing beside a horse drill on the corner of Market Lane. Kitty Ranson's shop still stands the frontage and inside just the same as it was seventy years ago where Mr Ranson would sell me a cap for two bob. Mr Heeks shop looking very much the same although very much altered inside and Mrs Heeks very much in control with son John. The Angel Hotel where as a little boy my Dad would buy me a bag of biscuits and a bottle of lemonade, he would shove me under the seat with the order "keep Quiet for a couple of hours", outside appearance no different as to when I was a little boy.

The surface of the Market Place has been the matter of controversy, no longer the Horse Fairs, Boxing Booths, Mr Paskin selling his boots and shoes the women making the rock and that old Lavenham character Billy Goff Howe, standing on his head on a wine glass singing Left Right Left At Buttons a shining Bright We Are The Militia Boys and drinking a pint of beer at the same time, that is all finished. Motor cars now fill the Market Place, drivers haven't a minute to spare, dash her and there as though their life depends on it, before we depart from the Market Place we will peek fifty yard down Market Lane, The Three Blackbirds no longer a pub was runned by old Lump Turners Father or rather Frank Turners Grandfather, where early on a cold winters morning labourers would call in for tuppence worth of rum or whisky and where the horse dealers would handle the money after their horses change hands. It is now inhabited by people leaving the big towns and cities looking for a quieter life. Now we will go across the Market Place down towards the school. What memories there for me, also my brother and sisters, I can still remember the names of the teachers who taught me, Mrs Boby, Mrs Warren, Mrs Cobetta, Mrs Buroughes, Miss Parker, Billy Sawyer, Miss Mary Wright, W W Dent and the Headmaster Mr Davies (Nobby). At that time you left school at the age of fourteen with bleak prospects of a job, as a little boy of four, that was the age for starting school, no Mother to meet you at the school gates, my Mother would be toiling at the looms down Barn Street. Of course my sister Ivy, two years older than me would take care of me. Now today they start school at five they tell me that some start at four at the end of school time. Mothers congregate at the school to pick up their offspring, some with motor cars, some on foot,

this was unheard of when I was a boy of four. Now we go down towards Bolton Street, on the corner of Shilling Street, next to the school stands Dick Turners house and Bakery, no alterations inside or out, where as a little boy I would take a cake for my Mother to be baked and would watch fascinated as the dough was needed into bread. The Bake House no longer bakes its bread or its cakes, but just stand silent in its memories.

Now we will go down Shilling Street. The houses are most of them renovated and painted up, despite the refurbishing it still looks like Shilling Street when I was a boy. Arundel House not much different to the time when the authors of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' were the occupants. Turning again onto the end of Water Street we come to the Common, with the old Gas Works now standing in isolation, also with its memories, again as a little boy I would watch in wonder as old Herbert Copping would walk round Lavenham with his long pole, lighting the street gas lamps. Across the green stands the Salvation Army Hall very few alterations either inside or out, and after all these years still a lovely Band to listen to. Across to the first meadow, where Stingy Wright and his fair would come once or twice a year, all lit up with electricity runned by the big steam engine. Billy Goff Howe standing on his head on the roundabout and Maurice Dibble losing his wooden leg and unable to find it until the next day, they would wheel Maurice home in a wheelbarrow. No fairs on the common no more, but a few modern swings are there for the benifit of young children, of course accompinid by their parents, today you can't leave children alone, modern society is terrible. Now we will come to the last street. Prentice. What memories for yours truly, we will start from the top, on the corner of the Market Place and Prentice Street stands the big white house, this was owned by Genete Peck, who lived alone with her Bull dog and where sister Ivy and myself, only four years of age and Ivy six, were caught by Miss Peck chalking on the plinth of the house, we were visited by Inspector Benstead, we were made to hold our hands on the Bible and promise never to do it again or else we would be sent to prison. That Big House, still as impressive as ever is now a Restaurant catering mainly for the elete and rich. Now going down the street. Next Come old John Baker's Mill where I used to go with horse and tumbil for bullock and pig meal would go after some maize for the chickens, a Mill no longer but converted into spacious flats again mostly for the elete and rich. Next door what was once poor old Rebecca Spites house. The poor dear who I saw carried up Prentice Street on a farm gate during the 1914-18 war, some straw bales had fell on her leaving her humpty for life. Out side appearance no different, but heavily modernised inside. Next door old Freddie Davies house, yours truly number forty two, Charlie Knock, Mr Burroughs the landlord of the four dwellings, today they look just the same, but smarted up a bit. Across the road where old Sam Leeks and family lived, also Eliza Wright and family, next door Charlotte Welham and family. Next door to them was Eleanor Mann and family. All these houses have been altered, for example one door instead of two or two housed into one. Across the road where Jarvis Smith, first Horseman for John Baker lived, next door lived Jimmy Keeble and his sister Kate, the Salvation Army Big Drummer. These two dwellings are now only one. Next door, nicknames first, Cockeral Tatum, Roodle Jarvis, Harriet and Gunner Barrel, Harriet's son. Today all these places not much different in looks as to years ago, but smarter. Up a bit, next door to Harriet Parrel was Bill Poulson and wife, he was coalman for Jon Baker and next to him on the same side was Hyde Smith Foreman Miller for John Baker. Next there was Mr and Mrs Mitchel's sweet shop, as you entered the shop a bell was fixed to the door and it rung very loudly. Then we come to old Mr Bye's seed grannery, all these places renovated and painted but most of the original structure still there. Then came Finnagan Carter, whose son courted my sister Ivy for a while and then right at the bottom the Anchor Inn, Greene King brewers, where old Tom Twitchet was the Landlord, he had only one leg, I believe he lost it in World War One, a public house no longer but a private dwelling. Across the road Mr Bye's other warehouse, mostly linseed he went in for and made a pot on money, infact when he died an old man in the 1950's he was alledged to have left ninety thousand pounds, this building has not been altered one little bit, a completely wooden structure.

I am now nearly at the end of my book, since I started writing it Sister Ivy has been plagued with a lot of pain and also had an operation for an ulcer, but she copes bravely with life. Myself, as a result of working too hard has finished up with artificial hips, I have had three total hip replacements, my right hip is playing me up now, it has done well for fourteen years, about twelve years is the expected life of these replacements. I have to see Mr August in about two months, it can't come quick enough as I am getting quite a lot of pain, July sixteenth nineteen ninety one is the date. I have a skin cancer on my left forehead, Doctor Penistan says he will fix me up to have it done. These are things that heppen to you when you get old. But Sister Ivy and myself can be blessed by having a reasonably healthy life, old age will always take its toll, but we are also very lucky to be surrounded by lovely offspring of the Risby and Finn.

I hope you enjoyed the book and don't have to reach for the dictionary too many times, Goodbye.

Charles Joseph Risby, born 26th October 1911 age 79