

Autobiography chapter: Relations

Eric Whittaker

Grandparents

My father's father died before I was born and my mother's mother died when I was about 2 and I have no recollection of her. Grandma Whittaker (as I always called her because Ken did – to distinguish her from Grandma Haslam who I think he actually saw more of) died in 1927, but she came to stay with us at Alderley twice in the period 1925-6. I remember her coming with Mum and me to Ken's school speech day at Stockport, and I remember gardening with her in the front garden, and for some years I called the front bedroom "grandma's room". I also remember once going to Sutton Bonington to see her. In retrospect I imagine this was probably after she had been in hospital at the start of her last illness, as her death certificate gave one of the causes of death as "cancer of the breast – removed". So I suspect the visit was when she recovered from the operation and before she relapsed. I remember on that visit she gave me a piece of perforated zinc used as a queen-excluder in her bee hives, and I had it for many years. However I obviously do not remember anything about her as a person as I was only 5 when she died.

Grandad (I never used the surname in his case as I knew no other grandad) lived till I was nearly 20 so I remember him well. I do not remember him from before we went to Alderley, and as he re-married the following year (1925) relations between him and Mum were somewhat strained so I did not see him between a time before memories start at about 3 and when I was about 7, though he always sent me presents for Christmas and birthday. In about 1928 Uncle Harold had jaundice; he was living with Auntie Edie at the time and she thought Mum ought to go and see him – so Mum and I went to Radcliffe. At that time Auntie Edie was not on speaking terms with Grandad (because of his new wife) and Mum did not know how she was going to cope with the rift on the spot. However Grandad heard somehow that we were coming and came to the station to meet our arrival, obviously wanting to make sure that Auntie Edie should not prevent Mum from seeing him. As we got out of the train Mum said "There's Grandad, run to him" so of course I did and he picked me up and made a fuss of me, and asked us to go to tea while we were there, and I remember he played draughts with me. In later years we went to stay with him at Cotgrave (where he moved in about 1932) two

or three times as well as going for the day on his 80th birthday on 19 October 1938, and he and “Auntie Mary” (his wife) came to stay at Alderley once or twice and he came on his own at least once. I do not ever remember him coming to see us at Littleover, and after 1938 I only saw him once in September 1941 when I went on my own to Alfreton where he was living for some reason in a rented house in his last year or so. He was in bed and never recovered, dying the next month. I remember he believed that the war would be over by Christmas 1941, so he was clearly out of touch with how things were.

So much for memories. However there are also verbal traditions to draw on. He had left home by about the time his youngest brother Wilfred was born, presumably to start his career in insurance, though where he worked at first I do not know. Certainly by the time he was 22 or so he must have been in the London region since that is where he met Grandma. It is said that he saw her sitting in a window and said to the friend who was with him “I am going to marry that woman”. She was 8 years older than him, and only agreed to marry him provided he ceased to be a Baptist and joined the Church of England. How long the courtship was I do not know, nor how the marriage coincided with his return to the midlands. By the time he was 24 he was at the Nottingham office of the Ocean Accident and Guarantee Corporation (of which he rose to be manager before 1910), and stayed there all his working life. For about the first 3 years or so of marriage they lived at Noel St, Hyson Green, Nottingham, and about 1885-6 moved to Radcliffe-on-Trent where they had about 3 or 4 different houses over 40 years – presumably as his affluence increased. My mother’s early recollections were that one of the downstairs rooms was not furnished at one time, so presumably the increase of affluence was a slow process. Two of these houses were called Ashbracken (“the old Ashbracken” and “the new Ashbracken”) by contracting the birthplaces of Grandma (Ashted) and Granddad (Brackenfield). Another was when they “lived in the Grove”. Certainly by the time I knew him (in his early retirement) he appeared to be much better off than we were.

In middle age he ran a troop of the Boys’ Brigade, and at some stage became a JP, presumably through his involvement in Liberal politics. He was a great admirer of Gladstone and was eventually the Liberal parliamentary candidate for the Bingham¹ constituency, which he contested twice, unsuccessfully, in 1926(?)² and 1929. His Conservative opponent on both occasions was, I believe, the Marquis of Hartington³. After Grandma died in 1923 Auntie Edie (who still lived at home) kept house for him, but he soon started courting Mary Radford. She was the daughter of his cousin Will

¹It seems the constituency name was Newark, of which Bingham was a part. [RW]

²Actually 1924. The results according to Wikipedia (on the page devoted to the Newark constituency) were: 1924: William Cavendish-Bentinck (Unionist) 14,129, H Varley (Labour) 5,076, James Haslam (Liberal) 4,124, and 1929: William Cavendish-Bentinck (Unionist) 15,707, James Haslam (Liberal) 10,768, William Richard Grosvenor Haywood (Labour) 8,060. [RW]

³According to Wikipedia, actually William Cavendish-Bentinck was known as the Marquess of Titchfield until he inherited his father’s title and became 7th Duke of Portland. The Marquess of Hartington seems to be the title of the eldest son of the Duke of Devonshire (also having the surname Cavendish). [RW]

Radford, son of his father's sister. Some years before, he had been to stay with his cousin in Derbyshire and had apparently fallen for her then. He had invited her over to stay with them and Grandma had taken a total dislike to her and realised the hold she had over him. She had said to Auntie Edie "never let that woman in this house again", so Auntie Edie (who shared the dislike) was faced with a problem when he started courting her. Eventually she allowed him to bring her in to tea, but when the marriage occurred in 1925 she promptly moved out into a house of her own and broke off all contact for about 6 or 7 years. He and "Auntie Mary" went on living in "the new Ashbracken" till about 1931 when they built a bungalow at Cotgrave, and remained there until about 1940 when for unexplained reasons they rented a house in Alfreton – the belief was that Auntie Mary had spent all his money, largely on prolonged holidays at "hydros", I suspect. After his death Mum said "I wouldn't like you to think badly of Grandad, but he was easily led. So long as Grandma was alive she kept him on the straight and narrow path". It was at this time that she told me the story of his involvement with Auntie Mary indicated above. Mum recognised that Auntie Mary had seemed to be a good wife to him and had looked after him well in his old age, and certainly in that way saved her (and Auntie Edie) a great deal in the way of looking after him in his last years. Auntie Edie on the other hand could never forgive her and could find nothing too bad to say of her. I remember her telling Mum that she "put the dishes away dirty", and when I went to stay at Cotgrave I looked in the crockery cupboard with interest and expected to see gravy oozing out between the plates, and I was quite disappointed to find nothing untoward.

Of Grandma Haslam I received less in the way of oral tradition. Almost the only thing I know is that Auntie Edie said "Mother was afraid of everything. Madge [my mother] was afraid of most things, but Mother was afraid of everything". From Mum I also heard of her fear of cows and horses, which she passed on to Mum, indeed.

On October 19th 1938 Grandad celebrated his 80th birthday and we (Mum, Dad, and I [with special leave from school]) went over for the afternoon. I think Uncle Harold called for us and took us by car, though I am not sure whether Auntie Gladys was with him. Auntie Edie was there, so all his living descendents except Ken were present. There were also his five surviving brothers Charlie, David, Jesse, Ted and Wilfred and also Aunties (?)⁴, Florrie, and Annie – the wives of Charlie, David and Ted. Uncle Wilfred's wife Auntie Annie was not well enough to come, and for historical reasons Uncle Jesse's wife would have been persona non grata. There was also his cousin and father-in-law Will Radford, father of Auntie Mary. This was the first time I had seen Uncles Charlie and Ted and their wives, Uncle Jesse or Will Radford. Uncle Charlie and his wife were staying with Uncle David and Auntie Florrie at Nottingham for the occasion and the following week they all four came over to see us at Littleover.

⁴Blank space in manuscript. [RW]

My total lack of memories of Grandad Whittaker can also be supplemented from tradition. The only oral tradition that I had from Dad was that he had managed the co-op in Sutton and had been a tax-collector – the latter piece of information being provided to show that tax collectors were not uniformly and always bad as suggested by the Gospels! In fact he seems to have been a remarkably successful man in improving his position from very humble beginnings, as I was subsequently to find out from written evidence. Starting as an illegitimate child, his first employment was as a framework knitter - in which he followed in the steps of his father / step-father (it is not clear whether the man his mother married when he was 2 was his father or his father's cousin). He was still a framework knitter at his marriage at the age of 24, so the starting family must have been in very poor circumstances. However he was to become quite a prominent citizen in the village, being clerk to the parish council and to the school board, as well as rate collector and tax collector and co-op manager, and apparently owned his own house by the time he died.

Uncles and aunts

The relation that I knew best was Auntie Edie, who was 1½ years younger than Mum, and although they were very similar in appearance and Mum was occasionally mistaken for her (to Mum's intense annoyance) they were actually totally different in temperament. Like Mum she had been educated at private dame schools in Radcliffe to about the age of 15 and then gone to the same little private boarding school in London where she had remained for a year or so after Mum. At what time she started serious study of the piano and cello I don't know, but she went to some music college in London and achieved the qualification of L.R.A.M. and set up as a music teacher in Radcliffe - again I do not know when this started. She remained in the family home until Grandad remarried in 1925, and I believe had a very few years in lodgings but then acquired a house of her own in Walnut Grove - whether she bought it then I don't know, but it was hers when she died. Her music teaching was done in school term time only (whereas music teachers in my experience taught all through the year, but apparently this did not happen round Nottingham) so she had long holidays. She used to come to stay with us for 3 weeks (in one go) each year at Alderley from about 1925 to 1929 or so, which Mum used to find quite trying as she never stopped talking. Some time in the late twenties she started going on the staff of Holiday Fellowship holiday homes that opened only for a short season – in school buildings, or whatever, presumably. She soon rose to be an assistant manageress and then a manageress, and it was obviously a very suitable occupation for someone of her extravert personality. This put an end to her long visits with us. She had a great knack of seeing the funny side of things, and of acquiring odd experiences and incidents which lost nothing (and probably gained quite a bit) in the telling, so her conversation could be quite hilarious. She was of such a different

temperament and outlook from Mum that they had never got on very well right from childhood. Mum told me that she got her down by talking so much even then, and when they were in bed Mum would simply not answer and Auntie Edie would say “I know what you are doing, you are thinking”! She was a very faithful member of her parish church and for quite a long time the secretary of the PCC, and she disapproved of Mum’s having become a Methodist. On the other hand Mum disapproved of her lack of puritan principles – she knitted on Sundays and she even smoked occasionally, and she liked to talk about things concerned with sex! She told Dorothy that she and Uncle Harold had once discussed Mum’s aversion to the latter subject, and said that in the unlikely event of Ken or I acquiring a wife we would not know what to do with her! At her funeral a former curate said to Mum that she was such a lively person that “you had to either love her or hate her, and I loved her”. Perhaps her least attractive feature was the bitterness of her hatred for Auntie Mary (Grandad’s second wife), which did not diminish even in old age. Sadly she became totally senile and out of touch with reality in her last year or so – she found it impossible to believe that her mother was dead for example. The one thing on which she and Mum agreed was in their devotion to their mother, who had understood both of them, different as they were – so Mum told me.

Uncle Harold was 5 years younger than Mum, and seemed to me to be the archetypal uncle. He had married Gladys Land about 1915 or so, but some time soon after my birth she had to go into a mental hospital, and I never heard of her till I was about 9. In fact Uncle Harold had a girl friend whom I called Auntie Nancy, and I imagined that he was going to marry her, and I was quite incredulous when I was told he was married and I had an Auntie Gladys. According to what Mum told me when I was grown up, she was in a private mental hospital for some time and made no progress; in fact the authorities told Uncle Harold that without the careful nursing they had given her she would have died, and as there was no hope of recovery he would be entirely justified in transferring her to a public asylum. He would not accept this invitation to encompass her death, and continued to pay for her to be cared for. Eventually she was discharged into Auntie Edie’s care and she by her downright forthrightness somehow effected a cure. Uncle Harold was an engineer, and by this time worked for Tangye’s in Birmingham and it was there that he and Auntie Gladys at last set up house again and lived for another 30 years without any relapse on her part, though it was said that she remained mentally very shallow and he had from time to time to take refuge from this by going fishing. As for Nancy, she of course departed from the scene altogether and I once heard Auntie Edie refer to her as “poor Nancy”. According to Mum there was “of course never anything wrong between them” but I wonder if this was a view through rosy spectacles. Auntie Gladys eventually had a stroke which left her partly paralysed and unable to speak or write. Uncle looked after her and died suddenly in her presence, and she by some superhuman effort got out of bed to reach him and fell - to lie for many hours before being found. He had made a very well thought-out will. He made a bequest to Auntie Edie, and a fairly substantial one to Auntie Gladys’s nephew

who was also to be trustee of the residue to be used in looking after her for the rest of her life. Any residue after her death was to be divided between Mum, Ken and me, so the nephew had no incentive to spare expense apart from ensuring that the trust money lasted long enough. In the end there was about £3000 to distribute between us.

I knew much less of my uncle and two aunts on my father's side. Auntie Jenny (Sarah Jane) was about 1½ years older than Dad, who was followed by Auntie Ethel and then Uncle Sam. I must have seen Auntie Ethel on the occasion that we went to see Grandma about 1927, but do not remember. I do remember a day visit to us at Alderley by Uncle Sam (and his wife and two children) and Auntie Jenny. They came after Grandma's death to sort out the settlement of her estate, which was highly controversial. Uncle Sam had had money from his mother earlier to help him set up in business (which had failed) and the others regarded that as part of his share. Auntie Ethel had looked after her in her last days and considered herself entitled to the house. What arrangements were eventually made I do not know (the two brothers and one sister were ensconced all afternoon in our front room while Mum, Ken, Auntie Winnie, Joan, Daphne, and I stayed in the dining room!) but the house was eventually sold, and various small items of cutlery etc came to us. What happened regarding sharing the proceeds I don't know, but it caused a rift in the family for about 10 years or more, with Dad and Auntie Jenny on one side and Uncle Sam and Auntie Ethel on the other (presumably because they were dissatisfied with the outcome).

I never saw any of them again until 1937 when we had moved to Littleover only 5 miles from Auntie Jenny at Milton. I was very friendly with my cousin Billy (her son) who had frequently stayed with us from 1932-6 at Alderley, so I went over on my own to see then and for the first time met Billy's father Uncle Will (Cooke), and that summer I went to stay with them for about a week. Before her marriage Auntie Jenny had been a school teacher. Uncle Will had originally been an estate gardener doing things like breeding new varieties of flowers, but then for about 12 years a farmer, and finally when I knew him the farm bailiff on Sir Frances Burdett's estate at Foremark. I greatly enjoyed my visits to them because they were such *country* people, and I enjoyed the chickens and smell of chicken food in the back kitchen and the homely talk of rural matters which was quite different from anything I had known. Sadly, Uncle died in 1938 so I only knew him for about 18 months. I kept on going to see Auntie as long as I lived at Littleover (till 1943), and saw her occasionally after that. Unfortunately she became very difficult in a senile sort of way by the time she was about 70 and died in her early seventies. How she and Uncle met I don't know, but they both worked at Kingston-on-Soar. She had been engaged for quite a number of years to someone else. He had been sufficiently one of the family to give Mum and Dad a large bookcase for their wedding present in 1910, and it was said that she suddenly jilted him (reportedly because she saw him speaking to someone else) and then married Will Cooke all of a sudden, and as that was in 1915 it must have been a long abortive engagement.

Of Auntie Ethel I know very little except that Mum and Dad regarded her as a rather miserable sort of person. She and her husband Uncle Will Rowarth started coming over with Uncle Sam to see Mum and Dad in their last years and I met her then, and also called on her at Sutton in 1971 and 72. Her career had been as an assistant in her father's co-op shop until she got married.

Uncle Sam was a more colourful character. He followed Dad onto the Midland Railway until he joined up in the first war and rose to be Regimental Sergeant Major. When he was demobbed the railway offered him his old job back at his old wages, so he turned them down on the spot and rejoined the army. He was in the army of occupation in Germany, and found excellent opportunities to run an import-export business in surplus materials etc on the side. When he eventually returned to civilian life in the early 20's this led him to start a hardware shop in Beeston as a limited company with a partner. Dad invested in it and lost his money when the business failed, and he never quite forgave Sam for not making restitution when he finally made money – though of course he was under no legal obligation to do so. Around this time he did a spell of chauffeuring and loved to recount his amazing long-distance high-speed journeys. Then he started a pork butcher's shop, and this flourished through the 30's and I believe eventually expanded to two shops. By the late 30's he also got into the gypsum mining business of South Nottinghamshire and made a lot of money. By the late 1940's he was living in Riddington Hall⁵ (I think it was called) a very substantial country house, and from his mining experience he had branched out as a “consulting engineer” advising on the design and setting up of factories. How he got, or persuaded other people he had got, the know-how we never found out. From about 1937 he started calling on us about once a year when he came to Derby for a regimental dinner. Eventually after Auntie Winnie had died he went to live at a farm in Bunny, where I called on him three times about 1968, 71 and 72, and he greatly enjoyed yarning about his past exploits! I remember on the last occasion he gave us a peach off the tree in his greenhouse.

Great uncles and great aunts

I never knew any of my Grandma Whittaker's brothers and sisters, and still know virtually nothing of them, and Grandad Whittaker had no brothers or sisters, so this heading relates solely to the Haslam and Page sides of the family.

The eldest of the Haslams, Uncle Luther, died before I was born, and I know little of him. He was in the offices of the Sheepbridge company I believe, and was able to get a job there for his much younger brother Ted when their father died. I met one of his daughters (cousin Jess) once or twice because she lived with Auntie Edie for a short while. The next brother (after Grandad) was uncle Charlie. He lived on the south coast

⁵Crossed through in manuscript. [RW]

in his latter years, and I only met him at Grandad's 80th birthday party and again for a few days afterwards when he visited us at Littleover. I believe he had been a teacher. Uncle David lived in Nottingham in retirement, and had been a draper. He was Mother's favourite uncle (and his wife Auntie Florrie was her favourite aunt). He came to see us at Alderley once when I was little, and I went to see him in bed in the morning and he told me stories, so I thought he was very nice. Whenever we went to the Nottingham region we used to call on him at Wollaton. I remember reading Hiawatha at his house, and on another occasions I found he had a copy of the one Bulldog Drummond book I had not read (*The Final Count*) and he gave it to me.

Uncle Jesse had been Mother's favourite uncle when she was a little girl because he used to buy her sweets! But he subsequently became the "black sheep" of the family. He became an atheist and would not attend Mum's wedding because it was in a church. Also his marriage broke up – Mum said he married his landlady's daughter because he had got too involved not to, although she was not really suitable. After parting he subsequently set up house with another woman and had another family. This was kept secret from his relations until the son (in his early teens or so), of this family wrote a letter to a national newspaper. This was seen, and since Uncle Jesse's address was known the existence of this second family became known. He came (by himself) to Grandad's 80th birthday, and much later, in 1965 I visited him at his home in Suffolk while on holiday at Stechworth. He was then very old, in his nineties. He lived with some members of his family and asked if I knew who they were, and when I said "no" he laughed but did not tell me!

Uncle Ted was the most financially successful of the brothers. He became secretary of the Sheepbridge company, and he looked a very suave business man and lived in a substantial house on the outskirts of Chesterfield. I first saw him at Grandad's birthday party, when he was accompanied by his wife Auntie Annie who was Auntie Florrie's sister. She was very different – very severe and formidable looking with a row of highly artificial little curls along her forehead, which she had apparently "always" had. I met Uncle Ted a number of times later, after her death, when I used to take Mum and Dad to see him in the late 50's and early 60's. Apparently they had never wished to go there when Auntie was alive as she was so stiff and difficult. Even afterwards the atmosphere at tea was rather prim and presided over by the eldest daughter, Marie.

Uncle Wilfred, the youngest, was the one I knew best. He was an accountant, though not qualified, and lived in Preston. He was very bald and gaunt, and really looked the oldest of the brothers, not the youngest. His wife Auntie Annie, was very small and delicate and frail, with her white hair, a picture of the little old lady even when she was in her fifties. They used to come to stay with us for Christmas, every year but one from 1924 to 1938, I think, and they were an inseparable part of my childhood Christmasses. Quite apart from the marvellous presents they gave me (the ones I remember were a Klyptico set, a conjuring set, a chemistry set, and astronomy book (twice), and a Frances Brett Young novel) they were enormous fun when we played games in the evenings.

We treated them as old people (i.e. for their sleep in the afternoon) even in their fifties, but they were nevertheless great fun. Uncle was of quite an intellectual bent, and they were keen on chamber music, and he had become a Unitarian. When I was quite little Mum and I once went to stay with them in their bungalow at Hutton, outside Preston. The one Haslam great aunt died before I was born.

On the Page side there was one great aunt and two great uncles. Auntie Bert, Grandma's elder sister, I can just remember. She came with us on holiday to Colwyn Bay in 1924 soon after the death of her husband (William Scott) – presumably to help her get over her bereavement. I also remember going to stay with her for the weekend of Oct 30th – Nov 1st 1926 in Clapham. On this occasion one of her sons was there who was a great joker, and he teased me that the joint we were having for dinner on the Sunday was a cut from a dromedary that he had shot on Clapham Common. This would be Cousin George, I think, whose wife was Connie, and they had a son Alastair who I think was nearer in age to Ken than to me. We saw this family again in their bungalow at Ewell in 1933 when Mum and I were staying with Cousin Ethel (see below). Mum and Dad subsequently got to know quite well a cousin of Connie's called Mim McDermott because they responded to a request from Connie to take in Mim's 14-year-old daughter Muriel as an evacuee during the V1 bombing in 1944 summer. Muriel must have lived with Mum and Dad for 4-6 weeks that summer, and I got to know her when I went home for weekends just before I got married, and in fact she gave me a little wedding present.

I never met Great Uncle George Page as far as I know, though I may have met his daughter "Momo" at Auntie Bert's. But I met Great Uncle Willy (he had been a superintendent at the British Museum Reading Room) twice – once when we went to see him and his daughter Dossie at Watford(?) in 1932 when we have been staying the weekend at Hatch End, and again in 1933 when Mum and I stayed with his daughter Ethel and he and Dossie were then living with her either temporarily or permanently. Cousin Ethel I knew quite well, as she twice came to stay with us for a week about 1934 and 1937. Mum was very fond of her, though they were temperamentally extremely different. She was great fun, and I think she appealed to a streak in Mum that she normally kept in rigidly suppressed. She persuaded Mum to go with her to a ballet in Manchester, and even to powder her nose for the one and only time in her life! When she came to stay with us it emerged that Mr Dewick who was the LMS estate agent (and hence technically our landlord at Derby) had been her boyfriend in their youth and he came round to see her and invited us all to tea. They (and we) had a hilarious time as they recalled their early life. When we went to stay with her she gave me a very good time about 1933, inviting her nephew Frank Jeffs to stay as he was just about my age and we got on very well. We were taken to the zoo and to Runnymede, and to a firework display at the Crystal Palace. Sadly she died of cancer about 1940. Her husband Charlie Clarke was a hairdresser, and after her death he married her sister Dossie who was very different and much duller sort of character. But she also died after

a very few years and at the age of about 60 he married a young woman and had a child - Ethel had been medically unable to have one in their younger days. Frank Jeffs was the son of Uncle Willie's third daughter Winnie and Alf Jeffs. I never met them until about 1958 when we had a car and started visiting them from New Mills / Chinley at their home at Ashton-under-Lyme. We saw Frank occasionally too at this period, and he was still unmarried. Since he and I retired he has taken to coming to see us with his wife Frances, more or less annually. She is several years older than him and was a widow with a grown up son when they married. He died of heart trouble in 1990. Uncle Willie's other son Charlie Page and his family I never met, though in 1989 I had two letters from his granddaughter Sarah seeking information on the Page family.

Cousins

There were of course no first cousins on the Haslam side. On the Whittaker side there were four. The only one I knew at all was Billy, son of Auntie Jenny. He was nearly 6 years older than me, but I got on very well with him, much better than Ken did. I first met him in the summer of 1932 when he was 16. Because Ken had been on a school cruise he did not come on holiday with Mum and Dad and me, and was sent (in Mum's words) to "sponge on his relations" – a week with Uncle Harold and a week with Auntie Jenny, after which he brought Billy back for a week with us. After that Billy came to stay with us every summer until 1936, I think. At 16 impressed us by his size – he weighed 14 stone. I was drawn to him because like me he was keen on chemistry, and he and I used to go all round the fields at Alderley, exploring the tunnel where "the brook" went under the railway embankment, etc. He also took me to the Stockport baths to try to teach me to swim; and started me off on reading John Buchan stories. Soon after we moved to Derby I went over to Milton on my own see him and his parents, and in 1937 I had a most enjoyable week there. I even went fishing with him. On Monday mornings he travelled back from Milton to Nottingham University where he was doing research by then, and I used to make a special point of catching the bus that he would be on as I went into Derby to school. Of course after he went to work at Rothamstead I only saw him occasionally. He was married two days before me, and Mum and Dad went to his wedding in Cumberland on the Monday and travelled from there to Leeds on the Tuesday for our wedding on the Wednesday. Billy (alternatively known as George at school, university and work, and as Willy by Beth, his wife) was certainly the most distinguished member of the family, becoming an FRS and CBE. He was a lifelong workaholic, and sadly fell victim to Alzheimer's disease from about the age of 72 onwards and disintegrated very badly, dying at 76. He had a bad car crash when he was about 60, and suffered crippling arthritis afterwards. He shed his youthful fatness by strict dieting about the age of 30, and remained quite spare until reduced to immobility in his later years. For about 12 years in the late 70s and 80s Beth used to get

together a family gathering or reunion of cousins annually at their house. He and Beth had a lot of difficulty in starting a family, with repeated miscarriages, but eventually had a daughter Harvey-Jane in 1958 and Benjamin in 1960. Harvey-Jane was a very withdrawn sort of girl who became a vet, and Ben was a cheery chap who became an engineer.

Kitty was Auntie Ethel's daughter. I must have met her in 1927 when we went to Sutton, but don't remember her from then. She came to Dad's funeral in 1963 and I next saw her in 1971 and 1972 when will called at Sutton in the course of our ancestor hunting expeditions. Thereafter I got to know her quite well at the annual family reunions, went to see her in 1985 on another ancestor hunt, and we went to her ruby wedding in 1988. Her husband Ted was several years older than her. They had two children, Martin and Jane. Martin became a dentist and regularly came to the reunion with his Welsh wife and two delightful children Elizabeth and Andrew. They seemed to be a very delightful and happy family. Jane, an accountant married Tony, a barrister. She was a strikingly beautiful girl and they were both very friendly to us – they had the reunion at their house in Highgate once – but we found their yuppiness a bit off-putting, and they separated in 1990.

Joan and Daphne were Uncle Sam's daughters, respectively 6 months older and 4 years or so younger than me. I met them in 1927 when they came to out house (as mentioned above) and in 1968(?) when I called on Uncle Sam and they both happened to be there. Thereafter I saw Daphne frequently at the family reunions, but only ever saw Joan again at Kitty's ruby wedding. Joan married a very reclusive farmer who wouldn't come into the room when told I was there in 1968, so I never met him. They had one son, who followed his father's trade and had no interest in Uncle Sam's offer to pay for his further education. Daphne's husband was an engineer and came frequently to the family reunions where he was quite genial if not particularly talkative, but they had no children.

On the Haslam side there were of course lots of "first cousins once removed" and second cousins. Only a few of these did I know personally. The one I knew best was Cousin Eric, who believed me to be named after him. The son of Uncle Wilfred and Auntie Annie, he came with them to stay with us at Christmas from 1924 to about 1929, and one year later than that he came by himself when for some reason they couldn't come. He came to stay with us for the night of 2 September 1939 to meet his fiancée Janet, half way between Preston and London (where she worked) to discuss their plans when faced with imminent war, so they were with us at the outbreak of war. We visited them several times at Whalley near Blackburn, and he and Janet came to stay with us in the early 70s. He was in insurance, and Janet was a librarian before her marriage. They had a son Paul who married a Catholic Ulster girl and went to live in Derry and had three children. Their daughter Claire married but was a career girl and had no children.

Of the other first cousins once removed there is little to say. I once met Uncle Luther's daughter Jess when she was quite elderly and lived for a time with Auntie Edie. I met Uncle Ted's daughters Marie and Muriel several times around 1960 when they were in their 50s. Marie as the eldest presided at tea when I took Mum and Dad over to Chesterfield to see Uncle Ted. She was very stiff and formal. Muriel, slightly younger, was less stiff, and for many years was a District Commissioner of the Girl Guides. They neither married and apparently hated being cooped up together under the parental roof, because as soon as Uncle died they sold the house and moved into separate houses not far away. They both sent us Christmas cards, but around 1980 Marie became totally senile and had to go in a nursing home. Muriel corresponded at some length about once a year on family affairs.

Of Uncle David's daughters I only met Marjorie once about 1932 when she called at Grandad's when we were staying there, bringing her niece Margaret with her. Doris I met twice; once when she visited us just before we left Beeston when I was 3, bringing Margaret with her, and again in 1937 when she came to Littleover bringing Margaret and Elizabeth with her. She corresponded regularly with Mum – I think she was Mum's favourite Haslam cousin, and I think they were very similar in temperament. After Mum's death she transferred her correspondence to me, and after she died Margaret took up the correspondence. Margaret was a few months older than me, and I had quite liked her when we met in 1932 and 1937. She became a nursery nurse and married a doctor – a paediatrician I think. We visited them for a night in 1982 or thereabouts at Lincoln. They had a very posh house and were obviously well-to-do. She was very welcoming and I had quite a heart-to-heart talk about the family, but her husband was very stiff and difficult – in fact she warned us that he might be and they did not seem particularly happy together. I had always known that Margaret had been the only survivor of triplets, but she told me it was kept from her until her teens. She felt that there was something hidden from her about her origin and eventually asked her mother if she was adopted! Her mother then told her the truth, and they wept and never mentioned it again. She had a son and a daughter, and the son also had triplets of whom two died! Elizabeth, whom I only met when she was about 8, had an illegitimate baby and lived in most unsavoury conditions according to Margaret.

Parents

Of all one's relations one knows one's parents best but they are the most difficult to write about. One wants to give them full credit for all their goodness, and at the same time one is so immediately aware of their shortcomings. Their care for me when I was little (and doubtless for Ken too) was absolutely unstinting – their own private interests and pleasures were totally subordinated to looking after us. It was not until I was much

older that I realised that the acme of their enjoyment on holiday was not necessarily to accompany me on the sands.

Dad's interests were essentially confined to his work on the railway and gardening, though before Ken was born he had been an enthusiastic and skilled amateur photographer. He also enjoyed playing tennis up to the age of 55, and after retirement took up (and became quite skilled at) bowls and snooker. He kept himself informed on current affairs but rarely read books or fiction. He could play the violin, and enjoyed listening to brass bands, and Gilbert and Sullivan, but knew little of art or classical music. He did not find it easy to discuss ideas or his feelings about things, and was not given to self-doubt – I don't think he ever explicitly admitted that he had been wrong about anything. He had a very firm religious faith, and knew the Bible well, though he did not talk much about it. On the odd occasions that he did I was surprised at the sophistication of his beliefs: they were by no means simple literal interpretations. He worked quite hard in organisational ways for the Methodist Church at Alderley Edge from about 1925-36, and I was surprised that after we moved to Derby he avoided taking any further office – he evidently felt that he had had enough. He was really very sociable: although we were a pretty private family and only rarely had people in the house, he became quite vivacious in company, and quite found his metier in retirement in acting as host and social organiser at Christian holiday homes when he took to doing this for two months or so each year. In his last few years when he was past this he became increasingly lacking in jollity and was at times mournful. He was always very ambitious for Ken and me, and willing to spend money from a pretty restricted income on our education. But having done this, and because of his other characteristics, he was very intolerant of any failures and gave Ken a very bad time when he got a 3rd class degree. He saw Ken as a big fish in a rather small academic backwater. He would have been overjoyed if he had lived to see me become a lecturer and reader at Oxford and vice-master of a college!

Mum was really of a very different temperament. Whereas Dad's conception of education was factual acquisition, she had had aspirations towards writing for its own sake. But her education, though at private schools to the age of 17 rather than a village school to 15, had been of lower quality to his I believe. She was much more emotional than him, much less sure of what she thought, and much more dependent on other people, and needed to talk to them. When Ken and I were little I think she suffered considerably from feelings of limitation and isolation. She had had some kind of nervous breakdown when she was 26 because she couldn't keep up with the pressure of work in her job at the Post Office, and she got near to it again when I was a baby, and for a few years she took regularly the magazine "My Magazine" edited by Arthur Mee. I used to thumb through these magazines later and she told me she had taken them to provide some outside input into life. Her problems in this direction were solved in the late 20's by Miss Glidden, the headmistress of St Hilary's School at Alderley who gathered various women at the chapel together to tell them about (what were then known as) "foreign

missions". Mum became extremely enthusiastic and read widely on this subject. Then she took over the running of "the Girl's Fellowship" at the chapel – an organisation meeting one evening a week for girls from about 16-20. Under her guidance this became very oriented towards "missions" and merged into a national Methodist organisation, the Girl's League. Later about 1933 she started another group called the Sunshine League for younger girls of about 13-16. To be cut off from all this activity was a great trial for Mum when we moved to Derby, but within about 6 months she was asked to take a Sunday School class of 16-year-old girls. This led her to get to know other active younger women in several nearby Methodist churches, and she started a "Missionary Circle" which met weekly at our house. This would be in 1938 and it continued to meet, at least sporadically, for twenty years or so. When she was aged 70 or so she was elected to some national mission committee of the Methodist church, and used to go to London (accompanied by Dad) to attend meetings of it.

The most difficult characteristic, that Dad and Mum shared, was an excessively critical attitude to people who thought or acted in ways different from them. This was particularly marked in respect of "sabbath observance" – they would make quite cutting remarks about or even to people who knitted or tidied the garden on a Sunday. But it extended to even more trivial matters like people having different ideas as to what were normal and what were luxury things to eat. We had some things that were luxuries to eat because they particularly liked them, but other things that were really no more luxurious that they didn't like seemed to be on a list of things that they thought showed that people were morally reprobate if they bought them.

We lived a fairly careful life financially. I think Dad earned about £300/year in the mid-1920s, gradually rising to about £800 by the time he retired. Out of this there was some income tax to pay, though I imagine not more than about £30 out of the £300, and £39 in rent and £22-10 for school fees for one of us (by the time I was at school Ken had a scholarship), so that left about £4/week for everything else including doctor's bills when necessary. It is not surprising that Dad had to keep things on a pretty tight rein. Even so he managed to spend about £30 per year on our holidays, that being over and above the travel involved which was free. But some of the economies seem very strange in retrospect. Whenever we helped ourselves to jam at tea we were exhorted "now not too much", and if there was tinned fruit or jelly we were told "now eat plenty of bread with it". A ritual asceticism was enforced at the beginning of tea that the "first piece" of bread and butter must be eaten plain without anything on it. This ritual however was not confined to us. I knew other children who had to observe it in spite of being marginally better off than us, and I once came across a family which extended this asceticism to "the first two pieces" which I thought to be a terrible deprivation. However we were always kept very conscious of the fact that many other people were much poorer than us, and I know that Mum and Dad were generous in helping some of them, sometimes secretly and anonymously. And of course there was regular giving to the Methodist church and

support via the missionary box and a collecting box for Dr Barnardo's Homes - a good cause whose support Mum had inherited from her mother.

Both Mum and Dad were singularly lacking in appreciation of what schoolboys and adolescents find embarrassing. Dad was always very stiff and unbending with my friends, and I think they were rather frightened of him. Mum enjoyed organising parties for me from about the age of 4 till I was 18 and she was very good at it. My friends certainly enjoyed these, even though she kept a very tight control to avoid them getting noisy or out of hand – in fact they liked them better than some other parties where they were given more freedom. I don't know how she did it, it was quite beyond me at corresponding stages of my life. But I could never be open with them about the things that went on at school or that my friends did because of their instant censure of anything of which they didn't quite approve. And they were always liable to embarrass me by visibly treating me in some "babyish" way. I suppose this is a common fault of parents, but Dorothy and I were very conscious of the need to try to avoid it, whereas they appeared to be quite oblivious of the problem.

They certainly learned from experience in dealing with Ken, especially when it came to the time of courtship and marriage. When I told Mum that Dorothy was "special" she immediately said would I like her to come to stay. I was then 19³/₄ and Ken had never had such an opportunity. Dad was initially strongly opposed to the idea, but Mum won him round, and of course when Dorothy came she soon charmed him on to her side – he was really quite susceptible to young ladies' charm! Some 2¹/₂ years later he was strongly opposed to the idea of my getting married at the age of 22³/₄ as it was much too young and I was not established etc, etc, but on finding that I was determined he agreed to differ and did not make a quarrel about it.

It would certainly be wrong to imply that I did not most of the time get on well with my parents. When I was little, indeed probably up to the time I got married, I got on better with Mum than with Dad, and provided I avoided taboo subjects, chatted with her a lot about all sorts of things. She was much more emotional than Dad, and much more emotionally demanding. It was this that came between us after I was married because I inevitably found this too much like a betrayal of my primary duty to Dorothy. This led to a progressively increasing coolness, which doubtless hurt her – but I was really surprised when in old age, she said "we never did get on with each other". She must have forgotten the first 20 years when we got on very well indeed, and had long heart to heart talks. This was much less possible with Dad, because he had no patience with views with which he disagreed, and he had little patience with youthful idealisms. But later, after he retired, he mellowed a lot, accepted me as a grown-up, and because he was less emotionally demanding than Mum, and obviously less likely to feel our relationship threatened by my marriage, I was able to grow closer to him.

Ken

I have no recollection of Ken in the environment of Beeston. My earliest visual memory of him is sitting opposite to him across the tea table watching him eating with headphones on as he listened to children's hour on the crystal set that he had made. This would probably be 1925 or 1926 and is probably a composite memory anyway. With 8 years between us, it wasn't often that we did things together. Another early memory was walking along the road and discussing my Christmas party, which must have been 1925 because the invitees were not really my friends but mostly bigger children invited by Mum. Two of these were girls whose mother was a war widow, so they must have been 8 or 9 years old at least, and Mum invited them because she was sorry for them. Ken, knowing this said "why are they coming?" and I said "because their father was killed" and he took the opportunity to give me a lesson in logic; he said "no, that's why we asked them, it's not why they are coming. The reason why they are coming is because we asked them"! I have always remembered this very clearly. I remember watching him playing with his trains with his friend Hal who used to come and stay and bring a suitcase full of his trains to supplement them. But of course I wasn't allowed to join in, I was too little. He used to tease me quite a lot, which led to trouble – Dad would say "leave the lad alone" and get cross with Ken, and this would lead to a mixture of relief on my part and also guilt in getting him into trouble. He used to call me "Strip" – derived as Eric – Rick – Rack - Rack-strip (a piece of Meccano) – Strip. He also took to saying "He is a cabbage isn't he?" and I would say "well you're a pickled cabbage then" (referring to the colour of his red hair). His interests were successively (but overlapping) Hornby trains, stamps, Meccano, and wireless (i.e. building wireless sets, initially with crystal detectors, moving to valves and mains sets). I suppose he must have been in his early teens when in some electrical experiment he blew the fuse while the rest of us were out and for some reason he could not repair it. When we got home he was quite frantically self accusatory and prescribing punishments for himself – I'll go straight to bed, I won't have any tea, etc, etc.

I believe Ken started school at 5½ and went to three successive private schools in the next 4½ years before going to a state school at Trent Bridge for a year or so from 10-11 in order to be able to get a scholarship to Nottingham High School, but before this stage was reached we moved to Alderley and he went to Stockport Grammar School as a fee paying pupil. He must have started there in January 1925, and must have been put into too low a class for some reason. He went up to the next form in September 1925 and then to the next one in January 1926. This was quite tough as it always involves social problems as well as academic ones. As a result he took school cert just before he was 15 and did well. He had shown mathematical aptitude as a small boy, and the doctor had told Mum and Dad that he had a mathematical brain and should go to university, but around 1919 they had regarded this as beyond the bounds of possibility. However in 1928 the school persuaded them of the possibility of getting scholarships, and he got a

Cheshire Intermediate Scholarship to finance his staying on in the 6th form. Curiously, his 6th form reports from the maths master kept on and on about the need for more work – whether this was justified I have no idea. In December 1930 he sat for an open scholarship at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge but did not get it. Then the head, an Oxford man, persuaded him to try at Oxford in March 1931 again unsuccessfully, and likewise in December 1931 but finally with success in March 1932. This was worth £100 a year, to which the school added £40/year from the Ben Smith Fund which existed to supplement the winners of open scholarships, and he also got a Cheshire exhibition of £25/year. Whether the delay in getting a schol was indeed due to insufficient application or to bad luck in being up against a particularly good field of candidates I do not know. In many ways I think Ken had a more acute brain than mine, and this is supported by the fact that he got a first in Maths Mods after one year. He certainly cannot have been lacking in application that year, especially as maths students are very much left to work on their own and organise their own time – compared to scientists with their lab work and systematised lecture courses. He was certainly much better than me at learning languages, too – he taught himself German and some Swedish in his last year at school.

He led a very active university life (far more so than I did). He was an active member of the Oxford Union and spoke in debates. I think he probably belonged to the Labour Club. He belonged to, and gave a paper to the Radio Society on television. He took an active part in the John Wesley Society, and still more so in the SCM in connection with which he event went to some kind of committee meetings in London. In connection with the SCM he also joined the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, involving a committed intention to engage in missionary or educational work overseas. In addition he was a Methodist local preacher – an activity that he had started in his last year at school, and he preached both in term time in and around Oxford and around Alderley in vacations.

At the beginning of his 2nd year he changed from maths to physics, and in finals he got a 3rd in physics. This was a bitter blow to him and led to dreadful recrimination from Dad who blamed it on excessive extra-curricular activities especially in the SCM. In fact, however, Ken believed to the end of his life that it was due to the fact that his girl friend Margaret (whom we never met, but with whom I think he was very much in love) jilted him just before finals. Dad's unapproachability on such emotional matters being what it was, I think Ken was unable adequately to explain what he felt to be the real cause.

Before finals Ken had put in an application for a DSIR grant to stay and do a DPhil, but of course this was now out of the question with a third. I do not remember his ever telling me about the proposed research, so cannot think that his heart was in it to any great extent, and I think he was torn between Dad's wishes and his SVMU commitment. Anyway, the upshot was that he stayed on at Oxford to do a DipEd, and during the year's course he applied for around 200 teaching jobs in this country without success. Around Whitsuntide (when we were visiting him in Oxford) he was interested in a job with CMS in Iran. Dad was very opposed to this as he said that the climate would ruin his

health(!), but why he did not get it I do not know; but the strange thing is that had he got it he would undoubtedly have got to know Shekufeh's father who was then 17, and (I suppose) on the verge of becoming a Christian. By late summer he had still no job when he got the offer of the job at Achimota School, Gold Coast. He sailed from Liverpool in the Elder-Dempster ship "Accra" on 28 October 1936, equipped as a pukka colonial servant of those days with pith helmet, white evening suit and gold (for Gold Coast) cummerbund! Dad had eventually bowed to the logic of 200 unsuccessful applications in this country, but he still did not like it, and as we stood on the landing-stage waving to Ken and waiting for the ship to cast off, Dad said to Mum, with tears in his eyes, "I would rather he didn't go even now" and Mum squeezed his arm. I was very upset too, and when we got home I went off by myself to cry and wish that the voyages of discovery had never taken place so that I would not have been deprived of my brother.

Of course I did not really lose him. He used to write fortnightly (which was the frequency of the boats) and he came on leave in March 1938 after 17 months. The tour of duty was originally 19 months in the Gold Coast and 5 months leave, but this meant that everybody always had their leave at the same season – i.e. always winter or always summer depending on when they started, so it was being changed to something like 16 months there and 4 months leave, and I think his first leave was something like March to May. In the course of this time he came on holiday with us to Torquay at Easter. For his next leave he was due to arrive on 3rd September 1939, and when about half way the captain was ordered in late August to open sealed instructions and the blacked-out ship did a big detour off the regular route into the Atlantic, and arrived many days late. We were obviously extremely worried, and then relieved to get his telegram from Liverpool that he had arrived. He returned to the Gold Coast just before Christmas on a date and from a port that had to be kept as secret as possible. Then during the war it was nearly 5 years before he came again, about October or November 1944, by which time both he and I were married. From about 1941-43 he was called up and served as a sergeant in the army within the Gold Coast, being demobilised when the threat to Africa had been lifted by the victories in the desert. He was converted from his earlier absolute pacifism to the need to resist because of the Nazi threat to enslave the African people with whom he identified very deeply.

During the late 30's or very early 40's he took an external London BSc in maths by private study and after getting the degree (a 2nd) went on to do two further advanced topics that was an option in the syllabus. He was also making a very serious linguistic study of the Akan languages, and tried to register to do an external London PhD on this work in the later 40's, but was not permitted to do so. The regulations required a BA as a pre-requisite for a literary PhD. The really stupid thing was that he could have taken a BA instead of a BSc in maths on the same syllabus (maths being the only subject for which such an alternative was possible), but even so the rule could not be waived. Eventually the rules were changed and he achieved his ambition in 1969.

Ken taught maths and physics at Achimota from 1936 till the mid 50's. Then in the years preceding independence a Vernacular Literature Bureau was set up to publish a newspaper and other things. At the school he had already acquired experience with printing, and this together with his language work enabled him to get the job of running the bureau. He did this for several years, and I think he really enjoyed it. But he lost the job in 1958 because he printed something critical of Nkrumah who was by then developing his dictatorship. He immediately came on leave and was here for about 6 months and feared that he would be unable to go back. However, this was eventually allowed and he got the job as head of physics at the new Kumasi Technical College. When this was given university status in the early 60's he achieved the rank of professor.

In connection with the inauguration of Kumasi University various Oxford dons went there in a consultative capacity, and one of these was Dr Kurt Mendelssohn, the low temperature physicist. He suggested that in order to get some research going at Kumasi Ken should come to Oxford to do some and then continue it out there. This was at the beginning of 1965, just when I had got my job in Oxford – in fact we were in Oxford looking for a house when Ken was in Oxford arranging this, each of us in ignorance of the other's presence. Ken started work on the low temperature (liquid helium temperature) electrical properties of manganese, because manganese was a product of Ghana. He soon managed to arrange to become a DPhil student, and just managed to keep the requisite residence by bending the rules as far as they would go, while still retaining his job in Kumasi. He spent about 5 months per year in Oxford in 2 or 3 separate periods, and Dr Mendelssohn let him have a bed-sitter at the top of his house. He eventually managed to complete his thesis in autumn 1969, and got his DPhil. But the extraordinary thing was that he was simultaneously (and secretly from us and his supervisors) completing his London PhD thesis on the Akan languages and he got that degree at about the same time. In addition to this he had also started secretly to study for the Bar by a correspondence course. His capacity for work must have been phenomenal, yet he used to spend most Sunday afternoons with us, apparently quite relaxed. Immediately after this marathon effort he returned to Ghana, but came back to Oxford in summer 1970 to tidy up his research and write some papers on it, living in his bed-sitter at Mendelssohn's as before, which is how he came to die there alone at the end of August of a cerebral haemorrhage. One cannot help wondering whether over-work had not contributed – he was still working for the Bar, and had actually passed one preliminary exam.

There is no doubt that the tragedy of Ken's life was his relations with the opposite sex. I think he probably blamed it on his upbringing. Mum told me that he had said to her (when he had grown up) "why didn't you tell me what girls were like?" and she commented "how could I, they are all different?". But I suspect he really meant "why didn't you tell me about sex?". Mum also complained to me (I suppose about 1942) that he seemed to look on every girl he met as a potential wife. There was an even more telling indication that his attitude was not quite normal and was felt to be so by his

contemporaries: one of his (female) contemporaries at Oxford whom I met in the 70's said to me "there were two things Ken liked - blancmange and girls"! I do not imagine for a moment that at that stage he was given to sleeping around, but he always fussed around girls and delighted in generally squiring them around. Of course we were much too far apart in age to have any brotherly confidences in these matters, but my first recollection in the matter dates back to when he was about 16 or 17. He wanted to go for a walk and he complained to Mum that none of the boys around had anything to talk about that interested him, but it would be OK if he could go for a walk with Joan Hamer (who lived down the road). So with Mum's blessing he went to ask her and they went for a walk, but when Dad heard about it there was a terrible row - there were quite definitely to be no girl friends before he went to Oxford. Once there he had many friends of both sexes who figured in his letters and whom we met when we visited him in his first and second years, but no-one appeared to be singled out at all until Margaret in his 3rd year. She figured very largely in his letters home every week, and Mum and Dad seemed quite pleased and amused by the phenomenon, but she jilted him just before finals and thus undoubtedly scarred him for life, both academically and emotionally. She subsequently became a nun.

It was 2-3 months after this while on holiday with us at Dunoon that Ken went on an all day steamer trip round Ailsa Craig by himself - because we had been on the trip the week before and he only joined us for the second week of the holiday. On this trip he met Mary Lancashire. Unfortunately two boys sitting at our table in the boarding house were also on the trip and highly amused by the way he had obviously fallen for her and spilt the beans at dinner. The result was a terrible row from Dad about him "picking up a girl", especially when the enquiry revealed that she was "only a 16-year-old schoolgirl". I don't know whether he managed to see her again on that holiday but he obviously followed up by correspondence, and 5 months later he managed to be doing his teaching practice in Derby for a term in easy visiting distance of her home at Ripley. Mum and Dad continued to disapprove. In September 1936 Ken came with us to house-hunt in Derby and took the opportunity for another disapproved trip to Ripley. By the time of his first leave from the Gold Coast in spring 1938 she was in her first year at LMH at Oxford, her photo still had pride of place in his room, and he was permitted to invite her over to tea, but there was a terrible row when he didn't get back till after midnight from seeing her home to Ripley (and he was already 24 at this time!). However some time during his next tour of duty she must have broken things off - he still fussed over her when he came to Oxford in autumn 1939, but she had a fiancé, a fact which he seemed to take philosophically. So this affair lasted the best part of four years and just fizzled out, apparently. Curiously even during these four years there were several girls over whom he fussed briefly but rather extravagantly as though he were really interested in them although I don't think he was really - or they in him.

The next development I knew nothing about at the time, and it must presumably have started when Mary Lancashire broke things off. He wrote to Mum and Dad some time

in late 1938 or early 1939 saying that he had got engaged and enclosing a photograph of his fiancée – an African girl. They were furious, and Mum confessed to me later that she said to him “how could they tell his little brother that he was proposing to do such a dreadful thing”. Apparently he knuckled under to the onslaught and called it off.

About 1941 or 1942 he started discussing Roman Catholicism in his letters, and was clearly contemplating conversion to it. Again of course Mum and Dad were horrified, and Mum wondered to me why he should be contemplating such a thing. I said “I suspect it’s because of a girl”, and sure enough this came out in his letters shortly afterwards. Again of course she was an African, and he wrote to me at Oxford to recruit my help in talking Dad round on inter-racial marriages. I tried but didn’t get far, though Mum had come round on the issue. However by the time I appraised Ken of the situation he told me that this girl (I can’t remember her name) seemed to have changed her attitude to him, so it didn’t matter!

Eventually of course he got engaged to Rose, I suppose in late 1943 or early 1944. This time it was clear that he was not going to be deflected by opposition. He emphasised (for Dad’s benefit) how light her complexion was, and how much European ancestry she had. He was very concerned whether Dad would receive her when he brought her home as his wife in autumn 1944, and Dad would not give a straight answer - only that he would not “put the flag up”. In fact on that first visit relations were rather cool, but on subsequent leaves Rose won Dad round and he became quite fond of her.

I was unaware of any trouble between Ken and Rose until the late 60s. Obviously they were spending a lot of time apart when he was working for his DPhil, about a third of his time from 1966-9 being in Oxford. Rose came with him for one of his visits, but there wasn’t much for her to do in Oxford while he was working all hours. The first noticeable alarm was that there was no celebration or rejoicing at their silver wedding in summer 1969 (when he was very busy in Oxford). Then that autumn he confided to me that he was thinking of leaving Ghana and toying with somewhere in Oceania. I asked how Rose would like that and he said that was one of the problems. He then seemed very depressed, and confided to Dorothy that relations with Rose were very bad, and he thought in summer 1970 he would leave Ghana and find a job in England without her. In fact from December 1969 when he returned to Ghana till he came back here in the summer he gave us a box number so that we corresponded with him in two separate ways, one jointly with Rose and one privately where we discussed his return in July 1970. However it was not till after his death that Dr Mendelssohn told me that Ken had two sons born in 1957 and 1959 – he had been told about it by a third party on one of his visits to Kumasi. Subsequently Dr Mendelssohn told Rose that he had told me, and she then told us what she knew – I think she had only known for a year or two, having had it thrown at her by a third party. How Ken kept it all dark I can’t imagine. I subsequently learnt from Kwame Atafua(?) (when he was High Commissioner in London about 1972) that Ken had actually brought the other woman with him to England on one of his visits – in retrospect I remembered one time when he was often having to go to London

for the weekend, about 1967 I think, and that was probably the occasion. In 1970 Rose was obviously still very hurt about it, but later Alan and Michael got in touch with her and she got so fond of them that they went to live with her and she virtually adopted them and got much support from them when they grew up. What happened to their mother, and even what her name was, I do not know.

In retrospect the affair explained various things. In his last few years Ken so frequently expatiated on the frequency and acceptability of illegitimacy in Ghana that Dorothy once said to me jocularly “do you think he is trying to tell us something?” but we did not think that seriously. It all explained the vehemence with which he repelled Mum’s idea that she should visit him in Ghana after Dad’s death. To Rose it explained what had previously puzzled her, that he completely gave up preaching about 1958 – he had eventually told her that he thought he should not have had the boys. But I believe that it was all part of his wish to be fully a Ghanaian in outlook, and to have children outside their marriage is apparently very normal amongst Ghanaians – according to Rose both his best friends Kofi and Kwame had done, though I never heard this from them or from Ken.

Subsequent note. When Alan got married in 1991 the notice of the marriage was in the names of the bride’s parents and on the bridegroom’s side of Rose Whittaker and Ewarafua Chaitheram, which was evidently the name of his mother. Although Michael’s birth must have been intentional, there is perhaps reason to suppose that Alan’s (the first of them) was not really intended. He was born on 8 December 1957, precisely 9 months after Ghana’s independence on 6 March 1957. This was the first British colony in Africa to achieve independence, and that day may well have seen some junketing whose consequences went beyond what was intended.