

Travels with Reg Priestley

Itchyfeet

Travels with Reg Priestley: Itchyfeet

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My Mum

Itchyfeet? An odd title you may think.

When I was quite small I wandered from Prep School, one day. I became hopelessly lost and a dear lady came to my rescue and took me home. Mother gave me the rounds of the kitchen.

She accused me of having ‘itchy feet’ and she was right. Since those early days I have wandered to many parts of the world, to all five Continents to both the populated corners and the remote ones. Even to Antarctica!

What better title could one use for the story of my life?

So, here goes...

I was born, Reginald Lawrence Priestley (Reg) Friday January 25, 1924 at 36 Shorrolds Road, Fulham, London SW6, at the home of the midwife. My Father and Mother were both 30 years of age when I was born. I was never Christened.

I was an only child. They could have had more children but mother had such a difficult time giving birth to me, that after I was born she said, “Forget it.”

I arrived at 1.32am in the morning - and she was never a night owl. It put her off. “This business? In the middle of the night? No way!”

Mother was very much a ‘plain-Jane-no-nonsense’ woman. A strict disciplinarian, she also had a sense of fun and humour.

Two things stood her out from any other women – she never used cosmetics and (to the very best of my knowledge) never entered a hair-dressing salon in her life. She had a beautiful clean, clear complexion and rosy cheeks but could *never* abide putting ‘all that rubbish on my face.’ I never found bottles and jars of this, that or the other creams, moisturisers, nail polish, lipsticks or eyebrow pencils – nothing!



Itchyfeet, Sheppey-on-Thames, UK, 1926



Mum and me, 1925.



On the Isle of Sheppey with mum. I was 2 and a half, 1927.

She did her own hair. She wore it in a chignon and when unrolled, it reached well down her back, and she could trim it herself. She was a smart dresser, an essential in a small person - she was only 150cm - 4ft 11in - and slim.

The only jewellery she ever wore - apart from engagement and wedding rings - was a pearl necklace on special occasions. Nothing else. No brooches, bangles or earrings. Very much a 'Plain Jane'.

Mum's Family

She was born Nell Martin in Kinnoul Road, Fulham. Her parents were Henry John Martin (d.2.8.1923) and Marion Francis (d.1936). They married and had seven children. Mum was the eldest girl of a large family.

There was Frank, who was the eldest son. I never got to know Frank. I only met him about four times in my life. He had two sons - one of whom was Eric. I cannot even remember the name of his second son. I last saw Uncle Frank in 1936.

Mother, the eldest girl, was born on 11 January, 1894. She died on 14 April, 1986, aged 92 years and 3 months.

Then Arthur, who married Christine. Arthur became a Catholic (to please Chris) They had one son, John, who wished to go into the priesthood. I last saw them in 1936.

Then came Kate. She married Frank Streeter and had two girls, Peg and Enid. I last saw my Aunt Kate in 1941 and Frank in 1936 at Grandma's funeral. The girls I cannot recall having seen since 1941.

Them Florence, who died when she was quite young.

Then there was Fred (who was damaged at birth and was retarded though a bright boy.) He spent most of his life in Brentford Asylum, Southhall, which you wouldn't do these days I might add. But in those days that was the treatment if you were a bit 'odd'.

He was - due to staff shortages - allowed out during the First World War, but the Zeppelin raids affected him so badly - they frightened the

life out of him and he returned to Brentford Asylum and stayed there for the rest of his days. He died about 1945. He was quite happy where he was. He really knew no other life.

The youngest of the family was Albert Edward (born 1912) better known as Uncle Jack. Twelve years older than I, he was an invalid from the age of 14. Uncle Jack died in 1970, age 58. He was never able to marry although he had a love of his life. That relationship was never fulfilled.

Mum's Childhood

Mum had a very ordinary childhood. She went to primary school and then at 14 she entered domestic service, serving in various capacities in several homes - mostly of wealthy people in and around Baron's Court, London.

When she got married in 1920, she was the Senior House Maid to Lady Codagan, in Sloane Square, Chelsea.

The house ran like clockwork. In those days you were right on the line or you were out. If you weren't smart, not on time or didn't do the job right, you were out. That was it!

Girls, of course, were two-a-penny for domestic service. She 'lived in', but most of them were daily maids.

During World War I, from 1915 to 1918 she was directed to Kynoch's Munitions Factory, (they still make cartridges and ammunition today). She was directed into war work for three years, which she hated. Of course, when she got married, she retired from domestic service - well, paid domestic service anyway.

She met Dad at school. They were in the same class as they were the same age (only a month between them.) Dad joined up in 1914 and they got married when he came back from the Middle East. He was demobbed in 1919 and they married in 1920. Dad saw service in India, and what is now Iraq. with the 25th London Cyclist Brigade; and saw action at the relief of the siege of Kut el Amara.



With Mum and Dad on the Isle of Sheppey, 1927.

Uncle Fred

Oddly enough, apart from Uncle Jack, the one I had a relationship with was Fred, would you believe?

As a baby, my Dad was obviously working and if Mum went to visit Fred, she had to take me along too. I was instructed to be quiet and sit on my hands, because he could get quite upset if you touched him.

So the drill was I sat on my hands, sometimes for up to an hour, maybe longer. He wouldn't say a word to me and I never said a word to him - just sat there, watched and listened.

The one person that he trusted was Mum. The one that he hated - and he would have murdered if he could have got his hands on her - was his sister Kate, because she made fun of him. He would have throttled her if he could have got hold of her. So she never went anywhere near him. But Mum, he trusted implicitly.

One day he said to Mum, "I've got something for you Nell - in my pocket."

She would go in his pockets and fossick around and find bits of string, razor blades and God knows what else! Eventually she would find a toffee! He'd been saving it for her! He had probably sat on it for a month, waiting for her to come.

It reached the point where I could also put my hand in his pocket because I had behaved myself and didn't step out of line and so he trusted me as well. And that really was a great privilege.

We went to Brentford Asylum three or four times a year. It was a maximum security hospital. He couldn't get out. He was all locked up. Grandma made him a Ward of the Crown and the Government kept him. My last visit to him was in January 1942 and by this time, I was able to go to see him on my own. I learned of his passing in 1945, while serving in Palestine.

I am aware of the passing of Mother, Jack and Fred. As for the others and their progeny I know not if they are alive or dead, or where they might now be.

Uncle Jack

Uncle Jack was about 12 when I was born. At 14, he left school and started work, as an apprentice at a bicycle manufacturers, Halford and Co., on Hammersmith Broadway. Jack was rather a humourist, perhaps looked upon as being cheeky.

One day he was cheeky to the foreman who swung on his heel and gave him a boot up the backside - literally. It damaged his spine and eventually developed into spondylitis. He was then permanently under medical treatment and was an invalid pensioner for the remainder of his life.

Invalided from the age of 15, his condition gradually worsened. He had spondylitis which is a heredity situation but exacerbated by the fact that he got booted. I've got it too - ankalosing spondylitis. Look at my back - it's only affected me up in the shoulders, which is no major problem - but his was all the way down. He was doubled over, and as a result, also suffered from severe asthma.

If Uncle Jack wanted to look at you he had to lean right back against a wall or a chair, and then he could look you in the eye. But if he stood up he was bent right over and there he was fixed. Couldn't get down and couldn't get up. But a great guy.

Uncle Jack lived at home all his life, from the time he was injured. When Grandma died, he went to live with Mum.

Mum loved Uncle Jack. Right from the time of his accident she was close. She'd stand on her head for him, and him for her. I was much closer to Uncle Jack than to my father.

Mum's Parents

Grandad Henry Martin died in the August (1923) before I was born, so I never knew him. Marion Francis soldiered on until 1936.

Poor Grandma had no sense of smell whatsoever. Her olfactory organ simply didn't work and yet she adored carnations! She reckoned she could smell carnations.



At Sheppey-on-Thames, 1927.



Look at the way we dressed for the beach! Me, Dad and Mum and a 'mysterious' Aunt.

Towards the end of her life we moved to Cheltenham. She came there on one occasion for about a fortnight but we still saw her fairly often.

She was a hard case, but she thought the world of me. I was her pride and joy. I was her first grandson. She died in 1936.

Family Life

The first move was Cheltenham, in Gloucestershire, near Bath. Dad was posted to the County Court in Cheltenham and later he was promoted and posted to High Wycombe, as Chief Clerk. That's where I had most of my schooling.

Holidays

We used to go the Isle of Sheppey for holidays when I was about two or three. Sheppey was a little island down the Thames - then a quiet, little farming community with half a dozen farms on it. We used to go down and stay for a week. You used to go across to it on a ferry.

My parents rented a room in a small farmhouse. All I know is that, as a titch, I was taken on holidays there. One thing I can remember is riding in a horse and jinker. Country roads. No cars. I can remember sitting up on the front seat with the driver. I can remember clip clopping along. King of all I could see!

Mum had a Kodak Box Brownie. That was the 'in-thing' then. There were no Pentaxes or Canons back then! Mum used to take her glasses off for photos. She was wall-eyed and it showed when she took her glasses off. She always had that slight squint. Mum used to take one of those mysterious 'aunties' whom one acquires. She wasn't an aunt at all, but there she was on a beach somewhere on Sheppey.

I didn't learn to swim until I was about ten at the local baths where I had swimming lessons.



Bournemouth, 1928.

Bournemouth

We stopped holidaying on the Isle of Sheppey and went to Bournemouth instead. I can remember visiting the Poole Pottery Works about five miles from Bournemouth. I remember being fascinated by a little woman who was painting flowers on a bowl. I was so intrigued with this, I didn't notice that the group had wandered off and someone had to come back for me.

Cheltenham

We moved to Cheltenham and I went to Prep School there when I was about four. We lived opposite a park and I remember that the house had gaslights - little gas main ports. We didn't have electric lights then.

Once I was lost at the Exhibition. Getting lost was quite a traumatic experience that effected me for the rest of my life.

I was about four and I became separated from my parents. All I can vividly remember was a sea of bottoms, because that's how high I stood. Heads were up in the heavens - but bottoms were at my level.

If you have been with me where there is a crowd of people you will notice that I tend to circulate around the outside rather than in the middle. I never go to things like football or cricket matches - anywhere where there are great crowds of people. I am still wary of large groups of people around me. This was the reason why I still, today, never get into the thick of a crowd if I can avoid it.

If I go to a function I like to sit on the end seats at the very front or back but not the middle. I suppose that this little 'hang-up' will stay with me till the day I die.

You might say, "That's stupid. You're 77!" but it affects one's thinking when it happens at a tender age. It made an impression on me and I never entirely broke it. I found this difficult on occasions - particularly Palestine when there were mass riots. To some extent, that was offset by the action of the time, controlling the crowds. At least



Have a look at it! The bathing cap and the long bathers. The 'in-man' at the beach, mate! Brighton or Hurley, 1927.

you've got guys who are doing the same thing as you and you're drilled for it, which is not quite the same as being lost on your own when you are four. Maybe that helped a little bit but it still doesn't endear me to crowds.

Thunder Storms

My mother was terrified of thunderstorms.

Whenever there was a thunderstorm my grandmother would cover all the mirrors and silver and gather the kids in a bunch and bury their heads in her skirts until it was all over. And they grew up to be terrified of thunderstorms. Sensibly, Mum thought I should grow up not to be frightened of them.

I was about two or three years of age - very young - we lived in the downstairs flat and my grandmother and Uncle Jack lived in the upper flat. When there was a thunderstorm brewing, my mother sent me up to Uncle Jack – and thunderstorms were fun.

There would be a flash of lightning and he would say, "Here's that coal man shining his torch down into the cellars to see how much coal is down there." And of course there'd be a roar of thunder and that was him putting a sack of coal down the coal hole. It was fun.

Mother, I now know, huddled terrified under the stairs, until it was all over.

So I grew up without any fear of thunderstorms at all and Mum, in later years ended up with less fear of thunderstorms as well, because I wasn't upset. I couldn't care less and it gave her courage.

Towards the end of her life she no longer hid or drew the curtains or anything else.

Picnics

I was 12. We lived at High Wycombe but holidaying at Bournemouth. On summer weekends Dad and some friends used to go on early morning swimming jaunts. Mostly, it was to Hurley just below

Henley-on-Thames. It's a big watering hole and a magnificent place for swimming and fishing.

Dad's first car was a Renault Tourer. Then a baby Austin 7. It was almost the same size as a pram! Four wheels and a very small engine. Seated four people - *just*.

I recall Dad driving up Park Lane in the Austin 7 and coming to the Oxford Street intersection. There we were, seated in this tiny, tiny car and him waving through a dirty great big, red, double decker bus! Talk about being cheeky! Later on, he bought an Austin Ten.

Outings to me were always murder. Quite often on a fine summer afternoon, they would decide to go on a little picnic to Burnham Beeches, which was about three quarters of an hours drive from High Wycombe. Thickly wooded area - very nice pretty area. It was a beautiful place - and I loved the beauty of it but I hated the picnics. We'd get there and find a nice quiet spot and we'd park. Take your books with you and whatever. And having found a spot and set up I would be then be left to look after the car and the goodies while my parents went for a walk.

Dad would say, "We're going for a little walk, you look after the car while we're gone." They might be gone for 15 minutes or a couple of hours! I dreaded picnics. I still do. Again, it something I still don't like doing.

Being an only son, there were no other children and this affected me as well. There is a very great truth in the adage, 'Two's company, three's a crowd.'

Human beings tend to pair off. What we had was a triangle. It's father and son, mother and son, father and daughter, mother and daughter ... but occasionally its mother and father and you're the odd one out. I was the odd one out. Phillip was always the odd man out - too young for Christine, too old for Andrew.

In later years, the pairing was my mother and I. There is always one on the outer but at the early stages I was the one on the outer. And



Littlehampton, 1936. Dad is smiling but I'm not. Somebody's saying 'smile'. He's smiling. And I'm thinking, "Sod you and your bloody car." The difficult, awkward, stubborn Aquarian.



Christmas, 1934. Uncle Vic, me,
Dad and Uncle Jack

that's why I'm a loner now. This is why being on my own doesn't worry me. It also made me a difficult, awkward stubborn, Aquarian who's too damned independent sometimes, and perhaps too self contained. But that's the way I am. I'm still not a person who chases relatives - even my own flesh and blood. I don't make a nuisance of my self by constantly knocking on the doors of my children. Its not that I don't love them I've never been a relative person. Although I do sense a mellowing with age, habits die hard.

Christmases

Did we have things like birthdays, Easter Bunnies, Christmases? I don't remember Easter Bunnies. I don't think they were 'in' then. Christmas was a pillow case at the bottom of the bed and relatives would come - Uncle Jack and Uncle Vic and his family - Patricia and Pamela with whom I have retained contact - the only two on my father's side of the family. Much later, Vic had a son, but he was a 'change-baby'

and didn't live for more than seven or eight years.

Uncle Vic and Uncle Jack

Victor William was Dad's youngest brother. He was like Uncle Jack from the Martin family and we were pretty close. The rest of them I have not set eyes on since Grandmas Priestley's funeral in 1938. As with Mothers family, I would not know if they or their progeny are alive or dead, nor where they might be.

They would come down from London, staying three or four days.

Victor joined the Regular Army (the Buffs or East Kent Regiment) and went to India for six years. Hell of a good bloke he was.

Uncle Vic was very down to earth. He rose to rank of Sergeant - did his six or seven years with Colours and five with the Reserve.

He was the head foreman at Beck and Pollitzer Ltd, who were heavy transport people at Waterloo. But very down to earth. He was a mechanic with a spanner in his hand. He didn't give a damn what his elder brother was or did. In fact he would bring him down to earth and prick his self-inflated bubble! He was like Mum - "If you don't like me, go away!"

For some reason father clung to him, probably because the others had wiped him. They couldn't stand his swank nonsense. Uncle Vic was the only one who would put up with it.

They would come for Christmas and New Year. Mum would make up 'apple-pie beds' for Uncle Vic - make the bed and turn the sheet up half way so you only have half a bed! She'd fill the bottom with holly leaves and you'd hear muffled remarks from Uncle Vic and Uncle Jack - "You devil, Nell."

Mum's outside on the landing, laughing. Uncle Vic enjoyed it too - he loved the bones of her.

I got on well with Uncle Jack. We were like brothers. We spent a lot of time together. We talked about all sorts of things. He was a big influence in my life. He and Uncle Vic shared one virtue in common. They listened. No matter what stupid idea you had, they listened. Father wouldn't; he just wiped you off. It was beneath his dignity. I could talk to Uncles Jack or Vic about anything. Anything, from how I would spend my next ten bob to what my latest problem was. It didn't matter. I could sit there with either of them and talk. No subject was taboo.

Jack died in 1970 - (aged 58) Vic went in 1986 (aged 82).

Perhaps I should mention Dad's immediate family. His father, Arthur Alexander, was by trade a painter. In those days, there were no ready mixed paints or acrylics, etc. such as we now have. It was a seasonal (summer) job and as far as I could see, he spent most of the winter months in the 'grip of the grape'.

Grandmother, Edith was a quiet woman, very much resigned to the

fate of bearing children - eight in all. I am unsure of the pecking order but I can list them.

Margaret (Mag) was the eldest girl. She had five or six children. I cannot remember either their names or the name of her husband. Dad was the eldest son. Then came Ernest, Dorothy, Florence and Jean (the youngest). What the names of their spouses or their children (if any) were, I am unable to say. The missing one was Winifred, who died in infancy.

I last saw any of them at Grandma Priestley's funeral in 1938, (except for Jean into whom I bumped on Putney Bridge one afternoon in 1940.) As with Mum's family, whether they are alive or dead, or what became of their progeny, I have not the faintest idea and frankly, I have no interest to find out!

Dancing

I only went to one dance and it took me a lot of courage to go to that one. I had never been to a dance before and I was scared because I couldn't dance.

Mother took me in hand, with the gramophone and records and taught me what she knew - which wasn't terribly much. Armed and primed, I went to the dance - and sat there all night waiting for something to come up that I knew. Of course, it had all changed over the years. I've never been a great guy for going to dances. I still can't dance, although I have a good sense of rhythm.

High Wycombe Primary School

We had moved to High Wycombe, 30 miles west of London, half way to Oxford. High Wycombe was quite a sizeable town. It was a big furniture making centre with a lot of other industry and some farming.

I went to a mixed primary school until I was 12. I used to walk two and a half miles to school and the same distance to get home. Ride a bike? Get taken by your Dad? You'd have to be kidding!

'Shanks Pony' was the 'in' transport.

“You’ve got two flat feet fella - get going!”

They didn’t run kids to school (or anywhere else) in those days. You walked, or, if you were lucky, you might use the bus. Children today, don’t know they are alive.

Some wit remarked a while ago that ‘Kids, today, wouldn’t even work in a Iron Lung’ (unless there is a Gold Medal to be won to placate the great God of Sport).

The day started about 7.30am. School finished about four. If you didn’t dawdle, you might be home by 5pm.

I got the cane at primary school, when I was about nine or ten. What for? Something I did wrong! I went through a bout of caning for whatever I was doing (or not doing). It got to the point where Mother went to the head master and asked, “What’s going on?” It stopped, but not before I got three of the best on each hand.

We didn’t have organised sport or cricket in primary school. Rugby and footy were out of my league because of my breathing, anyway.

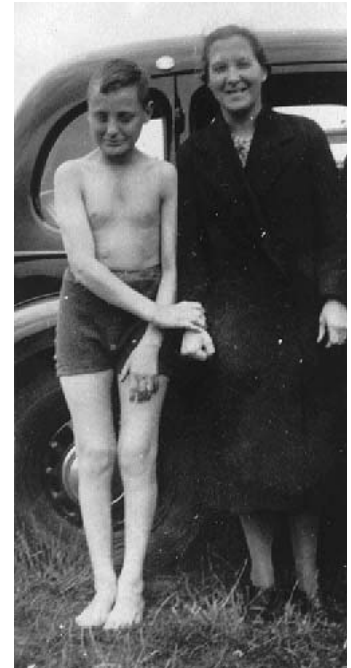
Surgery

I was never a sporting type.

I was a very sick child because I had deficiency in my body. The valve that closes off the stomach when food is taken in, didn’t close, so when I was laid down, having been breastfed, it flowed straight back out again. I was getting ill because of poor nourishment. The doctors didn’t know what it was and my mother was quite desperate.

I ended up in the Tite Street Children’s Hospital in Chelsea where I was examined and immediately taken into the theatre. Fortunately they knew exactly what the problem was and operated - the result is a four inch scar on my stomach. The same operation today is simple keyhole surgery, but not then.

The problem - pyloric-stenosis - the valve from the duodenum to the stomach - doesn’t close. The milk flows out as soon as you lay down. You can’t keep anything down. And I wasn’t getting any better.



1936. Mum was talking to me and pinching me to make me smile. Check my grip!

It usually appears in first - born boys. (Another member of family who had it was my cousin Pamela). It's just a matter of closing the valve and once that happened I was right. I was losing weight and Mum decided to get a second opinion. The doctor had said it would put itself right, but it wasn't putting itself right. I ended up in the Tite Street Children's Hospital in Chelsea. On the table in half an hour – snip, snip stitch!

I was three weeks old and they had to take out part of the diaphragm and solar plexus to get at this thing. If I hadn't had that surgery I wouldn't have lived. But it meant I could never control my breathing - I only had three muscles instead of four in the solar plexus.

Long distance running, footy, rugger, tennis and active sports - couldn't do it. I could never control my breath to run, except in short sprints.

My only sport was cricket. A nice dash of 22 yards down a cricket pitch - no problem. I coped adequately with cricket and played for the school team and also played for the Police 2nd Cricket Team in Palestine. That was only short little bursts of running. I could cope with that.

In later years I took up bowls, which doesn't require running.

I was never any good at cross country races either, for the same reason. I was always so far behind I never even saw the blokes who went out to see the stragglers come in. I was a straggling straggler! I used to walk it, half jog it - a sort of modified Scout's Pace.

When I went home in the 1960's I was sitting in Mum's living room toasting my toes and I told her I had become a Baha'i.

"Baha'i? I've heard that name before?" Mother said.

"Where? Tell me about it!"

"Don't know. I can't remember, but I've heard it."

We went on talking and said no more about it. Next morning, I was sitting in the kitchen at the table and mother came in, beaming from ear to ear.

“I remember where I heard that name.”

When she was waiting at the bus stop with me, wrapped up to go to a doctor for a second opinion, she met a lady who lived two doors down, whom she knew by sight.

Neighbours know your kids if they aren't doing very well. She asked, “How's your baby?” I was skin and bone and under nourished.

“No good.” Mother told her why.

“There's only one place you should go and that's the Tite Street Children's Hospital. I'll take you there.” When the bus came along, this lady took her (almost forcibly) to Tite Street Hospital and I ended up on the table.

She was a Baha'i. That's where mother heard the name. Way back in 1924! It was some thirty years previously that she'd heard that name and remembered that far back, so I think Baha'ullah had His eye on me, even then.

“I want you.”

Science

My favourite teacher was Mr. Ripley the science teacher. He was great fun. He did very simple things really, but highly technical to us kids. He did things with battery acid. He made science fun.

I was always strong on history, geography, social studies, language.

I was always down at the bottom for maths, science chemistry, both at Primary and Grammar School.

Teddy

I had one mate I knocked about with. My best buddy was Teddy Litchfield, an oddball. Teddy was born, again, one of life's misfortunes at birth, with a withered arm. Everyone made fun of him. He was a good lad; a bit of an underdog really. He lived on the main road and I picked him up on the way to school. It was mile each way from his home. I don't know what happened to Teddy and I have often

wondered what might have become of him. Did he survive the War? I've always had a soft spot for 'underdogs'.

We played in the school playground at morning recess and lunchtime. We had seasonal things like yo-yos, marbles and conkers.

I remember the conker season in Autumn and the marbles season in summer.

Conkers are chestnuts. I used to bake them in the oven to get hard. They were threaded on a string and the you each took turns trying to crack another feller's conker – if it split, you won, if yours split, you lost. The season lasted, maybe, six weeks.

Hobbies and Friendships

On weekends I did homework (and the occasional picnic which I hated). I went to the pictures, but not very often. I had pigeons and guinea pigs and stuff like that and I played with other lads about two doors away.

My main hobby was stamp collecting. I was not a philatelist - a student of stamps until I came under the influence of my father-in-law Syd Wallen. Up until that point I collected stamps. It was an interesting thing to do and I liked doing it. I learned a lot from it once I got into the technicalities of philately. That hobby stayed with me right through my life until the time came when I could no longer see the detail of the stamps.

I inherited Sidney John's collection before he died and married it with my own and it was an interest which never faded.

I never played sport, didn't belong to youth clubs or anything like that - it never interested me.

Piano

After school I did an hour of piano practice everyday from four till five and a piano lesson once a week. I hated it because I was forced to do it. I was learning scales - practiced damned scales for hours - and

simple pieces like the Barcarole and stuff like that - simple waltzes. I didn't sit grades. Well, it went on for about three or four years.

It came to an end eventually because the teacher told my father, "I'm wasting my time with Reg, because he's not bothering to read the music. Once he learns the piece, he plays by ear."

Was that the done thing for kids our age? Were we considered well off to own a piano? I don't know, but we had an upright piano and that was it.

I remember Dad used to visit ex-servicemen's Homes - places like the Star and Garter Home in Richmond (similar to our Vet's Affairs places here) and the British Legion Clubs, much like the RSL clubs. He fancied himself as a singer and I would accompany him on the piano.

I made a friend in the Star & Garter Home - Bert. He was just a trunk! No arms or legs (blown off in the trenches) and gassed to boot. He had a cradle chair and would be wheeled about. He took a shine to me, and I to him. I visited him regularly four or five times a year.

When I enlisted, I went to see him and we sat and talked. When I left, he wished me well and asked me to keep in touch with him, which I did, but then added, "I can't write to you lad".

He died in 1944 - a living 'trunk' for 27 rotten years. He was another of my underdog mates.

After piano practice I had tea and then did study and homework - particularly at Royal Grammar School which set a heavy homework program.

My father insisted on a very rigorous home study schedule which seemed not to be effective and dampened enthusiasm to learn. So many times he lectured me and stated quite categorically that, "You will never make a living with geography and history, boy."

Fathers are not always right. He was always hopeful that I might follow him into the legal field. I had no interest but neither could I say what I wanted to do.

Finally matriculating (albeit, only just!) in November 1941, and

having then the Christmas School holidays, I waited until my eighteenth birthday (which fell on a Sunday that year) and went poste-haste to the Recruiting Office on Monday morning. That took care of job-hunting, at least for the 'Duration of Hostilities'.

Sunday School

Apart from schooling there were two matters that affected my thinking and personality. One was by influence the other by confrontation.

It was decided I should have some 'religious' experience. Note that the word used was religious, not spiritual! I was sent to Sunday School, to the Baptist Chapel. The choice was simple. It was on the same side of the street in which we lived, so I didn't have to cross any roads. I was young (six years) so I could toddle along the road to Sunday School without too much problem.

I know I started in late November, 1930. I had only attended for two or three weeks before prize giving at Christmas. I was called out and presented with a Bible - a prize for 100% attendance - I was quite proud of myself.

My mother was quite cross about this. The following Sunday, she came to the Sunday School with me and returned the Bible to the teacher and said, "My son did not earn this prize. You can keep it until next year and if he has attended Sunday School for a year you can present it to him then. Sorry. Take it back."

She was Joe Blunt!

She had of course, carefully explained to me that I hadn't earned it - and I was schooled enough under mother's drill to know that it was right: I hadn't earned it. Only in theory. It was one of those lessons you get in life, that things are not handed to you on a silver platter - you have to work for them. Fair enough.

Cubs and Scouts

I continued at the Baptist Chapel until the age of 12 - about six years. I used to go on Sunday School "outings" once a year and there was always a kid's Christmas Party. They also had a Cub pack. I joined the Cubs and served as a Sixer with three proficiency badges - swimming, knots and semaphore.

At the age of 12, I had to leave Cubs and move up to Scouts. The only Scout troop was an open troop with the local Church of England.

I transferred to Scouts and went further afield, to St Andrews Church of England. We went camping and hiking and thoroughly enjoyed it. That formed a pattern. I was going to Sunday School for three Sundays of the month and to Church of England one Sunday a month as a Scout.

I found it confusing and disturbing - the vast difference between simple Baptist Chapel and high Anglican Church with all its ritual and dogma. It seemed to be two totally different things using common things - the name of the Bible and the name of God and Jesus were constantly evoked. This seemed to be the only relationship between these two systems.

I fell out with the church. It came to a head when we were requested to form a guard of honour for a visiting dignitary - on a certain Sunday.

We arrived at the Church and were seated in the pews near the back of the Church so that we could, on the signal at the end of the service, and after benediction, file out and form the guard of honour - two rows of scouts - outside the Church door. Me, being a little bloke, I was on the end of the line closest to the door. The special parade was in honour of a visiting Church dignitary, a Bishop from Tanganyika (Tanzania) East Africa - a *very black* Bishop.

At the end of the service, he and the resident Minister stationed themselves at the entrance, to farewell the congregation.

I noticed that when people came out of Church, they avoided,



I was 13 and in my cricket jumper. I've got the same teeth as Phil ... or him as me! The cross over teeth. I never had braces ... only on my trousers! Bastard things. My father insisted that belts made your stomach weak. 1937.

wherever possible any contact with the visiting dignitary.

Some walked behind him. Some walked behind the minister. Some got trapped and pulled their hand away from his as quickly as they could - and then counted their fingers to make sure they still had them all. Most odd!

The only reason I could see for this odd course of action was that the visiting dignitary was jet black. This disturbed and disgusted me because at Baptist Chapel I'd come up with the idea of a 'brotherhood' of Christianity. A picture hung in the Sunday School hall. A vision of Christ sitting under a tree with a dozen kids around him - black, white, yellow, red, brindle - "Suffer little children to come unto me."

As kids that's beaut; but as adults, they didn't want to know. The people at the Anglican Church seemed to say, "This is black, we don't want to know."

I asked my father and he said, "That's the way it is." - which is no answer.

I asked in the Minister about it. He patted me on the head and said, "Mine is not to question why, but to believe and do as I was told."

And I thought, "Phooey."

I stewed under all of this for a few weeks.

Finally, I dropped out of Scouts, I dropped out of the Baptist Chapel Sunday School and dropped out of the Anglican Church. I was 13. I went into 'limbo'.

When I look back upon this now I realise I did exactly what my father did and for the same reason. The demonstration of what I had been told was not there, but I could not express it in those terms at that age. I went into limbo and stayed in limbo until I was 18, in 1942. I was hurt. I was disgusted and I gave the lot away.

Other than those incidents my childhood was quiet. There were a couple of things that influenced my life - one for good and one for bad - in later years.

Incidentally, I returned to Scouting twice - the first time in Jerusalem with the Arab Scouts, the second time in Launceston in 1958 as a

Scouter with a Venture troop.

The Depression

During that period we also had the Great Depression of 1930. The depression years really did not effect us too much. It hurt people around us but Dad was 'safe' because he had a Public Service position. The Depression didn't affect us too badly and my memory of it was the conserving of material more than anything else.

I wore shoes to school but I wasn't allowed to wear them once I got home. I had to change out of school clothes. We didn't starve and we weren't in debt. The Depression didn't affect us as it affected so many families. We were fortunate really - we did not go short of much. Not like some of our neighbours. Mum used to help them and give food and drinks to those out-of-work, and to tramps who knocked on the door for a crust bread or thruppence to buy a meal. Father was not particularly pleased about it, but Mum took no notice of him. She would always try to help anyone in need or in trouble.

Start of WW2

I was home at High Wycombe, when the war broke out. They had air raid sirens and fire drill and a certain amount of fear and misgiving when the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, made the announcement at 11 o'clock on the morning of Sunday 3 September 1939, "We are at War with Germany".

I thought, 'the world's going to fall in on us' but nothing happened. Eventually you thought it was all a bit of a myth. Nothing much happened until 1940, with Dunkirk. But that was 'over there'. It wasn't in our backyard.

The Germans started bombing London in 1941. We were living in Twickenham then, by the Rugby ground. The bombing was mainly aimed at Central London. We were well on the outskirts. Moonlight nights were rather touchy. Not far from the house was a tall, white, church tower. The German bombers would site on that and come

along the Chertsey By-Pass and drop the odd 'egg'.

Eventually one came a bit close and damaged the house, rather badly. And some of our possessions were lost by fire or water (or both). No-one was injured - just shaken up.

Matriculation

At 12, I had sat an entrance exam and won a Scholarship to the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe. I stayed at Grammar until I was 17. Matriculating in November, 1941, but only just. God knows how! I was hopeless at things like chemistry and science and mathematics. I just about scraped through on those but I got straight A's for English, literature, history, geography, social studies and language. Perhaps they awarded, it to get rid of me!

There was no graduation ceremony, just a Certificate. (That went up in flames in the bombing, in 1943. I was overseas in the Middle East.)

School finished on December 15, 1941. I had the Christmas holidays. Then January 1942 came. I had my 18th birthday on the Sunday.

On Monday, I enlisted at the Kingston-on-Thames Drill Hall. I was launched into the big wide world. There would be some rather rude awakenings - but at that point in time one was rather hyped up with the glamour and glory of it all! (Now, I wouldn't join a damned Christmas Club! *And* I can give you a solemn assurance that War Medals are vastly over-rated 'souvenirs'.) Even the mental picture of Bert, living (if you could call it that) a helpless existence in the Star and Garter Home along with others in similar sad conditions, was no deterrent.

The die was cast.

My Dad

I had the impression then and I never saw reason to change it: that Dad was a swank pot. Thought he was better than anybody else. You not only 'keep up with the Joneses, you lead the Jones's.'

I remember a particular incident. I was about 13. We had guests for dinner one night. Father had a mouth full of food and as I recall it he was asked where he was born. As he couldn't answer, Mother answered for him. "He was born in Fulham." Was there a blue after the visitors had gone! He was telling everyone he was born in Kensington! It 'sounded' better!

Mum and Dad didn't fight a lot. They were like any other family. Occasionally there would be a little blue about something or other. But he was always 'putting on the dog' which neither Mum or I could stomach.

Nellie Martin was 'born in Fulham', she was straight and if you didn't like it, too bad. 'I won't change my history for you.' You took Mum, warts and all! Father 'came from Kensington'. He had to 'keep up appearances'.

(In the 1990's there was an extremely good programme titled '*Keeping up Appearances*'. It was so true. Dad was so much like Mrs Bucket - sorry, *Boo-kay*.)

He was in a profession where appearances were everything. Solicitors and barristers had a very definite pecking order and sometimes they crossed swords because of these differences - education and 'Old School Tie'. Nitpicking!

He got pipped to the post for some job advancement by the Head Bailiff of the Court, who was a British citizen, but born in Ceylon - Dudley Lissenberg. Dad never forgave him.



Dad and me, 1925.



Dad and me at the beach.
Sheppey on Thames, 1926.

In 1968 when I went home, I found Dad was in Isleworth Hospital and I got permission from the sister to see him, because I'd just arrived off the plane from Australia. I was told I could have 15 minutes with him and then come at proper visiting hours.

I walked down to the ward and back again.

"He's not there." I told the sister.

She looked. "He's there. He's sitting on the end of his bed."

I hadn't recognised him. We got talking and he was still churned up inside because he had never gotten to level the score with Dudley Lissenberg.

"You've got to be joking Dad, Dudley's been dead for 15 years!" And *that* made him even angrier, to think he had missed the chance altogether.

Mum and I were good friends with the Lissenbergs, and we kept track of them with visits and Christmas cards. Miriam, his wife, wrote to me back in 1953 to tell me that Dudley had died. "You're still chewing over the fact that you never got even with him? You're bloody mad. *He's been dead for 15 years!*"

"I never got that man," was his bitter reply.

When I went back in the afternoon, the sister asked if I could have a talk with the doctor. "We're very concerned. We can't find anything physically wrong with your father. We've given him every possibly test we can give him. Have you got any thoughts." I saw the Doctor that afternoon.

"I would suggest you're looking in the wrong place. Try looking into his mind."

"Are you suggesting he's mad?"

"No," I said, "He's not mad but he's warped and has been for years. He has one great weakness - he holds grudges. To the point of sheer hatred." He would mull and stew, mull and stew. I told the doctor about Dudley and that he was still stewing over that.

Why was he in the hospital? He collapsed apparently.

He lived on the Bath Road, a couple of miles from the airport. I hired a car at the airport and that was my first stop. I knocked on the door and couldn't get an answer. I thought, 'Perhaps he's down in his greenhouse', so I wandered down there but he wasn't there. I wandered back up to house and knocked again. The lady next door popped her head over the fence.

"What do you want?"

"I'm looking for my father. I'm his son Reg. I've just come in from Australia and I'm looking for him, Any idea where he might be?"

"You Dad's in hospital. He collapsed in the garden a few days ago."

When I saw him, he was unshaven and haggard. Three weeks after that he was gone. I got back to Australia and received a telegram from Jessie saying he had died. Jessie was his second wife, (I only met her once). She had been in the States visiting her daughter in California when he collapsed. She came home when she got the news of his collapse, but by then I had left UK and I did not see her.

I would say he was manic depressive - he had extreme highs and lows - bipolar depression I think they call it. One moment you think you're God, the next you're in a pit of depression. I don't think it happened until he hit middle age. He went on these big roller coaster rides from the time he was about 50 years old. I had left home at that stage. From 1942 onwards I was in Palestine. He died in 1968 age 74.

World War I

Dad had a hard childhood, so the great escape for him was 1914. Born in 1894, he was 20 when the Great War broke out. He was an apprenticed cabinet maker - and a very good one at that. He was a very thorough and painstaking workman. I think, probably, the War years upset so many personal plans. It did the same in World War II of course. The path that you thought you were on, you weren't on.

He had emerged from World War I, at least physically unscratched, having seen service with the 25th London Cyclist (Battalion), of the



Dad had me at the waters edge, 1926.



Me at the beach. Check out the modern bathers! 1927



Dad and me at the beach gathering shells, 1927.

Middlesex Regiment. He peddled his way round India, and the North West Frontier, spending some time in the Shalimar Garden in Lahore.

Eventually he was at the battle for the relief of Kut, in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Kut Al Amara was a big battle - Turks and Germans. He wouldn't talk about those days at all. It was a taboo subject. He simply wouldn't talk about it and I can understand now why, having been through the same sort of thing myself. I can see the point.

India

He loved India because there was no war on in India, of course. There were so many photos of India and not much of anything else.

"How come you didn't get any other photos?"

"The war was on. I was busy."

One of my delights was going to Lahore. I went over the border, into what is now Pakistan, and went to the Shalimar Gardens. When I walked into that place I knew exactly where I was. It was the same as father's photographs taken in 1915. I'd spent much time looking at his photos but he never explained them.

"Have a look at them if you want too," he would say. But he would never talk about them. A lot of what I now know about his travels I picked up from my travels, by going to Bangalore, Lahore and so on. I saw the things that he saw. It was somewhat odd to feel that some 45 years later, I was walking where Dad had walked.

Kut Al Amara

India and Iraq had a profound effect on Dad. I think travel did on most of us at that age and under those circumstances. It was better for some - Dad for example. The only action he saw was Kut. India was breeze. On the other side of the coin, you had blokes who were mangled in the trenches, gassed and shell shocked. I met some of them in the Star and Garter Home in Richmond.

He saw conflict in Kut. I think that was the only battle he saw - heavy guns and rifles but no gas. He undoubtedly saw carnage. (All his life

Dad suffered from bouts of malaria contracted overseas though the effects were minimal in his later years.)

Historically, Kut Al Amara was in Iraq (in what was then a Vali of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.) Iraq wasn't a separate country then. Not until 1920 did it become a country in its own right - under the Peace Treaty, which carved up the Middle East between Britain and France. The Middle East was carved up spawning four new countries: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Trans - Jordan. The Peace Treaty in Versailles gave Fiesel who had lead the Arab revolt; Iraq and made him King of that; Abdullah was given Trans-Jordan; France took Syria/Lebanon; and UK had the Mandate in Palestine.

Kut Al Amara was somewhere near the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris - very heavily fortified and defended. They were under siege for a long time. The British tried to relieve it, like Mafeking during the Boer War. Foot troops came in from India. They assaulted it and took it in 1917. By all accounts, it was a bloody senseless battle in which good soldiers were hurled at the enemy, literally cannon fodder. It seems the British bungled it badly, not unlike Gallipoli. Dad wouldn't talk about it at all and although he came out unscathed, apparently he had many emotional scars from a very grisly first hand encounter.

The action started the collapse of the Turkish Empire. At the same time you had Gallipoli, the Armenian massacres and the Arab revolt in Hejaz.

Dad didn't have colour bars - anymore than Mum did. If he chose to ignore them it was because they were 'foreigners'.

After WW1

At the end of the War, in 1919, he was demobbed and married Mum in 1920. I was born in 1924, when he was 30 years of age.

He didn't return to his trade after the war. Instead, he entered the Civil Service as a temporary clerk with the Ministry of Education. He must have sat a Civil Service exam, because he hadn't been to Univer-



Dad was trying to get me *into* the water and I didn't want to go! Eventually, I learned to swim. 1928

sity. Eventually he acquired Permanency and was then offered a job as Clerk at the County Courts at Cheltenham. From there he was promoted to Chief Clerk and transferred to High Wycombe.

During the Second World War he was transferred into the Ministry of Supply and the Board of Trade, returning to the legal field in 1946 to finish his career as Assistant Official Receiver for the Bankruptcy Court for Great Britain.

By all accounts he could 'think' in numbers and was able to run his finger down four columns of figures and add them all up simultaneously! I've watched him do it on numerous occasions.

He was divorced from Mum in 1943 and it seems one reason was, that he had a chip on his shoulder about his beginnings and class. They simply grew further and further apart, to the point of being incompatible.



This is 'the climb of the civil servant', 1938. The bow tie and the pose. He gave me the tom-tits. Father and I were not close.

My Relationship With Dad

I never got on with father at all. As a little chap I obviously did. He built sandcastles and what have you - but he was a 'nobody' then. He was still a nobody later on, but he thought he was God's gift to humanity. He had no humility at all. I think it was the sort of thing that got to Mother as well. It slowly happened and as he went up the professional ladder it got worse.

"I, Alick Priestley have said."

And it really went on like this until it reached the stage when I would have been about 13 and I had a half inch longer reach than father had. That's when I turned on him one day and I floored him. I punched him out. I don't think he ever really forgave me for my 'indiscretion'. He had accused me of something I had not done. I denied the charge and he grew abusive. So I woofed him. He came charging in and I just held him on the end of my arm. He couldn't get me. He was only 5'6" - slightly shorter than I am. Mum was tiny 4'11".

He criticised us a lot. I'd say he picked on me a lot. He wanted me to

follow him into law and I wasn't interested. He wanted to mould me so that he could say, "This is my only begotten son in whom I am well pleased." I got out from under. I realised I didn't want to follow in Dad's footsteps.

He had a very demanding job as Chief Clerk of the County Court, because one is responsible for the whole agenda in the Stipendiary Magistrates Court, and the Visiting Circuit Judges Court. He was conscious of his position. To his credit, he did it well - I grant him his due. He studied and he worked hard to raise himself ... and he excelled. But with success, he took his feet off the ground.

Dad was quite a good gardener until he got uppity and then he employed somebody to do it for him. He lost touch. He stopped getting his hands dirty!

Jehovah's Witnesses

Father, was a 'seeker'. I followed the same path in many ways. He had basic ideas about Christianity but had received several serious 'jolts' in terms of association with people and other faiths, such as Islam, during his War service that he had seen and suffered made him totally dissatisfied with the old ways of doing things.

I don't know what paths he investigated. I was very young. Having come through World War I, there had to be 'something better somewhere'.

My first awareness was when he got involved with Jehovah's Witnesses. I think he tried several things. My father was a religious man, but not very spiritual. My mother was a very spiritual person but not very religious and there is a vast gulf of difference. The two are not the same thing.

He used to go to all sorts of meetings here and there, of this that and the other - New Age Thought and God knows what else.

Eventually he got caught up with the Jehovah's Witnesses. The sect, at the time, was run from America - of course - and the head serang was a judiciary person, Judge Rutherford.



This is the only photo I have of my Dad from World War 1, 1914. He had many photos at one stage - many in India and Mesopotamia - but only God knows where they went.

Rutherford prophesied that the world would come to an end in 1938. A lot of people prepared themselves for that. I don't think father did particularly, but he was on the wavelength.

1938 came and went and nothing happened. Judge Rutherford issued a statement that he accepted responsibility for the failure.

What went wrong? *"I forget to add in the leap years."*

He was 'out by a few months'. So he adjusted it to 1939. The mob accepted that, but 1939 came and went. Apart from the Declaration of War on September 3, nothing else happened. Father saw no demonstration, no proof of what the good Judge had prophesied. Twice it had failed. Eventually, Rutherford calculated the 'end days' some distant time in the 1970s, but in sheer disgust, Dad threw all Jehovah's Witness material into the dustbin.

If you talk to today's Jehovah's Witnesses about those days and those prophecies, they don't have a clue because it was hushed up so thoroughly. It was 'lost' during the War years. The whole thing was rehashed and reformed and today's nonsense is just about as stupid! Little has changed. As for Rutherford, his name was a 'dirty word' then, but totally unknown to the present generation.

Father rebelled. I would have done exactly the same - chucked the lot out. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," he said. It all went into the dustbin.

Christian Science

Whatever he found, he would try to ram down the throats of my Mother and myself. Frankly, we let it go in one ear and out the other. Father, having thrown out Jehovah's Witnesses cottoned on to Christian Science. Having got a little bit of reading under his belt, the same old practice recommenced of ramming it down Mother's throat and mine. I can remember raising his ire on one occasion.

He proclaimed, "There is no such thing as pain. You only imagine it. *It's all in the mind.*"

I was at an age when I could argue.

"*Rubbish, Dad!* Why do you think you've got pain if it's not a warning system that something's wrong?"

"You only imagine it. All illness is imaginary," he insisted. "There is no such thing as pain. Physical defects - you only imagine them."

I remember he persuaded me to go to a Christian Science meeting with him. It was hilarious as far as I was concerned. When we got to the door, he asked the usher to, 'Put me near the front because I'm a bit deaf.'

I felt like saying, "Hey, you're *imagining* it." But I kept my silence.

We sat through this nonsense. I was bored out of my mind. It went on and on: "No such thing as illness or pain. *All* imagination."

Eventually I said, "For God's sake father, go out on the street and throw yourself under a double decker bus. Mum and I will come down the hospital *and see if it hurts!*"

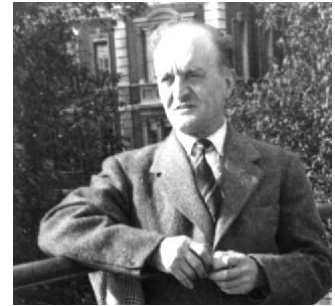
Blew his stack? Did he what! I was immoral and a heathen, unfeeling, a non-believer, I was too young, I didn't understand.

"I know when something hurts and something's wrong, Dad! If I hit my thumb with a hammer it hurts! And I know why it hurts because I hit it with the hammer. The connection between the hammer and the thumb is acute pain," I argued.

He felt misunderstood. I think he got the message and decided to 'think it out again'. He did stick with Christian Science until shortly before his death but he had grave doubts about it then, because he could see for himself it did not seem to be working. Again, the demonstration was not there.

After the 'bus incident', he ceased to ram religion down our throats; he kept it to himself. Mother and I were not too eager to know, anyway. We were relieved.

The difference between being 'religious' and being 'spiritual'. Religion, you have to learn. Spirituality is innate in you. Mum didn't go to church apart from weddings and funerals only.



By 1955, Dad had remarried and was contemplating a visit to his son 'downunder'.

Dad was obviously searching. He was looking for a faith that was practical. A Faith he could identify with. We had rare discussions because most of time it was, "This is what you will do."

Sometimes we would have a sensible discussion. One time he said, "I could never see the point of a Church that said the Son came down to save me: and the next thing is the vicar is going out to 'bless the troops' before we went into battle. That's not practical. One minute you're saying 'love your enemy', then next 'bless the troops.' Doesn't make sense, this dual standard is confusing."

I agreed with him.

Parents Divorce

My parents divorced in 1943. I was away. Very obviously Mother had had enough of the swank and the palaver. Father had had his fill of someone who 'only came from Fulham, dear'. They just grew apart.

I don't know what they cited in court, but they were surely incompatible.

In the early days it was reasonably good, but as father got further up the ladder things deteriorated. It interfered with his job.

Mum wrote and told me it was finished but I only got part of the story. When I came back I didn't even bother to go and see my father.

Uncle Vic told Dad I had married and had a daughter. He didn't come to our wedding and I didn't invite him. Not that I even knew where he was at that stage. Wherever he was living I didn't know and I didn't particularly want to know.

We eventually received a letter from him and he came to see us.

Mum stayed single. She didn't take up with anyone else. After her divorce she went back to Kinnoul Road and slept on the floor for a long time. Then a friend got her a flat in Walham Grove and she stayed there until the end.

Who do I feel I was most influenced by? My Mum. Mum and I got on like a house on fire. The values I got from my Mum were home values,

relationship values, and certainly not fathers 'I'm better than you' bulldust!

Dad was a good provider, he was meticulous and ordered and I've inherited some of that, but not the bulldust part. I can see where it came from. I can understand why he took that strategy. He came from a poor family and he wanted to break from that. I agree with that.

Lots of people break away and form a new life and set up a new standard of their own. This is good. But they don't become remote, high falooting, or 'I'm better than you' because they are still human beings.

He lost touch.

And his great weakness was that he held grudges. Sometimes, if I upset him, he wouldn't speak to me for weeks. At first it worried me, but then I said, "That's Dad. Let him get on with it."

Mum blows up, tears a strip off and then says, "How about a cup of tea." It was finished. I liked that about her. She was straight up. Life's too short.

Dad wasn't direct. He tended to be 'legally obscure'. He would 'um' and 'ah' and beat around the bush. He was oblique and never liked to commit himself. Typical legal eagle.

Jessie

Dad married Jessie in 1955. They had a civil wedding at Caxton Hall. She was a widow. She had a son and a daughter, who lived in the USA. The only time I met her, father said, "This is your mother."

I said, "Hold on, I can't have *two* mothers. I'm sorry, Mum's still alive. What's your name love?"

"Jessie," she laughed.

"That'll do me - Jessie it is!" She agreed.

I think Dad thought I was a 'smart arse', but it was a very simple equation as far as I was concerned. I couldn't have two mothers. He made the fatal mistake of saying, "This is your mother."



Adelaide, 1957. This is a rare shot! RLP, Phillip, Dad, Pop, Kim and Roy - the eldest son of the eldest son!



She took it well and there was no problem and our relationship was quite good in the same way that yours and Edna's was quite good.

I didn't see Dad before I left for Australia in 1951. I told him that we were going to migrate and he tried to do something about it - a week *after* we sailed. I caught the boat - he missed it!

He decided to come for a visit in 1957. Phillip was just turned two. He had dragged a Player Piano with him, planning to sell it here and cover his return fare. Unfortunately, PP's were 'two-a-penny' in Australia and no one was very interested. I think Nana Wallen finally purchased it, and gave it to Uncle Roy.

At this time, I had been asked to move to Melbourne to open up the Kings Tour outlet. Mother was pregnant with Andrew and we moved to Fern Tree Gully, where Andy was born.

Father had to come to Melbourne to board the ship and I went to see him off. Frankly, we were glad to see the back of him. He was more trouble than he was worth.

Enlisting, 1942

War was declared on September 3, 1939 which was a good reason as any for enlisting. Like most young fellows, one is stupid at that age. You don't think you're going to get injured or killed. There's the glory and the adventure of it and everyone my age was in it. I didn't have any mates as such. I've never been a 'matey' person. I just decided I was 18 and let's get in and do our bit.

They didn't have National Service, as such. I volunteered. Compulsory 'Nasho' came in about 1944 when they started 'calling up'. Some of the later lads who came in on National Service, and served in either the army, the air force or navy. The Palestine Police was also an option from 1945.

Dunkirk 1940

In 1940, the war wasn't making its presence felt at all really. It was a fizzer! One expected all hell to be let loose, but nothing much seemed to be happening.

The British Expeditionary Forces chuffed off to France and Belgium and Gerry, of course, came round the back and collared the lot. They all ended up on the beach at Dunkirk, just south of Ostende, Belgium.

It was a massive retreat. Some of them wound up as Prisoners of War but about 85% of them got off the beach at Dunkirk on anything that floated. Motor boats, fishing tugs, whatever - anything that would float and carry people.

Little armadas set out from East coast ports right the way up - Hull, Scarborough, Yarmouth. They would try to get the soldiers off the beach. It was a fantastic rescue.



New recruit 6216555, Hounslow, 1942.

The miraculous thing was that the North Sea was like a millpond the whole time they were being evacuated. Normally the North Sea is a rough sea at anytime because it's a channel of water that runs between England and Europe. Its usually very rough but the whole sea was like a lake. And as soon as the evacuation was finished and they had done all that they could do, it started getting choppy and stroppy again.

Don't ask me why. Whether you look at these things and say 'God was on our side' or whatever, it was such a phenomena that everybody remarked on it! The whole nation was praying as were the parents and friends of those on the beach. I have no illusions about the *power of prayer*. Prayer works!

I was at school. There were constant reports in the newspapers and on the BBC radio, eyewitness accounts and personal interviews.

As a kid we had a radio. We'd got past crystal sets by then. Crystal sets were a fun thing that you might have had as a kid, but going back to the '20s that *was* radio. The old crystal set, the 'cat's whiskers' was quite a contraption. Then came the table models and, later, you star the mantle radios, except they weren't little things like they are now - they were quite big with a wooden case to them. Quite nice really. We had press reports and radio reports. About every hour.

I always remember a bloke who got into one of these little boats. Apparently the guy who was handling the boat fell overboard or got shot and this lad is in this bloody thing adrift and the navy picked him up. The BBC interviewed him.

"How was it? Were you suffering very much? Are you short of anything?"

I always remember him saying - before BBC could bleep things out - "I missed me grumble and grunt!" I'll never forget that.

Dunkirk was a defeat. It was a withdrawal but it was heroic.

The Germans went on to take France, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway. The Russians occupied Finland but that wasn't because of the war. They had occupied it for some considerable time.

About the only defence that we had was the navy and a few light aircraft. We started the war with six Gloucester Gladiators. Bi-planes! That's all we had! It didn't take long for 'boffins' to get to the drawing boards and come up with things. In a fairly short while they had Spitfires and Hurricanes dashing around madly, which today, are as slow against our planes as the Gladiators were against them. Technology! Necessity is the mother of invention.

Hitler really missed his chance. If he'd have struck then, he could have walked into England and nobody could have stopped him. But he didn't and so we had time to get our act together. Was that also the 'protection' of the Creator?

End of School

We lived in Twickenham then, quite close to the Rugby ground. Twickenham is West of London. Dad had been transferred to Reading, but during the War he got seconded to the Board of Trade.

I was at Royal Grammar at High Wycombe and coming home weekends. I didn't board at the school but with a family known to Mum and Dad. They had a son and a daughter who were older than I, grown up and left home. I had a room there and it was okay. I boarded for about a year.

At school, my father insisted on a very rigorous home study schedule which seemed not to be effective and dampened enthusiasm to learn. So many times he lectured me and stated quite categorically that, "You will never make a living with geography and history, boy." Fathers are not always right. He was always hopeful that I might follow me into the legal field. I had no interest but neither could I say what I wanted to do. However, I had matriculated - just! When School finished in December I went home. For good.

1942, my 18th Birthday

On Sunday 25th January, 1942, I turned 18. I didn't have an 18th birthday party but Dad very magnanimously offered me a whisky.

I'd become a man!

"Come and join me in a whisky, Reg."

Poured the whisky and water and I took one sip of it - yuk!

"You like this stuff, Dad?"

"Love it!" he said proudly. I put my drink on the table next to his.

"Have two."

I have never touched spirits since. Obviously an acquired taste.

Mum was pretty healthy. Never used make-up. She didn't smoke and didn't drink.

There was a long standing battle, over some forty years, with grandfather - Arthur Alexander. He tried every trick in the book to try and get mother to drink. No way. She'd sniff it.

"What have you put in my tea? What have you put in my coffee?"

She knew. She wouldn't touch it. He finally admitted defeat.

"You beat me girl and you're the only person who ever has."

She didn't care what you did. If you wanted to drink, well, that's your business.

I didn't have a 21st either. I was in the Middle East. It was a Spam sandwich and a beer which I bought myself. My 21st birthday card from Mum didn't arrive until about a month later.

Joining up

The day after my 18th birthday - Monday 26 January, 1942 - was a fateful day. Without telling my parents I went off in the morning and cycled the eleven miles to Kingston-on-Thames, found the Drill Hall and enlisted. World War II was well in progress having been going since 3rd September, 1939.

Six feet of immaculately dressed sergeant filled the door.

"Yes lad?"

"I wish to join up, Sir."

"Age?"

"18, Sir." I didn't look eighteen.

"When?"

"Yesterday, sir."

"Name? Address? Which service? Go in there, strip to your underpants and wait for the doctor to examine you."

It was a simple medical.

"Can you see lightning and hear thunder? Have you got two eyes?"

"Cough." That was it! "You're fit - A1! Fit for active service!"

Back to the desk. "Take this copy of the MA's report with you."

"Thank you, Sir."

"When can you be ready?"

"Anytime, Sir."

"Religion?"

"Sir?"

"What church?"

"None really, Sir."

"You're obviously not a Catholic. Oh well, C of E will do. Sign here."

I had to fill out the paperwork and signed up for the 'Duration of Hostilities' or for however long that was. In point of fact the 'Duration of Hostilities' wasn't officially cancelled until 1961!

They didn't keep the blokes in the army though - they didn't want to pay the fellows for just sitting around, but they were on call. The guys that had signed on in '41 were getting a bit on by then anyway!

"Right-oh son, this warrant will get you up to Chester. Be at Euston Station, Platform Three at 8am on Monday 2nd of February. Here's a list of the things you should take with you. Don't be late. Here is your 'Kings Shilling' from your first pay."

What's a 'Kings Shilling'? A Kings Shilling is what you are given along with a railway warrant to a training depot when you join Her Majesty's Forces. That was the first 'wage' I'd ever earned.

In effect, it completed the contract of service one had just signed, and made it legal and binding.

In two hours I was signed, sealed and delivered. The problem of my future was temporarily solved.

The news was broken over dinner that evening and father exploded.

"You've done what?!!!"

"I've joined the army."

"God help the boy!" he exclaimed despairingly.

Mother was more philosophical. *"I'm not surprised. Its about time you left the nest, although it would have been better if there wasn't a war."*

Training Depot, 1942

The Americans refer to training as Boot Camp and for which, would you believe, they got a medal!

I wanted to be up and running. I wanted to get going. But the week or so dragged. One had ten days to collect one's wits. I got on a train and went to Chester, close to Liverpool, which is a very old and ancient city - a fine old town. It contains a lot of Roman and Tudor relics.

The army camp - the training camp for the Northumberland Fusiliers and Middlesex Regiment - was called the Dale because it was between two hills, five miles out of Chester.

There were some 200 lads assembled on the station at Chester and we were picked up in lorries and carted out to the Dale. They were a motley group.

I can remember getting my hair cut short even though I'd had a haircut during the week. It was cut smart and tidy, but it was still cut again - short back, sides and top. Little baldies - a severe crewcut! Everybody looked the same.

We were kitted out – issued uniforms, tin hat, a rifle, gas mask, web pack, small pack, two Bren pouches and a pair of heavy hobnail boots.

I didn't particularly cope to well with the rigorous training. I got through it - but the muscle in the tummy were a problem. The physical side of it was difficult because you had to double everywhere. Run everywhere. Damn nearly killed us. Up at six in the morning. Run, run, run everywhere. Route marches. Square bashing. You'd finish the day and flop onto bed. The first two weeks were the worst.

Then we started to tune into it. They didn't take any notice of my medical condition because technically I was supposed to be A1.

I couldn't do cross country runs. They used to do a cross country run once a week and I would be *so* far behind, it wasn't funny. If you were late coming in and dragged the chain, you had to do it again on Saturday. But I was so far behind the field.

I'd run out as fast and as hard as I could run and I would be winded and puffed and I would walk the rest of the way. I was so slow and late that even the checking NCO's had gone back to barracks by the time I got to their check points. Some three hours later, I'd walk into camp. So I never got caught up in the 'do it again with the Saturday. Mob'!

I never completed the runs either - at least, not in the expected way and within the specified time.

Discipline was easy because my mother was a disciplinarian. She asked three times and if you hadn't done it by the third time, watch out! I learned to be tidy the hard way. Even though I had a bedroom to myself at home, if it wasn't tidy, my gear as thrown out of the window. If I left my clothes and books lying around, they were thrown out of the bedroom window, on to the front lawn. Too bad if it happened to rain before I got home.

I learned to be tidy and self sufficient. I could clean my own shoes. I could wash and iron my own clothes. And even though I grumbled, I've been eternally grateful to her for doing this. Its held me in very good stead all through my life and I've never needed anybody to look after me. I'm quite capable of looking after myself. So being tidy was easy. I still am. It's ingrained.

Some of the lads, however, had a very difficult time, especially the wilder ones who had never been disciplined at home. Living in a bed space six feet by four feet, was no problem for me.

The first fortnight you weren't allowed out at all. I doubt if we had the energy anyway. Everyone came in and had their tea at night then staggered back to the barrack room and one by one collapsed into or onto their beds and fell asleep. Exhausted and dog-tired.

There were two blokes - Peter Henderson - big fellow, who was in the bed next to me - a real Cockney bloke. The other one was a fellow from Chatham, Kim Quick, a fitness fiend with bulging muscles, who had been on a super health kick all his life. He was a real lady killer (at least he thought he was). He lived in Chatham but he didn't want to go into the navy even though it's a naval base. We all wound up in the 70th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment.

I was, "Private Priestley 6216555, sir!"

The other one was my Police number: 631.

"Sitt miyya wa wahad wa talatien." Six hundred, one and thirty. The are both indelibly embossed, one on each side of my brain.

Basic training was about eight weeks. We did bayonet practice, hand grenades, rifle, full pack drills and cross country runs. I don't think it dawned on anyone that we had to use the combat training. We were taught to use it - taught drills to which one responded because it was drilled in to become second nature.

You were given commands and you responded instantly so that you ended up with a platoon of guys who worked in unison. But there was no propaganda or talk that you were going to execute somebody. It didn't really occur to any of us really that this was why we were being trained. If you did realise it, you hoped to God you didn't have to use it. It was a romantic adventure in the big outside world, away from home.

That First 48 Hour Leave Pass

The groups were separated out into platoons - a motley lot. The corporal directed us to a large hut containing 15 double deck bunks and introduced himself as Corporal George.

“That’s my name. Grab a bunk. Put your gear on it and be outside in five minutes.”

Up to the quarter masters store - everything fitted where it touched!

The boots - they were surely made of concrete! My God!

Barber shop. Short back and sides. Medical room - roll up your sleeves. Jab and prick. Tetanus. Vaccination. Dining hall for dinner. It hit the spot but it was nothing like mother used to cook.

Next morning we launched into the six weeks basic training. No time wasted. Drill, drill and more drill. I’m not ashamed to admit it nearly killed me. On a couple of occasions I cried myself to sleep.

The strangeness however was wearing off. The concrete boots began to bend a bit, the rifle no longer weighed a ton at the end of the day, and I’d put on about four and a half inches. And a few pounds weight.

The rigid discipline was not hard to take for me. It was for some, Mother had never been too soft.

The weeks flew by. At the end of the six weeks several platoons had a 48 hour pass which was quite marvellous - Friday afternoon until Sunday at midnight.

The remaining platoons would have their leave the following weekend.

Those going on leave, boarded a lorry which took them to Chester. Station Two things happened. Because of weather and military requirements, the train to Euston was three hours late. We were all coming down to London and we hit fog around Stafford - a thick peasouper fog that slowed every thing down. We finally got into Euston Railway Station about one o’clock in the morning instead of ten o’clock at night. Of course, with the war on, the Underground stopped running at midnight as did the buses.

Mum was back living with Uncle Jack and I used to go and stay at the Star Home for the Homeless in Star Lane, Fulham. It was a men's hostel, full of consumptive old fellers and drunks and guys who coughed all night. You could get a bed in there for a bob. Even the barrack room was preferable, but it was a bed, and only for a night.

I'd missed the train to Fulham so I started hoofing it. I walked out of Euston Station and down Euston Road and got to Piccadilly Circus. I thought I'd walk down through Knightsbridge and go through Hyde Park. Eros was all boarded up. I stopped for a spell and a cigarette on the steps of Eros near Leicester Square, when a lady came along.

"What are you doing soldier?"

Soldier explained. "Resting my dogs."

"Where have you been?"

"Chester. Just got in late so I'm on my way to Fulham."

"That's another three hours walk! You'd better come with me. I'll give you hot drink."

So I went with her to her 'rooms' off Shaftsbury Avenue and was given a steaming hot cup of cocoa and a couple of slices of toast.

"Put your head down and get the train in the morning."

Tired, I laid down on the couch and went to sleep and woke up the next morning with a blanket over me. I was indeed extremely grateful for that kindness and there was quite a friendship that formed between that lady and myself. Booted me out in the morning.

"If ever you're passing you're welcome to drop in. The key's on the transom over the door. Make yourself at home."

It was a long time afterwards before I learned - being very young and innocent at 18 - that she was a 'lady of the night'. But she never put the hard word on me. I was always able to call on her whenever I was in London - which I did for many, many years. She finally died in 1976. She was someone I could sit and talk to and feel perfectly free with and no hanky panky. She was really a nice kind soul who gave me a bed for the night. Vale, Elizabeth.

I continued my journey home by train in the morning. Of course when I got home I was the 'prodigal son' and had a marvellous weekend. I was spoiled to death by Mother and Uncle Jack.

On Sunday afternoon I headed back to Euston Station and caught the train, which, like the one heading South, was also delayed going North to Chester. More fog. We didn't get back until quite late.

There was quite a contingent of us. Technically, of course we were AWOL. We missed the transport and so we had to hoof it for the last five miles. We got back to camp at 3am in the morning, absolutely done in.

Those who had stayed in camp had played havoc with our bedding putting it up in the rafters etc etc. Little did we realise that we were in for some late night hi-jinx. We were trying to get the stuff down from the rafters as quietly as we could. We had tin hats, boots and verbal abuse hurled at us. In the end I gave it away and lay down on the springs and I cried myself to sleep.

I'm not sure why. Maybe a mixture of things. The joy of that first weekend home the anger at having all one's bedding nicked, and sheer physical tiredness.

It was through those tears that I left boyhood and entered manhood. I'm not ashamed to admit it. I'm quite sure I wasn't the only one who transitted one age to another in this fashion.

A week later, the balance of the platoons went on their weekend pass and got the very same treatment we had received a week prior. Their bedding was put up into the rafters, too. Revenge was very sweet!

Church Parades

It was the second or third week into the training and there was a Church Parade on Sunday morning.

“Smarten yourself up, lads.”

We get out onto the Parade Ground. Along came the inspecting officer. The ‘Orderly Pig’! He came round and inspected everybody.

As he moved along the line he’d say, “Right, you fall out over there, you over here.” Round he went. round sorting the guys out into two groups. Six blokes in each group.

“What have we done?” I thought.

The Sergeant pulled us to attention. Single file line.

“Right!” he barked, “When I ask for a smart Church Parade, that’s what I want. You come out here wiv yer boots polished, webbing ‘blancoed’, brass polished, neat and tidy. I want to see every man on parade looking like these fellows over here.”

Turning to us he barked, “You chaps have taken the trouble to blanco belts and polish boots - you fellows can have the morning off. Dis-MISS! Double!”

Then he lined the other blokes up and did the reverse.

“You lot haven’t done a bloody thing! You’re scruffy! Get down the cookhouse and bash spuds.”

That wasn’t so bad actually, because you got a nice hot cup of tea. It was the mediocre ones that went off to church and I thought, “So much for this game of Church Parades.”

Strangely enough, when I got to the Holy Land, the last thing they were interested in was a Church Parade! Didn’t want to know! We were all morally certain the first thing we would do was march to Jerusalem Cathedral. But they weren’t interested. Great!

“If you want to go to church, go to church, in your time.”

My Mum taught me to cook, and wash and iron and sew buttons on and darn socks. All sorts of things. I’ve been eternally grateful. As far as army discipline is concerned it really comes home to you when you

live in a space two feet wider than your bed. A bedding block in a barrack room is six foot long and four feet wide. This little space is one's entire world but it was no trouble to me to live within those bounds Mum was trained in domestic service. Neat and tidy. A place for everything and everything was in its place.

She was no different at 80 than when she was 18. Everything was ordered. The place was always clean. Her hair was always brushed. She had her apron on. You never saw her looking scruffy. You never saw her put things down anywhere. She put them 'away'. I'm the same. I was bought up that way. Add to that six years of military discipline and you're cast like concrete. And I'm pleased about it. It wouldn't occur to me any other way quite frankly.

More training

After eight weeks basic training, we were shipped down to Bristol and I started an Armourers Course which I didn't finish because I collapsed with pleurisy and ended up in Templemead Hospital.

The navy bloke in the next bed patiently taught me how to play cribbage. The only card game I could play! I think I've forgotten that now, it has been so many years since I played the game. I was in hospital for about two weeks. Later I reported back to the Unit and we were immediately transferred to Aldershot.

The armourers course taught the ins and outs of armoury, repairs, assembly, dismantling. Hand guns, Thomson subs, Brens, rifles, pistols, ballistics - very interesting really.

I was good shot on snap shooting - the quick draw - but on target shooting, no. If I have to line up on a target I would miss, because I've always had stigmatism. When you concentrate, your eyes wobble. But if it was 1-2-3-shoot! nine times out of ten I'd hit the target. I even got some cups. But I wouldn't say I was a marksman.

Some did Signals, others the Armourers Course. I don't think I nominated.

“You’re doing signals. You’re doing Armoury.”

“Yes Sir!”

You were not asked what you wanted to do. You were told to ‘do it.’ It was helpful course. One could go up to Doncaster and do field guns and the whole bit, if you liked it.

Aldershot

There was Sergeant Major at Aldershot who was generally known to everyone as “Snapper”.

“Yeeearghhhh!” The side of his face would open up and a roar would come out. We were attached the Brigade of Guards and I started taking the mickey out him quietly on the sidelines. He not only had a big mouth but a sharp eye too.

“You! Here!! Double!!!” I get wheeled into the Adjutants Office.

“Priestley 6216555. Dumb Insolence! Sir! Extra parade. Sir!”

Friday evening up on the old company notice board was a Saturday parade: Full pack Full marching order. Oh dear!

We line up on the parade ground with the Guards who were doing ‘jankers’ and away we go. Two hour drill parade. Me being a short arse little bloke was at the back of the line behind these big Guards who start striding out.

“Come on Priestley! On the double! Catch up to them!”

Run, run, run to keep up with them.

“About turn!” Now, I am leading! The blokes behind were going, “Come on you little bastard, get going. Get out of the bloody way!”

I was run, run, run, up and down that damned Parade Ground with a full pack. It was a pantomime. At the end of an hour I was totally pooped!

I don’t know how the drill sergeant took it. He made it a lot tougher than normal because it was Saturday afternoon and he had to take this extra parade. He’d had enough of me. “Get out of my sight, lad.”

I needed no second bidding.

Army to Palestine Police

Four platoons transferred south to Hounslow to the holding depot. It was here that I learned of the possibility of transferring to the Colonial Police Force in Palestine - and three or four of us were eventually transferred to the Palestine Police Force.

You were 'invited' to volunteer.

The sergeant eye balled me and spit on his fist.

"Priestley, you'd like to go to be a Palestine Police Constable, wouldn't you, son?"

"Yes! Sir! Sergeant!"

I 'applied' and was accepted. This was followed by a journey to Oldham (near Manchester) where one was de-mobbed and put on Class W Reserve, so you were still subject to the "Duration of Hostilities." They could recall you to your Unit. I went off the Army pay books and went onto the Police pay books.

I was later to be posted to the Jenin Police Depot, Palestine - British Constable 631. Duly sworn in.

We were given a set of civilian clothes, had our army gear taken off us and given a rail warrant to get home. We were given a fortnights leave and then reported to the docks in Newhaven, boarded a ship - about 40 new chums - and about 40 'old hands' who were returning to Palestine after UK leave who would accompany us on the journey. They'd been in Palestine since the 1930s'.

We were escorted in convoy from Britain across the Atlantic to New York. We had a few hours in New York during which time the American Red Cross really turned it on for us. We then transferred to another convoy and sailed across the South Atlantic, standing off Durban, South Africa for ten days, only to move in the dead of night. We woke up in the morning and Durban wasn't there any more! After five weeks, we went on through the Red Sea to Alexandria, Egypt.



Paddy Boyle, Reg and Ron Stead departing from Newhaven on the Mermaid for Dieppe, 1942. Then by rail to Toulon, then embarking onto the Derbyshire we sailed to Alexandria. Then a rail journey across the Sinai and onto Haifa.



Alexandria, 1942

Alexandria

Disembarking, we were bundled onto a train at Portside and went from Alexandria to Ismailia, then Kantara, Gaza, Haifa and on to Jenin. It was one of the most uncomfortable train journeys I have ever taken. Hard seats, crowded and the train rocked its way from beginning to end.

Palestine

In Jenin, we were accommodated in huts containing 20 lads in each. On the following day the group was divided into ex-Army types and ex-civvy types. I found myself (with one other fellow) attached to a civilian group, that is, those who had never undergone any basic training of any sort. For us, it was a breeze and we were, more or less, in the position of 'mothering' those raw recruits.

In a way, we were also 'old hands'. It was a similar basic training that I had undergone in Chester, but less demanding (maybe because it was no longer 'new' for me).

The Depot training lasted six weeks, Then we were posted all over Palestine. Eventually, I went to Jerusalem.

Background to Palestine

So began my service with the Palestine Police Force. The Force had been established on 20 July 1920 on which date Palestine had been awarded to Britain as a Mandated Territory. Following the collapse of the Turkish Forces and the capture of Jerusalem in 1917 by General Sir Edmund Allenby, the captured territory had been administered by Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA).

In 1918, a Gendarmerie had been formed, with British Officers and ex-(Turkish)Police, but in 1920, the role was taken over by the Colonial Office and the British Force formally established with a nucleus of Jewish and Arab constabulary. One or two of the Turkish Police remained and in fact, rose to high ranks.

During the Arab Rebellion (1936-39) the Force had expanded and additional units of the British Army had re-inforced the existing military compliment. With the outbreak of hostilities in 1939, the Arab Revolt was called off and life was reasonably peaceful. Jewish migration, which had reached a peak between 1935-39 (with the rise of Nazi Germany, and was the base cause of the revolt) was almost nil, but was to expand dramatically with the end of the War in Europe in 1945.

The expectation of a Jewish Homeland which had not thus far materialised, was now taken up in earnest.

The Jewish Forces - Haganah - many of whom were trained and had seen action with British Forces in various theatres of conflict, now flexed their muscles. Additionally, the two freedom fighter - terrorist groups - came out of the woodwork – Irgun Zvai Leumi and Stern group.

This would ultimately lead to the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, and naturally, the end of the British Mandate. This then is the general backdrop to the next few years.

I remained in Israel until the end of June 1948, one of the last five or six British Palestine Police, about six weeks after the birth of the State of Israel.

Jenin, 1942



The Depot stood on the Jenin Railway Station - the lines going across the parade ground or v.v. The station building was the Depot offices. Twice yearly the check car ran from Afula - Jenin, but no services operated the route.

Palestine was my first experience beyond England. It was a whole new world. A new world of sounds, smells, culture, religions, architecture. Everything was new and exciting. I revelled in this new environment in which I found myself.

There were two training depots; one at Mount Scopus in Jerusalem; the other in Jenin, 25 kms from Haifa. Much the same thing happened in the Police Depots as had happened in Chester. But less demanding both physically and mentally, maybe because I had 'been there, done that'.

We were trucked across the Sinai Desert, to Haifa and then onto Jenin Police Depot, 3/4 of a mile from the 'crossroads' township of Jenin - which had a couple of thousand inhabitants. We lived at the old Jenin Railway Station and they put army huts for the squads at the back of the Station. The Station buildings became the Depot offices. Once a year a train came through to check the line. It now runs regularly up to Nablus.

Separate, and half a mile away, was the Police Station, or Taggart, (so named after the Irish architect who had designed them, Sir Charles Taggart, in the late 1930s). He got his knighthood for them - Services to the Crown. Highly defensible, they are still in use today by the Israeli Police Force.

It contained a central courtyard and the billets, stables, workshops, garages and a tower which formed the outside of the building. We were divided into squads and the accent was on drills - drill parades, small arms parades; the law - powers of arrest; and languages - basic Arabic and Hebrew.

Once you got posted, you focused on either Arabic or Hebrew and that virtually dictated your career through the force. You patrolled either Arab or Hebrew areas. Jenin was an Arab area and so I learned Arabic and became reasonably fluent at it later on, although at Jenin it was very basic.

Grenade Practice

Most of the Army blokes went into platoons but two of us - John Isherwood and myself - found ourselves attached to a civilian platoon. So we had a fairly easy time. None of the guys had done any military training so we became assistant instructors almost straight away, helping the instructing sergeant.

We'd already done our 'square bashing' and weapon training. We broke the platoon down into small groups and between the three of us we taught the ins and outs of Bren guns, Tommy guns, rifles, pistols and whatever. It was quite good.

John Isherwood and I were also asked to demonstrate the use of Mills Grenades. They took us half way up the hill. Down in a hollow, they'd dug a hole and stuck an upright railway sleeper in it.

"Right you two. I want you to show these fellows the grenade technique. Pull the pin, count to five and throw."

I said to John, "You take the first one. When you throw I'll start counting. When I stop counting, you throw and start counting, and I'll throw the second one."

Instead of throwing together we threw them one after another in a delayed sequence. *Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!*

Head Constable Fagan looked down the pit. He wasn't too happy. We'd blasted his sleeper to smithereens! There was no sleeper left - just a little stump! Just the jagged end sitting out of the hole. That was the object of the exercise, but we were supposed to demonstrate to the lads *how* to throw a grenade, not demolish the target!

We did it for real - there's the target, let's hit it hard.



John Isherwood - judo expert and a good man in a riot!



Rifle drill, 1942.



There was a healthy sporting competitiveness between the Police and the Army. I was good at moving targets! 1942.

The lads were most impressed but Head Constable Fagan wasn't. He had to hang about while the labourers erected another railway sleeper.

Police versus Army

We had social sporting days - the Police versus Army. Events were organised - boxing, horse riding, gymkhanas, shooting, tent pegging etc between the various police districts and army units. Shooting was another one. I rode horses but not very much (nor very well). I got on a horse and cantered along gently. They were fun days and were supposed to 'cement relationships' between the Police and the Army, but in reality, there was not too much love between the two.

Self Defence Classes

Some of our training sessions were on unarmed combat led by an Instructor, a big beefy bloke fit as a Mallee bull. He used to pick on John.

"Come out here, Isherwood."

John wore glasses. "Hold my spectacles, Reg."

Out he'd go. *Bang!* Flat on his back on the mat. *Whoompf!* This went on for several weeks. Every session.

"Isherwood! Come here." *Bang!*

"Isherwood, double!" *Bang!*

The day came when we had our last session.

"Come here Isherwood. Do you think you could put somebody on their back?"

"I'll have a go sir.

"Right then, put *me* on my back."

"Yes, Sir."

That poor Instructor, all sixteen stone of him, suddenly flew through the air and landed, head straight into the corner. Two broken collarbones, broken ribs, broken arm. He was in Haifa Hospital for six

weeks - and not a leg to stand on, because he had invited Ish out to see what he could do. John came back, put his glasses back on, came to attention. Parade dismissed and the Instructor was carted off to hospital.

Three or four days later we all got posted out to our stations and everybody's packing up - stuff on beds and gear all over the floor.

Out of John's kit falls a packet of photographs. He hadn't noticed they had been dropped and somebody picked them up.

"Come here fellas. Look at this lot!"

We never did know what John did, he would never tell us.

There's John, with cups and trophies. He turned out to be Judo Champion Black Belt, British Army, Southern Command! Never said a word. He knew exactly what he was doing everytime he took his glasses off. He'd forgotten more than that Instructor new!

I said to John afterwards, "You were lucky he didn't have you."

"It was immoral to be called out like that!" said Ish.

"He picked on me for six weeks! He didn't worry me one jot, I couldn't care less what he did to me. He wanted to demonstrate. Fair enough. I've been in this game for years. I can fall without hurting myself. It was *hoping* to be called out in the last week."

"What would have happened if he hadn't called you out?" I asked.

"I would have put my hand up and asked if I could 'have a go at throwing you.' Either way I wanted him to say, 'Yes, come and do it.'"

John wanted to give him the payback for six weeks of bastardry. Which he did, very nicely, with a smile on his face and with permission to do it. Clever lad!

The Prison Riot

John Isherwood was a great bloke to have beside you in a riot. We were stationed together at Mustashpha Police Station in Jerusalem.

He was that quick with the judo. One minute someone would try it on; next thing they'd be lying on the floor. Then he'd be off to the next one.

On one occasion we had a riot at the Central Prison, Jerusalem. Central Prison was an L shaped compound - a long entrance walk that opened out into a big square surrounded by the cell blocks. You came up this passage into the square.

There was bloke positioned strategically, out of sight, just around the corner. Every time a Police Officer attempted to get into the square, a pole flattened him and they'd have to send a couple of blokes up to drag him to safety.

We were on patrol and got a message to report to Central Prison immediately.

Inspector 'Topper' Brown was there.

"Isherwood. We want you. We've got a problem."

"Sir?"

"We can't get anybody past that point to deal with the ring leaders. We've got to get past that bloody corner. Do you think you can help?"

"Probably," says Ish. "Got a broom stick?"

"You won't do any good with a bloody broomstick, Constable".

"Have you got a broom stick or haven't you, Sir?"

He ended up with an officer's walking stick in the finish.

Isherwood walked up tight against the wall. When he got near the corner he took his hat off and put it on the walking stick. Very slowly put the peak around the corner. Of course, down came the boom and as it came down, Isherwood grabbed the arm and flung the guy hard across the corridor smashing his head hard against the opposite wall. End of riot.

"Well that's that," he said wiping his hands. "Let's go back on patrol." That was John. He was a great guy and a very cool customer.

Arabic

Once again, Jenin was a training depot and the accent was on drills - drill parades, small arms parades; the law - 'powers of arrest' and that sort of thing.

The Arabic I learned was basic and one did not have too much chance to learn in six weeks. I remember to this day the very first phrase, I learned to use. I tried it out on the table staff, and nearly drove them mad.

"Hada mush nadif, ateeni wahad tani." (This is not clean, bring a clean one).

As soon as I sat down in the Mess, I would call the waiter over and trot out this phrase. The glass, of course, was beautifully clean and polished, but the phrase rolled off my tongue like it was tailor-made for me.

Posted to Mustashpha Police Station on the Jaffa Road in Jerusalem, I undertook both foot and mobile patrols. I was always accompanied by a TAC - (Temporary Additional Constable) who was either an Arab or a Jew, depending on the area one served in. I had an excellent partner in Na'im who was a well-educated lad, who spoke English, French, Arabic and Hebrew.

He suggested that while we spoke in English, I would never learn Arabic. We came to an agreement to use Arabic (unless there was an emergency, when instant understanding was vital).

Literally, I was in a walking classroom eight hours a day. That was tremendously helpful. Today, my Arabic is rusty because I have little use or practice. However, I have noticed in the past that whenever I was going through the Middle East, within twenty-four hours of hearing the 'music' of the language all around me, that rusty old key in the memory turned. The mind does not lose anything it learns. The power of recall is another matter, but the knowledge is always 'filed away' in the mind.



The junction at Jenin at the Haifa - Nazareth - Jerusalem Roads. One grows accustomed to the smell of the Suk.

'Busy' downtown Jenin streets and a view of the mosque, 1942.



Next Messiah?

In Jenin there was a Suk - market - at the crossroads. There was nowhere else to go unless you drove into Haifa, which was about 25 kilometres away. They sold all sorts of things - fruit, vegetables and fabrics - but the smell of the Suk was coffee (and crap) in equal proportions - and both roasted! The smell is intriguing.

Part of our 'hands on' training was point duty at the crossroads.

Now, because of that operation I'd had, as an infant, I could always blow up my diaphragm. I did this quite unconsciously and it led to an amusing incident.

I was doing a practice point duty, controlling traffic. Jenin was a quiet little town. You might get two cars in ten minutes. You'd stop them, check the other roads and then wave them on. I was doing my stint and in between cars feeling bored to death and I was inflating my stomach.

I became aware that an old Arab, sitting in the coffee house, was watching me closely. I looked across at him and I smiled and carried

on my duty. Eventually he came trotting across the road.

"I want you come Mosque."

"I can't come to Mosque now, I'm on duty."

"I wait you. When you no duty we go Mosque."

Sure enough, he waited a couple of hours. The next fellow came along to do his turn and as soon as I came off duty the old man grabbed me and wheeled me down to the Mosque. He got hold of the Imam and they have an animated conversation, none of which I understood.

Suddenly he turned around and poked me in the stomach.

"Fi tifl juwa? You got baby inside?"

"Me?! No!"

"You got baby in there?" accusingly.

They couldn't work it out. The party eventually broke up and I went back to the depot and got talking to the sergeant, an old hand, and told him about the old man and his odd-ball question.

"He was serious?"

"Yes he was. I took it as a bit of a joke, but no, he was very serious about it."

"Priestley, you know and I know you haven't got a baby in there. You ain't built that way son. But he doesn't know that!"

"Oh, come on Sarge!"

"You obviously don't know the Arab legend that the next Messiah will be born of a man. They call their pantaloons 'Allah catchers', with a low in gusset, in case they are the 'chosen one' and they can catch the baby when it falls."

The old man thought he was onto a winner!

I couldn't go wrong in Jenin after that. Every time I went into town, the Imam or the old man or one of his friends would come up to me.

"You come coffee. You drink coffee. Bishrub gawa?"

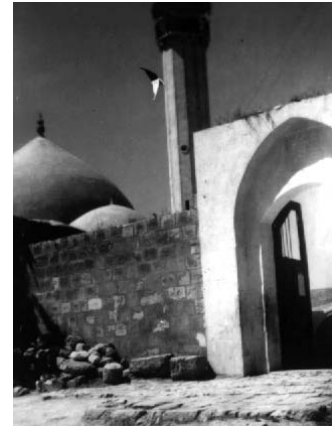
Right up till the day I left, he was still trying to find out if I had a baby. My one little moment of fame in Jenin.

Meshek Yagur Raid, 1943

Meshek Yagur is a Jewish settlement - a kibbutz - close to Haifa. The powers that be got a tip off that there was an arms dump there. At four o'clock in the morning, we surrounded the place.

"Block all the exits and entrances."

Guard on every one of the house doors so nobody could leave their homes. The boys went in looking for this armoury and they couldn't find a damn thing. Superintendent Ken Haddingham was in charge of



Jenin Mosque, but *not* the site of the next Messiah ... in 1942 anyway!

the operation. He was standing in the dairy and he was frustrated. To say the least.

The boys kept came back.

"We can't find a thing. We've searched the houses. We've searched the barns, the workshops. Can't find a thing, Sir."

Ken was that bloody angry he stamped his feet.

"It's gotta be here somewhere!" he shouted.

There was a very loud hollow thud.

"Quiet! What was that?"

Again he stamped the floor. Again that hollow sound.

"Up with the floorboards!"

He was standing over the top of it! They had dug a pit under the dairy. It was covered with straw and of course you'd never know it was there. If he hadn't stamped his foot, they might never have found it.

Boy, it was stacked! Boxes of ammunition, small arms, mortars, automatic weapons, rifles, pistols - all snuck in. All up, an estimated value of EP172.700!

Having found that, they dug up every floor in the place. There were little caches of weapons and arms hidden in hollow walls of the main dining room, the nursery and under house and workshop floors.

The Hagana had been busy buying up whatever they could buy up, for the defence of the settlements. But it was also tending then towards this independence thing and so the Police stopped them bringing in arms - but they still smuggled them in and secreted them away.

We found several settlements, where we made raids, and found enormous caches of weapons and ammunition. This raid was a major setback to the terrorists. The village heads were arrested and charged and all the arms confiscated.

Biblical and Historical Sites

My job took me everywhere. I got to see the places that you learn about in Sunday school – The Old City of Jerusalem, the Via Dolorosa - the Stations of the Cross.

I got to visit the significant sites of other major religions like the Mosque of Omar (Haram Esh-sharif) and many holy or semi-holy sites.

Having gone into limbo, at age 13, I was very interested in every aspect of the Holy Land. Its history and development. In effect, it was the start of a search which would find its culmination several years down the track and on the other side of the world - in Tasmania!

Jebreel

When I was in Jenin, the marvellous east view from our watch tower, half way up the hill, was quite famous – the plain of Jebreel (Gabriel Emek Yezreel) - Armageddon to you. Funny. It was quite some time before I knew what I was looking at!

The Christians have it that that is where the Last Great Battle is going to be fought. That keeps them happy, so that's alright. They take it literally rather than symbolically.

It's a very broad plain, at the foot of the mountains leading up to Nazareth, Afula and the Hebrew Armageddon (Mount of Gideon). Mostly farming, but this is where the last big wipeout is expected to happen - God help them.

Now, of course, it's intensive farming. You might think the real estate values aren't much chop - but lets put it this way, there aren't too many Christians living there!

Nablus

Nablus is an Arab town, not far from Jenin. I was there about three or four months. Nablus was the stronghold of Muslim Palestine: still is. The road winds tortuously up and down with breath taking views of



Kilo 30, 1942. Enroute to Jerusalem you pass through Nablus – stronghold of Muslim Palestine. The road winds tortuously up hill and down with breathtaking views of sunbaked wadis. Kilo 30 was in later years the rendezvous point for the cars carrying Police Mail which we were obliged to carry ourselves due to terrorist activity. It often entailed running the gauntlet of IZL ambushes, mines etc.

sunbaked wadis. There are seven kilometres of hairpin bends called the Seven Sisters – the winding road that takes you up over the range.

Kilo 70 was the beginning of the Seven Sisters and Kilo 30 was a special mail exchange drop. When the terrorists got round to blowing up letterboxes, we carried the official mail.

The armoured cars would set out from Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem and we'd meet at certain points and swap the loads over and turn round and go home again. I did many mail runs. They were considered normal duty. We had to run the gauntlet of the IZL ambushes, particularly in places like the Bab el Wad

The Bab el Wad (Gate of the Valley literally) runs from the Tel Aviv plain and then it starts to climb up 2000 feet into Jerusalem. It winds up and up and it was ideal for ambushes. It was the scene of intense battles during the 1948 War.

It was impassable. Jerusalem was under siege. At night, labour gangs were busy cutting a new road, to the South of the Bab el Wad, which is now the main, double-carriage arterial link between Tel Aviv and Quds. The old road is now a side road only, but worth travelling, since one can visit places like Enab, Motza Village and Abu Ghosh. They used to be on the highway but are now by-passed. And are very much 'backwaters'.

The old road is littered with old armoured cars that copped it during the '48 war because that's where the big battles were between the Jordanians, the Iraqis, and the Jews. They fought every inch of it because Jerusalem was under siege.

That's why they started the new road. It was designed as a back road to get supplies into Jerusalem to keep the inhabitants alive. It became the new highway.

Nazareth

I often went to Nazareth. A favourite tourist spot was and still is Joseph's Tomb - the tomb of Jesus' father. The locals think it's a load of old hogwash.

As far as they are concerned Yeshu'a Ben Yosuf was Jesus son of Joseph. No mystery about it. Sure He had certain powers and was picked as a Manifestation of God. This they accept.

As *'the'* Son of God they don't accept because 'Son of God', while being quite a common phrase is, from their point of view, a blasphemy. Anybody in that category was a 'Son of God' so it wasn't a unique situation.

They accept Him as a Manifestation of God as they accept Mohammed as a Manifestation of God. There was nothing miraculous about the birth of Mohammed or Moses or Baha'u'llah.

If you read your history and go back to Jophesus, none of these present day stories were in circulation. They've been dreamed up since. Bits have been added here and there to advance the idea. It's a load of hogwash! The time is rapidly coming where churches are painting themselves into a corner they can't get out of, which is why they are frightened to death of the release of the Dead Sea Scrolls. A lot of the writings confirm the Bible writings but the dogmatic things that they have dreamed up down the centuries - forget it!

Going back to 610AD, Mohammed in al Qur'an states categorically that Christ did not die on the cross. He was taken down before he died.

But the New Testament story says He died on the cross, was resurrected and then ascended. You are creating a figure that has an element of power about it.

In 1950, the Catholic Church claimed the Bodily Assumption of Mary into Heaven. Only in 1950 was that one dreamed up 50 years later, Catholic kids believe it implicitly.

I said to Pop Wallen, who was Catholic, "You don't seriously believe that do you?"

“It’s a load of rubbish. But in 20 years time every Catholic child will believe that implicitly,” he said. And he was right!

The Bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven ‘became’ one of the miracles. I was in Rome when it was proclaimed! It’s an example of the sort of thing I call ‘Churchianity’.

The Christos, as a Manifestation of God, I love and revere. The thing that’s reared in his name? That is another matter entirely and I have no time at all for any of it. You can also go to Joseph’s workshop in Nazareth, to this very day. Miraculously, *it’s still there*, well preserved.

It’s like Christ’s birthplace grotto in Bethlehem. The tourists pour through and think it’s marvellous!

I personally know of three grottos! There have been three in the basement of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, and all are, *of course*, at one time or other, the original grotto, where Jesus was born.

I give you that one very simple grotto could pass for the original. The latest one is bigger, with subdued lighting and all this sort of thing. Pure fantasy – and pilgrims lap it up. Like they lap the ‘information’ that ‘You are walking on the very stones that He walked on’ when they tread round the Old City of Jerusalem. Those *original* stones must be 40 feet or more under the rubble of the several sackings of Jerusalem down the Centuries.

Mount Tabor

There is the Monastery of Mount Tabor – a Franciscan shrine – a sacred site built on the scene of the Temptation of Christ. and a very holy site. The Bible story says Satan tempted the Christ.

“Jump off and I’ll give you the world,” tempts Satan.

“Get behind me,” says Christ.

Which was a very dangerous thing to say, really!

But ‘X’ marks the spot and the Monastery is a very beautiful landmark, and indeed, you do have a commanding view of the whole countryside.

Caperneum (Kafur Nahum)

The Church of St John, Tabhga is the scene of the loaves and fishes story. Kafur Nahum (Anglicised to Caperneum) is another one, is reputedly Peter's house.

Certainly there are archeological leads that say this is what it was and no one argues with that but its the hype they build up.

Romema

Romema is the site where Viscount General Sir Edmond Allenby was met by the Turkish delegation who surrendered the keys to Jerusalem in December 1917. They commemorated the site with a monument - an obelisk. Story has it that he solemnly dismounted from his horse and walked in. Not a shot was fired or a life lost.

The Holy Land has, without doubt, had great influence on my life. The decision made at age 13, to opt out of the Church, was for me, the right decision.

After several years in the Promised Land and having either visited Holy Sites or been on duty at the Festive events at the Sites, I no longer have any respect for what I have called 'Churchianity'.

Three Christmases, laying your life on the line, on riot patrol at Bethlehem put me right off 'Churchianity'.

Four Easters on riot patrol at the Holy Sepulchre, doing the same thing, was the 'straw that broke the camel's back'. If that is Christianity, forget it.

The disillusion I felt at 13 has been more than justified.

However I would grant that it better to believe in something than in nothing - even if the 'something' is myth and fantasy.



On duty, Jerusalem, 1943.



My first home in Jerusalem was Mustashpha Station built in the early 1800s. The walls were up to three feet thick to keep the heat out and on two occasions hot lead!

Palestine 1943-1946

Of all the towns and cities in Palestine, Jerusalem is the one I knew best. It may be said that I knew Jerusalem better than any other town anywhere. And why not? We patrolled it in eight hour shifts night and day for over two years.

Notice the past tense 'knew' – I got lost in the City I knew, in 1990. There had been so many changes. New housing, new streets, bombed areas cleared and rebuilt. It would probably not take too long to get to know the new city – basically it is much the same.

A similar situation arose in London. Areas that I knew well were, suddenly, strange. Houses had been knocked down to widen streets. The 'pub on the corner' was no longer a landmark.

Jerusalem was divided into 8 - 12 areas, each of which was patrolled by a car and crew for a week at a time - thus I got to know every door, every house, every lane, every alley under such conditions.

Mustashpha Police Station, Jerusalem

I eventually finished my training in Jenin and was transferred to Jerusalem.

My first home was Mustashpha Billet on the Jaffa Road. The billet itself was very old. Built by German priests around 1806, it was originally a hospital - cool and rangy. The walls were up to three feet thick, which kept out the heat - and on two occasions - *hot lead*.

Around 1850, the Ottomans Turks established a gendarmerie post which then became a police station, in use until 1990. At that stage of course there was no modern Jerusalem and so it was on the outskirts, about a mile or so from the depths of the Old City and astride the top of Jaffa Road which lead down to the plains, Jaffa, Tel Aviv and the coast, through the Bab-el-Wad.

The Billet had a tennis court - of sorts - and vehicles were kept on hand in front of the main entrance. It has now been razed and a block of flats is on the site.

It was quite interesting when, in 1975 I went to Jerusalem and stood outside the old Mustashpha Police Station to take a photo of it. An Israeli Police Inspector stopped me, snapped at me in Hebrew and said it was forbidden to take photographs.

“Sorry, English or Arabic?”

“What you are doing and who are you?”

“I want to get a picture of the Police Station.”

“Why you want?”

I asked him how long he had been stationed there.

“Two years.”

“Well, I spent two years here, too, back in the 1940s.”

He was very suspicious.

“Oh yes?”

“Would you like me to tell you the layout of the building? If you go in the front door and turn left that’s the charge room. There’s a corridor and a room at the back that leads to the cells. If you go the other way it leads to the officer’s quarters and out to the back garden.”

He softened a bit.

“You must have been here before, otherwise you wouldn’t have known these things.”

I then produced my Palestine Police Identity and was immediately treated as a guest of honour. I photographed the station and was then taken inside for refreshments. We discussed police work in 1975 compared with police work in the 1940’s. It was a very interesting visit.

“Come in. You have tea with the boys.”

As we crossed the road, I asked, “How old are you?” He was 28.

“I was serving in this police station before you were even born.”

I got my picture had a cup of tea with the lads and we ‘swung the lamp’ about the old days. It was once a lovely building - walls three



Morris Wireless van parked out front of the Station.



GMC Troop Carrier, Morris Armoured Scout Car, Morris Wireless van and Ford Armoured for the 1936 revolt!



Our hospitable Police Station.

foot thick, stone floors and cool as a cucumber even in the height of the Israeli summer.

Mohammed Na'im

At that stage I was on foot patrols of the area and it didn't take too many weeks to know the area fairly intimately. When you walk the streets eight hours a day five days a week you get to know the area very well - every door, every alley, you recognise faces, you get to know the people and they get to know you.

Our system was a pretty good one. We were accompanied by a Jewish or Arab Supernumerary Constable - virtually your minder and interpreter.

I was very fortunate. Mine was Mohammed Ni'am and we worked together for two years. He was slightly older, and married with a couple of kids. We worked eight hours a day together and we formed a very close association and friendship.

He was a very educated young Arab who had attended the American University in Beirut. He spoke his mother tongue - Arabic - as well as Hebrew, English and French.

We hadn't been on patrol more than two or three days when he said, "Look, while I speak English to you, you are never going to learn Arabic. So, from today, I will not speak English unless it is essential." And he didn't.

The consequence of that was that a patrol became a walking classroom in Arabic eight hours a day, five days a week. If I used the wrong tense or plural or word, he would pick me up.

The end result of that was I took my primary Government Arabic exam within six months - it normally took 12 months - and I took my Higher Government Arabic exam in about 15 months, which normally took two, to two and half years. These very concentrated one-on-one lessons were magnificent.

Walking around precinct in the hot summer sun would be extremely



Mohammed Salah, RLP and Na'im Selim, my off sider and non-stop Arabic teacher.

tiring if one wasn't used to it. We would come off patrol and I'd be quite worn out. We would check off and head across to the canteen for a beer.

The first time this happened, Ni'am got his beer and put his finger in it and flicked a drop of beer out he said, "*Bismillah ir Rhaman ir Rahim* - In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful." It was rather odd.

With the second beer he did the same thing. And the third.

"Ni'am, what is it you say and why do you say it?"

He repeated it slowly.

"Al Koran says I shall not touch one drop of alcohol. This is the one drop," he said indicating the drop of beer on his finger.

I saw the humour of it. Over the years, I never saw him take an alcoholic drink without doing this. I suppose it's all a question of 'interpretation'.

The Birkin Wedding

Birkin village is where I got drunk. I've never been a big drinker - ever. Two or three glasses, over an evening, but never a quick drink session.

I was invited to an Arab wedding in Birkin village. The head waiter in the depot canteen and I became quite friendly - he was a Christian Arab - and a couple of us were invited to his daughter's wedding.

The day arrived and we fronted up on time. There were chairs set up all round the village square and the host plied us with a very nice drink in tumblers. It had a strong peppermint taste.

"Very nice. I like that."

As the ceremony progressed the waiter would come round and top up glasses and it was very relaxed and pleasant.

Sip, sip, sip. Come round again, top you up. Then a bit more of the ceremony and more top ups. I must have had a couple of tumblers of this stuff over the course of a couple of hours and I was as right as rain and thoroughly enjoying the experience.

Then the actual wedding ceremony started - a long affair. I was sitting out in the sun and getting terribly dry. I'd emptied my tumbler so I walked across to the village tap and drew myself a glass of water, which I proceed to drink.

I don't remember anything after that. I woke up back at the station, on my bed the next morning, didn't I? Fully dressed. and I had a mouth like a bird cage and a thumping headache.

"Where am I? How did I get back here?" I asked groggily.

"We carried you back here yesterday afternoon. You collapsed at the wedding."

This was Sunday morning. I'd slept a solid twelve or thirteen hours.

As I said, my mouth was like a bird cage, so I got up and grabbed a glass of water and sank it - and blacked out again. *Bang!*

I woke up later, about four o'clock in the afternoon, with a thick head.

The orderly said, "What *have* you been doing, Priestley?"

"I don't know." I said, genuinely confused.

"Ah come on, did you go out on the piss or something?"

"No! I went to a wedding yesterday and had this nice drink and when that ran out I felt dry so I got myself a glass of water. The next thing I know is that I wake up here on my bed still dressed. I was fully clothed and they just threw me on the bed. Then I had another glass of water and bombed out again!"

"What were you drinking?" he asked.

"I don't know, some peppermint stuff."

"*Jesus! Arak!*"

I discovered that I had drunk tumblers of Arak - neat. The French know it as Anisette or Pernod. When water is mixed with Arak, the reaction is intense. It comes up cloudy, like milk of magnesia, creating a chemical reaction I'd taken this down and put in water afterwards and pooof! I didn't know. Instantly drunk!

I thought, "If that's getting drunk I don't want to know."

By the time I finished my career I could comfortably drink a small bottle of Arak without any harm. The secret was to mix it with water - before - not after you've consumed it. I have never been drunk since. First and last time!

Shifts and Time Off

We worked seven days 6am-2pm, seven days on 2-10pm, seven nights on 9pm-6am shifts. with one day off in between. At the end of each shift, we filled out a duty report, if there were any incidents. If nothing happened it was just a *Nil Report*.

In the canteen we used to have dart matches - different activities between the Army and the Police. We had boxing competitions, chess, shooting. Often we went out to eat and what were then, good clean, cheap restaurants. There were no pubs as such.

We used to love going to the pictures - not to watch the pictures so much as the audience. It was funny. The locals were very childlike in their approach to these things. They hissed and booed and stamped their feet at the villain and stood up and clapped and cheered the hero.

"Hiss! Boo! Hooray!" It was a comedy in itself!

Sometimes we'd go to the YMCA or YWCA or TOC-H. Occasionally, we'd go out to dinner - a Hungarian Restaurant - and have a three course dinner for the equivalent of five shillings.

Pay Day

My pay in those days was eleven pounds a month and 'all found' - meaning your uniforms etc were supplied. I must admit we twisted it to 'eleven pound a month and all you could find!' But that was a great wage after a bob a day in the British Army.

We got paid once a month and everyone contributed a pound to the Mess Caterer to augment the basic rations provided by the Government. By doing so, we lived very well The mess caterer was able to supply a certain amount of extras which were weren't part of

The lads! (Back) Reg Coombs, Doggie Chapman, Ken Cowdrey (Front) RLP, Dave Nevison, Cyril Wright, Christmas, 1945.



the rations and the bigger the station the more supplies they had. The mess caterer had about 27 pounds a month - not an awful lot now - but with the price of food stuffs those days, the caterer supplemented our basics rations and we lived very well.

Out of eleven pounds I spent one pound ten on services and having set that aside you'll realise the other eight pound ten in the pocket was quite a fortune.

Plus you got extra pay for your languages. When I finished I was on about fifteen pounds a month, which was a very princely sum. You can't buy a meal for that in London today, but it kept me in luxury for a month in those days.

At Christmas we all put in 30 bob and we'd buy all the grog and Christmas tucker. The war ended in 1945. At Christmas we stayed in and had a party in the canteen - Gold Star beer.

Wash boys

We were supplied all our uniforms. Our laundry was done by a daily boy. There was a dhobi attached to the station who did your laundry. With 27 fellows at one station it was a constant job - washing and starching uniforms. That cost us five shillings *a month* - a nice steady income for the dhobi. He thought he was extremely well and much better paid than as a laundry hand in the Old City.

It gave him enough to live on plus he was ahead - about seven pounds a month (30 shillings a week). You'd be lucky to be on ten bob a week in the Old City.

It was a much prized job and in order to keep that job they would do a lot of things that were not really part of their job. There was also a station boy who kept rooms clean. And a couple of suffrages in the Mess.

The Old City

One gets involved in the life of a community when you patrol the streets day after day. You get to know something about their customs and language. Most of them were thrilled to be in Palestine - allowed into the Jewish homeland. They were hard working people and mostly honest people. There were some hard cases, but mostly honest, everyday people.

I observed their religion, their Holy days and Festivals - Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover - and quite often we were invited to participate with them.

One of the things I wanted to do ever since I'd arrived in Jerusalem was to go to the Old City of Jerusalem.

The Old City of Jerusalem has a history stretching back more than 3000 years although the present street plan dates largely from Byzantine times and the encircling walls are from the 16th century.

Within the walls, the Old City divides into four vaguely defined quarters - one each, for the Christians, Jews Muslims and Armenians.



St Stephen's Gate, 1945.



The Old City, 1945.



East and South of the Old City are the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion. To the west and north is modern Jerusalem.

A week or ten days after I'd arrived at Mustashpha Police Station, when the rosters were drawn up, I was ready for it. Up early and dressed in civvies and off to explore the Old City of Jerusalem - the walled city. I'll never forget the very first day I went into the Old City of Jerusalem.

The smells. The sounds. The sights. To a young lad just coming out into the world - it was magnificent. The whole ambience of the old city - not the modern city!

I got horribly bushed and lost but I was fascinated with everything going on. It was marvellous.

The Old City is not the old Biblical city. That's several feet down because it's been razed to the ground umpteen times over forty odd wars. I hear tour guides say, "You're walking on the very pavements that Jesus walked on."

Technically they are right, but I think, "You lying bastards." But the tourists lap it up.

"Jesus walked here."

"Great!" Little do they know.

The old city has a wall around it, and the 'new' city extends outward, around it. It also takes in the Kedron Valley, Gesthemane, Silwan and so on.

Jerusalem is a big city now, but it wasn't then. Nearly a million people live in Jerusalem now and all the hills that were empty have high-rise flats built on them.

It was a magnificent adventure for a lad of 18 or 19 - foreign parts, foreign smells, foreign languages, things you'd never seen before - the sounds and the people of this Oriental centre. I didn't find it the slightest bit frightening. I learned much, going round looking at and absorbing all these new things - it was a great adventure.



The Dome of the Rock

I came across a mosque located in the Muslim Quarter, that looked extremely beautiful - what I now know to be the Haram esh-Sharif - 'The Noble Sanctuary' on Temple Mount - The Dome of the Rock - and the third most holy site of Islam after the Prophet's cities of Mecca and Medina.

Traditionally the site of King Solomon's Temple, it later housed the Second Temple, enlarged by King Herod the Great, later destroyed by the Romans.

It was a Jewish Holy site for centuries but left in ruins for more than half a century. When Muslims took Jerusalem in 637AD they established the site as an Islamic shrine with the building of the Dome of the Rock - one of Islamic architecture's greatest achievements - in AD691 by the Omayyad Caliph Abd el-Malik.

This is the rock where, traditionally, Abraham was to make the supreme sacrifice of his first born son Isaac. He was of course stopped. It is also supposedly the folkloric site where Mohammed got on the back of El Barak - his white Arabian horse and rode into Heaven to

The Dome of the Rock; and this is what they come to see - the site where Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac; and where Mohammed rode into heaven on his white stallion, El Barak



converse with God, not unlike the Biblical tradition of wonderful journeys - the ascensions, Jonah and the Whale, Ezekiel 's chariot.

It is highly doubtful whether Mohammed ever went to Jerusalem. He may have done but not in the role as a Manifestation of God. He might well have gone to Jerusalem, and Damascus, maybe in his role in charge of camel caravans. trading, but not in terms of his religious life.

Religiously, he only went from Mecca to Medina. Mecca is the first Holy site of Islam, Medina is the second; Jerusalem is the third.

The Dome of the Rock was never mentioned in al Qur'an but the site was more likely a political statement. In locating the Mosque on the site of the Temple, the Caliph Abd el-Malik most likely intended to reinforce the idea of the new religion of Islam and its worldly empire.

But there I was on that first day off. I went wandering round the Old City and eventually came upon the wonderful looking building. I simply went in to have a closer look at it, only to be stopped in my tracks by a Security Guard who wanted to know who I was and what I wanted.

I gave my name, rank, number and Station. He went to check, returning a few minutes later, smiles all over his face and bade me welcome. Then he escorted me across the courtyard to a table set in the shade, at which sat an elderly man. He invited me to be seated and asked the security bloke to bring tea. We sat and talked.

"How long in Palestine? What do you know about Islam?"

I choked on that one. The brain is whizzing through the knowledge bin - Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Haroun-al-Raschid, The Crusades - Oh dear!

I had to admit that that I knew very little about Islam - *very* little.

He looked at me very gently and said, "My friend, if you are to work here for three years (we did three-year contracts) don't you think you should know *something* about Islam?"

Have you ever felt so small that you could hide in a matchbox? I did, on that day. The outcome was that I had freedom to come and visit

whenever I wished and I became a frequent visitor, one might say almost a student, learning from the old man, whom, it transpired, was the Chief Imam of the Aqsa Mosque. I learned a great deal about Islam from him. In fact, I used to spend a lot of my off-time down at the Haram esh-Sharif, with the Imam from whom I learned the ins and outs of Islam. I had entree to go in there any time I wanted.

I found out afterwards they had phoned Jaffa Road Police Station and ran a check.

When I was back on duty the next day, Inspector Taylor said, "Went down the Old City yesterday, Priestley?"

"Yes I did, Sir."

"Yes, we got a phone call."

Over the months of association with the old man I learned the ins and outs of Islam. The 'magic' of Islam appealed to me.

I'll give you an example. You've held your newborn children in your arms and looked at this pristine little creation - the little hands and fingernails - absolute perfection. And yet the Christian church will tell you this is a sinner, born in sin and it must be baptised, otherwise it will go to Perdition. I've never heard such stupid nonsense in all my life! I cannot subscribe to such illogical dogma.

Islam on the other hand says children are born into perfection and remain in a state of perfection until the 'age of reason', which in the Muslim World is 12-13 years of age. Its at this age that Jewish boys also goes through the Bar Mitzva ceremony and is able to enter the synagogue. And the Muslim child at this age can also go to pray at the mosque.

And child, by the age of reason, should have learned right from wrong. If he has learned wrong, he *then* becomes a sinner, but he is not saddled with this from the moment of his birth, nor does he inherit sin.

If you are going to set up a Manifestation of God as the Saviour of mankind, however, then logically He has to have somebody to save.

People won't volunteer to be saved – from what?



Outside the Jaffa Gate, 1944.



Water a la goat skins!

Thus they 'created' sinners by saying everyone is born in sin and must be saved, to justify a Saviour. And this is a dogma that was worked out in 325AD at the Council of Nicea. It was a brilliant move at the time but it's gone on being perpetrated in every form of Christian Church. Its only one of the stupidities of Christianity that doesn't appear in any other faith.

While I do not reject Christ as a Manifestation of God, I reject organised Christianity as it is operated today by the church. Any church that can produce such stupid dogma - any religion that operates stupid dogma in the name of its founder - and enforces it (viz: the Inquisition) - is not worth following as far as I am concerned.

At the end of two years I knew something about Islam. I didn't know anything when I walked into the Haram-esh-Sharif.

Islam is a very practical religion without the dogma.

If I asked a question I got a reasonable answer. I wasn't patted on the head and told to believe and not question.

"If you have a question we will answer it. Look up the relevant passage in al Qur'an." It made sense.

It was absorbing and time consuming but the Imam was a nice guy, I was learning something and I suppose I was motivated by sheer disappointment with the events at age 13.

Quite often we might discuss other things - just catch up.

"How long have you got?"

"Half a day."

"I'll talk to you about this today."

If you go to some of the al Hazar University in Cairo, you see half a dozen guys and a teacher sitting under the porches - I had a one-to-one situation.

Why did he take me on? He could have told me on to go. I don't know why. I have queried it many times. Why did I drop out of the church at 13. Why did I embrace Islam? Why did I become a Baha'i? Why did I spend those years involved with the Muslim community in

Australia? There must be a reason for being directed into doing it. There is always a reason, a purpose.

Maybe I was young and seeing riots and death and that was making me reflective. It was not consciously so. Obviously, the influence and effects were there. Obviously, something was missing; let's explore the path and put it right - an unframed question at that age. My thinking hadn't advanced that far then. The Imam was a hell of a nice guy and we got on well. He was a very learned, old, gentleman - very knowledgeable. I found him good company. Hopefully, he found me good company. Whatever - we clicked.

Rabbi Isaacs

Sometime later got transferred from Jaffa Road to the Orthodox Jewish area - Mea Shearim Quarter - which in Hebrew literally means '1000 Gates'. There's not a thousand gates, but more likely a thousand doors.

For the first time I came into contact with the Orthodox Jewish person who wears a black hat, shawls and the locks of hair that hang down the sides of their faces. To a large extent they speak Yiddish.

I thought, "Righto, Priestley, what do you know about Judaism?"

I decided I knew as much about Judaism as I had known about Islam. Two years earlier.

I found my self a young Rabbi in the course of patrolling and visited his office. I sat down and I got talking to him.

Rabbi Isaacs was a refugee from Poland - a young fellow in his 30s. He spoke very good English, French, Hebrew and Arabic.

At first he was concerned, if not highly suspicious, as to why a Police Officer should be visiting him. I assured him I wasn't there as a Police Officer but as an individual and I had come in order that he might tell me more about Judaism. This made him more suspicious.

"Why would a British Policeman want to know that?"

I explained what had happened in relation to Islam and stated that



Orthodox Jews, Tel Aviv.

now I had been posted to his quarter of town – the Orthodox Jewish area – that I didn't really know much about Judaism either, other than the Old Testament and Christian point of view.

“I've already dropped the ball once at the Mosque of Omar and I don't know anymore about Judaism than I knew about Islam. I don't want to fall into the same trap again. If you don't want to tell me, that's OK, there will be someone in the area who will. But you're a Rabbi and so I am asking you.”

He was sort of mollified and finally won over. He realised my visit and question was quite genuine.

We actually developed a firm friendship over a period. Over that period I learned a lot about Judaism that I never knew before - Torah, Mishnah, the commentaries, all the great figures of Judaism, the rites, the festivals, Yom Kippur etc. - plus many things Christians do not teach - even though they subscribe to and use the Old Testament.

It was an informal relationship. I'd go down to see him and if he wasn't busy I'd go in and we'd make a brew of tea or coffee and sit around talking. I got to know his wife and his kids. I always seemed to be welcomed in the home - never frowned upon or tossed out.

My learning came in leaps and bounds considering I had abandoned religious pursuits at 13. This was all new to me. I was learning fast and from authoritative sources. I was extremely happy about this. Having dropped out of the church and, being rudderless, I now had a small grip on Islam, and Judaism. This situation kept arising. As I have gone around the world I have delved into Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrian faith - in much the same way - with the same open mind.

I realised as I stood in this Old City at the centre of the Holy Land, the centre of Four of the Nine Faiths of the world, that there were more paths to God than one.

And they were all legitimate - not what Christianity says, “There is only one path and all the others are all evil and nonsenses.” That is a nonsense. Particularly when your Scripture foretells. The earliest

prophecy about Mohammed is in Genesis. You have prophecies about Mohammed in the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the same way, the Old Testament has the prophecies about the coming of Christ. They still didn't believe it when He did come! But it was there. They didn't accept Muhammad when He appeared, but it was there in black and white.

Moses said, "One from amongst your brethren like unto me." In other words a Manifestation of God from amongst the Jews. Micah pinpointed Bethlehem. Somebody else pinpointed a certain time and in due course it happened.

But Christ wasn't sitting on the throne of David and what good came out of Nazareth anyway? He's an impostor and so on. And the same thing happened to Muhammad and of course to the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Although they were prophesied well and truly, when the time came, the religious authorities (those who claim to know, to be knowledgeable!) said, "We don't believe it".

Abdul'Baha was appointed by Bah'u'llah as the exemplar and the interpreter of the Baha'i Faith because a faith always has to be demonstrated. If it isn't demonstrated it is just a philosophy that begins and ends with words. Christ demonstrated His teachings to the people of Palestine. Muhammad demonstrated His teachings to the people of Arabia. Bah'u'llah couldn't do that because he was constantly confined to prison by the Ottoman and Persian Governments. He was never able to have access to the public to demonstrate the faith.

Secondly, with the Covenants of God, every Manifestation does two things - He makes a covenant which has two points. One is to appoint an immediate successor who will look after the people he's been talking to and not leave them rudderless. And He foretells a future Manifestation of God.

Moses appointed Aaron. Jesus appointed Peter - "On this Rock I built my church." Muhammad appointed Ali, his Son-in-Law.

Bah'u'allah talks about the future Manifestation of God who will not appear before a full 1000 years - from 1844 - anyone who bobs up before that time (2844AD) and says they are a Manifestation of God - is, He says, a lying impostor and should not be believed.

So it can't be before 2844 before there's another Manifestation of God.

Baha'u'allah appointed his eldest son, Abbas, as the exemplar and the translator. He would *demonstrate* the teachings to the people, He was also the translator, who explained the teachings.

Abbas took the name of Abdul Baha - the 'servant of the Baha'u'allah' after his Father died. From then on, He was known as Abdul Baha.

Krishna did the same, Buddha did the same, Zoroaster did the same. Its a standard Covenant between the Manifestations of God and the people. Occurs in every faith with no exceptions (where it's a real faith, that is).

Over the course of the years I visited just about every religious site in the Holy land and found my self on duty at most of the public festivals of the various faiths - Christmas in Bethlehem, Easter at the Holy Sepulchre, the Jewish festivals Purim in February, Pesach the Passover in March and April, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth, Hanukkah, and the Muslim Eid el-Adha, Eid-al-Fitr and Ramadan.

It was a time of gathering a lot of information about the different faiths that claim Palestine as the Holy Land - the Jewish to which it is the prime Holy Land; Christianity of course; and to Muslims for which it is the third holiest place.

You get involved in the various degrees of Judaism - Ashkenazim (from Europe) and Sephardim (from Spain), the Orthodox, Kabalists, Reformists and liberal; and every sect of Christianity - Greek, Russian, Latin, Coptic, Anglican, Catholic who all have their estates and properties and sites in the Holy City (and they make a lot of money out of the tourists).

Relative newcomers to the Holy Land are the Baha'i's yet, here again, their presence is well documented in Biblical (and Qur'anic) Prophecy.

I spent nights on patrol in Gethsemane, Bethlehem, the Via Dolorosa – 'The Way of Sorrows' - the stations of the Cross - reputedly the route taken by Jesus to Golgotha to be crucified - which passes through the Muslim Quarter.

By the time I finished in Palestine, I was a walking compendium on these various sects and their practices and their holy sites.

I must admit that the least acceptable of those groups were the Christians because it is always the Christians who argue amongst themselves and killed each other off in order to perform the first mass, or enter the churches first.

There were certainly arguments between the Jews and the Muslims, but it rarely resulted in rioting or violence. Verbal arguments - the Kabalists didn't agree with the Orthodox who didn't agree with the liberals.

The Ashkenazim and the Sephardics kept themselves separate and kept to their own areas and didn't mix and they didn't interfere with each other either.

But the Christian sects went out of their way to stir up trouble. From a Policeman's point of view – keeping the peace, harmony – they were more trouble than they were worth.

The Muslims were predominantly the Sunni or Shi'a Muslims and kept themselves separate.

The next level of trouble was between Christian and Jew despite the acceptance of the People of the Book by Muhammad – the people of the book being the Jews and the Christians – despite His acceptance of them and His protection of them, in this day and age they have devolved into open enmity and so any pretext was enough to start a bingle going.

The Jewish Quarter

Mustashpha was near an Orthodox Jewish area - Mahne Yehuda and for the first time in my life I came into contact with the Orthodox Jewish person who wears a black hat, shawls and the locks of hair that run down the sides of the face. To a large extent they speak Yiddish.

Much of the Quarter was destroyed during the occupation of the Old City, by Arab forces. The ruins have been cleaned out and the centre point of the area is now Hurva Square. Nearby is the beautiful Sephardic Synagogue and the Ramban Synagogue. It should go without saying that the Western (or Wailing) wall (Ha-Kotel-ha Maariv) is *the* focal point. The Old Yishuv Court Museum and the Tomb of David are other important places within this Quarter.



The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem.

The Wailing Wall

On other side of the western wall to the Dome of the Rock is the famous Wailing Wall. You've got this great brick wall which is on one side the focal point for the Jewish faith and Judaism's holiest site – the Wailing Wall – and if you go the other side you are in the Holy grounds of the Muslim world – Haram esh-Sharif.

The wall is part of the retaining wall built by King Herod the Great in 20BC on the original site of King Solomon's temple on Temple Mount.

During the Ottoman period the wall became the Jews' chief place of pilgrimage where they came to lament the destruction of the Temple in AD70. They are still, however, forbidden access to the Temple Mount, the site of Haram esh-Sharif.

Houses adjoining the land were levelled in 1967 to create the Western Wall Plaza. There were always attempts to expand or exceed the conditions set by Islam.

In those days the 'Wailing Wall' was the property of the Muslims who allowed the Jews to use the area under certain conditions.

People chant their prayers - particularly the Orthodox - they stand

there and rock. The wall is significant because it was one of the walls of the temple of King Solomon - what's left of it. The original temple was destroyed twice and rebuilt three times and finally utterly destroyed by the Romans This was Christ's prophecy - "There will come a time when not one stone will be left standing on another." And it wasn't.

They stand at the wall and they wail - they chant actually - they chant Hebrew prayers.

On Jewish Holy days and Muslim Holy days we always reinforced this area because there would be arguments of some sort going on.

There were five Holy days between the two faiths - the three Jewish Holy days and the two Muslim Holy days - and every Holy day there was a fracas of some sort, stirred up one side or the other. We were obliged to keep the peace and remain impartial.

It still goes on of course. Quite recently there were a number of deaths in this area and International Governments called on the Israeli Government to account for it, which they refused to do. It's their business and their country. It has to be resolved somewhere along the line by themselves.

One of the things that is of paramount importance is the fact that Moses and Jesus and Muhammad and Baha'u'llah are all related through the seed of Abraham, through Sarah, Hagar and Keturah (Genesis: Chapters 12-25).

Each has sponsored a line that has produced either the Muslim world through Ishmael; the Jewish and Christian worlds through Isaac, the Baha'i world through Keturah. So they are related. Yet they have this enmity. Even in AD610 the enmity from Christians to any other faith was obvious. Muhammad, in his teachings, set out to bridge the gap and teach acceptance to the 'People of the Book', but the 'People of the Book' never accepted Islam and gave them nothing but hostility. And it is apparent, even today.



The Holy Sepulchre, 1944



Christ's Tomb, 1944

Christmas and Easter Riots

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a church built on the reputed burial place of the Christ. Calvary or Golgotha was the traditional scene of his crucifixion. But tradition says he was buried in the crypt now covered by the Holy Sepulchre.

Like the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem - and I know them both very well - The Holy Sepulchre is deeply significant site to the Christians.

I had three Christmases at Bethlehem and four Easters at the Holy Sepulchre. They are what are known as 'Status Quo' churches, shared (but not equally) by various sects of Christianity - the Greeks, the Latins, the Russians.

We used to do extra duties at Christmas and Easter because of all the cuffuffle they made. To stand in Manger Square on Christmas Eve watching them carrying their torches up the hillside is a beautiful sight. Coming in from every direction making their way to the Square. Coming from Jerusalem. Coming up from Beersheba and Hebron.

They gather in the square and they are usually there at half past eleven for midnight Mass. At about twenty to eleven its on. Who's going to go in first? And so it starts. The battle. Our job was to try and separate e them and keep the peace.

I think, for the three Christmases I spent there, the average intake was probably 60-70 people into the local clink, 30-40 people into hospital with knife wounds, cut glass wounds, stabbings and probably 25 or more to the morgue - all in the name of Christ.

The Greeks being the largest group invariably won. They'd go in to perform their Mass and while they were chanting the roof off, the Latins and the Russians would be battling it out ,to go in second. What was that about "Peace on Earth and goodwill to *all* men?!"

From our point of view, we had to say 'Religious Freedom'. It is your church you do what you do. We won't interfere. other than to restore order. The Israeli's now take no nonsense. You're going in this year

first, second third, you next year, you the year after and so on. They spread it round and no arguments and one Group at a time. They won't stand the nonsense. That we put up with!

They thought the British were soft because we wouldn't interfere. We'd stop the fights and give first aid to the injured, but we wouldn't interfere with their religious practices.

The same with the Holy Sepulchre at Easter. They'd all gather in the square and the battle as to who would go in first would start.

This is built where Christ was buried - supposedly - nobody knows.

In AD 632, Constantine's Mother went to the Holy City to sort out the Holy sites and even then she had to dig to find them. They had already been covered in rubble after 600 years. The city was demolished many times and archeological digs go down through the levels to 50 feet in places.

Patrols

If you were on car patrols - whether it was armoured cars or wireless van - you went out with a team of three. One driving, one on the wireless and one on armoury.

If you were foot patrol you had the same Supernumerary Constable with you the whole time. I had Na'im with me for two years.

We had set pattern routes. They divided Jerusalem up into twelve set areas and you were assigned patrol routes accordingly. Foot patrols and vehicle patrols. You might do Day Shift in one area, Afternoon Shift in another and Night Shift elsewhere so you got to know all of them. I was there until the end of 1947.

I knew every street and alley in Quds. I knew Jerusalem like the back of my hand.

One of the delights of working in Jerusalem was night patrol. It was always a patrol in which one had to be especially alert but one we could play around a bit. Sometimes we drove up to the top of Mount Scopus and watched sunrise come up over the Dead Sea, which you could just see as a silver streak below you. It was marvellous.



RLP, Blackie, 1944

Then we went out to the other side of Jerusalem, to Ein Kerim, where John the Baptist was reputed to have been born. A long established village with very very narrow roads which had been built for horses and carts and not for armoured vehicles. The narrow roads were rowed on either side with boxwood hedges and we used to go there at dawn to smell the aroma of the dew, which was most refreshing after you'd spent a night trundling around the streets in the dark. It was most gorgeous.

Old Chums, New Chums

Other guys came along and as your seniority went up you looked after the new chums. Dick Page turned up, (National Service bloke) and I sort of mothered him as I'd been mothered. Dick and I have been mates ever since, for fifty odd years.

There's a great bond. You form that sort of bond because your life is in somebody else's hands and their life's in yours. You get to know a guy very, very quickly, and very well. You know what he will take and what he won't take.

Police Dogs

We used thoroughbred Boxers not Alsatians as police dogs. Lou was my favourite. She was a Boxer and had pups. She had a habit of getting up on her hind legs and walking towards you. Some stupid bloody military policeman thought she was going for him so he shot her through the belly. We were not very happy about that at all. The chap was given the 'bums rush' off the Station and never allowed back in again.

Just 'Good Friends'

Fraternising with the local people was encouraged but not to the extent of romancing with them. Any Police Officer who was set to marry a local - Arab or Jew - was informed that his Police career in

Palestine would be terminated. The reason being: the Police had a duty to being impartial.

The British always had a name for being impartial and it was felt that any Police Officer who decided to flaunt this was no longer an impartial person. They were biased one way or the other and so to get married to a local person was disruptive. If you married an English person that was alright.

We made friends with civilians, but girl friends weren't allowed. Definitely not. Immediately you got a recognisable girlfriend they moved you. If you married you had to leave the Force because you were no longer 'impartial.' Impartiality - we were instructed, was absolutely vital to good order.

You could apply for a posting to another country, if there was a vacancy, of course. Paddy Stewart married Hanna and had to leave the force. A lot of them did. Nigel Hall wed another one. I had Jewish friends I'd go and have a meal with. I also had Arab friends like the couple in Silwan. That was OK.

We deliver a baby girl

We used to drive Morris Radio Vans. I delivered my first baby in one of them.

We were on night patrol and were flagged down in Silwan village, just past the Garden of Gethemane. The guy was hopping up and down, He was extremely agitated because his wife was about to have a baby.

"Can you help me to get her to hospital?"

Her water had broken and she was already on the way. The road went four miles round to Hadassa Hospital and would have taken 20 minutes, so I decided to take the short cut and go up the old back track up the side of the very rough hill up between the Church of all Nations and the Russian Orthodox Church of St Mary Magdalene, to the Hadassa.



GOP, 1944

It was a bumpy five minute ride versus a twenty minute ride up the Jericho Road. It was a rough track and the bumps shook things on a bit and accelerated the birth! The baby started to arrive before we reached the hospital so we pulled over and I raced round to the back of the van. The only light I had was the little pilot light from the radio set.

I delivered the baby and cut the umbilical cord with my pen knife. And that was my one mistake. The doctor said I should have let it stop pulsating, but I didn't know. I saw this lump of blood and chord and I decided to separate the two. But mother and child - a beautiful girl - were delivered safely.

And I couldn't go wrong in Silwan village after that. Whenever we went through Silwan we would be stopped by the husband who was forever grateful that we had stopped and helped his wife and delivered his baby safely into the world. We'd be flagged down for tea and cakes and a chat for a long time They thought we were marvellous.

I often wonder what happened to that little family. He was only a young fellow of 18. His child, if alive. might be 50, if she survived the refugee camps and the battles. I would like to meet that woman and say I was responsible for delivering you and getting you to the hospital - what have you done with your life? I suppose she could also say the same - you're the guy who rescued me, what have you done with your life? It might be a very interesting exchange!

I didn't have anything to do with the females in the Middle East due to the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases. In the back of my mind was the medical compound in the Dale, Chester, where sexually transmitted diseases were treated in a very old fashioned and often agonising way.

In those days they performed a 'scrape' - a crude biopsy if you like - by inserting a wire implement into the penis. I have seen grown men scream with the agony of the treatment.

"You got it the old fashioned way - we cure it the old fashioned way."

Brothel Raids

There were brothels in the Old City which used to be frequented by officers. We used to surround them and the lads would go in.

We would send the TAC's in who had the 'Gurkha capability' to creep around without being perceived. They grabbed whatever they could find lying around - shoes, trousers, shirts. A dozen rooms? A dozen lads straight in! Pick all the clothes up and toss them out the windows. Then on a given signal all the search lights would come on from the vehicles, whistles would be blown.

"All out!"

It was quite amusing You'd be surprised who came out those brothels without their trousers on. Squaddies, superintendents, soldiers, captains of the army!

"Things are getting dull - let's raid a brothel!"

No name, no pack drill but we enjoyed the brothel raids!

The Arabs had a strict moral code regarding sexual issues, and sadly, sometimes they took the law into their own hands.

There was a messy occasion of a girl who had committed the sin of sexual relationship with an unmarried man and became pregnant. There was a 'fatwah' issued against the man and his tribe.

The first act of the vendetta was to dispose of the girl and we were called in after the death had been discovered.

The girl had been taken to a barn, where they had slashed her stomach in a diagonal cross, so it flopped open like an envelope and her innards fell out. She'd been left to die in a barn so the whole thing was mixed up with dirt and straw. Obviously a very painful death.

That resulted in the subsequent arrest of the man responsible, a murder trial and the ultimate hanging for that murder. But there was the continuation of that vendetta.

No doubt, it is still going on, today.



Allenby Bridge, 1947

Jericho

I had a short spell of service down in Jericho, right down in the Dead Sea and one of the hottest places. Even in the winter, the temperature rarely drops below 35C. Very hot but also very dry, so not unbearable.

The station was on Allenby Bridge named after General Allenby, the First World War hero who had captured Jerusalem in 1917.

From there we were attached to the Trans-Jordan frontier force and did patrols down the frontier, through the wadis and desert, to apprehend people smuggling arms, drugs and all sorts of things.

One tour of duty took place during the month of Ramadan. The platoon composed of Jordanian Muslims were on the fast. As I was attached to them I had to go along with that, because the cook wouldn't touch food, of course. So I had to go along with it and had a side involvement in the practice of Islam and the daily prayers and it was a very interesting fortnight.

The Christian Quarter

This area contains places like the Holy Sepulchre and a number of other Churches The Suk Khan-al-Zeit, Greek Orthodox Museum, and the Jaffa Gate or Bab al Khalil. Another area was the Citadel, which contained the Kishli Barracks from when both foot and Mounted patrols were operated. Part of the complex has now been destroyed. The Citadel contains the Tower of David, a well known landmark. The area contains both Muslim and Crusader ruins.

The Valley of Himnon

This is the valley between the city walls and the Garden of Gethemane and the Church of all Nations. There is a burial ground for Muslims. Then the Silwan Village and Jericho Road. Up the hill you've got the Hadassa Hospital, the Kaisers Tower and the Jebel-et Tur 'Kaisers Tower'.

Cafe Loy

Significant to me was the Cafe Loy, in new Jerusalem, run by Josef and Phyllis Kordachevska, in the German Colony. It was a nice quiet place to go to. I would go there often with my little dog, Betty, who was sadly was run over by a car. I 'took' Betty from a bloke who used to keep her locked in a cupboard during the day and belted her at night because she yelped and soiled it. But a beautiful small dog.

The American Colony Hotel

Not a five star pub - but the best pub in town, it was built by the American missionaries and later became the American Consulate and then a hotel, right opposite the Sheik Jarrah Mosque. A beautiful building with walls three feet thick, stone floors, reeking of history.

If there was a fault, that was it because first thing sun up you got woken up by the Muezzin, whether you wanted to wake up or not.

"Allah u Akbar! Allah u Akbar!"

Mt Carmel, Haifa

Mt Carmel, the Mountain of God, is the World Centre of the Baha'i Faith. In 1948, I was 'loaned' to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co and I was staying in a block of flats next door to these Botanical Gardens. At least I was under the impression that this is what they were.

On my day off, I would climb the wall and sit in the sun, write letters, read and snooze. A few yards down the hill, the gardeners were busy laying out flower beds. Sometimes the 'head gardener' would appear and give directions. This went on for a number of weeks and no-one ever said I was trespassing. The gardeners would call up a greeting, to which I would respond, and that was it.

Many years later I found out that I had, in fact, been sitting in the Baha'i Grounds. I had neither touched, nor been touched, by the Faith at that stage - at least I thought I had not. Now I have reservations about such influences, not all of which are visible or obvious.



The beach at Tel Aviv, 1947

Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv is a concrete jungle - the Commercial Centre of Israel. Jerusalem is the Spiritual and Haifa the Cultural Centre. Conjoining it, is the old City of Jaffa and the Manshieh Quarter. It has limited Port facilities and is like any other modern City. It had it's beginnings in 1909 so it really has no history. As one understands Holy Land history - its very much a 'Johnny-come-lately'.

Leave

There were periods of leave from time to time. Never more than about four or five days - not long leave. Long leave was three months at the end of three years, long enough to go to Britain, but that of course was scrubbed too because of the emergency, so I never ever had a long leave. Short leaves yes in which I could travel around. So I made excursions into Lebanon and Jordan, down to Egypt, all of which was great at the time. I soaked up everything I could see or hear. It didn't cost a lot and there was a certain prestige about it. Being British Police a lot of doors were opened. I got to see things that others didn't.

My favourite place was Tiberius which is up on the sea of Galilee - a freshwater lake. Its a beautiful area. Just across the bay is the ancient synagogue of Caperneum, and Tabkha. Directly across the lake from Tiberius is the township of es-Salt in Jordan. The Police had a club and a number of hospices where you could stay cheaply at two shillings a night and just unwind. Go swimming, fishing. Tremendous!

Athlit, the old Crusader castle complete with fabulous Muslim architecture - the old arch for example. The cathedrals in Europe later used this technique. They learned how to do it from the Muslims.

There was so much to see and take in. I took lots and lots of photos. I snapped away. People fishing. People going to market. Anything of interest. Churches. Holy sites. Shrines. The site of the Beatitudes - the great Sermon of Christ at Tabgha. It was endless.

Haifa

Haifa was my favourite city. It wasn't a big city. Jerusalem was the capital city, Tel Aviv was the commercial centre, and Haifa was the cultural centre. I had a particular mate - Dick Page from Colchester - and he was one of those civilians I mentioned. He was in my squad and we palled up and sometimes Dick and I would go off together.

Sometimes I'd go down to and stay for the weekend and we used to walk across to the Latrun Monastery which was a Franciscan Monastery where they made a beautiful brandy - and still do. You could get a large litre bottle of Latrun Brandy for about seven shillings. That would last us a long time. I used to drink occasionally in those days, though not a lot. (I never got drunk except for the one time mentioned earlier.)

We got split up eventually. He got sent off to a place called Latrun where they had various people under detention. Sometimes for their own safety, sometimes because they were a nuisance, but they weren't exactly criminals of the calibre that went to Acre Prison. This was a detention camp for trouble makers.

And trouble came.



Winter, 1945.

Palestine, 1946 - 1948

At the end of the Second World War, in 1945, the Jewish people realised that unless they did something, they were not going to get an established homeland.

Turkish control - the Ottoman Empire - was declining in the late 19th century when British Jew, Sir Moses Montefiore, had first called for the creation of Jewish state in 1839.

In 1896, the Austrian Jewish journalist Theodore Herzl had formed the World Zionist Organisation with the aim 'to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine' with a Jewish National Fund set up to purchase land for a settlement.

Turkish rule ended in 1917 during World War I when British troops, under the command of General Allenby, took Jerusalem.

The Arabs under their leader, Feisal, had fought along side the British and expected Palestine in return. However, with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British let it be known that, '... His Majesty's government favourably views the creation of a national Jewish home in Palestine.'

It did not establish anything; it only '...viewed with favour ...', but this was taken that this is what was intended for the Jews.

Peace talks in 1920 put Palestine under British authority later ratified by the League of Nations on 24 July, 1924. The Mandate had been taken up and the Palestine Police Force came into being on 1 July 1920, taking over from OETA (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration).

The following year, to placate Arab discontent, the British recognised Trans-Jordan as an autonomous Arab Emirate, ruled by the Emir Abdullah, the elder brother of Feisal, with Amman as its capital.

At the time of World War I some 500,000 Palestinian Arabs and about 85,000 Jews were living in the Holy Land.

In the 20 years between then and the outbreak of World War II about 250,000 more Jews arrived at the ports of Jaffa and Haifa to settle in Palestine. Each new wave of arrivals served to increase the tensions between the Palestinian and Jewish communities. This was exacerbated with the greatly increased migration following the 'Kristalnacht' episode on 1935 in Nazi Germany. This triggered off the Arab Revolt 1936-39.

At this stage, of course, they had many thousands of Jewish boys who had been trained in all sorts of weaponry by the British Army. They fought along side the British Army in North Africa and Italy. They were experienced people from the Jewish Brigades.

But a Jewish state had not been established after World War I and the Jews couldn't see it happening after World War II either, because of the obvious strategic importance of Palestine as a country, to Britain, at the crossroads of the Middle East.

And so they decided to do something about it.

The King David Hotel (left)
before it was blow up, 1945.

King David Hotel, 1946

My own 'baptism of fire' came on 22 July 1946, when the King David Hotel was bombed. It was the most prestigious hotel in Jerusalem at the time - the equivalent of a four or five star hotel - the south wing of which was occupied by the British Command and the Mandate Government.

Despite warnings, security was lax. The 'Colonel Blimps' were quite sure that no Jew was game enough to take on the might of the Army. How wrong they were.





Half a mile away we felt the blast! "The radio message was simple: "Scramble! King David Hotel!"

They got a call to say, "Get yourselves out, we're going to blow it up." The Brits, in their wisdom, laughed, "Oh bullshit! Blow it up? No way. Under our security, mate?"

Quietly, and without any fuss, IZL (we believed at the time) moved in a dozen or so milk churns to the Service Entrance of the South Wing. As we found out later, on this particular day, two of the milk churns that arrived on a milk delivery truck and moved down into the basement were full of explosives. But nobody took the slightest notice of a milk cart and the delivery of milk churns.

They then got a second warning which they took a little more seriously. As they were in the process of evacuating the building, it suddenly it went up at midday. Everybody heard the explosion, of course. Tremendous explosion!

It blew the whole South wing out. A wooden building and slab blocks of sand – a facade of six or seven floors came tumbling down with considerable loss of life.

I was on duty at the time. With my crew, we were patrolling King George V Avenue about half a mile away when the order to scramble to KDH was received – we were only two minutes away.

"Scramble! Scramble! King David Hotel!"

We went straight down there. Every car in the area converged on the site. It was pure chaos.

Squaddies all over the place pulling bodies out from under the rubble. These were solid stone blocks and when they fall on you they hurt.

An ATS girl was plastered on the tower across the road, like a tomato. The blast blew her across the road and smashed her into the side of the tower wall and she was left hanging there, 70 feet above the ground. Very nasty.

We were there a short time and then the military took over. After about half an hour or so they ordered us to resume our normal patrols.

"We've got enough people here to handle this."



I snapped off a few photographic shots and left.

They rounded up a hell of a lot of guys and could have caught the guys who did it but whether they were the guys who set that off, or someone else, we will never know. Some tried to pin it on IZL; others on the Stern group.

Nonetheless, the damage was enormous. There were a great many injuries and a great many deaths.

That was the first big offensive. There had been some smaller ones, of course, but this was a turning point - the first major terrorist operation.

The purpose was simple: they wanted the British out and it gave notice to the British Government that from henceforth, the Jewish boys meant business.



The Jerusalem Railway Station, 1946. Senseless.

Clear and present danger, 1946

After the King David Hotel things heated up. There had been incidents before that - vehicles blown off the road, harassment - but not major terrorism like the King David Hotel. That was the turning point.

Once they got that off their chest - and it was obviously successful - the IZL and Stern group looked for other prime targets to blow up.

From then on they became more daring and more dangerous. What started out as stock-piling munitions to protect kibbutz turned increasingly into direct attacks on the British military, to get them out of Palestine. The fight was on for an independent Jewish nation.

They blew up the police station at Haifa, blew the front out of the Goldsmith House, 21 March 1946. They blew up the Officers Club in King George V Avenue.

They set off a bomb at the Jerusalem Railway Station, filled with explosives, stones and nails. They set that off at a busy time and a lot of people were injured and the station was damaged. We disarmed the second one, a four gallon oil drum filled with a mish-mash of nuts and bolts and dynamite. They can be very nasty.

The British military were always the target. Of course, ultimately they succeeded. They got us out. It became an untenable government.

Britain took it to the United Nations and the Swede - Count Bernadotte - was appointed to mediate resulting in a number of Royal Commissions and White Papers over the years from about 1930 onwards - all examining the problems of the day - and then shelved.

Stern group, IZL and Hagana

There were three key players - the Hagana, the IZL, and Stern group. People who are quite famous today as leaders of the State of Israel - Yitzak Shamir and Menachem Begin later prime ministers - came from these groups.

The Hagana was a sort of homeguard, A small group – Sterngang led by Isaac Stern – were out and out fundamentalist terrorists involved in indiscriminate bombings. They didn't give a damn about anything or anybody. If they wanted to blow people up or kill people, they did it. That was it!

Then there was the Irgun Zvai Luemi - a break away from the Stern group – under future prime minister, Menachem Begin, who were more militant but at least a little moderate and who played the game pretty fairly. At least they'd give a warning.

"We're going to blow a building up - evacuate it now."

Hagana were the least terrorist of the lot. Started in 1930, they were the original defence force – sort of a homeguard established back in the 1930s for the protection of the kibbutz during the Arab Rebellion.

They had half a dozen guys in each one and they were armed. They built wooden perimeter towers as defences for the kibbutzim. Hagana was not particularly militant and was very protective of the British Police. Quite often we'd be stopped by Hagana patrols and told not to go down a certain street or into a certain district until after a given time. If we did go in, it was at our own risk. But we knew something was up. They were more protective than aggressive.

In 1948, they became the foundation of the Israeli army because they were highly trained under British Officer, General Ord Wingate. He was serving in the Middle East but ended up leading the Chindits in Burma during the War. Brilliant bloke. He did the initial training and left it as a legacy for the Israeli Army.

Post-war, Hagana picked up hundreds of men trained in the Jewish Brigades, chaps who had seen active service and were well disciplined. Those were the three groups: Stern were the worst, IZL so-so, and Hagana the less extreme.



Goldsmith House, 1946.

Jerusalem Operational Patrols

We were pulled out of Mustashpha Station and got sent to the Jerusalem Operational Patrol (also Haifa OP and Tel Aviv OP) with armoured cars and Morris Wireless Vans. Sometimes we were in the cars and other times in the wireless vans. Jerusalem was divided into several areas, and each unit was assigned to an area. I got to know every alley and doorway in it!

Every so often, areas would be swapped so that we did not become too well recognized.

There was a time when IZL threatened to blow every JOP vehicle off the road. Our response was to make and fly a black pennant from the wireless mast rather throwing down the gauntlet. The threat never amounted to much, though a couple of cars were ambushed.

Ambushes

Sometimes when we were on patrol we were attacked or ambushed by the IZL. They said they were going to run the Police Patrols off the road.

But we said, "Try it." We were so cocky. It was a game!

We used to wear the black puttees (leggings) and we made pennants and flew these from the wireless masts.

"If you want us, here we are! Look for the boys with black pennants."

They had a go at us several times.

But Hagana were very good. Hagana would stop us going down streets. If they knew there was a happening, they'd stop you and say, "Don't go down there tonight for the next couple of hours."

"Look we gotta go down there, that's our job," we'd say.

Next thing an order would be barked. They'd pull a revolver and shoot out the back tyres.

"I'm sorry you can't go. Be good lads, Don't make things worse. Just stay put."

And that was how they did it. You couldn't move. If we attempted to,

they blew the guts out of the other tyres, but they didn't harm us if they could possibly avoid it. We only tried that once.

If they said, "Don't go there" we went back. They didn't want terrorism as such. They were quite happy to achieve their aims by reasonable, peaceful means.

The IZL might have taken a slightly different view and coshed you over the head. "Wait here".

The Stern group said, "Kill them. Get rid of them."

But if the IZL were running a 'function', Hagana would stop you going anywhere near it. They were good. But we still got attacked a few times.

They made homemade canister bombs. Old gerry cans, packed full of nuts and bolts, stones, glass and bits of metal and anything that would hurt, powered by sticks of gelnite. They made quite a mess when they went off and could cause quite serious wounds. We disarmed one at the Jerusalem Rail Station that didn't go off. Faulty wiring.

Every patrol was a risk. You kept your wits about you and became observant. We were drilled and drilled and drilled in defensive tactics and protection.

Jerusalem matured me very fast. I think one does, when you've lived in a protective home where everything is done for you and then you go out into a world like that - you have to grow up fast.

You've got to get your act together. You had to. Your training was your means of staying safe - staying alive. You took on the responsibility of working with other people instead of ignoring them. Team work.

I lost mates. Guys I was close too. Harry Wilkinson. 'Doggie' Chapman. When Sgt 'Doggie' Chapman got shot I was upset because he was a good mate and it was the first time I'd come face to face with death. Grandma had died, but this wasn't the same thing as talking to a bloke one minute and he's gone to Heaven (or wherever) the next.

It was a quiet patrol. We were discussing what we would do for dinner that night.



A deadly unexploded homemade concoction packed with nuts and bolts, rocks, glass, nails and gunpowder.



The Police HQ, Haifa.

“Will we stay in the mess or go out for dinner?”

Harry Wilkinson was the radio operator and I'm driving and Doggie's in the turret and I'm not getting any answers. I reached behind and twiggged his trousers. “Hey, I'm talking to you.”

'Doggie' was hit by a terrorist sniper. He was sitting up in the turret of a GMC Armoured Car with his head sticking out and they drilled him neatly between the eyes. One minute you're talking to him, the next minute he's gone. It shakes you up a bit.

Bombings

The number of incidents began to increase. The railways were blown up. Power lines were blown up, police stations attacked.

The mortar bombing of Number 10 Downing Street in 1991, was very reminiscent of the way IZL did their bombing. The bombing of the Police Headquarters in Haifa, is an example. Drove past, stopped just long enough to roll the barrels of explosives over the barbed wire perimeter fence so they rolled down into the courtyard to the building and detonated by remote control when they touched the walls. Very successful. The truck, of course, sped off immediately the barrels were released.

We had several sweeps through out Palestine to round up terrorists and we kept them in the Prison Fortress at Acre. A number of them were executed after trials, in which their terrorist activities were proven.

They retaliated by hoisting British Personnel.

The whole thing came to a head with a young illegal migrant named Dov Gruner - only 18 or 19 but absolute chock-a-block full of hate up to the eyebrows for anything and everything. He'd been through the concentration camps. He'd escaped from that and managed to get to Israel - and then damn it, he was back behind bars again!

He was a committed terrorist, picked up in a raid in Tel Aviv, arrested, tried and sentenced to be hung and in due course he was hung. The retaliation for that was dramatic.

The Kidnapping of Judge Windham

Judge Windham was one of the British Circuit Judges who sentenced a couple of IZL boys to death by hanging. So they pounced on him.

They kidnapped a couple of army sergeants, Sergeant Paice and Sergeant Martin and they hung them in an orange grove. Some nasty things happened. More and more the climate changed. Palestine Police were shot at or killed. British Army the same.

Attack on the Police Billet

As time went on they became more offensive. More targeted. More direct. Attacks were made on various police stations.

One night, IZL attacked the Mustashpha Police billet with mortar and rifle fire. We had a running battle for over an hour. The building had a flat roof with a parapet about 18 inches high and just about everybody was up there.

When it started, John Isherwood and I were in our little room on the ground floor and without particular direction from anyone we set up a Bren position in the billiard room because it was immediately in front of the drive that led to the main gate and we could therefore control anything that came through the main gate. We set up this position on top of the billiard table with a clear view through the front window of the main gate, but we were far enough back not to be seen ourselves.

We were stretched out beside the Bren gun on the billiard table facing the opportunity of action with anyone who came through the front gate. All of a sudden a sniper bullet came through the window and

Machine gun drill, Mustashpha Police Station



down the billiard table between us! It took the baize off the table and imbedded itself in the cushion.

"Shit!"

I can tell you, we were out of that room very smartly and joined the lads on the roof!

The attack was not without loss of life or casualty. One died and one was shot through the stomach but fortunately only a serious flesh wound. But it was quite a battle.

Another night we were sieged in the station. All the Police Stations had defensive obstacles at the front to deter the IZL boys. There was an attack on the Police Billet and we caused some serious damage to surrounding buildings which overlooked us.

Again, we got up on the roof with Bren guns, rifles - anything that fired - and opened up on them.

We had riots in the Old City. Everything would be quite and then along would come a political stirrer to stir things up. Down would come the shutters and it would be on for young and old. It was not well lit. In fact, many sections of the Old City were blacked out.

Dealing with a riot in the Old City was not the easiest thing. A riot in the new city of Jerusalem where the streets were wider was much easier to control.

The Tax Office

One day we received a call from the Taxation Office. We later found out that the IZL had delivered a crate of what purported to be stationery, into the main door, in the centre of the building.

The paperwork was appeared to be legal and proper. There was no warning, but somebody got suspicious.

The people inside the Taxation Office endeavoured to move the box into the office to unload it and in so doing twisted it around diagonally and the corners had stuck in either wall and they couldn't budge it. (We tried to move it to get it out but it swung and twisted

and the corners jammed against the wall and we couldn't shift it.

It was then that somebody became even more suspicious.

"Evacuate the building and we'll find out what's going on."

We parked on the waste ground opposite and evacuated everybody from the building and the neighbouring buildings. The Head of the Taxation Office asked what we were going to do and we said we'd fire a couple of rounds into the box.

He balked. "You're going to ruin the contents of the box."

"If it is harmless and you have a few bits of paper damaged that's different to it *not* being harmless!"

So went back to the armoured car, parked across the street. The turret gunner put a short burst – a Bren magazine – into the box and there was a God Almighty explosion! What a lovely bang. No one was injured though.

But it *was* a trap - a box-bomb, loaded with explosives! It contained paper alright! And it blew the front of the Tax Office building out. People's records were destroyed in the fire that followed it and was the one occasion we became extremely popular!

The building was a write-off and for once, we were "heroes" because the Tax Records had been messed up. We might have done the new Jewish nation a big favour actually.

A similar act was repeated at Goldsmith House, the Officers Club, on KGV Avenue.

St Paul's Road

On another occasions, Inspector Tom Wilking was assassinated in St Pauls Rd; and we chased a suspect vehicle along the same road. This started out as a car chase through the streets of Jerusalem - not the old city of course.



Detonating the bomb jammed in the front door of the Tax Office had a popular result! It seems everyone is united in the hatred for taxes.



This car was jam-packed with explosives and during a police chase, crashed and exploded. God knows who was it meant for and the untold damage it could have caused.

He was trying hard to shake us off, when he ran into an refuge in the middle of the road. The car was packed full of explosives and of course exploded, killing the driver and his accomplice.

I don't think we ever found out for whom the car-bomb was intended. It was no longer important!

Escort Duty

The Israeli Government was formed to look after the affairs of the Israeli people. You had leaders like Yitshak Shamir, Golda Meir, Menachem Begin - they

were all members of the Knesset. They were a municipal body initially but the basis of the Israeli government. In waiting. Many of the personnel were allied to the Terrorist activities.

David Ben Gurion was the head serang – a wonderful man and a brilliant leader. I met Ben Gurion - met all of them in the course of protecting functions, escort duties or security.

Ben Gurion was one of nature's gentlemen. Delightful man. Very pig headed and stubborn, mark you, but never the less a gentleman.

Golda Meir was exceptionally good. When you were doing security on her home, she would arrive and ten minutes later there would be a tray come out with cups and saucers and a pot of tea for the lads.

She was Russian, bought up in Milwaukee. She spoke with a mixed Yiddish - American. What a character!

"Warch you bors doin'? You bors warnt tea?"

"Thank you, ma'am."

She went to Israel under the Zionist Movement. Like a lot of people of her calibre and age, she was looking for the formation of the Jewish homeland.

Theodore Herzl, an Austrian Jew and journalist in Vienna, was the guy who dreamed up the Zionist movement. He came up with the basic plan that they could do this in the 1870s. The arguments waged backwards and forwards for years.

The British Government offered to set up a Jewish homeland in Uganda. After the First World War, Uganda having been a German Colony was handed over to Britain.

“Take Uganda. Big country. Plenty of room. Nice climate.”

“No thank you. Not the Holy Land. Our promised land is Palestine.”

They refused it.

In 1917, you had discussion going on between the leaders of the Jewish people notably Chaim Weizmann, who became the first president. Dr Weizmann was a chemist, doing research work at Manchester University. He was the spokesman for the Jewish people. He had long negotiations with the British Government and the end result, in 1917, there was the Balfour Declaration.

While it promised nothing, it ‘viewed with favour the establishment of a Jewish homeland.’ But it didn’t say where or promise anything. It just said it viewed with favour. In other words, if you want to start one we will support you.

But they took that as a promise from the British Government. And that was the major doctrine that was the cause of the terrorism from 1944 onwards. They wanted the Balfour Declaration implemented.

Uganda was refused. They wanted the Holy Land.

The operation was of course to get the British out of the mandate of Palestine which they had been awarded after WWI. There had been a secret under the table between the French and the British - the famous Sykes/Picot agreement.

They carved the Middle East in readiness, should the allies win the war. France would get Syria and Lebanon and Palestine was to go to the British.

That got a little upset because the British instigated the Arab Revolt which featured Lawrence of Arabia, Peake Pasha, Glubb Pasha, Major Jarvis - (there were a number of them) - Lawrence was the figure head.

Everyone knew Lawrence of Arabia but not too many know Major Jervis. Lawrence led the Arab Revolt with British backing, from the Hejaz right through to Damascus.

Prince Feisal was the first into Damascus followed by the British followed by the French. He had the vision that he would become the king - the ruler of Syria.

Having reached that point they then produced the Sykes/Picot Agreement and said, "Sorry, its already agreed it goes to the French."

"But we'll carve a territory out for you from the Ottoman Empire and you can be king of that." So they carved out what is now Iraq.

Abdullah, who was his elder brother, was also involved in the revolt, got upset because Feisal was given a nice fat reward, He protested. They carved a little territory out for him and made him the Emir - not the king - the Emir of Trans Jordan. So Trans-Jordan came into being.

The French colonised Syria and Lebanon, the British had Palestine, Abdullah had Trans-Jordan, Feisel had Iraq, Syria became independent, Turkey became independent. Trans-Jordan eventually became a country in it's own right and is now called, simply, Jordan.



Things became increasingly dangerous for British civilians so Operation Polly – women and children first – evacuated many to Cairo.

Operation Polly

It became clear that it was too dangerous for British civilians. Operation Polly was the evacuation of British women and children from Palestine by trucks and trains, to Egypt. Most were sent home. About 300 - 400 were sent to a camp for safety. They evacuated them, then shipped them to Britain.

The gentleman in charge of the transit holding camp in Ismalia was one Major Gamal Abdul Nasser, who later became famous as the dictator of Egypt. Tossed Farouk out. He was a major then and a very helpful bloke. Anything they wanted he got for them. He looked after us very well. He eventually became hostile to Britain, but at that stage he was very cooperative.

'Palestine Post' Raid

Gathering information became more important. One night we got information that the Palestine Post, the daily English-language

newspaper. was producing inflammatory leaflets under the guise of the newspaper. We surrounded the building and raided the premises but the lead proved fruitless.

Some of our chaps - particularly those who had extreme fluency in the language - went into special CID unit.

I can remember being on patrol in the Zion Square region. There was this fellow selling chestnuts parked in one place. I came over and told him to move on, which he did. When I came around the square he was back where he was before.

“Come on, I told you to move on!”

Which he did again.

The third time he was back in the same place.

“Look if I catch you again, I’m going to have to book you. I’ve warned you twice. Keep moving.”

Out of this huddle of rags and beard came a very distinct whisper.

“Why don’t you *piss off* Priestley?”

It was one of the CID lads on a stakeout. But imagine my surprise when I heard a beggar tell me to ‘piss off Priestley’.

Off-duty incidents

On my days off I was wary. One walked around armed for curly situations. I carried a 9mm Beretta which cost me about 20 quid. Fully loaded. (You weren’t allowed to carry the official armoury issue.)

I was personally almost caught one night when walking back to the Station. I had been out to dinner, and as I passed an alley a couple of shots were let off. I walked straight into an ambush on the Jaffa Road. There were a couple of lads up an alley. I didn’t know what they were after but as I was going past, they saw it was a British Policeman they started firing.



The raid on the Palestine Post. Nothing came of this raid, but we were obliged to follow leads.

Fortunately, the guy could hit 'a barn door with a banjo at two paces' and I was very smartly on my stomach in the gutter, with the kerbstone for protection. I discovered, surprisingly, what cover there is in an ordinary kerb stone.

You look at a gutter and you, "There isn't any cover in this" but if you lay prone in the gutter, pressed up against the kerb stone, it offers surprising protection against stray bits of lead. I did that several times, as did many others.

There were ambushes going on all the time and you'd have to duck for cover. Somebody would run past you and fly up an alley shooting. You don't stop to say, "What's that? I'll go and have a look at that."

You get your head down and you ask questions afterwards. That was my training and self survival. It becomes second nature. You hear a bang, you get yourself down, then you ask, "What was the bang?"

That was the closest I came to actually getting shot in the sense of an attempt on my life. It was chance, but nevertheless an attempt on my life. A bit scary! We had to deal with this on a daily basis on patrol but never off duty until then.

There were big incidents in Haifa and Tel Aviv, but as they were not on my patch, I will not comment on them.

I was standing in Mum's kitchen two days after I got home, in 1948. She was leaning against the gas stove and I was leaning against the sink and we were just talking and somebody left the downstairs flat and slammed the front door.

Bang!

Without interrupting the conversation, I jack-knifed under the sink. Mother was quite amused and thought I was a bit sappy.

"Whatever the devil are you doing down there. Reg? Get up."

I explained that I had just come from a country where explosions were daily and dangerous and you don't stand up when there was an explosion and ask, "What was that? or Where was it?" You were likely to get hurt or killed. You hear a noise and you get down under cover.

Any sort of explosion, whether it was a bomb or rifle shot – you ducked. You didn't ask what it was. or where it might be coming from.

It saved my life many times. It took me two or three months to acclimatise to peace time before I ceased to react to sudden noises in that way. But in Jerusalem, if you heard a bang, you got down and out the way.

You don't realise you have these reflexes when you don't need to use them. Those reflexes had become automatic. At that stage it was still automatic. 'Bang! Down!'

We both laughed about it, and Mum saw the point. She was so concerned, poor old dear.

Sassa Police Station, 1947

In 1947, I was posted to Sassa Police Station, because I had had a lot of action in Jerusalem. They never asked however; they just posted you. They posted people to odd places - some went to the Jiflik Track, some to Allenby Bridge.

Sassa Police Station was an isolated and deserted old concrete bastion outpost and as such, no one wanted to be stationed there.

Most of the guys who went there said, "Let's get out of here!" I was posted there for three months originally, but stayed six. I loved it. Absolute silence. Peace and quiet.

The posting was for two people - myself and an Arab Constable and together we looked after an area of 300 square miles. We policed the Arab villages, mainly looking for contraband runners over the Syrian border. The Arab Constable wasn't my interpreter because I didn't need one at that stage, but he was my head cook and bottle washer, did my laundry and assisted me on my rounds.

I had a 1500 cwt truck and I'd drive into the villages and meet the muktahrs.

"Got any problems?"

"No." Sit and have coffee and generally, be friendly.

Then you'd drive to another village and look around. That would do for the day and you'd drive 'home'. Do another run tomorrow.

We patrolled during the day but rarely at night. This area was very rural and there were no problems. There was no electricity in the place so once the sun went down, people were in their beds. Nobody prowled around the hills except gun and hash runners. I mostly read at night and was up at the crack of dawn.

Once a week a truck came up with rations and the mail and any orders you had purchased. I would sit and write to mum, read books, study this, that and the other and have coffee in the village. I had learned the language and was at the grass roots level but friendships were still limited.

You couldn't take your friendships too far because the basic rule in any colony or mandate is impartiality, particularly where you had opposing forces like you had in Palestine. Impartiality. You could sit and have coffee with the fellas, but if you made contact with a woman, and it got too serious, they shipped you out almost immediately. If you married you had to leave the force.

Paddy Stewart married a Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia and three days later he was on his way back to Belfast. He ended up in Kenya as Superintendent of Transport, and died in 1997.

Motorcycle Escorts

I rode motorbikes - BSA or Triumphs. In those days we did the military convoy escort which was a dangerous and unpleasant job. You'd 'run' with two guys. You'd have your convoy set up in Allenby Barracks in Jerusalem and it was going to Jaffa.

You'd leave to the first cross road and the second guy to the second cross road. You'd see the convoy through and as soon as your last truck went past, you went like a hare, down to the third cross roads. No 2 would see them through the second and hare like to the fourth - leap frogging like so. Of course, we took short cuts.

When you went down the Bab el Wad - oh brother - straight down. Rock road, dust and sheer vertical hill sides! And flat out. Scary. You had to be there ahead of the convoy to see them through the cross roads and we took risks you wouldn't dream of taking now! I never enjoyed convoy duty.

Christmas 1947

1947 was our very last Christmas and we knew it would be the last Christmas together because Partition was on - confirmed in November - and we would be leaving when the Mandate ended.

You could buy gin for eight shillings a bottle duty free. Whiskey was 12/6d. Cheap! It was great. So we really had a wing ding and we bought enough stuff for Christmas and there was still enough stuff left over for my birthday on 25 January, 1948.

Christmas in the Holy Land, conjures up all sorts of pictures. The reality is very far removed from those Sunday School-Church visions which are painted every year for a gullible public.

I had duty Christmases at Bethlehem.

Coming up to midnight on Christmas Eve, the faithful would wind their ways up the hills, carrying flares and chanting. They would arrive in Manger Square - Latins, Orthodox, Greeks - whatever. At a few minutes to midnight, all hell would break loose as each group fought to be first to enter the Church of the Nativity.

It was Raffertey's Rules - knives, clubs, bottles. And afterwards? Broken limbs, cuts and gouges and dead bodies. Some went to the morgue, some to the hospital and some into the brig to cool off.

Yes it sounds very nice when you hear the stories of Christmas, but at this, the focal spot of the Christian world on this Day - it was very Un-Christian indeed. The decision I had made at age 13 to drop out of Church and Chapel, was more than confirmed as the right decision.

Once the action had started, to get the Brits out of Palestine and establish the long promised, long dreamed-of 'homeland', there was constant terrorist activity.



The Parita



This ship, loaded with Jewish refugees fleeing the European theatre was in such bad shape that it simply beached itself.

It must be said that it rather depends on which side of the fence one stands. We looked on the opposition as terrorists; they regarded themselves as freedom fighters.

There were incidents over the length and breadth of the country – ambushes, vehicles attacked and sometimes blown off the road, sniping, kidnapping, smuggling and general mayhem. In all there were well over 4000 recorded terrorist incidents between 1945-47.

Boat Refugees, 1947

From 1934 onwards there was a continuous stream of boats carrying refugees arriving in Palestine, but particularly from the end of 1945 onwards.

The refugees arrived on anything that would float. More often than not, they were not seaworthy. Famous ones were the *Patria*, 1939, the *Eliyahu Golomb* in 1946, the *Theodore Herzl*, 1947 and the *Exodus* in 1947.

The ship owners would be packed to the gunwales with people fleeing from the concentration camps - Auschwitz, Treblinka, wherever.

Sometimes they got intercepted by the British Navy once they entered territorial waters and sent back. Most of the time they 'avoided' the British Navy because the British Navy 'avoided' them, but you don't hear about that.

These boats would chug in close to the shores packed with refugees who then would stagger ashore drenched and lifeless.

We weren't supposed to assist because we were supposed to be impartial, but some of us used to go down to the beaches at night when we saw a boat coming in and help them get ashore.

They were bloody skeletons wading out of the water.

I got a young lad one night. I picked him up out of the water. He was gasping and choking so I pumped the sea water out of him and carried him ashore.

He spoke to me. I didn't understand his Yiddish which I don't speak and so he tried me in Hebrew, then German.

"Duestchlander?"

"Ist Israel?" (Is this Israel? Is this the Promised Land?)

"Ja. Ja, das ist."

He lay back and died in my arms.

But he knew he'd arrived. He knew he'd got what he'd set out to do. He probably died a happy lad. He wouldn't have been more than 15.

I saw a lot of that.

A lot of the people who arrived wouldn't last long. The trauma of the concentration camps, and the trauma of the journey under horrendous conditions, the conditions under which they travelled - only the fittest of the worst survived.

The survivors were whisked off to kibbutz and private homes and received medical attention and were fattened up and got back on their feet again and entered into the life of the country.

The Exodus (taken from the Old Testament) was the main one everyone knew about. Whatever the real name was, I don't recall, but they had painted out that name and it arrived in Palestinian territorial waters as the Exodus.

It was goods ship that started out from Hamburg and picked up another lot of refugees in Marseilles. Carrying over 4500 people it ran into a naval blockade, which escorted it into Haifa Bay, July 18, 1947.

The British Government refused to accept it so it was hauled back to Cyprus. The British Government at Cyprus refused to have them so they sent them back to France and Germany full of people. Eventually it ended up, fully laden, back in Hamburg. The refugees went on a hunger strike which caught the attention of the world media.

It got world-wide publicity and virtually said what bastards the British were. Stirred up a lot of controversy and a lot of anger - treating people in that condition in that way. Our name was mud.



The Exodus

The European Theatre

I was hearing and seeing the effects of the European Theatre first hand. People arrived, tattooed on their arms. For people who say the holocaust never happened - be assured that it happened. There is no cover up for it.

It wasn't just Jews. There were others - Catholics, homosexuals, gypsies particularly - and anybody else who was against the Nazi regime - as well as the poor devils who were mentally or physically retarded. They were incarcerated in dozens of the camps - Aushwitz, Treblinka, Delsenberg and a lot of small ones scattered around. This was Hitler's 'Final Solution' to the Jewish problem. Gas them! Get rid of them!

They also shipped them off to the Russian Steppes - Siberia at first - half way across the world, almost, where they joined the dregs of Russian society in the dreaded Gulags. The Russian Steppes are still inhospitable, flat, treeless and cold, a barren tundra where almost nothing will grow. The winters are unbearably long and cold. Many were instantly put into forced labour in mines. Many didn't survive the first winter.

Eventually, they didn't even bother going to those miserable outposts. They simply stopped the trains in the middle of nowhere and emptied hundreds of them out on the steppes and then pulled away. Abandoned, and in the middle of nowhere, under incredibly harsh conditions, they simply died from lack of food and cold weather. There is nothing out there at all - nothing. It got rid of them.

Nasty Hitler came along with the idea of the pure Aryan Race - the Master Race. "Anything of mixed blood we don't want." Ethnic cleansing had been 'invented'.

Hitler blamed the Jewish people for Germany's woes. As in most countries, the Jewish people held the reins of anything worthwhile - particularly finance - as they still do in Australia and the States.

There were of course, situations like the 1936 Olympic Games, when

Jessie Owens, the American Negro, who collected a tally of medals and completely outran Germany's best athletes. What a smack in the face for the 'pure Aryan race'.

Outraged, Hitler would not even shake hands with Owens, nor congratulate him on his achievements nor present his medals to him.

As a kid it didn't mean much but when I saw the refugees and saw what had happened to them, I realised the importance of the Jessie Owens incident. A 'nigger' defeating the superior, white Aryan Race? And then having to hang a gold medal around a black neck? No way! Hitler refused to do it. He was furious. Sad, but it happened.

For the record, the Holocaust happened. Period. Anyone who says it didn't, wasn't there, is lying or they are deluding themselves and others.

1947-1948 Jewish Arab War

By 1947, the pressure was mounting. Arabs were killed by their own people for selling their land to the Jews. They strung them up on the nearest telegraph pole or murdered them or scalped them alive.

We often came across sun bloated corpses which had been hanging and left to rot for days. Phew! You would have to climb on top of the truck and cut them down. Skirmishing was rife, and with the declaration of the State of Israel, would burst into open warfare.

The Arabs intended to drive every Jew into the sea. They came up against a new phenomena - a Jew with a country to defend and preserve. For over 2000 years they had been kicked around Europe. Now, suddenly, the Promised Land had become the long awaited promise - Israel IS!

They had a homeland for the first time after so many 'homeless' centuries before. Now, they intended to fight to the death to defend and preserve it.

Independence, 1948

It all ended up with the Declaration of the Jewish State of Israel at midnight on 14 May 1948.

Ben Gurion, the Premier-elect, made a speech on the steps of the Knesset, that Israel had come into being and he implored the Arabs to stay put, but the leaders of the Palestinian Arabs were not listening. For their part they literally drove their people into exile in Lebanon and the areas designated to be under Arab control.

Third and fourth generations descendants are still living in those refugee camps today (2000). Many stayed and became citizens of Israel and did quite well in their lives, growing with the State as it grew and became more strongly established. Leaders, like the Mufti of Jerusalem, did not serve their people well. Still they continue to stir up hatred, to this day.

Admittedly there are Mercedes and BMW cars, but they still live in camps and dream of the day when they can go 'home'. Those who stayed, did very well. They got representation in Parliament, Federal and local government, decent prices for their produce and all the freedoms that the Jews enjoyed. However, the 'blood-letting' continues to this day.

Stand Down, 1948

On 29 November 1947 the United Nations voted for the partition of the Holy land into an Arab state and a Jewish state.

In February 1948, it being enacted that the State of Israel would come into being on the 15th of May that year, the army units started to withdraw from Israel and we withdrew into the cities handing over country police stations to the new Jewish police force, in which there was a well trained nucleus, of course.

As we left, the Jews were ready to replace us. On 14 May 1948, the eve of the final departure, David Ben Gurion declared the birth of the State of Israel.

We stood down 15 May 1948 but by that stage we had handed over about 84% of the set-up to Arab or Jew - depending on the area. Much of that, of course, changed hands with the War of Independence - territories gained and lost. That was the situation in 1948.

By the 15 May we had ceased to be an effective force in the country and within a few days of the establishment of Israel, the balance of the British forces and British Police were withdrawn from the country. The High Commissioner left the country and I stayed on with five others until June, 1948, the very last of the British administration.

Anglo Iranian Oil, 1948

In mid-March, I went to work for Anglo-Iranian Oil, on the Bay between Acre and Haifa. I was still officially on the British Palestine Police books, but seconded with an additional 90 Pounds a month, paid by Anglo Iranian Oil - on top of my Police pay. Our job was to dismantle the Anglo-Iranian Oil Refinery. The Jewish Government did not want the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company there and they were to leave along with everybody else.

Anglo-Iranian Oil employed six of us, with language qualifications, to control enormous labour gangs which physically dismantled and shipped all their gear out through the Port of Haifa, down through the Suez and Red Sea round to the Kermanshah and Abadan the major Iranian bases. We each had a section of the oil refinery, were given our labour gang and told to clear it.

A-I Oil had also purchased the Royal Engineers Depot which had been established for years at Beit Nabala just outside Lydda, so we also had the job of moving all the engineer's gear - ton upon ton of metal, steel, equipment, engines, fittings - all sorts of things. It also was packed in boxes and shipped out.

We worked six days a week from sunrise to sunset and had one day a week off. At that stage I was living in a flat in Carmel Avenue which is the avenue that goes up to Hadar ha-Carmel, and runs right through the middle of the Baha'i property. The flats were right behind the Baha'i property, but then I didn't know about the Baha'i Faith. I thought the place was some sort of Botanical Gardens.

On my day off I'd climb over the low brick wall and sit in the Gardens

and read a book or write my letters home to Mum and snooze in the sun. It was pleasant in March and April sitting in the sun.

Many years later I discovered that I had, in fact, sat in the grounds of the Baha'i World Centre. It has always amazed me that I could be that close to something and not touch it, or be touched by it!

Looking back, logically, at that point of my life, I was not ready to discover any New Faith. I had to do other things first. One is much wiser in hindsight.

When our contracts finally expired, we had moved some 95% of the gear out. The Israeli government would not extend our work-permits and Anglo-Iranian Oil advised us to simply get out - leave whatever was left and go.

Forty-eight hours later I flew from the Haifa strip across to Nicosia, Cyprus, where I waited a week for a flight back to Britain.

Looking back

How do I view that time now? Palestine was a chapter of my life which I cannot forget. Like so many ex-Palestine Police, when we left, we also left a part of ourselves in the Holy Land, and we carry a part of the Holy Land within us. Most have never been back to the Holy Land but I've had the pleasure many times not only with tour groups but for pilgrimage.

I've seen the changes and watched the development of Israel as a country - the country I called Palestine.

It's a chapter I would be happy to do all over again if the opportunity arose. I wouldn't have missed it. It was exciting, at times, frightening, but for what I learned from the experiences I wouldn't have missed it. When I look back, I see why things happened that didn't make sense at the time.

Israel has a tremendous responsibility, spiritually speaking, to maintain those Holy Sites so meaningful to the Jews, Muslims, Christians and Baha'is. The purpose of Israel is to be the custodian of the Holy Sites and to protect and preserve the legacies of Judaism,

Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith. The total experience shaped my thinking and started my search for a spiritual reality which I had abandoned when I was 13 years old.

Now, at 24, I would start to travel a pathway of search for the next ten years which would ultimately make contact again on the other side of the world, in Tasmania.



Cyprus, 1948

Post War 1948

I was demobbed on 15 June, 1948 and that was almost the end except for the final Parade and reading of the Official Stand-down document. Following the inspection by His Majesty (George VI) he was moved to remark that 'we could be proud of a job well done'.

Cyprus, Athens, Rome, Home 1948

We officially finished duty and flew to Cyprus where we were accommodated in the King George Hotel in Famagusta for a week or so while transport was coordinated back to England.

My personal possessions and heavy goods were shipped home by sea. I found myself in Cyprus, on full pay from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and accommodated and fed by them. I had a wonderful opportunity to examine the small but historic island of Cyprus. I ranged the length and breadth of it. visiting Nicosia, Kyrenia, Patros, Limasol and other towns, the mountains and the beaches. It was a wonderful ten days before we boarded the Cyprus Airways flight to Athens and the Hotel Grande Bretagne, then Athens' top hotel.

I'd been given a thousand drachma note by someone. I thought that might be handy. I put it in my wallet. I duly arrived in Athens with a thousand bucks and ready to spend. Shock! The rate of exchange was 27000 drachma to the pound! My thousand drachma note was worth .0035 of a farthing It wouldn't have bought a pee in a toilet! I hung on to the note as a souvenir, for years.

Next day I boarded British European Airways flight from Athens to Rome, Marseilles, Nice and London and arrived home in a rainstorm into Northolt Airport and made my way home.

I also had a forged One Palestine Pound note. The forgeries had been discovered some years previously. At the end, we were ordered to burn them, and I snook one as a souvenir. (I gave them both to Michael who had an interest in coins.)

Oh to be in England!

I went back to the Old Dart - the old prisoner's term for Dartmoor Prison - and arriving home on 12 June, 1948. I was 24. It was pouring with rain - coming down in sheets. "Oh to be in England now that summers here!"

At first I was living with Mum in her flat. She was in her back room and I was sleeping on a stretcher in the front room. It was very strange because I hadn't seen her for such a long time. Over the coming days, we caught up with each other while I pondered on what to do next.

Job Offers

I arrived home on the Wednesday and the following Monday week, after a few days rest, I went looking for work.

I was entitled to move on to another force but had been delayed with Anglo- Iranian Oil. The lads who came home earlier had already been absorbed or were on line to be transferred to other forces. I was entitled to be considered and registered with the Agents for the Crown Colonies who had been my employer in Palestine.

They said, "Stick around, and they would find me another posting."
"Can I take a job while I wait, because I don't wish to live off my savings."

"Yes, that's OK, provided you're ready to move with a fortnight's notice."

The Police Association sent all of us a list of companies and institutions requiring staff. I always remember the first one was the Birmingham Fire Brigade! I had visions of me running around with a funny hat and fire hoses. I couldn't see myself in a brass hat running

up ladders. Whether I could do it or not, I didn't fancy that idea. It didn't thrill me at all.

They offered a Police Commission in Malaya - it wasn't Malaysia then - but I refused it because I'd had enough of being shot at - they were full into the anti-Communist era then. General Gerald Templer was doing the big clean up of the Communists in Malaya at the time. I let that go.

While in Palestine, I had also interviewed for Prison Service on the Isle of Wight. At the interview they explained the job and gave me 24 hours to consider it. I thought about this overnight.

"No. I'm more a prisoner than the prisoners. At least they get out once they've done their time." You soldier on, behind the bars with them. I knocked prison service back.

British European Airways

There was a position with British European Airways and I'd just flown home with them from Cyprus. They were offering a clerical job. That might do to fill in the gap.

I went to Dorland Hall in Lower Regent Street, just below Piccadilly Circus, and presented myself to Miss Paula English, the personnel officer. Delightful person.

"What was your last job, Mr Priestley?"

"Palestine Police Force; I'm still technically on leave until the 30th of June."

"Oh? When can you start?"

"Monday, madam."

"We'll see you Monday, then."

And that was it! It was the shortest job interview I've ever had.

I got to know Paula later and I asked her one day, "That must be the Guinness Book Of Records Shortest Job Interview!"

"Reg, if you were good enough for Colonial Police Force you're good enough for us. We don't even need a character reference!"

I joined BEA with the thought very much to the fore that I could leave, if and when a Colonial posting became available.

The upshot of it was I had a fortnight's instruction out at Northolt Airport, which was an old RAF station, built long before London Airport. BEA were running DC3s. Nothing big. The day of the "big stuff" hadn't started in 1948. Except for a couple of converted 'Wimpie' Wellington Bombers.

I did the course and got launched as a fully fledged booking clerk. I enjoyed the challenge a challenge which lasted right up until my last working day. Somebody walking in or somebody phoning up and you don't know what they want until they say, "I want." You were never in a groove. Constant variety. Somebody wants a brochure or a flight to Edinburgh or the Middle East. You'd never know what you would get. It was never dull or boring. It always kept your mind alert.

I worked in reservations at Dorland Hall in Lower Regent Street for a few weeks. When the summer rush started, they called for volunteers to go to Kensington Air Station (in Kensington High Street). This was even more interesting than the reservations office. One was dealing with a very wide variety of people every day. With an equally wide variety of requests.

Amsterdam

I was sent to Amsterdam as a relief clerk during the Autumn, (October 1948) for two weeks. I worked at the City office and then out on reservations at Schiphol Airport.

That was my first proper taste of Europe. I arrived on the morning flight and they sent me to my digs. I was billeted in a private home, with a lovely old Dutch lady who spoke little English. With the scarcity of land, the houses tend to be small and tall, maybe five stories, with a pocket handkerchief of garden at the back and the front of the house straight onto the street.

I had the tiny attic room some three flights up. She was 65-70 and



British European Airways, 1948



The Lunch Room, Amsterdam, 1948

had been injured during the war, with the bombing. Walking appeared to be difficult for her. But she staggered up the flights of stairs, very slowly, showing me where everything was, as we went.

I didn't have to report to work until the next morning. I took myself off to look around Amsterdam. That was my first confrontation with the Dutch language. I went for a wander round Amsterdam. Went to the flower markets, the canals, the Royal Palace. At around two o'clock I

found my self in Rembrandtplein, at the back of which was a small cafe. Being a bit peckish I thought I'd get a coffee and a bite to eat.

The waitress brought along a menu - which was in Dutch - which I studied until I came across something that said 'Biftek'. I thought, "Beef steak! That will do."

I ordered. And sat back to wait for my meal.

The coffee came and it was beautiful coffee. Eventually the meal came. I looked surprised - it was a dry roll with a slice of beef in it. She must have seen the look of surprise. The girl spoke no English and I spoke no Dutch. Stalemate. She rushed back to the kitchen and came back with the owner - a big bloke, every ounce of eighteen stone - Hank.

"Somsing ist wrong, mien herr?"

"Not really" I told him how I had gone through his menu until I found something that I recognised and imagined I was going to get a cooked meal - a beef steak. But I ordered my mistake and I eat my mistake.

"Give to me. You wait."

He carted the beef sandwich away and came back with a beautiful meal in quick time.

"What you not knowing is Dutch for 'sandwich', JA?"

"Ja!" We laughed.

The whole time I was in Amsterdam I went to this little restaurant in

Rembrandtplein for my midday meal. Hank and I became good friends. I learned some years later that he has died of a massive heart attack. With his weight, I wasn't surprised.

Later I went down to Rotterdam, which was, then, still in ruins - one mass of rubble; a real mess - bombed to eternity by the Germans during World War II. I went to a little a village out of Amsterdam where they still wore clogs, still made cheese and still carted the cheese around on wooden sleds. I took in the flower markets, and went to the 'Concertgebouw' Theatre to listen to the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. Magnificent.

This was at a time when the East Indies were breaking up, Indonesia had become independent and the Dutch were being booted out. Holland had a sizeable Indonesian population. Everyone rode bicycles - thousands of bicycles! There were trams and bicycles. Wherever I went I caught the Number Two Flat Feet - the only way to see a city is to walk its streets.

On that first day, I returned in the early evening. I climbed the three flights of stairs to my little room, There, beside the bed, was a little vase with a posy of flowers . My landlady, who must have been 65 or 70 - I mentioned that she had a struggle to climb those stairs, took the trouble to find a little vase and a posy of flowers and climbed those three flights of stairs, just to make that room a little bit more pleasant. It's acts of kindness such as this, which give one faith in human nature. That is an act I have never forgotten.

Oslo

I also did a stint in Oslo, working in the City office and out at the airport. The airport was built out into the fiord. It had a limited runway, built for small aircraft. It could handle a loaded DC3. When DC4s came in, a loaded DC4, was unable to take off because of insufficient runway.



Amsterdam. 1948



Point Duty! Amsterdam. 1948

What used to happen was that they'd fly into Fornebu, off load and strip the aircraft of all its passengers and freight, The aircraft took off empty, to Gardamoen, which was an old German airstrip used for landing bombers, up in the mountains and an hours drive out of Oslo.

That's where passengers departed from on the bigger aircraft, making air travel difficult. It's been solved since, of course.

On my first night in Oslo, I stayed at a little hotel opposite the Royal Palace (the Sostren Larsen's Hotel) It was at that hotel that I came face to face with my first Scandinavian Doona. I'd never seen one before. What was this enormous great 'airship' lying on top of the bed?

I poked it. There was nothing else. No top-sheet, no blankets.

"This isn't going to be too warm." I thought.

When I was ready for bed, I undressed down to my underwear and socks, put my pyjamas on and dressing gown and threw my over coat over the top of this airship and anchored the sleeves under the mattress so that it wouldn't roll off. Very gingerly I climbed under it. I managed to get under without mishap, but very concerned with an outcome, I must have drifted off to sleep, only to awake a couple of hours later *roasting!*

I quickly learned, first hand, about doona's. It had settled down and filled every 'crook and nanny'. Stripping back to pyjamas, I spent the rest of that (and subsequent) nights, in delicious comfort.

In those days, London - Oslo was a seven hour flight in a DC3, with 18 passengers - the rest fuel! Today it is a 50 minute (if that) flight.

When I say, "18 Passengers and fuel" I should explain that because of the distance involved maximum fuel is loaded. To compensate for the weight of the extra fuel, there was a sacrifice of passengers (reduced from 23 to 18; The term "cabin-loaded fuel" does not imply that raw fuel is placed *in* the passenger cabin, but that the sacrifice of passengers equals the additional fuel capacity, which is contained in 'wing pods' at the tips of the mainplane.

The next day, I discovered that Oslo is a beautiful city with a beautiful harbour.

I had a chance to look around the City. Just outside Oslo is the Vigeland Park named after Gustav Vigeland, the Norwegian sculptor.

The centre piece of the park is an oblong wall standing about three feet high and divided into panels depicting the life of a human being. The first panel shows a newly born baby in swaddling. You work your way round the four sides and eventually come to the last panel which shows a very old person, laid out in a state of death.

I had the opportunity to visit the small village stave church, built of wood, to cater for 50 or 60 people, also the Viking museum and Stavanger Fjord.

Rome

I went to Rome in the Holy Year, 1950. That's where I saw what I term 'The Great Catholic Fiddle'.

They were lining them up in Janiculum Square, selling them 'genuine chips of the Cross' - about the size of a matchstick - for 500 lire. If you wanted it blessed (dipped in "Holy Water"), it cost another 1000 lire.

We're talking about one and sixpence, but we are also talking about two million pilgrims, so it mounts up. I stood watching this and I was quite intrigued. As fast as they could, they took the money, dipped the wood in the bucket and blessed it. Eventually, the bucket ran dry! The old priest held the queue up, took the bucket across to a tap, filled the bucket and started again. That was the 'Holy Water'?

I thought, "What a damned swindle." I was reminded of the farce of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve and Easter at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

How many dips of the bucket does it takes to empty it? At 1500 lire a dip, it must be the most expensive bucket of water in the world. Certainly is was a great revenue source.

I enjoyed Rome, particularly the Old City. I also managed to get down to Naples - Napoli. but sadly, ran out of time to see Pompeii.



Youth, Gustav Vigeland.



Conversion to Islam 1948

I hadn't committed myself to becoming a Moslem until June 1948.

It was something I mulled over for a long, long time - having chucked the whole church thing away when I was 13; having seen the whole palaver in the Holy Land. By then I knew a fair bit about Judaism and Islam, so I had three choices. Which way do I go? I decided the most sensible and practical of the three was Islam. I've often wondered, in light of the fact that I became a Baha'i, why I spent those ten years in Islam. Now, its coming out when I'm doing my research on the indications of the Faith in al Qur'an. It's much easier if you know something about it. There must have been a reason. You can't always see the purpose at the time. Now, in the year 2000, it grows clearer why one took that path.

I did not like being in spiritual limbo. Something was missing and one felt that it was past high time to do something positive about the situation. Having made the decision, I quietly went to Woking, saw the Imam, had a talk to him and ended the afternoon by reciting the 'Shuhada' that is, the declaration that I would accept the concept of God (Allah), and Muhammad as the Prophet of God.



Roy and Jean Wallen, 1948

How I met Roy

In 1942 while I was still doing military training, I was stationed at a tank recovery unit. I was on barrack room duties, cleaning the joint up.

Roy Wallen lobbed in, posted to the same unit. "Is there a bed here mate?"

I said 'yes' and that was the start of a friendship that has lasted all these years.

I've often wondered why we struck a friendship which has lasted so many years. Somehow, we clicked. We struck up a keen friendship in six weeks. We both got our marching orders and Roy got shipped out to Gibraltar - he was REME - as a Batman to some Colonel. Trust Roy to find a cushy job!

I went to the Middle East, but we kept in contact through writing. He got demobbed in '45, but I 'soldiered on' until '48.

He asked his sister to write to me. When I was leaving Palestine in 1948, I wrote to him and he knew I was coming home. He invited me up to Crewe to stay a few days and meet his family and ,of course, his sister, Sylvia - Sue.

I got home in June 1948. We got married in August 1948. That was quick. I don't think I decided to get married. I think it was a collusion between Roy and his sister! I suppose he wanted his mate in the family. It was quick. But it wasn't a 'gunshot wedding' but for some reason it happened quickly. I learned the lesson to take my time. 'More haste, less speed'!

We got married in Crewe at a local church. I had made my decision about becoming a Moslem at that stage. I just went to a church because that's where one got married. I wasn't particularly interested in where it was. It could have been a registry office for all I cared.

Roy was preparing to pack his bags with his new bride, Jean, and come to Australia in 1950. He and Jean sponsored us and we come out in 1951.

Jean

When I first met Jean, they were not yet married. He had gone to her home to bring her over for tea, and on the way there was a cloudburst and the pair of them were soaked to the skin. I can still see Jean, dressed for the occasion, standing at the door, clothes soaked and her hair washed out and looking like a drowned pup! Poor kid. The problem was sorted out, but she was not at all happy about it. Down to tea in an old dressing gown (while her clothes were dried in front of the fire.) I have a very special corner in my heart for Jeanie, and we have always been very close.



Sylvia Wallen, 1948



Wedding, 14 August, 1948

Wages Freeze

When I came back from Rome, they transferred me back to Kensington Air Station. I went onto the public counter doing bookings. But the problem was that they froze wages in 1950 and I was stuck on 5 pounds a week less tax. We were living at Twickenham. By the time one paid bus fares and rent, one had 30 bob a week to live on. No good at all.

International Job Offers

It was at this stage that the Crown offered me a posting at Sierra Leone and I had to make a choice. I decided that I was both intrigued by and liked the air travel business much better, because at least you were helping people and not running round trying to hassle them for misdemeanors and traffic offenses. So I opted to stay with the airline and stayed in the Travel Profession for the rest of my working life.

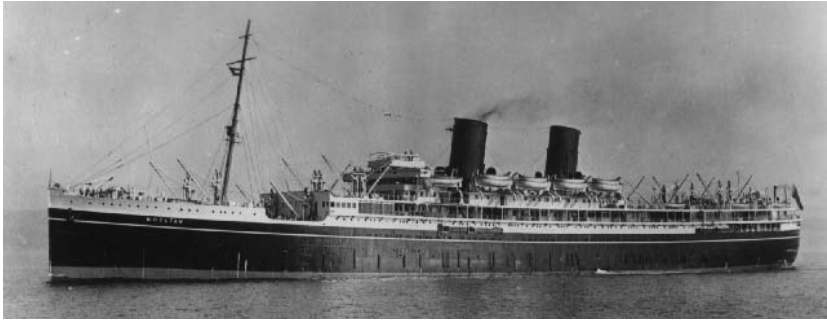
I gave my Police career away and stayed in travel for the next forty years. I often wonder what would have happened if I'd have taken Sierra Leone. If I had gone on with a police career I would have been promoted up through the ranks and at the age of about 45 I could have been retired, as a number of the lads were who followed that career path - and pensioned for life on 5000 Sterling per year - and still young enough to take up a position in commerce or industry.

Some did take the police path as career policeman. My very good friend Paddy Stewart did. He married Hanna - who was a Jewess from Czechoslovakia - in Palestine, and was obliged to leave the force. He went back to Belfast, and he was home less than 12 months when the Mau Mau thing blew up in Kenya, and he was offered a posting to Kenya. He wound up as Superintendent of Transport. That was a big jump from being a British Constable. In Palestine. When his time finished he retired to New Zealand.

I was getting nowhere in terms of advancement. Things were tight and wages were frozen. Christine was born in March 1950. More than



Christine and Sue, 1950



SS Moulton, 1950

half of the wage went in rent and we were living on less than two pounds a week. I cycled everywhere - couldn't afford bus-fares.

Mum got a job at a jewellery shop at Hammersmith Broadway (at Saqui and Lawrence) and learning the jewellery trade until of course she became pregnant and had to give the position away.

I decided to look further afield. So I put in for three jobs - East African Airways based in Nairobi; and British West Indies Airways in Jamaica; and Australian National Airways run by the Hollyman family in Australia.

Whatever came up – that's where we would go.

Australia, it is!

The first one to come good was Australia and probably just as well because the other two airlines folded. I would have been out of my country, high and dry without a job. I guess I was looked after, upstairs, by somebody.

I wrote to Roy saying I'd been offered this job. Having a job to come to I had no difficulty in getting a passage on a ship. He turned the screws very smartly and did a sponsoring job, and we were on the ship in February - the SS Moulton, an old P & O boat. Thirty-six days later we arrived in Adelaide. On 7 March 1951. Christine had her first birthday while crossing the Great Australian Bight.

The first half of the journey was alright via Suez, Aden and Bombay.

We came down through the Bay of Biscay, across the Mediterranean, to Suez, through the Red Sea, Aden, down to Bombay and Colombo, onto Perth and Adelaide.

You get fed up with it by the time you get to Bombay despite the fact you have little ports every two or three days. Colombo to Perth was a nine day bash and we were glad to get off the ship.

Fortunately, we had a cabin to ourselves. A lot didn't, especially those with no children. Those with older children got split up. Six fellows (or women) in six berth cabins. Christine, being a baby, meant we had a cabin to ourselves.

We arrived at Outer Harbour on 7 March, two days after Christine's first birthday, in 1951.

Sue, Christine and I, clock up 50 years in Australia on 5 March, 2001. More than two thirds of my life have been spent in this country. It cost us ten pounds, on the ex-Serviceman's Assisted Passage scheme. As far as I am I concerned, it was the best ten quid I ever invested.

I've never regretted coming to Australia. It has its faults and its problems, but fifty years or more later, it is *still* the lucky country.

South Australia

Having crossed the Great Australian Bight we arrived at the outer harbour, Adelaide, and Roy and Jean met us, having migrated a year before in 1950. They were living in a caravan at the time but found us a billet to go to.

Uncle Roy came on board the ship to welcome us and we were sitting around the cabin waiting for disembarkation with out papers and bits and pieces.

“When you get off the ship, Reg, if anybody says to you ‘my bloody oath’, it means ‘yes’.” That was my first lesson in ‘Strine’. (I’ve learned a lot more since then!!)

We went to our new home and Lloyd and Elva Wright in Albert Park in Adelaide made to feel most welcome. We were there about six weeks until we collected our funds and found we had enough to purchase a small business – a ladies hairdressing salon in Kensington, right opposite Kings College.

I was working at Australian National Airlines and mum had the salon and between us we pulled in enough to survive comfortably – your mum, Christine and I. Thus we started life in Australia.

Australian National Airways

I went to work with Australian National Airlines – ANA – before it became Ansett. That’s where I met Arthur Samuel Anderson being interested in Greek history, mythology, ballet and kindred subjects. Arthur was clerking on the counter two and I was intrigued by this guy that read Greek classics while he had his lunch, when most of the lads would grab a sandwich and nick next door for a couple of beers.

He’d sit and read Greek classics. I thought ‘heres’ someone who’s a bit different’ and Arthur and I became firm mates.



Reg, 1957

Arthur married Joy, a nursing sister and then moved up country where she became matron of a country hospital. It fell apart and they got divorced several years ago but I had a lovely letter from Joy when Arthur died in 1988.

I was working down North Terrace in Adelaide and I got off the tram at Pacific Square near the Post Office. I completely forgot that the midday sun goes southward in the northern hemisphere, and northward in the southern hemisphere.

So having worked out where the sun was I started walking. Eventually I came to South Terrace and I stopped someone and asked directions.

“Where’s North Terrace?”

“Right at the other end of town mate!”

I had it backwards, or upside down.

I spent several months with ANA. It was a totally different operation to BEA which was a volume operation. Here we were booking 20 flights a day and things were very leisurely.

Then I got the offer of a better job with Trans Australian Airways (TAA) which was four doors up the street in North Terrace, so I moved to TAA.

While geography was one of my strong subjects – and I quickly knew the layout of Australia, the South Pacific and New Zealand – I suddenly found how little I knew about geography one day.

And it was one of those days. A guy walked in and he wanted to go to Meekatharra.

“One moment sir.” I dashed down to a mate.

“Frank, where’s Meekatharra?”

“Western Australia mate. TAA in Perth can connect him to Gordon’s Airline.” Fixed.

Two or three hours later a lady walked in and she wanted to go to Coonabarabran.

"One moment madam." I dashed down to a Frank.
"Frank, where's Coonabarabran?"
"NSW. Sydney, Butler. Gordon's Airline." Fixed.
And the rest of the day was regular stuff. Sydney, Melbourne, Perth. It was about 4.30pm and this funny old guy wandered in – rough as guts – wanting to go to Nancicompete.

"Nancy who?"

"Nancicompete."

"Spell it for me."

I get the Gordon's Air Guide out and couldn't find it.

"One moment sir." I dashed down to a Frank, again.

"Frank, I've got a guy who wants to go to Nancicompete. I've looked at the air guide and I can't find it."

"Where?!"

"Nancicompete?"

"Christ I've never heard of it." Frank had a mate sorting mail up at the GPO. It was a pub, a general store and three houses stuck out in the never-never on the Woomera rocket range.

"You'll need a permit to go there Reg because its at Woomera rocket range."

I went back to the guy and asked if he had a permit.

"Yeah, yeah mate' he said fishing it out of his pocket. The guy had a permit entitling him to travel on the Woomera rocket range.

At the end of the day it struck me my lack of knowledge. You don't strike places like Nancicompete when you are doing geography at school in England. You know about Adelaide and Sydney and Canberra and sometimes Mildura. Sometimes large rivers and mountain ranges.

I solved the problem. I got a very detailed map of Australia and at night I would take a state and a foot ruler and I would slowly move the ruler down the state till I got these place names in my mind.

They begin to form patterns. many are based on Aboriginal names



TAA's DC4s landing in the middle of outback 'Woop Woop', South Australia, 1958

and languages peculiar to areas. You begin to note that form similar forms of spelling.

I don't think there are too many places in Australia where I don't know where they are, but I've still got a long way to go to learn about the country I live in.

I also got involved in editing TAA's newsletter, *This Air Age*, which involved a trip to Melbourne once a month to meet with the other representatives of the magazine and work out the next issue.

Islamic Society

When I got back from Palestine, I converted to Islam.

It had been a vast learning curve in the Holy Land, but I was still without an anchor having been rudderless since the age of 13.

I weighed up the various experiences and decided at that stage, Islam was the most practical down-to-earth thing I had come across. It was certainly more practical than the Christian church. So I went down to Woden Mosque in England, made the declaration and became a Moslem.

Of course when we got to Adelaide, I linked up with the mosque in Little Gilbert Street and soon became the foundation president of the Islamic Society of Australia – not for any special reason though - I was the only bloke in the community that spoke English. We had a mixture of people - Yugoslavs, Turks, Albanians, Poles, Middle East, Indonesians - Muslims all of them, but none of them spoke very much English which had made it difficult to cope with the legal jargon when it came to dealing with issues like the incorporation, getting permission to perform marriages and getting the mosque listed on the heritage listing.

But this I was able to do, because English was my mother tongue. But that's the only reason I got to be Foundation President of the Islamic Society. It wasn't because I was a good Moslem, or special.

And I wasn't knowledgeable or an Iman. They had an Iman.

Skarkar's dead now, but he was a wonderful man. But I was useful. I was good for the Moslems in that sense. It was a talent they could use and the flow on benefits exist to this day.

I got very involved in a number of legal issues with the mosque.

It started out someone was trying to acquire the property and turn it into a service station. We spoke to the authorities and attained recognition for it under National Heritage as a protected site.

We also established the South Australian Islamic Society – the first in Australia – and it eventually became an incorporated body in 1952, so we then had legal protection for the property and the community. The Islamic Society in Adelaide still functions however the old Iman is now gone.

We had children's classes.

We pushed a little harder and won the right to perform marriages in the mosque under Muslim conditions in the mosque. Our first wedding was between a Lebanese fellow and Australian girl. Arthur Anderson got married in the mosque too.

A lot of Muslims used the mosque in Adelaide and it became an anchor for them such as the swag of Colombo Plan students. Australia was involved in educating students from Indonesia, Malaysia, Ceylon.

We had a visit from Lieutenant General Mohommed Yusef the High Commissioner of Pakistan when he came to Adelaide. We sent him greetings and he came down to the mosque.

It was about this time – 1955 – that Phillip was born.

Phillip loved this old bloke, and the old bloke loved him. Isit Khan, great guy. We called him Tucker Man because he was the bloke who did all the cooking for the three of them.

"Me, Tucker Man." Phillip loved feeding his guts and Tucker Man loved feeding him.

It became a very sizeable community. We observed the various Holy days and festivals of Islam – Eid el-Fitr, Eid el-Adha, Ramadan. I also had some association in the course of travel, with Muslims who

frequented the mosques in Perth or Broken Hill, but without a doubt, Adelaide was the largest Muslim community in Australia at that time.

Now we have close on half a million to a million Muslims in this country with mosques in Port Kembla, Melbourne, Canberra and so on.

The whole thing is considerably larger and better organised than it was in the 1950s.

The history of Islam in Australia is quite interesting.

The community was pretty mixed – Albanians, Turks, Poles, Hungarians. We also had the remnants of the old Afghans who came out in the 1890's by Sir Thomas Elder of Elder Smith fame to open up the inland of Australia - about three or four very old men by that time then. They were living at the mosque and we looked after them. But even after all those years their English was broken English. They weren't educated men, they were cameleers most of them. Never been to school and couldn't read or write.

As a result of their travels, mosques were opened up in Broken Hill, Perth, Brisbane and then of course when other forms of transport put over, they became obsolete, but most of them stayed on and died in this country because they were here before 1924 and became Australian citizens.

The Ghans, the old Afghans who came from what is now Pakistan and Beligistan shipped out with their high quality baggage camels. Descendants of these camels now run wild in the Northern Territory and we round up the best of them and export them to the Middle East and zoos. We are the major exporter of camels to the world, would you believe?

The breed has remained fairly pure. And Australian Muslims are the fine tip of the crescent moon.

My wanderings in Melbourne and Sydney allowed me to visit libraries like the Thomas Mitchell Library and research Islam in Australia – the basis of a major article. It was interesting what has come out of that. Things that you might not suspect.

In the 1930s there were a couple of refrigerator ships at anchor out in Port Phillip Bay. They couldn't be used because the Iman who worked at the abattoirs and supervised the killing of the meat under Islamic law, for the Middle East market, had died. So without a new Iman they couldn't perform the proper procedures for the killing of meat under Islamic law so these refrigerator ships sat out in the bay until an Iman could be found.

It happened in New Zealand too.

There was an old bloke at Alice Springs who reckoned he was 60 years of age – but must have been 80. He had a job sweeping the Alice Springs train station. He had a humpy three miles out of town and one day he didn't turn up for work. The second day they were a little worried. On the third day he didn't show up they sent the police out to see what had happened.

They found the old guy had died and under his bed was a trunk and inside the trunk were at least ten years of pay packets that had never been opened. Hundreds of pounds. They advertised in the papers to find relatives of which none came forward. It ended up that the whole lot went to South Australia Consolidated Revenue and a grant of \$300 pounds – a lot of money then and a fraction of the money they found under his bed – was allocated for repairs to the mosque.

There were many interesting individuals who opened up the best trade routes across the Nullarbor, across the Birdsville Track and up through the Alice to Darwin.

The western side of the Adelaide cemetery used to be a camel park stabling over 4000 camels that would get loaded up with goods before fanning out through the outback.

I haven't got the original article which I sent to Bill Peach and my one regret is I only made one copy of it. He never sent the article back but it did represent several months of research at the various reference libraries in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide as well as visits to the various individuals.

We decided we might try and get some publicity for the community to attract the attention of those Muslims who had difficulty with the language or weren't aware there was a mosque in Adelaide. We invited the News which was then run by Rupert Murdoch who was the editor in chief – he didn't own it then. He sent a photographer and reporter down and the article he produced was very short, accurate and very good.

The photograph was of dozens of pairs of shoes outside the mosque. You go into the mosque and you take your shoes off. There were lots of interesting shots to take, but the photographer chose this photo and published it with the caption, "Can you find yours?"

I had a small battle with the News and Rupert Murdoch and said this was grossly insulting and we did get an apology and a picture of the mosque and we picked up over half a dozen people who had no idea there was a community in Adelaide. So it turned out quite good.

I never regretted the years I spent within the folds of Islam.



May Jane and Sidney Wallen

Nana and Pop

Mum had sold the salon and we moved into a house in Edwards Town. Phillip, born in the hospital in Glenelg, was a little fellow. Christine was just starting school and it was not long after that, that Nana and Pop Wallen arrived.

Sidney had retired from the railways and there was nothing to stay in Britain for because your mum and Roy were here.

Nana May Jane Wallen never ever took to this country but Sidney John loved it. He loved the people but mother hated it. She thought all Australians were brash ignorant people. She was a very prejudiced woman who was convinced that the neighbours across the street were watching her – spying on her. She hated the neighbours.

She had never ever been and spoken to the neighbours across the street and yet she hated them! Funny old girl. She died in Adelaide and Sidney John died on the Gold Coast in the Golden Home for the

Aged and he's buried down the coast or he was cremated and Roy has both their ashes. He has a very macabre wish that when your mum goes and he goes, all four ashes will be placed in the same urn. God knows who's going to keep them!

If they come to me they'll get emptied out in the rubbish tip. I couldn't be bothered to keep bloody ashes!

That's your Uncle Roy. He's got some bloody queer ideas too but he's very much like Nana Wallen. Your mum is very much like her father. Roy is his mothers son full of little hang ups and prejudices that she had for no apparent logic or reason.

Job Hopping

Spencer Wilson died which created a battle for senior clerk and there were four of us who were rotating acting senior clerks each fortnight. This went on and on and on for weeks. We were doing the job with all the responsibility for it, but not getting a senior clerks pay.

So we all trooped into the traffic superintendents office on a Saturday morning with the complaint and the message was to do something about the problem.

"We're fed up with this. Why don't you make a senior clerk so that we know where we stand?"

Dick Eagen wasn't at all cooperative. I remember Dick's words. "I crack the whip round here and you jump. If you don't want to jump then get out of the paddock."

So three of us resigned on the spot.

One guy went to Ansett Airways which was a separate company with nothing to do with ANA. Sir Reg Ansett eventually bought out ANA and it became Ansett Airways. The original Ansett was a small operation that ran a DC3 from Hamilton to Melbourne. He'd actually started out pre-war with coach travel.

Another bloke, Ian McLaughlin went to shipping and the remaining bloke was made senior clerk in charge of nobody. And he was still a

senior clerk 32 years later, when I retired. That's as far as he got. Dead man's shoes in TAA.

Liz Cornell had just started up a travel agency, and was looking for a sales manager so I joined Liz. She had more money than sense. Her father was Fred Cornell who had migrated donkeys years before and established a business. Fred built it up and when he died, the whole thing was sold to a corporation and the money was split three ways between mother and two daughters so they were all millionaires.

Liz didn't know what to do so she decided to go into travel, but she didn't have a bloody clue. But I did a couple of trips to New Guinea courtesy of Liz Cornell Travel.

I left Liz Cornells and went to Kings Travel.

Freemasonry

Freemasonry is a very ancient practice. It is condemned in some quarters because it is a secret society though I would describe it as a society with secrets.

Its always been condemned by the Catholic church and yet many Catholics are Freemasons. Sidney John was a Freemason, though not a practicing Catholic but he and his brothers Len and Mack were both well advanced in freemasonry.

Len was a Member of the Grand Laws of Great Britain. Mack was a past master of the Grand Laws of Great Britain. Yet he was Catholic.

There's a lot of hoo hah about it.

Basically its an esoteric spiritual teaching if its run properly, but unfortunately freemasonry like so many others has become a club where you scratch my back and I scratch yours. A lot of people join freemasonry lodges and do their first, second and third degrees and that's the end of it. It pays dividends but there are others.

I was interested in furthering my knowledge so I went on and did the first three degrees, the fourth degree, then the fifth degree and the

sixth degree which is the royal arch degree and on to the Rose Croit.

The first three degrees are based on the building of King Solomon's Temple as portrayed in the Old Testament. They are not interested in building temples, but use the symbolism to advance a persons thinking of right living, right thinking, right being.

There are several branches of freemasonry. Some go into the mysteries. Others into the history. The symbolism of freemasonry - Quatre Coronate- which means four crowns - is a research lodge in London which I managed to visit on one occasion and it was concerned with the history.

The regimental lodges scattered throughout the Empire went wherever the regiment went.

There was also a thing called the Dorma Circle which concentrated on the symbolic and spiritual aspects of freemasonry.

But so many of the blue lodges - I call sausage machines - they churn out first, second and third degree Freemasons. There is a percentage of them that go through the chairs and learn the rituals. The majority of them don't. I got a bit fed up with this and in South Lodge, St Peters Number 47 - my mother lodge - I was far more interested in the psychic and spiritual research side of freemasonry. We wanted to form a research lodge - purely research nothing else but Grand Lodge wouldn't allow that. They insisted we take four candidates at least so that Worshipable Master is not denied his privilege of working his degree. Fair enough.

So we put four first degrees through together, and two second degree together and two third degrees through together which gave us four nights, then there was the installation night when the new Master was installed and the rest of the nights were devoted to research.

The Master would call upon a mason in the lodge to carry out research.

I was called upon twice. The first time to do a talk on the symbolism of white gloves. Freemasons wear evening dress and white gloves and

regalia. That was very interesting because I had white gloves and I put them on and thought little about it. But what was the history of white gloves?

I was asked to give a talk on the ancient Gods of Egypt. Took a bit of research.

Freemasonry didn't help me job wise because I never used it that way. I never put they hard word on people and say I'm a mason, you're a mason. I could never do that and from a business point of view it didn't help me very much at all. But spiritually and symbolically it helped me a lot.

Then of course when I became a Baha'i I could not continue with freemasonry because Baha'is will ... not against the teachings of the Faith.

They agree with the broad teachings of freemasonry but the central pivot of the Baha'i Faith is the unity of mankind - the oneness of humanity - unity. Freemasonry is not united. There are people whom reject freemasonry but there are also people freemasonry rejects.

When you do the first degree you remove your clothes and put on a gown and remove your jewellery and watches. the symbolism of this is the symbolism of your birth - you come in with nothing.

A practicing Sikh must wear about his person certain things - three of which are metal - his dagger, his comb and his bangle. To take those off he would have to deny his faith as a Sikh. Since he won't take them off he can't enter a masonic lodge. He is not poor and penniless. He is carrying certain valuables which he will not give up. So Sikhs are not accepted by freemasonry.

The rights and wrongs of freemasonry are not a concern to the Baha'i faith but the fact that humanity is put outside the scope of unity does concern them. So for this reason freemasonry is incompatible, so I had to make a choice.

It was extremely easy because I could see the breadth and the scope of the Baha'i faith was greater than the breadth and the scope of freemasonry. So I gave it up.



'Ridgey didge' publicity shot for a bush tour of Wilpena and the Flinders Ranges, South Australia, 1957.

I still have my regalia and I could still visit a masonic lodge but I have no wish to do so now after 30 odd years.

I do find it easy to teach the Baha'i faith to Freemasons along the lines of masonic teachings. They see the points immediately. It does have its uses.

Kings Travel

I was ready for the agency field getting a pretty good grounding in the airlines – BEA, ANA and TAA – only concerned with air services and rarely packaged holidays or flight deals. If there were packaged deals the airline ran them in conjunction with a ground operator – a hotelier, resort, whatever. You only dealt with one thing.

The agency dealt with everything - rail, shipping, accommodation, tours, car hire - a much wider field with more choices.

When you work for a carrier, your choice is that carrier. When you are an agent you can make choices along the lines of what is better for the

client. – airline A versus airline B. And the treatment of agents was entirely different. They gave away all sorts of things. They sent you on tours and educationals to get you to sell their product.

I got the offer of a job from Len King as sales manager at Kings Travel to develop the accounts side of the business. I kept moving up. It wasn't so much as selling travel but the travel agent services.

I aimed at 1000 accounts and ended up with 1170. So exceeded my own target and Kings got to the point where they could diversify into international tours. And we were operating tours to New Zealand, Fiji, Indonesia and Singapore.

That was to grow even further as we expanded into the States and Europe. Kings was run by a father and two sons – Roy had been in the navy during the war, Brian had was a little too young for war service but had seen military service on the home front; and the old man, Len had originally served with the Australian Light Horsemen in Palestine and one of the reasons I go the job. We became very close. He'd also been a Freemason and I encouraged him into the research lodge I spoke of earlier. He came back into the lodge as the Treasurer and I was the Secretary, so we had quite a bit to do with each other.

There was the first AFTA Convention in Sydney at the Chevron in Kings Cross and we went. Christine went and stayed with Marge Kirk and Phil stayed with a family in Glenelg. I'm not sure if Andrew was on the scene.

That was amusing. I was quite involved with AFTA and went to all the conventions. And the most important part wasn't the meetings, but the getting together afterwards. A great place to make contacts. They ran hospitality suites. The company's hired a room and put on drinks. So you'd go wandering around to the hospitality suites meeting people.

Mum decided she'd had enough to drink. So she ordered tumblers of water. Next year when I went - she didn't come with me - somebody remarked, "What happened to that bird you were with who was

drinking those pints of gin? She's not here this year!"

I ended up as the secretary of tour operators of AFTA.

Len again during this period offered me a number of educationals. Lufthansa took me off for a fortnight to Germany. Air India took me on my first trip to India. I went to New Zealand though I had already been a couple of times. I made my first visit to the States. It was in this year we also acquired PoliTours in London and acted as their main distribution point in Australia.

That resulted in going to London for a four week stint with PoliTours – which operated student tours before the war and post war developed into the general market – to see how they operated. They ran packages to France, Switzerland and Germany. We were their agents in Australia, which took me all the way around Australia - Darwin, Perth, Brisbane - visiting the agents.

That was my first trip back to England in 1957.

There were four reps - one from South Africa and two from the States and myself. It meant we worked through all aspects of the company and spent Christmas there.

Poli offered to arrange accommodation for me and I wrote back and said I had friends I could stay with, but in fact I was actually staying with mum.

They also assumed – indicating by their attitude– that it was my first trip to England from Australia so I shut up and never said a word.

They took us to all of the attractions – that were always available – that I had never seen! I saw the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace, I went to Madam Tussards, the Tower of London, the stately homes of Berkleyshire and Buckinghamshire. It was great, but all the time biting my tongue.

"No I haven't been there before." I was innocent and playing this game! Marvellous.

During the course, everyone was introduced as Mr Smith, Mr Jones and Mr Johnson. People who had worked with each other 25 years

were still calling each other Mister. Which is very un-Australian.

“What’s the J stand for?”

“John.”

“Righto John.”

By the time I left they were all on a Christian name basis. Mr Archibald had been there since 1936 and was almost remote. I went to see him one day.

“Archie I’ve got a problem.”

“What’s that, Reg isn’t it?”

“Well Archie.”

When I left everyone was calling him Archie.

We’d break for lunch and go across to Lion’s Corner, Oxford Street. I went over there and somewhere there was a holdup in the queue. We only wanted tea but someone was waiting for a sandwich to be made. So under the rails and across to the till.

Pandemonium broke out! Caused a bloody riot and the manager came out. It was very un-British to break the queue. They still queue like they did during the war. It became a tradition.

I got invited - along with a fellow from Los Angeles and a guy from South Africa - to see the Changing of the Guard in Whitehall.

I said to mum, “Would you like to see it?” Bred and born in London in 1894 and had never seen the Changing of the Guard! So I took her.

We got a good position where mum could see everything. She was a little dot, but we got a good possie. Mum had her nose up the horse’s arse but she could see everything and she was thrilled to bits.

The new Guard appeared; gleaming breast plate, sword, brass helmet, the works and a voice over the other side of the quadrangle yelled, “Jesus bloody Christ, there’s Ned Kelly!”

Mother said, “Who’s Ned Kelly dear?”



Mum and I went to see the changing of the guard, on my visit to England in 1957.

The staff party on Christmas Eve at which the four of us were guests of honour. My contribution was Waltzing Matilda. When the party broke up, the four of us decided to have some more fun and we wandered up to Regent and Oxford Streets and we started talking about two up.

So on the round about in the middle of Oxford Circus there the four of us were and I'm teaching the others to play two up. And all of a sudden there was the addition of a pair of highly polished black boots, which lead up to blue trousers, silver buttoned jacket and helmet.

It was a London copper.

"Good evening chaps, what are you doing?"

"I'm teaching them to play two-ups, do you want to be in it?"

"No fellas, its not pay day till Friday, good night." And he turned and left. That broke the whole thing up - the psychology of the British Police.

"If this had been Kings Cross, they wouldn't have asked you what you were doing. They would have nabbed you, thrown you in a paddy wagon and run you in for illegal gambling."

The British Constable decided we were sober and harmless and left. That was the end of the evening.

At the end of the course, the three others went back to their native countries and I went on to spend a fortnight in Europe to look at properties, hotels and tourist facilities of Poli Tours.

I travelled by rail through Europe through France, Belgium, Holland, Austria and Switzerland.

I finished in Italy. At each point I linked up with the Poli rep in each town and checked out the sites and the tours available. I got to see Paris, Brussels, Vienna, Zurich, Lucerne, Florence and Rome.

In Paris, I had to come to terms with the traffic being on the opposite side of the road and flowing in the opposite direction. I stepped off a kerb and a taxi screamed past blasting his horn and hurled an outpour

of abuse. My guide and mentor Hans Bok and roared his head off.

“Didn’t you hear what the taxi driver said? As he screamed past he yelled out, “Give my regards to Mademoiselle, your mother!”

When I got to Switzerland I was met at Lucerne by the courier, John Schapel and it was freezing cold morning – minus degrees – and we went over the station bar and downed a Kirsch. It was like fire water. We continued to the office. John was prattling away in peculiar but fluent English. Swore like a trooper and I remarked on this.

“How did you learn to swear like that?”

Turned out he was a stocker in the British Navy, for twelve years, of all things. The Swiss have a navy of four gun boats on the lakes but not a navy as such.

I was there for about four days and he invited me to his house for a meal one night. I knock on the door and this big red faced woman opened the door.

“Eee, tis good to see thee!”

A broad north country accent on the side of a Swiss mountain.

I look a bit taken aback.

Later I said, “How come?”

“Oh, I married t’im, when he were’t in t’navy.”

“Where do you come from?”

“Yorkshire, the Port of Hull.”

Delightful couple with a couple of sons.

So on through Florence and Rome and back to Australia. But that gave me a great insight into forming tours. I knew how they were put together and costed. It was very good training.

Through all these visits and journeys I was able to explore. I got to see Hindu temples. I visited churches and cathedrals. I experienced the scripts and practices of the Buddhists and their temples. I met up with Parsees in Bombay and look at the Zoroastrian faith. I gathered all

this information and the more I gathered, the less differences I could see in the various faiths.

There was this golden thread of truth of sameness running through them. The messages were the same – the brotherhood of man, love, honesty, truth, compassion – all the same message. I'd heard it at Sunday School when I was a kid.

At that stage Chrissie was in primary school. Chris was a nice little girl. I can always remember we were invited to tea by Jumbo Lambert and his wife. Jumbo got his name because he was a Scotsman with a big gut, but hell of a nice bloke. Ex-merchant navy and we worked together on the counter at TAA.

We had them over to tea one time and they reciprocated.

His wife collected lots of little ornaments and figurine dolls and she was frightened out of her life because we had a daughter.

She relayed this fear to mum. "Don't let her touch things."

Mum said she wouldn't but that didn't calm her. But after tea we were sitting talking and Christine was wandering round, hands behind her back, never touched a thing.

Jumbo said, "It was a real pleasure to have your little girl with us. We've never seen a girl so well behaved."

I think she knew she was in deep bloody strife if she dared touch anything but she was as good as gold.

She was very well behaved. The discipline was there.

Phillip on the other hand was a bugger. Into everything. He was too young for Christine and too old for you. Not how I see it! You got all of the attention from Christine as baby brother. He had that attention but then suddenly Andrew appeared and he got dropped. He got dethroned.

When Christine started school, she loved school. She thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. She adored school and when she come home she'd set up all her dolls and teddy bears and Phillip.



Phillip and Christine, 1959



Phillip, Christine and Andy, 1959

And of course if anyone got their knuckles wrapped for talking it was Phillip. If anyone got their knuckles wrapped for not getting it right it was Phillip. And Phillip hated school. Right from the very word go before he even went to school. He didn't want 'school.'

Now I admit that you mother and I were very wrong on this. We'd sneak up to the window and kill ourselves laughing at this because it was highly amusing.

"Come on Phillip" Whack whack. "Hold your hand out."

She never hit him hard enough to hurt him - it was always the flat of his hand - but it was enough to put him off and the fact that he was the object of amusement we realised long afterwards when we discussed it, we realised we should never have done that.

OK, you've done it and the damage is done. He like me is a loner. He's in his profession and doing well but he's a loner. And that's the story of it.

Someone living in a caravan invited mum over for afternoon tea and of course Phillip. Phillip was very good and sat there being behaved but eventually it got to the point where there was a piece of cake left on the plate and the lady offered it to him. He looked at the lady and then at mum and said, "I may as well fill my guts while I'm here."

Mum wanted to crawl under the bench and die.

But Phil has also said to me since, that while he resented the discipline, thought I was a bit hard, said now he has no trouble disciplining himself and his staff.

But at least you knew where you stood.

I used my mother's technique - tell you once, tell you twice, third time watch out!

My mum said, "Don't do that."

"Righto mum."

"Don't do that."

"OK."

Third time she got you by the hairs behind the ears and hauled you

up on tippy toes and it hurt but you knew what it was for. Didn't do it again. She only ever thrashed me once. She never forgave herself. It took me a long time to forgive her.

This is going back to the thirties in High Wickham. I must have been eight or nine. Still at primary school. I had to pick up the Radio Times and her women's magazine on the way home past the paper shop. I was reading the thing while I was walking home and she caught me. I was dawdling along and overdue so she came out to see where I was.

She grabbed the first thing that came to hand which happened to be a pea stick and thrashed me until the pea stick was in pieces. Boy did she hammer me. Never forget it.

She did it because I was late and I think she was relieved when she realised I wasn't in trouble. So she vented her 'relief'.

I had welts for days. She was worried. Funny way of showing it.

That was only time I recall she was physically thrashing me.

She realised what she had done and never did it again.

I've had a couple of swipes across the face, even as an adult.

I was home one time and got up and made a cup of tea.

"Good morning Little Helen, how are you?"

Wham! Straight across the chops. I had finger prints for a couple of days.

What did I do.

She apologised later. "I shouldn't have done that but don't take liberties with my name."

She was a stickler for discipline. You say you're going to do something you do it.

I made a lunch one time and had to run out, so I, left the dishes in the sink. Boy did she give me the rounds of the kitchen when I got back. "Don't you dare leave my kitchen in a filthy order."

But that was her strict domestic service training. She was years in domestic service. The discipline of domestic service was very stiff. That's why she ran a good home. That's why she didn't stand

any nonsense even if it was her only son, and looking back I don't regret it.

I might have been hostile and upset at it at the time, but looking back I've been eternally grateful that I had that self-discipline.

I know when I joined up, having to live with a six foot bed space in a barrack room was no problem to me at all.

I'd been bought up to be tidy. If I left things lying around, she'd throw them out the window and they'd be lying on the lawn, when I came home from school. And tough cheddar if it happened to rain!

I'm tidy now. It's automatic. I get up in the morning. I make my bed, I sweep my floors.

Its routine and discipline. I've never regretted it. Good training. I learned to do a bit of cooking. I learned to sew on buttons and darn socks. I've been eternally grateful. I'm self supporting. I don't need anyone to come in and do anything for me.

Rona said, "You manage very well. You're always neat and tidy."

I had two lots of training. One was mother in the domestic service who trained me; and the second was the discipline of Her Majesty's Forces.



Me and Dad just before he went back to England, Adelaide, 1957.

Dad's Visit 1957

Dad decided to pay us a visit and came out here to South Australia in 1957. Jessie didn't come with him to Australia because she was in California visiting her kids.

It wasn't a question of whether I agreed or not. He wrote and said flatly he was coming. He was on 'such and such a ship and he would arrive on such and such harbour at a certain time' and that was it.

Anyway he trucked a Player piano with him so he could sell it and pay for his return to great Britain. But nobody would buy the bloody thing.

"I'll have to go and find myself a job," he said.

He tried to get a job and in 1958, when he was 66. He sought various

interviews and eventually he picked up his umbrella and pin stripe suit and disappeared.

He arrived on time for the interview and he sat there and sat there and sat there. Eventually he got fed up with this and left.

He said to the secretary, "If this is the way your company works, I do not wish to be part of it." Then he turned on his heel and walked out.

I didn't know about this at the time but some months later I happened to make a call on this firm and I got to see the head serang and he said, "Priestley? I had a bloke by the name of Priestley come here looking for a job a few months ago. Are you related to him?"

"I don't know if any other Priestley's in Adelaide sir." (He'd gone home by then.)

"He was an old bugger. Retired. I got caught up on the phone and I had to keep him waiting so he told my secretary what I could do with my job and pissed off."

"Oh well."

But that was father. He thought he was God Almighty.

"I can take the firm over. You will do as you're told." No way!

He was a member of the Royal Anti-Diluvial Order of the Buffalos, (which was poor man's Freemasonry). Anti-delusional! He'd been in this for years and had become 'Sir 'Alick Priestley.

When I knew he was coming I said, "Bring your regalia, we have Buff Lodges here. It will give you an intro to meet people and perhaps make your visit more interesting."

After two visits he was telling them how to run their lodge and they told him to piss off! He was a visitor.

"If you don't like it sir, don't come back." Typical Australian bluntness - if you don't like it piss off. He got most upset.

I asked him what was wrong. It was something they were doing - or weren't doing. Their ritual was wrong.

"This is Australia Dad, they do things differently here. Go along with it. You won't change it. Any more than they go over to England and say we do things differently in Australia."



Me and Dad, 1957.



Fiji, 1959



Fiji, 1959

I don't know whether he saw the logic but it offended his sense of importance. So, no, father and I didn't get on well.

I was working for Kings then. They wanted me to go to Melbourne and open an office. So we packed up and went.

May Jane ended up buying his piano because nobody else wanted it. It cost him his last penny to get back home again. In fact he had to borrow from Jessie to bridge the gap. There was no reciprocal pension agreement between Britain and Australia in those days so he had money piling up in Britain but nothing here.

New Country

Being in Australia had a big influence on me. Lack of formality. It's a totally different situation even though its still 'not what you know but who you know'. But without the obvious bullshit. But I had to learn this lesson.

When I worked at TAA, a bloke came in to see the head booking officer - Frank Lovell. So I bought the guy up to see Frank and I introduced him. "Mr Edgar Wallace this is Mr Lovell." and left them to it.

Later Frank called me up stairs. Boy did he roast me.

"I'm bloody Frank, don't you introduce me as Mr Lovell."

I saw the point. "Lovell is my clan. Frank is me. Out of all that clan I'm the one you're talking to."

At Kings there was the old man and two sons. If you said Mr King, who were you talking to? It had to be Len, Roy or Brian.

Father didn't like that because it robbed him of his title. The first time he went to a Buff meeting he was just "Alick" not "Sir Alick" and 'mate'. Inevitably, it was a bloody disaster.

He was just too old to learn new tricks.

Kings 1958

Kings had a local office in Melbourne and Len asked if I'd be prepared to move to there. Dad was still out visiting from England, so I jumped at the chance to get away from him. We went to Melbourne and Dad's time expired. Nana Wallen bought his piano and subsidised him to get home.

Kings had developed tours to New Zealand and the Red Centre and on the strength of these two tours we decided to open a Melbourne office and trade wholesale through the agents Australia wide.

Kings decided they would try and break further into the New Zealand market but it fell flat on its face mainly because the New Zealand Government Tourist Bureau got frightened by the competition and they cornered the accommodation and left us to fight for the crumbs.

We launched into tours into New Zealand there were very few operators from Australia. It was run by the New Zealand operators like Guthries and Kirra Tours in conjunction with the New Zealand Government.

The powers that be were not happy with the added competition and wrecked the whole deal.

Up to this time the New Zealand Government Tourist Bureau calculated the total number of available hotel beds in New Zealand and divided them fairly equitably among the national tour operators in New Zealand – of course weighted in favour of the local operators.

That meant keeping the lion's share for themselves. They took what they wanted and threw the rest into the kitty. Guthries would run a coach tour and take 25 in one and two in another and we'd have to fight for the remaining seven beds.

And it was a real scramble and a struggle to take whatever was left over.



Fiji, 1959



Iris Hunt from Hunt's Travel, Fiji.

Fourteen or fifteen operators fighting over a dozen beds in one hotel, two in a pub, six beds in one place and 30 in another. You couldn't run a tour like that. If you have 20 people on a tour you need 20 beds in one pub. So outsiders were really stuffed.

There was a rapid get together to sort out the issue but they didn't want us to break into the New Zealand market.

That year the NZGTB had the field entirely to themselves, but out of that came the formation of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) - banding together for our own protection and development along with the Australian Council of Tour Operators.

But that's when Andrew was born. He arrived at the hospital at Fern Tree Gully on Easter Monday, 8 April. Having spent the previous day turning him over - because he'd turned around - he was going to be a breach birth. The doctor and I spent the whole day massaging him back into the right position. Then the next day he came properly. It was a very difficult birth for mum.

We found it almost impossible to break into the New Zealand market under the existing conditions and cut our revenues, and after a few short months, we withdrew back to Adelaide.

Old man King said, "Forget it."

It was too costly a battle.

"Next year maybe." he said.

We eventually liaised with Guthries and they did the ground operation but we put the tours together. That way we got our beds and could operate and for the first time ever, New Zealand Tours had opposition.

The Central Australian tours also collapsed mainly due to bush fires which had burnt out two of the pubs and so there was no accommodation, so nobody could operate tours.

I returned back to Adelaide and I resumed my duties of tour development and planning.

We came back to Norlunga in South Australia when Andrew was



Christine, Phillip and Suetwo weeks after Andy was born, Fern Tree Gully, 1958

about five months old. He had picked up Golden Staff in the Fern Tree Gully Hospital. The titty was huge.

The doctors didn't know what to do about it but an old midwife fixed it by whacking anti-pygitine poltices on it and it exploded. Blew up like a bloody volcano.

It was lethal because the treatment then was very primitive. Now its easy but then is was as dangerous as legionnaires disease is now.

I reached the point where mum was having trouble with the South Australian summer. She couldn't cope. I'd come home and find her flaked out on the floor. Whether she'd been there ten minutes of eight hours I didn't know. Sometimes in awkward positions so it was fairly obvious she had fainted.

The doctors gave her a thorough check up and to put it simply, she seemed to have lost her thermostat and couldn't control her own body during the summer heat.

She spend the days sweating. She'd stopped doing hairdressing. Christine was at school. Phillip was at school and Andrew was at home. She was doing some hairdressing at home like Christine does - neighbours, friends.

We had a business in Kensington, got a good living out of it while we had it and sold it well.

The doctor said there was only one sensible solution: move to a cooler climate where the temperature won't affect her as much.

I ended up leaving Kings and we 'migrated' south to Tasmania.



Andy, South Australia 1959

Tasmania, Melbourne

We went to Tasmania because of Mum's health. Whatever it was, heat or humidity, she couldn't take it and the doctor recommended we move to a cooler climate. So we moved from Adelaide to Tassie.

I had a good friend, Ron Chenery, who was a Senior Clerk with the Tasmania Government Tourist Bureau, next door to the Majestic Hotel in King William Street, Adelaide. Ron had been posted back to Launceston, as Assistant Manager, and offered encouragement and assistance.

We went to Launceston, found a house, shipped our stuff over, moved in and settled down.

But I didn't have a job to go to and for some reason I couldn't get a job. Nobody in the industry wanted a sales rep. I didn't expect any great difficulty but the most important thing at that stage was Sue's health.

Telegraph Printery

One night, Ron and I wound up together at Masonic Club. Over a couple of beers he introduced me to the MHR, John Orchard, a retired school teacher, who had gone into politics and sat in the House of Representatives representing Launceston.

John Orchard owned a publishing house and printery - the Telegraph Printery. He was about to embark on producing a tourist guide book for Tasmania. There hadn't been one since 1936. Things had 'moved' a bit since then, of course.

During the conversation with him, I seeded some ideas from the point of the view of a user. He asked if I'd be interested in doing it.

It involved travelling all over the State, photographing sites, staying at hotels, meeting tour operators. The offer of the job was accepted, doing the donkey work to put this thing together. It was a new challenge.

Here was I, brand new to Tasmania, armed with a letter of introduction from John Orchard MHR and the operative was, 'Go get it.' I took it on and it lasted six months.

I got paid to go all over Tasmania - all the key attractions in the cities and major towns - but also the back blocks. Because he was an MP, it gave me entree into places you couldn't normally get in to - places like the Tarraleah Power Station, down the mines in Queenstown, through Parliament House. It opened all sorts of doors.

For several weeks I travelled all over Tasmania taking photographs and writing copy. That was entree into journalism as a very raw prawn! I did about 90% of the write ups, photos and layouts.

I was also selling advertising as I went along, selling to hotels and motels and service organisations, car hire firms, tourist operators.

At the end of eight weeks I came back to the Telegraph Printery and assembled the guide book. I possess an autographed copy of the finished production.

Tas Bureau

I was then asked by Felix McCallum, the chairman of Tas Bureau - if I would take on the publication of '*Coming Events in Tasmania*' - a quarterly publication distributed nation-wide for the benefit of visitors to the State. The publication was losing money and in danger of closing down. Ron told me about it and I went and saw Felix and convinced him that there was no reason why a thing like that should go broke.

I knew that tourists picked these things up in the hundreds. We had 50 on the counter at Kings Travel and they'd disappear within a week or so. They were an invaluable source of publicity. I had a phone call about a week later asking if I'd be interested in taking it on. I said I'd

do it for 12 months and see how it worked out. At that stage it was 700 pounds in the red.

It was interesting, because as a travel agent, one uses guide books all the time, but I'd never put one together. I increased the amount of advertising; increased the page run from 28 to 40 pages; put more pictures in it; and did four issues for a profit of 970 pounds - after having cleared the 700 pound deficit. The Tourist Commission was very pleased now that it was in the black, and promptly took it over again!

Between the Guide Book and '*Coming Events*' I was really thrown in the deep end, but the experience was invaluable. Out of it came the offer of a position in my more legitimate field.

Devonport

I met the Robinson's who had just started a travel agency in Devonport and I was offered the job as Sales Manager. We moved from Launceston to Devonport. I was working on the Ferry Terminal designing on-the-spot package tours - lasting anything from three to ten days.

You'd meet people coming off the boat and find out what they wanted and phone around and fix up a tour package, then and there. Sometimes you had to send them off on a half day tour and book them into a pub. When they came back, one presented them with the rest of their itinerary. It was a very challenging job to have.

The one's who were amusing were the Americans. Off the Ferry, up to the desk to get a few clues.

"How long do you have in Tasmania?"

"Going back on the Ferry *tonight*."

Their less-than-one-day stay cost them a couple of hundred pounds. They thought they could whiz round the Island State in half a day! This failure to appreciate the size of Australia was a common failure with Americans. Understandably, they would look at their enormous

land mass and then look at what seemed to them to be a small place and trim their time back. Little did they realise that, from North to South, we are about the same depth as the States and slightly wider from East to West.

Many years ago, I met up with a young feller who had come here to have a look at our 'Air-Beef' scheme which was established in various place all over the Continent. He was going to do it three weeks. I asked if I could see his itinerary and I was surprised to see that he held a rail Voucher for a journey from Adelaide to Alice Springs and return the *same day*. Bloody stupid Yankee Agents.

When I told him it was a *three day journey each way* and that the particular place he was to see was a full 24 hour drive from the Alice, he looked quite stunned. I re-hashed the itinerary, and he stayed nearly four months.

The Ferry Terminal was the base of the operations of the '*Princess of Tasmanian*' the first post-war ferry service between Devonport and the Mainland. There had always been some sort of transport, operated by Holyman's (who had operated Australian National Airways) but the new Ferry was also a vehicle carrier which opened up a whole new era of tourism for the State.

How I became a Baha'i

I did a lot of work with the '*North Coast Examiner*', Devonport, shipping their stuff around -handling freight and newsprint and so on. The office manager, Albert Benson, invited me to come to lunch one day and we settled down for lunch.

"What do you know about the Baha'i' faith?"

"*The what Faith?* Never heard of it."

He proceeded to tell me about the Baha'i Faith for about half an hour over lunch.

"What do you think?"



The Princess of Tasmania

"Not much. It sounds like a glorified sect of Islam."

"Do you know something about Islam?"

"Yes, I am a practicing Muslim."

"You didn't tell me that."

"You didn't ask. You assumed that because I was white and English that I was a Christian. Sorry to disappoint you, mate. I became a Muslim many years ago, in 1948. I needed a path that I could walk on." So much for the lunch-time conversation.

I linked up with the local Masonic Lodge. Christine and Phillip were at school, and Andrew had just started kindergarten. We were reasonably comfortable in a rented house on the edge of town in Best Street.

Three months later, Albert invited me to see a travelling teacher from Britain.

"We're running a public meeting. You're the odd man out in Devonport and because you're Muslim and you'd have a different point of view, would you chair the meeting?"

"Sure, I should be pleased to do that for you."

Apart from the Masonic Lodge once a month, there was little to do in Devonport.

I turned up on the due night and met the guest speaker, a retired British Major, Harry Charles, MC and collected a few facts from him so I could introduce him.

Albert said they'd like to tape his talk which presented no problem.

I introduced Harry and left him too it and I went back to the seven-inch-reel tape deck. There was one problem. Harry didn't stand behind the lectern, he walked up and down the stage. Backwards and forewords. Up and down.

I plugged in the ear phones and adjusted volume as he moved towards and away from the microphone. I turn the sound down and as he walked away I turned it up again. Up and down - for an hour and a half. I was listening to sound level I didn't hear a word he said.

I told Albert I would take the tape home and listen to it. If anything was missing, he could re-record it in the morning. I got home around 11.30pm. Everyone was asleep. I set up my machine, plugged in the earphones and played the tape. I played it again, again and again. Three times.

Everyone was in bed asleep and it's nearly midnight. I'm sitting there with the ear phones on listening to the Major's address. By the third time, I'd got it. About five o'clock in the morning the whole room lit up with a brilliant flash. I had arrived at a point where I could develop a stable direction.

This is it! This is where I've been heading for - Freemasonry, the church, Islam - this is it! Everything that I'd learned and picked up, in the years of travel, living with Muslims and Jews and exploring the different faiths - the whole lot came together in a blinding flash of light, all summed up and bought together in the Baha'i faith. Harry's delivery of the Baha'i faith was totally different to Albert Benson's. Keep in mind that it was very much an intellectual acceptance. What I could see was that if this thing worked then I wouldn't have to worry about Christine, Phillip or Andrew having to go off to wars again. It would, straighten out the whole thing - if it worked!

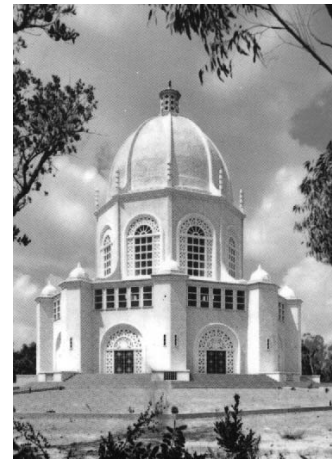
The Oneness of God made infinite sense to me - I'd already decided that years ago - there was only one Creator. I could see the points of agreement - between all religions. The oneness and unity of humanity was a new thought. But it was an intellectual thought. If it worked, it was worth backing it.

I never went to bed that night. I showered and went down to Albert the next day and took the tape with me.

"Beautiful tape. How do I get into this?"

"I'm just off to work, can you meet me this evening? Harry's staying an extra night and he's doing something for the community tonight."

I went to Albert's home in William Street that evening and gave Albert the tape. Harry had decided to stay one more night and was going to show some slides. I arrived quite early and sat talking to



The Bahai Temple, NSW

Harry asking him to explain several points I'd noted from the tape, which he explained quite straight forwardly. He was delighted I was going to accept.

Harry had a screen and a projector set up. I'm sitting beside the table and asking questions and by this time everyone's arrived and sitting down. An opening prayer was read. The lights went out.

The first slide came on and I must have muttered to myself, "Gee I know that place."

Harry heard me.

"You know that place Reg? Tell us what it is."

"That's the Carmelite Monastery at the top of Mt Carmel in Haifa."

"How do you know that place?"

"Because I sat on the roof of that building in 1948 and I watched the Battle for Haifa going on in the city below."

The next shot was again from the Carmelite Monastery looking down the hill. Something was familiar and yet it wasn't! It was a building with a dome on top in a garden. It was the Baha'i Gardens.

"Do you know the gardens?"

"Yes. That's the Haifa Botanical Gardens or something. I used to live in the block of flats immediately adjacent. I used to climb over the wall and sit there on my days off, when I worked for the Refinery. I'd watch the gardeners or read a book, write letters home to my Mother or lie in the sun. It was nice and peaceful. A good place to spend a day off."

The day off being Shabbat - everything shut. Nowhere to go and nothing to do.

I thought they were a public gardens - The Haifa Botanical Gardens or something. What threw me was the Dome surmounting the Shrine of the Bab which wasn't built then. But the square building was a flat roofed building. The super-structure wasn't built until 1951. I couldn't remember a golden dome, simply because, in 1948, it was not there to be remembered!

"Do you realise you were sitting in the grounds of the World Centre

of the Baha'i Faith?"

I am still amazed to this day that I could come so close to something and neither touch it nor be touched by it. At the height of my life now I realise I wasn't ready then. I had to do all those other things first, for some reason or other. It had to be 10 years later. in Tasmania - on the other side of the world. Strange.

I became a Baha'i that night, the 21st October 1958. I signed the card and declared. A few months later the first Spiritual Assembly of Devonport formed (April 20 1959).

We were in Launceston for about eight months, and over two years in Devonport. The company I was working for went bankrupt, mainly due to the stupidity of the owners who spent far more than they earned. They were buying the latest electronic equipment without the business to support the purchase. So I had to make a new decision to move back to the Mainland.

Melbourne again.

We left Devonport in 1961 and came back to Melbourne and flatted in Prahran with Grenville Kirton.

Gren was a tall, fair skinned, lanky odd-ball with thinning hair and black rimmed glasses. He appeared on the scene in Devonport where he met Mum in the Devonport Repertory Company. He had not long been in Australia (from West Indies) and he was to become the first of my 'spiritual children' - that is, persons to whom I had introduced the Baha'i Faith.

He used to turn up at our place on the weekends with a bag of Ovaltine rusks for the kids gleefully saying with his big toothy grin, "It's Sat'dee today!" which amused everyone no end.

He had returned to the Mainland a short time before we did and we were able to stay with him until we found accommodation in Melbourne. Shortly after that, he became a pioneer to Tonga,

spending several years there. (Sadly, he contracted some tropical infection, which resulted in his death, in 1998).

Speed Reading

I did a Speed Reading course in Tassie - one gets so much stuff coming across the desk. I heard that they were looking for an instructor at the YMCA in Melbourne, and I becomes involved in this, doing it for 12 months, for \$5, one night a week. Most people learn to read the same way - letter by letter, word by word. Once they have reached some degree of proficiency in reading, formal training stops. So they are, basically, 'one-speed' readers. The course opened up other avenues of reading. While the average reading speed is 100-150 words a minute, 'Speed Reading' will increase the rate up to 1000 (or more) words per minute. The basic word-by-word is changed to line-by-line reading.

Thus a range of speeds is possible. One might then 'speed read' a text book but then re-read it at a range of speeds in order to absorb the contents. It certainly solved the problem of dealing with the masses of mail which comes into travel outlets every day.

Hand of the Cause

I got a job with a company that operated tours - Jewel Tours - and I got to visit South East Asia - India, Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ceylon and out into the Pacific - Tahiti, Cook islands, Samoa, Fiji, Hawaii, Vanuatu, New Hebrides and New Zealand.

During those trips to the islands I picked up a lot of information about the local religions. One place I never visited but would have loved to have gone to was Easter Island. I never was able to travel to China, Japan or Taiwan, but went to Hong Kong and Macau.

We were invited to a Baha'i function - and I'm going back to a time when there were only 30 or 35 Baha'is in Melbourne. Everybody knew

each other. We were told we were going to be visited by a Hand of the Cause of God and 'could we come along to a certain location one Saturday afternoon?'

In my day at Kings Travel Agency in South Australia I used to call on the businesses from one end of the Port Road at Hindmarsh and go right through to Port Adelaide, every business, factory, warehouse, on both sides of the Port Road. Cold canvassing.

One company I called on was an electrical company and I met the manager on three different occasions but never did business with him because he had a satisfactory set up. But he'd have a follow up call every time I did the territory. His name was Collis Featherstone.

We were all gathered waiting for the arrival of the Hand of the Cause of God. There was a knock at the door and he had arrived. I'm sitting at one end of the room and he greeted everybody and he looked at me and said, "I've been waiting for you!"

It was the same Collis Featherstone I used to call on in the Port Road several years beforehand. He never mentioned he was a Baha'i let alone a 'major player', if one might use the term.

Subsequent to this I met a lot of Hands of the Cause. They were appointed by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi. He couldn't cover, in person, all the developments that were happening, all over the world. He appointed 27 assistants. They are a once off. There can never be any more appointed. When the last one dies, that's it.

Of the original 27 there are now two left.(2000) Recently we lost Collis Featherstone who died in Nepal and is buried just outside Katmandu. I lost a good friend.

I have met about three quarters of them over the years - all special people - chosen by Shoghi Effendi personally. From each I learnt a considerable amount about the Faith and its ramifications.

I made a trip to India as an observer to their National Convention. I arrived in Delhi and went to Canning Road, the Baha'i Headquarters in India. I was informed that the National Spiritual Assembly was in



Family 'happy snap', Brighton.

a session and that they would shortly be breaking. for afternoon tea.

I talked to various people and later I was invited in to meet the Members. What I understood about the unity of man in Tasmania came into real focus. Here were nine people- the National Assembly - eight of whom were nationals of India, Baha'is of many and varied backgrounds - Muslim and Hindu, One was a Brahmin, one a Harijan an Untouchable - and these two men were sitting at the table discussing the affairs of India. In the outside world, had the shadow of the Harijan fallen on the Brahmin he would have immediately proceeded to his home, ablouted, put on new clothes and had his clothes washed because he'd been defiled. by an Untouchable.

It worked! It was a demonstration that the 'oneness of humanity' worked. It confirmed that I had arrived. It was a confirmation of everything I understood to this point in time. The same lesson has been repeated many times, all over the world. I was surrounded by people from different religious backgrounds. They all had a respect for those special Manifestations of God - Jesus, Mohammed, Moses - a tremendous reverence and respect.

It was also a point that I hadn't recognised in myself. I still had a tremendous love and reverence for Jesus, the Manifestation of God, but I couldn't give a hoot about the church, which obviously didn't operate along the lines that He would have intended. Any church that can produce things like the Inquisition, can make money out from the slums of Redfern, NSW and say they are on the side of the Aboriginal, is a nonsense. Any church that can take children from their Aboriginal (or American Indian) parents in the name of Christ - forget it. Any church that can say prayers and then go into to battle and severely wound, injure or kill others, as in trying to gain entrance to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem at Christmas or the Holy Sepulchre at Easter, is out. If that is Christianity, I don't want to know.

When I look at the madness in Northern Ireland - Catholic versus Protestant.; the problems in Lebanon - when I look at Christianity in

India. For all the vast effort of three centuries of rule, we have made less than one percent of India's population into Christians. It is little things that were un-Christian - notices in parks that read: "Dogs and natives keep out." - in that order - and then run around saying, "You should be a Christian."

Hindu's, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains look at this demonstration and say "Forget it. We've got problems in the Hindu faith but you've got more problems. Better problems you know than the ones you don't."

Russia (USSR)

During this time I visited Russia as a guest of Intourist - the only travel agency in Russia. I visited Moscow and Leningrad. I visited the Bolshoi and the Kremlin. Saw an opera performed in the Kremlin auditorium. Have you seen the Russian parliament meeting? Rows and rows of seats? When it is not in use, it is a theatre with an enormous stage. I saw 'Carmen' performed in Russian at the Pushkin theatre. Went to see Archangel Square and to Lenin's 'dacha'. Leningrad (now St Petersburg again) is a beautiful city with rivers and fine buildings. The Muslim part of Russia is also marvellous - Tashkent.

For some reason, eighteen of us upset the system. That was on the day that they wanted us to visit the Lenin Museum. Unless one understands and reads the Cyrillic script, we could see no point. It would have simply been a room of old papers. We scattered throughout Moscow and a couple of us went out to the University. Around the city of Moscow are five enormous buildings of 45000 rooms each. They were built as morale boosters in the days of Stalin. On the top of each building is a big neon Red Star that lights up the sky at night.

The buildings are put to various uses - one is government offices. Another is the University, and so on. We went to the University and soon we had a crowd of students around us. The questions went back

Red Square, Moscow



and forth. Simply, it went like this:

“Are you enjoying your trip to Russia? Is your hotel comfortable? Have you seen the Bolshoi? *Do you go to church in your country?* Have you been to the Kremlin? Do you like Russian food? *Do you have priests in your country?* Where else have you been in Moscow and Russia? How long are you here for? *Do you have freedom of worship in your country?*”

The spiritual questions kept being dropped in amid a general run of questions. I came back and I said to people in Australia that Communism as you think you fear it, is a dead duck. It might now have military superiority, but as a political force it is a dead duck. It can only fall over in the end. I was right.

They suppressed everything. Spiritual teachings have been handed down from father to son. They couldn't openly be taught or practiced. It was even difficult to do it in your own home without being dobbed in by somebody. They found themselves stuck in prison. I enjoyed the

sights and sounds of Russia, but was quite relieved to get out of it again.

In discussion with the Intourist officials, we asked if something could be done to help 'foreigners' to cop with the Cyrillic script. They did not quite get the picture, Ron Gray, an agent from NSW, tried to explain.

"My name is Gray. G.R.A.Y - four letters. In your alphabet it is five and unintelligible."

He then produced his visa to demonstrate the point he was making. *That* was like red rag to a bull!

"Why do you have this visa?"

"Why should I not have it?"

"You were instructed to hand it in when you arrived at the Airport?"

"No we were not. We were asked to hand in passports - that's all!"

The response had been varied. Some who had passports, visae and health books in a wallet just gave them the lot. Others, who were more experienced, gave them what they had asked for - passports. It then transpired that the two girls working on the Reception Desk (of the National Hotel) were, at that time, down on the Marx Prospect, being 'grilled' as to what they had done with the several missing visae. Ultimatum.

"You get the girls back behind the counter and then, and not until then, we will hand over the missing visae."

About an hour later the girls appeared looking somewhat 'put about', and we then kept our side of the bargain. I was one who still had the visa form. That closed the incident, except for one more thing. Immediately a signal was sent to all entry ports into Russia that officials *must* request Passports *and* Visa forms. There was a hole; it was promptly plugged.

Again we found, we could upset the system. The dining room had two long tables set aside, one for the Australian group the other for an American Group. On each table was the respective National Flag. We were first down to breakfast one morning and one of the lads quietly swapped the flags over.

The waiter came to take breakfast orders, spotted the faces and the flag on the table and very quickly disappeared, to return a few minutes later with the Maitre'd. They muttered to themselves, and again disappeared, this time to reappear with the Floor Manager. The three of them mumbled among themselves, and they went off. Not a word was said to any of us. We grew tired of the game and put the flags back on their rightful tables...and THAT caused even more confusion. What a pantomime!

On the final night, at a joint dinner with Intourist staff, the head bloke, Gregorovitch made a speech, in which he said that it was 'obvious' that we must re-assess the Australian groups.

"You obviously do not agree entirely with the way things are done here." That got a cheer. He'd got the message - we hoped.

I was working with Ted Shepherd at Japanese Tours in Collins Street. Then I went into Air Cargo with Brambles, we were living in Ormond, then Brighton. One school holidays, I took Andrew on a trip around Melbourne. He sat in the truck while I went in to talk to my clients.

Brambles wound up because TNT had come into the picture and bought them out. Many of the staff got jettisoned in the rationalisation.

Trans Otway

There was a job advertised for a Manager for a country travel agency. I wrote for it but got no answer and thought that it was a company that didn't have the decency to reply. I forgot all about it. That was in November 1964.

In the following February, 1965 I got a call from Trans Otway in Geelong and they said, "Mr Priestley, you applied for a job with Trans Otway Geelong?"

"Trans Otway Geelong? No. Never heard of you."

"You applied for the job in November. Sorry we've taken so long to get back to you. The advert was for the Manager of a country travel agency. Can you come down and talk to us?"



Agents group, Fiji,
Reg (second left) 1968.

Napkin notes:

“Reviewing all this travel I have arrived at several conclusions:

1. That people, in spite of wide differences of culture, language, religion and colour are all the same - all look for love and understanding.

2. That politics do not count among ordinary people - that prejudices are usually unfounded and pointless.

3. That all the countries it has been my good fortune to visit - I could happily live in Israel or Fiji - both of which are areas in which I feel 'at home'. Australia, of course is 'home' and could never live in England again.

4. I haven't finished travelling yet and this viewpoint is flexible and so space is left for later comment.”

They had some serious troubles, too. The Manager had been embezzling funds; there was a court case, and it was mess.

The ex-Manager eventually collected a jail sentence; but of more concern, the Agency was stripped of its travel agency accreditations, which was a disaster.

I went down, was interviewed and was given the job of managing Trans Otway's Travel Department with a 'free hand' to develop it.

So we moved to Geelong.



Manager of Trans Otway Travel,
Geelong, 1965.

Geelong

I took over the reins of the Trans Otway Travel department which was then located at their Bus Depot in Ryrie St. Business was very slow. There were two reasons. Firstly, we were located on the outskirts of the business district. People, being basically lazy, would not take the trouble to come to Ryrie St when they could obtain the same services in the centre of town.

Secondly, we had a bad name - the embezzlement and subsequent loss of the agency accreditations was fairly common knowledge - so customer confidence was at a low ebb. Talk about a challenge!

I found an empty shop and we re-opened in the centre of the city, in Moorabool Street. The first year report showed that we were slowly growing, but research showed that we had been held back by being too far out of the CBD. Also, in 1966, we changed from Sterling to decimal currency and we had two lots of fare prices - pounds, shillings and pence and the new dollars and cents currency. The policy, of course, was to sell the dollar.

An old lady wanted to go to Sydney and I said \$22 and she said, "No I can go for 11 pounds." It was a little confusing in the early months, especially for elderly people. I stayed with Trans Otway until 1969.

Resigned from Trans Otway

After we moved to Moorabool Street, the figures rose every year from then on, running at about 17% increase per annum. But one of the managers said, "Not enough." So we worked hard to improve the end of year figures which I took into the accountant. The accountant said, "We're up 18% on last year. *Is that all?*"

My reaction was, "If you can do bloody better, you go and do it."

I stewed and fumed on this for two or three days. You know me. I'd turn out at 11 o'clock at night for a client - say someone needed to get to Sydney because a family member had had an accident. I'd fix bookings for them and if they needed to get to the airport, I'd take them. People talk. Recommendation is always the best form of advertising. Our business accounts were growing. We had no debts.

"If you can do bloody better you go and do it." knowing very well that he couldn't because he didn't know anything about travel. He was an accountant. All he could see was 'dollar signs'. They tried to talk me out of resigning.

"No. There's no way I was going to work with some accountant breathing down my neck to see if I'd made the extra cent, questioning every move I make, checking every cent I spend, and then querying every cent I make as not being sufficient. If you can do better, you go and do it."

I finished up and started looking for another job.

Priestley Travel

I was offered another job with Parlorcars, coach operators based in the Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne. They had gone bankrupt, but refinanced. They operated period, day and half-day tours and wanted to re-establish the travel department. The offer amounted to carte blanche to redevelop it, with just a desk and a phone for starters. There was nothing else, no accreditations - nothing!

What a challenge! I told Mother this and she said, "You're a bloody fool. You'll track all the way to Melbourne for a wage to help them start a business and get AFTA and IATA. Why don't you set up your own 'desk and phone'. The risk can't be any greater. Why don't you do it for yourself?"

So I did.

That's how Priestley Travel came into being, in Belmont, Geelong. Trans Otway was *not* happy, but I signed no agreements which limited my activities.

When I started Priestley Travel, we were living in Volum Street, Manifold Heights. The week that I opened up was an interesting week. The Americans had landed on the moon, Kelly Jane was born and I opened up in Belmont. It was a very busy week that went for another 17 years.

I opened Priestley Travel Services with \$1000, sharing an office with Ainsworths Solicitors. When I went to lunch, his secretary would take phone calls.

The Centreway Arcade was being built and I took an option on the corner shop. I never looked back. I built a great little agency on personal reputation and reliability.

I can remember a lady who came in and she wanted to make her last trip back to England to see her sister. She came in six months early to book an Advance Purchase Seat. There was no trouble booking a seat and she paid for her ticket. I said, "A week before you go, bring the ticket in and I'll re-confirm the booking." Then I put it in my diary and subsequently gave her a ring, checked the bookings and everything was OK.

But when she checked in at the airport, they asked, "Who are you?"

They could guarantee her a seat to Bombay but it was touch and go from there on. She decided to take the punt and off she went. She got through OK. That was the Sunday.

On the Monday there was a big bloke standing at the door. I opened up and said, "What can I do to help you sir?"

"What have you done with my mother's money?"

"Who are you? Who's your mother? What are we talking about?"

"She left yesterday."

He told me what had happened. I phoned Peter Thompson, who was with me in 1948 at BEA. He was now the Chief Reservations Officer with Qantas, Melbourne.

"Got a problem Peter. She was not on the list."

He checked and confirmed that.



Priestley Travel opens for business, Belmont, Geelong, 1969.

“Shot in the dark, Peter, Pull up London/Melbourne” and gave him the return flight and date.

“Got her!”

“What happened Pete?”

“Was the booking re-confirmed?”

“Yes, last Wednesday”

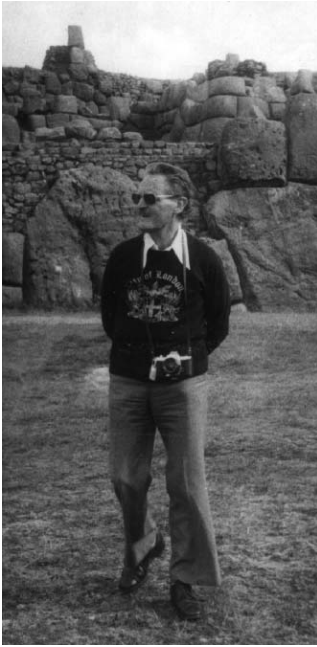
“Who did you speak to?”

“No idea.”

“I’ve got 40 people in Reservations Control. If you can tell me which finger on which hand touched the wrong button and wiped the booking I’ll sack them on the spot.”

“Can’t help you Peter, but can you help me? I’ve got a young man ready to strangle me, right here and now.” I handed the phone over to the son and confirmed that everything had been OK.

They did the right thing. When she checked into London for the return journey, they upgraded her ticket to first class from an



Peru tour.

economy fare! She was wrapped, I was exonerated and our reputation and referrals grew!

I loved travel. It was good to me. It needed the things I was always good at school - history, geography, English - things for which I was always at the top of the class. I remember Dad saying, "You'll never make a living doing that."

I realised, looking back, that he couldn't possibly have foreseen a travel industry. Pre-war, there was only. London Polytechnic which ran student tours; and Thomas Cook. Nothing else, except for Imperial Airways and the shipping lines. But after the war - *boom!*

There were all these ex-army surplus airplanes, trucks, buses and boats. The first civil airlines were converted Wellington Bombers and DC3s. The DC3s did the local runs and the Wellington's did the longer ones. Imperial (which became BOAC) flew Sunderland Flying Boats and took 10 days to get to Australia. Now it is less than 24 hours.

Neville Shute wrote a great book titled '*Round the Bend*' which is exactly what it was like. Guys flying to Malaya, or Oodnawoopwoop, opening up new routes. *Carpe Deum* - '*Seize the day!*'

Educationals

I did a number of these. I went to Fiji with Kings. I only got that because the Kings didn't want it! I was Sales Manager at the time. It was a marvellous trip. I also did another five day trip to Fiji with Pan Am.

I went to Tahiti and later the Cook Islands and Samoa with Air New Zealand.

Two weeks in Germany - twice - with Lufthansa.

Two weeks in Russia with Air India.

In 1972/73, I went on a 22 day educational right around India. That what's got me into looking at tours to India. Ended up going 20 times - 19 visits to the Taj Mahal and Agra.

The last time was to visit the new Baha'i Temple on my twentieth trip

to India with Edna. I have set foot in every state of India with the exception of Orrisa on the east coast between Bengal and Madras. Flown over it but never set foot in it!

I went to Pakistan, Nepal and the Himalayas and the backblocks of Assam and Bhutan.

I did Canada with Canadian Pacific from Montreal, Quebec and Toronto into the eastern provinces and back to Vancouver.

Then 15-16 days in South America with Brazilian Airlines. Brasil, Argentina and Peru. Went to South Africa and Mauritius with South African Airways.

Never got one to the States, but went several times - Chicago, where I spent time with the Baha'í' community and visited the Temple at Wilmette twice.

Never went to Japan, Taiwan or mainland China and never had a desire to really. I would have gone if I had been given the opportunity. I went to Hong Kong and Macau though.

I also had a couple of more tours to the Middle East from Turkey to Israel, from Egypt to Iran.

I added some East Africa tours - Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe - taking in the National Game Parks. Most enjoyable.

All in all, in my world travels I have set foot on every continent and many of the islands - not only the Pacific - but Iceland and the West Indies.

It was during Priestley Travel days that I finally cracked two tours to South America - one as a guest of Destination Holidays at the end of which I did a fortnights teaching trip for the Faith in Argentina. The other was with Aerolineas Argentinas on its new Argentina-Australia flight in which I went to explore the Amazon Basin. I had a really good look at Argentina, Brazil and Peru, also Chile and Ecuador.

Its been a wonderful life. I didn't make a fortune in money, but a fortune in human relationships. The name of the game is people. You remember the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Tower of London, and

the Changing of the Guard at Buck House but it's people who make the lasting impressions - like my little old Dutch lady, who climbed three flights of stairs, just to put a posy by my bed or the old prostitute who befriended a weary recruit on his first leave home.

Its people that make travel magic, not places. Places are incidental. My life has been vastly enriched by meeting people from all areas, of every colour, race, culture, faith and language, yea even to drawing pictures. (Pictures are universal- words are not always understood).

World Showcase Tours

It was at Priestley Travel that I created a touring company - World Showcase Tours.

We did three tours down the Nile Valley. one of which included a flight down the Nile Valley and then a boat trip back taking in all places of interest - Abu Simbel, Aswan, Luxor, Dendra, Bene Asoot, the Pyramids at Giza and Sakara, the Sphinx. Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens, Valley of the Nobles, the burial site of Tutenhkamun and the Museums.

The research I had done on the Ancient Egyptian Gods, years before (for Freemasonry) came in most handy. I had some grounding in the subject.

In the course of taking tours I added a number of other Middle East countries to the tour - Syria, Jordan, Turkey - in addition to Israel and Egypt.

In Turkey, we visited Istanbul, Gallop and Ankara as well as to travel to Cappodocia and the cave-homes in the mountain side, Palmyra, Damascus, Krak de Chevalier - one of the most perfectly preserved Crusader castles remaining - (I've been there two or three times); Petra the ancient Nabeteian city, Aqaba where the Arab Revolt started in 1915 under the guidance of Feisal and Lawrence of Arabia and then Israel and Egypt.

In 1975, I went on my first pilgrimage back to the Holy Land,

travelling via South Africa, Pretoria, Cape Town, Angola in the midst of its civil war and onto London.

I spent time with Mother and then on to the Holy land. Only one thing marred the trip. I picked up a dose of dysentery in Johannesburg and literally sat on it until I reached Tel Aviv - only to find *everything* closed for Passover. Six days of agonising 'runs' Now I always carry Lomotil!

For nine wonderful days you see the objects d'arte and personal things connected with the Faith and the three Central Figures of the Faith. The Holy Land has changed tremendously since 1948. Jerusalem, a City that I could once say I knew 'like the back of my hand' is where I can now get lost so great have been the changes, new buildings, new thoroughfares.

I came back via Iran to visit the house of the Bab in Shiraz. Very hush hush - pre-Khomenei - but still very risky and difficult for the Baha'is in Iran even then.

We were met at the airport and taken to four different hotels. We flew down the next morning to Shiraz. We were met in Shiraz by four guides who took us four different ways to get to the house of the Bab. We spent some time in the house of the Bab and then went back to the hotel along different routes again, then the next morning, flew back to Teheran and onto our connecting flights.

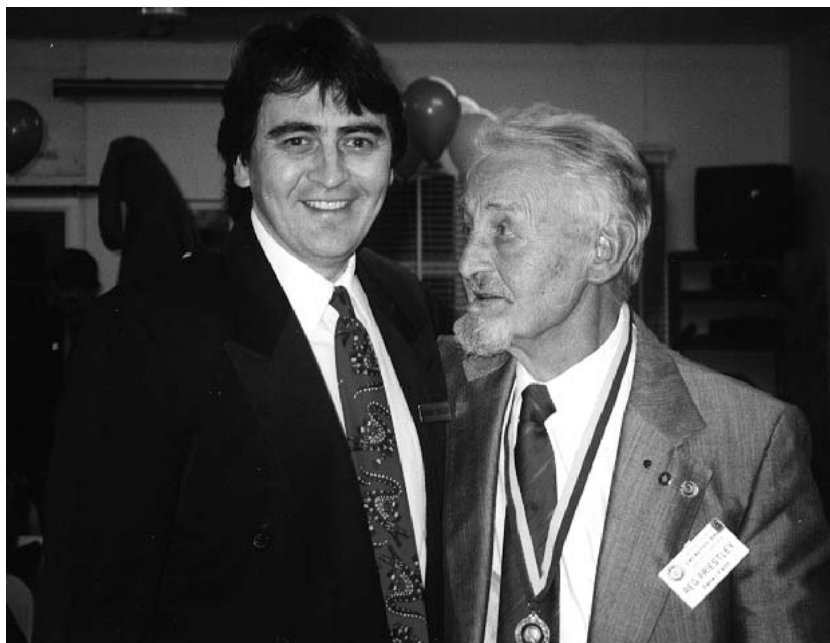
Since then, the Khomenei regime has destroyed the house of the Bab. I was grateful that I had the opportunity to visit it before that happened.

Over the years I looked at the Egyptians, the Qur'anic traditions, and later in South America, the Inca and the Aztec civilisations.

Rotary

Another great thing that happened during Priestley Travel days, was I was invited to join Rotary, on March 21, 1971. I went through the ropes. I was a director of Vocational Service, International and Club Service, Secretary and President in 1982-83.

Andrew and Reg after Reg received Rotary's highest accolade - the Paul Harris Award for 27 years community service to Rotary, Deception Bay 1998



I eventually received a Paul Harris Award for 27 years of community service at Deception Bay Rotary Club, in 1998. I clock up 30 years as a Rotarian on 21 March 2001.

There was a great benefit wherever I travelled. I had two levels of people I could talk to. Firstly, to the business people - Rotarians - people with some sort of influence in the community, which enabled me to make out what made their country tick. At the other end I could talk to the Baha'is - the little people of the country - and they told me why it didn't tick. So my understanding of countries - their politics and way of life was greatly enhanced by my ability to meet with these two levels of people - the Rotarians and the Baha'is. This is considerably better than the average tourist can do, who sits in his hotel, goes out on his half day tour, comes back and goes to the pub and amuses himself in the bar and doesn't get to meet too many of the local populace at all.

Whenever I took tours away I'd look up the directory in line with the tour I was taking and find where Rotary meetings were being held. When I got my group together I'd find out if there were any Rotarians in the group. I could then get them along to a Rotary meeting, which they hadn't expected to do. This was a little added bonus on the tour and much appreciated.

I met a mixed bag of Rotarians. Wherever you went they were extremely good at translating the guest speakers addresses. If you happened to be in Brazil where they are Portuguese speaking; or Israel where they are Hebrew speaking, someone would translate the gist of the talk - not verbatim of course - but the general gist of the speakers remarks, along with offers of hospitality

That enhanced all my travels.

When I moved to Queensland, I was President of Deception Bay Club in 1997 - and again for no special reason other than they couldn't find anyone else to do the job. There were five past presidents as foundation members, but the young ones were either frightened to take it on or were too inexperienced.

Probus

I also had the privilege of being the second President of the Belmont Probus Club, which had been sponsored by my Mother-Club. However I have never pursued Probus, because it doesn't do anything other than - what is the Germans say, "*Kafe, klatch und kooken.*" - coffee, chatter and cakes. Purely social, with no purpose. Yet it is very popular.

Divorced

Phillip had moved to Melbourne to pursue a cheffing apprenticeship; Christine had married and Sue, Andy and I moved to Mernda Parade in Belmont.

Shortly after a tour to India, I separated from Mother, in 1973, due to

irreconcilable differences and divorced sometime later in 1975. Such events are always painful, but I did try not to make things too difficult. I left the house with only my books, clothes and tools and went into the Caravan Park in Belmont for a few weeks until I could collect my wits and get sorted out. I neither contested the hearing nor argued about the settlement. Not that there was anything to settle - it had all been left, except for personal items.

Auntie Jean

Around this time I caught up with Auntie Jean. Poor Jeannie. I loved Jeannie from the moment I saw her - as a sister - a very brotherly/sisterly love - from the day that she stood half drowned at the Wallen's front door, back in 1948.

She was such a poor little soul. They'd been to visit her Mother and they were walking back to Flixton Drive and got caught in a cloud burst storm.

I can still see Jean to this day standing at the door, dripping wet, dress hanging to her body, her hair down over her face like a wet fish. Poor kid. I reached out to Jeannie at that moment and we've had a wonderful friendship over the years.

I rescued her when she finally split the scene with Roy. Almost got into trouble over that.

She phoned me to tell me what she was going to do. I was at the AFTA Convention in Sydney staying at the Chevron Hotel. She decided to cut the cord and asked if she could come down to me.

I told her I was in Sydney and told her to get to Sydney. I had driven there. She got a flight to Sydney, with Kerri. I picked them up and sneaked her into the Chevron and she stayed over night. There were so many people buzzing around the Chevron, they wouldn't have known if they had one more or one less.

Then we drove back to Geelong the next day. By then all hell was let loose.

I was divorced at that stage, living in Newtown. Mum turned up and I saw her walking down the drive. I said to Jean, "Get in the spare room and sit on your daughter's head. Not a bloody sound."

Mum told me the sad story that Jean and Roy had split up and did I know.

"First I've heard of it. When did all this happen?" Roy was going bloody frantic.

Mum went off. Jean stayed about a fortnight. She went on to Adelaide to her parents.

In the meantime, old Emily Easey, had contacted the National Spiritual Assembly to say that 'Mr Priestley was cohabiting with a woman and an Aboriginal child his house.'

I received a very nice visit from a member of the NSA, Iraj Master. Jean had gone shopping. He came to see me.

"Hello. Allah 'U' Abha!. Come on in."

"I'm not here on a very good mission Reg."

"What's your problem?"

"We've had a report that you're living with a woman and an Aboriginal child."

I stood there and laughed.

"It's very serious Reg. What's the truth of the matter?"

"Have a cup of tea. They'll be back in a moment, they've just gone to the shop."

I didn't say anymore. We're sitting there having a cup of tea when they came back.

"Would you like to meet my sister Jean and my niece Kerri."

"Oh. Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"You wouldn't have believed me."

Jean asked, "What's going on?"

"One of the friends has reported me as cohabiting with a woman. And Iraj has come from the NSA to investigate."

"This is family, Iraj. There is nothing in the Aqdas that says I can't



Edna and Reg, 1981.

take care of my own family, in my own home. I'm perfectly right to shelter my sister under these circumstances."

Jean subsequently became a Baha'i. But shortly after this meeting she went to Adelaide. I don't know if Mum ever found out that she was there all the time.

It almost cost me my Voting Rights - all because of an interfering old busy-body!

When she finally pulled out, she borrowed from a friend to get the plane to Sydney and arrived with less than five dollars in her pocket.

"Haven't you got savings?"

"Roy wouldn't let me have money. He gave me house-keeping and if there was money left over at the end of the week he took it back."

She had virtually nothing. She now lives in Dunbogan, on the Central Coast of NSW. Jean and I have always been very close. I look on her as the sister I never had and she regards me as the brother she never had. In-law or out-law, that's the relationship.

I haven't seen Roy for a long time. He's a poor old man. He came some time in 1998 unannounced. He had come to Caboolture to see Kim. There was this old bloke standing at the door. I didn't recognise him.

"What can I do for you mate?"

"Come on Reg, it's Roy!"

Married Edna

In 1979, I married Edna Bennett and bought a house in Bellarine Street. Geelong. Edna was born in County Durham, but raised in Liverpool. During the War years she was in 'directed labour.' After the end of the War, she applied for and was offered the position of Housekeeper at the Quilmes Girls School in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She was to live in BA until 1974 when she came to Australia to spend time with her daughter, Sylvia who was then to have her third or fourth child and needed help. Sylvia's husband had been killed in a motor-cycle collision in Geelong.

Edna decided that there was little point in returning to Argentina when she had a child and grandchildren in this country. She returned to BA, sorted out her affairs and returned. She held a housekeeping position with a surgeon, Bob Waterhouse, in Geelong. We met on the occasion of the Parents without Partners Christmas break-up, 1978 when I was doing a slide show for them. I showed the Holy Land, which also included some of the Baha'i sites.'

After the show finished, I needed to pack my gear and get out of the way so that the next part of the programme could proceed. While I was doing this, a lady came over and asked me about the Faith, I explained that I did not have time there and then, but 'give me your phone number and I call you and answer your questions'. Given the number, I slipped it into the shirt pocket, and promptly forgot about it, until the next weekend, when I came to do my laundry and, checking pockets, found the slip. Oh dear!

I extended an invitation to dinner which was accepted and in due course the lady arrived. We ate and then started talking and went on until around 1am. Off she went home. A couple of days later a phone call to thank me for a pleasant evening and "How do I become a Baha'i?"

We continued to see each other and married on 18 May, 1979 in Albury, with a Baha'i ceremony, conducted by my late friend Ken Morgan.

In 1988, we came to Queensland for the World EXPO, and decided that given health reasons and that the weather was far superior to the Victorian brand, we moved north in 1989.

She died of a massive heart attack on 28 February 1998 and was laid to rest in the Caboolture Cemetery, Deception Bay.

Heart Attack

I ended up having a heart attack when I came back from my second trip to South America on 24 April 1984. The 25 April was ANZAC Day and nothing was open. I felt pretty crook and rested a lot. On the 26 April I went and saw the doctor and he admitted me to hospital. "You've had a heart attack."

It was only a mild one - a shot across the bows - but it put me out of action for a few months. I handed the running of the business over to John Paton, my business partner.

At the end of three months I started to go back to work and was still taking it fairly steadily I stopped taking tours because the job of the tour leader is to look after the clients, not their job to look after him.

Priestley Travel Folds

John Paton and I used to rotate on educational. I'd go off and when I came back he'd go off. In 1985, John went off to Europe with his family for six weeks. He left on Friday night. On the following Monday morning I'm sitting in the office and in walked Dick Ball, the ANZ Bank manager.

"Coffee?" Nice and chatty.

"What can I do for you."

He looked at me and said, "I admire your flippancy!"

"Flippancy? What do you mean?"

"When are you going to fix this overdraft?"

"What overdraft? We don't have an overdraft."

Then: "I've got news for you."

He then told me that the trust account was \$17000 in the red.

"Don't talk bloody silly, it can't be!"

I fished into the draw for the cheque book and looked at the last signed cheque.

"According to this I've got about \$8200 in the black."

"You've been in the red for some months."

"First I've heard about it."

"Who knows about it?"

"I've spoken to John. He knows about it."

"Does he?"

Meanwhile the brain's working.

"If you think I'm \$17000 in debt and I think I've got \$8000, I'm probably about \$26000 in the red. As you know I had a heart attack and I've been taking things very quietly. John has been running the business."

I looked for the Trust Account bank statements and the statements dating back to the end of the previous financial year are missing. We used to keep our records stored in John's garage on the other side of the shopping centre carpark but I had no access to it. There was no way I could access records until he returned.

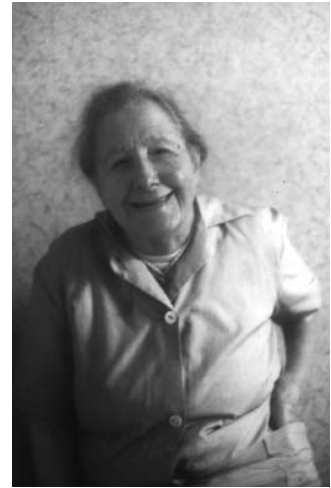
Dick agreed to review the situation after a few days to give me time to sort through other records. I started to look around and found unpaid ticket returns from various companies like P & O and Australia Tours. I did a quick calculation and found that there was over \$5000 unpaid for tickets!

This increased the debt to around \$31,000.

There was nothing I could do about it until; John returned. As the week went by, various operators started to phone up and request payments. Thankfully I had a great personal relationship with most of them because I'd never had this problem for the 16 years I'd operated on my own. Now, suddenly, I'm getting it. I explained the situation but with the same request - sit on this for six weeks? I managed to hold their fire. Thankfully people were most reasonable.

I had to get photostat copies of all the bank statements going back to the end of the previous financial year - July 1984.

I found the most amazing entries. I found the cheque stub for \$11.10 but the statement was \$110. I found a credit entry for \$26000 but there was no way I could reconcile that figure, assuming even a whole



Andrew visited Mum in 1979 and got this rare 'smiling' shot.

weeks banking. All I could do was sit tight until John came back.

When he came back, he was most non-committal about it. He didn't know. Played dumb. I didn't say anything more to John. Two can play that game.

When he went for lunch. I rang Dick, the bank manager, and asked him to come over, unannounced, around 2pm. and to bring any relevant correspondence with him. And that's what happened.

John came back, the bank manager turned up at 2pm.

"Mr Paton, what's all this business that you don't know anything about the overdraft?" Dick had the file in his hand, containing letters he had written to John while I'd been away.

"How come you think you don't know anything about it?"

John stayed silent but went deep red! I asked John about it later. Under the terms of partnership I was liable for half of it. And that meant I would have to sell my home and car. Not on your Nelly if I could possibly avoid it!

The upshot of it was that the Bank impounded John's house as collateral against the overdraft debt. He saw the writing on the wall. There was no way known that either of us was going to find \$31,000. Or even half each.

The business could no longer carry two people.

I said to John, "You trade your way out of this. I'm prepared to withdraw from the business and hand it over to you. You continue to pay my Superannuation and the vehicle and trade your way out of it."

He agreed to that. I had the necessary agreement papers drawn up and had them signed very smartly witnessed, and lodged with the authorities.

Meanwhile, I went to see my doctor. This shock had further shaken me up and the doctor advised me to retire on an invalid pension. He applied on my behalf for the Invalid Pension - which was granted - and I opted to officially finish on 31 December 1985. Thus, I retired.

The agreement dissolved the partnership, with no residue debt for

me and John Paton to continue to pay out my car and my Superannuation.

I'd only been home at week in January when I had the second heart attack, but at least I had a pension coming in. It was another 'shot over the bows' I got out of it again.

I could have lost everything - Bellarine Street - car - Super - they could have taken me for every penny that I had. In the subsequent nine months, things went from bad to worse. Eventually the whole shebang collapsed. John had to sell his house to pay off the ANZ Bank and the family moved into a much smaller house. I later heard that he and Judy had divorced. Last I heard he was taxi-driving in Geelong. He'd lost his home, his marriage was broken. He lost the lot. I have no sympathy for him. We had a nice little business and he screwed it up.

It's water down the river now, but at the time I was fuming bloody angry and that didn't help the heart problem. It was the end of Priestley Travel Services - a sad ending for a very active business, at its height.

Unfortunately, I had taken my hands off the wheel and trusted John. I should never have had that four months off with my heart attack. But he was stupid and the temptation was too great. A mistake is one thing - dishonesty is something else. We paid a big price for his stupidity and dishonesty. He paid a very high price.

The only person who knows where all that money went was John. I suspect that he financed his trip for the family in the September. As far as I am concerned I ended my career honourably. And unscathed financially. The guy who caused all the trouble copped all the flak.

The house and the car was paid off and my Superannuation was paid out in January 1990 which was used, as intended, to finance the Pilgrimage trip for Edna and myself.

After 38 years in the travel industry, I retired from Priestley Travel in December 1985 and went on a Disability Pension in 1986 which was converted to the Age Pension in 1989.

I had left the travel industry once. Before, in 1956. I was offered a job with a construction company and they were paying me a quid a week more than I was getting at Liz Cornells. Eight till four and close to home so I could nip home for lunch, and no weekends. I stuck it for three weeks.

Mum asked 'what the hell was wrong with me'. Easy job, good pay, good hours, nice people to work for, but no challenge and dead boring. They offered me another quid to stay, but that's when I went to Kings.

It was a wonderful 38 year journey, despite the sad ending. However, I have learned that there is a wisdom in everything, and if one is patient, one sees the wisdom.

Queensland

In 1988, Edna and I came to Brisbane, Queensland for World Expo 1988. It was late July, early August - beautiful weather - we wondered if we had any reason to stay shivering in Geelong in the Winter. Edna came up a few weeks later and found a place in Deception Bay and we moved up in May of 1989. The winters in Queensland are beautiful - au revoir Geelong!

Baha'i Faith

In 1990, I was elected secretary of the Baha'i Assembly in Caboolture remaining as secretary until (Ridvan) 1998. The elections were quite funny because the assembly said, "Do you want to do the secretary's job again, Reg?"

"If you want me to and that's what the Assembly elects me to."

It didn't even get to a ballot paper. Obviously no-one wanted the Secretary's slot. This is a position I have always enjoyed, having been Secretary in the Masonic Lodge, Rotary, Probus, University of the Third Age and AFTA.

At this same time one was also undertook confidential work for the National; Assembly (which I did for some 12 years). In 1993 I was contacted by Joy Stevenson, who was then on the Board of Counsellors and asked if I would go to the Solomon Islands to do some work for the Universal House of Justice.

NSA, Solomon Islands, 1993 and 1995

The Solomon's Community was in Administrative trouble and it needed sorting I worked hard to get the NSA of the Solomon Islands up and running in 1993.

Such were the problems that one was sent by the Universal House of Justice to sort it out. Having gotten it on a more even keel, I returned to Australia. But they stuffed it up again and I had to go back in 1995 and fix it up again.

It was a little easier the second time round, because I knew the various people involved with the NSA and also had a better idea of the local thinking.

A whole new system was designed and various persons, particularly the National Secretary (Alec Ratu) were given advanced training. The Universal House, is interested in the operation of *all* National Assemblies, but particularly those, like the Solomon Islands, which they need to subsidise financially. Most of the people have very little money. It was not uncommon to find a couple of sacks of yams or whatever, on the steps of the National Office, with a scribbled note to sell them and whatever money was made, put it in the National Fund. That, of course, meant setting up a table in the market and maybe standing there all day to finish up with 20-25 Solomon Island dollars, if prices were good. If they were not, it might be only 5-6 dollars.

U3A

I also kicked off with the infant U3A in Geelong, with the *Armchair Travel* programme, covering South America/India and Middle East, which enabled me to share with other people some of the experiences and sights of those years of travel. I find this a mental challenge as well.

When we moved to Queensland, I linked up with U3A, Redcliffe as well and ended up Secretary of it as well as lecturing. The concept of U3A was launched in France - it is simply a facility for older persons (in the third stage of their lives) to continue to learn, to be active and mentally stimulated. It grants no degrees or Cappings - and the idea has now spread world wide.

Vale, Edna

Edna had been at the Redcliffe Hospital for hip surgery. She had fallen and broken the hip and that involved a hip replacement. While she coped with it extremely well considering age and weight, it did slow her down and there were a number of things she was no longer able to do like hanging laundry, ironing and vacuuming. I became a sort of 'general dogsbody', which I did not mind in the least (Mother had make very sure that I would not grow up to be a helpless male).

One morning, Edna asked me make her a cup of coffee. She was lying down, resting. When I came back five minutes later, she had died quietly from a massive heart attack. She was gone in a minute. Probably never knew what hit her! In one regard, a nice way to go on 28 February 1998.

A Baha'i service was held 1 March 1998 at the Deception Bay Cemetery where she was laid to rest. She was a good wife and companion and we had a good 19 years together.

I was at the midway point of my year as President of the Deception Bay Rotary Club, and had to finish that out on my own.

Research

I decided, long before Edna passed away, that I wanted to focus on some of my own projects - time not being a known quantity. I decided to finish the with the long standing NSA record keeping job on the 21 March, 1999 I gave notice that I no longer wished to continue as Secretary of Local Spiritual Assembly of Caboolture.

From April 1999 onwards, I decided to focus on finishing my 20 year research into 'Revelation of St John' and the 'Indications of the Baha'i Faith in al Qur'an' and try and get those published.

Perhaps I can encapsulate the wisdom gained over the years (or the knowledge anyway.) Why not? Produce something useful for the next generation. Wait and see. What you have in mind and what you succeed in doing are not always the same thing.

In the course of the years I did a lot and still do a lot of work for the Baha'i' faith. I take the view that in my life span is limited and the best thing I can do is enhance the cause of God to my best ability, and for humanity. So I do work for the NSA, Deepenings for adult groups, and hold 'Fireside' teaching evenings. I have also been appointed as an Assistant for Protection of the Faith. And I also work with the Board of Counsellors.

Then there's my bowls. Something for sheer pleasure, distraction, friendship and escape!

My retirement is a busy retirement. I'm not looking around each day wondering what I'm going to do to kill time. I am not comfortable with the stereotype view of retirement - 'easing up' or 'twilight years'. I have plenty of useful things to do.

I had pushed on, completing my year as President of the Deception Bay Rotary Club. In 1998. The RTC asked if I would be available to help a struggling Community in Warwick, Queensland, but for some reason that fell through. Gympie. was suggested as an alternative. At that point of time, it mattered little to me where I went, if it was felt that I could be useful.

I put the house on the market, found a home in Gympie and moved. I felt totally drained and exhausted by everything ... Edna's death ... the year as the President of Rotary ... the NSA work and my secretarial job ... the move to Gympie and subsequent renovations on the house ... and the work with that new community.

I decided to take a much needed rest. Edna's nephew, Brian, and his wife Rosa Maria, had long since extended an invitation to visit them in New Zealand. Arriving in Auckland, transported to a beautiful beach-house overlooking Waia Bay. I went to bed and disappeared off the planet, not surfacing again for a number of days. Divine!

I felt a little recharged by several firesides and deepenings I attended and caught up with Hedi Moani's intended bride.

Hedi, one of nature's gentle creatures, and a great teacher of the Faith,



Reg and Rona,
wedding day, 2000

was stabbed to death by a member of the Maori Church. The murder charge fell through on grounds of insanity. It was a deeply moving moment to visit his grave, but more moving to spend time with his fiancée. He was murdered on 18 October 1998, and they were to have been married the following February. Hedi had been a friend since his student days in Geelong in 1965.

I attended a National Conference in Auckland and also caught the Father and Mother of all chills, ending up in bed for a few days.

Rona Barrell

I realized that I had a deep friendship with Rona and I asked her to marry me.

Rona, born in South Africa, reared in Kenya, had migrated to New Zealand, to avoid the Mau Mau uprising in the 60's.

Finally she had moved to Queensland. When I returned from New Zealand, much rested, she finally said, "Yes" and this happy news was well received by the delighted Caboolture Baha'i Community.

“We thought you’d never get round to it. What took you two so long?”

Rona and I, married on 21 October 2000 at Morayfield and I moved back to Deception Bay. I’ve said it before, and so often been proven wrong, “This is the last move; next time in a wooden box.” No more predictions, I’ll take it as it comes.

Gleanings

I’ve given you the salient features of my life. There are ten thousand incidents, if I could remember them. What I want to share with you before I close are two or three particular readings as I came across them. The first prayer I ever heard that stuck in my gullet was this one:

O my God! O my God, Unite the hearts of Thy servants and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them O God in their endeavour and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God leave them not to themselves but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord.

Baha’u’llah.

That first sentence always stuck - ‘Unite the hearts of thy servants and reveal to them thy great purpose.’ And slowly but surely it does. It reveals itself.

There is a little book called ‘Hidden Words’ which is, in essence, the Baha’i Faith. It has verses translated from Arabic and Persian and they are all thought provoking verses.

“O Son of Being. With hands of power I made thee. With fingers of strength I created thee and within thee I have placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek nought else, for My work

is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not nor have a doubt thereof.”

I always like that verse. No matter how insignificant you may feel as an individual here is God saying to you: ‘... with hands of power I made thee. With fingers of strength I created thee and within thee I have placed the essence of my light.’

The station of man is quite marvellous.

As I said in my 76th year, my time is limited and I’m quite happy when the time comes to go - it doesn’t frighten me at all. I rubbed shoulders with that situation many, many times. Not only with people round me being knocked off and often violently - death is no stranger - but also having sat on the side of the bed strapped to an ECG machine wondering “How many more tomorrows have I got? What is important that I do? What do I need to finish? What can I afford to throw out?” That changed the whole orientation of my life. I abandoned doing a number of things, as being a waste of time.

Baha’u’llah said:

“Son of the Supreme. I have made Death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shine on thee its splendour. Why dost thou veil thyself there from? The spirit of holiness beareth unto thee the joyful tidings of reunion. Wherefore thou dost thou grieve? The spirit of power conformeth thee in His cause. Why does thou veil thyself. The light of His countenance dost lead thee. How can thou go astray?”

Very reassuring - all of it. The reading I love the best - when I read it, it made immediate and all possible sense to me.

It is from "Gleanings from the Writings" of Baha'u'llah:

"Tear asunder in My name the veils that have grievously blinded your vision and through the power born of your belief in the unity of God scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter then the holy paradise of the good pleasure of the All-merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pail of His vast and mighty revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapped in the dense veils of your selfish desires inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows therefore that every man hath been and will continue to be able of himself to appreciate the beauty of God the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called upon to account for his failure? If in the day that all peoples of the earth will be gathered together any man should, while standing in the presence of God be asked, "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self?" and if such a man should reply and say, 'Inasmuch all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I too following their example, have grievously failed to recognise the Beauty of the Eternal.'" such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by anyone except himself."

Baha'u'llah.

Yes I can teach you. I can encourage you. I can help you. But in the final analysis, its up to you. It has to be your choice. Its up to you whether you take your Faith a step further.

I wanted to share those particular readings with because they seemed to me as I read them at the time - over forty years ago - and years later,

still the same - highly important pointers to where one is going spiritually.

Sure I've made mistakes. I've had failures. But I've also had successes. I've done some things right. When I look at you three - and I am very proud of you - I look at you and see the sort of lives you live and the attitudes you have it occurs to me that my part in your upbringing couldn't have been all wrong. It might not have been all right, but it couldn't have been all wrong. Somewhere along the line I've managed to share or impart something that was useful and I'm glad to see the end results demonstrated by the way you live your lives, the work you do, the good names you have in your respective professions and communities. Marvellous.

Share this with your family. It is neither designed nor intended for a broader audience. Live your lives. Live them to the full. Get the most out of it. While you are taking out of life - don't forget to put something *in* as well.

The old Bible saying: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap" is still very true.

Second Pilgrimage

1990 saw my second pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which by comparison in 1975, was really a Pilgrimage. The first one, in 1975, was a thrill, but by comparison it was just a visit. So much refined and added to it in 1990. Presented in a totally different way. I was very fortunate to have Edith Crawford - an American negress and a mine of information. As a guide she shared her knowledge very freely and generously. A remarkable lady, to whom I am most grateful.

Iran was out of it, so this tour I started in London with a visit to the Grave of the Beloved Guardian (Shoghi Effendi Rabbani) at the Great Northern Cemetery I was able to spend time there and photograph the grave site.

There is still a lot of places of Baha'i history that I never got to - the Ridvan garden and the house of Baha'u'llah, in Baghdad for example.

But I am satisfied with what I have managed to do.

That will probably be my last journey out of Australia of any import unless I win Tatts or some miracle happens. It doesn't matter. Since 1942 I've been on the move. I've done so much in that time and travelled so many thousands of miles - I am entitled to belong to the Million Air Miles Club - a million miles of air travel.

When you look at the map of the world - and link up all the journeys - at best you only see a few hundred yards to the right or the left of the line on which you are travelling - you've only made scratches on the surface of this earth. There is still far more unseen than seen.

To someone who hasn't travelled, the journeys I've managed to make are absolutely magnificent. I've seen so much of the world and I'm glad I had the opportunity. If I never travel again, I have a storehouse of memories of places and people from every continent, and islands and independent territories. I have no regrets at what I've missed. You simply can't do it all anyway.

My reading has been wide. Rotary, Probus all helping to enrich my life. My services to the Institute of Travel and Tourism of which I am a Fellow, the Institute of Sales and Management of which I am a Member, the Institute of British Travel Agents of which I am a Member and the Palestine Police Association of which I hold Membership have all given me outlets to be of service to my fellow man and I have enjoyed them.

I've been in Freemasonry and the Rosicrucian Order. It was beginning to double up on the Masonic concept so I dropped it. You do this in life. You wander along a road and explore it and it comes to a dead end so you retrace your steps back to the mainstream and continue the forward journey and every so often you reach a cross roads and have to decide which direction to go. Your decision is based upon the sum total of knowledge and experience to that time. On that you make a decision: left, right or straight forward. And this is the progress through life.

I've never wanted for lashings of money, power or position and I have managed to follow my own particular interest consistently and maybe now I can pull it all together and present it as a useful thing to people who are also exploring their spiritual reality.

I've collected an extremely good library of reference books. I've got an extremely good Baha'i library. I've got a good slide library. I am surrounded by infinite riches.

My health - apart from the six by-pass surgery in 1995 is reasonably good - I keep on the tablets and sometimes I get tired ,but by and large my health is very good. I am still looking at a limited number of years left. I ain't going to be everlasting!

When I do go, I say "Don't grieve." Remember me kindly if you can. Forgive me if I've committed hurt at any time. I never intend to. Forgive my failures and shortcomings. This is not the plane of perfection it is the plane of trial and error. None of us are perfect and none of us are answerable to our fellow man. We are only answerable to ourselves and He who created us.

Still Travelling

As I write this closing chapter, we stand at the very threshold of a new Century. Today is the Eve of the Year 2001, a *new* Century.

In the preceding chapters I have tried to paint a very broad canvas of my life – a mini-review of the last 76 years. There has been joy and sorrow. There have been successes and failures, pleasures and disappointments.

The 'tapestry' is, really not overly different to millions of other lives, in this respect, my life has been very normal. So, what's new? That's life.

By and large, it has been a reasonable life. There are many things that I might have done better – or not done at all. There are some things I would have liked to have done, but which never happened. I have never been one for 'standing on ceremony'. Take me as you find me!

Ambition is now, for the most part, an ember – albeit, there are things I want to finish.

Any regrets? Nothing serious. Nothing that now matters very much. I would have loved to have spent at least a season on an archeological ‘dig’ somewhere in the Middle East – but it never happened. Realistically, I am a bit past it now. I would have liked to have gone to Uni – people my age are now doing this, but I question the value of it other than as an ego trip.

What do I want to finish?

Firstly, I want to continue to serve the Baha’i Faith and the Communities.

It is a privilege to have been appointed an Assistant for Protection of the Faith in both Caboolture and Cooloola Shires. I also edit and distribute a quarterly news-letter ‘Bulbul’ (it means ‘Nightingale’) to all isolated Baha’is across Australia, in an endeavour to reach out and support them in an isolation which debars them from normal association with a Community.

Secondly, I want to complete my ‘thesis’ (if I may use that word) which is an amalgam of St Johns Book of Revelation - the Prophecies in al Qur`an and the directives of the Kitab-I-Iqan (Baha`u`llah’s `Book of Certitude’) that is, Christian, Muslim and Baha’i Scripture, on which I have steadily worked for twenty or more years. There is still quite a way to go to complete it.

If I can continue, and complete these activities (hopefully, I shall be given the time) I shall be content. I can, perhaps, look at myself without shuddering too much. I have also considered a resolution to mark the new Century (I don’t usually bother with them; invariably they are a waste of time.) I want to be ‘smoke-free’. That will be a challenge!

I makes no apologies for my life, nor does one seek reward/ recognition. Just accept me as I am, for whatever I am! First and foremost, I am just an ordinary guy who has had extraordinary `opportunities in this world.

I am proud of my daughter and sons, of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I love them all. Geography means separation from them. It can be both a barrier and a blessing. We have never been a family for 'living in each other's pockets' and I have no wish to change the status quo, which, by and large, suits all of us. None of you really want to be cluttered up with an old feller travelling his last few miles. You have your own burden.

I leave you with this thought. Don't ask who penned it. I came across it way back in 1943 and it stuck!

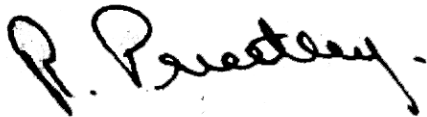
*"As through this life we mortals go,
One thought alone can pierce our mental blindness.
Not, what we get, is gain, 'tis what we give "*

Tomorrow is the First Day of the New Year and the 21st Century - how appropriate. May it be kind to you.

Vaya con Dios - Go with God.

My love to all of you.

Dad (2000)

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Priestley." The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Israel at a Glance

The Jews and the Muslims are competing to control the small pocket of the Middle East which comprises Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Under UN direction, the British declared the State of Israel in May 1948.

In the 1967, Six Day War, Israel captured Golan Heights from Syria, the Gaza Strip from Egypt and the West Bank from the Jordanians.

The various peace settlement negotiations, since, have focused on returning sections of the Gaza Strip and West Bank to the Palestinians and withdrawing from the strategic towns of Nablus, Jericho and Hebron.

The Palestinians also want sovereignty over Islamic Holy sites located in Jerusalem such as the Noble Sanctuary and Temple Mount which houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. RLP

