Life's Jigsaw: A Medical Man Finds the Pieces

by

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The Memoir Club

First published in 2001 by
The Memoir Club
Whitworth Hall
Spennymoor
County Durham

British Library Cataloguing in
Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book
is available from the
British Library.

ISBN: 1 84104 025 8

Typeset by George Wishart & Associates, Whitley Bay.
Printed by Bookcraft (Bath) Ltd.

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To Jenny

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Foreword

IF WALTON HIMSELF WAS *The Compleat Angler*, read on and judge whether this biography was written by a man who might well be regarded as *The Compleat Physician* . . . because John Richmond has served with distinction in so many of the fields of Medicine.

He was assuredly held in high regard as a family doctor in Whithorn. Before that, he acquired a truly outstanding range and quality of experience as a (National Service) Army Doctor in Africa. He went on to be a most successful hospital physician and was successively Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Reader in Medicine at Edinburgh. And he then proceeded to embellish the Chair of Medicine at Sheffield, taking the Deanship there in his stride and with prestigious senior status accorded to him in the London College of Physicians. He returned to Edinburgh where his term as President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh was a great success. It is a pleasure to write a foreword to this all-too-brief biography of a remarkable man who has been my close friend for forty eventful years. The challenge is to do justice to his character without overindulgence in superlatives, because my admiration will be obvious.

John's personal account in the following pages reflects much of his typically guarded understatement. But his readers cannot fail to be impressed by his record of so much achievement and his daunting combination of industry,

determination and great ability. His patients, his friends, his colleagues, his guests and his students will all testify to the constancy of his authority, his courtesy, his gentleness, his unyielding integrity and his strength. I have cast this paragraph almost as a reference, because the style of the biography is unassuming but these points must be made.

Here is the story of a dedicated doctor, a gifted teacher and a man of uncompromising honesty who has never lost his friendly nature, his warmth and his human touch. These qualities have survived, despite the need (increasingly evident in these difficult years) for the determined competitiveness that he displayed in sport – in his swimming and diving, and on the rugby field – and in his very successful academic studies. He has also been able to develop and display firmness and to hold to his high principles in his teaching, his clinical management, and notably in his senior committee work. He makes light of his courageous responses to many of the very demanding challenges that he faced. And he sprinkles his biography nicely with anecdotes that reveal his grand sense of humour and love of good stories. He is, himself, an accomplished raconteur.

John Richmond has won the acclaim and unreserved respect of his professional colleagues across the world for his outstanding contributions to Medicine and to medical education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He holds many honours. His personal friends will warm to his many fine tributes to Jenny, his wife, and they will join me in applauding this modest chronicle of his remarkable career.

Gerald Collee
(Emeritus Professor of Medical Microbiology, University of Edinburgh)
Edinburgh 2001

Preface

IT IS AN HONOUR, but also somewhat embarrassing, to be approached with the invitation to write one's memoirs. I demurred two or three times but eventually, with some trepidation, decided to proceed. The main concern was that it might all read like self-aggrandisement, which is the last thing that I would want to happen. Also I had to wonder who would be interested apart from family, close friends and colleagues.

There is quite a lot about climbing the ladder in teaching hospital and postgraduate medicine and about doors opening unexpectedly. However I have tried to pepper the story with happy memories, anecdotes and my enjoyment of humour. There are many quotations and while the odd word may have changed with the passage of time, I am sure that the content is close to the original; indeed, I can still hear the voices.

I have purposely not mentioned many friends and colleagues by name and I sincerely hope that no one will be offended by any significant omission of a piece of the jigsaw.

Finally I want to thank my good friend Gerald Collee for his extraordinarily generous Foreword and also the many staff of the Memoir Club who have given me so much help and encouragement.

Acknowledgements

1. The Richmond Surname Society.
2. The Head Teacher, Hall Cross School, Doncaster, formerly Doncaster Grammar School.
3. Air Images, Haltwhistle, Northumberland NE49 0DG.
4. Blackwell Science Ltd.
5. President and Council, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.
6. *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, Vol I, by Sir George Clark, Clarendon Press, Oxford, for the Royal College of Physicians 1964.
7. The Medical Pilgrims.
8. The Public Relations Office, University of Sheffield.
9. Emeritus Professor Donald H. Girdwood.
10. 'Bicentenary of the Faculty of Medicine 1726-1926' by University of Edinburgh.

CHAPTER 1

Origins and Early Childhood, 1926-36

THE FAMILY NAME 'Richmond' is believed to have originated in the eleventh century. It may be derived from 'Riche-monte' meaning fine or noble hill, of which there were many in northern France. It was a splendid term for the Richmond Castle site in North Yorkshire on the River Swale.

The first Constable of Richmond Castle was Rhasculpus Musard de Richemont born in 1070, his father being Roaldus Musard de Richemonde born in 1028, and the surname may have evolved from that time. One particular family tree has been traced right back to that period. After Rhasculpus the name Musard seems to have been abandoned but 'de Richmonte' continued until the fourteenth century when in succeeding generations it became Rychemonde, Rycheman, Richman and finally a John Richmond was born in 1561. Another fascinating feature of this particular family pedigree is that Oliffe Richmond was born in 1881; he became Professor of Humanity in the University of Edinburgh and actually 'capped' me at my own graduation.

There are Richmonds all over the world and of course there could be many sources of the name other than North Yorkshire. My own family goes back for many generations in Ayrshire, Scotland. Indeed one of Robert Burns's best friends was a John Richmond, but I cannot claim any direct connection.

My father was born in 1899 and might have been caught up in the First World War had he not been plagued with the asthma/eczema syndrome from infancy. His own father, John Richmond, had gained a Colliery Manager's Certificate in Glasgow and moved the family to Larkhall, Lanarkshire in 1912 when he became General Manager of a group of collieries in south Lanarkshire owned by the Darngavil Coal Company. The collieries were to be mostly 'worked out' by the late 1930s and early 1940s, but this background is possibly why my father took a BSc in mining engineering at Glasgow University. In 1923 he migrated to Doncaster in South Yorkshire to start a Department of Mining in the College of Technology. I believe that the original thirty students studying for various coal mining certificates was later to increase in number to around 600 because of the great expansion and importance of the South Yorkshire coalfield. Father was later to become Principal of a very large College which had grown to embrace many disciplines.

He married Janet Hyslop Brown in 1924, also from Larkhall and daughter of James Brown the Gas Manager. While my father had four sisters, my mother's mother had died at her birth and she had been brought up by her father and a maiden aunt.

I was born on 30 May 1926. It is not a particularly notable anniversary although Joan of Arc was burned at the stake on 30 May. I was to grow up in a nice friendly area, Wheatley Hills, on the eastern outskirts of Doncaster. Then it was next to open farming country and there were two nearby golf courses. Indeed, I can recall in the 1930s peeping through the hedge bordering one of the golf courses, watching a slightly disabled man who was playing. Then I

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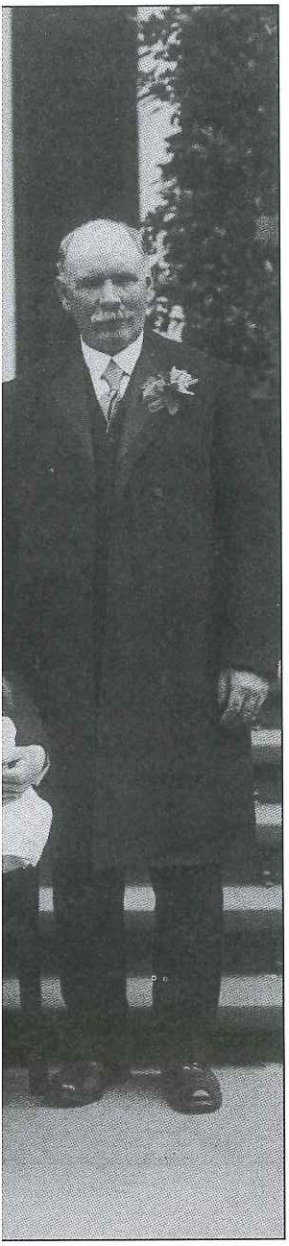
Four generations with Mother, Grandfather and Great-grandfather Brown.

Four generations with Father, Grandfather and Great-grandfather Richmond.



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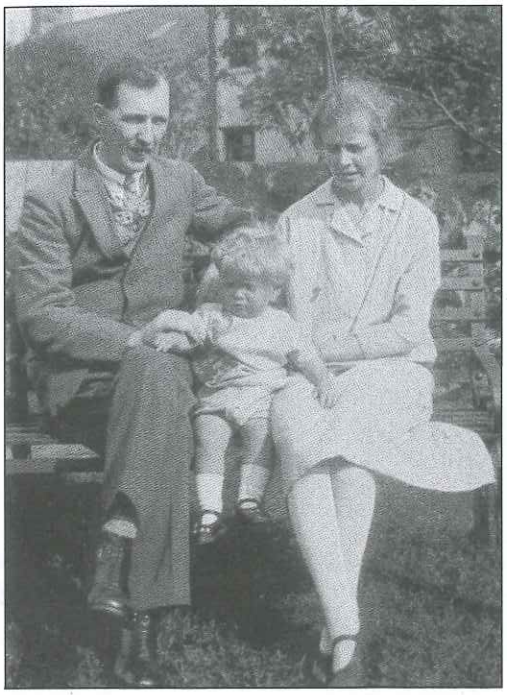

With parents in garden of Richmond grandparents in Larkhall, summer 1927.

was most surprised to see him knock out his pipe on one of his artificial legs; it was the great Douglas Bader.

An old stone quarry in the area was converted into a lovely boating lake which reminds me of an early addiction to Yorkshire humour. It was rumoured that at a meeting of the Town Council, a Councillor had proposed that it would be a good idea to put a gondola on the lake, and then one of his colleagues went on to suggest that they should have two and then they could 'breed off 'em'!

Schooling started early in 1931 when I was still aged four, at the new Intake Junior Mixed School. It was in fact a primary and junior school. 'Mixed' was a good adjective

First primary school class, summer 1931. Teacher Miss Highfield. Author fourth from left in third row down.

First primary school class, summer 1931. Teacher Miss Highfield. Author fourth from left in third row down.

because while it was in the middle of a large council estate near the racecourse it drained a wide area and the social mix was splendid. Although the Head Teacher was a delightful man, nearly all the teachers were women and they were outstanding.

In my first few days I was greatly moved by the morning assembly conducted by the Head Teacher. We all had to recite together the Lord's Prayer, but the young at the front had to pick up the words from the older children in the rows behind. My parents were delighted to hear about the Lord's Prayer but were not impressed when I gave them my first version; 'Our Father who shot in Heaven, Harold be thy name . . .'

We were in A and B streams in the junior school, by which time the average class size was fifty pupils, seated in serried ranks, something which would be unacceptable today. Another recollection is that from an early age I cycled solo from home to school through a field and the fringe of a sand quarry 2 miles to and fro', including lunch time. This might cause concern today.

Apart from schooling it was a happy childhood, in which I was joined after a few years by a brother and then after a further few years by a sister. With my father being in education we had generous family holidays in the summer, usually at some sea resort and ending up with the relatives in Larkhall. Sadly my maternal grandfather died in 1932 in his fifties. It was then the custom in Scotland that the coffin would be lowered into the grave by the nearest eight relatives and friends, the closest taking the cord at the head. At the age of six I was the senior mourner on my mother's side and having led the cortege behind the horse-drawn hearse to the cemetery, I had to take the head of grand-

The first bicycle for school. From 1932 I would travel approximately eight miles per day.

father Brown's coffin, assisted by grandfather Richmond. I had to do the same two years later when the maiden aunt died. These were memorable events that have left no scars.

Around this time in Doncaster we were fortunate to have an outstanding Secretary to the Education Committee, Mr Danby. Through him a programme of weekly swimming lessons was started for all junior school children at the Corporation Swimming Baths. I obtained my first certificate for swimming one length and then three lengths in 1935, and through this initiation, swimming was to become a major sporting interest in later years.

Having mentioned the Lord's Prayer, I should mention that my childhood was in a strict and deeply religious home. My parents had been brought up in the Plymouth Brethren,

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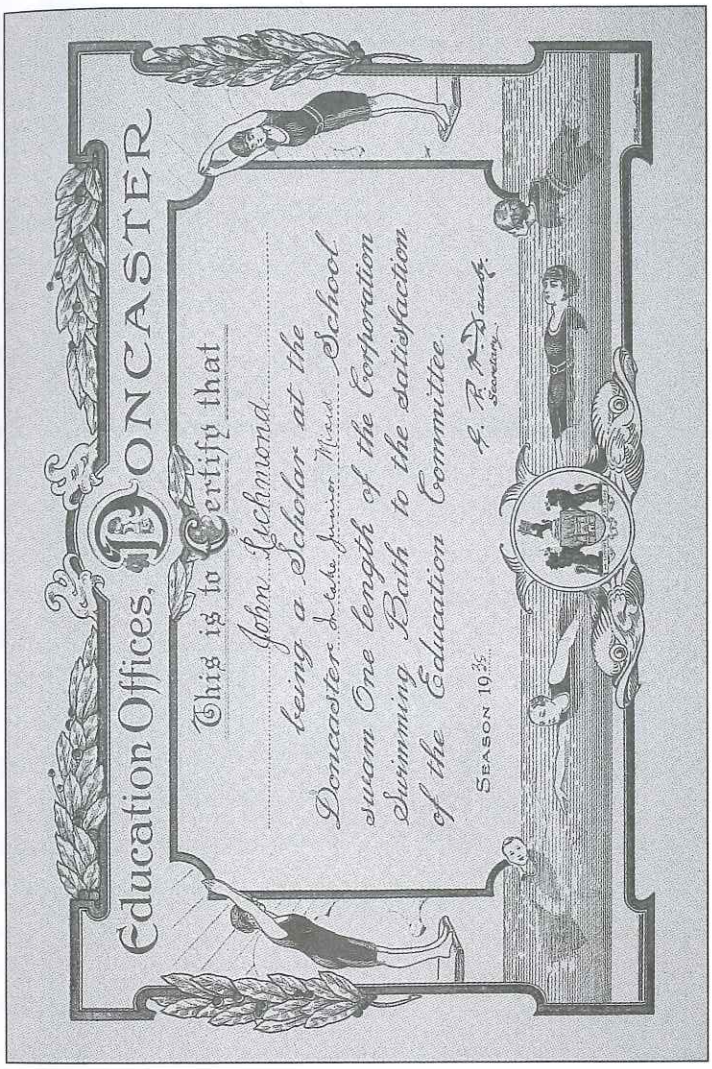

First swimming certificate 1935 for achieving one length (30 yards) of pool. This was followed a few weeks later by a second certificate for three lengths by different strokes, one to be backstroke. A life-long interest followed.

The Christmas pantomime in 1935. Author is 'The man in the moon'.

The Christmas pantomime in 1935. Author is 'The man in the moon'.

which was very strong in the west of Scotland. I still greatly enjoy hearing rousing gospel hymns. Also in 1935 we went for the first time to the cinema because my parents were particularly keen to see King George V's funeral on Pathé News. My mother was convulsed with laughter during the main film, Laurel and Hardy in *Bonnie Scotland*, and things were never quite the same again.

What came next was to begin the shaping of my whole career. In Doncaster then, children around ten and eleven years of age sat the 'Scholarship Examination' in the spring of the last year at the junior school. This would be the precursor of the 'Eleven +'. For reasons not very clear, a few of us in form 3A, the penultimate year, were allowed to take the examination a year early. I was only nine years old, shortly to be ten, and to my surprise I passed. Also in those days there was streaming into the secondary schools. The boys who passed the examination went to Doncaster Grammar School, and the girls to the Girls' High School. Depending on examination performance, a second group went to the Central School where they followed a similar curriculum and from where it was possible to gain promotion to the Grammar School or High School if there was later academic improvement. The third group went to my father's college where there was available a wide range of training, not only in the 'three R's', but also in technical skills for the boys, and for the girls, an introduction to other subjects such as domestic science and secretarial work. While the fourth group did have comprehensive schooling one can imagine that these children may have found it more difficult than the children in the other groups to go on to the next stage.

Over the years, primary and secondary education has

been the subject of much change and controversy and the debate for and against early streaming and selection still continues.

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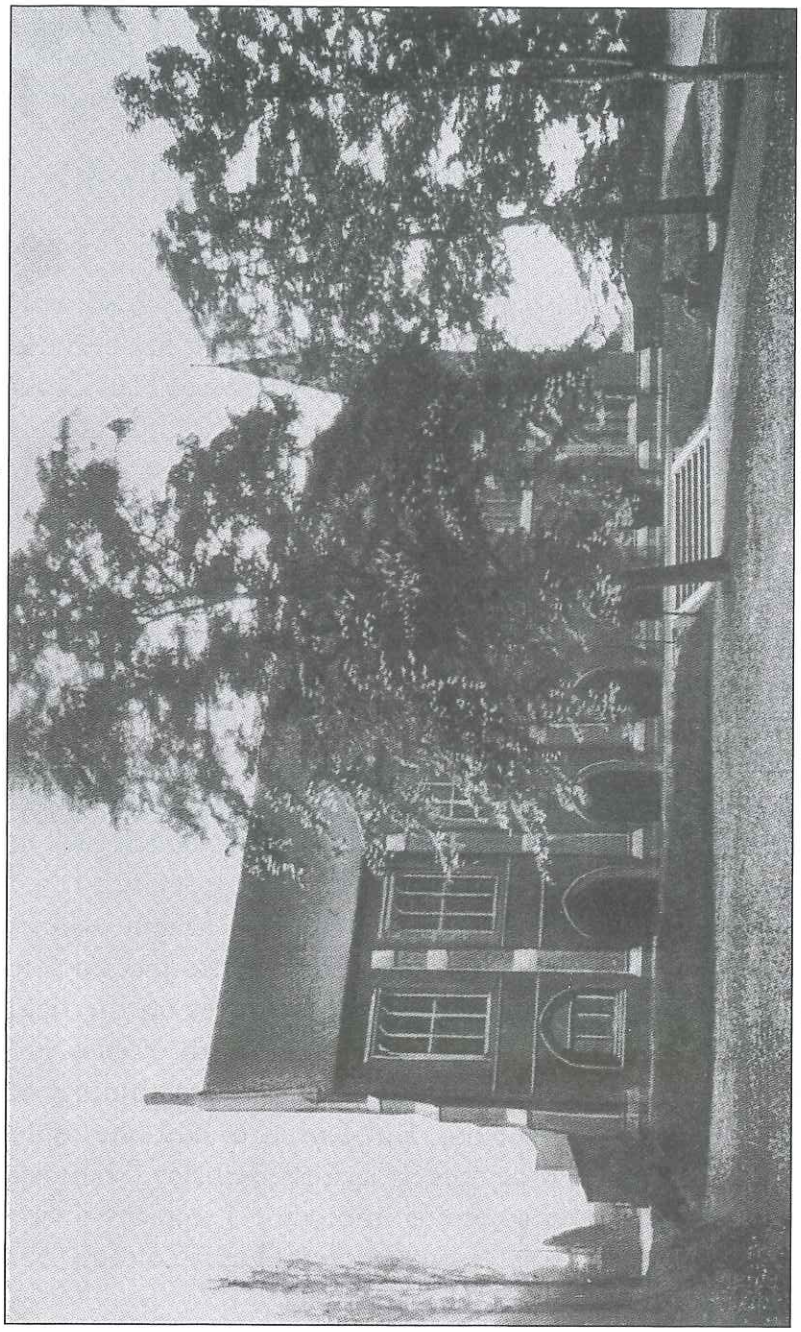
CHAPTER 2

Doncaster Grammar School, 1936-43

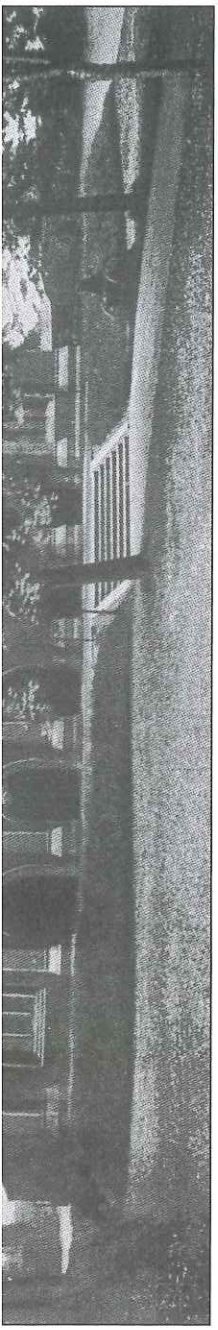
DONCASTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL was a boy's school with long-standing traditions. In recent years it has become a comprehensive co-educational school known as Hall Cross School. However the Grammar School was recently able to celebrate its 650th anniversary having had its first mention in the time of Edward III in the York Chapter Act Book of 19 May 1350.

I cannot praise enough the dedicated schoolmasters who followed the grand teachers of the previous school. Indeed many of the attitudes and values I now have were absorbed from these men. The same social mix continued.

Again I have many happy memories and select a few from my second year. One was a most detailed and informative trip to London by train and then a coach tour, which took in most of the sights. In the summer of 1938 a group was taken to Headingly to watch the Fourth Test Match against Australia and spent the day sitting on the grass just outside the boundary. The many well-known figures on the field included Hammond, Verity, Fleetwood-Smith, Farnes and O'Reilly, although the outstanding event was the innings of Don Bradman, 103 not out. But I need to add one other occasion, the swimming contest against Barnsley Grammar School. At the risk of sounding immodest, I won the diving event and then was awarded my Half-Colours for swimming, in the bus on the way home!



Doncaster Grammar School prior to the Second World War.



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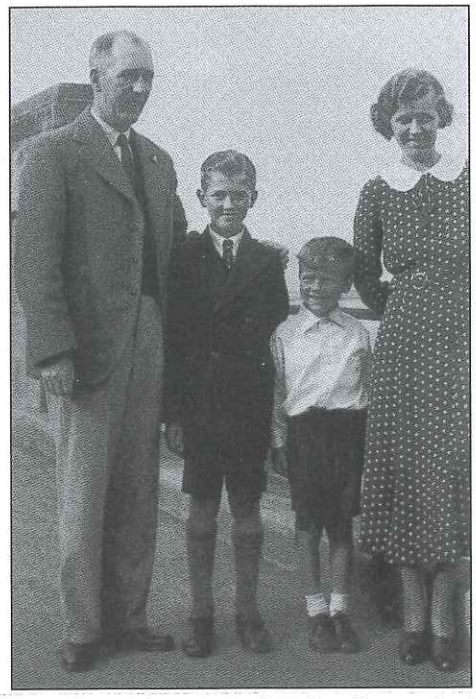
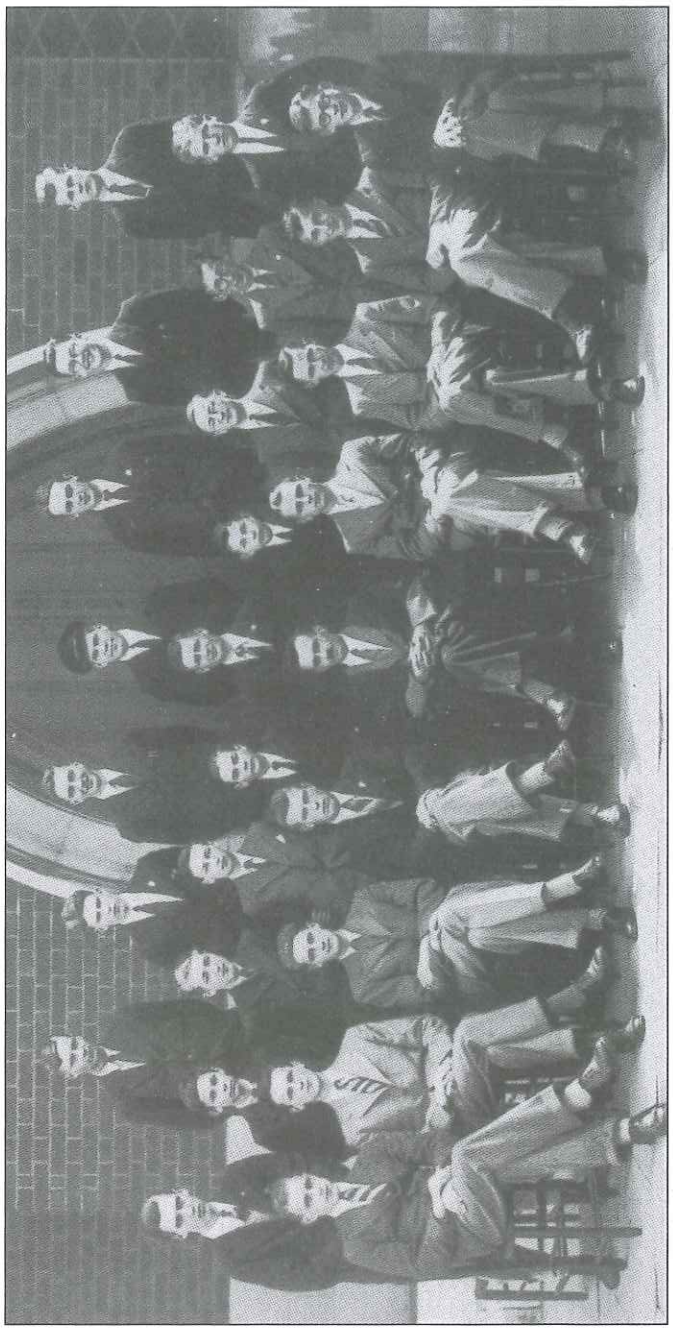


With parents and younger brother James in 1937.

Some rather critical academic landmarks followed. At the end of the 3rd year (now aged thirteen) we had to decide between the subjects of German, Greek and Chemistry. I do not recall seeking any advice but Chemistry it had to be. This was when the Second World War was about to begin. Then in the summer term of the 5th year (now aged fourteen and soon to be fifteen) we sat the School Certificate Examination, the present equivalent being 'O' Levels and GCSEs. Like the rest of my class I took nine subjects with pleasing results.

I had many good pals at this time not only in the school but also among neighbours. Looking at a photograph of Form 5A (the School Certificate Year) some of the boys



Summer 1941. Form 5A (the School Certificate or 'O' level year). Form Master is Mr K.G. Brooks. Author is at right-hand end of second row. The classmate in uniform in back row had just joined the Merchant Navy. The late Sir Roy Watts is on Mr Brooks's right. Because of wartime clothing restrictions we are not all in school uniform.

Summer 1941. Form 5A (the School Certificate or 'O' level year). Form Master is Mr K.G. Brooks. Author is at right-hand end of second row. The classmate in uniform in back row had just joined the Merchant Navy. The late Sir Roy Watts is on Mr Brooks's right. Because of wartime clothing restrictions we are not all in school uniform.

appear a little older then fifteen and sixteen. One dear friend was the late Sir Roy Watts, one-time Chief Executive of BEA, then British Airways, then head of Thames Water. He was an outstanding cricketer and rugby player but most of us enjoyed sport and I myself was honoured with Colours in rugby (scrum-half), athletics and, of course, swimming. The swimming included getting the cup as Junior Swimming Champion and then Senior Swimming Champion.

In 1938-40, the school was rebuilt, but retaining the old library and cloisters and apart from excellent new classrooms, laboratories, gymnasium and swimming pool we now had a squash court and a fives court, and of course ready access to the adjacent playing fields on Town Moor. I also recall many schoolmasters devoting themselves to out-of-hours activities, which apart from sport included a scout troop and a very enthusiastic choir. The choir got as far as performing the whole of Handel's *Messiah* in public to great acclaim.

Because of the war we used to take it in turns in groups to 'fire watch', supervised by a schoolmaster, in the tower of the new school. My group used to drink large volumes of cider, apparently without realising that cider contained quite a lot of alcohol. We also had, compulsorily, to join the Air Training Corps in the 5th and 6th Forms. Apart from regular drill sessions we had interesting visits to local RAF stations and these included some short flights in warplane cockpits.

In my last year in 1942-3, I was enormously honoured to be made School Captain and enjoyed the loyalty and support of seven other prefects. One punishment comes into my mind, which has certainly changed in recent years. The cane was used by the masters from time to time, sometimes for very minor offences, and no one seemed to object. I myself

Summer 1943. The prefects with Headmaster Mr F.C. Lay. Author is on Mr Lay's right.

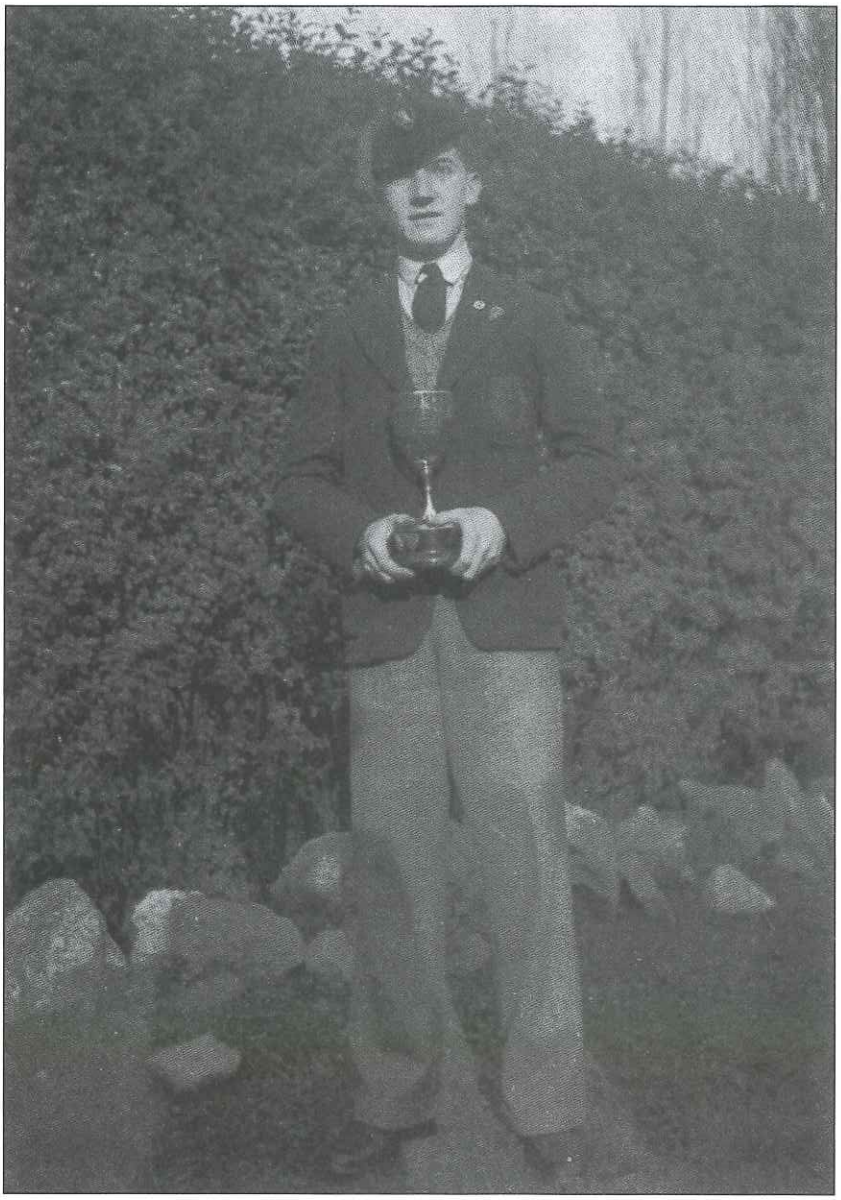
Summer 1943. The prefects with Headmaster Mr F.C. Lay. Author is on Mr Lay's right.

had four painful strokes on the 'derrière', on one occasion for 'talking'. Prefects were also allowed to give bad boys the slipper in the School Captain's room, and they did, albeit with constraint.

The new school hall was very effectively blacked out in the war period. Because of this the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), used the hall quite extensively for concerts. These included one by part of the London Philharmonic Orchestra but I recall particularly the many pianists who came, including Myra Hess, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Pouischnoff and Nina Milkina. When Mark Hambourg came from Leeds I happened to have been put in charge of the lights in the wings of the stage. His recital included *The Moonlight Sonata*, which I had learned to play myself. Those who know the piece will remember that the left hand is mostly octave chords but Mr Hambourg seemed to have all five fingers busy for most of the time. When he came off the stage mopping his brow, I said to him rather impertinently, 'Excuse me, sir, which edition were you playing from?' to which he replied, 'I was playing it just as Beethoven would have liked it, lad'!

I was now approaching Higher School Certificate (now 'A' Levels) in which my subjects would be Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics with subsidiary Biology. In retrospect it seems most inappropriate that our general secondary education in English, History, Geography, Latin, French and Art had to be left behind at such a young age; I was only just fifteen. The same is true today, whereas in Scotland, a somewhat broader band of subjects tends to be taken in Scottish Highers, up to the point of leaving school.

One sad embarrassment remains as I conclude my memories of Doncaster Grammar School. I do not know



Summer 1943. The Senior Swimming Champion with cup. The jaunty angle of the School Captain's cap with tassel must have been appropriate at the time.

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how it emerged that I might make my career in Medicine, as there was no family tradition in this profession but there was encouragement. My Chemistry master, the late Mr I.G. Jones thought that I should try for Cambridge. Mr Jones gave up all the mornings of his Easter vacation to coach me personally in Organic Chemistry so that I could take the first MB Examination at Cambridge externally in May. This I did and was successful, and was interviewed and then followed the offer of a place at St John's College, which I was delighted to accept. I cannot explain what followed but shortly afterwards I turned down the place at Cambridge in favour of going to Edinburgh. Perhaps I was influenced by the family's Scottish traditions and of course the Edinburgh Medical School had a distinguished reputation. I could have done both, gone to Cambridge first, then to Edinburgh for my clinical years. However, had I done this I would have finally graduated a year later (six years as an undergraduate instead of five years), and if this had happened I would not have met my wife. As will emerge later, my wife Jenny was to become an absolutely critical part of my life.

Although I was much in Yorkshire in subsequent years, I did not pay a full pilgrimage to Doncaster until 1993, fifty years after leaving school. I had a memorable escorted tour of the school, a visit to childhood homes, then to a country church where as School Captain I had shared in the dedication of a stained-glass window.

Then I made, nervously, a pre-arranged visit to the home of Mr Jones. He was now aged ninety-five, but he remembered only too well Richmond's bad behaviour and rejection of Cambridge. However we were able to have a very happy time together, sharing reminiscences. He knew how much I respected and owed to him and all was forgiven.

When I left Doncaster Grammar School, the Second World War was still at its height. On the night of the first day of the war, 3 September 1939, the air-raid sirens startled us all so we jumped out of bed and hurried into the depths of the cold cellar of the house where we were later to set up bunks. Father said, 'They will be over in their thousands,' but nothing was heard until the 'all clear'. Doncaster fortunately escaped much bombing but we had multiple nocturnal alerts because the town was in line with Hull, Sheffield and Manchester, a regular path for overhead bombers. Apart from this I think my main memories are Mr Chamberlain's declaration of war on the wireless on Sunday morning, 3 September, the sight of hundreds of sad and bedraggled army survivors of Dunkirk on Doncaster racecourse, the Battle of Britain, the North Africa and Italian campaigns and the invasion of Russia. The horror of the Holocaust did not emerge until later.

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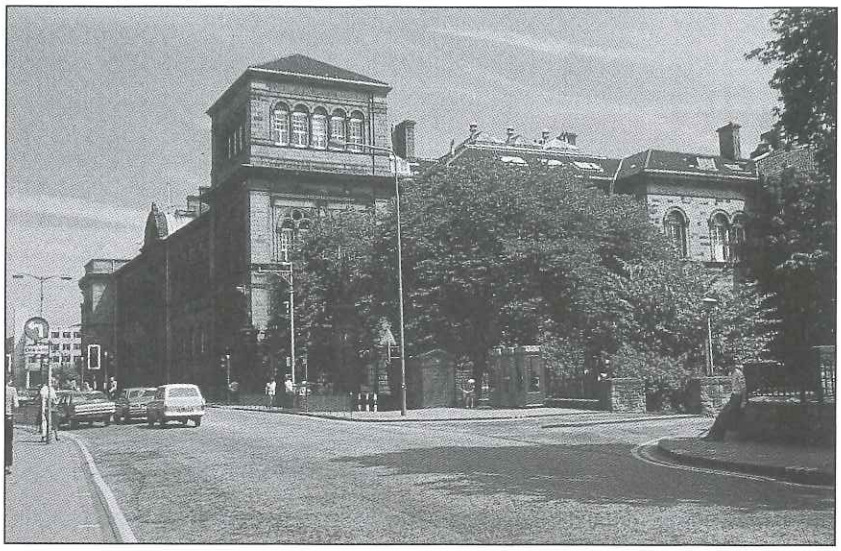
CHAPTER 3

Undergraduate Days at University of Edinburgh Medical School and First Hospital Appointment, 1943-8

THE ENTRY TO Edinburgh Medical School was some 200, a quarter of which were girls. Being wartime, we were all young; a few were still aged sixteen but most were in the seventeen to nineteen bracket. There were a few boys from Accra in West Africa. There were large numbers of Edinburgh schoolboys still retaining their school loyalties and being a lone boy from South Yorkshire, I remember thinking that they were a bit of a 'shower'. However that feeling quickly abated and very many were soon to become my best friends and have remained so. Many students of course lived at home, others in halls of residence but some resided like me in 'digs'. I stayed for my whole five years in a top-floor flat in a tenement in the Marchmont area, looked after by a delightful old lady who had been widowed in the First World War. Apart from breakfast, I had every evening meal provided and on Saturdays and Sundays I also received lunch; the cost was £2 2s per week, rising to £2 5s.

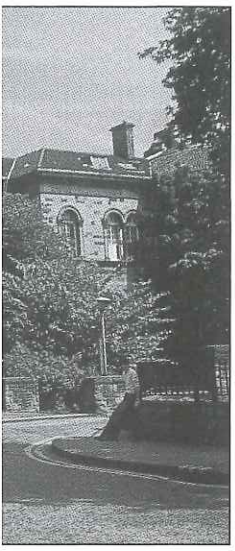
Teaching of medicine in Edinburgh went back into the 1400s. Significant events followed with the Incorporation of Surgeons and Barber Surgeons being established in 1505. In the late 1500s a Town's College was founded and in 1681 the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh followed (see Chapter 9). Some of the physicians were much involved in



The Medical School in Teviot Place as it was in my time and as it is today. This houses the main departments of the preclinical and paraclinical subjects.

the creation of the Edinburgh Medical School but it is not widely known that it was the first to be established as a formal teaching Faculty in a University outside Oxford and Cambridge and this was in 1726. In those days in order to enter Oxford or Cambridge aspirants had to be members of the Church of England and so in the 1700s and 1800s students came in their droves from all parts of the United Kingdom, continental Europe and North America. Moreover in the 1700s Edinburgh was a particularly exciting place to be during 'The Enlightenment'.

The first professors had been mostly trained in Leiden, Holland and many of the early traditions had been inducted in them by the famous Professor Boerhaave. The first Professor of Medicine in the new University Medical School was John Rutherford, maternal grandfather of Walter



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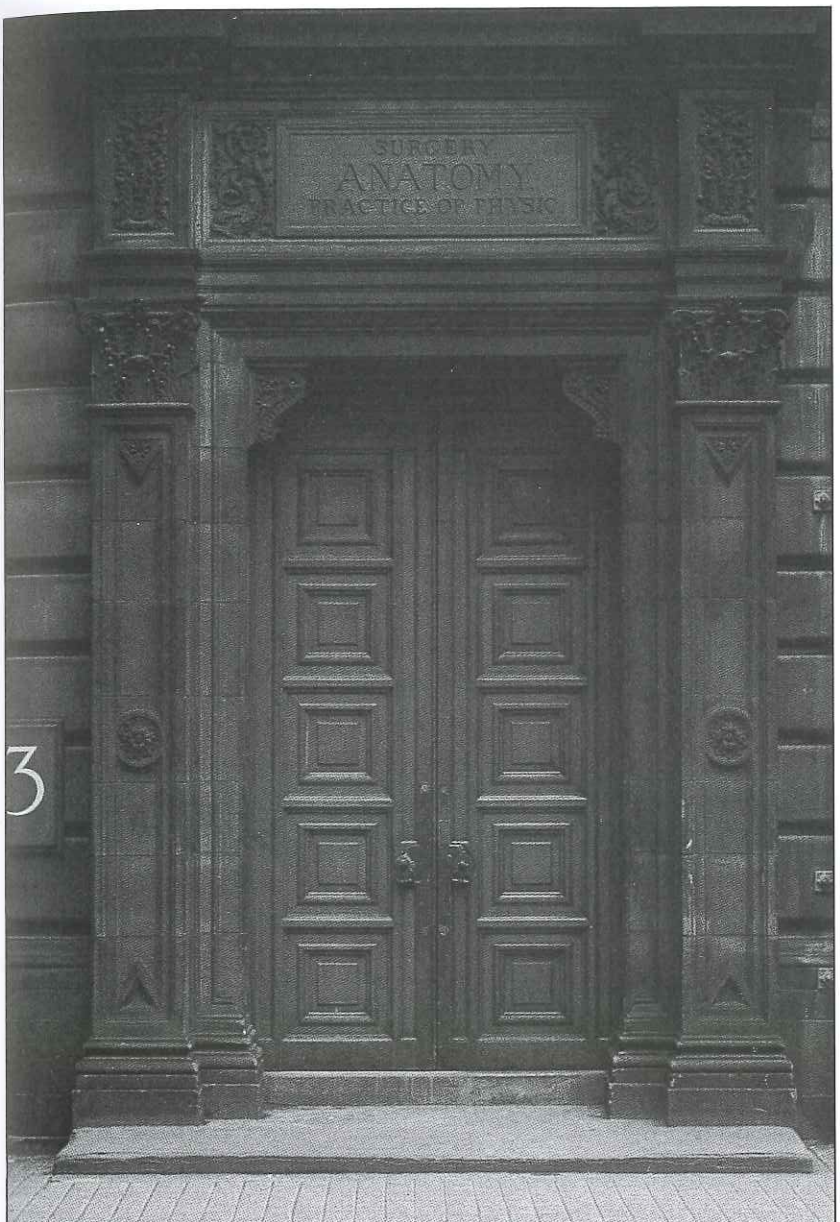

The door we entered in our first days which illustrates the importance then of Anatomy compared with Surgery and the Practice of Physic.

Scott and it was he who started teaching clinical skills on living patients. There is a delightful recorded extract from Rutherford's first clinical lectures:

> The method I propose to pursue is to examine every patient before you, lest any circumstances should be overlooked. I shall conduct this by a plan which will be the most useful I can think of. I shall give you the history of this disease in general; second enquire into the cause of it; third give you my opinion how the disease is likely to terminate; lay down the indication of cure which will arise... If you find me mistaken I hope you will excuse me for the art of physic is not infallible... I shall make as accurate observations and as just conclusions as I can. I hope this will produce a good result and help to make you real physicians.

Clinical teaching was even more developed by the third Professor, William Cullen in the late 1700s. Indeed the founders of the first medical school in North America, in Philadelphia, received their medical training in Edinburgh in Cullen's time.

The early 1800s saw the evolution of Anatomy as an important discipline but sadly this period included the infamous 'body snatching'. Later, Surgery was to improve, particularly under Syme but aided by Lister's introduction of antisepsis and by the appearance of ether and then by the discovery of chloroform by the Professor of Midwifery, James Young Simpson.

In my time, the first year included Medical Chemistry, Physics, Zoology and Botany and in the second year there were three terms of Physiology. However both years were dominated by five terms of Anatomy when in pairs we dissected every part of the human body. The Professor of Anatomy was Professor Brash, who along with our Professor

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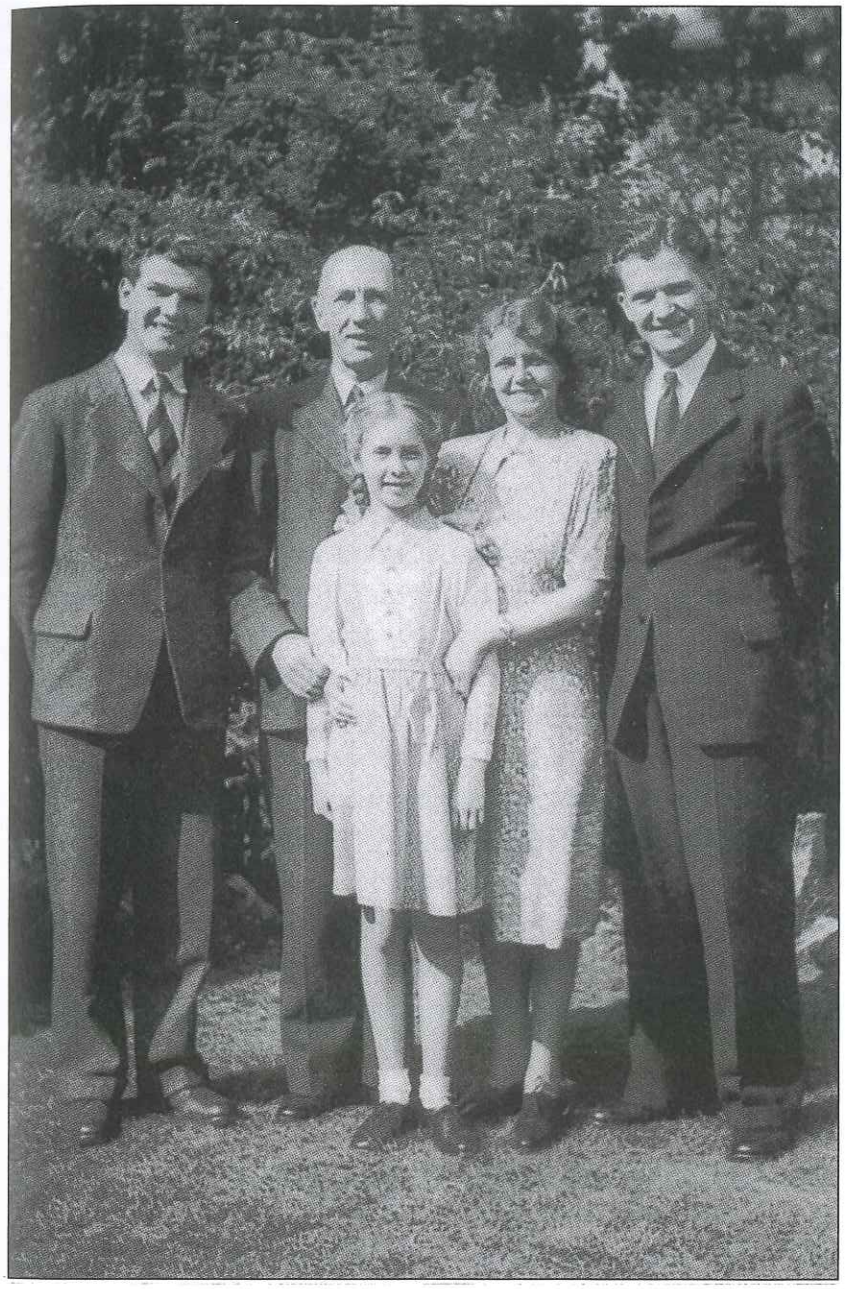


Family group in 1946, now with sister Elizabeth.

of Forensic Medicine and Dean, Sydney Smith, had had much to do with unravelling the Buck Ruxton murder case in the 1930s, a pioneering investigation. Our main dissecting room presence was the great Shetlander, Dr E.B. Jamieson. Indeed we were the last class to have him in his formal appointment, although he stayed around and continued to inspire succeeding classes of students.

Because of my English Higher School Certificate and Mr Jones, I was able to coast through my first year and concentrate on Anatomy. This led to my being awarded at the end of my second year the Cunningham Medal, so named after the famous Professor of Anatomy, Daniel Cunningham, father of the distinguished Second World War sailor, Admiral Cunningham. My head is still stuffed with all sorts of anatomical minutiae which I have never needed to use.

Being wartime, all the men had to belong compulsorily to the Senior Training Corps, the equivalent of the OTC. This lasted for our first two years and was quite a commitment. Every Wednesday afternoon we marshalled in High School Yards and after collecting our rifles were ordered by the Sergeant Major to get 'fell in three thick'. After inspection we would run at the double down the Cowgate and do three hours of manoeuvres near Holyrood Palace in King's Park on the slopes of Arthur's Seat. It was said that we would be expected to defend Daikeith in the event of invasion but of course fortunately this never happened. However once a term we were marched to Dalkeith to 'recce' the area and then returned to Edinburgh by coach with blistered feet.

Another memory I have of the STC was our having to take part in frequent parades along Princes Street such as 'Wings for Victory' and 'Salute the Soldier'. This would be

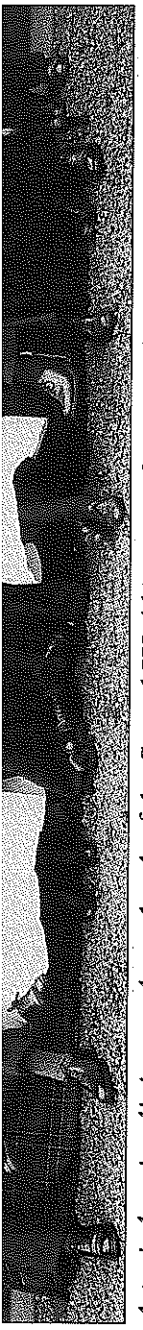
in the summer of 1944. The parades would marshal in Waterloo Place, near St Andrew's House, and would include contingents from the Navy, Army, Air Force, Wrens, ATS and WAAFS and then us, and after us there would be Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys Brigade and others. The parades would be about a mile long.

On one occasion, after setting off, our pipe band was about 100 yards ahead of the company that I was in and just behind us the Boy Scouts were blowing their bugles ten to the dozen. Passing the General Post Office, as we entered the east end of Princes Street we were all hopping and skipping to get into step, with our rifles at the slope. I remember very clearly hearing a voice from the pavement, 'Jings is thaes fellies dancin'?' (Goodness me are these fellows dancing?)!

The third year of the medical course was mainly Medicine and Surgery with collateral Pathology, Bacteriology and Therapeutics. Fourth year was mainly Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Psychiatry, Paediatrics and Public Health Medicine, together with so-called 'specials', ENT (ear, nose and throat), Ophthalmology and 'skins' (Dermatology). In the final year we returned mainly to Medicine and Surgery.

We all had to have delivered twelve babies in normal parturition but also had to have observed complicated childbirth during six weeks residence near the Simpson Maternity Pavilion of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Many of us opted to do our normal midwifery based in Dublin either at the Coombe or the Rotunda Hospital. The childbirth experience was mostly in rather humble homes in the city and I recall occasions waiting for the baby to arrive with a picture of De Valera watching over me from one wall and the Sacred Heart from another. The group I

A typical senior clinique at the outbreak of the Second World War. Professor Stanley Davidson is in the centre with his ward sisters. His colleagues on the front row were all to become teachers of my class in 1945-8.



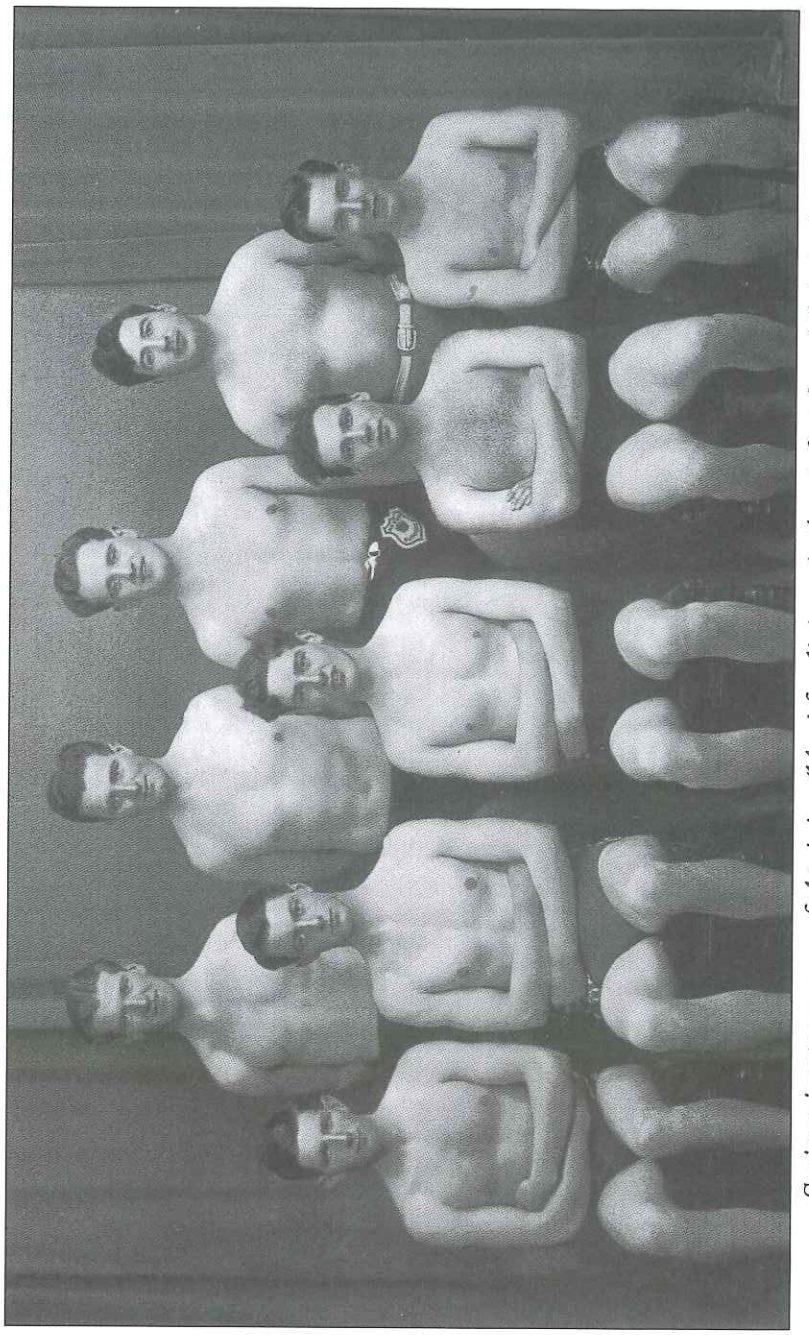
A typical senior clinique at the outbreak of the Second World War. Professor Stanley Davidson is in the centre with his ward sisters. His colleagues on the front row were all to become teachers of my class in 1945-8.

was with went out by boat from Glasgow and we did not get down to business for several days. We arrived on St Patrick's Day, which was followed by Holy Thursday and then Good Friday. But Saturday was committed also – everyone went to the races at Phoenix Park! One other memory is of the tavern next to the hospital known as the 'PPH'. We thought at first that this must mean 'post partum haemorrhage but were soon to learn that it was 'pub past hospital' and it seemed to be highly accessible even when closed.

Many skills were learned 'junioring' at nights in the hospital wards of the main teaching hospitals, particularly the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Perhaps more importantly we had long summer vacations and many of us worked in hospitals near our homes where, because of the war, young doctors were in short supply.

I once removed a small piece of steel from the thumb of the late Bruce Woodcock in the casualty department of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. This would be in the summer of 1946 or 1947. Fortunately it must have been a very minor event because he was then at the height of his career as British Heavyweight Boxing Champion.

The sporting interests continued. At first I concentrated on rugby, trying to stay in my favoured position as scrum half. Unfortunately the scrum half for Scotland, Angus Black, was also in my class and so I got to play for the first XV only when he was busy on a higher plain or unwell. One afternoon I was included when we played against a rather prestigious Royal Australian Air Force XV and we lost by a modest margin. The next day in 'Sporting Titbits' in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* there was a brief note to the effect that 'Had A.W. Black been playing 'varsity might well have



Swimming team year of obtaining 'blue' for diving. Author is first from left in back row.

Swimming team year of obtaining 'blue' for diving. Author is first from left in back row.

won', but happily went on to say, 'Richmond played quite a plucky game.'

I felt it wise to return to swimming and was soon recruited into the university team. In 1947 we were the Inter-University Swimming Champions, winning every event. I had won the high board diving and the *Varsity Athletic News* had the nice entry, 'In J. Richmond we found a neat and reliable diver who got us honours in this event for the first time since P. Heatly graduated.' Peter Heatly of course went on to win the gold medal for diving in the Commonwealth Games. I did not get as far as this but was delighted with the award of a University 'Blue'. Now if I am standing three feet above the ground I feel dizzy!

Apart from these sporting interests, there were many other digressions. In the third year particularly, I recall many of us being bored by the Pathology lectures, immediately after lunch, important as they were. Lunch was usually a roast beef rissole and chips costing 10 old pence! Instead of dropping off to sleep a group would repair to Jack's Billiard Saloon nearby and we soon became quite expert at billiards and snooker. This perhaps explains why my sons were so puzzled by my knowing where the coloured balls were in snooker contests, when we still had black and white television. We also had a good billiard room in the University Men's Union. I enjoyed being on the Union Committee of Management in the Final Year. The Committee included several members of staff but also encouraged much mixing with other students and attendance at the regular jolly Saturday evening dances – the 'Union Palais'.

I have to reflect again on the many outstanding teachers I was exposed to in the Edinburgh Medical School and at that time most of the bedside clinical teaching was done by the

University Union Committee of Management 1947-8. Author is second from right in back row and Lindsay Davidson, his opposite number in the Deaconess Hospital, is fourth from right. Another long-standing friend, Douglas Bell was President and is seated fifth from right in the front row. Dr E.B. Jamieson and Professor Brash are first and second from the left on the front row.

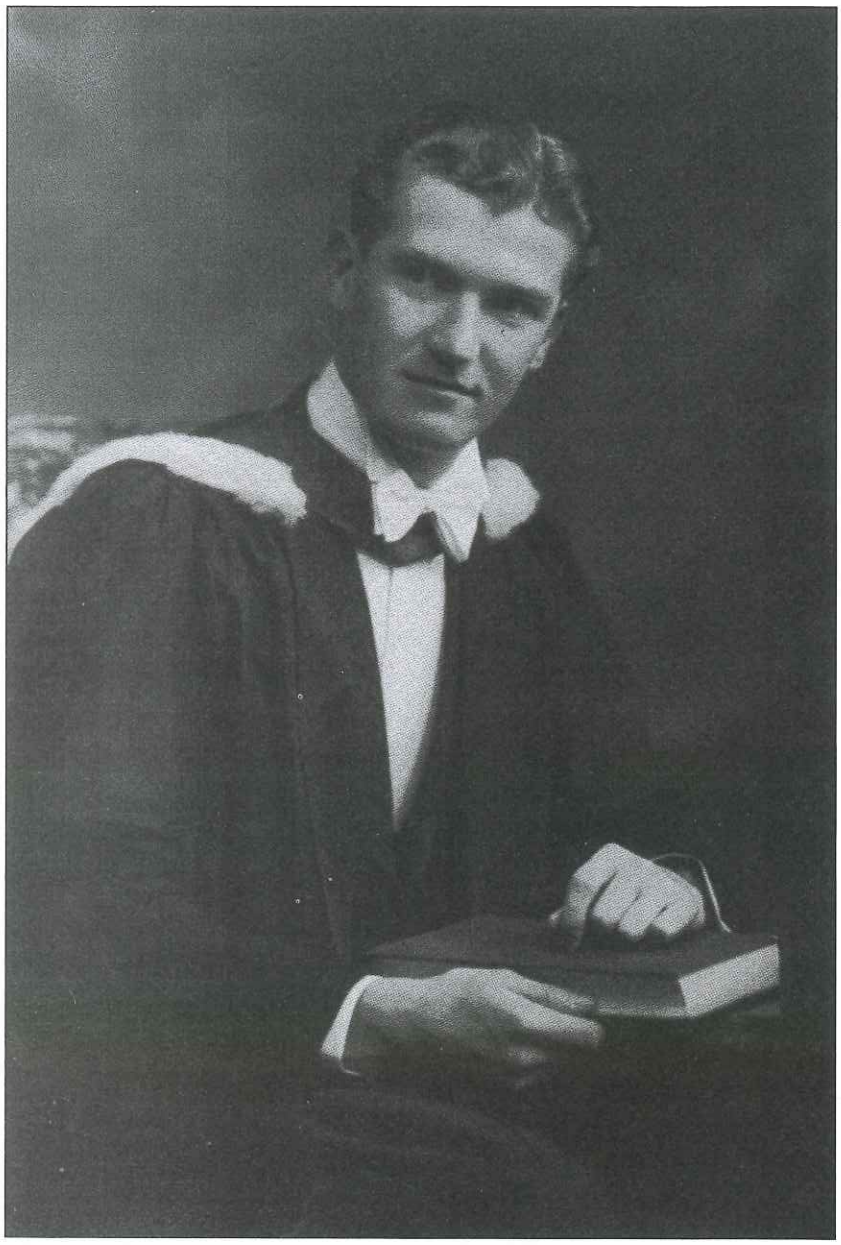
University Union Committee of Management 1947-8. Author is second from right in back row and Lindsay Davidson, his opposite number in the Deaconess Hospital, is fourth from right. Another long-standing friend, Douglas Bell was President and is seated fifth from right in the front row. Dr E.B. Jamieson and Professor Brash are first and second from the left on the front row.

most senior. My class and near contemporaries had the great Stanley Davidson, Derrick Dunlop, Rae Gilchrist, James Learmouth, David Henderson and many others all prepared to give endless time to their clinical work and their teaching. Stanley Davidson used to say that if you took a good history from a patient and then did a careful examination, the rest might not be too difficult or too expensive. This is still true.

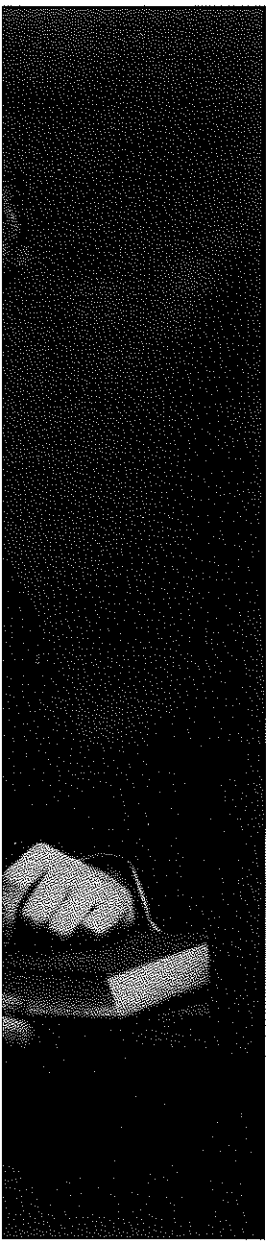
I passed the Final Professional Examination with Distinction and we graduated on 12 July 1948 one week after the inception of the National Health Service. I do not think that many of us had much idea what the National Health Service meant, or was going to mean.

A few other things happened in 1948. For example, cortisone was introduced and vitamin B12, the treatment for pernicious anaemia was isolated from liver. We already had sulphonamides and following penicillin, other antibiotics were beginning to emerge. We also had digitalis and barbiturates and morphine and aspirin, but the range of medicines was fairly limited.

In Edinburgh at that time one registered with the General Medical Council on graduation and pre-registration House Officer jobs in hospital had not become obligatory. Most of us would join the MDDUS, the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland, for which the annual subscription was then one guinea (£1 1s). House Officer appointments lasted for six months and began in October and April. If I remember correctly, I believe that in 1948 we were only permitted to do one job before being called up for eighteen months (later two years) military service, but there were some grounds for deferment and of course exclusion because of ill health. Many of my class went into hospitals all over the country and some for a time went straight into



Graduation day 12 July 1948. This was one week after the National Health Service started on 5 July.



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general practice. I opted to do a House Officer job in Edinburgh in a small hospital sharing duties with a classmate, Lindsay Davidson.

I filled in part of the August and September months by doing a few weeks in a locum appointment in Baguley Sanatorium in Cheshire near Manchester. This was a large hospital and it was a revelation indeed to see so many patients with active tuberculosis, mostly in the younger age groups, and to experience the level of mortality. At that time there were no curative medicines and the treatment involved bed rest, with rest of the affected lung by pneumothorax (air in the pleural space), pneumoperitoneum (air in the abdomen), phrenic nerve crush in the neck to paralyse the diaphragm and sometimes mutilating surgery termed thoracoplasty when ribs were removed. Apart from assisting at thoracoplasties I had to undertake the other procedures and the many patients with air in their body spaces had to receive refills every week.

The House Officer job began on 1 October in the Deaconess Hospital, Edinburgh. This was a remarkable period and perhaps in retrospect a most unusual experience. The hospital had been associated with the Church of Scotland but was now embraced by the NHS. Lindsay Davidson and I were of course resident and we looked after about 120 acute hospital beds which included adult medical and surgical wards, a children's ward and a number of beds set aside for gynaecology and ENT patients. There was a casualty department which could be quite busy. The two of us did three months predominantly on the medical side and three months on the surgical side. Our consultant staff to whom we were responsible were all primarily based in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, but were all readily available if

Deaconess Hospital, Edinburgh, now Lothian Health Board offices. This was where I held my first House Officer appointment, October 1948 to March 1949.

called upon. They all did regular ward rounds and there were several operating sessions each week. At that time no undergraduate students were being taught in the hospital which meant that they could not share some of the tasks. A few young doctors leaving the Services attended the hospital primarily as observers but they did stand in for us and support us in times of pressure. The two House Officers therefore carried considerable responsibility. They had to do minor surgery and reduce simple fractures in the casualty department, where they might also have to give simple anaesthetics. We also gave the anaesthetics to children in tonsil operations. We worked late into the night counting blood cells, staining blood films and bone marrow smears, and testing urine samples. Major investigations were done at the Infirmary. None of this would have been possible

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without the help, advice, assistance and even instruction by the outstanding ward sisters and staff nurses. Throughout my entire professional life the nursing profession has been an essential partner.

Looking back, one particular medical problem was beginning to emerge which I do not recall being taught on when I was a medical student, and that was myocardial infarction (coronary thrombosis). Dr Ian Hill (later Professor of Medicine in Dundee), was very interested in cardiology and at that time was pioneering the further development of electrocardiography. He was our senior physician.

My pay for the first month was £4 1s 6d later adjusted to the new NHS scales. We did of course have free board and lodging but the salary did not matter because we were seldom able to get out of the hospital to spend it. I will however recall two outings.

One evening my opposite number held the fort while I went out to the Royal Infirmary to see some old pals. I did not realise that every time my glass of beer was half empty it was being filled up and the result was that around midnight I had to be returned to the Deaconess Hospital in the Dalkeith ambulance. The Night Sister was not very pleased with me.

The other outing also upset the Night Sister. In those days peptic ulcer, particularly duodenal ulcer, was common and often intractable. Many patients ended up having gastric surgery and often had a month of intensive medical treatment in hospital before surgery was decided upon. One patient was a general practitioner but I seem to remember that he had disguised the fact that he was a young doctor and had served in RAF aircrew during the war. In any case he was rather an unusual chap.

After a few days of milk and alkali, milk puddings and steamed fish he said, 'Richmond, I cannot stand this any longer'. I had to say, 'I am not at all surprised but what am I to do?' 'Well,' he said, 'Chico Marx is on at the Empire Theatre and I would love to go.' To cut a long story short my colleague again held the fort while my doctor patient and I slipped out through the boiler house, because I, of course, had to take him. We had a grand evening but Sister caught us soon after returning through the boiler house. However there were no harsh words because she was so relieved to find her missing patient alive and well. I think that the patient's symptoms were much better next day.

At a medical examination at the Cowglen Military Hospital in Glasgow early in 1949, I was passed fit for military service. My time at the Deaconess Hospital ended on 31 March and I was called into the Royal Army Medical Corps two weeks later. I was still only twenty-two years old but I think Colonel Keyes was only twenty-two when he led the raid on Rommel's headquarters and Guy Gibson was only twenty-four when he led 'the Dambusters'!

CHAPTER 4

Military Service in Africa, 1949-50

AFTER SIX WEEKS induction at Crookham near Aldershot and at Millbank in London our first postings began. Many were assigned to the United Kingdom. I volunteered to go to the Middle East and a most maturing experience followed.

Those going to the Middle East and Far East went out on the troopship SS *Dunera*, later to be named the SS *Uganda*. Six of us were crammed into a cabin meant for three. We rounded Cape St Vincent at Gibraltar to our first stop at Port Said. One of our six spent most of his time sitting on his bunk blowing a chanter (the musical part of bagpipes), and he nearly ended up going through the porthole into the Mediterranean. Quite fortuitously the piper and I were to become close collaborators in research in the 1960s.

We arrived at Port Said in the dark and anchored offshore. Almost immediately we were surrounded by scores of little rowing boats known as 'bum boats', whose occupants were selling their wares up and down ropes to the troops hanging over the side or through portholes. On board was a battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders en route to Hong Kong. I happened to look out of my porthole to see a kilted Highlander standing up on the ship's rail. At the same time one of his mates from a porthole low down shouted up to him, 'Pee on them, Jock', and he did, much to the consternation of the visitors.

Aboard SS Dunera *en route to Port Said. The author is seated at front and Angus Stuart (the chanter player), a research colleague in the 1960s, is immediately behind.*

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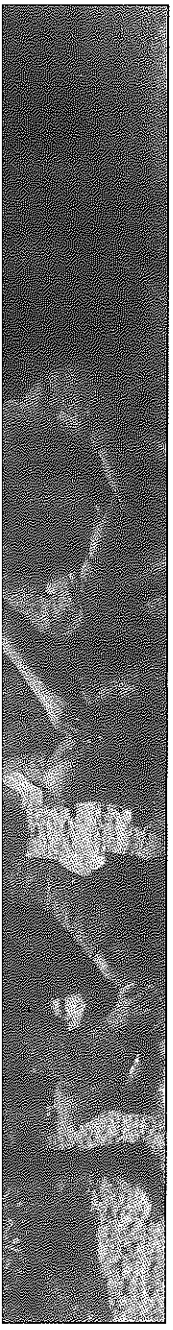
Next morning before disembarking a 'Gilligilli' man (spelling uncertain), came on board and as part of his act, produced scores of little chickens from under his white gown. Then after getting off the boat, we were greeted by small boys, 'Hello Mr Churchill', 'Hello Harry Lauder', 'You like meet my sister?' But we were soon on our way to the transit camp down the west side of the Suez Canal.

After two weeks I was posted to the Military Mission in Ethiopia to relieve its Medical Officer for two months, I think selected because of the brief but very varied experience in the Deaconess Hospital. I was a little nervous, not having travelled overseas before and because of continuing local unrest after the Palestine conflict, I was not allowed to travel in uniform. The train to Cairo left from Ismailia where the station was swarming with people. When the train came in, many passengers were hanging on the outside, but I managed to get on board. After walking up and down, I eventually found a compartment full of packing cases with a stocky gentleman sitting in one corner. There was a little sitting space in another corner and I asked in slow English did he mind if I joined him. 'Not at all, lad, come in. I'm Mr "So and so" from Bayswater, travelling for Burberry's, just back from China.' Mr 'So and so' was a good companion and we had dinner together that evening at the famous restaurant in Cairo, Groppi's, before I caught my plane.

The flight to Ethiopia was in a noisy Dakota, stopping first at Jeddah, which now has one of the most sophisticated airports in the world, but in 1949 the airport was like a small broken-down English cricket pavilion. From the air one could see overland trails to Mecca. Then on to Asmara in Eritrea, and over the mountains to Addis Ababa.

I did not have much opportunity to travel widely in

My team at the Military Mission to Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, 1949.



My team at the Military Mission to Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, 1949.

Ethiopia. The capital had some fine buildings such as Haile Selassie's Palace (and Haile Selassie was in residence at the time), and the Koptik Church. The Italians had left behind a railway station and an opera house but Via Mussolini had become Via Churchill.

I often look back on those few weeks with alarm. The Military Mission comprised a Major General, senior officers and many NCOs whose purpose seemed to be to train the Imperial Ethiopian Army. I was the only British doctor in the country, although there were a few Scandinavian doctors and also a small Russian hospital, where I was not welcome. There was also quite a large Russian legation. I wonder how I would have handled a serious medical problem because Nairobi was 400 miles away and British military hospitals in Egypt a good deal further. Fortunately there were no disasters. I did however have two rather challenging surgical procedures on very large dogs, each of which required anaesthesia. The first dog had buckled its big tail rather badly, and the owners asked me if it could be corrected. All I could do was to perform an amputation. The second dog had jumped over a barbed-wire fence, torn the scrotum and had a testis hanging out. Again, fortunately, all was well. Interestingly, reflecting on the Russian presence in 1949, much of that 'Horn of Africa' later became Marxist.

I flew to Nairobi on another noisy Dakota of Ethiopian Airlines with the Lion of Judah painted on the tail and crewed by Trans World Airlines. There were few passengers and I was sitting at the back, minding my own business, when I was aware above the noise of someone shouting in my ear, 'We are crossing the equator right now and that is Mount Kenya on the left there.' As I turned round the lovely air hostess was kneeling beside me and unfortunately the top

of her dress had fallen rather far forward. Although this may sound indelicate I am afraid that I was temporarily distracted from the scenery that I was supposed to admire!

The time at the military hospital at Mackinnon Road between Voi and Mombasa was most educational and rewarding. There were several very good medical officers and Queen Alexandra nursing sisters. We had a commanding officer and supervisory physician. My own job was to do three large sick parades in surrounding camps each morning and also to be in charge of a medical ward. Some Swahili had to be mastered fairly quickly for the sick parades. 'Nahara' (diarrhoea) was common and treated from the so-called MI Rooms with 'Mist. kaolin sed'. 'Nahara damu', diarrhoea with blood, usually meant dysentery, and admission to the hospital. When the sick Askaris got to know how I handled this, I one day caught a group queuing up to see me with their obligatory stool samples and some were pricking their finger to add some 'damu'! My memory of Swahili may not be quite the same as in present-day dictionaries.

A major event was a large outbreak of typhoid fever, despite all the troops having received TAB vaccination. The mortality was rising to high levels when fortunately the new and effective antibiotic, chloramphenicol, became available and helped to stop the epidemic.

There were one or two interesting trips to Nairobi and Mombasa, and one to Moshi to view the snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro. On all these journeys wild animals of all kinds were numerous. One duty which I had to undertake personally was to travel north once a month to the River Tsavo to inspect the source of our water supply. There was plenty of wild life in that area and the book, *The*

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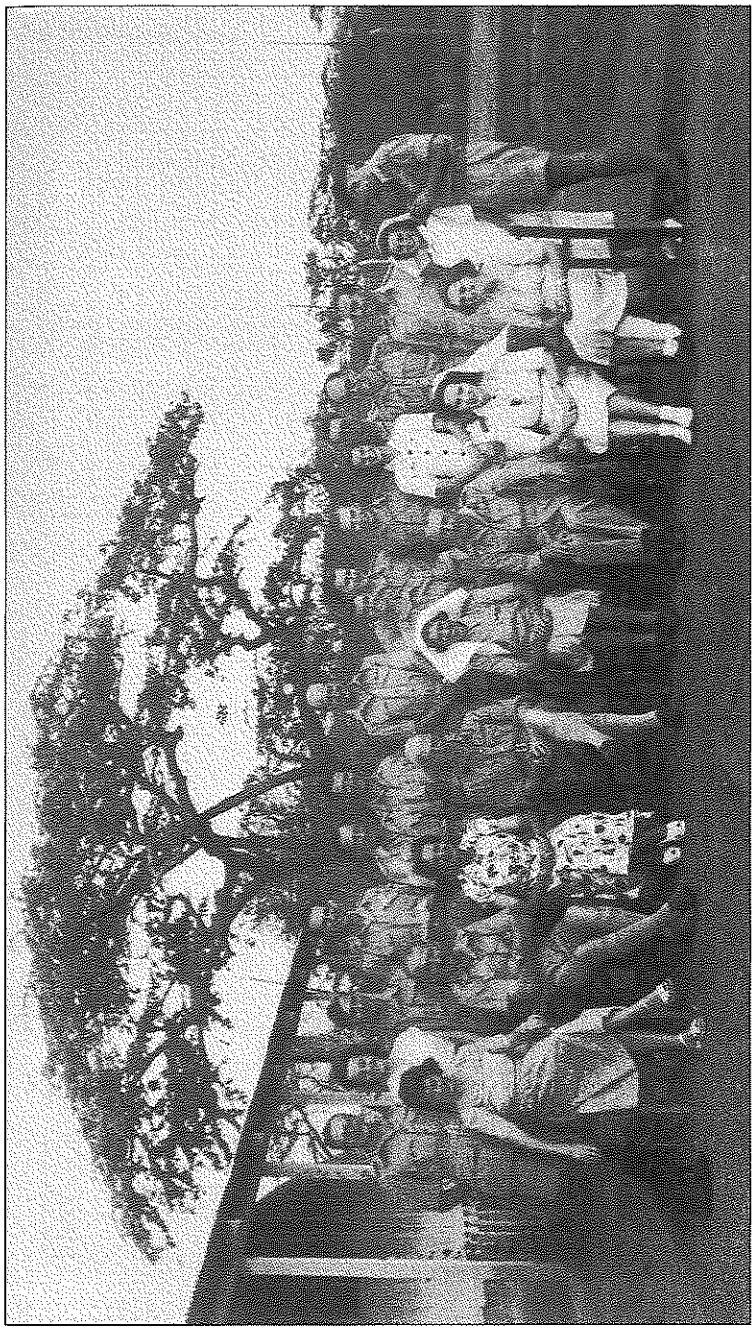
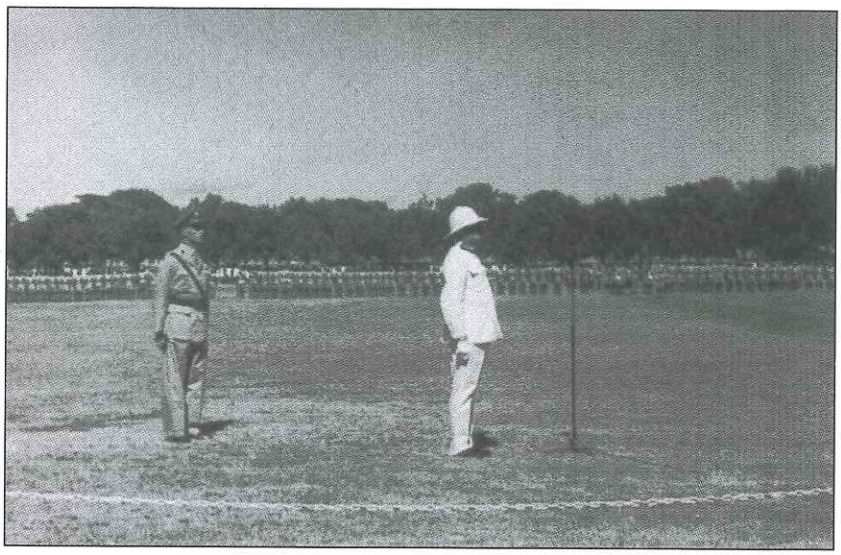


The staff at the Military Hospital, Mackinnon Road, Kenya in 1949. Matron is in the centre with the visiting Director of Medical Services and Assistant Director on either side. The author is sixth from the left in the back row.

Man Eaters of Tsavo, was based on some lion attacks on the early railway workers.

Christmas was approaching and I was looking forward to having a role in the pantomime. Then out of the blue, I was posted to be the Medical Officer to the 1st Nyasaland Battalion of the King's African Rifles, based in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia. Again this was to be another great part of life's tapestry. The King's African Rifles were extensively involved in the Second World War, but were now reduced to a few security battalions in Africa. Idi Amin was later to be a Sergeant Major in the Uganda battalion.

My duties were less onerous than in Mackinnon Road, but nonetheless enhanced my further training. The British Officers and NCOs and their families presented few problems, and the same was true of the Africans. I did a sick parade at 06.30 hours every morning and because of the general fitness of the troops (and their families), much of



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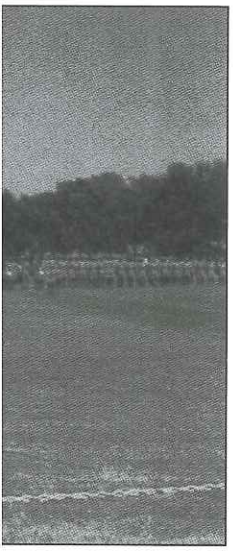

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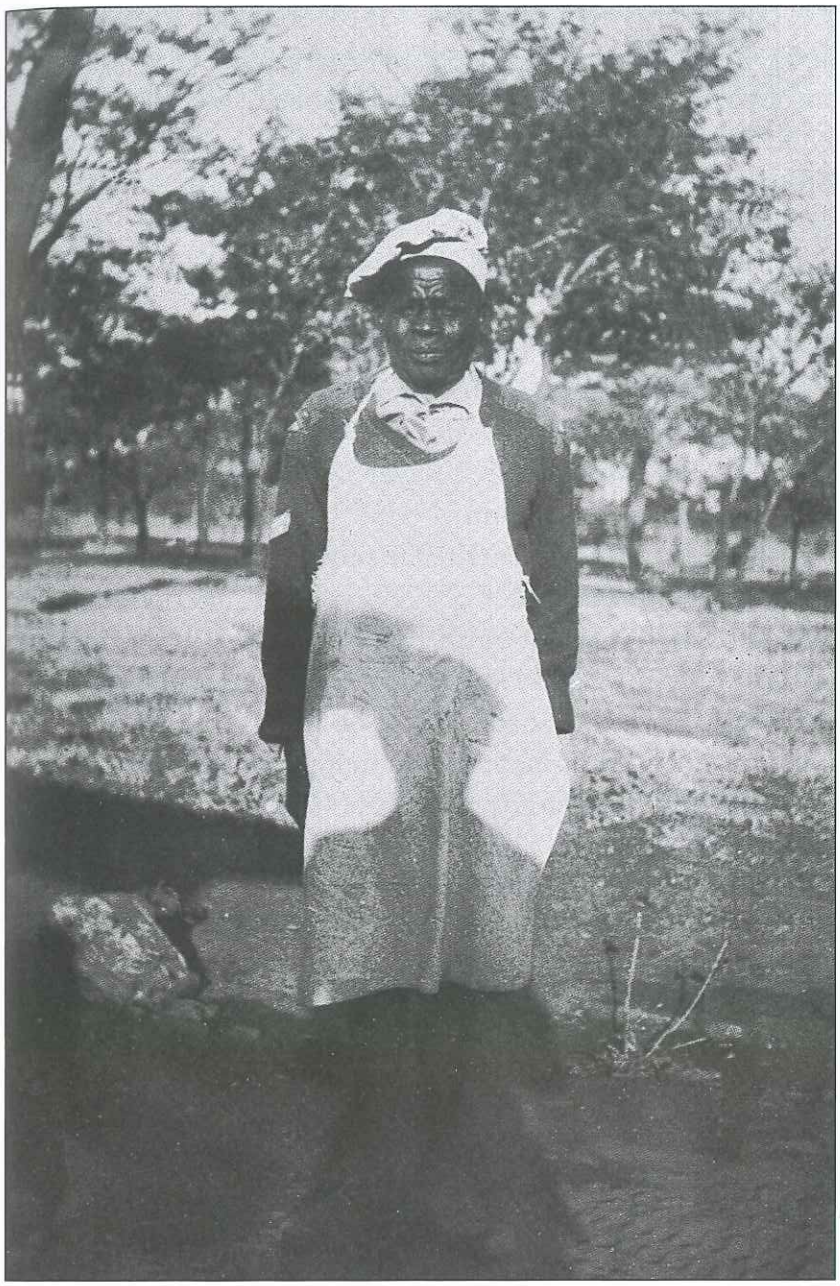

Corporal Jonathan.

the day's work could be achieved by breakfast time or soon after. I had a little sick bay of my own, with a few beds for minor illness and there were very good if small European and African hospitals in Lusaka which gave support. Indeed I often assisted at operations in the European hospital in the mornings. There were few doctors in Lusaka and most in Northern Rhodesia at that time were based in the copper belt in the north.

My greatest fan was the battalion cook, Corporal Jonathan. Goodness knows how old he was. He wore a medal dated 1908 which was from one of the Mad Mullah's uprisings in Somalia, but I never liked to ask him if it had really been awarded to him.

Among Jonathan's particular requests was that I would deliver his granddaughter of his first great-grandchild in my little hospital. This of course occurred early one morning without difficulty and I went back to see her an hour or two later only to find that she had gone to the market with the baby on her back. Jonathan was delighted and told me that that afternoon the family had made 'Merry Christmas from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.'.

I had my first involvement with witchcraft. The sergeant in the Officers' Mess occasionally helped me with some of the ailments that appeared to be non-organic, with all sorts of strange herbal remedies. However the event that sticks in my memory most strongly related to a particular soldier, Chibaya. He had learned that for some reason the elders of his tribe in Nyasaland had put a spell on his beer. Gradually he began to fade away and in the little sick bay he lay in bed with face turned to the wall awaiting death. With some difficulty I persuaded the Commanding Officer to let my dying patient return to Nyasaland on one of the convoys so

that Chibaya could make peace with the elders and have the spell lifted. He returned fully restored a month or so later.

Some months into my time in Lusaka there followed a most critical event. I was the bar member in the Officers' Mess and one day the Commanding Officer intimated that he would like to have a cocktail party on the Saturday evening. Apart from the officers and their wives, we would be having some guests from Government and the local hospitals and the police. He requested that I would prepare his favourite cocktail, something that I had never heard of: a 'White Lady'. With difficulty I discovered that it was gin and Cointreau and lemon squash, but no one seemed to know if it was 1:2:3, or 2:1:3 or whatever.

I spent the Saturday afternoon finding out and by 4 o'clock I was 'legless'. However after an hour or so in bed, I was feeling normal again and able to attend the cocktail party. Then as usually happened on a Saturday evening, a fair number of us chose to go to the weekly dinner dance at the Country Club.

I had a girlfriend who had a wobbly old car and she and I went to the Club with another officer and his wife in the back seat. I was still feeling my normal self, but the first strange happening was that a police officer slipped on the dance floor and dislocated his shoulder. I made the diagnosis with unjustified confidence and then reduced the dislocation with Kocher's manoeuvre, something that I had never done before, and have not done since. However, although my patient did look a little pale, all was well.

Then on the way home, I was driving and as we rounded the corner outside Government House the car skidded, I think on sand, and I was thrown out onto the road; the car fell across me. If I had been smoking I would not have

survived because I was soaked in petrol. Fortunately my passengers were unharmed. However it took half an hour or so to get help to lift the car from me, and because I was having trouble with sensation and movement in my legs I was taken into the local hospital. Happily there was no serious injury, and on recovery one of my mates came to collect me at the hospital in my own little army 'buggy', so that I could drive back to the barracks and restore my confidence. However the first thing that I had to do was go to the bank.

Everyone in the small European community in Lusaka knew that the army doctor had made a fool of himself and the next person in the bank queue was a most attractive young lady whom I had met briefly once before. Her greeting was, 'You should take more water with it next time.' This was Jenny aged twenty, who was later to become a marvellous wife, companion, and consort. I was to discover that her parents also came from the west of Scotland where she had been born, but she had been brought up in Hertfordshire to where her father had moved his farming in the early 1930s. She had been preceded in Africa by an older sister, and Jenny had gone out some two years later staying for one year in Johannesburg and working with the Anglo-American Company and then moving to Lusaka, to friends, where she was to be in government service.

Shortly our friendship was to be interrupted because with an infantry officer and a transport officer, I was sent off into the south-west of Northern Rhodesia to assist in the recruitment of 200 men for the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, currently in Tanganyika. Each officer had a 15 cwt truck with driver and batman, and we were followed by 16 three-ton trucks for the recruits. We went south down the

Livingstone Road to Chomo and then westwards to Namwala, an area that had not been recruited for some time.

I do not know how the 'bush telegraph' functioned, but the villages on our journey seemed to know that we were coming and the local Chief had arranged a congregation of young men. Charlie Matthews, the infantry officer, would give a short address, the Chief would advise the men not to join us too light heartedly because they would be away for three years and then some would rise and go and collect a few belongings. After I had made a superficial medical examination, off we would go.

We three officers slept in the open under mosquito nets beside an enormous fire. Although we did not see any lions, we could certainly hear them roaring not too far away. We fed mainly on guinea fowl, spur-wing geese, snub-nose duck and little sucking pigs. As we went on, accumulating men, some large animal such as a kudu or a wildebeest had to be shot most days, usually by Charlie. We had brought a lot of provisions with us, which I remember included Booth's gin. We also had a battery radio with fairly clear reception.

By Namwala we had a large number of recruits and so twelve trucks were sent back to Lusaka. We went on to Sesheke on the Zambesi expecting to get along the north side of the river to return to base. Here we met the Paramount Chief in all his splendid robes, and he was anxious that we should meet his son. The son appeared out of a mud hut, in Savile Row suit and hat, an Oxford graduate!

Unfortunately we could not get along the north side of the river and had to cross cautiously on pontoons into the Caprivi Strip and from there eastwards. We arrived at the Victoria Falls on the night of a full moon to witness the

Jenny at the end of my time in Lusaka.

famous lunar rainbow in the spray. Then back to Lusaka into the embrace of my new lady.

I had given Charlie Matthews a £5 float when we set off and to my astonishment I got £4 change after our month's absence. We had had to buy only a few eggs and chickens. I, in addition, had had my army stipend doubled with one month's 'hard living allowance'! I also reflect on how we had all survived the water supply, because all we could do was to boil large volumes every day from rivers and small lakes.

Soon I was on my way home to the UK via a two-month camp in Southern Rhodesia where we had a busy spell of manoeuvres with troops from Kenya and Nyasaland but mainly Southern Rhodesia Territorials. It was yet another new experience.

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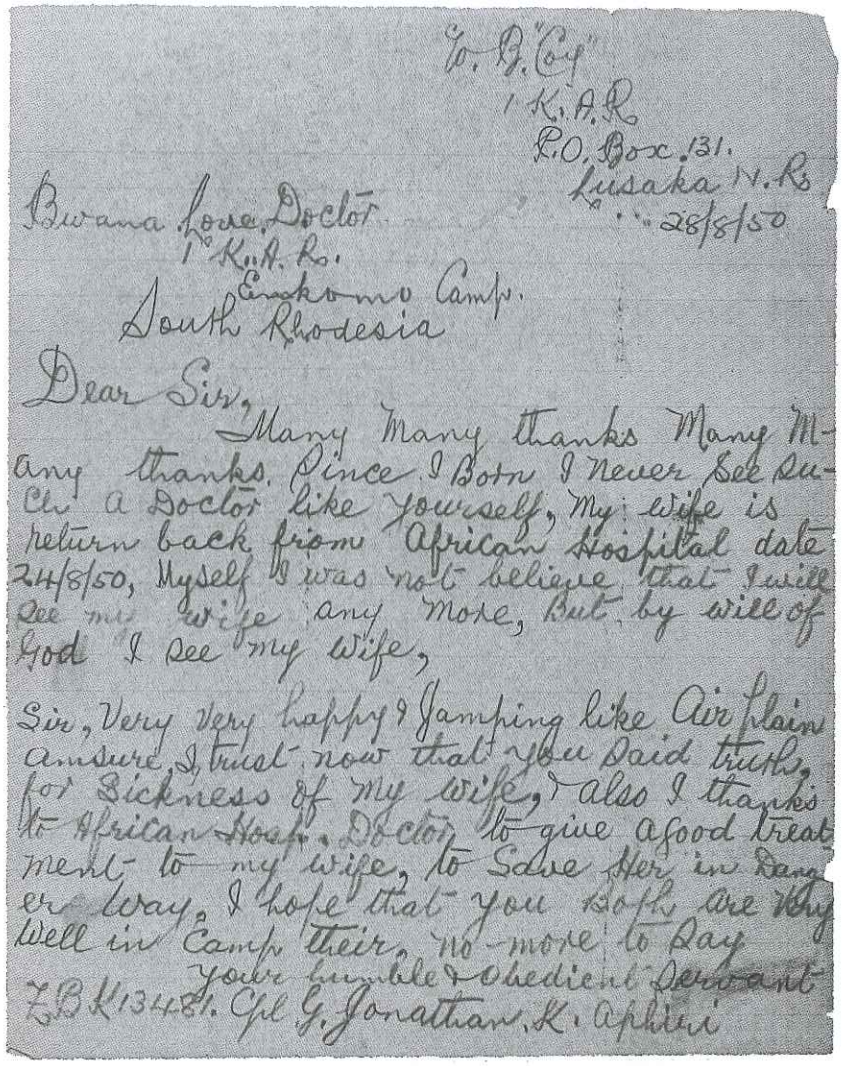
The author on last evening in Lusaka, 1950. Not exactly 'on the rocks'.



G. J. "Coy"
1 K.A.R.
P.O. Box 131.
Lusaka N.R.
28/8/50

Bwana Love. Doctor
1 K.A.R.
Enkomo Camp.
South Rhodesia

Dear Sir,

Many Many thanks Many Many thanks. Since I Born I Never See Such a Doctor like yourself, My wife is return back from African Hospital date 24/8/50, Myself I was not believe that I will see my wife any More, But by will of God I see my wife,

Sir, Very very happy & Jamping like Air plain assure, I trust now that you said truth, for Sickness of My wife, & also I thanks to African Hosp. Doctor to give a good treatment to my wife, to Save Her in Danger way, I hope that you both are very well in Camp their, No-more to Day

Yours humble & obedient Servant
ZB/13481. Cpl G. Jonathan, K. Afrika

Corporal Jonathan's letter to me in Southern Rhodesia. 'Both' in the penultimate line of the letter is because my successor as MO had now arrived.

One nice event was to receive a letter from Corporal Jonathan; I had to admit his wife into the African hospital in Lusaka with pneumonia before our departure. It is the only testimonial that I can recall seeing and I still have the original.

I was due to return to the UK via Mombasa but my Commanding Officer managed to get dispensation for me to return home via Cape Town on RMS *Stirling Castle*. Jenny and I had been in frequent contact and by the time I got to Cape Town, although we had known each other for quite a short time, it was clear that we had reached 'an understanding'.

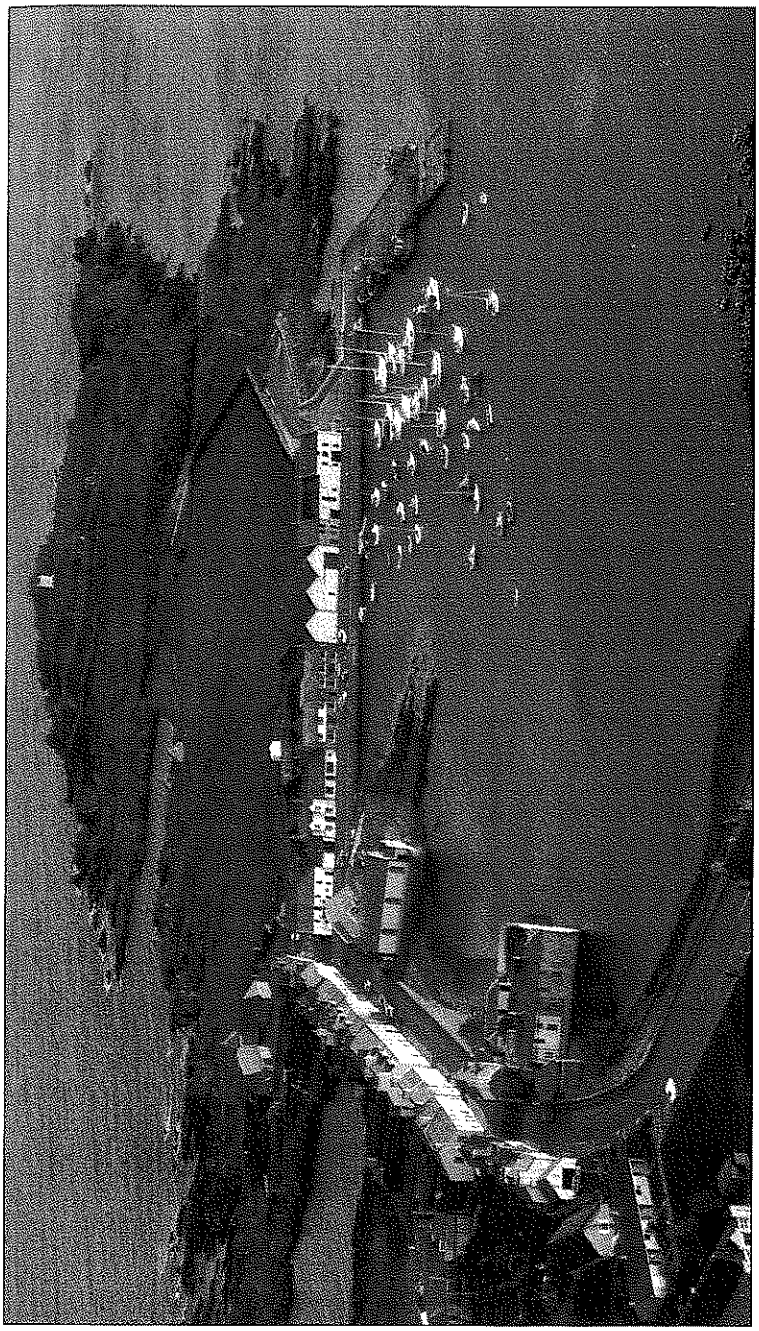
Just as I was about to depart I learned that my period of service was to be extended for six months because of the Korean War, and I ended up as a supernumerary medical officer in an Ordnance depot near Nottingham.

CHAPTER 5

Rural General Practice, 1950-2

AFTER ABOUT SIX WEEKS wasting time in Nottingham I got an SOS from my father. A young uncle running a single-handed general practice in the Machars of Galloway in south-west Scotland had taken his wife and daughters to the pantomime in Glasgow and had had a major heart attack. This would be in December 1950. The SOS was to ask if I could possibly get two or three days leave to temporarily hold the fort in this remote area. I was able to get away and arrived the following evening in my uniform. A very elderly retired general practitioner from some distance away had looked after the practice for the two days, he had done the evening surgery and on my arrival, he gave me the list of visits for the following day, put on his coat and left me.

The practice was based in Whithorn in the Burrowhead peninsula between Kirkcudbrightshire and the Mull of Galloway. In addition to the historic village of Whithorn it embraced the villages of Kirkinner, Garlieston, Sorbie, the Isle of Whithorn and the whole population in the countryside. The main occupations were farming, the creameries and fishing. There were some 2,500 patients in the practice and the nearest other doctors were some miles away in Wigtown and Port William. The Isle of Whithorn at the tip of the peninsula was not only a delightful fishing port but it was also traditionally associated with St Ninian, the first Christian missionary in Scotland, who settled in the area in



Aerial picture of the Isle of Whithorn where St Ninian settled around AD 400 and began to evangelise the southern Picts.

the late fourth century on his return from Rome and set about evangelising the southern Picts. This was some 150 years before St Columba arrived in Iona from Ireland.

The uncle's family were to remain in Glasgow for a few days and I was quite alone but still full of youthful confidence and was not giving much thought to my rather awesome responsibility. There was a small cottage hospital in Stranraer but the main acute hospital was about 70 miles away in Dumfries.

During the first night I was called to two confinements. The family had gone to Glasgow by train and so uncle's car was in the garage; I had to get the young maid out of bed to find the car key, accompany me and show me the way. However Sister Robertson, a splendid district nurse from the Highlands, had preceded me in both homes and was in attendance when I got there.

I could not get away from Whithorn to return to the Army and with the help of the local MP I was eventually demobilised over the telephone. In those days a heart attack usually meant some six weeks in hospital and a long spell of convalescence, and so I was in charge and single handed for three to four months before my uncle returned to part-time work.

I reflect on the enormous respect in which the family doctor was then held. Within a few weeks I had been in almost every home because shortly after arrival there was a flu epidemic and then a measles epidemic, the latter being the first for about twenty years. Some time ago I enjoyed an after-dinner speech given by Dr Yellowlees of Aberfeldy in the Royal College of Physicians at the 50th reunion dinner of his 1941 Edinburgh class. He was remarking on how the esteem of the medical profession was so sadly declining but

he went on to say that this was not true of the country doctor. Apparently a country general practitioner had been called out to certify the death of an elderly patient who had been ailing for some time. He finished his evening meal and went out to examine his patient. He said to his patient's wife, 'Jessie, I am afraid that Willie has slipped away.' With that Willie opened one eye and said, 'Jessie I'm no' away yet.' Jessie then admonished him and said, 'Wheesht Willie, the doctor kens best' ('Be quiet Willie, the doctor knows best')! That was the sort of regard which prevailed for the country doctor in 1951.

Looking back, I must have been rather busy. However the doctor was not pestered with trivia and if he was called out of his bed at night, which was not common, it was for something that needed his help. It could be something serious and urgent or the relatives were anxious and required reassurance.

I did a surgery morning and evening, Monday to Saturday and the Saturday evening attendance might be quite large if some had travelled in from the surrounding villages to see a good film at the local cinema! Home visits were requested in the mornings usually by telephone and I also divided domiciliary practice into three sections: the Isle of Whithorn and environs on Monday and Thursday afternoons, Garlieston on Tuesdays and Fridays and Sorbie on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and in each of these places, requests for visits were also left in a particular shop or the local Post Office. The visits were always made possible on that day although sometimes a few had to be done after the evening surgery. I do not remember any difficulty about getting urgent hospital admissions into the infirmary in Dumfries, or in getting outpatient appointments. The latter

was helped by the senior physician and the senior surgeon from Dumfries each doing a clinic in Newton Stewart, some 18 miles away, once per month.

No doubt there were problems but fortunately I escaped any serious catastrophe. One Saturday evening after my surgery had finished, I was a little tired and also a little cross when a patient rang the front-door bell while I was having supper. I did however think from what I found that my visitor might have perforated a peptic ulcer and although the ambulance had to come from Newton Stewart he was on the operating table in Dumfries before midnight.

Midwifery was a major commitment but thankfully I always had Sister Robertson who was my main mentor and support. Indeed there were one or two occasions when I had to start some 'open' chloroform and Sister Robertson would keep it going while I scrubbed my hands hurriedly to get on with the business. Again I was lucky that this aspect of work, while sometimes a little worrying, did not cause too many difficulties.

Some three times a week letters had been exchanged with Jenny in Northern Rhodesia. My aunt once remarked that I must be obsessed with her, and indeed I was. Then in spring 1951, there was a major event – Jenny had returned home and I was able to get away briefly to meet her in London. Shortly afterwards she came to Whithorn and it became known that a young lady from Africa was coming to visit the doctor. It was said that most of the local populace, maybe two-thirds, had never been out of the area. I heard a rumour that a lot of my patients expected that the young lady would be black.

I went up to Newton Stewart to meet her off the train and a more gorgeous sight would be hard to imagine, albeit a

little incongruous for Whithorn. She had on a mustard cape and a 1920s style hat with feathers dangling down to her waist. Then halfway down on the drive to Whithorn in the car she got out a long cigarette holder and lit a cigarette – and she was not a smoker. She was of course soon to be enormously popular, and to remain so. After this first visit I drove her down to Doncaster to meet my parents. On this occasion and on other short absences a locum had to be appointed and the first was an old friend who had been in my Edinburgh medical class (as had his wife).

In the summer, as I was now doing compulsory service in the Territorial Army as Medical Officer to the 5th Dumfries and Galloway Battalion KOSB, I had to do the first of four summer camps and I took the opportunity of driving down to Jenny's home in Hertfordshire. I had to explain to her father that Jenny and I wished to 'tie the knot' and he seemed to spend several minutes telling me about all the chaps that she might have had! However all was well and we had a delightful wedding in September in a church in St Albans and then a reception at Jenny's parents' farm at Wheathampstead. It was embarrassing to have received so many nice gifts from the Whithorn patients.

I have not so far mentioned that there was a high rate of births outside marriage, perhaps one in three, but it seemed to be acceptable and part of the local culture of the time. I used to pay pastoral visits to some of the elderly patients if I was passing near their homes although they might not have any immediate medical problem. I called on one particular lady in her eighties almost every week; we will call her Mary. Mary had had eight children and she told me that she was not sure of the father of any of them. However they had all

Our wedding in September 1951.

The wedding in September 1951. Jenny's parents are to the left and my parents to the right. Best man, brother James, is on Jenny's right and Nancy, Jenny's younger sister on his right. My sister, Elizabeth is in front of me.

done well and she lived with one son, and his family, who was a farm manager.

One afternoon I took my future wife with me on my round of home visits and we called on Mary who was delighted to entertain us with a cup of tea in the kitchen. Then she began to relate how she had brought up her children and had got to number three and could not afford the price of a pair of shoes to get the child to school. She was called in front of the school board and went in fear and trembling because she would be confronted at least by the Headmaster, the Laird, the Minister, the Town Clerk and the Bank Manager, and she fully expected that the child would be taken from her. She recalled that the first question was, 'Mary, how is it that you have managed the first two so well and this last yin's [one's] giving you so much trouble?' Mary responded by saying, 'How do you ken [know] it's the last yin when I dinna ken myself?' The Minister said, 'You have answered well, Mary,' and they all put their hands in their pockets to provide funds for the shoes.

I speak about Mary because I called to see her shortly before leaving to get married to thank her for the gift of a lovely water jug which we still have. She was in bed but jumped out, rolled back the mattress and gave me £2 in small silver coins which she had saved and which I was not allowed to refuse.

The first spell of marriage was of course delightful. My uncle was now back in harness and Jenny and I both began to feel that perhaps we would not wish to stay in Whithorn for the rest of our lives. It was then that I realised astonishingly that I seemed to have given no thought at all to my long-term career. This had been prompted a little earlier at my first Territorial Camp in the previous summer with the

Lowland Brigade when I discovered that several of my Edinburgh contemporaries had taken the Membership Examination of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. At that time, I did not seem to have any idea what the MRCP Ed was all about.

Rather to my uncle's displeasure we decided to move on and I thought that I should go and consult my former Professor of Medicine, Stanley Davidson. I had learned that he had two Assistant Lectureships in the University Department of Medicine which seemed to be the ideal appointment for someone at my stage, but I discovered that the posts were occupied and likely to be for some time. However the Professor indicated that I could not possibly know enough medicine to be considered for these posts and it would be a good plan to go for a year to the 'salt mines' in England. And so it was that I became a Senior House Officer in Kettering in Northamptonshire.