

Chapter 1

Background

The Millionaire Patriarch

James Craig, born into a Northern Ireland farming community, started employed life in Belfast as a junior in the Post Office. In 1850, as a frustrated and near penniless clerk, he took a job as a salesman with the nascent distilling firm of Dunvilles. It seems, thereafter, that his aggressive selling tactics resulted in so many orders that, on his return to Belfast, the struggling young firm could not raise sufficient funds to cover his commission, and therefore had no option but to offer him a Directorship in lieu of payment. Before long he had become Managing Director, with an apparently natural propensity for enhancing the profitability of all aspects of the distilling process. In that context, the realisation of the lost profit potential of all that precious spirit having been absorbed into the wood pores of each stave of each of the many barrels involved, must have grieved him, and driven him to think of a solution, if crude and laborious. Each barrel would have to be filled with boiling water, and then shaken sufficiently violently to tease the liquor out of the woodwork.



The resultant alcoholic sludge proved immensely popular with pig farmers, whose animals swallowed it with such relish that they soon became almost incapable of movement, and thus put on weight by the minute!

Before long, it seems, the process became established and was known as grogging. However, brief consideration of the combined enormous efforts required of a group of men having to lift a barrel, its normal considerable weight aggravated by the addition of boiling water, and then being ordered to shake it violently, makes it clear why the patriarch was apparently not a popular employer! In fact, a contemporary description of James Craig, the elder, reads: a self-made whisky millionaire, dislikeable, with no regard for

other's feelings.



James and his wife Eleanor had a daughter and eight sons and heirs, including my father, Edwin, and James, later to become Lord Craigavon. James senior had insisted that his sons either became qualified professionals, or underwent apprenticeships. Thus Edwin learned his mechanical engineering skills at the great shipbuilding firm of Harland and Wolff, where the Titanic was soon to be built.



The Craigs with uncle James (2nd left standing) and father Edwin (far right standing).

The Family

Edwin married my mother, Molly, in 1908. Her father was a well established London solicitor whose family were interested and involved in the arts, which meant that culturally, her background differed considerably from his, which was, inevitably, more commercially orientated. Nevertheless, their marriage was generally harmonious, possibly because Molly would normally defer to Edwin's wishes. In France, with the Ulster Division in 1915, Edwin was given charge of the administration and maintenance of a major ambulance unit (being over-age for front line duties). For this

task he was given the rank of Acting Captain, of which he long remained inordinately proud; in fact he carried it forward into civilian life, and was always known as The Captain.

My only sister Alice was seven years my senior and often away at boarding school, so, naturally was not very close to me. However, on occasions when Edwin was particularly angry with one of us (of which more anon!) then basic sibling solidarity would manifest itself. For example, around 1941, Alice, who was already married to an actor named Beriffe, met a Sorbonne Professor of Physics, named Georges Fournier, who had escaped from occupied France to join General de Gaulle's Free French staff in London.



My older brother Colin

Before very long, she became pregnant by Georges, and begged me to intercede by broaching the highly embarrassing news to Edwin (Paas we called him). However, despite my best efforts the (perhaps inevitable!) outcome was a permanent ban on Georges' shadow ever darkening the threshold of Tanera More.

I had, originally, had a brother, Colin, slightly older than Alice, whom, deeply regrettably, I never knew. As a young boy he had fallen victim to the horrendous Spanish Flu pandemic of 1919 which, in total, globally, killed more than all those killed in both World Wars put together, involving lingering and painful deaths. From photographs, it is clear that Colin was a handsome boy, and apparently already showed potential. He would no doubt, have made a wonderful older sibling.



Colin, Molly & Alice

My childhood years, therefore, were spent largely on my own. Middle class Edwardian convention decreed that close contact with children was a matter for nanny or nurse; indeed over the years, I cannot readily recall a cuddle or kiss from either parent, though, no doubt, there probably were some. Unsurprisingly therefore, my early years revolved very much around my nurse: Ruth Stiles. With little education, but a wealth of common sense, she proved a loving and truly wonderful proxy parent, providing me with a natural grounding in how best to develop into an acceptable and constructive member of society.

When not involved in her other duties, such as tending numerous poultry, several hives of bees and assorted pet animals, she shared with me the spacious nursery, with its cheerful open fire, piano for lessons and large table for meals until I reached age ten.

The only cousins I saw regularly, who were not only naturally close, but were also good friends, were the four



Nanny Ruth Stiles

daughters of Granville (my father's younger brother, who had married Patty, my mother's twin sister) named :- Iona, Ailsa, Eleanor and Priscilla.

The death of her first-born child while still a boy, must have been deeply traumatic for my mother and left her with a lasting emotional scar. In desperation she had asked one of her brothers for suggestions for counseling and psychological support. Regrettably, he had advised her to try Christian Science one of the many newfangled religions emanating from middle-class North America. One of its main tenets was emphasis on the spiritual , to the exclusion of all things material , including all forms of medical

assistance. This could result, for example, in the irritating not to mention possibly dangerous scenario of having cut oneself, and being told to repeat the mantra It never happened while the blood continued to flow!



The cousins on holiday with Nanny Ruth



Molly and twin, Patty

The prominent historian, H. A. L. Fisher, had himself suffered through being brought up within the same cult, which so frustrated him that he once wrote a highly critical piece about its founder, Mrs Eddy, in which he recounted the case of an American woman devotee who proclaimed, in lectures, that she was the product of an immaculate conception, which so infuriated her father that he took legal action against her for defamation of his physical properties.

Like the adherents of so many cults and religions Molly felt obligated to proselytise, so in spite of its literature consisting largely of indecipherable mumbo-jumbo, my sister and I both became tainted by it, at least when still young. Unfortunately my dear nurse Ruth likewise became involved, resulting later in her totally unnecessary premature death through the absence of appropriate drugs in a Christian Science nursing home.

For too many years, Molly herself had withstood crippling asthma attacks without any medical relief, which, in the end, inevitably led to terminal heart failure.

Christian Science also espoused two absolute taboos: smoking and alcohol. I had no trouble with the first, having made a life-long vow as a boy to preserve my lungs in the hope of one day climbing Everest , and this remained intact apart from a brief period during Army life when smoking was all but obligatory.

Alcohol was another matter, and once having started, the natural reaction to earlier denial soon took charge. Edwin himself was a firm teetotaler. This had nothing to do with Christian Science, which, like all other religions, he never had any time for; however, it had all to do with the premature death of his younger brother, William, through an overdose of Dunvilles.

As a result, Edwin had what amounted to almost a fear of whisky; and he once offered me a large sum if I would promise to steer clear of it permanently. However, that offer was set aside because I have never, in fact, been a great whisky lover.

The Family Home



Edwin had bought the property, which he renamed Tanera More (after a Scottish Island) around the time of their marriage. The site was magnificent, with panoramic views extending twenty miles to the South Downs, near Hindhead in Surrey, in a beautiful, unspoiled environment of heather clad hillsides.

The house was a typical Edwardian mansion, somewhat ostentatious, with very large ground floor living rooms, generous first floor bedrooms, and ample second floor accommodation for domestic staff. Those rooms were in fact used, in September 1939, to accommodate some twelve boys, evacuated from the bombing of London.

The mature, landscaped gardens included both beautiful contoured lawns, and an unusual, one hundred yard long, straight and level stretch of lawn flanked by massive eight foot high yew hedges, which were so dense that, as a boy, I was able to walk along their tops: this was known as the yew walk. Around 1910, the immediately adjoining property was occupied by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who particularly enjoyed the yew walk and is known to have written *The Hound of the Baskervilles* while sitting there. There were also tennis and croquet lawns, many splendid trees and colourful shrubs including a labyrinthine group of large rhododendrons, which was ideal for games of hide and seek. Beyond the gardens, there were extensive woodlands of both conifer and deciduous trees, with fields and stabling for the riding ponies. Adjoining the entrance lodge, the impressive main gates led to the broad drive with its spacious turning circle adjoining the house.

In an area away from the main house were the chauffeur's bungalow, extensive chicken houses, garages, sheds for firewood, and several large greenhouses, including one housing a massive vine that produced regular crops of beautiful, juicy black grapes. The staff required at Tanera More comprised the head gardener, living in the lodge, his three assistants, the chauffeur, the cook and scullery-maids, two parlour-maids and two other domestics. As I grew up, they were all my friends and mentors in the arts of living.

There can be no doubt that Tanera More provided a truly wonderful environment to grow up in, but one which could so well have accommodated a far larger complement of children than myself alone; however circumstances dictated otherwise.

The Name Nares

Following my birth, at Tanera More, in November 1917, I was given the name Nares to help maintain my mother's earlier family name, and, in particular, that of my great grandfather, Admiral Sir George Strong Nares, who had died not long before. He, in turn, had been given the name Strong to commemorate the name of his ancestor of two generations earlier; Edward Strong (1681-1723), who had been the builder of St Paul's Cathedral under Sir Christopher Wren.



Combining Prudence with Dash is an appropriate sub-heading for my great grandfather George Nares (my mother's grandfather) who was born in 1831, educated at New Cross and joined the Royal Navy in 1845. As Captain Nares, he was given command of HMS Newport in the Mediterranean, on the eve of the formal opening of the Suez Canal, of which a contemporary description (with French overtones, because the great canal had been the creation of the famous French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps) reads as follows:- The French boat Peluse had swung round



and taken ground near the embouchure of the canal in the lake and had moored quietly for the night All other vessels behind had found themselves constrained to do the same. Captain Nares however felt by no means equally disposed to resign himself and condemn his guests to leave their share of the work of the day unfinished in deference to timid example and the floating obstacles blocking the channels. Combining prudence with dash, he first assured himself of every inch of his way by careful boat soundings, narrow and winding it necessary was now on the port, now on the starboard of the ships to be passed and along it the Newport held perfectly in hand twisting and bending to the turning of a finger glided gently like a water serpent just grazing the ships' sides but never once touching the ground. The crew of the Peluse raised a wail of dismay as we bore down on her stern but round her we swept never scraping her paint although you might have cracked a biscuit between the two hulls and so we were the first to follow the Aigle the Empress's Yacht which led off the procession at 8.30 a.m.



The Challenger

The next major naval appointment assigned to Captain Nares was to take command of the Challenger expedition of 1872-76. It was the first global scientific exploration of the oceans, and brought back such a wealth of material that books about it were still selling in 1938.

The steamship Challenger, with her fitted scientific laboratories, was most probably a near replica of HMS Beagle, which had carried Charles Darwin on his famous exploratory work some

thirty years earlier. The official account of the Challenger expedition, (which was under the scientific direction of Professor Sir Charles Thomson FRS) was written by W. J. J. Spry RN and published in 1877, while a more modern report, The Voyage of the Challenger by Eric Linklater, was produced in a Cardinal edition by Sphere Books in 1974.

In 1875, Captain Nares was transferred to take command of the Royal Navy's attempt to reach the North Pole, in the leading steamship HMS Alert, followed by HMS Discovery. Both ships were trapped in the ice throughout the winter of 75 and sledge parties then achieved the highest latitudes ever reached by man. Serious scurvy afflicted both ships companies and in autumn 1876, Captain Nares brought the expedition back to Portsmouth. He was then made a Fellow of the Royal Society, promoted to Admiral and knighted by Queen Victoria.

Sir George Nares' eldest child was Amy

Nares and it was she who was most concerned to keep his memory alive. It is likely that she would have encouraged Molly and Edwin to give me the Christian name of Nares and the nick-name of George. Indeed I recall that George was the name I always answered to up to the age of ten or twelve. Amy then continued to consolidate my interest in and concern for my great grandfather by bequeathing to me his more important books, albums and other memorabilia.

The name Nares also lives on around the world from the Nares Strait and Naresland (Greenland) to Nares Harbour



HMS Alert caught in the ice off
Cape Beechy



My maternal grandmother
Amy with her son Owen

(Papua New Guinea) and Nares County (Queensland, Australia - including the city of Cairns).

Life at Tanera More

Our home lives were governed by routine and convention, laced with a certain amount of snobbery. This was well illustrated by the following: a large and very impressive gilt-framed portrait of Edwin's mother hung in the most prominent position in the grand dining room. In sharp contrast, no balancing portrait of his father was to be

seen anywhere.



Nares Mountain (Yukon)



Nares Lake (Yukon)

The significance of that gap (for those caring to notice it!) was that it had only been through the assiduous money-making of James Senior, that all this high living by his various progeny (including myself) had been made possible. The anomaly was, of course, explained by Edwin's mother having been a true lady, being the daughter of a prominent Belfast lawyer, whilst his father had committed the cardinal sin of being in trade.

In fact, I cannot recall my paternal grandfather's very existence ever being mentioned let alone any of his activities. A portrait of him (a reasonably-sized studio photograph) did in fact exist, but it had been long relegated to an attic (presumably by Edwin) from where, somewhat damp-stained, I rescued it, forty years later.

In fact, the circumstances (of considerable wealth) which were fundamental to our entire environment and lifestyles were never for one moment hinted at, and certainly never questioned: it was tacitly assumed that they simply represented the totally normal and accepted way of human life.

However, from reading Times articles and other reports, I knew, in fact, that our family circumstances were far from normal, and that, by contrast, most human life involved subsisting in various degrees of poverty; I believe that realisation - as a boy must have had a very unsettling effect, resulting in my feeling that I was at least to some extent - living a lie through existing at a vastly better and undeserved level of life than my fellow citizens, simply through the availability of comparatively vast sums of money, which I personally had done nothing whatever to acquire.

With hindsight, I believe it must have been the expulsion from University (for mocking royalty) of his only living son that forced my father Edwin to believe that my respect for the status quo was not as firm as he would have wished it to

be.

At the same time it is likely that Edwin's inevitable mingling with other newly-successful businessmen (or their progeny), meant that Edwin would have soon succumbed to the contagious disease of snobbery, which, as we shall see below, was a weakness which he evidenced over several years to come and which would have led him naturally to revere his mother but to relegate his father James to second place because James' recent career had involved him in grubbing around the commercial world of pubs and the like touting for commissions.

I do, in fact, faintly recall just once, when Edwin mentioned to me (with, I believe, just a hint of pride), that his father James had made his way up from being a mere postman but he stopped short of giving me any details of James actual activities.

Children like myself were to be seen but not heard , and I well recall my father's early, ominous dictum to the effect that each child when born, is allocated a certain quota of words which he/she may utter in their lifetime, after which (presumably!) oblivion.

My early and somewhat hazy childhood memories of my father are of an authoritarian figure of whom I was slightly scared rather than deeply fond.

Meals often passed in long, embarrassing silences, presided over by the inevitable pair of parlour maids standing like sentries, ready to pounce on emptied plates or dishes (see illustration.). This ridiculous ceremonial was just one of many, no doubt listed in Edwardian books of etiquette, as those recommended for wealthy middle class families to adopt if they were to keep up appearances.

That scene of the two parlour maids was mirrored almost exactly in a photo dated 1938 by Bill Brandt, taken at the home of a relative, and I hereby acknowledge with thanks the use of it here.

At Tanera More, meal times; at eight-thirty for breakfast, (nine on Sundays), one for lunch, four-thirty for tea and eight for dinner, were announced by the parlour maid whacking an enormous gong, and expected to be respected punctiliously. Ruth used to join us for breakfast and lunch but not for the more formal evening meal. After age ten, I was expected to attend dinner every night in evening dress including horrible stiff collar and black bow tie.

After breakfast, Edwin would often travel to nearby Farnham, to take his place as chairman of the local Bench or Justices of the Peace. Alternatively, he would attend, again as chairman, a meeting of the board of Directors of the local



Bill Brandt

water supply company: the Wey Valley. Occasionally, the mahogany dining table would be extended to its full length to accommodate a meeting of the eight or so trustees of the neighbouring several hundred acres of National Trust properties, of which Edwin was also chairman.

Alternatively, he would disappear to his beloved workshop (of which more below), or to his study to check receipts of dividends from his numerous investments. The original 120,000 odd which he had received as his one-eighth share of his father's estate in 1910, was of course spread amongst numerous holdings with colourful names such as Cape of Good Hope Consolidated , Alabama Great Southern 5% , Egyptian Preference Inscribed 3% , Chicago, Milwaukee and St Paul's 7% Mortgage , Pennsylvania Railway Co. First Mortgage Gold 4% and so on.

Meanwhile, much of my time was spent organising or expanding my museum , which had begun with Admiral Nares memorabilia and was added to by a variety of coins, fossils, brass rubbings and so on: I would also expand and improve my model railway. Weather permitting, I would be climbing trees or building platforms within them, or building a log cabin at ground level. Co-operative activities with friends from school were severely limited by Edwin's insistence on only the right type of boy being invited. There was, naturally, never any problem over Wilfred Noyce visiting, because his father, Sir Frank, was eminently respectable. However, another boy with whom I would have liked to co-operate in expanding my model railway was not acceptable because his father was a dentist, who messed about in the mouths of the general public !

The Remarkable Great Aunt Emily

Sir George Nares had ten children, most of whom led conventional married lives with children, such as my mother's mother, Amy. However one, the youngest daughter Emily, was evidently an independent spirit and tended to plough her own furrow. First, she married Lionel Latham, fortunately without issue. Latham was an unsuccessful stockbroker who, strangely, actually lost money. Had he made the customary fortune he would no doubt have been accepted into our family; in fact he was ostracised, and poor Emily along with him. Her disgrace was then compounded by her choosing to run a low-cost boarding house for sailors in Portsmouth, which put her truly beyond the pale of upper middle class etiquette, and throughout my childhood her name was never mentioned and she became a sort of non person.

Sir George's wife had died prematurely which left him without a female companion for the numerous official occasions which he was expected to attend. Emily agreed to accept his request to act as his proxy consort, which resulted in her

accumulating often amusing anecdotes about various high level foreign dignitaries, together with prominent Englishmen such as premiers, Gladstone and Disraeli.

One day Thora and I were fortunate to meet eighty year-old Emily at her home in Salisbury where she had been an active cathedral supporter. During her time at the Cathedral she had met the Dean with whom she had struck up such a close relationship it almost amounted to an engagement. Marriage however, would only be an empty dream because of her still being married to the stockbroker.

Thereafter we spent many pleasant occasions with her both at her home and elsewhere and learned of her many experiences, one of which related to an Eskimo nowadays known as an Inuit - Sir George and his crew had befriended during the winter of 1875 when their ship, HMS Alert, was trapped in the ice. When the spring of 1876 freed them and enabled them to head for home Sir George took a decision which I believe may well have been well-intentioned but was probably wrong or even inhuman. He decided to take the Eskimo man with them to England, where of course he would inevitably become the object of intense Victorian curiosity. In fact, the mind boggles at the thought of the innumerable aspects of culture-shock which that poor man must have endured quite apart from the total inability to communicate. Emily, who probably finished up as the Eskimo's carer said he used to sit all day in total wonderment simply staring at a great oak tree having, of course, never seen a tree of any kind before.

In due course, Emmie was struck down with a terminal illness and Thora offered to move into her house for a week and nursed her to the end, which was deeply appreciated both by herself and some particularly close relatives.

Edwin's Famous Clock

Following his qualifying as an engineer, Edwin had developed a keen interest in horology, and especially in the challenge which has always intrigued clock designers: namely how to best derive the time from a pendulum whilst also keeping it swinging, but with minimal interference. With his inheritance, he decided to retire and devote his time to meeting that challenge. He therefore had one of the ancillary buildings at Tanera More converted to a fully-fledged workshop, complete with lathes, drills, a milling machine, facilities for soldering, brazing and so forth.

In my youth and teens, I naturally gravitated there often, and thus gradually acquired an understanding and liking for a wide range of engineering techniques. Edwin had an astonishing aptitude for accuracy and attention to detail which were vital assets when he actually came to design, and start making, his answer to the challenge. This evolved as a free pendulum design, in which the pendulum's initial swing was maintained by the minuscule weights of two minimum-size ball bearings, which were arranged to pass over



each end of a cross head fixed to the pendulum, at alternate intervals. The resulting nascent clock soon became christened within the family as Bobbly and he encouraged me to learn its intricacies, and make suggestions. Without departing from the original concept, he then went on to develop, and try out and discard innumerable variations (sometimes as many as one every day) until, finally, around 1935, we took the latest version to the Greenwich Observatory Test Laboratory, where it was duly assessed as more accurate than Big Ben.

Edwin's
clock -
Bobbly

Following Edwin's death in 1947, one final version went to the Clock Gallery in the London Science Museum, where it can still be viewed, while I kept the other running from time to time, until my own failing eyesight made it too difficult. His clock was, certainly, a work of genius and one of hypnotising fascination to watch in motion, when the journeys of the little balls back and forth, and their functions in both driving the pendulum, and imparting its timing back into the mechanism driving the hands, could be clearly seen and understood.

Yachting

Spending several months of every year usually in Scotland on a yacht was a routine feature of our lives during my boyhood and teenage years. The yacht was usually laid up at a boat yard on the Clyde during winter, and then commissioned each spring by the crew of Captain, engineer and steward: all part-time fishermen.

In their earlier adult years, Edwin and his younger brother Granville, with whom he had always had much in common, used to enjoy cruising around the Northern Irish coastline, in a variety of small craft. When the opportunity arose, they decided, between them to purchase the steam yacht Isle of May , which would permit of longer cruises overseas, such as to Iceland, Norway, and the Baltic states.

Laughing Water

Following World War I, Edwin decided on having a more modest sized yacht built to a design modeled on a typical Scottish fishing boat: she was named Laughing Water and had bunks for five or six family and three crew. We used her during the summers of 1923 to 1928 around the West Coast of Scotland, which is ideal cruising territory. Although she did have sails, which we used occasionally, Edwin was never really interested in sailing so we used to move from one place to another using the single paraffin engine.

I soon grew to love living on the water, and began to master the rudiments of seamanship such as handling the rowing dinghy or the motor launch which were carried, and basic navigation. The superlatively detailed admiralty charts all carried magnetic north compass imprints which made possible the plotting of a course from A to B with the aid of the

brilliantly simple parallel rule.

Once during the night on Laughing Water, an exceptionally severe gale caused us to drag anchor and the engine failed to start in time to prevent us running aground; by very good fortune not resulting in particularly severe damage. Edwin then vowed never to depend on a single engine again and, after some time, purchased a replacement, rather larger, yacht with twin diesel engines, which he named, in homage to Ulster: Boyne Water. Being rather larger, with more cabin accommodation, it was possible to have more friends and relatives on Boyne Water, including school friends from Charterhouse such as Dick Lee. Although spending most of the three years from 1937 on in familiar Scottish surroundings, we were also able to go further afield, for example to Ireland and the Orkneys. In 1939 with war looming, the Admiralty commandeered Boyne Water, for use as a torpedo boat, which brought our yachting days for the time being to an end.



Laughing Water

Chapter 2

Schooldays

St. Edmund's Preparatory School

When my parents put my name down for entry to Charterhouse, they were advised to do the same for one of their recommended feeder schools, which naturally shared similar attitudes and practices, such as, for example, good old corporal punishment. So, I was duly signed on for St. Edmund's, at which Edwin insisted I should be a boarder, although it happened to be situated only a short distance from Tanera More.

Thus, at age eight, I was sentenced to be sent, alone, and for my first time ever away from home, to a place which I had never even seen, to live with a group of boys and staff, none of whom I had ever met. I well recall the tension of the moment, when I was told that the chauffeur was waiting at the front door, ready to take me, and I showed my extreme distaste for the whole idea by locking, and attempting to barricade, my bedroom door.

The Sadistic Headmaster

The headmaster, one Cyril Morgan-Brown, was an oversized, heavy jowled man whose exceptionally rough tweed suits emphasised his boorishness. He was a sadistic old bully, who had deliveries of fresh canes made regularly along with the school stationery supplies. Once, trembling before him, he accused me of being a whited sepulchre. When I asked if he could please explain the meaning of such a strange description, without any hint of a reply, he simply made it very painfully clear that it was not intended to be complimentary.

The school was high church with its own built-in chapel, which we had to attend at least twice daily. Often there were sermons, usually of unbelievable tedium. One day at prayers, I was kneeling dutifully, when I noticed the boy at the opposite end of my pew had been unable to control himself, and pee was starting to cover most of the bench. Thereafter, speculating on the explosion which would follow eight or nine bums changing from kneeling to sitting positions made for a welcome distraction.

The chapel had a young woman organist, and a senior was once caught kissing her. Naturally, the Head's wrath was fearful to behold, especially as the sin had been perpetrated in God's own temple etc, etc and the wretched lad was sentenced to receive a whack from each of the 70 or so of us in turn. And so we had to line up on a playing field where the victim had to bend over a chair. Canes, with instructions in use, were then distributed, and as I recall a series of somewhat perfunctory taps on his bum followed.

Being a high church environment, fish was obligatory for lunch each Friday. By bad luck, one Friday, my helping of cod was bad, and quite serious food poisoning resulted. After several days in the sanatorium, the school doctor ruled that I should not be served any fish in future. In fact, a life-long allergy to fish (luckily excluding shellfish) then began.

We ate at long refectory type tables, and my place was at the far end of the Head's table. He had clearly been told, but stupidly would not fully accept, the doctor's instruction, and, on Fridays, he would always insist on placing a thumbnail sized piece of cod on an otherwise empty large plate to be passed to me, thus making fun of my predicament.

Boy Scouts

By contrast, the assistant Head was, for an ex Indian army major, a surprisingly gentle man, who enthused me and other boys with the pleasures of outdoor work such as tree felling and ground leveling while we were creating a short golf- course in the school grounds, and he also taught us the correct use and maintenance of the various tools involved. He also ran the Scouts, where we learned, for example, how to set up a campsite, complete with field kitchen and latrine etc. I was rewarded for my fulfilment of those sorts of tasks by being made patrol leader of the Kangaroos.

Indeed, the main saving grace of St. Edmund's was its staff (apart of course from its Head!) They were a friendly group

of men and women who well understood the values of empathy and understanding; I particularly valued their introductions to mathematics, and to Latin, with its splendid logic and its relevance to so many other subjects.

Charterhouse

In 1931 I was dispatched, yet again, to totally unknown territory, but this time at the ripe old age of 14. Charterhouse, originally in Southwark in London, had moved, in the late 19th century, to a striking position above Godalming in Surrey, with ample level ground for spacious playing fields. The original group of Gothic-inspired buildings, including assembly and classrooms, and two houses for boarders, crowned the hilltop and was impressive, especially at a distance.

However, as the school grew, the required additional boarders' houses were built against the steep hillside below the school centre. By chance, several years earlier I had passed by those buildings and had been so struck by their deeply forbidding appearance that I had assumed they must be the local workhouse.



Charterhouse School

Weekites

Each House for boarders was named after its founder ; my particular prison along with some 30 other boys for the next few years, was called Weekites. Being built so close to the steep hillside, it received virtually no sun, and seemed to be bathed in a sort of permanent gloom. The only access to the school centre for classes etc. was via steep and seemingly endless steps, which were treacherous in winter.

In Weekites the ground floor accommodation consisted of an extra large L- shaped common room, in which one wing contained a big refectory type table with benches each side, flanked by rows of lockers for school books and personal possessions. Above these hung serried ranks of engraved wood panels, bearing tedious lists of previous inhabitants and their years of sufferings.

The other wing had a row of cubby holes along its sides, each having a narrow work top, cupboard and small bench, just big enough for one boy to sit at, to one of which you graduated if you survived the first year at the big table. Off the common room, was an average sized room reserved for the six or so prefects. These were older boys who had been

invested by the house master with some disciplinary powers, together with privileges which included the right to shout very loudly: FAG! ,at which we juniors were supposed to rush to offer our services to fulfil whatever stupid whim had entered the prefect's mind.

This, of course, was but one of numerous manifestations of Tradition, which oozed from every pore of the woodwork, of which there was a great deal all stained a uniform dark brown to underline the pervading gloom. The most conspicuous feature of the common room, was the complete absence of any vestige of comfort, indeed it closely resembled a stable without any straw. My accustomed, and only possible seat, was a window recess with sides just wide enough to lean ones back against.

Also on the ground floor was the doubtfully hygienic kitchen, where the somewhat scruffy-looking cook, would, occasionally, shave. The House Master and family naturally had their separate accommodation elsewhere in the house. The toilets were totally open air, the only roofing being chicken wire, presumably to catch missiles dropped from windows above. By the grace of God, they were not Indian type squatters , but actually had seats, though why they had troubled to erect partitions between them was a mystery, because closing the doors was forbidden.

Traditions

Possibly the most diabolically stupid tradition was that of new boys having to memorise and use a childish language special to the House consisting of, perhaps, a hundred words or phrases for every-day things or happenings. (I could not bring myself to write twice about this appalling travesty of education, but it had applied also at St. Edmund's, where I recall, for example, that the obligatory word for fart, was vot.) At Weekites, a prefect would be allotted a new arrival to instruct in this rubbish for a few days, including committing it to a notebook.

Then, for new boys, came the dreaded initiation ceremony, which, for each, meant standing on the table while undergoing an oral exam in the house language , followed by the obligatory singing of some currently popular song. Owing to the barely credible capacity of a young brain's memory, I not only did well with both, but actually received some applause.

Immediately afterwards, I was summoned in to the prefects room, where I was told they had decided that I should be chastised, lest I developed a swollen head from the applause. In spite of such an astonishingly illogical decision, I received a beating from the senior prefect, which was all the more demeaning for being performed in view of the other five, who included my close friend Wilfred Noyce, who had already been appointed such, presumably for his outstanding entrance exam grading. Thus arose a particularly ironic situation, since only a few days before, Sir Frank, about to return to his job on the Viceroy's council in Delhi, had taken me aside and asked me to keep an eye on Wilfred, and

here he was witnessing me being beaten!

In line with the other major public schools, Charterhouse had its OTC or Officers Training Corps. This involved all the usual basic military activities including drilling and taking part in mock manoeuvres with replica rifles and wooden machine guns. The OTC also boasted a band, (for ceremonial occasions and for leading the troops when out marching) to which I was allotted because they needed a tall cadet to carry and beat the bass drum.

Since it was quite heavy, they also appointed an unfortunate boy of small stature, to march in front and share the drum's weight on his back. By its nature, the beat of the big drum tended to control the tempo of marching. Thus when passing the extensive neighbouring girls school, I was able to slow down the whole column to enable us to better stare at the girls, and vice versa.

Teachers and Friends



Wilfred Noyce

The Educational syllabus at Charterhouse naturally included all the usual academic subjects. However, I never really experienced any lasting intellectual benefits, I think because so few of the staff were outstanding. In fact, my English master, for example, was so unpleasant that he only succeeded in alienating me permanently from both Shakespeare and virtually all poetry. Also in spite of being co-author with Yeatman, of the famous 1066 and all That, my history master, W. C. Sellars, never really brought his subject to life in a stimulating manner

I did of course have good friends at Charterhouse - such as Wilfred Noyce - whose company I always enjoyed and who, on occasion, was able to join us for holidays such as , for example, when yachting in Scotland. One, Dick Lee, I remember particularly because he always carried in his wallet a portrait of his father, who

had been a World War 1 pilot and was killed in 1918. Dick always vowed that he would follow in his father's footsteps and avenge his death. He did indeed become a highly capable flyer and won many prestigious honours. However, unhappily and probably inevitably, he too suffered the tragic fate of his father, being shot down during the Battle of Britain.



Dick Lee D.S.O. D.F.C

Chapter 3

Climbing

Satisfaction from climbing almost anything climbable is a wholly natural childhood proclivity, and, for me, one which persisted into teenage, and indeed beyond. For, with adulthood, come rewards such as viewing panoramas - seen perhaps for the first time - and the knowledge that your own efforts alone made that enjoyment possible.

Competitive sports never enthused me; cricket in particular bored me stiff, thus naturally, I was useless at all of them. So, it was rewarding to find, in climbing, an activity which I could perform well. Tanera More was ringed by majestic and very tall conifers, and, at the level of their uppermost branches it was easy to rid oneself early of any problems with vertigo.

Wilfred Noyce

I was particularly fortunate, at St. Edmund's, to find a good friend in Wilfred Noyce exactly my age and a natural born climber. When we both moved on to Charterhouse, we found there a friendly junior master named Murray-Rust, himself an enthusiastic rock climber, who offered to take us for training on the splendid, firm rock faces of the North Wales mountains. That was particularly helpful for me, while Wilfred had already had the benefit of a brief period of training there.

It soon became clear to me that serious climbing fell into two main categories: first, pure rock climbing, normally learned first, and second, full-blooded mountaineering, involving an understanding of both rock, snow, and ice techniques, and the impact of weather conditions.

Training on rock

My basic rock climbing lessons by Murray-Rust took place on the beginner's routes up milestone buttress at the foot of Tryfan. These included emphasis on the importance of carefully (but not too slowly!) studying the rock ahead for both hand and footholds, and, importantly, how they could lead on to the next ones.

I also learned customary rope drill. This, for a pair of climbers, involved the rope (usually 100 feet or so long) running back from the waist of the leader to his second,



Tryfan, North Wales

who holds it in a special way over one shoulder and down his back and pays it out (without slack) as the leader ascends. The second meanwhile, has secured himself by passing a loop from his waist around a convenient belay, consisting of any, small or large, preferably smooth projecting piece of rock forming a natural hook. The intended scenario is that, if the leader falls, the shock is taken first by the rope being secured by its comparatively smooth anchorage over the second's shoulder and back.



Central Buttress, Scafell, Lake District

Following basic training, I gained further valuable experience by climbing as necessary to assist Wilfred with his tasks of writing up recommended climbs for the Climbers Club guidebooks, involving measuring lengths of pitches between natural resting places, and noting locations of good belays. During these movements, Wilfred took delight in pulling out and discarding what he scathingly described as ironmongery that is, early examples of the (now widely used) aids, such as "pitons hammered into rock faces, which, we both agreed, tarnished the chastity of the mountains.

By now I had developed sufficient confidence to enable me to act as a reasonably efficient second to Wilfred, and together, we began to make a series of climbs of gradually increasing difficulty on Tryfan and its surrounding peaks.

After a few weeks, Wilfred, always anxious to take on new challenges, suggested we travel north to the Lake District. So, we duly camped at Wasdale Head, and warmed up on Pinnacle Rock and other well-known routes on Great Gable, before moving on to the more difficult climbs.

Severe Climbs

First, Wilfred achieved an unprecedented ascent of the notorious, 80-foot Innominate crack in boots. This is a narrow cleft in a truly vertical, smooth face, normally only ever attempted in rubbers (i. e. tennis shoes). I followed him up, but even in rubbers found it so fiendishly difficult that I could well understand why an appropriate name had never been thought of for it.

We then went on to tackle the very severe Central Buttress on Scafell (wearing rubbers) where our slight differences in physique proved helpful, he having broad shoulders, and I being a little lighter and taller, and thus with a longer reach. Halfway up, at a particularly exposed spot, above a sheer drop of several hundred feet, with Wilfred securely belayed, I



Innominate Crack, Cumbria (anonymous climbers)

temporarily took over the leadership and was able to make good use of one of his shoulders, when it proved possible to reach a good hold and pull myself up on to a very welcome ledge, where he soon joined me. That experience, possibly, was the scariest of all throughout my climbing days.

Doctor Edwards: a very brave man

A Doctor Edwards, from Liverpool, used to join us for climbing from time to time, both in Wales and the Lakes. He had an unusual first name: Menlove (possibly Scandinavian in origin). Menlove Edwards was a man of prodigious strength, and a climber of very great ability: an equal of Wilfred's ; both of them used to move up or across near vertical rock faces with the same sure-footed agility as mountain goats.

Following our conquest of Central Buttress, I returned south, while Wilfred decided to attempt, with Menlove as his second , another exceptionally severe climb on a different side of Scafell, and it was on that climb that he suffered his horrendous fall, in September 1938.

Menlove was an exceptionally imaginative and self sacrificing man, who had developed a unique theory that, if the second , rather than securing himself tightly to the rock face, deliberately left that vital connection loose implying, perhaps, six feet of rope rather than two feet then, if his leader fell, when the strain came on the rope it would be less likely to break because part of the energy would be absorbed by pulling the second(himself in this case) off his stance until the six foot belay took the strain. I well recall watching him try out this courageous procedure by deliberately dropping off a ledge, and

leaving himself hanging by the rope at his waist, a few feet below.

Wilfred's Fall

This highly remarkable theory was soon dramatically proved to work wonderfully well when Wilfred fell some 80 feet, and Menlove was duly pulled off and left hanging in space, but still just able to lower Wilfred (alive but unconscious) to the ground, before climbing down himself to summon help. The outcome, for Wilfred, was many months in hospital, with numerous plastic surgery operations on his shattered face, after which, although I had known him since childhood,

I had real difficulty in recognising him. He went on to make an almost complete recovery, which enabled him, later, to join the team for the coming successful assault on Everest.

Mount Victoria: Rocky Mountains

My first experience of full blooded mountaineering had come about largely by chance, when, in July 1935, I had happened to be passing through the Canadian Rockies on holiday with my family. At Lake Louise, near Banff, I came across a group of Swiss climbing guides who had been brought over by the Canadian Pacific Railway company and given accommodation, as an addition to their tourist facilities. One of them, Edward, agreed to lend me both boots and ice axe and to take me to the summit of Abbot's Pass, on the shoulder of the ridge leading up to Mount Victoria. Because of the distance alongside the lake, it was necessary to leave in the early afternoon and stay overnight in a forest cabin, in order to get on the glacier before the sun stirred too many avalanches.



Abbot's Pass, Alberta

In the very early hours, I was woken by the sound of something evidently heavy moving over the cabin roof, and I asked Edward to explain it. I well recall that he replied quite casually that it must be a grizzly, which had picked up our scent. Apparently it had been a particularly severe winter and wild animals were especially hungry, but he thought it would have gone by the time we had to leave.

We were, in fact, soon on the glacier, and thus free of the bear. However, the fear of being eaten alive was soon replaced by new terrors. It happened that the comparatively narrow (perhaps 500 yards wide) glacier, lay in a steep sided valley, down the sides of which there were constant avalanches, which we could not see because of the morning mist, but whose noises were unnerving. Further, the glacier itself was riven by numerous vicious crevasses, one of which, some eight feet wide, we had to cross on a

terrifyingly narrow ice bridge.

Since first stepping on to the glacier, we had of course, been roped together, and I soon learned, perforce, how to drive



Abbot's Pass hut

my axe into the ice for security, and then pay out the rope as Edward progressed, while he, in turn, did the same for me.

Leaving the lower levels of the glacier, we then had to climb the snow and ice mountainside, involving the very exhausting cutting of steps where necessary, and eventually reached the hut at the head of the pass with great relief!

After a good rest, we started down the steep slopes at the other side of the pass, the first thousand feet or so of which was on snow which we, individually, (un-roped), hurtled down by schussing , that is, squatting, using the axe at one's side as a brake.

The second, equally steep but not so fast part of the descent consisted, also squatting, of scree running(scree being stones varying from cricket to croquet balls in size) when, once started, surprisingly large adjoining areas of mountainside appeared to move with you.

Having reached level ground we had a pleasant walk along a very beautiful lake to an agreed rendezvous with my family. I then said my farewells to Edward, and thanked him profusely for having guided me so safely and well through what had turned out, for me, to have been a more than expectedly profound experience.

Cambridge University Mountaineering Club

Mountaineering Club

While at Cambridge, the university mountaineering club was formed, and I and three or four others who had even more limited experience, used to take parties of enthusiastic novices both to Wales, and later also to the French Alps, where, with the help of a guide from La Berarde, I had been able to augment such knowledge of snow and ice as I had been able to glean from my brief time with Edward in Canada.

Once, in severe cold at Christmas time, I was leading a group of learners on Tryfan, when I decided to traverse across to another route which I thought might be safer in the very poor conditions. As my second paid out the rope, I passed it over a belay to reduce the drop if I should fall, which was normal practice. Minutes later my fingers froze, I fell, and my second withstood the pull, but the old fashioned hemp rope broke at the belay, and I fell some 30 feet, and was lucky to escape with a deep gash in one buttock, which responded well to stitching.

The climbing fraternity that I was happy to be part of for a number of years was remarkably diverse, friendly and mutually supportive, and I made and retained many good colleagues within it.

Following the end of the 39-45 war, I called one day to visit Wilfred Noyce. He had become a master at Charterhouse, and like myself, had married and already had children. After reminiscing over old times in Wales and the Lakes, I explained that I had seen more than enough excitement and death during the war, and had decided, for my family's sake, to give up climbing for good.

I urged him to do the same, but evidently, he was reluctant to do so, probably, and understandably, because, at the time, the final Everest team had not yet been decided on. Deeply tragically, he eventually lost his life while climbing in the Kara Korem Mountains.

Wilfred Noyce was not only a brilliant climber, but more importantly, a wonderful person to have had as a friend for so long. His remarkable record of climbing achievements included: First, in both Wales and the Lake District, he broke many records on rock, for example, by being the first to climb the Innominate Crack in boots; he also pioneered numerous totally new routes and then added them to the Guide Books, together with interesting variations on several old-established climbs. Second, while still a boy at Charterhouse, having had training from a particularly expert Zermatt Guide, he actually led a party of climbers up the Matterhorn, and thus set a record for being the youngest climber ever to do so. Third, on Everest, a crisis caused by several other climbers being off sick was averted by Wilfred undertaking the desperately arduous task of climbing, alone, and carrying all the necessary equipment himself, to establish the vital starting point camp on the South Col for Hilary and Tensing's final, successful push to the summit.



Wilfred Noyce on Everest

Chapter 4

Canada

For the family's summer holiday in 1935, it was decided to make the railway journey across Canada, followed by a sea trip up the west coast as far as Alaska.

The Atlantic Crossing

The Atlantic crossing from Liverpool to Montreal was made on board the White Star Liner Duchess of York, one of the well-named drunken Duchesses, since, being very narrowly built, they rolled atrociously. We had one very prominent

fellow passenger on board, the well-respected governor of the Bank of England during the inter-war years, Montague Norman. He was always glad of a friendly chat while walking the decks, and made plain his disgust with the absolutely intolerable rolling, and vowed to complain bitterly to the captain, which, needless to say, made no difference whatever.

Icebergs

Approaching the entrance to the St Laurence waterway, I well recall the stunning beauty of several huge icebergs seen against the deep grey background of the turbulent Atlantic, also the exciting glimpses of the Aurora Borealis.

Two Great Railways

Great Railways

Our westbound train journey was made on the Canadian Pacific line, and our return, some two weeks later, on the Canadian National Railway, whose line ran rather to the north of that of the C. P. R.

In terms of the great engines and other rolling stock of the two companies, it was hard to tell them apart, yet they were two different, fiercely independent organisations, both founded to achieve the same objective of linking East and West, when just one would have served Canada far better by making it possible, in particular, to concentrate the original Herculean construction efforts on the optimum route through all the thousands of miles of often desperately difficult terrain between the two coasts.

That is made dramatically clear in the Rocky Mountain areas particularly, where the two lines have perforce to share the only conceivably viable route, through a steep-sided canyon for example, where astonishing engineering acrobatics were needed to keep them apart, which must have cost them together, many millions of dollars more than just one, more rational solution would have done.

However, whatever the logic of the original strategic decision may have been, there can be no doubt both railways represent lasting monuments to the skills of their engineers, and to the courage and endurance of the many who laboured and died to construct them.

Views from the Trains

from the Trains

Views from the trains on both routes were of course continually spectacular, particularly for their immense scale: both forests and prairies especially seemed to be literally endless. Towards the west, the foothills rising from the prairies introduced the dramatic ice and snow covered Rockies, which close up, made the Alps seem like toy mountains by comparison. On long bends, it was intriguing to walk to either the front or rear end of the train to see the opposite end apparently traveling in a different direction. Level crossings had very loud warning bells and wildly oscillating semaphore arms, but no gates. Consequently, great spectator sport was provided by dare-devil motorists racing the train and darting across in front just in time.

In the mountains, the trains moved so slowly it was easy to walk to the front, dismount, go into a station bar for a beer, and rejoin the train at the rear. Hobos , unemployed men looking for work, would jump the trains, and travel free for hundreds of miles. Once, on an uphill gradient, our train stalled completely, and it transpired that a group of them had greased the rails to slow the train down to make it easier for them to mount, but had overdone it!

Following my climbing adventure on Mount Victoria with Swiss guide Edward (chapter Three) we had finished up at a pre-arranged meeting point with the family.

Kicking Horse Pass on the Footplate

Horse Pass on the Footplate

By chance the meeting point proved to be at the very place on the Canadian Pacific track where it emerged from that spectacular 19th century triumph the Kicking Horse Pass with its two consecutive steep gradient spiral tunnels.

A typical monster locomotive was standing there, having just completed its task of assisting to push an eastbound train up to the summit. Its engineer(driver) asked if I would like to join him and his fireman on the footplate on their short journey back down through the tunnels to their depot at the foot of the pass. It was an invitation I could not refuse, and the trip proved truly momentous. The huge engine was a wood burner, so, as it hurtled and shuddered, making astonishing noises, around the many bends in the total darkness, showers of sparks from its chimney provided intermittent illumination.

Mail Steamer to Skagway

For the next phase of our trip; up through the west coast archipelago, we joined. At Vancouver, the regular mail steamer plying between Seattle and Skagway, capital of Alaska. It was a comfortable ship with a surprisingly large

number of passengers, who appeared to be almost exclusively Americans. It was my very first encounter with Americans and I can recall being astonished that so many of them clearly spent an inordinately long time each day, eating in the dining saloon.

Steaming north, the first few hundred miles, along an often surprisingly narrow channel bordered by hundreds of beautiful small islands, was most attractive. We stopped occasionally at small coastal towns, some with colourful Indian names such as Ketchikan or Juneau, and found that the rivers (prior to 21st century pollution) were so alive with salmon that they appeared to be a solid mass of fish, completely obscuring the river bottoms.

As we moved north, the climate grew very distinctly colder, and the shore line was punctuated at intervals by the ends of huge glaciers. Occasionally the captain would approach one and blow the ships foghorn, hoping that its sound wave would cause a significant slab of ice to break off, and thus amuse his passengers. While we were watching, he never had any luck.

Finally we reached Skagway, which has a good natural harbour but disappointing hinterland. During the frenzied Yukon gold rush, it had been a hub of all the hectic activities involved but once the gold collapsed, everything had come to an abrupt and total stop that was evidenced throughout the forlorn desolation of the phantom town, with widespread abandonment of personal possessions and even unfinished meals on dining tables.

Proceeding south, our mail ship soon reached Prince Rupert, where we boarded the CNR train for our return to Montreal, stopping overnight first at the beautiful Jasper Lake National Park in the Rockies.

Chapter 5

European Cities

In 1936, I decided to try to get at least an idea of the great breadth of European culture by visiting a number of its cities, and attempting to see as many as possible of their wonderful museums and art galleries, as well as their cathedrals, castles, and other great architectural masterpieces.

Paris

I had about three months before starting at Cambridge and began in Paris, naturally with the Louvre and the other well known museums and galleries. I also traveled out from the city to see the neighbouring beauties of Versailles,

Malmaison, Fontainebleau, and some of the great Gothic cathedrals such as those at Chartres and Beauvais. In France I found I could build on a fragile framework of school French, particularly when stimulated by the free carafes of wine always waiting to greet you at the many hospitable bars and small restaurants, and, importantly, the opportunity to try out conversations with uncritical strangers or new acquaintances.

Munich

I then moved on to Munich, where free board and lodging was available with a family, owing to an exchange arrangement, through which Molly had already provided a daughter of the family with some weeks of hospitality at Tanera More. This, of course, provided me with an immediate insight into German culture, which was not particularly attractive, especially as the 17-year old son, Julius, was a dedicated member of the Hitler Youth. He appeared to spend 24 hours of every day immersed in their drilling and other militaristic activities, and his manic devotion to the fatherland was something I was to experience only too bitterly in his successors, ten years later.

With its ponderous furniture and drapes and the stodgy food, I was glad to escape the house, and take a tram to the city centre, where I had arranged to have some German lessons. I then visited the great opera house, and found, unsurprisingly, that most programmes consisted of Wagnerian works, and, in fact, the first convenient one for which a seat was available proved to be Parsifal Wagner's longest, filling some six hours from 5pm onwards.

Before long it began to outweigh my love of music (at least by that composer) and I moved to the opera bar. There I met a strikingly beautiful blonde girl from Mayfair, with the unusual name of Eila who had also had her fill of Parsifal. She was a typical upper class deb ; however, she had a keen sense of humour, and importantly, a healthy dislike of the Nazis. She had been sent to Munich to learn German, as I too had hoped to do, so our conversations in English were actually unhelpful to both. However, we decided to try other operas, and to make some visits to various famous museums, galleries and the like. Some of these were huge, mausoleum-like buildings, where I recall her colourful company was often particularly welcome. Eila and I soon became good friends, and remained so until the outbreak of war in 39.



Eila - my friend in Munich

Salzburg and Innsbruck

From Munich I moved into Austria, to see first the towns of Salzburg and Innsbruck, the former of course, containing

numerous reminders and memorabilia of Mozart, including a major museum in his memory. Both towns stand in impressive settings, with splendid mountains rising directly from their perimeters, and both contain those wonderful baroque embellishments which are the hallmarks of most central European towns and cities, in the forms of elaborate doorways, fountains, porticos and other features of both private and municipal places, including beautifully landscaped small parks.

Vienna

From the excellent Pension Engel, I was able to visit the St Stephen's Cathedral, the Hoffburg palace, the delightful Liechtenstein museum containing a mix of both old masters and furniture, the Spanish Riding School, the famous Prater amusement park with its big wheel , forerunner of the London Eye , and the beautiful Vienna woods and vineyards overlooking the Danube.

Following Vienna I had intended to move on to Budapest, and then to Prague, Dresden and Berlin. Regrettably, at the time, Hitler was becoming daily more aggressive and British citizens were strongly advised to return to the U. K. It was the time of the Munich crisis which soon concluded, disgracefully, with Chamberlain's notorious scrap of paper , and so my European tour was cut short.

Budapest

The steamer trip down river to Budapest was at times quite alarming, since the Danube was in spate and running extremely fast, and the flooding made navigation very confusing for the captain. Again, my invaluable Griebensled me to the excellent Pension Bellevue, in the more modern part of the capital: Pest , while the older part Buda , lay on the more romantic south bank with its many inns and gypsy music. The whole city brilliantly floodlit looked extremely dramatic, with the exciting St. Gellert terraces high up on the Buda side providing wonderful views of the whole, including the attractive large Margaret Island in mid stream. Also on the south bank were the famous Gellert Baths, having the first ever artificial wave machine, which appeared to strike panic among the swimmers when it was switched on.

Prague

A few hours train journey from Budapest through Bratislava led to Prague. The rather dull landscapes of the great Hungarian plain were enlivened somewhat by the activities of some of the fellow train travellers; I vaguely recall a rather large Spanish opera singer busily rejecting the advances of a clearly over- sexed young Hungarian army officer.

My first morning in Prague was well spent in a several-hours introductory coach tour, which included the dramatically sited castle high above the river with its enormous old hall and magnificent ballroom, both boasting a host of lavish Baroque details.

Dresden

Moving away from the Hungarian plain, the three hour train run to Dresden along the Elbe, passed through beautiful hilly country punctuated by dramatic limestone cliffs, which was, in fact, the Sudetenland, that notorious region of Czechoslovakia, long claimed, and eventually occupied by Hitler.

I remember finding Dresden to be a charming, modest city with a wealth of beautiful architecture, and none of the noticeably militaristic atmosphere of Munich. I can recall no signs whatever of it being a hub of railway intersections vital to the German war economy, which was the reason given later for the wantonly destructive air attacks on it by Bomber Harris. Those raids, and the ensuing hurricane-like fire-storms, must have been as agonizing for its inhabitants as were the later, devastating blows to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After following a guidebook tour of the centre, I concentrated on visiting the lovely riverside Zwinger group of buildings, considered to be the finest of all examples of German Baroque design, and a centre of activity of the 18th century royal court. A whole wing of the Zwinger complex housed a picture gallery, which I was able to visit before moving on.

Berlin

Unfortunately, at the time of my visit, the capital city was greatly disrupted by preparations for the imminent Olympic Games. However, I was able to visit the famous Brandenburg Gate, and to see the mile long, dead straight Unter den Linden the German equivalent of the Champs Elysees in Paris. I also took a half hour local train ride to Potsdam a charming small town with a beautifully kept riverside park, well stocked with a great range of splendid trees, very reminiscent of London's Kew Gardens.

Venice

In the autumn of 1938, with fellow students Michael and Graeme, we set off to drive across France, Germany and Northern Italy to Venice. Our first significant stop on the way was at Lake Garda, where a small side road with innumerable hairpin bends led up to the dramatically sited village of Tremosine, with its highly recommended Pension and panoramic views.

From Riva, at the head of the lake, we drove to Vicenza, famed for its beautifully preserved Roman theatre, and its exceptional Palladian architecture, and thence to Ravenna with its fascinating group of churches all having different designs of very colourful mosaic floors.

Parking the car at a mainland garage, we then went by lagoon ferryboat to the city centre, where we had the astonishing luck to find a large room available. It was in a pension occupying a prime position in the corner of St. Marks square, next to the Cathedral itself, and opposite to the Doges Palace and the towering Campanile.

During the next two days we were able to see much of the best of the city, including its premier picture galleries. Our room opened on to a balcony overlooking the great square the real centre of the city, where we noticed exceptional crowds gathering, and it transpired that Mussolini was due to make a speech at the other end of the square. From our vantage point, we were well placed to judge the impact he made on the average Italian and it was clearly very little, for many hundreds of them simply continued their incessant eating, drinking and chatting throughout.

Florence

From Venice we moved on to sample the cultural treasures of Florence, including the lovely cathedral in its dramatic setting, and the Uffizi gallery, with the glorious Titians and Botticellis. Unfortunately it was the time of the Munich crisis, so, fearing war, we were pressed for time because of getting home. However, we managed to include stops at both San Gimignano the city of towers, and Siena. Traveling towards the French frontier, the main oil circulating pipe fractured. By astonishing luck, there was an old-fashioned Italian blacksmith nearby who performed an incredibly accomplished feat of both brazing and soldering, and that crisis was over. Fearing running out of petrol before reaching the Calais ferry, we bought a 50 litre drum, filled it and then carried it all the way home on the back seat, by which time the crisis had blown over, with Chamberlain's notorious scrap of paper.