

# Chapter 6

## *Career advancement*

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The job at PSG was a major milestone in my professional life. It represented another step up the ladder in my career and afforded me not only with the prestige of working for a world-class employer, but the attendant increase in salary (£28/5/0d p.w.) was nothing to be sneezed at either. By happy coincidence, when looking out of my picture window in John Fox House I could see the roofline of the Rolls-Royce IMD factory directly ahead on the horizon. I could, quite literally, commute to work as the crow flies.



*View from the Balcony of 145, John Fox House, Caradoc Close, Coventry, 1969.*

*The apartment looked east out onto the Warwickshire countryside. In the foreground are the family units of the Henley Green Council Estate. Beyond is a light industrial complex built on the site of the old, worked out Craven Colliery. In the left hand background is Potters Green, and in the right hand background is the village of Walsgrave on Sowe, dominated by the new Walsgrave Hospital. Directly ahead on the horizon is the Rolls-Royce Industrial and Marine Division factory and offices; home to Product Support Graphics.*

The ‘intelligentsia block’ filled up rapidly, but not all the tenants were ideal neighbours. No. 145 was sandwiched between two larger corner units meant for couples or small families. Both flats housed a married couple. Shortly after the couple in No. 144 moved in, it was apparent that daily arguments between the husband and wife were becoming routine. The walls were sufficiently robust, but the volume of shouting was loud enough to penetrate into the adjoining apartments. Family rows were nothing new to me. At Liverpool Buildings they were considered a fact of everyday life – the couple opposite being particularly obnoxious with verbal exchanges containing language that would make a docker blush [Dad would say, “Sound’s like the brothel’s open again with all the ‘effing’ going on”]. However, more disturbing were the physical threats made to the wife next door, and her obvious distress possibly due to actual violence happening.

On one occasion after a violent scene, I heard tapping on my patio door window. The outside balcony was shared by two adjoining flats largely for emergency purposes. When I investigated, it was my next door neighbour and his wife. He asked me if it was OK for them to pass through my apartment and to the common hall as their front door lock was defective and they couldn’t leave their own flat. I said it wasn’t a

problem and, seeing the wild look in his eyes and a screwdriver in his hand, I wasn't going to complain about their noisy encounters. His wife, looking visibly shaken, followed and they left without further ado. Presumably he was using the screwdriver to try and repair the lock. To all intents and purposes the man appeared mentally unstable, so it was with a sigh of relief that they were moved on by the Council. Their eviction was instigated by another neighbour on the same floor. Geoff Bratt of No. 143 was also being disturbed by the constant rumpus next door and decided to circulate a petition. With sufficient names on three floors he was able to convince the authorities that the bad tenants should go. Geoff and I got on well together and we shared a number of pints before he returned to his native Liverpool.

The replacement tenants gradually became a problem for other reasons. It was a black family; husband, wife and two small children. The kids would constantly wander along the balcony and gawk through my windows. Contrary to the rules, lines of laundry appeared at their end of the balcony creating an eyesore. Their radio volume was unacceptably high and became irritating, and the many visitors became noisy and objectionable as well as also wandering along the balcony in front of my windows. This called for action, so I circulated my own petition. They must have received a stern notice from the Council. One evening I answered my front door to be confronted by the wife and another black woman (witness?). The wife gave me a tongue-lashing and I had to be careful not to retaliate and be accused of racial discrimination. Although they scored a moral victory, they had been put in their place and toned down a bit. One amusing spin-off of the incident was when I related the tale at work, a couple of the illustrators created a drawing showing a caricature of me with a surprised look after opening my front door; on which was impaled a dead chicken.

After a while, minor vandalism started on the estate and the two rows of lockup garages became one of the favourite targets. Between the two rows was a large concrete area suitable for random parking. Despite security lighting, vandals were breaking into the lockup garages and causing damage. The police patrolled once a night, but that was the extent of the inspection. One tenant had had enough and decided to enlist other concerned tenants into an impromptu vigilante committee. A notice posted in the lobby advertised this initiative and a number of men ganged up to create a civilian patrol in two shifts. I decided on the late shift (2:00 to 4:00 a.m.) and we hunkered down in one car observing for any suspicious activity. Nobody caught the vandals, but the crime spree came to a halt once the word about the vigilantes spread around.

The tower block also saw a certain amount of excitement. In early March, 1972, I arrived home from work and, as usual, walked up the fourteen floors instead of using the lift. When I opened the stairwell door I was greeted with a cloud of smoke billowing in the hallway. I then saw that the source of the smoke came from under the front door of No. 147. I banged on the door to arouse the tenant and also alerted the tenant in No. 146. Nobody had a private telephone so I raced down the stairs to the nearest public telephone kiosk (booth). A woman was inside making a phone call, so I had to cut her off to dial the emergency number 999 (equivalent to 911) and summon the fire brigade (fire department). When waiting for the fire brigade, my neighbour from No. 142 arrived and I told him to be prepared to evacuate his family. The fire engines (trucks) arrived and I took the officer in charge up to the 14th floor. By this time the tenant in No. 147 had opened his front door and we ascertained that he had fallen asleep and the smoke was due to a pot of stew overheating when electricity was restored following a power failure. Fortunately nobody was injured and the incident made a small article in the Coventry Evening Telegraph.

During my nearly four and a half years tenure at John Fox House, I saw the beginning of a general deterioration as wear and tear took its toll. On one occasion we had the exterior window frames painted and, on another, the gas-fired boiler was upgraded and converted to use natural gas. However, the Council couldn't keep up with all the problems associated with wanton damage. First to succumb was the security lock on the front door. It couldn't withstand a hefty kick and was never replaced. This rendered the remote control of the intercom system useless. The two lifts also had mechanical defects and were abused – often used as toilets so became a health hazard. Some tenants with dogs used the stairwells but never cleaned up after their pet had defecated on the steps or landings. The wrong sort started to infiltrate the 'intelligentsia block' as the professionals moved out and, after I had left, acute social problems resulting from alcohol and substance abuse worsened the situation. It wasn't unknown for flats to be stripped of all valuable items. Objects, including unwanted furniture, were hurled over the balconies to their destruction below. It became well known as 'High Rise Hell' and described as such in the newspapers.

Suffice it to say, however, I enjoyed a relatively high standard of living and one evening, as a measure of total contentment, I decided to recline in my easy chair, light up a large Havana cigar (my first smoke) and dreamily survey the prize possessions that surrounded me. Life was good – a well-paying job in my chosen profession; well-appointed apartment; reasonable vehicle, and a modest circle of friends.

### *Industrial unrest and recovery*

As part of my employment agreement at PSG I was required to be a member of the trade union, DATA, and there was no problem in transferring my Coventry Climax membership. It was around the time when I started at PSG that a new collective bargaining agreement was being negotiated between DATA and Rolls-Royce. One of the issues revolved around a weekly wage increase: the company offering a seven per cent pay raise, which would amount up to £2/15/0d p.w. depending on the basic salary. The DATA negotiating representatives, however, were pressing for a £5/0/0d p.w. pay increase to bring wages in line with other DATA members in the industrial Midlands.

By the time I had settled in, an impasse in negotiations had developed between the union and the company. The union was adamant in its claim and the company started to prepare itself for the possibility of industrial action. A couple of months after I joined PSG, Rolls-Royce locked out all the unionised draughtsmen and other technicians who were members of DATA at the company's two Coventry facilities.

This was my first experience of unemployment due to a work stoppage situation. As such I was required to report for picket duty outside the gates at Rolls-Royce IMD and the stage was set for confrontations with delivery truck drivers who ignored the picket line. One particularly ugly incident was when a driver tried to barge his way through, but the pickets gathered in front of the lorry and hampered its progress. The driver left the vehicle and went to the guardhouse to call the police. The local constable from the nearby village of Brinklow arrived and read the Riot Act to the pickets, threatening to arrest anyone who caused mischief or harassment. The pickets withdrew and the truck entered the company property. Another occasion was when somebody in a private car sped out of the main gates onto the country road. There was quite an uproar from the crowd and one picket lashed out with his foot to strike the side of the car. Unfortunately, his foot was

caught between the rear wheel and the body panel nearly severing his foot. It was a close call as the car didn't stop.

The picket line incidents, and the later development where shop stewards of the production workers at Rolls-Royce refused to endorse a four point request to establish a "unity of purpose", weren't encouraging signs. I was not very optimistic about my future at PSG if the company decided to relocate or even reduce its workforce once the dispute was settled. So, I looked around for another job. I made an unsolicited call at the General Electric Company (GEC) located in nearby Rugby and was granted an interview, which I attended, and was offered a position. I didn't accept right away, which was a fortunate thing. One morning, as I was driving the Austin A40 to do picket duty, the clutch master cylinder seals failed and I was unable to change gears. Marooned at the side of the road just outside of the village of Ansty, I had to go to the nearest public telephone and call for RAC road assistance. The tow truck came from a garage in Shilton, the neighbouring village to Ansty, and I spent most of the morning waiting for the repair to be completed before reporting to the picket marshal so I was eligible for strike pay. The outcome was that I refused the GEC job on the grounds that I had an 'unreliable' car for commuting between Coventry and Rugby. It was a flimsy excuse but suited my purpose and I persevered with the lockout situation until it was eventually resolved.

The dispute raged for nearly four months. Although there were some negotiations, the company bided its time and waited for the union to run out of strike pay funds. The strike pay, itself, was a generous portion of our regular wages and with 977 members locked out the coffers soon started to dwindle, regardless of the voluntary levy requested from DATA members at other Rolls-Royce offices. Soon there was dissention in the ranks at mass meetings as some members were unable to meet their personal financial commitments. The outcome of the dispute remains unclear in my memory, but eventually a compromise was reached and we returned to work.

The mood was sullen but a regular weekly paycheque was now guaranteed and I settled back into what was a relatively new routine. There hadn't been a great deal of time to work on my assignment before the lockout happened. My first day at PSG was, of course, to be introduced to new colleagues. The office building was a conversion of the original RAF officers' mess when it was part of the wartime Ansty aerodrome. Other remnants of the aerodrome were: hangars that formed the core of the factory; several outbuildings converted into offices for the Rocket Division, training school and model shop/blueprint store; a fully functioning sewage treatment facility, and the old runways now used by Chrysler to store finished cars in readiness for delivery.

I was part of a fairly large team of professionals, and the other technical authors (as we were called) came from many backgrounds. My supervisor was Roy Passmore, a dapper, silver-haired man, who also managed the workload of Brian, an ex-Royal Navy type. Sitting nearest to me were Colin Simco, an apprentice from Armstrong Siddely; John Dwelley, a shrewd individual; Sidney Bannister, the clubbable gentleman who was a pilot for Imperial Airways with a wealth of stories about the early days of passenger flight; Jack Hathrill, a veteran engineer with tales of colonial Singapore, also known as "Jack the Hat" to differentiate him from Jack Hennell. Other writing personnel were: Don Bawtry, Arthur Mortimer from Yorkshire, Norman Whiteman, our union representative, and the easy going John Beddall-Smith.



## The stew that got too hot

A tenant in a 17-storey block of Coventry flats was woken by warning shouts from neighbours early today. Mr. J. Brennan, of 147, John Fox House, Caradoc Close, Bell Green, got up to find his flat full of smoke.

Mr. B. Page, of No. 145, raised the alarm and called the fire brigade when he saw smoke coming from Mr. Brennan's flat. A brigade spokesman said later that the fire was caused when a pan of stew over-heated after power was restored.

Coventry Evening Telegraph, Thursday, March 2, 1972

Article Taken from the Coventry Evening Telegraph, Thursday, March 2, 1972, Describing the Emergency Caused when a Pan of Stew Overheated and Filled the 14th Floor with Smoke.

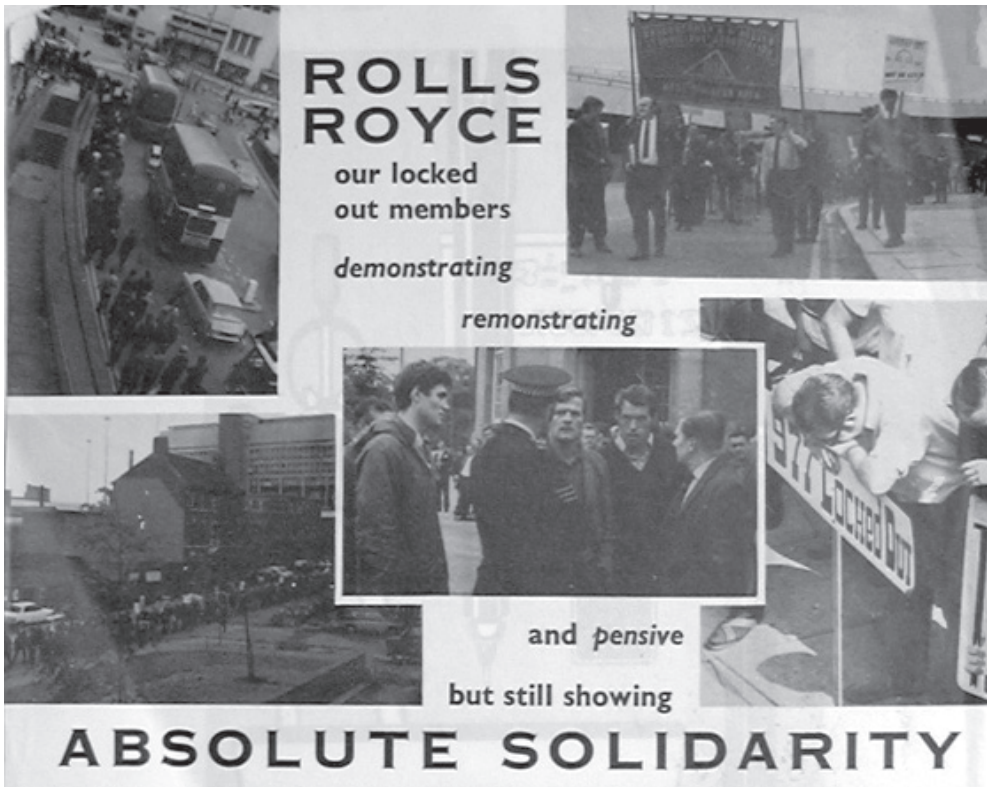


John Fox House, Caradoc Close, Coventry, Slowly Deteriorated into a 'High Rise Hell'. As Tenants Were Rehoused, the Empty Block Became a Prime Target for Vandals.



Headlines Screamed on the Front Page of the "DATA news" Union Publication Announcing the Lockout of Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians at Rolls-Royce's Two Facilities in Coventry. The Bitter Dispute Was to Rage for Several Months before the Union Agreed to a Compromise Resolution.





**Data men stop city traffic**

DATA men on the march in Coventry under the generalship of their "commander", Mr. Dick Jones walking beside them (Page 21).

More than 900 Rolls-Royce draughtsmen and technicians took part and brought today's lunchtime traffic to a halt.

Long traffic queues formed as the men marched slowly from the Rolls-Royce factory in Parkside, to the Central Hall where a mass meeting was held.

The men, in dispute with the company over pay, were joined today by Data men from other factories.

*Union Morale was High in the Early Stages of the Dispute. Organised Events such as Marches and Meetings Showed Solidarity within the Ranks. I Achieved a Front Row Seat in the Photograph – as One Colleague Quipped: "Who Put the 'T' in DATA?", a Parody on the TV Advertisement Jingle: "Who Put the 'T' in Typhoo?", a Brand of Tea.*



*One of the Solidarity Marches through the City of Coventry that Caused a Little Traffic Chaos and Police Intervention. This March Ended with a Mass Meeting at the Central Hall. July, 1970.*

The technical illustrating side of the office was presided over by the chief technical illustrator, Owen Manley. His staff were John Ellam, an aspiring thespian; Roger Moore, the expert air brush artist; Bob Bennett, who was the film actor Christopher Lee's lookalike; Arthur Nicholls, a reflective and religious man, Derek Crutchlow, the rebellious rocker/biker, and Tom Lyons, the 'gentle giant'. In the same part of the office were the parts manual compilers: Edward ("Ted") Mitchell, the butt of many practical jokes; Ted Jones, a short statured Coventrian who had a chequered career in the Guards Armoured Division during the Second World War; Cyril Robinson, who hated any form of discipline, and Stan Watson, an impressionable young man.

Rounding off the department were typists, Barbara Drummond, Lynda Prosser, and Ann Burrell; clerks, Joan Cockayne, Rose Owen, Susan Boneham and May; photography staff, Mr. Crowley, Mark Bowcutt and Christine Wing; management personnel, Alan Hancock, Malcolm Bromwich, John Merrifield, Des Harris, and the overall director Jim Mansfield and his secretary, Sandra Medlock.

Being an agency of sorts, PSG not only produced Rolls-Royce work but was also contracted out to various clients. Together with Roy Passmore and Brian, I was assigned to work on writing the instructions for a special machine designed by the tyre manufacturing company, Dunlop Ltd. A number of these machines were being installed at Dunlop's Coventry factory in Lockhurst Lane and we occasionally visited the site and spoke to the Dunlop representative. Tom Lyons was the illustrator chosen to do the artwork and we got to know each other quite well.

Another important client was the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), Rolls-Royce industrial gas turbine engines were used by the CEGB at various electricity power stations as standby units for emergency or supplementary generating (also known as peak-opping). The nearest regional CEGB office was in the town of Solihull and I sometimes visited there on fact finding missions. Rolls-Royce, however, remained the principal contractor and a great deal of work surrounded orders placed by the Royal Navy for marine gas turbine engines to power the new generation of frigates and destroyers. Throughout the world other electricity generating stations and navies used Rolls-Royce products and business was brisk.

## *Holidays with a difference in 1970*

Despite the lockout, I managed to take a week off in July and decided on a different type of holiday. Having visited Land's End in Cornwall, it was natural to consider the other end of mainland Britain. Looking at the map, my destination wasn't John O'Groats – as one would expect – but Dunnet Head, which was the northernmost point. Furthermore, I elected to travel entirely by train using a BritRail pass. Using the pass meant flexibility and I was able to choose my overnight stops at random.

There was an overall plan, of course, and that took in Eastern and Northeastern Scotland. Lodging was anticipated to be simple Bed & Breakfast accommodation so all my luggage was stowed in a small suitcase. The first stage was a straightforward journey from Coventry to Birmingham; then changing to the Edinburgh train. It was a long stretch travelling north on the western side of England through Crewe, Wigan, Lancaster, and Carlisle to Carstairs, the junction where the main lines to Glasgow and Edinburgh divided. I

must have stayed overnight in Edinburgh although I don't recall it on the outward bound trip. However, the next stage was a train to Inverness.

One of the highlights of this part of the trip was crossing the Firth of Forth via the Forth Bridge. This famous railway bridge, which is constantly being painted, is a mass of steel girders like a giant Meccano set and I managed to peek out of an open carriage window, take a photo and imagine the suspenseful setting in John Buchan's mystery novel, "The Thirty Nine Steps". The train then crossed another well known and very long bridge: the Tay Bridge. Every schoolboy recalls the story of the Tay Bridge disaster when the original structure collapsed in a hurricane strength storm; taking with it the luckless passenger train that was crossing at the time. From Dundee, the railway followed the east coast to Aberdeen – "The Granite City" – where I stayed over. The railway then turned inland towards Elgin and the Moray Firth before reaching Inverness, which was my next overnight stop. Near Inverness was Culloden Moor, scene of the famous Battle of Culloden, and the small museum housed in a crofter's cottage there provided a wealth of information.

From Inverness, the railway followed a tortuous route through glens carved in the Northwest Highlands. Although the end of the main line was Wick, my train was destined for Thurso on a branch line. I found my Bed & Breakfast room and hoped that the following day's weather wouldn't be a problem for the hike to Dunnet Head. I anticipated walking along the road that connected Thurso to John O'Groats and veering off towards the rugged cliffs at the mainland's most northerly point: a distance of about nine miles (15 km).

The day dawned cloudy but dry and with a brisk wind off the sea – not unusual for this coastline. I set off walking and made good progress despite fighting against the wind. The gravel sideroad was clearly marked and so I left the asphalt and made my way along to the Dunnet Head lighthouse and the soaring cliffs overlooking the Pentland Firth. Through the grey sea mist I could just discern the long hump of Hoy; one of the South Orkney Islands that overlooked Scapa Flow, the deep water natural harbour used by the Royal Navy in both World Wars. The lighthouse tower was a solid stone structure, painted white and with a huge lantern on top. Nearby were the lightkeeper's cottage and two outbuildings that housed the enormous red painted foghorns. Far below the sheer cliffs, the surf raged and boomed as the wind whipped up the grey sea into great fountains of white spume. A sight to behold!

My goal fulfilled, it was time to retrace my steps to Thurso. By the time I had reached the main road, the clouds had turned a nasty dark grey and precipitation was in the air. It didn't bode well for a dry walk and, as the rain started in earnest, there was no choice but to brave the elements and stick out the hitchhiker's thumb. Traffic was infrequent on this road, so I was pleasantly surprised when the first car that was travelling in my direction stopped and provided me with a dry ride for the rest of the journey into Thurso. On top of that, the driver actually took me to the door of my lodgings, for which I was extremely grateful.

The return train journey through the Highlands of Scotland took a different route from Inverness. Instead of retracing through Aberdeen and Dundee, I took the alternative train to Perth. This took me through the heart of the Grampian Highlands, the Cairngorm Mountains and the famed Pass of Killiecrankie. The Bed & Breakfast digs in Perth were problematic. A busy road was on one side of the house and the railway was on the other, so there was a great deal of traffic and train noise throughout the night. However, the next day was





*Crossing the Firth of Forth Bridge Between North and South Queensferry near Edinburgh, Scotland, July, 1970.*



*Site of the Battle of Culloden, Culloden Moor, near Inverness, Scotland. July, 1970.*



*The Cliffs at Dunnet Head, the Northernmost Point of Mainland Britain, near Thurso, Scotland, July, 1970.*



*The Lighthouse at Dunnet Head, the Northernmost Point of Mainland Britain, near Thurso, Scotland, July, 1970.*





*The Cliffs and Ramparts of Stirling Castle, Sterling, Scotland, July, 1970.*



*The Scott Monument, Princes Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, July, 1970.*



*The Entrance and Ramparts of Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh, Scotland, July, 1970.*



*The Palace of Holyroodhouse. Behind is the Rocky Crag of "King Arthur's Seat", Edinburgh, Scotland, July, 1970.*

spent in Sterling, with its magnificent hilltop castle, and another overnight stay in Edinburgh. Although wet and miserable, the following day was devoted to exploring Edinburgh's well known sights, including: Princes Street; the Scott Monument; Edinburgh Castle; the "Royal Mile", and the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Having enjoyed the flavour of Scotland, both actually and figuratively, I returned to Coventry along the same railway route as the outward journey.

My second holiday of 1970, taken in October, was entirely different to the Scottish trip. I had heard from Heidi's sister, Karla, who was studying at a teachers' training college in Münster, Westphalia, Germany. It was arranged that I should spend a few days there as a gesture of hospitality. After flying to Düsseldorf, I was met by the Neuhahn family and eventually arrived at the city of Münster. Karla introduced me to her fiancé, Georg, and also to Johanna, Karla's fellow student. The four of us were to have an excellent time in the city and surrounding countryside.

A highlight of the visit was exploring the streets of this Mediæval city. Although heavily damaged in the Second World War, the local government had ensured that during the rebuilding campaign the original façade designs of the Middle Ages buildings were to be faithfully reproduced. Streets such as the *Prinzpalmarkt* appeared exactly as they were centuries ago, and the *Rathaus* (town hall) was completely restored to its prewar condition. Another major building that had been virtually rebuilt in its entirety was the cathedral of St. Paul. Inside, I was surprised to see a stone plaque engraved with the cross of St. Michael and a message of reconciliation from the citizens of Coventry.

One evening we went to a well known *Gasthof* (inn or public house), which was part of the "Pinkus Müller" brewery. Of the original 150 breweries in Münster, "Pinkus Müller" is the only remaining one that's fully operating. We indulged in eating a traditional German *Gulasch* (meat stew) and drinking a beer with a difference. Called *Erdbeerenbier*, the dark ale, brewed on the premises, was poured in a glass and a strawberry (*Erdbeere*) added. I still have a glazed earthenware *Aschenbecher* (ashtray) decorated with the "Pinkus Müller" trademark as a souvenir of my visit. Afterwards we attended a live theatre comedy show.

The Baroque architecturally styled *Westfälische Wilhelms Universität* (University) was one of several ornate public and private mansions in the city. Sharply contrasting were the unadorned *Fachwerkhäuser* (half-timbered houses) and *Windmühlen* (windmills) displayed in *Mühlenhof*, an open air museum depicting Westphalian life of bygone centuries. My enduring memory of the trip, however, was visiting the *Karneval* or *Fasching* (amusement park), which was traditional at this time of the year. We had a lot of fun on the various rides – including the Ferris wheel – and ate many *Bratwürste* (German sausages) on a *Kaiser* (bun). It was really nice to meet Karla and so I came to know all of Heidi's family first-hand.

## *New friends*

My social contacts in Coventry were improving and, although not dating seriously, I did pursue some casual relationships with a number of young ladies that I met at the Mercia School of Dancing. However, there was one amusing incident that happened when my neighbour, Geoff Bratt, and I decided to invite two girls back to our flats. We had convinced the couple to 'see our etchings'





*The Fully Restored Rathaus (Town Hall) of Münster, Westphalia, Germany, October, 1970.*



*The Fully Restored Cathedral of St. Paul, Münster, Westphalia, Germany, October, 1970.*



*The Fully Restored Prinzipalmarkt. Photograph Showing the Reproduced Original Façade Designs, Münster, Westphalia, Germany, October, 1970.*



*Barry, Johanna and Karla Celebrating at the Pub of "Pinkus Müller", Münster, Westphalia, Germany. Photograph Taken by Georg, October, 1970.*

of sorts and drove them back to the flats – Geoff having secured the least attractive of the two as his companion. On arrival at the high rise, the couples each went up to the 14th floor in a separate lift and dispersed to the relevant apartments.

My young lady companion was suitably impressed with the two reproduction Rembrandts on the vestibule walls. The bed-sit was cosy with low lights and the flickering flames of the electric fire – very romantic, in fact. The cocktail cabinet was opened, but a drink was declined, and conversation started to flag a little. Seduction was making little headway and the end result was a disappointing drive back to her house.

The next morning, I met Geoff and asked how he fared with his ‘plain Jane’ girl. He appeared tired, but enthusiastically reported that he had made a 100% conquest. He even started to date ‘plain Jane’ regularly as he was assured of ‘sowing his wild oats’. I then philosophically considered that when it came to a choice of two girls, always pick the ugly one!

The minor setback, however, didn’t deter me from seeking other females for companionship, and the Mercia School of Dancing was a source of eligible young ladies who were approachable for dating. One particular candidate was Vernice Harris. She and two friends, Jean Long and Joy Harrison, were inseparable and attended the school’s tuition sessions and social evenings. Similar to Jean Long, Vernice was relatively tall, and Hetty, the instructor, considered that we should become regular partners. This arrangement didn’t exactly materialise, but we danced together frequently in any case.

Later in the year I did invite Vernice out for the evening, but it fell on stony ground. With my upcoming twenty-fifth birthday in November, 1970, however, I was anxious to celebrate it in style and, once again invited Vernice out for dinner. The venue was to be “The Saxon Mill” restaurant, Warwick, an upscale dining establishment, and this tipped the balance as Vernice accepted the invitation. I drove to Vernice’s home in Heathfield Road to pick her up and was invited to meet her parents. When her father walked into the living room, we both stood stock-still; wide-eyed with surprise. I immediately recognised him as Les Harris who worked on the assembly line at Coventry Climax Engines. He recognised me, too, and everyone was amazed at this encounter. This eased any semblance of unfamiliarity and contributed to a harmonious relationship with the family. I tried to foster the friendship with Vernice, but she had a particular apprehension that revolved around our age difference, as she was some years older than me. It may be, though, she preferred a spinster’s life or perhaps had been scorned in the past – not wanting a repeat experience, and our friendship remained a casual ships-that-pass-in-the-night mutual understanding.

Beyond the dancing school, however, meaningful friendships in Coventry were sparse. As usual, periodic trips to Hatfield often meant a journey into London to meet my old pals, Phil and Mike, for an evening of socialising. But I had yet to meet a bosom buddy in Coventry who could be a warmhearted drinking companion. Most of my office colleagues led domiciled lives and, outside of work hours, the few bachelors in the department tended to congregate with their own groups of long standing friends. As time went by, I occasionally shared my cafeteria table with a fellow of a similar age and range of interests. His name was David Cross and he was a graduate technologist straight out of college. We engaged in some philosophical conversations as well as exploring our mutual interests, such as photography. He also introduced me to

another of his passions – sailing. Before long we had connected and started meeting at various pubs for an evening of imbibement. David was Coventry born and bred so was familiar with many of the pubs in and around the city. Soon we were frequenting “The Golden Cross”, a classic ‘olde worlde’ pub in one of the surviving Mediæval buildings near Coventry cathedral, and the “Three Horseshoes” country tavern in the village of Princethorpe, among the gamut of establishments. Although the drinking and driving laws were less stringent then, I’m surprised how we got away with so much ‘driving under the influence’ as we did. Another favourite venue was the regular Sunday trad-jazz jam session at the “Mercers Arms” near the Coventry City football club stadium in Highfield Road. This was excellent toe-tapping, thigh-slapping entertainment just for the cost of a small cover charge and a pint or two of beer. In due time, I was introduced to more people in David’s extensive circle of friends and acquaintances; some at the Draycote Water Sailing Club and others at the Earlsdon Young Conservatives Club – an organisation that I was to become heavily involved in later.

### *1971 – a pivotal year*

The early 1970s promised to be profitable years for PSG. I had already received a raise in pay and was now earning £33/0/0d a week. The Rolls-Royce and other contract work seemed inexhaustible and the department was fully staffed and even working overtime to keep up with the deadlines. This picture, however, was to change dramatically in 1971 due to circumstances beyond our control.

Before the ensuing débâcle, life was ticking over comfortably. There was more activity on the dancing scene and, following a fleeting attempt to partner me with Mary Ely, Hetty Armstrong considered that one of her star pupils, Gayle Lydster, might be a better fit. Gayle, a 25 year old attractive brunette, was keen to upgrade her dancing skills and bought into the partnership. Dancing acted as a therapy and became a method for her to blend back into society after being dreadfully shocked following the untimely death of her boyfriend in a car accident. Our standards were roughly the same and we specialised not only in ballroom, but also Latin-American dancing. Soon we had progressed to private lessons and eventually into the competition circuit where we secured a few prizes.

Gayle, who worked as a clerk/typist for Coventry Transport, also found a little fame for herself when she was crowned Carnival Queen for the town of Bedworth. This was a prestigious honour awarded by the Bedworth and District Old Peoples Welfare Committee, and she was called upon to participate in various charity events and represent the municipality as its foremost ambassador. Being the dancing partner of a beauty queen was significant to me and I broadcasted the fact extensively.

Only once did we have a major rift, but it was quickly healed and our relationship was steady and virtuous. We went out on a few dinner dates and she even visited my apartment where I prepared a stack of pancakes for her on Shrove Tuesday. I admired Gayle for her outlook on life, but I knew nothing romantic could happen between us. There were certain personality incompatibilities, and her dizzy predispositions often came to the fore. She also needed a beau who was the strong and silent type, but had to be masterful at the same time – and that wasn’t me. She found these qualities in a fellow called Alan Radford, who was a ‘gentle giant’ with a pleasing nature. They started dating seriously and that sometimes interfered with our





*Gayle Crowned as the Bedworth Carnival Queen, Bedworth, Warwickshire, June, 1971.*



*Barry and Gayle, Second Prize Winners in the Studio 3-Dance Competition, Mercia School of Dancing, Coventry, Warwickshire, June, 1971.*



*Barry and Gayle at the Sphinx Club Dinner and Dance, Coventry, Warwickshire, 1971.*



*Barry and Gayle, First Prize Winners in the Beginners Waltz Competition, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, July, 1971.*





*General View of Scafell Pike and the Cumbrian Mountains in The Lake District National Park, Cumbria, May, 1971.*



*Pleasure Boats at Bowness-on-Windermere, Lake Windermere in the Lake District National Park, Cumbria, May, 1971.*



*Furness Abbey Ruins near Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, May, 1971.*



*Remnants of Hadrian's Wall near Housesteads, Nothumberland, May, 1971.*

dancing schedule, but Alan was very understanding and no animosity occurred between him and me. More bad news was to affect Gayle with the death of her father due to cancer, but she weathered the storm and, as the only child, applied herself to help her mother maintain the family home in Heath Road, Bedworth. Alan proved his worth by being at her side and, eventually, they became engaged to be married.

**M**y parents were now well settled in their Hatfield home. The small terrace house was their pride and joy, and Dad's job as the Land Rover Representative for Henlys Limited, although onerous in terms of responsibility, was well paid and they lived comfortably off. They were both animal lovers and on a country ride one day decided to investigate a 'Puppies For Sale' notice nailed to a tree by a gate. They drove along a track to a small farmhouse and, upon enquiring, were shown the remaining pup – a bitch – of the litter. This little half-whippet and half-collie, called Honey, was to be the centre of their lives for the next sixteen years. Honey was, indeed, a lovely creature and endeared everyone who met her.

Nobody was prepared for the axe to fall at Rolls-Royce, so life went on unabated and I decided to take a short spring holiday. Dad was busy at work and couldn't afford any spare time. So, to give my mother a break we thought it would be nice for her to get away from Hatfield for a while. The destination chosen was the Lake District of Cumbria and, with judicious searching, we were able to find Bed & Breakfast homes that were pet friendly as we had anticipated taking Honey along for the ride. The Triumph Herald convertible proved its worth as we were blessed with extraordinary fine weather and having the top down for most of the driving was considered a bonus.

The quickest way to the Lake District was Motorway driving. The M10, M1 and M6 routes took us to Kendal where other main roads branched off into the Lake District National Park. The first of the picturesque lakes to visit was Lake Windermere and then, on the way to Keswick, there was Thirlmere with its characteristic scree slopes. The town of Keswick, itself, was located on the banks of Derwent Water and overlooked by some of the highest peaks in the National Park. Nearby was the neolithic Castlerigg stone circle. The clear weather made the journey to Barrow-in-Furness most enjoyable as we negotiated the challenging minor roads taking us over high passes, such as Wrynose Pass (1,281 ft. [393 m]), all the while being surrounded by the peaks of the Cumbrian Mountains. After viewing Wast Water, the next lake visited was Coniston Water where the world water speed record breaking runs of Donald Campbell in the "Blue-bird" performance boat took place. Barrow-in-Furness was a large industrial town with extensive shipyards where nuclear submarines were constructed. The most important historical site in the area was the 12th century Furness Abbey with its ruins that were still solid and extensive. We left the Lake District by travelling north past Ullswater to Penrith, then Carlisle and across to Northumberland where we stopped at Housesteads to view the best preserved section of Hadrian's Wall built by the Romans. Returning to Carlisle, we joined the M6 and retraced our steps back along the Motorways and home to Hatfield.

**N**ot long after I had returned from the Lake District holiday, a significant announcement was made at work. The entire Rolls-Royce company was placed into receivership due to cost overruns while developing and testing the RB211 jet engine assigned to the Lockheed Tri-Star airliner. The latest state-of-the-art engine had been plagued with problems and, in 1969, the design was well behind schedule largely because of excessive fuel consumption, insufficient thrust and it was overweight.



After a year of struggling development – including the use of new, revolutionary materials which did not withstand the rigorous testing – Rolls-Royce reported to the government that the project costs had nearly doubled the original estimate. By January, 1971, the company had become insolvent, and in February, 1971, was placed into receivership. However, due to its strategic importance, the company was nationalised by the then-Conservative government of Edward Heath, allowing development of the RB211 to be completed and a new contract signed with Lockheed. In May, 1971, a new company called Rolls-Royce (1971) Ltd. acquired the assets of Rolls-Royce from the Receiver and this reconstituted company dictated the downsizing of the original Rolls-Royce organisation.

Part of the downsizing was hiving off subsidiary companies, eliminating jobs, processing voluntary redundancies and streamlining where necessary. On the morning of the announcement, Jim Mansfield called all the PSG employees into a meeting and explained how we would be affected. Both voluntary and enforced redundancies meant a reduction of 33% of the workforce. The photographic section was disbanded; some surplus management, writers, illustrators and general clerks were let go, and I was certain that being a recent new hire my tenure was perilous. To my relief, however, I was kept on and weathered the storm with little detriment to my career.

Other parts of the two Rolls-Royce facilities in Coventry weren't so lucky. Wherever possible, manpower was trimmed at both the Parkside and Ansty facilities. One of the biggest blows was the elimination of the entire Rocket Division. This part of the Ansty group was headed by an autocratic manager by the name of Valentine Cleaver; and the joke of the day was, "Who needs an axeman, when we already have a Cleaver." The training school was also decimated, and reverberations were felt in the Drawing Office, Model Shop and RND. My friend, David Cross, was one of the casualties, but he eventually found another job at Associated Engineering Development (AED), Cawston House, Rugby.

The dust soon settled and the remnants of PSG at Ansty meant we were now employees of Rolls-Royce (1971) Ltd. Work didn't seem to falter as new variants of marine and industrial gas turbine engines rolled off the drawing boards. These models were becoming increasingly more customised as the engineers tailored the end product to unique applications. This added pressure to a depleted workforce, but also provided me with a measure of job security and, later in the year, a weekly salary of £36.50p (in decimal currency).

**D**espite the upheaval, I managed to take time off for a summer vacation and, in July, embarked on an independent tour of Scandinavia, including Iceland. I had anticipated travelling around the Continental portion using a EuroRail pass, but resorted to other modes of transportation for the long distance trips. The first leg of the journey was flying from England to Iceland using the Icelandic airline, *Loftleidir* or "Air Trails". The flight landed at Keflavík airport; then it was by bus to the Hotel Loftleidir in downtown Reykjavík.

Reykjavík was an unusual city dominated by colourful houses and the ubiquitous pipelines carrying steam for domestic central heating. This unique system used natural thermal heat tapped from the volcanic terrain to turn water into steam then distributed through the pipelines. I found the Icelandic drivers erratic and impatient with a tendency to speed, even on the city streets. The monumental Icelandic Cathedral was

still under construction, but promised to be an architectural wonder. Hotel Loftleidir was to be my base of operations for the next three days as I had signed up to visit several tourist attractions.

After breakfast, which was my introduction to the copious *smörgåsbord* found in Scandinavia, the tour bus left the hotel on its way to the popular tourist destination of *Gullfoss* (Golden Falls) in the thermally active interior of Thingvellir National Park. The road to the park crossed an endless vista of an ancient lava fields and past the water-filled explosive crater near Fludir. After viewing the magnificent cataracts at Gullfoss, the tour bus continued to Geysir and the opportunity to see the boiling mud fumeroles and thermal geysers that erupted every so often. Further down the road we visited the greenhouses at Hveragerdi – heated by steam from volcanic hot springs – and later to the site of Thingvellir, where the oldest parliament gathering in the western hemisphere took place (930 A.D.).

Some years before I made the trip to Iceland, there had been considerable volcanic activity just off the south of the island. The main focus was the birth of a new island, to be called Surtsey, as the volcano threw up huge amounts of rock from the sea bed. I had hoped to see something of this new volcanic island so booked an aerial trip. After arriving at Keflavík airport, I reported to the general aircraft section and found the small aeroplane, its pilot and two other tourists who were both middle-aged German ladies. We embarked on the plane with me in the co-pilot's seat and the two ladies in the rear seats. The Icelandic pilot spoke good English but no German, so I acted as an interpreter for the ladies as best as possible. The flight took us for a bird's eye view of Gullfoss; over Geysir, then turned south to the see Iceland's highest peak, Hekla – (4,892 ft. [1491 m]), and the glaciers of Eyjafjällajökull. After leaving the shoreline we turned west over the Vestmannaeyjar archipelago towards the distant speck of Surtsey. The volcanic island wasn't active and the crater appeared dormant. However, steam and smoke could be seen escaping from vents in the side of the cone. The return leg to Keflavík couldn't happen quickly enough as I was feeling the effects of air sickness and fortunately made it to *terra firma* without bringing up anything.

It was becoming obvious that Iceland was an expensive place to spend a holiday and my Icelandic funds were dwindling very fast. The cost of meals were such that I survived purely on as much as I could eat at the *smörgåsbord* in the mornings. However, I was determined to see some more of the country and eagerly awaited the overland trip to Hvalfjörður and a tour of the whale processing plant.

After breakfast the next day I waited in the hotel lobby for the tour bus. Somehow there was a mix-up with the departure time and I arrived too late to board the bus. The tour company radioed the bus to return to the hotel and I shameface apologised to the other passengers for my tardiness. As we drove along the coastal road to Hvalfjörður we could see a whale catching vessel out at sea heading for the harbour. We arrived just before the whaler – complete with its catch of three whales – moored at the quay. The rendering plant – consisting of a number of sheds, a power house, winches and cranes – was enveloped in a noxious odour of steam, fish and decomposing offal. Certainly visitors could smell Hvalfjörður before seeing it!

It didn't take very long for the experienced workers with their razor sharp flensing knives to start striping flesh from the first carcass that had been hauled by the tail up a slope from the harbour. Starting at the head, the jawbones and baleen were removed and placed to one side. Next was removing the blubber from

the body and this was done by attaching steel hawsers with hooks to the flesh so that when the flensing cuts were made, entire strips of blubber were pulled away from the carcass when the hawsers were dragged by the steam driven winches. Parts of the animal's entrails accompanied the strips of blubber, contributing to the foul odour that permeated the place. In no time the carcass was reduced to a skeleton and the butchering area was made ready for the second corpse.

My original plan was to fly from Iceland to Oslo, Norway, and make my way up the Norwegian west coast by rail to Bodø which is north of the Arctic Circle. The next flight out of Keflavík to Oslo, however, wasn't for two more days and my shrinking funds could only stretch for one overnight stay in the hotel. Since this was at the time before I possessed a credit card, I had to make a quick change of plan and decided to fly out the following day on the flight to Copenhagen, Denmark.

The scheduled SAS flight left Keflavík and headed over the North Atlantic Ocean, bypassing the Färø Islands and crossing the heavily indented fjord coastline of Norway before making landfall at Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport. It seemed logical to find the tourist information bureau to secure accommodation and, after taking the bus to the city centre, I made enquiries at the office in the main railway station. The helpful official made a telephone call and gave me directions to a small hotel. The *pensión* was tucked down a side street and provided a good base to radiate out from and, that evening I started exploring the lively quayside area known as Nyhavn. This was a stroller's paradise – the numerous outdoor cafés, bars and discotheques pulsed with life and this was extenuated at dusk when the many colourful lights illuminated the scene.

In the morning, after consuming the traditional Danish *smørbrød* breakfast, I continued to look around Copenhagen on foot and found a number of interesting sights. The first was the iconic statue of the Little Mermaid which, because of its lifelike size, was not as imposing as I first imagined. Still it captured the essence of the fairy tale stories written by the venerable Dane, Hans Christian Andersen, and attracted a host of admirers. Another statue – this time far more dramatic – was the Gefion Fountain. A huge bronze figure of the Norse goddess, *Gefjun*, stood in a chariot pulled by mighty oxen; appearing as if it was emanating out of a great spume of water. There was minor pomp and circumstance outside the Amalienborg Palace when a troop of soldiers in ceremonial uniform performed the Changing of the Guard. The Danish parliament's Christiansborg Palace, was an architectural masterpiece with its soaring tower and steeple encased in green copper patina. The Stock Exchange or *Børsen* building had an even more spectacular spire, which consisted of four intertwined dragons' tails. The evening was spent at the world famous amusement park called Tivoli Gardens which was a delight just to wander around and absorbing the sights and sounds under the myriad of coloured lights.

Again, funds were running low as I wasn't prepared for the high costs on the Continent, so I elected to continue on my next step of the journey using the EuroRail pass. The destination was Stockholm in Sweden. At the Copenhagen main railway station I secured a passage on the daily train to Stockholm. However, the ticket didn't guarantee me a seat. When I boarded the train, the carriages had compartments accessed by a corridor and the train was full of passengers. The prospect of standing in the corridor for an extensive train ride didn't excite me so I found a little niche near the baggage compartment where I could at least sit down on my suitcase. It wasn't long before I was discovered there by the train conductor who made it abundantly





*Gullfoss Waterfalls in the Thingvellir National Park, Iceland, July, 1971.*



*The Big Geyser Erupting in the Active Volcanic Thermal Area near Geysir, Iceland, July, 1971.*



*Flying over the Dormant Volcanic Cone of Surtsey, Iceland, July, 1971.*



*Removing Strips of Blubber from the Carcass of a Whale, Hvalfjörður, Iceland, July, 1971.*





*Statue of the Little Mermaid (den Lille Havfrue) in the Harbour of Copenhagen, Denmark, July, 1971.*



*Christiansborg Palace, the Danish Parliament, Copenhagen, Denmark, July, 1971.*



*Stockholm City Hall (Stadshuset); Site of the Nobel Prize Ceremony, Stockholm, Sweden, July, 1971.*



*Round Tower and Ramparts of Akershus Fortress, Oslo, Norway, July, 1971.*



clear that I wasn't welcome in that area; so I left and resumed standing in the corridor. At least I could look out of the window and it wasn't long before the train stopped at Helsingør for the special rail ferry ride over the Øresund to the Swedish port of Helsingborg.

At Helsingborg the Swedish Customs officials boarded to check the passengers' documents. There was an assortment of travellers in the nearest compartment to where I was standing. Among them was a Spanish lady who was having some difficulty because of a language barrier. She couldn't speak Swedish and the official couldn't speak Spanish. I determined to help and found out that she could speak a little German. So in a roundabout way she spoke to me in German and I relayed it in English which was understood by the official. After this encounter, the lady asked me to squeeze in the seat between her and another passenger. This way I was able to continue my journey to Stockholm in a modicum of comfort.

The train made its way through Southern Sweden with stops along the way at places such as Linköping and Norrköping before terminating at Stockholm's main railway station. Again I secured a cheap hotel room through the visitors' bureau and settled down for an overnight stay in the Swedish capital. Before going to bed, however, I walked around the immediate area to get my bearings. Meanwhile the weather had deteriorated and a heavy rain shower forced me to find shelter in a shop doorway. Three other individuals decided to do the same thing and wait out the rain. As soon as they congregated, one of them produced a strange looking pipe and a piece of tissue paper. He then filled the pipe with a tobacco product, lit it, and inhaled the smoke through the tissue paper that was placed over the mouthpiece and acted as a kind of filter. An unusual aroma became apparent as the pipe was being shared by the others – obviously this was dope being openly smoked. They did offer the pipe to me, but I gracefully refused and soon the rain stopped so I could escape and return to the hotel.

The following day was sunny and warm; very conducive for walking and absorbing the atmosphere of this cosmopolitan city. There was much to see in the *Gamla Stan* (Old Town). New and old stood cheek by jowl with modern tower blocks standing alongside Mediæval streets, such as the narrow and winding Västerlånggatan, and Romanesque palaces. The massive *Stadshuset* (City Hall) stood like a sentinel across from Riddersholm, the ancient heart of the city. In the Blue Hall of the City Hall, Nobel Prizes are awarded at a ceremony rich in pomp. Further downstream could be seen the lofty *Kaknästornet*, or observation/communications tower that indicated a distinct connection with 20th century technology.

With my pocket money now running low it occurred to me that I could save on accommodation expenses by travelling through the night. Having seen and experienced Stockholm, I made plans to take the overnight train to Oslo, Norway. Waiting in the main railway station in Stockholm provided free entertainment, largely because many of the city's vagrants, winos and junkies congregated there and clandestinely consumed their liquor. After a while, they became raucous and unruly, often fighting among themselves while under the influence. On one occasion when peacefully sitting on a bench, I was accosted by one hobo so I let out a torrent of Anglo-Saxon expletives at him – only to be cursed back with a volley of similar language. I was gobsmacked at this! However, it didn't take long before the local constabulary arrived and literally frogmarched off a number of rambunctious individuals. Obviously the Scandinavian law enforcers didn't take kindly to these itinerant drunks – a situation that I learned first hand on the following day.

I boarded the Oslo train and was directed to my carriage to face the first challenge of travelling third class. The carriage compartment benches were not upholstered; in fact they were just wooden slats. This didn't bode well for a comfortable overnight journey. The bad situation became worse when my travelling companions – some students – decided to while away most of the night by strumming on guitars during an impromptu jam session. Sleep was just not elusive, it was impossible. I remember staring out of the window with bleary-eyes when dawn broke over the lakes and forests of Värmlands Län, Sweden and Akershus Fylke, Norway.

At length the train arrived in Oslo and I decided to make the best of a bad thing by exploring as much of the city as possible on foot before considering another train trip. Somehow I managed to wander around carrying my small suitcase and wearing a raincoat, both of which were burdensome. But I came across some interesting sights such as the *Akershus Festning* (Akershus Fortress), a Mediæval stronghold with sentries dressed in the traditional uniform of *Hans Majestet Kongens Garde* (His Majesty The King's Guard), and the Royal palace that was surrounded by *Slottsparken* – a considerable public park.

Fatigue started to take hold; a combination of lack of sleep and food, and I sat down on one of the park benches to rest. Evidently I drifted off into sleep and the next thing I remember was being awoken with a start as a hand came down on my shoulder with a mighty force. I looked up to see two burly constables with an Alsatian dog (German Shepherd) looming over me. The barrage of Norwegian they gave me could not have been misunderstood; simply, “move on”. No small wonder that I was taken as a vagrant with my dishevelled and unshaven look, together with what appeared to be all my worldly goods in a suitcase. The episode hastened my departure from Oslo as I boarded another train; this time heading down the Swedish west coast through Göteborg towards Denmark.

Recollections become a little hazy as to whether or not I stayed another night in Copenhagen. However, the plan was to return home via the boat train that plied between Esbjerg and Harwich. The westbound train travelled across the Danish landscape through the islands of Sjælland and Fyn to the Jylland (Jutland) peninsula and the town of Esbjerg. Believing this to be my destination, I alighted at Esbjerg Station only to see the train continue on its way. I then discovered that the end of the line was, in actual fact, at Esbjerg Harbour Station. This meant a quick march down to the docks where the North Sea ferry boat was moored. Fortunately I managed to board the vessel in time and found my assigned berth, which was shared with another passenger. The overnight voyage proved to be smooth and my roommate generous as, after describing my experiences and impecunious state of affairs, he offered to buy me breakfast on board ship – the last morsel I had eaten being a dry roll (no money even for butter) bought with my remaining Danish kronor.

The final leg after arriving at Harwich and clearing HM Customs was on the forwarding train to Liverpool Street Station, London; then across town to King's Cross and the suburban train to Hatfield where I arrived virtually penniless. It was a great relief to stay at my parents' place and be 'fatted up' by Mum's homecooked meals. The enforced lack of sustenance had taken its toll and, all in all, I had lost 10 lb. (4.5 kg) in weight during one week. Looking back, despite the disappointment of not fulfilling all my goals; e.g., travelling north of the Arctic Circle, visiting Helsinki, Finland, etc., my Scandinavian trip was quite an adventure and series of experiences that I still remember with fondness.



## *Prime of life*

To all intents and purposes I was entering my prime years of 25, 26 and 27 when it seemed as if I had the world at my feet. Of importance was a steady increase in fostering close friendships at work. Two fellows in particular, Colin Simco and Roger Moore, became regular chums and these friendships continue to the present day.

I also took to some sporting activity: notably trying my hand at archery, fencing and golf. Rolls-Royce encouraged employee participation in physical activity and supported various sports at its recreation field and social club. There was even a squash court next door to the Technical Publications building at Ansty. The archery club met at regular times to shoot arrows for both amusement and competition. Equipment was available for borrowing and tuition was given to the novices. The keen followers brought their own bows, many of which were superbly engineered and made of special material with weights for precise balancing. Safety was paramount on the butts (shooting range), and a senior member acted as the marshall to make sure nobody was injured from errant arrows.

The sport of archery brought Stephanie and I together. When the Rolls-Royce Rocket Division at Ansty was disbanded due to the company shake-up, some of the employees were redeployed to other departments. A systems analyst, Stephanie Hall, came to Technical Publications as a documentation clerk and she also participated in the archery club. Stephanie was the daughter of Sergeant Frank Hall, who was the senior on-site security guard. Frank took no nonsense from anyone, and his stern military bearing made him a force to be reckoned with. This personality trait extended to Stephanie, who preferred tomboy activities to more feminine pursuits and listed judo and archery as two of her favourite pastimes. She cut her hair short and wore no makeup. Even her choice of car was somewhat masculine as she drove a sporty MG Midget and relished the top down, wind-in-the-hair feeling. We sometimes followed each other on the drive home after work – both in convertible mode. At the Leicester Road T-junction outside Ansty she would turn right to her home in the village of Shilton, whereas I would turn left to Coventry.

On the other hand, Stephanie could be culturally minded and had a keen interest in history. We started to informally date and one of our first outings was to visit the stately home of Aston Hall in Birmingham. It was a wet, miserable day and, to make matter worse, when we arrived we discovered that the mansion was closed to visitors. Now at a loose end, I believe we just gravitated to a nearby cinema to see “Bedknobs and Broomsticks” which Stephanie found entertaining, but it didn’t turn me on. The dating didn’t become too serious which was a good thing because later in the relationship Stephanie took umbrage for some reason and refused to speak to me. I never did get to the root of the problem and just sloughed off the situation. On the occasions when I took her home, I met Frank on his own turf and saw an entirely different person. He was very approachable and not the fearsome individual found at work. Both he and Stephanie’s mother were homely folk who welcomed me into their humble cottage for tea and biscuits. A sad postscript to this episode was Stephanie’s untimely passing, at age 50, from complications of breast cancer. She was a popular person at the office and in the community, and this was borne out as the church was filled to overflowing at her funeral. Although she never married, Stephanie enjoyed a full life with other male companions: one of them possessing a pilot’s licence and who used to fly over the office building just to give her a thrill.

The sport of fencing was a new departure influenced by my uncle Tony's reputation as a champion fencer in the Royal Navy. His prowess extended from foil, through épée to bayonet, and he won many championship cups. The fencing classes, held at Whoberley Hall Primary School, were presided over by a chap who was in peak physical condition. The students found out why as we were put through our paces in the introductory sessions. The sport demanded both physical and mental agility where speed, nimbleness, a keen eye and a strategic mind were total criteria. We learned about the protective dress and weaponry, followed by technical terms and tactics. Initially we were taught the correct way to hold the weapon(s), and then the instructor launched us into a gruelling session of footwork. "Heel, ball, toe!"; "Heel, ball, toe!", he would bark out as the ragged line of students progressed back and forth on the gymnasium wooden floor. This was a precursor to the many rigorous exercises demanded of the sport.

Special protective clothing consisted of a sleeveless padded body vest extending from the throat to the groin. The face and neck were protected by a purpose designed mask with a coarse metal mesh for visibility that encased the entire head. A lightweight track suit (or breeches, stockings and shirt), athletic shoes and protective gauntlets completed the attire.

We started learning with the simple foil and were taught the various stances assumed when participating. The *en guard* position, for example. Terms, such as remise, reprise and riposte were demonstrated and these were drummed into us, as well as the rules of the sport and the attendant sense of honour (sportsmanship). During the amount of time I spent with the sport, I tried the épée (a heavier type of foil) and sabre. The techniques of fencing with the sabre were completely different and far more aggressive.

My golfing career was a short one since I found the sport very staid and I never progressed beyond the 'pitch and putt' standard. There was a small municipal golf course at the War Memorial Park and sometimes my good friend David Cross and I would spend some time playing a short round before finding a suitable pub that became our 'nineteenth hole'.

Following the previous years ambitious, yet abortive, attempt to visit Scandinavia, I still harboured a sense of *wanderlust* and discovered an affordable alternative to the recognised two week holiday abroad. A company called Clarkson Travel organised short vacations – often no more than four days in length – to various European destinations. Although a package deal in nature, the mini-holidays were flexible and tourists could go on arranged tours or be completely independent. Costs were kept down by using the chartered Court Airlines out of provincial airports such as Luton and East Midlands. Taking advantage of these short breaks meant that I could schedule several mini-holidays during the year. As it turned out, three such trips were booked for 1972 with the destinations of Paris, the Rhine Valley, and Portugal.

I mentioned my plans in passing during conversations at the Mercia School of Dancing and one fellow showed considerable interest – enough to contemplate the notion that we should be travelling companions. His name was Ian Gaff, a young, bearded electrical technologist who came to the dancing academy largely to find friends and help overcome a shy nature. He was a good dancer and often partnered my old flame, Vernice Harris. I didn't object to his request to share a hotel room (cheaper than the single occupancy tariff), and he decided that the Paris and Rhine Valley trips were perfectly acceptable.



*Place du Tertre, Montmartre, in the Artists' Quarter of Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*Sacré-Cœur Basilica at the Summit of Montmartre, in the Artists' Quarter of Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*Rear View of Notre Dame Cathedral Showing the Impressive Flying Buttresses, Île-de-la-Cité, the Historical Heart of Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*Barry Standing on the Sidewalk of the Boulevard des Champs-Élysées. Background is the Place de l'Étoile (Arc de Triomphe), Paris, France, April, 1972.*





*Eiffel Tower, Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*View of the City of Paris and the River Seine from the Summit Observation Platform of the Eiffel Tower, Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*Formal Gardens and a Wing of the Royal Palace of Versailles, near Paris, France, April, 1972.*



*Southeast View of the Cathedrale de Saint Pierre Showing the Massive Gothic Flying Buttresses, Beauvais, near Paris, France, April, 1972.*

April in Paris is steeped in romantic lore. “*La Ville-Lumière*” (“The City of Light”) can, indeed, be magical and is quintessentially Gallic. It is also a city that encourages strolling *à la boulevardier* and the maze of Mediæval streets, grand avenues and plazas were waiting to be explored. The weather was generally fine with sunny periods and we walked around many of the renowned districts of the city. Obvious tourist attractions were the artists’ quarter – especially Place du Tertre and the impressive Sacré-Cœur Basilica that crowned the hill overlooking Montmartre; the massive Gothic structure of Notre Dame Cathedral with its huge stained glass rose window (amazing when viewed from inside against the daylight); the university quarter of the left bank (Rive Gauche); Avenue des Champs-Élysées connecting the Place de l’Étoile (Arc de Triomphe) to the Place de la Concorde and, of course, the Eiffel Tower. Visitors took two separate lifts to reach the top of the tower, and one wondered how the antiquated elevators survived over the years. The second lift wound its way through a spider web of steel girders to the summit observation platform where the visitor was rewarded with a spectacular view over the entire city.

Strolling down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées also enticed pedestrians to stop at one of the many sidewalk cafés. Ian and I decided to take a break and sat at a table to relax and people watch. The café waiters instinctively recognise tourists and tend to put on an assertive attitude; something we didn’t appreciate when ordering coffee. However, it served a purpose if only for the experience.

An experience of a different kind happened when we attended an organised champagne evening at the famous *Moulin Rouge* cabaret in the neon lighted entertainment district centred around Place Pigalle. The original *Moulin Rouge* was built in 1889 with the red windmill sign on the roof as its trademark. Inside, the club’s décor signified much of the romance of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Paris. Ian and I were in a party of tourists that arrived at the club where we were escorted to cabaret tables illuminated by dimmed lights. Soon a waiter placed a bottle of champagne and glasses on our table and the cabaret show began. True to form, the stage came alive with a chorus line of glamorous girls dressed in sumptuous costumes and dancing to the spirited tunes of a music hall style orchestra. Naturally the highlight was an energetic *cancan* dance routine complete with high kicks and flying splits, performed to the *cancan* melody that’s traditionally associated with the act. The finale being the nude *tableaux vivants* exhibiting naked female models in static poses under strategic lighting. All in all, a superb evening of entertainment and culture *à la Parisienne*.

We ventured outside Paris on an excursion to the world renowned Royal Palace of Versailles. This huge château, that once was a humble hunting lodge, showed off the opulence of the French Royal Dynasty. The ornate building and excessively manicured formal gardens were extensive and we could only visit a small part within the allotted time. One essential room to see, however, was the enormous Hall of Mirrors, scene of several historic incidents: including the Declaration of the German Empire under the Prussian King Wilhelm I, and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 following the Armistice of WWI.

Another coach trip was to visit the impressive Cathédrale de Saint Pierre (St. Peter’s Cathedral) in the city of Beauvais, north of Paris. An architectural masterpiece, the cathedral was under construction for a number of centuries as successive Bishops of Beauvais strove to make it the largest and tallest cathedral in Europe. A series of catastrophes, including the collapse of the tower and some of the vaulting, however, brought the project to a halt. The massive flying buttresses are a prominent feature of the structure.



**B**efore embarking on the second Clarkson Travel tour – to the Rhine Valley in September – I spent a couple of short summer breaks in England. The first, in May, was a camping trip with David Cross to the New Forest area of Hampshire. We decided to take Dave’s camping gear in my Triumph Herald and head towards the official camping sites. The first night, however, was spent some way away from our destination and we ended up in the lane leading to a farmer’s field. Not wanting to pitch our tent, we elected to sleep in the car and this was an uncomfortable experience. I started off sprawled across the two front bucket seats and Dave did the same on the rear bench seat. As sleep eluded me I asked Dave if he wouldn’t mind trading places since the bench seat afforded more comfort. Seeing that I was the driver, Dave agreed to my request and the night passed by reasonably well.

The rest of the holiday was typical of a camping outing; albeit the first time under canvas for me. The nearest to ‘roughing it’ that I could recall was when I was a young boy. Dad had rented a Ford Esquire shooting break (station wagon) and the family headed for Cornwall. We intended to sleep in the extended back of the vehicle, but after one night of total discomfort and a disastrous breakfast we abandoned the idea and found Bed & Breakfast accommodation along the way. Dave and I got on well even in confined quarters, and spent time at a number of interesting places, including the historic site of Buckler’s Hard – an important shipyard in the 18th and 19th centuries – and The National Motor Museum at Beaulieu Abbey, the home of Lord Montagu.

The second short summer break was taken in August when, once again, I teamed up with my good friend David Cross who had suggested that a floating holiday on the Norfolk Broads would be novel. To reduce the cost of renting a motor boat we looked around for additional paying passengers. David was engaged to be married to Susan Jackson, a girl from Malton Colliery, Lanchester, County Durham. Actually, Susan lived in rooms not far from my old flat in Spencer Avenue, but I didn’t know it at the time. Susan agreed to come along, together with a female companion, Eileen Simpson, who I knew from the dancing school, and another of David’s acquaintances, Dave “Fuzzy” Wilson.

The week long holiday had its share of adventures. As well as renting the motor boat, we had access to a small ‘pram’ dinghy that was towed behind. The dinghy with its single sail was used for the occasional trip out onto the large bodies of water. David, who was an accomplished sailor, often went out single-handed strictly for enjoyment. With the exception of deploying the sail, the dinghy was rigged so that it could be cast off at any time. However, this was our undoing. One day we were progressing through a congested part of the Broads that included a low road bridge. As we navigated under the bridge a loud cracking sound was heard and we all looked back to see the dinghy’s mast breaking in two as it struck the bridge superstructure. After retrieving the remains of the mast that had sheared off, David decided that the relatively clean break could be temporarily repaired and, at our next mooring we bought a roll of orange coloured electrician’s tape from the local hardware shop. We married the pieces of the mast and bound them together with the entire roll of tape. This proved to be very effective and even when sailing in strong windy conditions the mast repair held firm. An insurance claim covered the cost of the damage without any problems.

Another incident was when we decided to turn around in a relatively narrow river. This was like the equivalent of a ‘three-point turn’ on the road and I was at the helm and not very conversant in controlling



*David Cross Cooking Supper at our First Camping Stop – in a Field Laneway – en route to the New Forest, Hampshire, May, 1972.*



*Machinery at a Steam Fair, The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire, May, 1972.*



*David Cross, Susan Jackson, Eileen Simpson and Barry on Board the Motor Boat Rented for a Week on the Norfolk Broads, August, 1972.*



*David Cross and Barry Sailing the Dinghy after the Mast Breaking Incident – Note Orange Plastic Tape Repair to the Mast, Norfolk Broads, August, 1972.*

the large craft. It was fairly well known that the ecology of the Norfolk Broads was fragile and boaters, in particular, were made aware of the common courtesy of not speeding and creating dangerous wakes as well as keeping clear of the easily damaged banks.

Manoeuvring the vessel depended on several factors: steering, forward/reverse direction and throttle controls. At the point of turning, I attempted to work the controls to try and keep the boat midstream, but there were other dynamics in play such as the river current, wind, etc., that prevented a smooth manoeuvre. On one occasion the boat's bow came into contact with one of the river banks at a point where two property owners, who were watching the proceedings, became irate and, with expansive gesticulations, started shouting, "Get off the bank!!", "Get off the bank!!" This cursing only added to my frustration, but eventually I was able to pull free of the bank and resume our new course.

The Norfolk Broads holiday was an enjoyable excursion in which five people lived harmoniously in close quarters. Nobody shirked on their housekeeping responsibilities, and we eagerly looked forward to mooring in the evening not far from a riverside pub and exchanging stories with other boaters.

Back in Coventry, my social life was far from dull. I started to seriously appreciate the live theatre in the city and spent many evenings at the Belgrade Theatre watching productions ranging from Frankie Howerd in "The Wind in the Sassafras Trees" to classical ballet and Viennese operettas. At the other end of the scale when my father was attending training sessions at the Land Rover factory school in Solihull, we used to meet and enjoy a few pints of beer at some of the working mens' clubs. On one occasion we ventured to a seedy area of Birmingham called Digbeth and visited "The Dolls Club" striptease establishment.

Dancing remained my main interest, however, and Gayle and I continued to partner and learn more intricate routines from Hetty Armstrong for the IDTA ballroom and Latin American advanced level tests. In 1972, I reached the top of the ballroom dancing amateur achievement ladder by being presented with the IDTA Annual Award. In the same year Gayle and I attained both the 1st and 2nd Gold Bar awards in Latin American dancing.

Gayle habitually left her car in a municipal car park near the dance school and, after our private lesson, she would give me a ride to my own car that I had parked in a side street as I refused to pay parking fees. One time another student, Carol Lewis, was also being given a lift home by Gayle. When we left the car park exit, Gayle's car was cut off by a reckless driver in a big Jaguar and, to make matters worse, the passenger lent out of the window and displayed a rude gesticulation. We caught up with the Jaguar at the next stop light and I got out to remonstrate; having been ticked off by the insult. The upshot, however, was for the other driver to drop behind and follow us to where I was parked. Once again I got out to argue. The front door of the Jaguar opened and a huge shape unfolded and lurched towards me like a big ape. This apparition reached forward and grabbed both of my arms, holding them in a vicelike grip. I was in a precarious position: not wanting to antagonise him any further, but reluctant to back off and show cowardice in the eyes of the women. He cursed me with a number of choice words and forced me back into Gayle's car where I hit my head on the door opening. Both women were petrified and after I had sat down, Gayle quickly sped away, heading for the nearest police station. The Jaguar followed us almost into the station itself then left



the scene. We reported the incident but couldn't provide the Jaguar's licence number so the police were powerless. We returned to my car, but I kept a wary eye out for our attackers in case they were still in the area. The following day Dave Cross and I went swimming at the downtown indoor pool whereupon I had to explain why there was a ring of bruises around both my upper arms. We both had to smile at my close call.

Life went on unabated with the exception that I did not have a steady girlfriend; only a few fleeting relationships that didn't blossom. My buddy, Dave, was fully aware and sympathetic. He and Susan kept close company with me and there were times when the three of us went out to play tenpin bowling at the Forum Lanes near where Dave lived at home with his parents. Although I was playing 'gooseberry', the arrangement seemed to work, and then Susan introduced me to an acquaintance, Christine Reader. Christine had recently separated from her husband and Susan considered that I would make a good companion to help put her back on her feet.

Christine and I started dating; I met her parents, who were down to earth Coventry folk, and I hoped that taking her out on occasions would provide a therapy. After a while, however, Christine perceived that I was becoming too friendly and was fearful of a serious relationship developing so soon after her marital break up. She went away on a short holiday to contemplate some soul searching and, when she returned, wrote me a "Dear John" letter and apologetically, but earnestly, requested to cut short our friendship. In retrospect her reaction was natural and I could be faulted for 'coming on too strong' at times. I really wasn't offended just disappointed that I couldn't jolt her out of her misfortune as I'm sure that her ex-husband's influence continued to rear its ugly head. Experience can be a tough teacher sometimes.

With the approach of autumn I looked forward to the Clarkson Travel holidays that were scheduled for September. Ian Gaff and I prepared ourselves for the Rhine Valley journey which was centred in the small town of Rudesheim am Rhein, a popular tourist destination during grape harvest season. We were a little too early for this activity but learned a great deal about the wine industry nevertheless. Extensive vineyards covered the valley hillsides all around, not only on the River Rhine, but also on the River Mosel as we were to see on a coach trip.

German hospitality was at its best as Rudesheim opened up its sidewalk cafés and bars. The bright lights along the main entertainment street, the *Drosselgasse*, enticed us to listen to traditional 'oompah' music and indulge in *Sauerkraut und Würste mit Bier* (pickled cabbage and sausages with beer). One evening a small party from our group decided to really enter the spirit of *Gemütlichkeit* and sling back a few litres of local suds and dance the night away to the strains of the accordion and brass instruments of a small combo. Late in the evening, I was among a few diehards behaving ridiculously by cavorting on the tops of the long wooden trestle tables, much to the annoyance of the waitresses. One of the party was an unattached young woman who I eventually escorted back to her hotel room. I remember that in my advanced state of inebriation we had an intimate affair in her room before I passed out, and the next day was challenging to remain alert on the excursion which took us over the river to Bingen then on a cruise downstream to Koblenz.

The highlight of this trip was to see some of the famous Rhine castles, including *Burg Katz* at St. Goarshausen and *Burg Maus* at Wellmich, and also the picturesque *Burg Pfalzgrafstein* at Kaub. The cruise

also took us past another beauty spot, the *Loreley* (Lorelei Rock) based on the Germanic legend that the hypnotic singing of the lovelorn maiden called Loreley lured sailors to their deaths on the treacherous rocky shoreline. At Koblenz, where the Rhine and Mosel meet, we continued by road along the Mosel Valley to Cochem, a typical provincial town nestled at the base of the steep valley sides covered with rows of grape vines as far as the eye could see. In keeping with the Teutonic heritage of the area, a massive multi-turreted and crenelated fortress, *Reichsburg Cochem*, brooded over the town from a craggy outcrop.

There was an educational component of the trip that consisted of familiarisation of the wine industry. One evening we attended an information session where we learned about viticulture and, by systematically tasting various wines, an appreciation of the end product. A local *Meisterwinzer* (master vintner), who spoke excellent English, arranged to have a range of wines served in sequence. As each different wine was served, he gave an explanation of the characteristics, such as bouquet (aroma); colour; degree of dryness/sweetness, and appropriate food accompaniment. Between each tasting, we ate a small piece of dry bread or cheese to neutralise our taste buds – a useful technique to know.

The production of a different wine end product was explained to our party when we visited the distillery of Asbach Uralt. The output from Asbach Uralt is primarily a brandy distillate, and a knowledgeable guide showed us the huge copper stills used for distilling the wine into alcoholic spirit. The spirit was stored in 300 litre Limousin oak barrels for 24 to 36 months to mellow and age into brandy before being bottled and shipped from the plant. We were then invited to taste samples and have a group photo taken and, of course, escorted to the exit via the gift shop where Asbach Uralt liqueur chocolates were also available for sale.

Two more coach trips included a journey through the Hessen countryside to visit and explore the ancient city of Heidelberg. Highlights were the *Altstadt* (old town) and *Schloss Heidelberg* (castle of Heidelberg). The castle was accessible by a funicular railway and at the top visitors could look out over the city with its university and the River Neckar valley. Another overland trip took us to Wiesbaden with its Neolithic and Roman roots influenced by the local thermal springs that evolved into therapeutic spas. A significant landmark was the *Marktkirche* (Market Church), a Protestant church also known as the Cathedral of Nassau.

Another taste of Continental Europe happened in the same month with a short visit to Northern Portugal. The Court Airlines flight took us over the Brittany peninsula and the Bay of Biscay to Oporto, the second largest city in Portugal. Oporto (known as Porto in Portuguese) grew up from ancient times and later gained fame with the port (fortified wine) trade that was controlled largely by British wine merchants. The area was steeped in history with an emphasis on viticulture that had existed in the River Douro valley for centuries.

Oporto was a modern, cosmopolitan city, but also exhibited the extremes of rich and poor as seen in Mediterranean countries. Luxury villas in the valley indicated prosperous upper and middle classes, whereas in some of the slum areas there was evidence of abject poverty. Communal gatherings at water stand pipes, laundry fatigues at the river's edge and substandard buildings were commonplace.

Typical of the wealthy landowners and vintners was seen on the estate of the Sogrape family at Vila Real. The Mateus Palace is a mansion built in the Portuguese Baroque architectural style. It is featured on



*Burg Katz, one of the Imposing Mediæval Castles that Command Strategic Points on the River Rhine, St. Goarshausen, Germany, September, 1972.*



*Burg Maus, one of the Imposing Mediæval Castles that Command Strategic Points on the River Rhine, Wellmich, Germany, September, 1972.*



*The Lorelei Rock of Germanic Mythology where the Maiden Loreley's Hypnotic Singing Lured Sailors to their Deaths, Germany, September, 1972.*



*The Market Square at Cochem, a Typical Small Town in the Mosel Valley Surrounded by Hills and Vineyards, Germany, September, 1972.*





*Overlooking Heidelberg and the River Neckar from the Ramparts of Schloss Heidelberg, Germany, September, 1972.*

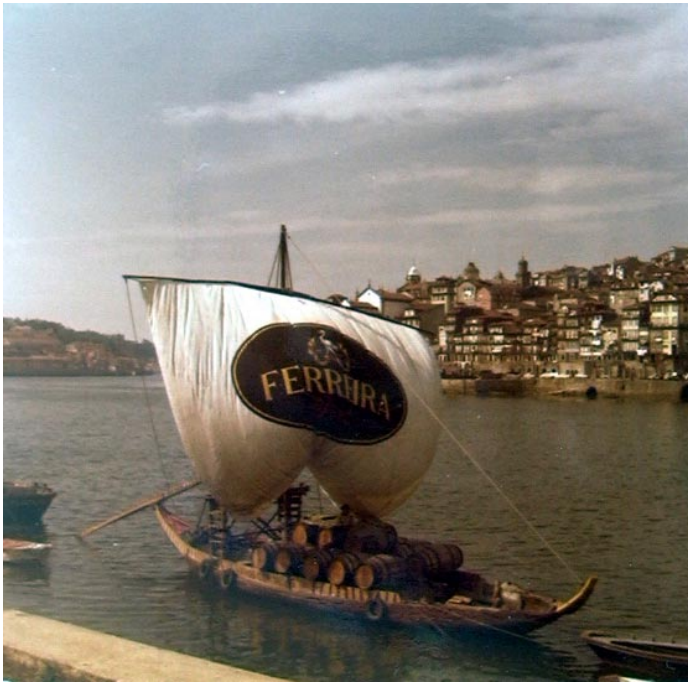


*The Marktkirche Protestant Church in Wiesbaden, an Ancient Roman City with Thermal Spas, Germany, September, 1972.*



*The Clarkson Travel Party in the Hospitality Cellar Room Following a Tour of the Asbach Uralt Distillery and Learning the Techniques of Producing Brandy from Wine, Rudesheim am Rhein, Germany, September, 1972.*





*One of the Traditional Barcos Rebelos Used for Transporting Barrels of Wine Along the River Douro, Oporto, Portugal, September, 1972.*



*Seafood Market in Full Swing After the Fishing Boats Have Arrived Back into Port, Póvoa de Varzim, Portugal, September, 1972.*



*Poverty in the Back Streets and Alleyways – a Typical Communal Gathering, Oporto, Portugal, September, 1972.*



*The Mateus Palace – now Corporation HQ for the Sogrape Family Company, Vila Real, Portugal, September, 1972.*

the label of Mateus Vinho Rosé wine, which became very popular in England and elsewhere. The distinctive narrow neck and flask-shaped bottle was often used similarly to Italian Chianti wine bottles after use – as a candle holder or decorative table lamp. A tour of the estate and winery was followed by a wine tasting session. The day was very hot and I was glad to doze off in a *siesta* on board the returning coach.

Fishing is one of Portugal's industries, and approximately 12 miles (20 km) to the north of Oporto is the small city of Póvoa de Varzim. At one end was the port and picturesque fishermen's quarter where the men arranged their brightly-painted boats and the womenfolk quietly sat mending their husbands' nets. A big tourist attraction was when the fishing fleet returned from a day out on the ocean and the fish market opened for business. The entire market was a total babel of vendors hawking their catches to the locals in animated conversation. Some of the fisherfolk were characters in their own right. I saw one older woman, wearing a traditional headscarf and minus most of her teeth, bellowing at the top of her voice trying to attract customers and in one hand waving aloft a moderately size octopus. Seafood of all types was being sold from the makeshift stands, and the sight, sound and smell of the fish market made for a unique experience. Other tourism spin-offs in Póvoa de Varzim were the extensive golden sandy beaches and the casino and entertainment centre. Here we saw performances of the age-old *fado* in which couples in national dress practiced routines similar to those found in country dancing elsewhere; morris dancing in England, for example.

The Portuguese trip was my final holiday fling for 1972, but thanks to a flexible vacation schedule at work I was able to secure the time off and benefit from the extensive travelling. However, the following year was to start with a novel holiday. My neighbours, Barry and his live-in girlfriend, Christine, and I decided as a group we would try a winter skiing trip, and so plans were put into effect for February, 1973.

Even though I didn't have a companion for the trip, the three of us got along well and I was happy to fall into their plans. Barry made the arrangements and settled on the Austrian ski resort of Söll, a popular spot in the Tyrol. Not wanting to spend too much on special clothing I decided to try and get by with an anorak, ski pants and then add layers of underwear, shirts and sweaters where necessary. I even wore a pair of my mother's discarded nylon tights (a struggle to get into).

The trip was a success from beginning to end. We flew by charter airline from Birmingham to Munich, Germany, then by coach to Austria. We were amazed at the amount of snow; much more than we had ever known before in England. Soon the chalet style buildings of Söll appeared in the valley and we settled down in our hotel rooms. The next day after breakfast, we were taken to the skiing school on the nursery slope where we met Christina our instructress. Christina was well versed in English and, of course, an expert skier. We then acquired our ski boots, skis and ski poles before starting the first exercise. There were many amusing incidents when the group of students started learning the basic techniques. On one occasion when we were traversing a slope in a procession, Christine slipped down the slope and I followed to try and rescue her; the both of us ending up in a jumble of arms, legs and skis. Much to the mirth of the others, Christina shouted down to us, 'Vat are you dooeeng??' We became accustomed to the cold, but were reminded that the bright, sunny days were very deceptive as the weather in the mountains could change dramatically. Naturally we were eager to tackle the more adventurous slopes, accessed by ski lift, but had to learn the basic skiing manoeuvres, especially how to stop and turn using the rudimentary 'snowplough' move.





*Ascending the Alps on a Ski Lift and Looking Back to the Tyrolean Village of Söll, Austria, February, 1973.*



*Barry at the Finish Line after Completing the Snowplough Part of the Beginners' Ski Test, Söll, Austria, February, 1973.*



*A Partial Line-up of the Students Learning Basic Skiing Techniques on the Nursery Slope – Barry [1st on Left], Christine [3rd from Right], Christina, the Instructress, is Wearing the Blue Jacket and Red Toque, Söll, Austria, February, 1973.*

We all progressed and it wasn't long before we were ready to leave the nursery slope and try some of the moderate hills. Using the various ski lifts was learned through experience. In particular, the rope tow or pommel lift, which was challenging as you had to hang on to an endless rope that was in constant motion while making sure your skis didn't wander off the established ruts as you were pulled up the hill. The chair lifts were more forgivable but still required a certain amount of agility when getting on and getting off.

After a day on the slopes we realised that we weren't as fit as we first thought. Aching limbs plus the effects of sun and the altitude's rarified air sent many of us to bed early. However, if you were able to muster one last ounce of strength the *après-ski* scene in the evening was excellent. The tourists were entertained by traditional *Schuhplattler* dancers and we were introduced to delicious *fondue* meals followed by the hand- and heart-warming *Glühwein* or hot, mulled wine drink. The local villagers mingled in a nearby tavern and, following a few *Steins* of powerful Tyrolean beer, we were well in the mood to grab a partner and swing him/her around in a *Waltzer* or *Ländler* to the strains of an accordion, brass and woodwind combo.

Towards the end of the week most of the students were proficient enough to head to the highest peaks and enjoy a long, exhilarating run to the bottom. Furthermore, we were asked to enter a test to demonstrate our recently acquired skills and take home a souvenir of the event. The day was snowy and overcast, but the test went ahead and the competitors lined up on a prescribed, but simple, course. We had to show proficiency by traversing the slope and turning according to the techniques taught us; preferably without falling. At the end all successful candidates were handed a congratulatory certificate.

Learning how to ski on this holiday provided me with a new dimension of recreational enjoyment that proved beneficial after I had emigrated to Canada, as will be seen later in this memoir.

In the meantime, Dave Cross had introduced me to the Earlsdon Young Conservatives (YCs) and the fraternal group with its political ties became a source of companionship. I found it easy to blend into this club of like-minded young adults and enjoyed the camaraderie at meetings and other events. One of the favourite rendezvous places wasn't actually in the district of Earlsdon, but at a popular country inn called "The Old Mill" in Baginton. This old, rambling structure to the south of Coventry had several bars and a restaurant of renown. The YCs often monopolised one of the bars and their consumption was good for business. The mix of men and women was roughly equal and I made friends with many of the ladies, including Josie Roberts-Powell, Margaret, Turner and Angela Webster, and some casual dating outside of the YCs' activity took place. I escorted both Josie and Margaret on separate occasions to the Mediaeval Banquet at Coombe Abbey, a stately Warwickshire home, that was organised by my department at Rolls-Royce IMD.

The YCs' political leanings would be put to the test in May, 1973, when the local municipal elections were to be held. Before the ramp up to this event, however, the YCs got together at house parties and organised functions, sometimes with guest speakers: one of which I remember being an airline stewardess who spoke and demystified certain popular perceptions about her job.

The Local Government Act of 1972 remapped parts of England, and the City of Coventry became a District Council of the West Midlands Metropolitan County. The 1973 Coventry District Council election

was going to be a baptism of fire for the YCs. The ruling Labour Party was strongly entrenched and the Conservatives were hard pressed to unseat them. In the Westward Ward – part of Electoral Division No. 2 – they reached out to the Earlsdon YCs to tap into a new human resource and that was the younger generation with fresh ideas and energy. Dave Cross had a number of strong political convictions and decided to throw his hat into the ring as a nominee. Two more nominees were required to fill the slate of candidates and Dave persuaded me to run: Josie Roberts-Powell being the third applicant. This set into motion the procedure for the Coventry District Council Returning Officer to validate the nominations and I was advised of the successful validation on April 17th, 1973.

There now followed an intense campaign programme within the boundaries of Westwood Ward. This included attending strategy meetings, campaign literature distribution and physical door-to-door visiting of residents within the ward. As soon as the candidates became official, an all-purpose information pamphlet was designed and printed. Other propaganda used to remind and encourage the voting public consisted of a poster showing the candidates' names in large type. The Coventry South-West Conservative Association spearheaded the campaign, and much of the administration was done by the Chairman, Jim Pendle, and the Secretary & Agent, Gordon Whiting. Also instrumental was the Conservative Womens' Committee for the area. This group consisted of several ladies who organised coffee mornings and jumble sales for fundraising as well as other initiatives for the good of the Conservative Party. Among them were: Pat Adams, Doris Dyer, Doreen Guthrie, Mrs. Hirons, Mrs. Ingram, Mrs. James, Muriel Papworth and Connie Watts. From April 25th, 1973, the date when the complete list of candidates was published in the newspaper, to May 10th, 1973, the day of the election, there wasn't a great deal of time to garner votes. However, the ladies made a sterling effort to help spread the message, often accompanying candidates during neighbourhood canvassing. One particular evening was spent at the home of Josie Roberts-Powell where we all pitched in to stuff envelopes with leaflets for a mailing blitz. An additional person was there: Muriel Papworth's daughter, Monica, an attractive blonde that caught my eye and we exchanged pleasantries.

There was a healthy voter turnout for both the West Midlands County Council and the Coventry District Council elections. Once the polling stations were closed on May 10th, the ballot counting began and all the candidates congregated at the assigned headquarters to wait for the results. From the preliminary returns it appeared that it was going to be an uphill battle against the Labour Party candidates. There was an element of excitement when our agent demanded a recount on one set of ballots, but we were denied an advantage and, at the end of the official counting, the final figures for Westwood Ward were – Cross: 1186; Page: 1192; Roberts-Powell: 1203 – with the opposition candidates secured the following – Robinson: 3121; Thompson: 3079; Waugh: 3058. At least it wasn't a walkover victory for Labour and we were pleased with our efforts and those of our supporting crew. The Conservative Womens' Committee was there to help bolster our morale, and Monica Papworth was among them. It seemed opportune to extend a dinner date invitation, but my request was politely declined.

However, romance was definitely in the air as, despite all the turmoil of the municipal elections, my good friend David and his fiancée, Susan, were married on Easter Saturday, April 21st, 1973. I was particularly honoured to be Dave's best man and entrusted with two wedding bands. The nuptials took place at All Saints' Parish Church, Lanchester, County Durham, with the reception at The Lanchester Social Club.



COVENTRY DISTRICT  
COUNCIL ELECTIONS

**WESTWOOD WARD**

THURSDAY, MAY 10th, 1973  
8.00 a.m. – 9.00 p.m.


**PLEASE REMEMBER!!**

THAT  
THIS YEAR  
EACH ELECTOR  
WILL RECEIVE AN  
OFFICIAL POLL CARD  
GIVING DETAILS OF POLLING  
STATION AND ELECTORAL NUMBER

**YOU HAVE  
THREE VOTES  
YOUR  
3 CONSERVATIVES  
ARE**

<b>CROSS</b>	×
<b>ROBERTS-POWELL</b>	×
<b>PAGE</b>	×

**YOUR CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES**




**DAVID CROSS**

Born in Coventry in 1947 and educated at Bablake Direct Grant Grammar School and Lancaster Polytechnic where he obtained an Honours Degree in Applied Physics.

After gaining industrial experience on the shop floor and Technical Departments of Rolls Royce (1971) Ltd. joined the Associated Engineering Group where he works as a Scientist in the Research and Development establishment.

Is an active member of Earlston Young Conservatives and bats sailing among his hobbies.




**JOSIE ROBERTS-POWELL**

A native of Worcester-shire, Josie Roberts-Powell, has been in Coventry for about seven years. She was educated at Bromsgrove High School, and later obtained a B.Sc. Degree in Sociology at Birmingham Polytechnic.

She was a Careers Officer for five years with Coventry Corporation, and is now employed by Warwickshire County Council.

She is at present Secretary of Earlston Young Conservatives.

Her interests include Cookery, Winemaking and the Theatre.



**BARRY PAGE**

Aged 27, single, and has lived in Coventry for nearly 6 years.

Has a career in technical authorship and is employed at Rolls Royce (1971) Ltd.

An active member of the Young Conservatives, his main interests outside politics are the theatre, sports and ballroom dancing. Takes a keen interest in Civic Affairs.

**UNITED IN ACTION**

**TO THE ELECTORS OF WESTWOOD WARD**

We are asking for your votes on Thursday, 10th May, because we wish to represent *YOUR* interests, and as a team of young people we have new ideas which we believe will be helpful on the new Coventry District Council.

We find the recent increase in the Rates by the controlling Labour Party completely unjustifiable, and if you elect us as your Councillors, we will endeavour to stop these unnecessary increases.

Although young ourselves, we are very concerned about the problems facing the elderly, and believe that they should be given 'a fair deal', particularly in their housing needs and in the Social Services.

Since Labour took control in Coventry last year, Municipal Tenants have been denied the right to buy their homes. We believe this to be wrong, and we should strongly support any move to give back this amenity to tenants.

An essential in Education is the right of parents to have choice in the schooling of their children. For this reason, we support the retention of Grammar Schools and Comprehensive Schools.

You have **THREE** votes on 10th May. Please use them to vote Conservative!

JOSIE ROBERTS-POWELL, DAVID CROSS, BARRY PAGE

**FOR ALL THE PEOPLE**

*Election Propaganda Included an Information Pamphlet that Listed a Mini Profile of the Three Young Conservative Candidates, together with an Action Plan to Help Garner Votes from the Westwood Ward Electors. Coventry District Council Elections, May, 1973.*



*Barry and David Cross at David's Wedding to Susan Jackson, Lanchester, County Durham, April, 1973.*



*David and Susan Cross at their Wedding Reception. Lanchester, County Durham, April, 1973.*

The lead up to the wedding included the respective ‘stag’ and ‘hen’ parties. Although not privy to the ladies’ outing, I was fully involved with Dave’s bachelor bash, and the Earlsdon YCs made sure he was given a memorable send off. As usual, we congregated at “The Old Mill” in Baginton and Dave was plied with several rounds of beer. Later in the evening Dave wasn’t feeling too much pain and significantly worse for wear. I suspect some of the beer had been ‘doctored’. Since I was his chaperone I had to make sure he arrived home in one piece. When we arrived at his parents’ house, he suddenly woke up and pleaded with me not to take him in as he didn’t want his parents to see him in this condition. So I took him back to my flat and dumped him on my bed where he promptly threw up. That meant cleaning the affected area before turning out the light (I slept on the floor). Dave was so apologetic in the morning, but there was minimal damage and we resumed the day with his safe return home. I’m sure his mother was well aware of the circumstances and just shook her head and tut-tutted.

There was a certain amount of logistics involved with the wedding as guests were arriving from all points of the compass. Dave and I were assigned to be billeted with one of Susan’s relatives in Newcastle upon Tyne. Now this was in the heart of ‘Geordie’ country where a distinct and somewhat unintelligible dialect was spoken. This made for a linguistic challenge with our hosts, but everything went well. One highlight was the visit to a renowned country pub called “The Lord Crew Arms” in the remote village of Blanchland. Returning to our digs over the desolate and foggy moors was eerie at best – reminiscent of scenes from “The Hound of the Baskervilles”.

**L**ife continued unabated and, indeed, it appeared that I was overreaching things with my innumerable activities. Whether it was cultural pursuits at the theatre, sporting endeavours as a sailing crew-member at Draycote Water or gliding around the dance floor, there didn’t seem to be any respite. I was also earning my highest salary to date – £42.00p a week – and Rolls-Royce IMD was doing well with contracts to various navies, power stations and natural gas utilities.

The national political climate in 1973, however, was fraught with problems that ranged from terrorism to industrial unrest. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was waging a campaign of terror in England and was responsible for many bomb explosions that killed or maimed ordinary people. On one occasion, a bomb threat was phoned in to Rolls-Royce IMD and this precipitated a full-scale emergency evacuation of the works and offices. We all congregated in the car park and nobody seemed to take things seriously; although I made sure I was sheltering behind a sturdy brick wall and away from any potential bomb blast.

The main industrial unrest affected everyone as the coal miners and electricity workers started rotating strikes. With power interruptions and ‘brown outs’, it wasn’t long before industry as a whole started to feel the effects. To counteract the disruptions, the government instituted a three-day work week and other austerity measures. There were some bitter confrontations at the coal mines as nonunion replacement workers were brought in under riot police protection. The country’s future was looking bleak and I wasn’t prepared to stumble along in the current political climate. So my earlier aspirations of emigrating were resurrected and I started to put out feelers at the most promising destinations of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. New Zealand was considered the favourite and I advertised my services in the New Zealand News hoping to attract an employer or sponsor.



At work we tried to make light of the situation and any happy event was used for morale boosting. When our senior typist, Barbara Drummond, announced her wedding, the department made things festive by encouraging Barbara to wear a fancy dress and have her picture taken with colleagues. Ted Mitchell, our venerable poet, composed a verse and announced it at the photo session much to everyone's delight.

For my annual holidays I had, once again, considered the four-day Clarkson Travel trips and elected to return to Holland to see the spring flowers at the world famous Keukenhof Park in the small town of Lisse. We flew to Rotterdam and made excursions to a number of commercial tulip growers to see the rows of colourful flowers that were shipped around the world. Despite the cloudy conditions, the outstanding riot of colour at Keukenhof Park made up for the dull days. Most impressive was a 'river' of grape hyacinths that wove its way through woodland. We had a canal cruise and a trip out to the *Polderland* where we stopped for refreshments and I ate raw pickled herring, which was an acquired taste I enjoyed.

Sometime later in May I was walking along Queen Victoria Street in Coventry from where I had parked my car and, quite by chance, I met Monica Papworth. After some small talk I once again extended an invitation to dinner and this time Monica agreed. This was the first of a number of dates as the spring and summer went by and slowly our friendship became more sincere.

The first of two early outings was to a dinner-dance at the Wychbold Hotel in Sutton Coldfield. My colleague, Jack Hennell, had two spare tickets and I decided to take advantage of them and ask Monica out for the evening. We were well dressed for the occasion and a pleasant time was spent in each other's company. We also went for a long country ride to the Rhydspence Inn, a 14th century tavern near Hay on Wye, Herefordshire. The main reason to visit this place was an obscure association with my grandfather (Dad's father). In one of the family photo albums there's a picture of my grandfather standing outside the entrance to the Rhydspence Inn. I seem to recall him standing in a specific position with his right foot resting on some steps that were possibly used by post coach passengers. He was also smoking his pipe and his left hand was supporting the bowl. With this mental image I decided to replicate the scene and had Monica take a photo of me in roughly the same position. It was an idyllic ride with the Triumph's convertible soft top down most of the way.

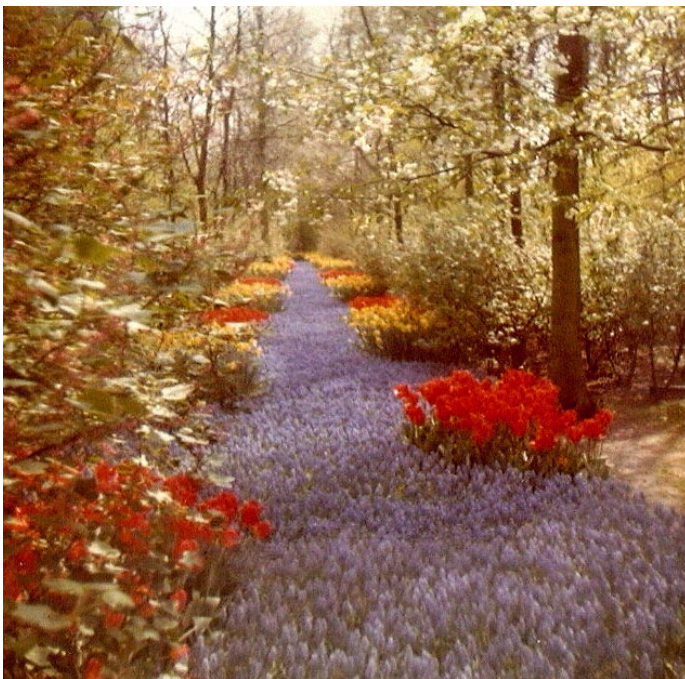
My Scottish holiday back in July, 1970, inspired me to make a further visit – this time to the West Coast Highlands and the Inner Hebrides islands. Transportation was mainly using long distance buses and some ferries that honoured a special travellers' pass. My recollections are hazy as to how I initially went, but suspect that I took the train to Glasgow as I know I stayed overnight at the station hotel. I spent some time exploring downtown on foot and even took a short ride on the Glasgow Underground train. When walking along Sauchihall Street I came across an arguing man and woman, each berating one another in a broad Glaswegian brogue that was completely unintelligible to me. This seemed like life in the raw and perhaps typical of the local working class culture.

The route was flexible and I gradually made my way to Kyle of Lochalsh on the West Coast. Accommodation was Bed & Breakfast, and at Kyle I was hard pressed for a room and ended up at one place that could only provide a couch in the living room. As beggars couldn't be choosers I accepted the offer and waited for





*A Light Hearted Occasion in the Rolls-Royce IMD Office when Senior Typist, Barbara Drummond, was Dressed up for her Wedding Announcement. From Left to Right: Barry, Colin Simco, Barbara Drummond, Ted Mitchell, Lynda Prosser, Ann Burrell, Bob Bennett in the Background, Ansty, Coventry, May, 1973.*



*A 'River' of Grape Hyacinths at the World Renowned Keukenhof Park, Lisse, Holland, May, 1973.*



*Barry Sampling a Raw Pickled (Soused) Herring, a Typical Dutch Dish, Polderland, Holland, May, 1973.*





*Barry and Monica Papworth in the Back Garden of Monica's Home at 305, Broad Lane, Coventry, just before our Dinner Date at the Wychbold Hotel, Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham, June, 1973.*



*Barry outside the 14th Century Rhydspence Inn, near Hay on Wye, Herefordshire, where his Paternal Grandfather Similarly once Posed, June, 1973.*



*Iona Island and Abbey Associated with St. Columba and Burial Place for Numerous Scottish, Irish and Norwegian Kings, Scotland, June, 1973.*



*Fingal's Cave, Island of Staffa, Legendary Home of the Celtic Hero Finn McCool, who also Built the Giant's Causeway, Scotland, June, 1973.*

all the other guests to go to bed before ‘crashing’ myself. Unfortunately, one other visitor, a schoolteacher, insisted on continuing a philosophical conversation until the early hours, and he had extremely fixed views that culminated in his final statement: “We are living in a misbegotten society!”

The following day took me to the furthest reaches of the trip as the bus – via the ferry – crossed the narrow inlet to Kyleakin on the Isle of Skye. In the drizzly weather, the Cuillin Hills appeared brooding and menacing in the distance, but I arrived at Portree to find a busy fishing harbour with colourful boats and peaceful atmosphere. I then located a small terraced house offering Bed & Breakfast for £1.00p a night! This was an incredible deal. After settling down I decided to walk around and explore the harbourfront (actually started to hike towards the Cuillins, but bad weather forced me back to Portree). The dominant building there was the pub where locals and visitors met and everyone was having a good time with laughter resounding across the harbour.

The next morning after a hearty breakfast and my elderly landlady saying, “Arr ye awee noo?”, I retraced my steps to Kyle of Lochalsh, continued to Fort William, nestled at the base of Ben Nevis, and on to Oban. One of my life’s ambitions was to visit the Island of Staffa and a close up look at the island’s claim to fame – Fingal’s Cave. This desire was inspired by Mendelssohn’s classical overture that I knew so well. It so happened that a tourist boat excursion from Oban to the Holy Island of Iona also incorporated a sail past Fingal’s Cave. The weather seemed fine and, after securing accommodation, I made arrangements to embark on the short voyage. The island of Iona is located just to the west of the Ross of Mull, a peninsula of the Isle of Mull. The ancient abbey and nunnery, associated with St. Columba, are important religious sites and are kept in good condition. After a stop ashore to visit the abbey where numerous kings of Scotland, Ireland and Norway are buried, we continued to sail past the Island of Staffa for a view of Fingal’s Cave, which could be clearly seen, as well as the signature basalt columns at the entrance that added an air of mystery.

I continued from Oban down the Kintyre peninsula to the fishing port of Campbeltown. This was the extent of the ‘Highlands and Islands’ trip as I finished my journey through the Central Highland glens and Loch Lomond before arriving in Glasgow and the final train trips to Birmingham and Coventry.

While I was away I sent postcards, including one to Monica that announced the fulfilment of my ambition to see Fingal’s Cave. I was anxious to continue our relationship and, during the next month, we dated regularly with visits to the cinema, an orchestral concert in Birmingham and the occasional dinner or country pub outing. We favoured “The Bear” at Berkswell and “The White Lion” in nearby Hampton-in-Arden. Monica’s parents always made me welcome at their Broad Lane home for a cup of tea. I had many meaningful conversations with Mr. Percy Papworth, who was a retired chief draughtsman from the Wickman Wimet Company, manufacturers of sintered carbide segments for the machine tool industry. We sometimes made a foursome and dined at the “Blackdown” restaurant near Warwick and, with Marjorie and Eric Brains, some mutual fiends of Muriel and Percy Papworth, we went to the “George in the Tree” pub and restaurant at the village of Balsall Common.

One of the more unusual dates with Monica was a picnic outing with a difference. I had seen an advertisement about a hot air balloon rally on the grounds of Stanford Hall, a stately home near Rugby. Having



never been close up to a hot air balloon this was an opportunity to witness them in a colourful take off. The day was nice and sunny – just ideal for the event. We set off with the picnic hamper and, upon arrival, found that the launch site was already a hive of activity. Some balloons were fully inflated, tethered to the ground and ready to take off. Others were laid out or gradually being filled with hot air. To see the balloons lift off *en masse* was a thrilling sight and from that day on whenever we see hot air balloons in the sky it always reminds us of this occasion. Soon afterwards we found a secluded spot for our picnic and afterwards a little ‘necking’ time. When fully occupied in our amorous advances, we heard a whooshing sound and discovered one of the balloons drifting directly over us. One can only assume what the occupants were thinking as they peered over the side of the balloon’s basket and observed our activity.

### *The die is cast*

August, 1973, was a defining month that began with a short summer vacation. Dave Cross had suggested a camping holiday to a small group of YCs. The plan was to spend a week or so down on the South Coast of England, including a stop in the New Forest, Hampshire, and also on the Isle of Wight. Dave rented a Ford Cortina estate wagon to carry the camping gear and six passengers that consisted of Dave and Susan, John and Cassie, Jim Fraser and myself. The weather was excellent and we drove straight to the campsite in the New Forest near Brockenhurst. The warm weather enticed us to the coast with a side trip to Lulworth Cove in Dorset to spend a day sunbathing on the beach. The picturesque cove, a photographers’ and artists’ paradise, is dominated by the natural rock arch called Durdle Door. Back at the New Forest, we discovered a remarkable country inn called the “Cat and Fiddle” with its characteristic thatched roof and delicious pub grub. Later in the week we took the car ferry from Lymington to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight and spent some time in the Sandown and Shanklin area before returning home.

Fate was now about to intervene. My efforts trying to attract a sponsor for emigration had fallen on stony ground. There appeared to be no interest in my qualified services. England was now reeling under an inflation rate of 8.4% and Value Added Tax (VAT) had been introduced. VAT proved to be totally unpopular as it eclipsed the old Purchase (Sales) Tax and garnered more revenue than ever before.

One day, however, I returned to the office after lunch in the cafeteria and noticed a colleague reading his copy of The Daily Telegraph newspaper. I casually looked over his shoulder to glance at the ‘Sits. Vac.’ page that he had opened and immediately noticed an advertisement for engineers and technical writers. Furthermore, the company that was actively seeking such personnel was United Aircraft Company of Canada Limited (UACL), based in Longueuil, a community located on the South Shore opposite Montréal. This piqued my interest and I took down the particulars about interviews being conducted at Canada House, London. I had to do some diplomatic negotiating to have the day off (it was Monday, August 20, 1973) and made plans to attend the interview.

Naturally I had to broach the subject with my parents, and obviously it was something that didn’t sit well with my mother. My father didn’t show any emotion, but perhaps he secretly wished me success knowing that there was little future for anyone in a country racked with industrial turmoil and political discontent.



*Monica at the Hot Air Balloon Rally, Stanford Hall, Rugby, Warwickshire, August, 1973.*



*Durdle Door Rock Arch, Lulworth Cove, Dorset, August, 1973.*



*Cat and Fiddle Inn, Near Brockenhurst, New Forest, Hampshire, August, 1973.*



*Alan and Gayle Radford at their Wedding Reception, Newdigate Sports Club, Exhall, Warwickshire, September, 1973.*



At the allocated time I visited Canada House and met the two men who would eventually seal my fate. They were the personnel manager and the technical publications manager. The interview was straightforward and consisted of informal discussions, analysis of work samples and company expectations in the event of hire. The session culminated in a mutual understanding and an offer of employment. Ostensibly, the hiring contract extended for two years in which both parties could sever ties if needed. In the event of an early resignation, however, the employee was obliged to repay all outstanding sponsorship expenses to the company. UACL was prepared to pay for the one-way flight to Montréal and a nominal *per diem* allowance until the issuance of a biweekly paycheque. Also the company arranged for the services of a bilingual advisor to help find accommodation and generally assist in the acclimatisation process.

The momentous decision had far reaching consequences. I had to quit my present job; vacate the flat and sell most of my personal effects and, in essence, remove myself from friends and family. When I informed my parents, my mother was visibly dejected although neither of them implored me to change my mind. My friends tended to put on a brave face; even jokingly saying that I would soon be back to Blighty. A more than serious relationship had evolved in the intervening months since I first met Monica; so it was particularly difficult for me to tell her of my future plans, even though we had discussed the real possibility of my emigration. To compound the situation, Monica and her parents had just left for a two week holiday in Norway. As there was no means of softening the blow I felt there was no choice but to write a letter to Monica at her Norwegian hotel and break the news.

At work I hadn't made a secret of my intentions once the interview was arranged. The country's political and economic climate was instrumental in a mini-exodus as one of the typists, Ann Burrell, left to emigrate to Australia, and my colleague, Colin Simco, decided to follow in my footsteps. Arthur Nicholls, one of the technical illustrators, later left to join his son in Australia. UACL had advised me that the work visa and other emigration paperwork would take up to two months to clear through the system, so my notice at Rolls-Royce IMD extended to some time in November.

The two months also provided breathing room to methodically dispose of my effects. I had numerous offers at work for items of furniture, but the modular teak sideboard unit was bought by my dancing partner, Gayle, who was about to start married life. Gayle and Alan made their wedding vows on September 8th, 1973, at Exhall Church where I acted as one of the ushers. From then on, of course, the dancing partnership dissolved, but we had enjoyed our time spent 'tripping the lights fantastic'. David and Susan were still setting up home and acquired some of my smaller items. In the end all I was left with was the bed, which Alan Hancock took away on the last day I spent in the flat. The rent, electricity and gas bills were paid to finally shut up shop at No. 145, John Fox House.

On separate occasions, the YC crowd and my coworkers at Rolls-Royce IMD made sure I was given a good send-off. The traditional meeting place for the YCs, "The Old Mill" in Baginton, was the scene of a wild party that ensured I wasn't overlooked. At the end of the evening, it was the turn of my good friend, Dave Cross, to take me home to his place for recuperation as I was in no fit state to stand up let alone drive. Whenever there was a departure from the office, it was customary to say farewell on a Friday lunchtime at "The Raven" pub in nearby Brinklow. The guest of honour had previously determined the number of drinks

and phoned the order through to the pub. My going away was well attended and, indeed, a memorable exit. There were many mini-speeches from the manager, Jim Mansfield, who after each anecdote presented me with a moderately sized cigar (I was partial to smoking cheroots at the time) until I had a pocket-full. Then it was the turn of the department's 'poet laureate', Ted Mitchell, who had specially composed a poem of several verses that he read aloud; much to the mirth of the gathered crowd. Jim Mansfield, Owen Manley and John Ellam had collaborated in designing the goodbye card, signed by all the office staff. It was a priceless memento of caricatures and verse; the essence of which went:

"I'll tell a short story about a tall Tory,  
Who's grown tired of the old status quo.  
So he's setting his sights to far greater heights,  
And decided that West he must go.

"This youth so astute sells all but his suit  
And cries "Cobblers" to Heath, hearth and home.  
For he's boarding a plane to that distant terrain  
Where grizzlies and lumberjacks roam.

"Say "Farewell, forsooth" to this venturesome youth,  
As he leaves old Albion's shores.  
Take heed of our hollers, hang on to your dollars.  
And the seat of your Union Jack drawers!"

It now remained to coordinate a journey to my parents in Hatfield and the departure from Heathrow Airport on Sunday, November 4th, 1973. The Triumph Herald was now sold, so I arranged for Monica to pick me up at John Fox House and, with two suitcases containing my worldly goods, drive to Hatfield in her parents' Hillman Avenger. The journey to Hatfield was a nail-biting one as we encountered dense freezing fog and early darkness. After dropping me off at Hatfield, Monica then drove to Luton, where she was staying overnight with her cousins, in the anticipation of seeing me off at the airport on the following day. The atmosphere at home was sombre and the depressing weather wasn't helping matters.

However, the die was cast and there was no turning back. My future was dependent on progressing in a new, younger country, and this opportunity had come my way. In the morning, Mum, Dad and myself drove to Heathrow Airport and I checked my luggage at the airline counter. In the departure lounge, Mum said, "Don't forget, if it doesn't work out you can always come home", as she fussed around making sure I was dressed properly. Dad was his usual quiet self and trying his best to keep his spirits up in a situation that, although deep down he approved, was charged with emotion.

The time to leave rapidly approached and there was no sign of Monica. The difficult farewell was made more painful as she didn't appear right up to the final boarding call and I could no longer wait. So, with many tears, handshakes, waves and a final *bon voyage* I continued down the departure ramp and found my seat on the '*plane to that distant terrain*' and then watched the receding silhouette of old Albion's shores.



