In Search of Sonia – and other family notes.

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Contents:

This is written at the time of my 60th birthday, my *shashti apda purti* in the Hindu stages of life. It is supposedly a time of
reflection and gratitude for a life. Reflection here can only mean some measure of self-indulgence, something in which old people should not be encouraged since, with age, there is often both growing insecurity and increasing vanity. I hope the self-indulgence here is tolerable since this is in the main a factual account - of the overlapping social networks, most of them unseen, which have shaped my life and woven it - albeit indirectly - into some of the momentous events of twentieth century. On the other hand, it is gossip, a family soap opera, but lacking the crafted edges and teleology that fiction allows: a real life remains inconsequential, the fortuitous merely fortuitous.

It starts with a detective story, the account of our search for my mother, Sonia. From there it moves out to recount the family descents that, by chance, are related to this story. At the end, in response to my children's criticisms of the first version, there is some account of my life - weak and descriptive, for sure, since I lack some of the egoism required to be seriously interested in my own life.

If Sonia's life has elements of tragedy, of self-destruction, another mother, Rose Harris, ensured I arrived at a full and vigorous adult life - even though I was hardly aware until much later, when I came to reflect on the damage Sonia might have wrought, of her singular act of salvation.

The background includes an age of unprecedented destruction, of two World Wars - and the deaths of at least 160 million people through war, international and civil. The shadow of violent death has lain across the twentieth century, much as the Black Death scarred the fourteenth century. This is particularly true for those who lived in the great battlegrounds of Europe and east Asia. The time includes also the Great Depression of the 1930s when it seemed capitalism as a system could not hold, of the break up of the great empires Europe carved out of the rest of the world in the preceding century, beginning with the British and ending, half a century later, with the Russian.

But it also includes unprecedented material and scientific

progress, transforming the lives of millions, first in North America and Western Europe, then Japan and East Asia, and finally much of the rest of the world. When I was young and a villager, we farmed with horses, pitching the hay with forks onto wagons; milking was in the main by hand; in the autumn, the schools closed for a fortnight so that we children could help in the fields, digging potatoes – now, forty five years later, it is almost impossible to imagine it as other than ancient history.

The progress, in many ways, broke the links of continuity with the past. It also made possible what was, by the standards of the past, extraordinary liberation, the partial – or contradictory – freeing of women, a sexual revolution (marked in the 1960s), a rethinking of the State and authority. The fragmentary notes here omit most of this background, but make no ultimate sense without it.

In Search of Sonia

I grew up, from the earliest time, with the knowledge that I was an adopted child. There were fragments of information – that I was given the name Nigel by my mother at birth in Liverpool on the 4th July 1935, that my mother's name was Sonia, she was unmarried when I was born but married an Austrian two years after my birth, and my father was an Indian law student, son of an important lawyer in Madras in south India. Just after my second birthday, I was brought to a small children's home within a larger health centre in Leatherhead, Surrey. I was brought by a French woman (identified half a century later by Basil Jaques, but the name has now been forgotten), a close friend of Sonia's, for a holiday while my mother `worked something out'. The centre was run by Rose Harris who subsequently, as the holiday was extended, became my foster mother. Clifford, her husband, took us north to Nottingham and a new job in 1939, and sometime during the second World War, I was formally adopted.

This unorthodox background did not particularly trouble me, and I was not especially curious about it, a fact I now attribute to the care which I experienced as a Harris. There were then few Indians or people of Indian descent in Britain, particularly in the village in Lincolnshire, Chapel St Leonards (north of Skegness) where we came to live, so the fact that I was too dark to be of English extraction was no more than a curiosity – like a prominent birthmark or a minor disability – which I and everyone else took for granted. Only when Clifford came to work in what was then British Malaya (what is now Malaysia) and we joined him (the family now included a second adopted son, Peter), was I obliged to confront directly race

prejudice. After just over a year, I fled, leaving the family and returning to Britain. Aged 15, I went back to Chapel St Leonards and a rented room for the rest of my school years. I did my two years compulsory military service (in then-British Nigeria), 1954-56, three years at Oxford, 1956-59, and then went for a doctorate to the London School of Economics, 1959-62.

In July 1960, Tirril Gatty, the girl I had met at Oxford and whom I was to marry, needed a new birth certificate. I kept her company when she went to the national registration centre, then in Somerset House. As I waited for her, with some idle curiosity, I flicked through the birth register for 1935, and to my astonishment, found there only one case of a Nigel born in Liverpool on the 4th of July - to a woman living on Prince's Street called Joyce Phillips. My curiosity was now aroused. I checked the marriage register for the years following 1935 and, again to my astonishment, found a Joyce Phillips of Marchmont Street in Holborn, London, marrying a Franz Paul Jaques, lawyer, on the 23rd of October 1937. The witnesses were also lawyers - Thomas Esmer Rhys-Roberts and E. Graham-Little. Imagine the shock when we then consulted the current London telephone directory and found a barrister of the Inns of Court with the name F.P. Jaques, living at an address on Elgin Crescent in Kensington.

I think that I still could not connect this with me; it was some kind of coincidence, or a sort of fiction. I wrote to a good friend, Peter Sedgwick, then living in Liverpool, also an adopted child, and he went round to the Prince's Street address and talked to the bemused people living there; they knew nothing of a Joyce Phillips. Otherwise, Tirril and I did nothing to go any further.

Sometime later, in 1961, Tirril's friend Mary Harris (no relation) came to stay. We told her the story as a curiosity. Her view was that matters could not be allowed to rest in this inconclusive state - the mystery must be solved. Neither Tirril nor I had the courage to act, so with our agreement, Mary did. She telephoned Franz Paul Jaques at his office to ask if his wife's name had been Joyce Phillips before marriage. With some puzzlement, he said it was. The puzzlement was not simply that a stranger should ring him to ask him this; all her life, Sonia had rejected the name Joyce. He must have rung Sonia to warn her - perhaps fearing a blackmail attempt - since when Mary tried to ring Elgin Crescent, the number was engaged. When Mary did get through, she asked Sonia if her name before marriage had been Joyce Phillips; Sonia agreed, and then Mary asked if she had been in Liverpool in July 1935 - at which point, Sonia put the phone down.

Tirril was so alarmed at this outcome, at the possible damage we might have inflicted upon Sonia by our clumsy exposure of her secrets (who knows? perhaps she had had nightmares about this kind of thing for years), she immediately wrote a letter to Sonia to apologise. She invented an excuse, saying she was intending to marry me and her parents wanted reassurance that my family descent did not involve some dreadful disabilities. Her letter must have been delivered the following morning and must have been reassuring since Sonia rang us immediately. It was 8 o'clock and we were still in bed. She agreed to meet Tirril.

They met in a Kensington coffee bar. She was, Tirril says, a beautiful woman and welldressed. Sonia firmly refused to meet me, and made Tirril promise that she would never seek to contact her two subsequent sons, the youngest of whom, Paul, was studying economics at University College London (where Tirril was reading for a second degree, in psychology). Basil was the eldest son.

We suddenly had much more information. The fictions were growing richer. My father's name was Mahadevan. His father was rich and a famous Madras lawyer; his mother, a well-known singer of Carnatic music. Sonia remembered hearing records of her voice as, supposedly, I was conceived. Sonia had, outrageously for the time, set up house with Mahadevan in an apartment in Maida Vale when she was eighteen or so, in 1933 or 34. Mahadevan’s father, who was unknowingly paying their bills, discovered the relationship. He was outraged, forbade them to marry and ordered his son to return to Madras on pain of being cut off. Mahadevan was in London in the final stages of Sonia’s pregnancy, but not at the very end.

Sonia, young and now alone, threw herself on the mercy of Mahadevan’s best friend, then a doctoral student in Liverpool (hence the entirely misleading clue as to my place of birth). When Mahadevan, in direct conflict with the wishes of his parents, escaped from Madras and sailed back to Britain, she returned to London. But they were poverty-stricken. Mahadevan tried to work - he tried to drive a truck to Edinburgh and work as a film extra - but the relationship, it seemed, was beyond repair. They parted.

Sonia said nothing of her own family of origin, nothing on exactly why the relationship came to an end, and nothing on why she gave me up after two years' of life with her.

There the story ended, and although I would have liked to meet her, Tirril and I accepted that we had promised not to pursue

matters further – and her trust in Tirril's integrity turned upon not doing anything more. We hardly expected we would discover more.

We finished our respective degrees, and then set off for two years' travelling in Asia. We wanted to go to Japan, then just emerging rapidly as an important industrial power, but the only work we could get was in India, courtesy of a friend of Tirril's stepfather (Thomas Balogh) – P.C. Mahalanobis, head and founder of the famous Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. The trip to India was thus accidental, not in pursuit of ghosts.

We drove overland from London and spent just over a year in India – between Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta – before moving on, ultimately to Japan. We made no attempt to go to Madras or make other enquiries – where would one start in such an enormous country ? We moved on to south east Asia, taught in Tokyo for a few months, and then when Tirril was already pregnant with our first child, Kate, travelled back to England by train from Hong Kong, through China to Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin and home. I went to teach – and the pair of us to create a family – in York, but after a couple of years, we returned to London. There were no more clues or searching, nor did we expect them.

More than ten years after Tirril's meeting with Sonia, in 1972, I had a research appointment at Oxford which involved living in Bombay for a period. So off we set, now with our second child, Dilip. This time we made a trip to the south. In Madras, I checked the name Mahadevan in the telephone directory, without knowing that still at that time many people did not have surnames, and their given names were used instead (confusion was reduced by the two initials before the given name – standing for the first letter of the name of the locality where the family originated, and of the given name of the person's father). There seemed to be an immense number of Mahadevans in the directory and none that I could identify as a lawyer. We gave up.

More years passed with what was not much more than an anecdote about a Sonia. However, from 1978, seventeen years after Tirril met Sonia, matters changed with great speed. In that year, I was part of a mission to advise the British aid Ministry on aid policy for India's cities. By then, the good friend I had made during my earlier stay in Bombay, Bain D'Souza, had become Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Housing, the agency then responsible for India's cities. In Delhi, he invited the mission home for supper.

Late in the evening, with plenty of whisky, I was chatting to

Bain's wife, Neela. She mentioned a story, The Love Child, that she had once written in a journal, **Quest** (May-June 1971, pp.39-45; as I write this, I have the copy Neela gave me, but it will surely not survive the years). It was about what we called in those days, an illegitimate child, a bastard. In the spirit of the occasion, I told my little story as an illegitimate - only to discover that Neela was from a Madras family. `We will find your father', she said.

By chance, almost exactly a year later (Dec. 1979), I was again in India as a consultant to the Ministry of Works and Housing. By then Bain had retired from the civil service and become Director of the Indian Administrative Staff College in Hyderabad. I travelled there as part of my work and stayed with the D'Souzas. I asked Neela whether she had had any luck. She said she had put the matter in the hands of her lawyer-sister, Ramani Natarajan. Neela was somewhat vague, saying Ramani had come up with a judge called Veeraswamy `or something'. I was, I fear, a bit disappointed, but continued my mission to the far south-west, to Trivandrum.

I was scheduled to return north from Trivandrum via Madras to Calcutta and thence to Delhi. But in Trivandrum, I discovered with dismay that Indian Airlines had made some last minute changes in the scheduled flights. I was now due to call in to Madras for only twenty-four hours - most of it on a Sunday when it would be most difficult to meet anyone relevant to my mission. I was to arrive on a Saturday evening, and then go on to Calcutta on Sunday evening. I knew no one in Madras, but many people in Calcutta, and Madras was at that time `dry' - that is, alcohol was illegal (but it was legal in Calcutta). The plane from Trivandrum to Madras carried on to Calcutta so that it would have been the simplest thing just to stay on the plane that Saturday evening, and find a warm welcome in Calcutta. I remember, sitting on the plane as it came into land, debating whether to write off Madras and continue. But I finally decided not to, partly because the British Council who were organizing my visit, would have sent a car and driver to meet me at Madras airport, and nobody would know what had happened if I just did not arrive. As it turned out, the next twenty four hours led to almost the whole story unfolding.

I was booked in at Spencers' Connemara Hotel which was then (and may still be, if it survives) a friendly and efficient place. I arrived, tired and grumpy, but my spirits cheered when the young man showing me to my room said he was happy to find me a couple of bottles of beer - prohibition was not so tight. There was also, to my surprise, a message, asking me to ring Neela's sister, Ramani. This I did. Ramani welcomed me to Madras, and said that, if I was not too tired, perhaps I would

care to come round and join a little party at her house in Kilpauk. She would send a car to collect me. After a shower and a change of clothes, I set out in much better spirits.

At the party, I discovered brandy was flowing freely and I spent a pleasant time chatting to the other guests. Although people in the crowded room took polite notice when I arrived, no-one, including Ramani, made any reference to my obscure origins. I assumed that, as Neela had suggested, nothing had been discovered.

Later in the evening, I fell into conversation with Ramani, and, when there was a pause in the talk, casually asked whether she had had any luck in the quest set her by Neela to identify Mahadevan. After a moment's hesitation, she replied in substance that:

> `Oh, we never had any doubt. There were very few Madras families in the 1930s with sons being educated in London. But in any case, my senior' (the senior lawyer who trained her when she was a trainee lawyer, NH) `had been a junior in your grandfather's practice when the whole scandal broke, and he told me the story. It was all over Madras'.

I was nonplussed. But now the information came and thick and fast. Jayarama, Mahadevan's father, had had three sons of which Mahadevan was the eldest and a film maker with the famous Gemini Studios; he had died of a heart-attack in 1971 (one year before Tirril and I made our first visit to Madras). The second brother, K.J.Natarajan, was now retired in Madras, but had been general manager of the State Bank of India in Bombay. Finally, the youngest, K.J.Sukumaran worked for the textile group, Mettur Beardsall and lived in Madras with his family.

Ramani's husband, also a Natarajan, told me that he had had a close drinking relationship with K.J. Natarajan (who was a prodigious Scotch consumer). He suggested that he ring him in the morning and broach the subject of my meeting him. The fiction was becoming alarmingly realistic. `How will you explain it to him?' I asked. `Oh, I'll say there's some Englishman here, asking about his family'. The whole story sounded ridiculous - or threatening. I went back to the hotel to it sleep off.

The following morning, Ramani rang me at the hotel to say her husband had indeed spoken to KJ Natarajan who would like to meet me. I was again astonished, if not alarmed. It was arranged that it should be on `neutral' ground (that is, without risking family observation), at the Madras Gymkhana

Club at 11.00 that morning.

Ramani's husband came to collect me and took me to the Club. It was, if I remember, an old ramshackle place, built by the English in the high noon of empire, with, I think, wicker furniture and silver plaques for cricket, pictures of past presidents and cricket teams.

I had to make a telephone call to fix my one official appointment in Madras for that afternoon. While I was doing so in the corner of the large open sitting room, K.J.Natarajan arrived and sat down with Ramani's husband about four metres away. I was not aware of his presence so he had time to have a good look at me before I finished my call. I turned to face him - a thin elderly man -and started to walk across the room. He stared at me intently, rose and walked towards me. He put his arms round me and said, `Welcome to Madras. I am your uncle Natarajan. What kept you so long?'. I was stunned.

We sat and talked. More fragments emerged. It seemed Natarajan had always known about me. Indeed, Mahadevan had asked him to find me when he came to London in 1960 or 61. But he found it impossible to trace either a woman called Sonia Phillips or a man called Nigel Phillips.

His elder brother, he said, had been a debonair man-about-town and a great dancer (at the Connemara) in the 1930s. In London, he has been well-known among the set of upper middle class Indians there then (including, supposedly, Radhakrishnan, the future President of independent India). But while he spent a lot of money, he failed the entrance examinations for the Indian Civil Service (held in London), failed to persist in a law degree and in an economics degree course at the London School of Economics, failed indeed to do what his father had sent him to London for. But he did come to live with an English girl, a matter of outrage for a rich Tamil Brahmin family of conservative Madras. He was ordered home in 1935 on pain of having his income from his father, Jayarama, stopped. Once in Madras, he was virtually imprisoned. Jayarama's Chief Clerk in the law firm was given the task of monitoring his activity (the law practice was based in the great house where Jayarama's family lived). He intercepted the letters from Sonia so that Mahadevan received none of them.

Perhaps it was this complete lack of communication that induced Sonia, in despair, to flee to Liverpool, to throw herself on the mercy of Mahadevan's friend from schooldays, Subramanian, then a doctoral student of botany at Liverpool University. Even then it was hinted that Subramaniam had taken unfair advantage of Sonia and that this was the reason that, when Mahadevan

finally escaped from his father's house and took a tramp steamer back to England, it proved impossible to restore the relationship. Nonetheless, Mahadevan tried, especially since now there was a child, and presumably Sonia was penniless. But Mahadevan now had no income from his father. He tried working as a truck driver on the Edinburgh run and at Ealing film studios as an extra. But the relationship could not be mended. He only gave up hope when he learned Sonia was to marry a German lawyer. He returned to Madras before Sonia's marriage, emotionally distraught.

Natarajan also said that Mahadevan married on his return to India. He had had two daughters. The eldest, Lakshmi, had once been an all-India tennis star, seeded for Wimbledon, he said. She later worked on the staff of the Connemara Hotel. Her sister, Sharad, had studied French (as had Mahadevan) and married a Frenchman, Jean Lartet, at that time on the staff of the Madras Alliance Francaise. They lived in Paris with Jean's son by an earlier marriage. Neither daughter had had children.

Finally, Natarajan said he might telephone Lakshmi and see if she would like to meet me. He could not say whether Mahadevan's widow might not be upset to learn of my existence, so he would have to approach the question discreetly. We parted with me in a state of mild shock - or still persistent disbelief. It is as if I was detached, watching myself as an observer, uninvolved in the action.

I had lunch with Ramani and her husband - with much feverish talk of the amazing outcome. Ramani, as she confessed, watched me closely to see how I was reacting. I then went off to complete my one mission interview in Madras. I returned at about 3.30 to Ramani's house. As I was driven into the garden, Ramani came on to the porch and called: `Prepare yourself, Nigel, the whole family is gathering to meet you at four o'clock at your step-mother's house in Gandhi Nagar'. My flight to Calcutta left at 6.30.

Ramani insisted on coming with me - she was, after all, the midwife of this strange rebirth. How did I feel? She asked. `As if I have accidentally wandered onto the film-set of a Tamil musical, only to discover I am expected to play the star role - but without anyone giving me the script'. We drove across Madras to Gandhi Nagar in the south, an upper middle class modern suburb of large separate houses, masses of trees and large gardens.

We stopped outside number 40, and as we did so, a grey haired woman in a sari came on to the porch smiling. As I learned later, she said something to those behind her in the house

about my being chubby, so I must be her husband's son. I got out of the car with embarrassment and approached her, not knowing what I was supposed to do. But she was not at all embarrassed. She came and embraced me to welcome `her son'. Simultaneously, a pretty young woman in a splendid sari followed her out, introduced herself as my sister, Lakshmi, and also hugged me. It was all most perplexing.

In the sitting room in the house was K.J. Natarajan, his wife, also called Lakshmi (or Chin as she was nicknamed) and their daughter, Rajni. We sat and talked, and peculiar though it seemed, I was astonished at how swiftly we all settled into these quite new roles - a new mother, Amma (mother in Sanskrit), two new sisters (I had had no sister before, they had never had a brother, let alone an elder one), a new uncle, aunt and cousin.

It seemed the power of programmed social roles overwhelmed any strangeness, and in a matter of minutes. I had no time to linger in shock before I was being absorbed, as a rightful - indeed, important - member of a quite strange social network. They in turn were eager to hear about Tirril and Amma's only grandchildren, Kate and perhaps especially (in a male chauvinist culture), Dilip (the fact that Dilip had an Indian name was due more to Tirril than me. We had both been very fond of our best friend in India, Dilip Mukerji, but without Tirril's passion for boys' names beginning with D, our son might never had had an Indian name).

In turn, I learned. The family were Tamil Brahmins, descendants of the educated and priestly caste, prosperous, English-educated professionals or businessmen. They were descended two or three generations earlier from rural landlords in a village, Kadamburi, near the provincial town of Kumbakonam in the rich rice-growing area of Tanjore (Thanjavur)in the far south. It was said the ancient lineage of the family was recited by a priest in Varanasi (and would there be, at the end, I wondered a KM Nigel and a Tirril of Camden Town, or KN Dilip and a Kate?).

We talked of Mahadevan's life as a film actor in the early 1940s, and then a director and finally a director-producer with his own company. To my astonishment, there were photographs of him on the wall, pictures of my grandparents. Everyone said I looked so like my father, they had no doubts as soon as they saw me (and the lack of doubts also surprised me). Natarajan was keen for me to relate to his daughter, then in her mid-twenties and clearly rather sick (with, I felt, a tragic case of anorexia; she died the following year).

The third, youngest brother, Sukumaran (`Suku'), and his family were out of town. Suku was a manager with the textile firm, Mettur Beardsall, linked to the Tootall group in Britain. He and his wife, Lalitha, had two grown up children. Padma (nicknamed Bethi) was a history lecturer at a women's college in Madras and preparing her doctorate on classical temple sculptures of Tamilnad. In 1979, she had married Ashok Anantra, a chemistry graduate who later studied management, and then tourism in Glasgow, before becoming Sales Manager to the Sheraton hotels division of ITC (Indian Tobacco Corporation). Narayan, Suku's second child and a boy, was a doctoral student of electronic engineering in the United States.

In a little more than an hour, the story filled out like a balloon, instructing me, it seemed, in new identities, new roles, and above all, vast areas of uncertainty. My powers to absorb it in such a short time were not tested – the departure of my flight to Calcutta had to end the exposure. Everyone came to the airport to wave me off.

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I had always been reluctant to talk about my obscure parentage. It was unromantic, un-heroic. But now there was a story to be told and a most unusual one. By the time I reached Calcutta, I was ready to tell it. Indeed, in telling the story to enough people, I was perhaps hoping to find out how I should feel about it.

The first person to listen was a very old friend from our first time in India in the early 1960s, Rita Mukerji. She heard me out, hugged me with joy and declared: `Now you are one of us – isn't that wonderful? When you lived in Calcutta no one ever believed you were not Indian or that that awful English accent of yours wasn't put on'. I told her daughter, Tuki, then a budding journalist on the Economic Times, and she responded, `Uncle Nigel, it makes me shiver, it's so exciting'. And in Delhi, I told another old friend, Subhash Chakravarti, then with the Times of India. He responded gruffly, `Gossip! that's all those bloody Tamils ever do'.

Yet, lest I think I might have invented the whole thing, in Delhi I was telephoned by my third uncle, Sukumaran, and aunt Lalitha. They were so excited at the discovery of a lost nephew, and sad not have met me in Madras (there was no time to meet in Delhi). I could only reflect on the mysteriousness of family bonds:how was it possible for us, without a common past, simply to take up these roles without question ?

Back in London, the story created a further round of ripples,

encompassing now the outer reaches of what was becoming the Mahadevan family. Tirril discovered she had become, without knowledge or choice, a Hindu daughter-in-law. Kate and Dilip, then aged 15 and 13, were sure it was all a joke. Kate said we were the punk Brahmins of Camden Town. I also told the woman I regarded as my proper mother, Rose, and she was most understanding, although her comment – `I am so glad: now you know who you are' – left me winded. `I always did know', I replied.

However, from my point of view, the issue of my origins had now become a matter of great curiosity. Where had Sonia come from? How had she met Mahadevan? Why had they parted? Why had she abandoned her child after two years of looking after me? So Tirril and I set out to use the public sources of information as far as possible to reconstruct Sonia's origins. Second, we set out to see if we could re-establish contact with her. To take them in turn,

The Phillips

We set out to exploit the resources of the archive of births, deaths and marriages, now in St Catherine's House on Aldwych. When we had exhausted this – they extended back to about 1870 – we went to consult the parish registers in Western England where the Phillips came from. The family trees of the contributing families, the Phillips – with the Lears, Batts and Vickeries – from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, are attached at the end as an appendix.

The Phillips were, we presume, of Welsh origin, both because of the surname and because of the recurrence of the first name, Llewellyn, down the generations and long after one would have expected them to have forgotten this origin. Perhaps they were of mining stock, colliers, and migrated from Wales early in the nineteenth century to a cluster of pits (now long since closed) in districts north-east of Bristol on the borders and within Gloucestershire: Bitton, Hanham and Warmley.

A John Phillips, collier, married a Mary Ann in the 1830s. Of their five children, another John (1844–1907) of North Common was a boilermaker and married in 1861 at St Mary's Bitton in Gloucestershire a shoemaker, Harriet Batt (1837–1908). They had six children, and one of them, Benjamin Llewellyn (1877–1938) a boilermaker of Lawrence Hill, Bristol, was my grandfather, although our lives overlapped only by three years(and by then Sonia had cut off all contact with her family). At Bristol, in 1899, he married Florence Ada Lear (1879–1917), one of a great clan of Lears in that part of England. She was one of the twelve children of Joseph Lear (1839–1892), a stone mason of

Earl Street, and Mary Vickery (1840-1879), a servant (daughter of a shipwright) who married in Bristol in 1861. Sonia - or Joyce Florence - was the daughter. We did not persist to find if she had brothers and sisters (it seems she had one elder brother, living in Plymouth).

The detail becomes tedious - and Jack begat Jane begat etc. We gave up as the parish registers become increasingly difficult to read. With the Lears, we got back to John (1782?-1862) and Sarah (1777?-1855), masons of Mount Hill, and with the Batts, to William and Sarah Smith (born 25 Jan. 1761) of Bitton. In general, the men were miners (or colliers), masons, shoemakers, tailors, cordwainers, and the Phillips rose to be boilermakers and engineers. The trail of the Phillips went cold before the 1830s, perhaps because they were migrants into the area from unknown parishes.

Sonia was born on the 19th June, 1916, in the middle of the first World War, and in what was a crucial area for the naval war effort, Portsmouth. Was her father, Benjamin Llewellyn, drawn to the naval dockyard by the war's giant consumption of manpower? The family lived at 36 Newcomen Road, Stamshaw in Portsmouth. Only seven months after Sonia was born, her mother, aged 37, died of cancer and a heart attack. We can only guess at what effect this had (pre-marital pregnancy has some association with early loss of mother). What happened to the family? There is some suggestion that Sonia was boarded out to a convent for a time, and in later life, perhaps counted herself as a nominal Catholic. Seven years after Sonia's birth, her father, aged 41 and living at Maddens Hotel in Portsmouth, married a second time, Mary Luisa Lander, of Plymouth, aged 52, a farmer's daughter. That was in 1924 and only ten years later, Joyce Florence had become Sonia, had cut off her family and was living with an Indian in Maida Vale. The last fragment here is the death by toxemia in 1938 of Benjamin Llewellyn, aged 60, pensioned from the naval dockyard at Plymouth (now of 19 Sollox Place, Plymouth).

Secondly, we set out to find Sonia again. The Jaques' were no longer in the London telephone directory, but through the register of lawyers, we traced the retired Franz Paul to a cottage near Deal in Kent. The local telephone directory gave us the number.

I cannot now remember how, when I got back from Madras in 1979, I approached Sonia, whether by letter or by telephone. Tirril had occasionally sent her a letter when she lived in London and Sonia would then call her. Now that distant relationship was restored - and handed over to me. A bizarre relationship began to develop. I would, a few times a year, ring her or drop a

note (she always rang up immediately in response to letters), and we would chat. Sometimes she would answer my questions, sometimes she would tell me off or ridicule me in those tones only a mother could employ – although, from my point of view, we had no such relationship. I don't know whether it pleased her to restore contact, alarmed her, or was a matter of indifference – she proclaimed terror if I suggested I might drive down to see her (but then, as I learned much later, that was always her response – one had simply to go and face her out, in which case she would be welcoming). She was also terrified, she said, that I might make contact with her other sons – Basil, running his own business in Cambridge (and for a time in Corfu), and Paul, now a medical doctor in North Carolina. Idly I checked the Cambridge telephone directory and found a B.T.Jaques of Sherlock Road. Often she was irritable and argumentative, asking what I wanted from her, why did I not leave her alone? She had no interest, it seemed, in my family, only in Kate, my daughter, to know if she `had',as she put it,`inherited my evil tendencies'

She would not tell me much about what had occurred when I was born nor about her relationship with Mahadevan. But she hinted at the trauma of my birth – once, she said, she has been unable to allow July 4th to pass each year without remembering my birth. She was anxious to be reassured that I had suffered no damage by being fostered, but she was vague about whether I had been adopted or not. Perhaps Franz Paul had taken charge of that – to spare her the torment. She said Franz Paul had wanted her to keep me, but did not say why she had decided otherwise. Perhaps she felt it was bad enough being a German in the Britain of the second World War without also having a black child. She had no interest in what had happened to me in Madras – she hated them, she said, since they had `tried to steal me away', a somewhat bizarre charge since she had then given me away.

She knew nothing, she said, of her original family after she ran away in, I suppose 1932 or 1933 - she hated them. Something had happened with a man on the train from Plymouth, she said, and then she became a child's nurse with a family in Harlow in Essex. It was a mystery how she got from Harlow to meet, by her standards, a rich Indian in central London. It linked to the two contradictory fictions which were emerging - the tale of a beautiful English girl on the make, upwardly mobile, exploiting briefly a rich young Indian, and then, when his money ran out, abandoning him for something more secure; or the story of a weak but rich young Indian, on the loose in a foreign city, exploiting a very young girl but abandoning her when his father threatened to cut him off from his inheritance.

Already the long shadows of the misery of her declining years were casting her life in darkness. But I learned that she had a dachshund that perpetually suffered from false pregnancies, that she made tapestry cushions (two of which she gave us), was a fanatical bridge player and a chain smoker. There was no talk of Franz Paul and he never answered the phone, so I supposed she lived alone.

Madras

In March, 1980 or 1981, we learned that the uncle I had met in the Madras Gymkhana had died suddenly from a heart attack, possibly related to his long term condition of cirrhosis of the liver. Just over a month later, his only child, Ranji, also died. I had in fact only just been in time to meet them.

In July, my new uncle, Sukumaran, and aunt Lalitha returned from staying with their son, Narayan, now a research assistant in electronics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and stopped with us for a few days in London. Lalitha had written to us in February that my appearance in Madras had been `the happiest event in the family in many long years', and it was inspiring to find `a branch of the family thriving so far away'.

Visitors from Madras started coming through London – in the spring of 1980, Ramani Natarajan passed through, on her way to teach in California. A little later, Lakshmi's younger sister, Sharad with her husband, Jean, drove over from Paris to stay with us in our cottage in east Suffolk. Sharad had been particularly close to her father, so the appearance of an elder brother was a matter of particular emotional significance. She gave me a couple of short stories, published by my father in 1938 and 1939 in a Madras periodical, Triveni (XI, 5 and 9). In July, we met in London, Lakshmi’s new husband, Muthukrishnan, manager of a medium-sized car manufacturing group.

However, by one of those flukes which mark this story, my relationship to Madras itself was also opening up on a much more elaborate basis. From 1980 to 1986, I was required to go there once or twice a year to run or supervise short training courses for the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority. The first trip, with my colleague, Desmond McNeil, came in the autumn of 1980.

I now stayed in the Mahadevan house, in the first floor apartment originally occupied by my father (it gave me an eerie sensation). I was assimilated in to the way of life of the

household, and at home at least a rigorous vegetarian. We met the friends of the family, for example, the well-known film star, also Lakshmi, who took us to see her shooting on set.

In long talks with Amma (mother, Nagamani), I tried again to reconstruct what had occurred to my father in London. On her account, Mahadevan finally returned to Madras at the end of April, 1937, emotionally shell-shocked, unable to work or find a purpose. He was marked by scandal and therefore not as easily marriageable as his family origin would otherwise suggest. Jayarama, his father, however, was determined that he should be married, and Mahadevan finally gave in. A link was arranged, despite opposition, with Nagamani, the very young daughter of a widow (that is, of relatively low marriageable status, although of distinguished family). Mahadevan refused to consider such a relationship until, through an officiating priest, he had told her the story of his tormented relationship in London and secured her free acceptance of him despite this scandalous affair. Amma said, as one so young, she was so delighted by this confidence, she gave her immediate consent.

Thereafter, she joined the joint family of the Jayaramas, the baby of the family. She remembered how terrifying it had all been in the great house (subsequently the home of the music and religious school, the Bharatya Vidya) on the principal road to the temples and tanks of Mylapore (the chief centre of traditional Hinduism in Madras), and how she used to run away to hide in the garage from her mother-in-law, the redoubtable Alumela. She remembered the juniors, scratching at their desks, the great crowd of people from the household who, in the hot season, journeyed south to the hill station in Kodaicanal. Jayarama died in 1959.

The Jayarama family were, as we noted earlier, descended from Brahmin landlords, originally from a village, Kadambari, near the old religious centre of Kumbakkonam in the Tanjore (or Thanjivvur) province of what is now Tamilnad State. At some stage they became minor civil servants - there was a Kumbakkonam Assistant Collector - and then lawyers, a profession closely related to upward mobility in the British empire. They combined landed wealth with earnings from the law in the city of Madras. Jayarama, my paternal grandfather, became an important criminal lawyer of considerable wealth and built the great house in Mylapore. He married a woman, Alumela, from a family also originating in a village near Kumbakkonam, Ganapati Agraharam (`place of the Brahmins'). The main stem of the family tree is enclosed at the end, and from this it can be seen that others in the family moved into other professions, the armed forces and business

Mahadevan stagnated, dabbling in this and that, until by chance - perhaps recalling his brief acquaintance with Ealing Studios - he took an interest in acting for the films. He became an assistant director, and between 1942 and 1958, worked at the famous Gemini Studios in Madras, Some of his better known films included *Chandraleka*, and *Shataran* (in Hindi). He earned, by the standards of the time, hugely and had an appropriate life-style - there was talk of the dances at the then-premier hotel, the Connemara (he was by reputation good at the tango). In 1958, he went freelance with his own company. But with three flops, the company collapsed and the financial basis of the Mahadevans was under threat. A long period of litigation followed with Mahadevan's growing illhealth. The family made symbolic sacrifices as a commitment to his success - Lakshmi gave up tennis (she had been seeded for Wimbledon) and missed the traditional progression to an arranged marriage. The success of the court case - and some restoration of the family's financial position - came only just before, in 1971, Mahadevan's death by cerebral haemorrhage.

* * * *

The Mahadevans

In 1980, Lakshmi sent us a letter in which she confessed that she had married. As a student in 1959 at Madras University, she said, she had been in love with her cousin, K.S. Muthukrishnan, or `Muthu' (the relationship is illustrated in the family tree at the end). But a feud between the families - Jayarama had accused Muthu's grandfather of physically ill-treating his wife, Jayarama's sister - made an acceptable marriage impossible. Muthu had an arranged marriage with another woman from which there were three children. He worked in the family firm and finally became Chairman of a holding company which included Union and Standard Motors, and Managing Director of Union Motors, then a medium-sized group of companies manufacturing, in the main, vehicle parts (as well, at that time, as the Indian version, the Standard, of the Triumph Herald car). While Lakshmi was working in the sales department of the Connemara Hotel, Muthu offered her a job as Sales Manager in the Consumer Products Division of his group, and the relationship began once again. In 1979, it was sealed in a trip to London, and on February 8th of the following year, the two married in India.

Muthu's company then had close links with Rover in Britain (and came for a time to build the Rover 2000 in India), so he came frequently to London. Hence Lakshmi also came often and for a time stayed with us almost every year either in London or at our cottage in Suffolk.

One of these trips coincided with the only occasion when Sonia decided she did want to meet one of us - my daughter, Kate, then about 17. Lakshmi thought her father's love story was intensely romantic and was therefore very excited at the idea that she might catch a glimpse of this supposedly mysterious beautiful woman. She insisted on going with Kate on the train to Canterbury in order to catch a sight of Sonia. She did and Sonia was unaware of the spy. Sonia met Kate at the station and took her home. Kate spent the day there and returned in the evening, but without great inspiration - Sonia, she said, seemed bitter, full of self-reproach and depressed. Although Kate was always very fond of older relatives, no long term relationship developed with this grandmother.

In August 1980, Sharad and Jean were posted to La Plata, the capital of Buenos Aires Province in Argentina, where Jean was both head of the Alliance Francaise and Honorary French Consul (with, as he put, a fancy uniform to go with it). They were there for about four years. In 1981, Tirril, Dilip and I were on a trip to Brazil, and travelled on by bus afterwards through Uruguay to Argentina to stay with them. Lakshmi also made the trip from Madras to La Plata, but earlier in the year.

In late 1981, I was again working in Madras. This time, Tirril and the children came out to join me for Christmas - it was to be our induction to the family. Amma and Lakshmi gave us a great welcome and lavished hospitality upon us. Amma took us about, particularly to one concert where she introduced us proudly - to the astonishment of her old friends - as her son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren from London. We called on Ramani and Natarajan, and did lots of shopping under Lakshmi's careful guidance. Ramani and her sister, Aruna, non-Brahmins, were derisive of Brahminism, and told me I would be compelled to learn 10,000 lines of the **Rig Veda**; I said Tirril, descendant of a long line of Church of England vicars (and a linguist) would be much better able to do it.

We all had our pictures taken dressed in Tamil Brahmin clothes - I put on my father's wedding *lungi*, Tirril and Kate were allowed to enter the kitchen and learn a little Tamil Brahmin cooking, and were taught something of the elaborate designs that each morning Amma created at the threshold of the house to symbolise some aspect of Hinduism and welcome.

When Muthu and Lakshmi guessed we might be getting a little weary of Brahmin vegetarian food, they rushed off to one of Madras's fancy hotels to have some meat or fish. But in the family, Tirril with her descent from vicars (even a bishop as great grandfather) was far better equipped to be a Brahmin

daughter-in-law than I was to be a Brahmin son.

We went for a time to the south with Lakshmi and Muthu, to visit the great temple complex at Madurai. We went on to the famous hill station, Kodaicanal to stay in the family holiday house that Jayarama had bought or built in the 1930s. Sadly, it was not the cool bliss that it is in the hot season, but thick in dense cloud, cold and wet. For Christmas itself, Lakshmi and Muthu took us to a magical hotel facing the sea at Fisherman's Cove, near the famous temple at Mahaballipuram. We swam in the sea on Christmas eve and banqueted on lobster with champagne.

We had, quite without conscious intention, come to join a small privileged elite of Madras society, and, as unequivocal atheists, a family of the priestly caste and practising Hindus..

The Subaru Story

I went again to Madras in 1982 (and Lakshmi came to London), and in each of the following years to 1985 (when Suku also came to London). In 1986, I went twice (and again, Lakshmi came to London; Muthu was regularly passing through). Suku and Lalitha moved to Delhi in the closing phase of his working life and I stayed with them on my quite frequent trips through Delhi.

In 1984 we moved house, from Kentish Town to the western edge of Islington. My adoptive mother, Rose, could then move in with us. She had been living in a village, Arlesford, in Hampshire, close to her sister, my aunt Hilda and uncle, but was coming to find it physically a strain to cope with a separate house. Lakshmi was eager to meet her and exchange news when she arrived (my mother was less sure about who this beautiful Indian woman in a gorgeous sari was, in the new house She also became very fond of our dog Zoe (`Kanna Zoe', in Tamil, or `darling'). The bonds between us, apparently so new, had swiftly become part of our common experience, taken for granted as naturally as any other family, and I was proud to introduce Lakshmi as my sister.

In Madras, I continued to try to piece together the story of Sonia and Mahadevan. I tried on various occasions to meet Chandru, the clerk to my grandfather's law practice, supposedly privy to most of the family's secrets (since in the great Mylapore house there was no sharp distinction between what was family and what was legal business). In the 1930s, he had supposedly had the job of policing Mahadevan in captivity on his return to Madras. He was very old and always refused to meet me.

I had hoped there might be papers in the family, old letters or diaries, but everything seemed to have been lost or destroyed. The remains were no more than tantalising photographs and the memories of others.

However, in 1980, with Lakshmi's help, I was able to track down T.S. Subramanian (`Subaru,), the doctoral student in Liverpool who had taken Sonia in just before I was born. He was very old, thin and slightly stooped, a former professor of botany at Madras University and living in retirement with his son's family in another part of Mylapore. We sat on the balcony of their apartment, enclosed by mesh to keep out birds and insects, with the noise of passers by, car horns, street sellers and children whooping below.

He had been at school with Mahadevan. His old friend – along with Sonia – had come to Victoria Station in London to meet him on the boat train from Southampton. It was, he said, 1933, and he was bound for Oxford to spend a year there before going on to Liverpool to take his doctorate. He said Mahadevan looked very swanky, with gloves, spats and an umbrella. When Mahadevan was ordered by his father to return to Madras, he had asked Subaru, he said, to look after his wife.

Subaru was very careful, both welcoming – `I remember dandling you on my knee when you were three weeks old' – but also slightly shifty. He was living on four pounds per week in Liverpool, he said, in a bed sitting room, working very hard, when Sonia arrived on his doorstep, `The woman' was pregnant and penniless. `So', he said, `I went straight to my Head of Department to tell him what had happened. He was very understanding and found a doctor for Sonia, who had a nursing home which could take her in'.

Subaru was casually damning –

> `After all, what sort of a girl was she? There was talk she'd had an affair with Radakrishnan - the man who became India's President but was living in London with his wife and daughters at that time. I didn't realize how deprived she'd been - until the police turned up one day and said she had stolen a pair of silk stockings from a local shop. We hushed it up'.

Subaru seemed guilty about something, covering something up, but his precise role in Sonia's nightmare at that time is not clear.

After I was born, he moved into an apartment where he could

have a room and Sonia could live separately with me. He suggested to Sonia that she should find work, perhaps in domestic service. He bombarded Madras with letters demanding Mahadevan return and take up his responsibilities, but there was no reply. Finally, he got his father to approach Jayarama, urging him to let Mahadevan return to England or allow Sonia and the baby to come to India. Eventually, Sonia, he said, was called back to London when Mahadevan returned. Supposedly I was 6 or 8 months old (in, say, February 1936), so they had shared a flat for quite some time. He put us on the train at Lime Street Station.`I never saw her again', he said with finality.

Later, he heard that the relationship with Mahadevan had broken up and the child had been fostered. He said he tried to trace me to see if I was properly cared for, but failed. He stayed in England until 1945. The next time he saw Mahadevan was at his own wedding in the same year.

Later, from London, I wrote to him to remind him of his promise to call on me when he came that way. He replied, saying my visit had `kindled a lot of pleasant and unhappy memories of the thirties', He promised to let me know when he was coming to Britain the following year, but I never heard from him again.

Kumbakkonam

In 1985, in the blistering heat of a Tamilnadu May, Muthu lent me his air-conditioned car, one of those great steel beasts, an Ambassador, and I journeyed south to the rich rice growing region of Tanjore to one of the places from which Jayarama's ancestors came. Kumbakkonam lies in an airless dip in the land, so it was very hot, so hot I was reluctant to do more than dash out of the car for short periods, to return dripping with sweat. Despite this, I did manage to see part of the great temple complex, the twisted winding streets where Brahmins in loin cloths lounged or wandered in the shade, or performed their devotions with bells and water.

Amma had written in advance, so after much searching, I finally tracked down K.V. Janakisaman (on the family tree, he is a son of Venkatraman Iyer). He was a shy man, wisely resting in the cool against the blazing heat of the early afternoon - no civilized person should have called at such an hour. Small and thin, he had spent a life teaching at a local College. He was welcoming but in the years of retirement, had largely forgotten his English. We stumbled into some muddy comprehension but he was sad and mystified that I, son of Mahadevan, did not speak Tamil. We parted and I fled back to the car.

The end of the affair

In the last year I visited Madras, 1986 (after which my work took me to other places), I also continued my periodic telephone calls to Sonia. Perhaps I still hoped that the resolution of the mysteries in Madras might lead her also to feel old ghosts could be laid and she might allow me to meet her and then discover what had happened in 1935 - `I am a skeleton in your cupboard', I remember saying to her, somewhat histrionically, `rattling my bones to be let out'. However, the telephone calls were going in the opposite direction, towards great acrimony - `What do you want from me?' she kept demanding; `Haven't you had a good enough life, without plaguing me?' The tone was intimidating enough not to be able to reply that it was idle curiosity to meet my mother, to meet someone who shaped my first two years of life.

At one stage, she accused me of persecuting her. Though the charge was absurd - my calls were infrequent and I had never tried to visit her - I was irritated, and decided to suspend the telephone calls for a year or two to prove I was not pursuing nor persecuting her. Thus, I thought, she could relax, confident that my demands upon her were entirely marginal to her life. Certainly I was not sufficiently involved to accuse her of anything or to reproach her. I little knew then that in the closing years of her life, separated from Franz Paul, she was becoming increasingly isolated from the world, bitter and reproachful. The only way to break through was to invade her privacy, not at all to accept her protestations of wanting to be left alone.

In about 1985, Sharad and Jean completed their mission in La Plata - with relief, since Argentina had been through a period of hyperinflation and manic-depressive politics at that time. After a time in France and Madras, they were sent to Guatemala. Dilip, our son, had meanwhile made two extensive trips to Latin America, on one going overland from Rio to La Paz, on the other, travelling in the northern parts of the subcontinent. He decided to learn Spanish and settled in Antioquia in Guatemala; Sharad and Jean kindly agreed to act as supportive aunt and uncle. We also intended to go to see them, but timed our visit for 1987 when Lakshmi and Amma were also scheduled to visit Guatemala. In the event, Sharad asked us not to go - if I remember rightly, because she felt it would be too much of a burden to have us all there together. In Guatemala, Lakshmi contracted some worrying health problems, so she returned to India and did not stop off in London on the way back. However, after much pressing, Amma did agree to stop off on her way back and stay with us for a few days. She was flying on KLM from Mexico City via Amsterdam, so I flew there to meet her and bring her to London.

To our delight, we had finally managed to get Amma to come to London. Sadly, although she had heard much of my adoptive mother from Lakshmi and had wanted to meet her, she was too late: Nanna, as she had become for our children, had died two years earlier. Nonetheless, Tirril and I planned to make Amma's stay as pleasant and stimulating as we could, arranging for her to meet old friends, to attend a barbecue in our garden to meet our friends, to go to dinner with another Madras couple we knew, visit Harrods etc. We had also tried to stock up with appropriate vegetarian foods so that she should not be alienated by our diet. We were eager to show her our lives as she had so generously in Madras opened hers to us.

However, it was difficult because her health – never good in the years we had known her – was now, according to Lakshmi, especially poor. She could not climb stairs, and our house was organised so that bedrooms and bathrooms were all on the first and second floors. To avoid this, we reached the not very satisfactory compromise of putting her in Tirril's consulting room, using the bathroom in a ground floor apartment attached to our house (where my mother had lived up to her death) – the tenant was away.

Despite these problems, the visit seemed to us go well, and Amma seemed to relax and enjoy her new, if not bizarre, circumstances. Only after her return to Madras did we discover how unhappy she had been in London (for reasons which were never very clear). However, this – from our point of view – sad outcome marred all further relationships with the Mahadevans.

Nonetheless, relations with my uncle, Sukumaran and his family were not affected. Mythily, Lalitha's sister, a lifelong Communist agitator in Madras and a most gentle and sensitive person, came to stay on her way back from the States. Suku's son, Narayan, and his wife, Gyatri, with their new baby also came and stayed on a return trip to India from New Jersey where they lived (Narayan was working for an electronics engineering company there). In December 1991, I was working at the United Nations in New York when Suku was staying with his son. They came over to New York to see me one evening and explore what had gone wrong between us and the Mahadevans. And in 1994, Suku and Lalitha again stayed with us in London. There were other trips to India in the following years, and visits both in London and the States.

Sonia – the end.

In late 1991, I realised with a shock that my intention to

allow one or two years to pass before reopening contact with Sonia had drifted into five years. I sent a New Year card to her old address in Kent. In contrast to her past behaviour, she did not telephone as soon as she received it nor write. I tried to telephone her but the number no longer existed, and there was no other number for her in that area. I wrote, saying `I had quietly assumed - and been comforted with the thought - that you were still there, playing bridge, smoking, grumbling and making tapestry cushions'. The letter was returned, marked `Deceased'.

She had escaped, her secrets all intact.I felt robbed: in the end she had finally cheated me, exploited my willingess not to disturb her peace of mind and gone without telling me what had happened and what of herself she had planted in me, programming for a lifetime. My last link to the events of 1935 and the mystery had been severed. I returned to the archives in St Catherine's House and retrieved Sonia's death certificate. She had died on the 4th October 1989 of ovarian cancer.

The Jaques

However, to my astonishment, the saga was still not complete. On the death certificate was the name and address of the informant, Paul Francis Jaques of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Tirril regarded us as still bound by her ancient 1960 promise to Sonia never to approach her sons. I did not. There was a discussion in the family, with Kate arguing that I should be allowed to approach them. On the 21st March 1992, I wrote to Dr Jaques, praying that my letter would not be a bombshell in his life.

I was away in Colombia and Mexico for the following three weeks, but when I returned, Basil Jaques had already rung from Cambridge to see when we could meet. We had to drive to Yorkshire that Easter and would return to our cottage in Suffolk through Cambridge. It was fixed that we should call on Basil and Penny Jaques on our way back on the 20th April.

If my visit to Madras in 1979 had been an extraordinary experience, meeting the Jaques family was not dissimilar. Sonia had been a mystery to me, but so also, it seems, to her two other sons. She had no past, and kept her life segregated in separate parts, without allowing intercommunication. I was the ‘missing link', the secret that perhaps explained her extraordinary treatment of her sons, particularly Basil. She had been unwilling to accept the affection of her sons or their families, and had grown with the years withdrawn, resentful, reproachful, angry, bitter. She took no interest in her grandchildren. Tirril suggested the thesis that, if the bond

between a mother and her first child is broken at an early age, often she finds it impossible to create a satisfactory relationship with her next child. It is as if the mourning at the loss of the one destroys the potential for love of the other.

In fact, Basil survived a turbulent childhood with Sonia as well as I had survived without her. Parked from an early age in a Catholic boarding school (as Sonia had been), he joined the army young, retiring after seven years as a captain to become a businessman, finally managing his own building company in Cambridge. When he retired from this, he took up leading walking tours of American academics, among many other passions (of which the restoration of antique furniture was a major one).

We bonded as if we had always been brothers, and people endlessly remarked, as they love to do, on our likenesses both in terms of physical build and character. We became frequent visitors to each other's houses. In due course, Paul, a Professor of Radiology at the University of North Carolina, also arrived on one of his infrequent visits. He stayed a night with us on his way home, overlapping bizarrely at Heathrow airport with Uncle Suku just arriving from the States. I took Suku to Cambridge and the passion for cricket (like all sports, I had little interest or knowledge of cricket) instantly linked him to Basil. What would Mahadevan have made of such an extraordinary link between his younger brother, just a child when the main events took place, and the sons of his English lover?

Basil and Penny had three sons - **Tim**, the eldest, a business executive, married to Ann; **Adam**, an ex-soldier and at this time working in Basil's Cambridge firm, married to a German girl, Petra, with two sons (the family later moved to Germany, to Luneberg); and **Jamie**, then working in Hong Kong as a businessman, and engaged to Rebecca. Later, on a trip to Japan, I stopped off in Hong Kong, and Jamie and Becca entertained this new uncle. In June, we had a dinner in London to introduce ourselves to the two sons in England and their wives. And in July 1994, we had what Basil called our `first blood ceremony' - Jamie's wedding to Becca in a village church in Cambridge. Now, it seemed, all the Jaques wider family and friends knew us, and welcomed us as proper relatives.

The arrival of the Jaques' in our lives added a quite new dimension to the story. If my birth was a tiny thread in the story of the decline of British imperial power in India, the Jaques history was a thread in the story of Germany and the Nazis. The family traced a descent (the family tree is attached

at the end) from lawyers, State officials and bankers in north Germany. The Jaques, Jewish then, settled in Hamburg, and in the 1820s, became Lutheran. Basil's grandfather, Franz Emil, with his uncle ran the family law firm up to the mid-1930s. He married the daughter of a Holstein wood merchant, nephew to the famous nationalist poet, August Storm, and served as an officer in the first World War. None of this counted for anything, however, when the Nazis came to power in 1933. He was classified as a Jew. He was subsequently interned in a concentration camp but was released in the late 1930s and fled to Lisbon where his eldest daughter lived. There in due course he wrote a memoir which someone translated and passed down to Basil, a valuable document on the life of a professional family in Hamburg at the turn of the century. It is a paean of praise for the civilization of the Hamburg professional class, but with no explanation as to why it was not written in Hamburg.

Franz Emil had had three children. The eldest, **Franz Paul**, became a lawyer in Hamburg. In the 1930s, he moved to Portugal but could not settle, so he moved to London - and in 1937, married Sonia Phillips. The second child, **Felicitas**, in 1932 married Herman Katzenstein, child of a Hamburg-Lisbon trading family, and settled in Lisbon. There she had a son, Miguel, and daughter, Sybila. In reaction to the terrible events in Germany, the family became Portugese, Castanha, and Catholic. The third child, **Emily**, married a businessman, Herbert Illies, in 1933, and went to live in Tokyo. They moved in the late 1930s to Peking (now Beijing) where the marriage broke up and Emily married Dudu Farbel, a journalist who had long lived in China and became Professor of Geography at Peking University. They had a daughter, Milliken. After the war, the German Foreign Office was keen to recruit staff not tarred by the Nazi experience, and Dudu became German Consul, first in Montreal and then in Houston. Emily travelled with her infant through a China wracked by civil war to find a boat from Shanghai that eventually reunited her with Dudu. Dudu's two daughters by an earlier marriage settled in Seattle, and Milliken married and had two sons in Dallas.

In February 1994, with the help of Basil and Penny, Tirril and I went for the weekend to Lisbon to meet Felicitas and Emily. They welcomed us warmly, to the small farm of Miguel, to Sybila's house, and to Emily's where we had the good fortune to meet Dudu, then aged over 90. Felicitas said she had been very fond of Sonia, so much so that when she heard she was very ill and alone in Kent, she had - at the age of 75 - travelled to England to see if she could help. But Sonia refused to see her. Sybila, coming to Reading in the 1960s to work as a child's nurse, remembered Sonia's kindness in looking after her in London. But, of course, no one knew anything of Sonia's

secrets.

Subsequently, when Miguel passed through London on his way to Germany on business, we gave a dinner for the Castanhas in England and Basil and Penny – Patrizia (Miguel's eldest daughter), a former ballet dancer, then working in fund-raising for the Covent Garden Opera, and Bernardo (son of Sybila), a businessman.

And that, in July 1995, is where the story of Sonia ends, the mystery unresolved, but now perhaps no longer of any concern. On the way, we learned an immense amount, particularly about the amazing strength of family bonds – even when they exist as potential. Some of those threads, and my own part in them, are related below, and if there are to be conclusions to the essential inconsequentiality of an individual's life, they are at the end.

Postscripts : other threads.

I. Gattys

Tirril's family is the confluence of Gatty, Tower (her paternal grandparents), Hodgson (her maternal grandmother), Warren, Chermside and Morrisons(her paternal grandmother). The family fortune came largely through the Morrisons, and Tirril's Uncle Richard (Gatty) reconstructed the origins of the Morrison fortune in his Portrait of a Merchant Prince : James Morrison, 1789-1857 (privately published in 1976). There are other references to what by the 1890s had become one of the largest private fortunes in Britain (see, for example, Charles Jones' International Business in the Nineteenth Century : The Rise and Fall of a Cosmopolitan Bourgeoisie, Wheatsheaf, Brighton, 1987). The Chermsides produced a whole American clan.

The families were not of aristocratic origin, but rather the 'technical gentry', upwardly mobile in the great expansion of British capitalism in the second half of the eighteenth century on the basis of technical expertise. The same kind of social group in France was known as noblesse de la robe: lawyers, officers of State and the armed forces, vicars (with at least one prominent theologian, and a bishop, Tirril's great grandfather). Many, particularly in the case of the Tower family, came from Wiltshire. The Gatty family is said to be of Italian extraction, the name derived from Gati, a common name

in north Italy, by way of Devon (one ancestor was said to be governor of a west country prison in the sixteenth century); others were said to be Restoration lawyers who moved into landed property.

Sir Stephen Gatty, Tirril's paternal grandfather, was Chief Justice of Gibraltar. He married a Morrison daughter late in life, and lived for long on an estate in Mull in the Hebrides. He had three children. The second, **Oliver** (Tirril's father), was a biochemist in the 1930s, a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, and of Trinity College, Cambridge. It was in Cambridge in the first year of the second World War (1940) that he was killed during experiments to create smoke screens (designed to conceal targets, especially big cities, from enemy bombing), just before Tirril was born.

The eldest child, **Hester**, married the well-known first World War poet and writer, Siegfried Sassoon (they had one son, George). The Sassoons, originally migrant Sephardic Jews from Baghdad in the sixteenth century, were descendants of the famous textile mill-owners and philanthropists of Bombay (now Mumbhai). One branch of the family, under Victor, became in the 1930s, large property owners in Shanghai. Siegfried's ancestors must have moved to London early in the nineteenth century, and with their great wealth, became part of the English aristocracy. Siegfried's father abandoned Judaism. The marriage was not a success. Siegfried remained secluded on his estate in Wiltshire writing, becoming a Catholic, Hester retired to Mull in the Hebrides. George became a research scientist at Cambridge, and later at his father’s estate in Wiltshire.

The youngest, **Richard**, married Pamela of an Essex landowning family, the Strutts. He became a lawyer and during the war, served in the Intelligence Corps in north Africa. Towards the end of the war, he inherited from his aunt, Clemence Chermside, an estate at Pepper Arden in Northallerton, Yorkshire. He and Pamela farmed there up until his early death in 1975 (he also undertook historical research, the fruit of which was his portrait of the founder of the Morrison fortune). They had four children. **Jessica**, perhaps under the influence of her uncle, Siegfried, became a Catholic, a nun and subsequently a Mother Superior. **Jonathan** was a painter. His first marriage was to Valerie, also a painter, and they had two daughters – Fiona (who later married a former army officer who became a businessman; they had three children) and Pippa, also a painter, who married a photographer and had two children. Jonathan's second marriage, to Cherry, produced a son, Richard, now growing up in Pepper Arden after his father's early death. Richard and Pamela's third child was **Martha**, a gifted musician,

who died in her twenties having just completed her studies at the Guildhall School of Music. Finally, **Rhoda**, the fourth child, married a Wiltshire solicitor, David Bucknill, and had three children - Stephen, Gemma and Charlotte. Rhoda, having missed an early higher education, when her children were adult, suddenly set out - and with great success - to become a medieval historian at King's College, London.

Tirril's mother, **Penelope**, was the daughter of Bernard Tower, a vicar, headmaster and Church official, who died in 1964. He was the descendant of a long line of Wiltshire vicars. He married Stella Hodgson of a Cumbrian family whose father had been first Bishop of Ipswich (William Noel, her brother, was a war poet, killed in the first World War). Their second child, Pen's brother, Dub, was a naval officer, killed at the battle of Dunkirk in 1940.

Pen herself, widowed in 1940 so soon after marriage, retired for the period of the war to the house she and Oliver had rented in Loweswater in the Lake District, and which she later bought. That is where Tirril spent her early years. However, in 1945, Pen married a second time, to Thomas Balogh who thus became Tirril's stepfather. Thomas was an Hungarian economist, educated in Budapest and Berlin, a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. He later attained some prominence as Chief Economic Adviser to the Labour Government of 1964-70 and Minister in Charge of the Government's national oil corporation (where he acquired a life-peerage). His father had been an official of the Hungarian railways, and like the Jaques of Hamburg, people of Jewish origin who became Lutherans. Thomas' brother, Denes, also emigrated to Britain and became Professor of Agricultural Economics at Exeter University, but the two loathed each other and almost never met (Denes married an English painter, Hilary Goddard.In 1994, Tirril and I were in Budapest on holiday, en route for Rumania, and searched out where the last Balogh family house might have been on the heights overlooking the city. But there were no traces; and we did not know if there were surviving Baloghs of Tommy's family in Hungary.

Pen trained in Oxford in the 1950s as a psychotherapist, being one of the founders of the British Association of Psychotherapists in 1951, and practiced up to her early death from myeloma in 1975. The marriage to Thomas broke up in the late 1960s, and Thomas remarried, Catherine Storr.

Pen and Tommy had three children. **Stephen** became, after a life of adventurous vicissitudes, a Chinese translater, living, after Pen's death, in the old family house in Loweswater. His first wife, Anna, living in London, had a son, Thomas Pi, and daughter, Daisy Delta (now students in their early twenties).

By his second marriage, to Ruth, there were two daughters, Nina and Lucy, now in their late teens. **Christopher**, the second son of Pen and Tommy, worked as an anthropologist in the crime section of the Home Office, and then trained and practiced as a barrister. He married Jan, and they have two children, Tom and Adam. Finally, the fourth Balogh child, **Tessa**, became a child psychotherapist, married Ian Henghes (son of a German sculptor who lived much of his life with his English wife in the Dordogne); she has just followed her first child, Leo, with a second, Ben.

II. Stokes'

Finally – and most appropriately – the Harris family. If families shape our perceptions, it is the Harris family, particularly my adoptive mother, Rose, from which I have descended and which has most marked my growing. She was one of six children, the aunts and uncles of my growing up (all have by now died; a family tree is attached at the end) of the Stokes family of 102, Effra Parade, Brixton in London, a tiny two-up and two-down terrace house, with an outside lavatory in the yard at the back (as I remember it in the late 1940s). '102' was the focus of the family from the time when the Stokes' took it just after the turn of the century to the late 1950s, when the children had dispersed far from London (my grandparents refused to move out at the time of the second World War blitz, the mass German bombing raids of London).

The Stokes' were, at the time of my mother's childhood just before the first World War (1914-18), London lower working class – my grandfather worked as a casual labourer in many jobs, from maintaining sewers to delivering milk, and my grandmother took in washing. There is some suggestion that my grandmother, Elizabeth Brown, might have been of Irish extraction. One splendid summer holiday when I was preparing for the higher school exams, she looked after me, and I remember her boasting of the wonderful pink bonnet she wore in Kew Gardens on her first date with grandpa in 1890.

Of their children, the eldest, **Elizabeth** (Bet) was an office worker before her marriage to Patrick Cowan, a marriage which later broke up. She had the first grandchildren of the family in the 1920s – Don and Den who were, like their father, draughtsmen in the London engineering industry (that is, a cut above the Stokes'). The sons married (Don to Maizi, Den to Vera) and had children who are now also married with children, but we have largely lost contact. Aunty Bet, with a close friend, Frances, set up a guest house in Sandbanks, near Poole, in 1945, and spent the rest of her active life there.

The second Stokes girl, **Florence** (Florrie), married a Communist Party leader and journalist, John Mahon (son of the legendary trade union leader, John McMahon of the Glasgow engineers). They lived in Moscow in the late 1920s when John reported for what was then the Party paper, the Daily Worker. When they returned, they met a wealthy young man, Purcell Weaver, who had been cured of a fatal illness (pleurisy?) by a new method of medical treatment, cosmotherapy, created by a Hungarian, Dr Szekely. To mark his gratitude for this cure, he decided to turn his family home and estate, Lawrence Weaver House in Leatherhead in Surrey into a health centre for a landowner. John Florrie became convinced of the new medical method and agreed to help him. It must have been some kind of focus for Communist and Labour Party left activists – Sir Stafford Cripps who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first Labour Government after 1945 was said to have been a visitor – as well as those interested in rigorous and testing nature cures.The children's section of the health centre was the responsibility of Rose, Florrie's sister and my mother, while my father, Clifford, worked as an electrician and handyman on the estate. It was here I was brought for a holiday in 1937 while Sonia considered what to do.

John and Florrie had two daughters, June and Jan. June advanced through the educational system after the 1944 reforms to become Senior Lecturer in Zoology at Imperial College, London She married Alan, a New Zealand flute player with the Sadler's Wells orchestra, and there were two sons, Julian and Robin. The marriage did not last, and June died young, as did one of her sons, Julian, in a car crash. Jan married a Scottish solicitor, Donald, had three sons, and still lives in her mother's house in Leatherhead.

Jim the only Stokes' son, trained as a draughtsman, and then joined the army. All I know about his career is that he was posted for a time in Shanghai in the later 1930s (perhaps passing both Emily Jaques and a Sassoon in the lobby of the famous Sassoon hotel there), and ended his service as a Major. He became the director of a then-wellknown instrument-making firm, Newmark. He had married Anne before he went into the army, and they had one son, Bill, who became a draughtsman; he married Jean, but there were no children.

Jess also worked in an office before she married Charles Buckwell and moved to Nottingham where Charles worked for National Cash Register. Because my father also moved to Nottingham in 1939 – to work as Clerk of Works (electrical) for the military ordinance centre at Beeston – we knew them well. Other children – for example, June and Bill, were evacuated from the mass bombing of London in 1940 to stay with us for a

time. The Buckwells had four children.Ed became an Inspector of Taxes in Yorkshire. He and his wife Gladys whom we knew well when I worked in the University of York in the mid-1960s, had six children, but we have lost touch with them now. Leslie Buckwell, the second child after June of the wider Stokes clan to go to University, became a teacher in Camberly in Surrey; he married another teacher, Phyliss, and they had two children, one of whom for a time was a nurse in London. Phyliss, the third Buckwell child, worked in an office before she married Josef, a soldier in the former royal army of wartime Yugoslavia; he worked on Nottingham's buses, and they had had several children. Finally, Dorothy also married, had children and lived in Manchester.

Jean was the Stokes child who gained most education (but of course never aspired to University, an absurd ambition when, at the time of the first World War, she was a girl). She became an official of the YWCA and worked her entire life there. On retirement, she moved to a mobile home in St Ives where we often called on her.

Rose (1906-1985), my mother, was next in line of seniority. She worked as a shop assistant before she married Clifford Harris.

Finally, the last Stokes child was another daughter, **Hilda**. She again was an office worker. She married in 1939 an architect, Raymond Elliot, just as war was breaking out. Leaving Hilda pregnant with Christine, Ray was conscripted and drafted to the then-British colony of Singapore. He was there when the Japanese army fell upon the island, and spent the rest of the war in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in conditions so bad, the memory - like the malaria he contracted - never entirely left him. On his return in 1946, a second child, Peter, was born. Christine married and had children, moving to the west country. Peter became a physicist with a Cambridge doctorate, working in research for IBM.

III. The Harris'

Not a lot is known about the Harris'. We have a photo of Clifford's grandfather as an old man in the 1890s, with his daughter, Annie. The grandfather, it seems, was a migrant from Cornwall. His son, John Harris, became the manager of two grocery shops in Streatham (and thus a cut above the Stokes' of Brixton). He married someone with the surname Ashdown and there was only one child, Clifford. Shortly after his birth, she died. John remarried, and this was perhaps the source of the estrangement between father and son - so far as I know, I never bet the Harris grandfather. But we continued in some contact

with John’s second wife, Edie; she retired to a house in Worthing, and, afterwards, to a hospice in Welwyn.

Clifford left home early, and somehow picked up a trade in the new boom industry of radio manufacture just after the first World War. From radio, he broadened into electricity generally. In those days, there was money to burn and he dressed as a man about town. He met Rose, she said, on a Clapham omnibus, and they were married in 1928.

But the boom ran out, and the onset of the Great Depression (at its worst in 1933) made work very difficult to find or keep – there were long periods of demoralizing unemployment, and long hikes on the off chance of a job (my father was never a strong man and later in life suffered from bouts of pneumonia and finally cancer). They must have been delighted to get the offer of work from the Mahons at Lawrence Weaver House on a wooded estate along the river Mole in Leatherhead. My mother in particular threw herself into caring for the orphans in the small children’s home, and was very proud to be involved in saving some of London’s abandoned.

IV. Me (biographical notes, mainly for my children)

The Harris' had no children. Hence when Sonia's French friend delivered me to the children's home, it was an opportunity for them to have a child. Except it was fraught with difficulty since I looked to be Indian, and the Stokes family, particularly my grandmother, would, it was thought, be outraged at a black child. They also thought it would be extremely difficult for me to make my way in a racist Britain. But Rose insisted. On our first visit to Brixton when I was three, she made me run down the road, shouting `Granny, granny, granny!', to the woman waiting at the front door of the house – shrewdly and rightly calculating that the maternal instinct would frustrate any racism.

i) Nottingham

In 1938, my father finally landed a job in the government service – as an electrician with the army at the great ordnance depot at Beeston in Nottingham(the job was part of the military expansion with the onset of the second World War). In 1939, we moved to Nottingham and up the social scale, to what seemed to me an enormous house and garden at Chilwell, near Beeston. Almost immediately, war broke out. For me the two most striking results were the introduction of sweet rationing and hiding, with great excitement, in our Anderson air raid shelter, listening to German bombers probing the night air (once one crashed nearby, as soon as possible, we swarmed over

it for magic fragments. We also took in lodgers. I remember a Major Fox who to my fascination ate his toast and marmalade in carefully cut small fragments.

My father was transferred to East Retford in Lincolnshire for a time. It was a great military junction, and I remember the tents of the Canadian troops in lines in a field; we were astonished as they scrubbed out a cow shed, but they gave us army biscuits as a reward. In Retford, my mother adopted at birth a second child, Peter. I stole algebra textbooks from my school and dropped them in the canal as I walked home.

The Harris family returned to Nottingham from Retford in early 1943. As the pressure of the war eased, travel started again. We went for a holiday in north Wales, to a Llandudno caravan, and I found it astonishingly exciting. I went also to London with my mother in 1944 to see her parents; she wept as the bus probed through the heaps of ruined buildings and bomb rubble.

By the end of the war, my father had become a Clerk of Works with the army, and now called himself an electrical engineer. Perhaps this gave him the confidence to abandon the safety of public employment and try his hand at his own business, and do so in a place where my mother wanted to live, in the country next to the sea. In early 1946, we moved to the outskirts of village, Chapel St Leonards, on the Lincolnshire coast, eight miles north of the small holiday town of Skegness (where I went to the Grammar School). The move usefully concealed my failure to get a place at the prestigious Nottingham High School (High Pavement). Instead I was to go to Skegness Grammar School.

ii) Skegness

It was a good place to grow up. The sea was very close, just over the sandhill in front of our house, and we swam almost every day between March and October. My father put out lines on sunken iron stakes early in the morning for fishing (I don't remember ever catching anything), kept his vegetable garden and chickens (as we had done through the war to ease food rationing). Once a ship sank nearby and the beach was covered in grapefruit – which lasted for months. My mother took in holiday guests to increase the family income. One of them, an Israeli engineer working nearby, taught me theorem eight in geometry – it was the only one I ever understood (maths at school was taught by the games master who insisted we learn each theorem by heart so we could recite it; getting pupils to understand was not part of his job).

After school or at the weekend, I help on the farm of my best friend, Rob Traves – in the milking shed (I was there when the

first electric milking machine was installed – otherwise it was by hand), driving an ancient American tractor in muck spreading (putting manure on the fields). And at harvest, we would go with carts and horses to pitchfork the hay on the wagons. Indeed, so great was the labour shortage that my school was closed for a fortnight in the autumn so the kids could pick potatoes – spud bashing.

However in terms of my father's business, there was not enough work in rural Lincolnshire (especially when we, like most other people, did not have a car or a van). Again there was a period of extended unemployment. He was driven back to being an electrician and handy man – with the Derbyshire Miners' Home – but this was only summer work and poorly paid. He set off, just as in the 1930s, to find work. I remember my mother weeping over his letter, saying, in desperation, he had taken a summer job as a waiter in a Yarmouth restaurant.

But he was in luck. The British economy boomed, with sharp shortages of labour emerging, and the army still needed his skills. In 1949, he got back his old job with the government, but this time in what was then British Malaya (it became Malaysia after Independence).

Meanwhile, my record at school grew steadily worse. It was a turbulent time. One weekend, I discovered on my long solitary walks along the coast, an empty derelict bungalow – and set about breaking every window in it. At school, I knocked a smaller boy over in the cloakroom and he cut his forehead on the clothes hanging grid – there was a tremendous fuss and I went to the parents to apologise (they fortunately were forgiving). I seemed always to be miserable and loved to think about suicide – everything about my life seemed irredeemably second rate, trapped in a mind numbingly boring place, with only tattered old clothes and shoes full of holes which we could never afford to mend. The only things I seemed any good at were painting and physical exercise (I was part of a Boys' Brigade demonstration team), but in both, I was only mediocre. The headmaster of the school was no doubt inured to under-performers, but I was also rowdy and cheeky, possibly dangerous. He was perhaps relieved when I was withdrawn to go to Malaya when the family rejoined my father in 1950.

iii) Malaya

However, the world outside Skegness was, for me, intoxicating, fascinating. My first experience of it never left me. In 1945, a holidaymaking family stayed with us, and the daughter had a pen friend in France. She was bored with the chore and passed it over to me. I was delighted to correspond with Monique

Savalle of Yvetot in Normandy. Furthermore, in 1946, under a barrage of nagging, my mother (my father was already away at that time) agreed to allow me to go to Yvetot to stay with the Savalles. France was only just free of five years of war and Nazi occupation, and the wreckage of the Allied liberation. It is incredible that my mother allowed me, a boy of eleven with no experience of the world, to set out on my own to cross England, London and the Channel to rural France – and with barely a word of French. Furthermore, in those days, the costs of telephones were so high, they were almost never used for long distance calls.

Yet, so far as I recall, it passed off without mishap – but with a lot of hand signals. The Savalle family owned a furniture-making factory and lived in a style far above my own family. It was furthermore a shock after what seemed a lifetime of wartime rationing to find magnificent Normandy cuisine.

I returned in misery to the old life. But later, got hold of a second-han bike and began to use it to explore. Each day, I cycled to school in Skegness with my best friend, Rob Traves, a farmer's son from the neighbouring village of Hogsthorpe. We joined the Skegness Cycling Club, and every Sunday, went out on a collective tours; sometimes there were all night runs. I also began to make tours on my own. I made major but extending trips – to Boston (23 miles), to Lincoln (40). And then I pressed further – to Nottingham (80) to visit my startled Aunt Jess. Then there came the spectacular triumph, cycling to London (120) to visit my equally astonished grandmother. However, even that was exceeded by the journey to an equally startled Aunt Bet at Sandbanks, east of Bournemouth.

Thus, to sail to Singapore in 1950 was almost insupportably exciting, each moment treasured, endlessly recalled. Perhaps I needed such a psychic state to hide the dreary reality – an antiquated and crowded troop-ship, taking 32 days to make the journey.

It is almost impossible now to imagine that journey. It never touched non-British territory – Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said and the Suez Canal, Aden, and Colombo. Everywhere was the same union jack – and the same dreary food, soldiers in long shorts and pith helmets.

We came to live in a large wooden house with a verandah and garden in Johore Bahru. Malaya, a British possession, was in the midst of a war between the guerrillas of the Malayan Communist Party and the British army. The British High Commissioner had just been murdered. The famous train from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur was armoured like a giant lizard,

with gun carriages at the front and the back. The British military were everywhere. I made a friend of a Birmingham conscript boy who had been on jungle patrols; the group cut the heads off those they shot, holding them up to the gruesome camera.

I went to school in what was then the English College (now, in independent Malaysia, I believe it is the Sultan Abubakker College). Having brought my bike, I cycled each day to school in the roasting heat, taking an hour to dry out. The boys in the school were much older than me as a result of the war and Japanese occupation (which had suspended the normal educational system). Most were in their early twenties and fiercely serious in their school work. It transformed me and I began to apply myself for the first time and to grope for the idea of becoming an intellectual. Literature was my passion. In a local bookshop, I discovered a paperback, **The Waves**, by an author I had never heard of, Virginia Woolf; it was a revelation and I became a bigoted modernist. I began to do better at exams, started a school newspaper (with largely my own writings under one name or another), joined the school debating team on Singapore radio. And painted the vast wall of my bedroom with ferocious and bloody lions.

However, Malaya added another dimension to the normal emotional and sexual turmoil of adolescence (I did seem to fall in love with irritating frequency, mainly with Chinese girls). I discovered that in a white colonial society, I was not white. My family now suddenly became 'white', and as a result, I became an anomaly, something to be explained or excused. I became involved in a continual battle to pretend that I was white (in a school where most of the teachers were white and the boys Chinese, Indian or Malay). The growing tension, embarrassment, culminated during a trip to Malacca with a group of Chinese school friends when I was asked to leave a whites-only swimming pool.

However, I applied to a cycle firm to ride my bike home from Malaya to Britain as a publicity stunt. The Singapore agent, a fatherly fellow, said the company would be willing to it but I must be made – the guerrilla campaign was at its fiercest in Malaya and there was civil war in Burma, just for starters. I gave in and came back to Britain by troopship, this time – my father had been promoted – in first class and so protected.

I got back to my grandmother's house in London in time for the Coronation. My best friend from Malaya, a Chinese boy arrived at the same time to start a degree in architecture (I met him 18 years later as Chief Architect to Kuala Lumpur), and we hung out of the windows of Uncle Ray's architectural office at the

top of Whitehall to cheer the passing procession.

iv) Skegness again

I fled – from Malacca and from Malaya. My parents were worried to let me go but also understanding. I returned, aged 15, to lick my wounds to a solitary bed sit in the same row of houses where we had lived in the village of Chapel St Leonards. After a year or so, I moved to Skegness, to a garret under the roof, overlooking the gasworks. The landlady, Mrs Scarret, married to a former Derbyshire miner, clucked over me for most of the rest of my time in Skegness. Towards the end, when her son went off to do his military service, she suggested I take out his girlfriend, Margaret Goy, so she would not feel abandoned and of course the inevitable happened – which caused much frayed feelings. For a short time, I lodged with a spiritualist lady who knew when I was about to return because a seven foot Red Indian standing in the corner would let her know (he was only one of many inhabitants of the house – there was also a seventeenth century Chinese mandarin).

But this is jumping well ahead of the story. Fortunately, Skegness Grammar School, under a new headmaster and with whatever reservations, let me back in. Reconstructed intellectually by the Malayan school experience, I threw myself into work for the higher examinations (in history, English and Latin) to prepare now for university. The new headmaster took a special interest in my progress and this enormously helped my development – someone who was tough minded and uncompromising took me seriously and as an adult. I fell in love with a hopeless dream, and stood in the dark outside her house, mooning miserably. In the holidays, I worked as a bus conductor. I became a militant atheist and as some of the prettiest girls were in the Student Christian Movement, I joined it to proselytise for godlessness (without striking success – I was regarded as merely eccentric). I became a founder member of Skegness Federal Union to campaign for world government. And I played each Saturday in the season for Skegness Town Rugby Football Club, a little piece of laddish culture, though that idea had not yet been invented. To my father’s horror (in Malaya), I led a night-time break in to the town swimming pool, but fortunately no one caught us.

The Malayan experience also began to shape my political views. I had had a slender experience of colonialism but enough to hate it. This was the middle of the Cold War, the half century of the conflict between Washington and Moscow and their respective allies. I instinctively identified with the other side. As soon as I returned, I started reading the **Times**, in those days the pillar of the establishment, and the Communist

Party's paper, the **Daily Worker**. I suppose I was the only person in the village to read it. However, I was still pretty innocent; on one holiday with Aunt Hilda in Leatherhead, I diffidently approached Uncle John (Mahon), a leading Communist Party member, to ask him what he recommended me to read on the Soviet Union, adding I would like to read something critical and had heard of a book by one, Leon Trotsky, **The Revolution Betrayed**. Only a complete innocent could have done it. Uncle John looked at me carefully to assess whether I was being derisive or was just a fool, and decided I must be the latter – 'There's an awful lot of rubbish about. Why not read this?' He handed me a copy of **The Short History of the CPSU (B)**, recommending I read carefully Chapter 4, which I subsequently learned is supposed to have been written by Stalin himself. Dutifully, I read it – or tried to since it was almost incomprehensible, the gibberish that passed for philosophy under high Stalinism. Anyway, ignorant or not, I stood in the school mock elections as Communist candidate and won a landslide victory (the story was splashed with alarm in the local newspaper, and as a result, followed me into the army and was the evidence that I was a security risk). However, at the same time, I kept a foot in the establishment by agreeing to be Head Boy of the school.

Although numbers were increasing, still relatively few people went to university at this time (although many more than before the second World War). Most left at 15 and started work. No one had ever tried for entry to Oxford or Cambridge, even thought the school claimed – spuriously – its descent from an ancient school in nearby Wainfleet, founded by William of Wainfleet, Bishop of Winchester, and also founder of Magdalen College, Oxford. I think the Skegness headmaster had the ambition to use me as the precedent for entry to Oxbridge for succeeding generations of applicants from the school. Whatever the truth, with the headmaster's support, I made an application, and to everyone's astonishment (my own most of all), I was offered a place at Magdalen. Awarded a State scholarship in the examinations, everything now seemed to be opening up.

v) The army

The condition on going to Oxford was to do two years of military service first (it was, up to 1960, compulsory for all males of the appropriate age). My father, from Malaya, advised strongly that I should join the airforce, get a safe clean job and save for university. I joined the infantry to see if I could get a commission. Margaret Goy and I went off for a farewell holiday together in Edinburgh.

Hence in 1954, I found myself a raw recruit in the Shrewsbury barracks of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and was plunged into the horrifying brutalisation of basic training. At some stage, as potential officer material, I was transferred to the Light Infantry brigade headquarters in Strensall outside York. The solitary delight here was Betty's Bar in York city where we went at the weekends for what we thought of as a good meal.

From York, I set out for the three-day set of tests before the War Office Selection Board. Most of the ordinary tests were straightforward, and the boys in each team rapidly learned to collaborate to boost each other's chances. But it was the two long interviews with intelligence officers which rattled me – 'Would you have felt morally justified in fighting with the British forces opposing the Communist takeover of Korea?'. 'Would you be willing to fight the Communist guerrillas in Malaya?'. I don't now remember my fumbled reply, but I was sure I would be turned down (with the majority of applicants). But perhaps they were more shrewd than I expected – they had seen many more upwardly mobile fresh faced youths expressing sympathy with the Comunists who turned out in practice to be zealous defenders of the status quo. It was a shock but I was accepted.

Then there were three months of Officer Cadet training at the old Eton Hall near Cheshire. Most of what we were taught was appropriate to the second World War, and so long out of date with the arrival of nuclear weapons, but nobody really cared (the Director apologised to us at the end for this curiosity). I gazed with fascination for the first time on the sons of the ruling class, people who had actually been to Eton and the rest. The confidence of the other boys was staggering – they knew where they were going and had complete confidence that they would get there. I began to reconsider where I was going. I re-applied to Oxford to abandon what had seemed so obvious in Skegness, English, and take up Philosophy, Politics and Economics. The Skegness English teachers were outraged.

I was commissioned into the regiment closest to where my mother was then staying, Nottingham – the Sherwood Foresters at Derby. And there I turned up, shifty in my new clothes, Sam Brown belt, gleaming pips and new peaked hat, and very unsure of how to behave – I accidentally passed a colonel without seeing his shoulder pips and failed to salute, came in for a round of abuse. In the officers' mess, to my astonishment, they discussed horses and hunting. But it was a brief acquaintance since I had applied to be seconded to foreign service, and was assigned to the grandly named Royal West African Frontier Force

After a sleepless night in the Goodge Street deep shelter (then, as through the war, used as a transit centre for troops), I flew – for the first time – to Algiers and then across the vastness of the Sahara to Kano. We had just time to see a fragment of the old city, and then on to Lagos. The delight there, as I later found out, was the Ikedge Hotel where they had, joy of joys, some Danish blue cheese. From there, I was driven by jeep through the bright jungle, slashed with patches of orange soil and swirling brown rivers, to the headquarters of the second battalion of the Nigeria Regiment in Abeokuta.

Almost all the junior officers were like me, national servicemen. The senior officers regarded themselves as marooned, far away from the places where there was excitement and promotion. The conscript officers were all better educated than the senior, clever, cynical and derisive of the army, so it must have been quite demoralising for the senior officers. I was attached to a company with a mad commander, an M.C. from Korea, passed over for promotion because of his ungovernable temper, and dumped in Nigeria. But the routines enclosed us, punctuated by hockey matches (the team was filled out with Lebanese traders from the town), by full-dress mess dinners (with the regimental band playing outside), by treks through the wilder savannah (hospitality courtesy of the White Fathers, Irish Catholics far out in the bush in home made buildings, or under canvas).

The Queen decided to make a State visit, so the route from the airport was walled off with brand new corrugated iron sheets to hide the hideous slums. We were detailed to move down to the city and form the garrison in Lagos; the Queen was then an attractive young women, so half the sex-starved junior officers had wet dreams that night (I dreamt I was in the back of a taxi with the Queen and she was stroking my knee as I reflected with surprise that even Queens get randy). Lagos allowed us to slip into anonymity, to walk the streets or go to nightclubs and pick up girls. For a time, I joined the Pony Club and tried to go riding. I wangled a long tour across the country and the Niger to Enugu, then electrified by the nationalist oratory of Azikwe.

I tried to take a sympathetic interest in local nationalist politics, then dominated by Azikwe in the east and Awolowo in the west. Fortunately, I was never put to the test of commanding troops, defending British imperialism, in a nationalist riot. I stayed at the officers' mess in Ibadan during the elections, and walked down at about midnight to the election office. On the way back, some time after midnight, someone stopped me to discuss the elections, and as we fell

into conversation, I looked up and saw a club crossing the moon heading towards my head. Without time to think, I fled, the club whistling past my ear. I stopped a hundred yards up the road gasping and laughing at the amazing speed of my reactions. Later I learned that spot was notorious for people disappearing, clubbed out of recognition for the value of their clothes.

Generally, the life was easy. National servicemen were able to save significant sums for their future time as students. We stopped work after lunch, and the afternoons allowed me to write a couple of novels (one I lost hitchhiking later in Britain; the other is unreadable). I learned Russian. I moved out of being a company officer, to become for a brief – and terrifying – period, battalion pay officer (supervised closely and derisively by two English warrant officers, both accountants). But the best job was battalion education officer.

In the officers mess, with a couple of others, we formed a 'red *gida*'(*gida* were the quarters where we all stayed) and outraged the senior officer by arguing that the Soviet Union was a peaceable country. In an officer education class, the Colonel laid it down that Soviet armed strength was a myth – the tanks and missiles were all wooden or rubber models. Give him a battalion and a train, and he would reach Moscow by the morning.

In the middle of all this, Egypt's Colonel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal and expelled the British garrison. Eden, then Prime Minister, conspired with the French and with Israel to launch an invasion of Egypt to reoccupy the Canal Zone. In sleepy Abeokuta, we were put on alert to mobilise, to prepare to launch an invasion of southern Egypt across the Sahara desert – armed with our 1914 bolt action rifles.

The officers' mess was abuzz with excitement, and I was surprised to find a high degree of simple anti-Egyptian race prejudice. The Red *gida* was instinctively on Egypt's side. At one stage, no longer able to listen to the prejudice, I declared – with unconcealed satisfaction – that the new Russian MIG fighters of the Egyptian air force would demolish the invading forces. At which point, wisely, I jumped up and fled – pursued by the young adjutant who overtook me, put his hand round my shoulders and said – 'That was so unfortunate, Nigel. But we had no idea that you were Egyptian'. Nothing but the fictions of the blood could explain my absurd behaviour.

I recovered a little shred of respect at the end. The Colonel, having done his requisite time as a battalion officer, was to be transferred back to a staff position in London. For the

farewell party, I painted the back wall of the great barn like main room of the officers' mess as a mock Italian balcony, overlooking a lake and snowy mountains at night (with a statue of a naked girl). On the evening of the party, the Colonel, highly flushed, lurched over to me – 'I always thought you were rubbish', he said unsteadily, 'but you've done a grand job here. When I'm in my wheel chair in Cheltenham, I'll read in **The Times** about chaps like you' – and tottered off.

I planned to drive back to Britain, on the Hogar route across the Sahara to Algeria, but I had too little money to pay for it, so gave in and flew at the army's expense. I returned on a hopping flight, a tiny aircraft that bobbed about in the like a cork on the waves. We hopped from Lagos to Accra to Freetown to Gambia to Villa Cisneros in the Spanish Sahara, to Gibraltar to Bordeaux and so to Stanstead. But it was a joy to be home, even if most uncomfortable to return to a solitary civilian existence.

I loafed around London, solitary and sex-starved. In the National Gallery, a man picked me up who turned out to be wildly gay, novel-writing and into ballet. We became good friends and he sympathised with grotesque sex starvation while being entirely uninterested in men.

vi) Oxford

Oxford was, at first, awful. Returning to academic work was bad enough, but the place was crawling with the rich, the 'bloodies' as we scholarship boys called them, with their awful accents, narrow-minded complacency and arrogant superiority. After a term, I decided to leave. I was saved only by my young philosophy tutor who dropped into my room, perhaps sensing my unhappiness. 'What would you do if you left? Here at least you have an income for three years and can read some books'. How right he was. The logic worked and I hung on.

The immediate context and the times reinforced my belief that the world needed radical change, and the only people who seemed to promise that were the visionaries of the extreme Left, excluding the conservatives of the Communist movement. The heavy impress of the Cold War during the mid-1950s had almost completely liquidated any political forces independent of the Cold War – the overwhelming majority around the Labour Party supported the American position on the Cold War. The minority who supported the Russian position hardly existed at all. But from 1957 or so, particularly following the Anglo-French attack

on Egypt and the revolt against Soviet power in Hungary, new political possibilities opened up. The most important was the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament with its annual march to London from the nuclear research centre at Aldermaston. Indeed, it was on one of the many parliamentary lobbies on the question of the bomb that I met Tirril. A second new departure was a movement created by ex-Communist intellectuals and new comers, the New Left, which came to create a journal, a mass of meetings, a coffee bar and bookshop in Soho. It gave a platform for Isaac Deutscher and the critique of the Soviet Union by Leon Trotsky – maybe my question to uncle John had not been so irrelevant. I was active in the Oxford Socialist Club, a tiny outfit, all that was left by that time; in the New Left, and in the national labour students organisation (NALSO); ultimately, I became editor of the NALSO newspaper, Clarion, and chairman of NALSO. We sponsored a number of initiatives – a collaboration with the People's Youth of Yugoslavia to build roads and have camp at Dubrovnik (Tirril and I went off on our first trip together to Istanbul, Bulgaria and then Yugoslavia; the PYY policed the tents to make sure no one slept with anyone else – Tirril and I got off with a scowl, perhaps because I was the Chairman); and a couple of conferences at Kessingland, near Lowestoft, to 'regroup' the left outside the Communist party and the Labour party.

At Oxford and out of these left-wing activities, I came to know Tirril. I had had girl-friends in Oxford before – a girl from a small town near Skegness, a German au pair girl (which took me for a long summer holiday in Reutlingen in 1957 and close brush with getting engaged – the champagne stayed in her mother's fridge). But Tirril was a quite different species, from a public school, gentry-academic background, all the things I associated with the 'bloodies'. Her step father, Tommy Balogh, was one of Oxford's giants, tutor in economics at Balliol and with many other grand appointments (ultimately to be chief economic adviser to the Wilson Labour Cabinet of the 1960s). They lived in what was for me an enormous house amid the trees of north Oxford, had cars, refrigerators, television sets (still marks of social status in the 1950s), and took regular holidays in France and Italy. It was like knowing the Queen.

It was a painful adjustment for me, learning to live with the ruling class. When Tirril's friends called, I remember, I was completely tongue-tied, a mute. But I did climb into Somerville College, the only entry once the gates were closed at 10.30.

Otherwise, I set up an Oxford Federal Union in my first year at Oxford, largely in pursuit – before I met Tirril – of some girl with a generous bosom. But once accomplished, another girl had replaced the first so I left the OFU for others to run(I think

it may still exist). I was passionate about films, and my best friend, David Steel, and I would, if money allowed, take in two or three a week at the Scala cinema or the Oxford film club. I acted in a university drama group for a while. And there were schemes to travel – search for funds to finance a visit by David Steel and me to all the Oxfords in North America (21, I think) which came to nought. And then the grandiose Oxford-Peking Expedition (it was still 'Peking' in those days, not Beijing) with Tirril, Martin Gilbert and Tirril's great friend, Mary Harris. It even had headed notepaper. I think were offered a Standard Vanguard car and unlimited rope, but we were refused a visa so it came to nought.

I put down as career preference after Oxford to work abroad but not for the British government, a refinement in demand beyond the capacities of the Oxford Appointments Board – they sent my application to the Foreign Office and I was duly called for interview, all expenses paid.. Tirril and I had a great day out in London without any intention of becoming diplomats. I told the admiral who interviewed me that they couldn't possibly have a black man as an ambassador, so, gratefully, he said he'd pass my name on. That led to an attempt by MI5 to recruit me as a spy for the British on Oxford foreign-born students; the theory was that Mossadeq would not have nationalised the Anglo-Iranian oil company if one his Oxford student friends had kept in touch with him and remonstrated. My recruitment didn't work because, at the time I was being wooed to spy for the Soviet Embassy and, as I said to both sides, I just could not keep a secret. In all cases, my brief spying career was sustained by food – I lived on bread and marmalade for much of the time, but the spy recruits always took me to expensive restaurants.

For a glorious time, David and I considered becoming Conradian mates with a steamer company in the Malayan river trade. Then there were great ideas of migrating to an American University. But David went to the Ecole Normale and I to London.

I got a passable but undistinguished degree, certainly not good enough, according to Tommy, to marry his stepdaughter. She was after all the eldest granddaughter, child of the fallen hero, Oliver, and a favourite of all, a prize not to be bestowed on the unworthy and unwashed.

vii) London.

But there was enough Oxford academic praise to carry me on, to another State scholarship for doctoral research (I had few other ideas as to what to do). I rebelled against Oxford and fled to the London School of Economics, to Mannheim and Laski (both not only long since dead, but long since forgotten). I

took as room in Frognal with a violinist couple (friends of my cousin June, then teaching at Imperial College and whom I saw a lot of then), and threw myself into student politics and the Labour Club at LSE. To make a bit of money, I taught modern history to extras-mural classes of the University of Maryland to US air force staff; two Captains at the Ruislip US headquarters attended my class on the 1948 Berlin air lift and turned out to have flown it. At LSE, my topic was the economic policy of the Conservative Party since the war, but I undertook it in a sociology department, making a melange of economic, political and sociological ingredients that has remained my forté.

Tirril followed me a year later to start a second undergraduate degree, in psychology. To the mild disapproval of her parents, we set up house together (something still rare at that time and for most people, shocking; we were expelled from our first address in a Regency terrace in Park Square East – for immorality). Tirril's grandfather, a vicar, must have been horrified but he put a very good face on it and welcomed me to dinner with great generosity. My family were horrified and on the occasion of a big family reunion, glared at Tirril, the scarlet woman who had stolen a leading Stokes' son. The father of Tirril's great friend, Mary (then Harris, later McAuley) was caught, sadly washing up and gazing from the window, saying, 'Poor Tirril. Do you suppose she gets enough to eat?'

We then moved to an apartment, just off Bedford Square, sharing with two others (Dennis Butt and Mary Kay Wilmers, an old friend of Tirril's from school). Tirril and I joined a little Trotskyist group, the Socialist Review (producing a weekly of the same name), and I became reviews editor of the new heavyweight quarterly journal, **International Socialism**. Our main energies went into the Holborn and St Pancras Labour Party; we were both careful to stand for election only in safe Conservative wards. We spent most effort in setting up and expanding a Young Socialist branch (I was the Party's Youth Officer). A important designer, Ken Garland, set about redesigning the slum offices of the Party and the Young Socialist branch carried out the redecoration – as a result, our Party won a prize, and I was nominated to received it at the 1962 Labour Party annual conference in Brighton from the then leader, High Gaitskell.

In 1962, Tirril finished her degree at UCL with flying colours and was offered and research position to continue. But we had decided to travel, so she – regretfully – turned down the chance, and took a job selling toys in Galt's on Carnabie Street to fill in the time while I finished the Ph.D. In the meantime, she became Janet Brown, reviews editor of **Socialist**

Review.

We married – Tirril suitably dressed for those times of virginal white weddings in dark brown velvet and gold lamé (but no doubt to the quiet shame of her vicar grandfather)– in a Registry Office in Russell Square. The reception – at the new Balogh house in Hampstead (Tommy was increasingly involved in the London-based inner counsels of the Labour leadership) – was excruciating, even though Tirril's mother had prepared a splendid show with a grand butler to announce the guests ("Miss Please Skip It", he solemnly intoned when Mary Kay arrived). It combined friends of Tommy, academic economists (Paul Streeten; Paul Samuelson, the future Nobel Prize winner, arrived late); Trotskyists from the SR group; elements of the landed gentry (Tirril was given away by Sir Malcolm Calm-Seymour who, in his speech, said the marriage united his two greatest passions, the landed gentry and Indian art); and my family. All occupied their corner of the room, talking to each other, and eying each other either suspiciously or nervously. As soon as possible, we ran away.

We intended to travel abroad. Pen, Tirril's mother, was worried we might not return, so she strongly encouraged us to buy a place in the country as a sort of anchor to pull us back, but officially "to store your things in". With Pen using her car (neither of us could drive) or sometimes my architect uncle, we set out to find a barn which we could convert – in Hampshire or Sussex. We were, of course, thirty years too late for our price range. We moved eastwards, to Essex and then to Suffolk, and when we were about to give up, we discovered Fenn Farm cottage. It was a house not a barn, but it was an end to the search. It was a cold day although sunny, and I thought the former small-holding (littered with sheds, chicken runs and fences) was pretty cheerless; the house had one cold tap and an outside pit lavatory. One of Pen's manic Lakeland terriers got stuck beneath a chicken shed which did not help. But Tirril saw the potential and we took it. We did not then have a car so it meant coming down on the old unimproved A12 on our scooter. But we set up a building plan – with a rural grant – to build a bathroom and inside lavatory with various other changes that the government insisted on. There was a stream of visitors, and on one occasion in May 1962, there were six or seven babies staying (it was our age group). They were stacked on the shelves of the pantry, supervised peacefully in the early morning by Tony Cliff (leader of the Socialist Review group), reading between the screams, Brailsford's History of the Civil War.

Where were we going to travel? Japan was all the talk, a miracle economy transforming itself out of backwardness with

unbelievable speed. But there were no jobs and we had no language. I talked to Ron Dore at LSE, a rising star of modern Japanese studies, and he assured me that I could be competent in the language in four or five years. Then at Pen and Tommy's house we met P.C. Mahalanobis, the famous statistician, founded and head of the Indian Statistical Institute with its headquarters in Calcutta. He told us to come to India, and, if we could pay the fare to get there, would provide both of us with research positions for a year. We jumped at the chance.

We had to set about getting driving licences which took a miserable age and was the plague of our friends. Then we bought a Landrover with the intention of driving to India and giving the vehicle to the Indian government at the end as a contribution to Indian development. That winter, 1962/63, one of the hardest on record, we spent at Fenn Farm while I completed my thesis. The bitter cold kept us in doors – burning giant timbers in the sitting room grate, length by length, because we had no means to cut them. We were coming to know a couple in the local village, Dougie and Pat Free, and quite conveniently they needed somewhere to stay, so they were able to take over Fenn Farm while we were away (and clear it of weeds and sow grass and trees). They became life long friends.

We also recruited to the journey Gavin McFadyen, a friend and American socialist, in Britain to dodge the US military call up. He had experience of servicing vehicles in a New York garage so we were doubly keen to have him, and he welcomed the adventure.

viii) Asia

In the spring of 1963, with great excitement and much trepidation (Tommy tried to insist we carry a revolver, but we resisted the temptation), we set out. Gavin was to join us in Rome. Unfortunately, our knowledge of cars was so weak, when the landrover broke down on the outskirts of Paris, we took it to a garage to be repaired. There Tirril debated with the mechanic on the source of fault – he maintaining stoutly that theoretically it must be 'le bobbine' with the electrical system; Tirril, a crude Anglo-Saxon empiricist, had suddenly thought it might be that we had run our of petrol, and indeed that turned out to be – embarrassingly – the case. The mechanic was mortified at this defeat of the theoreticians.

From there, we crossed Switzerland to Turin and down the Via del Sol to Rome. At that time, my parents had been transferred by the British military authorities to Libya (then ruled by King Idris; Gaddafi could hardly have been born). So we left the landrover in Rome and took a plane to Tripoli – with great nervousness since we had so little experience of flying. At

that time, my brother Peter was in the Air Force in Cyprus but we had no time to call on him. We stayed some days with my parents in Tripoli, admiring my father's persistent attempts to grow tomatoes and the spectacular remains of the Roman cities of Leptis Magna and Sabrata.

Back to Rome, we picked up Gavin and continued south to Bari, and then by ferry to Igoumenitsa, opposite Corfu, in the northern Greek mainland. Here, the late cold of the bad preceding winter hit us as we crossed the mountains in snow on a road just being built. A car with a wrecked sump passed us being towed back, and we tried to be careful. Fortunately, the landrover had high clearance and a protected sump, so when in due course, we descended to the warmer plains and duly hit the same rock, we had only a loud bang and a spark.

We camped on the beach under an old Ottoman fort with a view of Mount Olympus. Tirril and I normally slept in the back of the landrover, Gavin in a tent, while we cooked and ate on camp chairs and a table under a tarpaulin hooked to the side of the vehicle. At dawn, on this occasion, we were woken by noises of boats and heavy vehicles. We were at the target point of an invasion by the Greek army – with tanks and landing craft. A smart young officer, recognising our GB plate, marched up and apologised in perfect English for the disturbance. Further on, on the road from Adrianople, we saw a travelling circus with performing bears.

On to Istanbul to stay in a sparkling new camp site – with, oh joy, tiled showers and proper loos. It seemed there were quite a lot of people travelling to and fro – an elderly English couple, the odd hitch-hiking student (some from the US as well as Europe). We struck up a friendship with one couple, an American with a Japanese wife, Chase and Connie, in a Range Rover; they proved especially useful to us later in Iran.

From Istanbul, we wandered down the coast from the excavations at Troy, visiting one ruined ancient Greek city after another. We camped, and in one tiny village at sunrise, local young girls brought us buttermilk as an act of welcome. Side, now, it is said, a famous tourist centre, was one road to the sea and a tavern. Ypou swam over the remains of Greek city just under the surface of the sea. The landlord of the tavern had spent many years in France and when he presided over a long table of guests in the moonlight, declaimed Verlaine in his cups. In Pammakele, we bathed in the hot extra-salt pools of blue-grey rock. In Antakya, on a festive Sunday, we were dragged from the vehicle to a family feast in the park. In Izmir, we came upon a group of English and had our first barbeque on the beach; the food heavenly after our diet of tins.

Where we could, we gave hitch-hikers a lift, riding on the roof in the spare tyre. There were students travelling east. And sometimes local travellers - one insisted on taking us home to feed on omelette and tea until we felt we would burst and realised that until we stopped eating, he was obliged to continue feeing us.

We continued along the Syrian coast to Lebanon, passing the great Crac des Chevaliers crusader castle. In Beirout, then the Middle East's great centre of hedonism, a Swiss journalist lent us a flat while we recovered; he was ferociously anti-Arab and pro-Kurd. On to Baalbek, Heliopolis and Damascus. On the Syrian border, the lonely guards served us delicious glasses of tea. From there we went on to the delight of Arab Jerusalem (then, before the 6-day war of 1967, part of Jordan). An Armenian, sitting outside his little street shop, told us of the successive flights of his family and ancestors. We did not know then that the hammer of Israeli violence was, four years later, going to drive him out again.

Then to Amman and by moonlight across the Jordanian desert to Iraq. On the border, in the middle of the night, as I dozed - taking my turn to sleep in the back - Tirril was hoisted aloft on the back of a camel of the Arab Legion. In Rutba at dawn we discovered a plague of flies to torment our lack of sleep. More desert to Baghdad. Here it was roasting. An English family met us on the roadside and took us home.

In Libya, my parents had introduced us to an Iraqi economist in exile, and he gave us the name of a friend in Baghdad, currently the Minister of Agriculture. We did not know how to contact him, but in a café, the waiter told us to use the phone which we did, and spoke to him directly. We arranged to meet. He was young, energetic and full of enthusiasm for his work. Before we reached India, he had been killed. Iraq was already set into the mould of brutality that lasted through to the next millenium.

Southwards through countless military checkpoints. Young raw lads in ill-fitting uniforms, unsure of how to hold their sten guns, checked our passports. I noticed one reading my visa to enter Afghanistan upside down. So the next time, I tried a laundry ticket and it still worked. Into the desert, following the truck tracks in the sand and hopping between the straw huts at ten kilometre intervals that sold Pepsi from the depths of vats of cold water. At one stage, we followed the wrong set of tracks, westwards into the desert. We arrived at a construction site and the lonely workers dragged us out for tea and music. But the sun was declining, so we set off back the way we had

come, and finally arrived at a police point; they gave us string beds to sleep on in the open.

In Basrah, we tried out our developing sting – calling on the local British consul or British Council resident to see if we could extract a free drink. In this case, the Deputy Consul was suspicious and unfriendly. He seemed unwilling to let us camp in his garden, let alone offer us a drink. He told us to go to the Club and have a good wash. On the way, we passed the US Consulate, much grander, and on the strength of Gavin, piled in. The Consult was away but his wife, not knowing whether we were important or not, did invite us in to drinks. While this was happening, the telephone rang. It was the British Deputy Consul. He had set out to check we reached the Club and noticed our landrover outside the US Consulate. He just wanted to let us know that we were expected to dinner and could stay in his house – in the blessed coolness of air conditioning. Competition had won the day for us.

From Basrah, we went east. We had to cross the Shatt-al-Arap, the strip of water separating Iraq from Iran. The ferry was a flat raft and our landrover threatened to keel over and capsize it. But we got to the other side to find that that was the Iraqi side of the border, for whatever historical accident (probably the military plan of the British who invented Iraq). There was a border checkpoint with a guard sitting at a table. He demanded to see our exit visas. We were dumbstruck. The light was failing and we could not face recrossing the water on the ramshackle raft to get a visa. Then I heard myself saying – with some panic – 'The Chief of Police of Basrah has given us special permission to leave Iraq without a visa. He asked me to ask you to telephone him" – I nodded at the field telephone on his table – "to confirm the order". There was a sullen pause, and then the officer stamped our passports and we were gone. But it was not the end of the story. We drove off boldly into the desert towards Iran and Khoramshahr, only to find ourselves lost. We were obliged, in horror, to return to the border. But fortunately, in time we found the right track without meeting the Iraqi border guard, and again sped away from Iraq.

In Khoramshahr, late at night, we did success in getting camping space on the roof of the British Consul's house. The Consul invited us to breakfast. He was an old man (or so it seemed to our young eyes) who had spent his early life in southern Turkey, pursuing his passion, hunting, with the boys of the neighbourhood in the local hills. A year or so preparing to enter Sandhurst and then Sandhurst itself was the only time he had spent in Britain. For the rest of his life, he served abroad in the army and, afterwards, in the consular service. He was now facing the awful prospect of retiring to this cold damp

foreign country he scarcely new. His wife who spent her life playing bridge with other foreigners in the nearby oil centre of Abadan snorted derision – bridge was no different in Surrey to Abadan.

Then on, through the desert, parallel to an oil pipe line, with occasional oil flares spurting out of the ground, to Shiraz, a cool and beautiful city with water channels down the sides of the street in Persian fashion, and old mosques and bridges, beautiful with brick rather than tiles. Northwards, through Persepolis – where years later, the Shah was to celebrate his grandeur to the world's great and rich – at stupendous cost and his own final loss of the throne – to Isfahan and the magnificent Blue Mosque, wheeling on its axis to face Mecca while opening on the Maidan. In Teheran, relatives of an Oxford economist friend of Tommy's, greeted us, entertained us at home and in their garden house in the Elborz mountains. He was a governor of the Central Bank. Where are they now? scattered to the winds by the gale of the Islamic Revolution.

After Teheran, we continued north through the Elborz mountains to the Caspian, camping near a little fishing village. Then we headed east, through Turkmen villages (inhabited by high cheek boned, thin, Mongolian men), along what was then the Soviet-Iranian border. On the way, we stopped in a wooded village and were invited in to stay the night in the house of a landowner (he had both a Mercedes and a jeep). I pushed Tirril into the harem to see if she could see something of the way of life (she beamed and bubbled appropriately at the babes), little thinking that her short hair and jeans might mean she was taken for a man. After a splendid meal on the great carpet, we were put to sleep on the rugs and cushion of a sleeping room. By chance, Gavin left his much-prized "Himalayan" sleeping bag there when we set off in the morning, and remembered only miles down the road. Nothing daunted, Tirril wrote a letter to Chase and Connie (the friends from Istanbul), care of the US Embassy, Teheran, explaining the problem and how to get to our village. I was entirely sceptical. But to our later astonishment, it worked, and the sleeping bag was recovered, carried through Asia to Japan, and then back to Michigan where, almost a year later, Gavin collected it.

Once again across the desert, vast and yellow, punctuated by the bright green of oasis villages. In Meshed, we beat on the great double doors of the British Council compound (in those days, the Council was a power in the land). The resident was suspicious. As he told us disarmingly later, he sent his man to inspect us and report. "If you'd had beards, I wouldn't have let you in". We didn't so he did, and dined us before we camped in his beautiful garden.

Over the border between Iran and Afghanistan, we came to Heart, a city of ruined mosques, baking in the dust and sand. We followed the new Soviet concrete highway – already buckling in the heat – to Khandahar. Sometimes along the road we saw the giant Soviet engineers in white shirts and straw hats, but they never dared to approach us. From Khandahar, the road was smart, flat black tarmac, being built by the Americans, such was the competition of the Cold War for the uncommitted like Afghanistan. The Americans were keen to hear how the Soviets were doing. To Ghazni with its mud fort. At wayside stop, we met an Afghan who spoke English who insisted on leading us in his jeep to Kabul, with Tirril riding beside him.

Our Kabul hotel was full of travellers going east or west. A notice board asked guests politely in English not to sell their cars in the garden, for Kabul was one of the last places on the route to India not controlled by import controls. In a restaurant, we came across a teacher, Noel Ollie, later of Summerhill School in Leiston, near our cottage, and gave him a lift on the roof as we went north. We met a Peace Corps couple who had made a trip to India and believed they had seen the 'population explosion' because of the vast number of children and pregnant women (in the year we were in India, we failed to see a population explosion).

We made a detour north into the centre of Afghanistan to the Bamian Valley to see the gigantic Buddhist statues carved out of the side of the ravine (statues now smashed by the Taliban). Opposite the statues was the ruin of the Red City on a high plateau, laid waste by Gengis Khan). The valleys were beautiful and brilliant green against the brown mountains. The landrover groaned sluggishly at the altitude, but took us over a 10,000 feet pass in the Hindu Kush. It was a still and peaceful land in those distant days; who then could imagine the unremitting horror of civil war, Soviet invasion and more civil war, with six millions driven abroad as refugees?

Finally, down between the bare brown hills of the Khyber Pass, marvelling at the British regimental insignia cut into the rock beside the road, marking where British troops were cut down by the wild Pathans of the hills. In Peshawar, now in Pakistan, we felt we were coming home – the food was familiar and English was widely spoken. But it was not quite like that. We stayed in Green's Hotel and Tirril had a shower with a bucket that turned out to house cockroaches. But the traces of the British seemed to be everywhere – an ancient turbanned man in white on a horse and trap stopped us, cheering the GB plate – "You British? Hullo! I was cookie with the 18th Punjab regiment (or something like that) in Paris in 1918", he said.

It was now getting very hot, and as we drove across the great plain of the Punjab, we felt like insects crawling across a copper pan on the fire. We were consuming gallons of foul-tasting water – from a canvas water bag, hanging on the outside of the landrover to catch the wind. We debated whether it was better to have the car windows closed and suffocate or have them open and let in the burning air from outside.

In Rawalpindi, I began to prepare my first article for **The Economist**, on the theme of a sign I saw on the road, Ayub Khan: Cabinet Maker (Ayub Khan was the then military dictator of Pakistan). Pakistan had done well economically and prospects seemed bright; it was perhaps the best that there was to be for a long time. To Lahore and the spectacular Moghul remains – the great fort, the Shalimar Gardens, and then on to the border.

I had thought that since we were hired to work in India, we did not need an import permit. It was a silly idea. Thus, under the 1905 British Imperial Import Regulations, all the individual parts of our vehicle were listed in the patient long hand of the Customs clerk and impounded, pending clearance from Delhi.We went to Delhi on the train, suitably chastened. Gavin, sadly for us, then set off for the south by air.

Once in Delhi, we became part of the Indian Statistical Institute (the Delhi office), and were housed in the recently completed – and beautiful – Indian International Centre, in Lodhi Park. We had a month to wait, and started work while we secured clearance for the vehicle (with the help of the ISI). Then we returned to the border to collect our vehicle.

The monsoon was just breaking over the Punjab as we set out for Amritsar and Delhi. About half way on the route, a cow ran out from the side of the road, and Tirril who was driving, could not avoid it. The cow seemed sound enough, jumped up and skipped away, pursued by a frightened owner. But our radiator was severely damaged and leaking. A passing car, packed with south Indian pilgrims to the Himalayas, stopped and gave us a bar of soap to fill the holes. We limped, stopping and starting, through monsoon flooded roads, into Karnal to the dak bungalow (dak bungalows were nineteenth century bungalows built to house visiting judges, civil servants etc).

The following morning, we took the vehicle to the largest local garage we could find, run by some amiable Sikhs. We were poor and I was nervous at the possible cost of repairing the radiator. The mechanic was vague about the price. At lunchtime, I returned and this time the two Sikh managers sat me down in their office, brought out a bottle of Black Knight whiskey

(then one of the few whiskies available in India, now regarded as undrinkable) and insist I drink with them – and try a Charminar cigarette. Properly oiled, they then stated the only terms they would accept – that Tirril and I would go home with them that evening for dinner and stay the night in their house. So – with some foreboding – we could not do other than accept. The house was large, and at dinner we heard the sage of the family fortune – refugee peasants from West Punjab at the time of Partition; starting a small farm; then a repair service for agricultural implements; then selling spare parts and agricultural machinery, particularly Soviet tractors; finally, becoming the agents for Soviet tractors. A brother of the family came to dinner, an artillery major stationed on the eastern front (1962 had seen the armed border clash between the Chinese and Indian armies in both the western and eastern sections of the border). He was a caricature of the old British army officer – "terribly boring up there. We're just longing for the Chinese to come over the top so we can poop, poop at them and have a bit of fun". And so back to Delhi.

Delhi's economists in 1963 were still dominated by the heroic ethics of the Independence movement and the second Five Year Plan, the high point of a State-driven blitz krieg economic development programme. The private sector was entirely marginalized, regarded as nothing but a parasitic obstacle to development. The inspiration for the second plan had been a model (derived from the Soviet first Five Year Plan) by our new boss, P.C. Mahalanobis of the ISI, so in Delhi, we were in the heart of the business, and fascinated by what we could see. Nehru was still alive although now old and tired, dependent on the increasingly corrupt and dictatorial bosses of the Congress Party for survival. He died while we were there. The mood was demonstrated by the fact that, amid the universal grieving, the Home Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda, moved three police battalions into Delhi without informing the army, so the Commander in Chief of the army ordered two army divisions to the city. There was no coup and India moved into a new era of longterm economic stagnation – to last until it had begun to free itself from the terrible virus of State power in the 1990s.But at that time, we were all worshippers at the shrine of the State.

Once we had brought to vehicle to Delhi, we could pack up and set out for Bombay. We meandered in the season of some the most beautiful weather, along then then one and half lanes wide Grand Trunk Road (dodging the oncoming trucks), periodically we stopped to see an historic town, fortress or a Buddhist cave temple as well as all the better known tourist sights. At places, we marvelled at the remnants of a Britain unfamiliar to us, of military dictatorship and colonialism (the club, the cantonment, the garrison church). We stayed in dak bungalows –

and in one, the caretaker was immensely excited to see the GB plate, demanding that he cook for us egg and chips since it was so long since he had had the opportunity. We would have preferred dhal, but it would have been sad to disappoint him.

We stayed in Agra at what was, for us starvelings, the lavish comfort of Clark's Hotel. I complained the food was too bland, prepared for foreigners – so the waiters planned to disgrace me with food to roast my mouth; I sweated like mad. At breakfast, the waiter approached us to ask in a whisper if we were Americans; we were not but forced him to say why he asked – "President Kennedy was been murdered", he said. Tirril was dumbstruck, and the shock lingered on for a long time, fuelling conspiracy theories round the world.

We stopped off in Ahmedabad, the great textile centre. By chance, in the street, we noticed a young man with a packet of Senior Service (our favourite cigarette at that time, but we had seen none since we had left Britain). We accosted him in standard beggar mode. And he took us home for a Scotch with his brother in the great family house. He was a child of the great textile dynasty, the Sarabhais. While we were chatting, an older woman with grey hair came into the room. They introduced her as their aunt, Sarojini Hutheesingh. She chatted, and in a connection I can now no longer remember, mentioned "the Stalinists". Now the only people who used that term at that time were Trotskyists, so of course, we quickly cross-examined her on her political past. She was – or had been – a member of a Revolutionary Communist Party, a tiny fragment of a 1920s organisation led by a Saumyendranath Tagone (child of the great Bengal zamindar family that also produced the poet and Nobel Prize winner, Tagore). When she heard we were bound for Calcutta, she gave us his address. More to the point, she invited us to stay in her grand house, designed as a Hindu-European synthesis, a style of life bizarre contradiction to the ambitions of proletarian revolution (but one, as we found, most common in India).

In Bombay, we stayed with one of India's best known economists (and a friend of Tommy), Sachin Chaudhuri, founder of **The Economic Weekly(EW)** in 1947 and editor of its successor, **The Economic and Political Weekly**, possibly in its time the most influential publication in India. He was a most kindly and gentle man, child of East Bengal Hindu landowners (zamindars) who stayed in Calcutta at the time of Partition. He welcomed us into his dark and crowded apartment in an essentially slum tenement, Churchill Chambers, behind the Taj Mahal hotel (a prostitute plied her trade on the ground floor, bribing the local policeman with illicit liquor – Bombay was 'dry' in those days). Through Sachin, we were introduced to many of the

people who ran Bombay and India's business world. In addition, there was an endless stream of economists, civil servants and even Ministers through his apartment, supping his whiskey and swapping gossip of government and people.

Daily I went to another slum but this time an office, Sonawallah Building, to work on the paper. My first article on Pakistan for **The Economist** (which was accepted) was aired in its first version in **EW**. I wrote one or two news pieces a week on international political issues, and after I had settled in, acquired the grand title of International Editor and contributed my two pieces throughout my time in India. I wrote regularly for **The** Economist, and later, **The Far Eastern Economic** Review.

The business manager had fought the British in Malaya with the Indian National Army. He used to take us home for a drink at lunchtime on Saturday and ply us with either whiskey or gin. Whatever the choice, we ended up with a headache an hour or so later. When he got to know us, he charmingly confessed that "They are both the same but I put colour into one. I make them in the sink in the kitchen".

Being poor, Tirril and I applied separately for a liquor licence to allow us, as foreigners, to drink (the rare bars had a police officer checking permits at the entrance). One individual licence was to last the two of us a month. Getting a licence involved an interview with a police officer. When Tirril's turn came, the police captain looked at her fiercely and demanded, "Does your husband know you drink?".

We had political contacts, especially A.R. Desai and his wife. He taught at Bombay University (as she did later). Desai bullied me into addressing a meeting of striking silk weavers "on behalf of the British trade unions". They sat patiently while I spoke, sometimes getting up and going outside. To my surprise, no one translated what I had to say, and the workers clearly spoke no English. Afterwards, AR Desai addressed them, also in English. I had to presume that the audience must think it made them feel good to hear an incomprehensible language – like medieval peasants hearing a church sermon in Latin. Desai also introduced us to the aged and famous C.G.Shah who claimed to be a founder member of the Indian Communist Party, but I fear we had little in common– he was very Gandhian and almost folksy Christian in ethics.

We got to know an English journalist, Stephen Hugh Jones, who worked on the English-language newspaper, **The Express**, although much of his time seems to have spent watching the bosoms of the

older schoolgirls coming out of the school gates opposite his officer. He was married, not very happily, to a rather fey girl. Through them we met Hawk, head of Oxford University Press in Bombay, and veteran of a great overland trek in the 1930s through Kabul to Moscow. He took us on a walk on an ancient trade foot-route up the Western Ghats. On the way down, we bathed in warm pools. We also made – on our own – numerous trips to sites around Bombay, and even one, by train, to the north and the stunningly beautiful Mount Abu and the Dilwara caves in Gujerat.

After three months, we moved on, crossing India at the most beautiful time of the year just after the monsoon. We called in on a film location at the old ruined fort of Mandu to see Sachin's younger brother (a film producer we had met at his house in Bombay). We saw the famous Dilip Kumar in action. And to Sanchi, the sacred Buddhist stupa, and Benares (it may already have been turning itself into Varanasi by then). We called at the marvellous temple complex of Khujarahao with its amazing erotic sculptures (the man in front of us was appalled, shouting that they were disgusting and should be destroyed). We joined the Grand Trunk Road (Delhi to Calcutta), and finally, through the fields golden with rice, reached Calcutta.

In Calcutta, we stayed in the guest house of the Indian Statistical Institute, then on the Barrackpore Trunk Road. We began work in earnest – Tirril on the psychological underpinning for India's family planning programme; and me, on what ought to be the price of labour in countries embarking on industrialisation. Both projects were 'ordered' by the head of the ISI, P.C. Mahalanobis, along with his required conclusions – that family planning was a waste of money in India, and wages in Indian manufacturing were too high. Fortunately we were not beholden to him for our future, so it was relatively painless to reach the opposite conclusion – in my case, wages were too low to secure the optimal level of productivity. In Tirril's case, she was so disturbed by being required to recommend a conclusion so at variance with her views, she was unable to produce a report – to her great anguish.

Mahalanobis was a tall, thin, imperious figure, now aged. His wife was short and plump, clad like a maharanee (her name was Rani). Mahalanobis loved to hold court, and he would sit with his two young foreigners at dusk speaking of anything and everything. He loved to boast how, in 1944, he cheated a visiting American brigadier; he called for the results of an agricultural survey, was brought by mistake the results of a survey of milk consumption, but nonetheless held forth as they were the right data. On one occasion, his Personal Assistant shyly entered the room and approached him to whisper that the

flight to Delhi was awaiting him at Dum Dum airport. PC angrily denounced the PA for interrupting "serious scientific discussions" (I don't know what we were talking about, nothing very serious). The plane, full of passengers, was obliged to wait for the Statistical Adviser to the Government of India and Member of the powerful Planning Commission.

Early on, we made contact with another contributor to **The Economist**, Dilip Mukerjee, and became fast friends. In fact, we were being put to compete with each other by **The Economist** until I withdrew, not being a professional journalist. Dilip grew up in Lucknow, a Muslim city, and remained fascinated by Islam and Pakistan (he was one of the first Indian journalists to report from Pakistan and years later, wrote a biography of the then-Prime Minister, Z.A.Bhutto). When we met him, he was making the transition from being public relations officer to Tata Iron and Steel to being a journalist on **The Times of India.**

Our great treat of the week was to drive in to central Calcutta, to Parkway, for beers and samosas, and to pick up the English press. Sometimes, we would go on to Dilip's apartment for a party with his group of friends, whisky flowing freely, moving on afterwards for a stunningly delicious meal at Amber. We became close friends also with Dilip's wife, Rita, a wonderfully warm, chainsmoking woman; as a student in Lucknow she has stood in the front line of student demonstrations against the British.The children, Tuki and Bubu, were at the most charming age in 1964 when we were in Calcutta.

We explored the area round the ISI, walking for miles in the semi-rural outskirts of the city, with village huts, palm groves and great water tanks - faraway the screech of a film pop song reminded us of how close the city was. We had an earthquake, marked for us in the middle of the night by hearing cement scraping against cement; we shot downstairs from our second floor room, and stood nervously in the open air - forgetting that above us were a line of two cement balconies. The spire of St Andrews Cathedral was felled. We had a Hindu-Muslim communal riot in which Congress organisers (Hindu) raided Muslim shops and warehouses to replenish Party funds; many streets were closed and policed as we drove into the city. We tried to follow the Bengali film industry, then dominated by Satyajit Ray in his prime; one of his leading ladies turned up to one of Dilip's parties.

We made trips with other guesthouse guests (Oldo Kyn, a Czech economist, whom we later went to visit in Prague in 1967 in the Dubcek spring reform period and who fled to the West a year

later; and Prokopec, an anthropologist, also from Prague), led by the guesthouse manager, Tapathi Raychaudhuri, to Diamond Harbour on the sea, stopping off along the way to buy village pottery. Tapathi took us home – "I do pujas though I don't believe in it, just to be on the safe side" – and with her army Major husband fed us delights; their son, an officer cadet in Poona, was worried about how to afford a horse. We ate voraciously of the famous Bengali freshwater fish, hilsa, in mustard oil, followed by dhoy and sandesh. Another person at guesthouse lunches was Dr Chaudhuri, a heamaglobinist, working on blood groups of the Bengali population, who discovered the mystery that the Bengali tribe, Shantals, had a blood group shared by only one other group in the world, in Morocco. Tirril, with love, started learning Bengali and got further than being able to say she did not speak it. She also, on a tour of the ISI gardens, was persuaded to eat a piece of ginger root dug fresh from the soil, and was very ill for ten days. A Dundee jute mill manager, living on his own, would sometimes drop in to the guesthouse, searching for English, for a drunken exchange of confidences. Three Russians came through and fell upon us with vodka and pickled herrings – I was very sick (and have not had pickled herrings since). Later, we met one of them, an Armenian university teacher, in Moscow. We made a trip to Darjeeling and were stunned to see the outline of mount Kachenjunga, 80 miles away, high above us. We met there the father of Calcutta friends, an old civil servant who many years earlier had made an expedition into Tibet.

We also met Saumyendranath Tagore, the man we heard about in Ahmedabad. He was a striking tall well-built man. Once, in the 1920s, robed in saffron raw silk with flying hair, he had led the Bengal Workers' and Peasant' League. The fame took him to Moscow, he said, in 1927, just when Stalin was finishing with Trotsky (we were reading Deutscher's trilogy to each other then). But we saw him only long after his days of glory, reduced to giving lectures to the American Ladies' Club. We met also the real Revolutionary Communist Party and its ancient leader, Tridib Chaudhuri; they had a clutch of seats in the national assembly (the Lok Sabha) and in the West Bengal Assembly. But the greatest political excitement while we were there was the split in the Indian Communist Party following the great clash between Peking and Moscow, the stuff of volumes of articles.

One of Tirril's friends from Oxford, Dee, was also in Calcutta. She was busy at the weekends with her friends digging ditches in a village; we were now wise enough to wonder why she did not employ people to do it and so increase local incomes? Her American boyfriend was in the US Consulate, writing a weekly political report on Calcutta for the State department – I

realised how impossible in Washington it must be to understand anything if weekly reports were arriving from all major cities in the world – falling like snow flakes to bury the officials. We met Dee's mother, a kindly lady in a sari, married to the head of the important company, Metal Box. She told us over tea in her neat sitting room how impossibly oppressive India was becoming, and as we sympathised at this attack on the bureaucracy, she gave us her example – "I used to be able to go to New York shopping each year, stop in London to see the children at school, and then stay at our cottage in Majorca. Now with this wretched government and the foreign exchange rules, I can't do any of it". This was, remember, 1963. We retired, realising this was not our league of oppression.

We worried for a long time on how to move on eastwards. I came up with a harebrained scheme to interview Ho Chih Minh (leader of North Vietnam, then locked in the opening stages of war with the US in South Vietnam) for **The Observer**. **The Observer** responded with great enthusiasm, but the North Vietnamese did not. We had, however, sent our passports to the North Vietnamese embassy in Delhi for visas when the bad news came – Tirril's grandfather had died. Tirril was shattered and it was obvious she must return for the funeral. To our astonishment, the ISI and the British Consulate succeeded in opening Calcutta post office on a Saturday afternoon to retrieve the registered envelope with her passport. All the other bureaucratic hurdles to getting out of India were similarly whisked away and she was on the first available plane. It was a miracle.

On her return, Tirril brought shock-absorbers to replace the clapped out four on our vehicle. She was smuggling them through Indian Customs. But when I saw her arriving at Dum Dum airport (in those days, not much more than a gloomy barn), bowed down by the weight of her hand luggage, so great was my excitement, I called out in a joke, asking what she was carrying that was so heavy. Fortunately nobody heard.

We were saved from the problem of our onward journey by a visit to the ISI of Bill Newell, Professor of Anthropology at the International Christian University in Tokyo. Without much prompting, he offered me a visiting lectureship – in Society and Politics in South East Asia – for a semester, provided we could get there. We had the post, now we had to find the fare. We promptly started Japanese classes in Calcutta – when I had proudly mastered 30 or 40 characters, Tirril was clocking 600, and I never caught up.

The other great problem facing us was how to get rid of our vehicle. We had bought the landrover in England in order to give it to the Government of India to help India's development.

Foolish children. With months of correspondence with the Indian Customs authorities, the conclusion was always the same – remove the vehicle beyond Indian territorial waters or go to gaol. Sachin came to Calcutta for a meeting of the Indian Board of Trade at the depths of my despair, and I asked his advice. "Come and see Manubhai Shah (Minister of International Trade). I'm having a drink with him this evening". I protested that my wretched landrover was a trivial thing in the context of India's external trade, but he insisted and I went along, even if sceptically. The Minister was kindly and thoughtful and promised to look into it. A few days later I had official notification that I had permission to import my vehicle – but with a special import tax of 150 per cent of its value. We were stunned, and I took the whole problem – as well as the problem of our fares – to Mahalanobis, and he saved us at the last moment. He – or his staff – devised a scheme. We would give the landrover as a gift to the ISI, but would sell the ISI the wheels in return for air tickets. The ISI would then negotiate to have the import duty waived; if they failed, they would give the vehicle to government in lieu of the duty.

Now we had an appointment and the fare, we set about creating journalistic commissions. This was not difficult since both Burma and Cambodia had banned foreign journalists so papers were eager for stories. I signed up for a press card with **The Economist**, and various other papers (**Far Eastern Economic Review**, **Observer**), and we set to work.

Then we were away, escaping, liberated from India. We had not realised how oppressive it was – India, the ISI, the poverty of Calcutta. In Rangoon, the sight of a large Burmese woman, smoking a cigar, beating her husband with an umbrella, was the contrast with the tiny bony bespectacled Bengali office worker in a cheap cotton sari, bowing and scuttling to work, clinched our sense of escape.

Burma was now under tight military control (General Ne Win) and busy expelling the Burmese Indian community (and robbing them before they left). Foreigners were not allowed a visa to stay for more than 24 hours, and the airline schedules did not allow more than 22 hours. For six weeks, Tirril and I prepared, mastering all we could. And then in the hours of daylight ran from one appointment to another, finally expiring in the Strand Hotel for a few hours sleep. There was even time to see the Shwe Dagon and take in dinner with a Burmese journalist. As we took off from Rangoon airport, I started typing, completing the task in our Bangkok hotel. We estimated we extracted 7,000 words in different articles from those 22 hours.

From Bangkok, we moved on to Vientiane in Laos. The country was

then riven by civil war between the royalists (Prince Souphanouvong) and the Communist Pathet Lao (under Prince Souvanna Phouma) – the Pathet Lao chasing the royalists back and forth across the legendary Plain of Jars. The famous Constellation hotel had a regular clientele of journalists, most of them stringers, like me, who had just reached the end of the hitch-hiking route and needed enough to pay the hotel (and dope) bills.

As we arrived at the airport, Tirril suddenly gripped my arm and said, “That’s Marcus Edwards”, of a young man waiting to meet someone arrive in the terminal. Being vulgarly English (or those absurd times), we avoided meeting his eyes, but the terminal was too small to allow this for long. He was a young member of the British Embassy and delighted to see new faces from old times. On our last night in Vientiane, he invited us home to practice – rather unsatisfactorily from my point of view – smoking opium. But we were very groggy in the morning to catch the early morning flight.

Being poor, we had booked in the cheaper hotel in the guide book, the Chantivasouk. But the airport bus had a mind of its own and took us to the Constellation, the sleezy handout for all journalists. Since we had left the other hotel as our forwarding address, I asked the Constellation manager how to get there. He looked at me suspiciously, saying “But, Monsieur, you have a young wife”. We persisted in searching out the Chantivasouk. It was of course a brothel. “Oh, just a joke”, said the journalist who wrote that section of the guide book and whom we met in the bar of the Constellation; “Everyone knows it’s a brothel”.

Otherwise, we did our job, working hard to interview anyone who would agree. We even managed to interview General Phoumi, between sessions of squash behind his peaceful villa. The brilliant green of the paddy fields lapped up to his garden. He was dead not so long afterwards. But we got our copy in on time.

We were to go on to Cambodia after Vientiane but the flight was cancelled, with the next one not due for 14 days. So we agreed to go via Saigon. Groggily dodging the Laotian airport immigration officer who wanted an exit visa, we took an alternative flight on a kind of small country bus of a plane – with chickens and vegetables and peasants; you had to climb up a steep gangway to your seat. We called at Savannakhet in southern Laos, and then Saigon where we had an unexpected stop over. It was, for us, deliciously redolent of France and French colonialism. It was not yet dominated wholly by US military power. There was a riot going on between Catholic and Buddhist

students, so, loyal to our trade, we went down to see. While we were there, a European emerged from the crowds and introduced himself. He was a stringer for **The Observer**. He asked us home. He said coyly, "I hope my wife will be decently dressed". In fact, as we entered the door of his apartment, a young woman, plump, wholesome and in pink and white check gingham, greeted us, saying to Tirril with some surprise, "You won the Greek reading prize from Badminton". There was no escaping the English ruling class.

To Cambodia, now firmly under the control of Prince Sihanouk. The ban on journalists (and the expulsion of those identified) meant that we had to behave with circumspection, not using my press-card. We were discreet and all went well – even to the point of sending a telegram from the Phnom Penh post office.

We were to go to Siem Reap to see Angkor Wat. There were only two others on the airport mini-bus as we left Phnom Penh, a distinguished elderly couple, he in a pale linen suit with shirt and tie and carrying a panama, she equally elegant. They looked unspeakably English. They spoke English, that sort of English. However, vulgarity again, we did not meet eyes. But on the way to the airport, we had a puncture and could no longer avoid meeting. He was, it seems, Sir William Hayter, former ambassador to Moscow (and then, I think, head of New College, Oxford), one of the great and the good. His wife was very direct in extracting our class of degree, saying "Theresa only got a third". How we carry our tortoise shells on our backs round the world.

Angkor Wat in 1964 was magnificent, buried in the jungle, with only the destruction of nature and the years, not of the wars that were to come. Who could then have envisaged the nightmare of the US bombing and of the Khmer Rouge?

Hong Kong was under typhoon and we were green with fear. But it was a blessed relaxation – hot water, soft beds and good food, at the expense of the airline which would not take off in such weather. The typhoon lashed the city with torrential rain, tearing ships in the harbour from their mooring, filling the little streets with ripped off street signs, slates, hoarding, even the odd balcony. I went to see the people on the **Far Eastern Economic Review** – and was offered the possibility of job. We took off for Tokyo in a blind funk, but I sat next to an American PX manager (shops supplying US forces in the region), who was very nonchalant. He pooh poohed our fears: "The people I admire take the B.26 weather planes out of Guam, through the eye of the typhoon to measure the wind pressure. The wings flap, the rivets pop – now that's exciting".

In Tokyo, on the Mitaka campus, we had a sweet little wooden house under the trees, next door to Rod and Lucia Dugliss. Rice fields surrounded the campus (it was the turn round point for the marathon in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics). It was idyllic. 37 years later – in 2,000 – we paid a second visit and recognized very lttle. We could not find the little house – now there were concrete student apartment blocks. Housing and streets, a sea of grey, had replaced the rice fields.

After our year in India, Tokyo seemed ultra modern – full of flyovers, great highways, the bullet train (just introduced), office towers. We felt like peasants coming to the big city and marvelling. Of course, the city then would seem like a shabby provincial city compared to modern Tokyo. On the other hand, a lot of the old Tokyo still remained – many women still wore kimonos, shuffling down the tiny side streets; many houses were still bamboo, with rice paper screens, and many of the shops were the old style open fronted ones. It was still in the main the Japan we recognized from **Rashomon** and other films.

The University, being an American foundation, was well-furbished
and modern with an excellent airy library. But quite a number of staff lived in more traditional wooden houses. Not long after arriving, I gave a seminar in Bill Newell's house when a mild earthquake took place. Everyone else ignored it, but it seemed to me all parts of the wooden building were moving in different directions. On the other hand, we were invited home by a member of staff, still known as Baron Kondo. He had studied in Oxford in the 1920s – and remembered, as a schoolboy, seeing the general in command of the 1905 attack on Vladivostok, riding on the open platform at back of a tram, grim faced as if remembering the shame of the terrible slaughter. His sitting room was a model of English Edwardian style, chintz curtains, deep arm chairs and sofa.

The students were good and keen. We had a discussion about national stereotypes and I asked them how they saw the British. To my astonishment, they replied shyly "Sexy". They had all been to see the latest British film hit, Tom Jones. In my class, I also had some students from a party of University of California junior-year abroad students. One girl persistently fell asleep in my class, so afterwards, I teased that she was staying up too late partying or boyfriending. Afterwards, the professor in charge of the party came to thank me for being so understanding – she suffered from narcolepsy (sleeping sickness).

Tirril had carefully planned to become pregnant in Japan, and she succeeded – with Kate. She took a job in a Japanese girl's

high school, teaching English, trying to hide her snatched bites at peanut butter sandwiches under the desk to ward of morning sickness. However, at lunchtime, the teachers noticed that she retched over raw fish, and the great global clan of women closed in on her to protect from the worst provocations.

Again, we walked as far as we could around the university. We took weekly trips on the packed trains (with the dutiful shovers packing us in) to the bright lights of Shinjuku and perhaps a foreign film (I remember walking out of Les Parapluies de Cherbourg). We took more ambitious trips, to Kamakura, Fujiyama, and down the coast to Yokohama. Standing, watching the ships slip out of port, I am supposed to have asked dreamily, "Why don't we ever go to exciting places?"

At the end we made a bigger trip to Nara and Kyoto. We went by ordinary sleeper – we could not afford the bullet – and were packed in on shelves, four or five deep, to sleep. It was most unpleasant. At the temple sites, we met an English carpenter, hitchhiking to Australia, and he instructed us on the quality of craftsmanship in the buildings. We stayed – shivering since it was December – in little inns, ryokan. They had pits with heaters in where you sat on the edge, surrounded by rugs, with a table for the evening meal. Blessedly there was much hot sake and deep scalding baths. The snow lay on the bare branches, sometimes with the glistening orange persimmons still hanging.

It seemed no time at all before we were planning our departure. We had decided to try to return to Britain by train – from Hong Kong to Victoria, through China and Russia. We had applied for a Chinese visa in Calcutta and been refused. So en route to Japan, we arranged a Hong Kong convenience address and applied again, pleading that we could not afford the air fare to Europe and needed to go by train, the cheapest means. This time we were lucky.

We now returned to Hong Kong, with a few days to finalise arrangements – particularly to find clothes warm enough for the deep winter of Russia. We managed to get in Tokyo some giant quilted trousers to keep Tirril and her baby warm – but she was turned into waddling sphere, a *fata morgana*, after the Prokoviev opera, A tale of three oranges. I talked to the **FEER** and got numerous briefings from the China watcher centres of the city. I was already signed up for three articles for **The Economist** on Chinese factories. I met someone from Hong Kong University who was interested in recruiting me, but sadly, we were already committed to the University of York and to having a family in England.

China was effectively closed in 1964, with only a trickle of foreigners allowed in. It was thus an immense excitement for us to take the train across the heavily fortified borders, one of the lines of demarcation between east and west. The country was still licking its wounds after the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the catastrophic famine of the early 1960s (of course, at that time, the scale of the disaster was still not known to most people). The problems were exaggerated by the unilateral suspension of Soviet aid to China following the Sino-Soviet split. Mao was beginning to grapple with opposition in the party, and the year after we were there, launched the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". Not that we saw much of this drama – less could be learned by a foreigner within the country than outside. As we trundled on our train – with heroic music accompanying departure, and giant mugs of green tea regularly supplied (or 'white tea' – hot water) – we were regarded with intense curiosity, but no one dared speak to us except through an official interpreter. It is a strange sensation to pass through a country so cocooned in silence.

We whisked through factories, spotless, industrious, betraying nothing. Except a Canton petrochemical plant which, we were told, was temporarily closed – we learned later that few people had ever seen it working. In Canton, Tirril was busy reading all she could – seeing a banner across the street, she asked why it said "May the Wool Merchant live for 10,000 years". The character for wool was the same as from Mao, so it was in effect, "Long live Chairman Mao". I thought it was a pretty good try. In Hangchow (all the English transliterations was unreformed then), we visited a small factory producing millions of silk screen portraits of Josef Stalin. Later, I put Tirril up to talking to the guide to let me slip away – down a side street, to where there was what appeared to be a prison. But the interpreter was quick to catch up. He was enraged at our disobedience.

In Shanghai, we stayed in the Friendship Hotel, formerly owned by the Sassoons – Pegleg had the famous pent house on the roof. In our room, we complained loudly at what we took to be a bugging device that Chinese factories were very boring because none of them had any problems. The life of a Chinese manager was so easy – every problem was solved by reading Mao's **Little Red Book** (a collection of particularly vacuous pieties that attained some fame in the 1960s). The following day, the interpreter apologised for taking us to a factory which had problems they had been unable to solve. It was a jute mill, and the problem was air pollution – we were strictly instructed to wear masks. Now, we had lived in Calcutta, one of the world's great centres of jute manufacture; in many of the mills there, you had to part the dust with your hands to get in. But this

Shanghai factory was spotless, no trace of dust. We were the only people wearing masks. In Shanghai, the tourist bureau were, I think, getting suspicious of us, and insisted we went to see other things – a housing project which, they said, was occupied by ex-prostitutes under the old regime. And to infant'school where they sang a song for us about killing US airmen (with a picture on the wall); there was no heating, and the toddlers were wrapped up in quilted clothes, tiny little balls; Tirril being on the edge of motherhood could not restrain her tears.

But the damage to our standing did not carry over to Nanking. We went to visit a rural commune. To our astonishment, they put on a spectacular banquet at lunchtime. We had not noticed, but our hosts had, that it was Christmas day.

However, in Peking, there was no leeway – we were required to do our duty as tourists and not stray into untourist things like factories. It was cold and windy, with snow not far to the north. The regime here presented its most stony face. But the food was still very good – in the famous duck restaurant where all parts of the duck were used. As visiting journalists, we were invited to lunch at the British embassy. Tirril sat next to the wife of the Chargé d'Affaires who said she recognized the name Tirril from one of the doors close to the room of her daughter, Onora O'Neill, in Somerville – there was no escape. In Peking's northern station, the trans Siberian train stood. Its Chinese wagons were spotless and shining, the Soviet wagons filthy – a mute symbol of the Sino-Soviet split.

While we were there, we made an attempt to get an entry visa for Outer Mongolia. The consul, in long shiny boots, stared at us suspiciously and asked with a strong Russian accent and sinister innuendo, "And why do you want to go to Mongolia?" Suddenly the whole project seemed silly. It was obvious that only spies would ever want to go to Mongolia. We were refused, although allowed to transit by train through Ulan Bator station.

Fortunately, we had a beautiful Chinese compartment on the train, lavish with walnut panelling and walls lined with Chinese blue brocade. I took the top bunk, and at one stage fell out in the middle of the night, protested "Don't worry, everything is under control" till Tirril woke me up. The food was good while the Chinese dining car lasted through the endless miles of snow. There were two merry British diplomatic couriers, carrying diplomatic bags to Ulan Bator. One was busy wooing a Mongolian border guard, and on this trip, was carrying an illustrated book of birds as a bribe.

At Ulan Bator, we could do no more than stamp up and down on the snowy platform – in our furry Chinese boots and great furry hats. Beyond, the white city and white sky merged into each other. It was bitterly cold.

Then on, across the vast snowy wastelands of Siberia, with an occasional forest or miserable looking village – Irkutsk, Tomsk, Novisibirsk, Omsk, Sverdlov to Moscow, nine days in the train altogether. The Russian dining car served tough mutton chops and vodka for breakfast to hard faced army officers and others who came and went.

Moscow was also very cold, and in the Metropole Hotel, boiling (so poor Tirril was broiled until she could strip off). The car windows iced up as soon as we entered. The streets were slushy with black ice. We were invited home by the Armenian academic, Karina, we had met in Calcutta (Armenia was then part of the Soviet Union). By superhuman efforts, they had managed to get a piece of beef and I was honoured with the invitation to carve it. In best British style, I sliced it paper thin – to their horror at this desecration. I should have cut steaks.

We made a side trip to Leningrad. The weather was brilliant – the sun hot, glistening on the snow and the grand buildings. We had a guide – no one was allowed into the country without one (so the costs were steep). We passed a park with two statues and when we asked who they were, he said “Oh, two philosophers – Germans”. We pressed him and with some surprise, he said “They’re called Marx and Engels”. Then catching himself, he said “Of course, you’re Europeans. Most Americans I take round don’t know the names”.

On to Warsaw, shabby, grey and cold, the wedding cake Palace of Culture only adding to the depressing atmosphere. We called – through Tommy – on the famous Polish economist, Kalecki. He stared at us quizzically when we explained our journey, and asked: “Why were you in India? People only go to India who are fools, hypocrites or crooks. Which were you?” We confessed that, like him, we were hypocrites.

And on, the layers of Asia falling away as were crossed into the fortress of East Germany, to the enclave of Berlin, and the through the iron curtain to the lavishness of Cologne, Brussels and Ostend. Pen and Tommy came to meet the three of us at Victoria station.

I went to se the editor of **The Economist**, and he offered me job in charge of their China coverage. Sadly I turned it down – we were committed to a new academic life at York and creating a family.

ix) The Rest

That is the end, as it were, of the beginning, overlapping with the arrival of our children, so what follows are only very brief notes. We stayed in York until 1968; our two children were born in Fulford Hospital in York. Tirril went to work in the Retreat Psychiatric Hospital. I was very active in the anti-Vietnam war campaign.

We then moved to London, and I went to work with Ruth Glass, a fierce Prussian Jewess, at her Centre for Urban Studies at University College London to work on what was to concern me for the rest of my professional life, cities and urbanisation in developing countries. We moved to Kentish Town. Tirril came to work with George Brown, then at Bedford College, on what also proved to be her life-time professional concerns.

It was a time of intense political activity, and we were both increasingly active – in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (which mounted 100,000 demonstrations outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, in International Socialism (expanding rapidly to become the Socialist Workers' Party) and as editor of the journal, **International Socialism**. Later, I came to work for the SWP in organising immigrant recruitment to the party – we started producing two Indian-language monthlies (in Punjabi and Urdu).

In 1972, I left the Centre for Urban Studies to take up a research fellowship at Oxford for the Ministry of Overseas Development to work on the economy of Bombay. That took the four of us to Bombay. When it was over, I took part-time work – allowing me to work virtually fulltime with the SWP – with the Development Planning Unit of University College London, under another Prussian Jew, Otto Koenigsberger, but a much more gentle and kindly one.

In 1975,in one of those silly events that occur sometimes in small group politics, I was ousted from the central leadership of the SWP, and went off to New York on a UN project to lick my wounds. I did speaking tours for the American SWP associate that took me the length and breadth of North America.

When I returned, I moved into full time work with DPU and began travelling much more extensively – to India and then Mexico (from 1976), later to China and Brazil and many other places. Publications came thick and fast (I have put a list at the end). In 1982, I became Director of the DPU, and in 1987, Professor.

However, in the 1970s, I continued to speak for the SWP and to write for its publications. In 1976, we launched the Anti-Nazi League, a collaborative venture with other organisations and people (Neil Kinnock, later to be leader of the Labour Party; Peter Hain, and Ernie Roberts, a trade union leader), to block the rise of the neo-Nazi organisation, the National Front. In the 1979 elections, the Front were effectively knocked out of British politics and never recovered. The ANL was wound down immediately afterwards.

I was growing weary with SWP politics, resentful of the treadmill of meetings and increasingly bored. I was finding British politics increasingly tedious. I suppose it was reflected in my writings, since in 1987, I was interviewed by two leading figures in the SWP, Tony Cliff and Duncan Hallas. I told them I was bored and wanted not to have do more meetings, particularly because the gap between what I was urging other people to do and what I was prepared to do was becoming intolerably wide. I was released and dropped straight out of the organisation.

In 1989, I stopped being Director of the DPU and went off for a semester at the University of California (Los Angeles). I then concentrated on my teaching, starting a Master's programme in managing city economies, and running the doctoral programme of the DPU. In 1997, I took early retirement and went to work for a time in Washington with the World Bank. I then spent a year as visiting professor at the American University in Cairo. I returned to a quiet life of writing and consultancy – the rest is the present.

x) **Publications (books only):**

The Return of Cosmopolitan Capital: Globalisation, the State and War, IB Tauris (forthcoming).

Thinking the Unthinkable: the Myth of Immigration Control, IB Tauris (forthcoming).

Cities and Structural Adjustment (with Ida Fabricius, Editors), ODA-DPU, UCL Press, June 1996.

The New Untouchables: Immigration and the New World Worker, IB Tauris/Penguin (1995).

Jobs for the Poor: a Case Study in Cuttack (with Sunil Kumar and Colin Rosser), Research Press, 1996.

(Editor), **Cities in the 1990s: the Challenge for Developing Countries**, ODA-DPU, UCL Press, 1992.

National Liberation, IB Tauris, 1991, Penguin 1992, University of Nevada, 1993.

Cities, Class and Trade: Social and Economic Change in the Third World, IB Tauris, 1991.

The End of the Third World: Newly Industrialising Countries and the Decline of an Ideology, IB Tauris, Penguin, Viking, London and New York, 1986, 1987.

Of Bread and Guns: the World Economy in Crisis, Penguin, London, 1983.

Economic Development, Cities and Planning: the Case of Bombay, Oxford University Press, Bombay and London, 1978.

The Mandate of Heaven: Marx and Mao in Modern China, Quartet, London, 1978.

India-China: Underdevelopment and Revolution, Vikas and Carolina Academic Press, New Delhi and Durham, North Carolina, 1974.

Competition and the Corporate Society: British Conservatives, the State and Industry, 1945-1964, Methuen, London, 1971 and 1973.

(edited, with John Palmer), **World Crisis: Essays in Revolutionary Socialism**, Hutchinson, London, 1971.

Beliefs in Society: the Problem of Ideology, Watts and Penguin, London, 1967 and 1971.

* * * * *

The story of Sonia is incomplete and cannot now be completed. I have used the pretext of that unresolved detective story to give a disconnected account of the interrelated family histories woven around it. And at the end, largely for my children, a personal self-indulgence. The family stories are of course a cheat, merely biological histories through the male line (the transmission of names), without any account of the non-biological relationships and networks which may be even more important in practice. But it gives a flavour of these unseen networks, of the binding and unbinding of relationships that go into making one person, much of it entirely accidental.

I have only partly touched on the background - the waves upon which these corks rose and fell. There are parallels - the

great opening up of the upper class social structure with British expansion in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, which provided unrivalled opportunities for some of Tirril's ancestors to rise is not dissimilar to the twentieth century opening up for the working classes – lifting the descendants of the Stokes' into the middle classes. All equally suffered from the growing savageries of war that punctuate the stories.

a

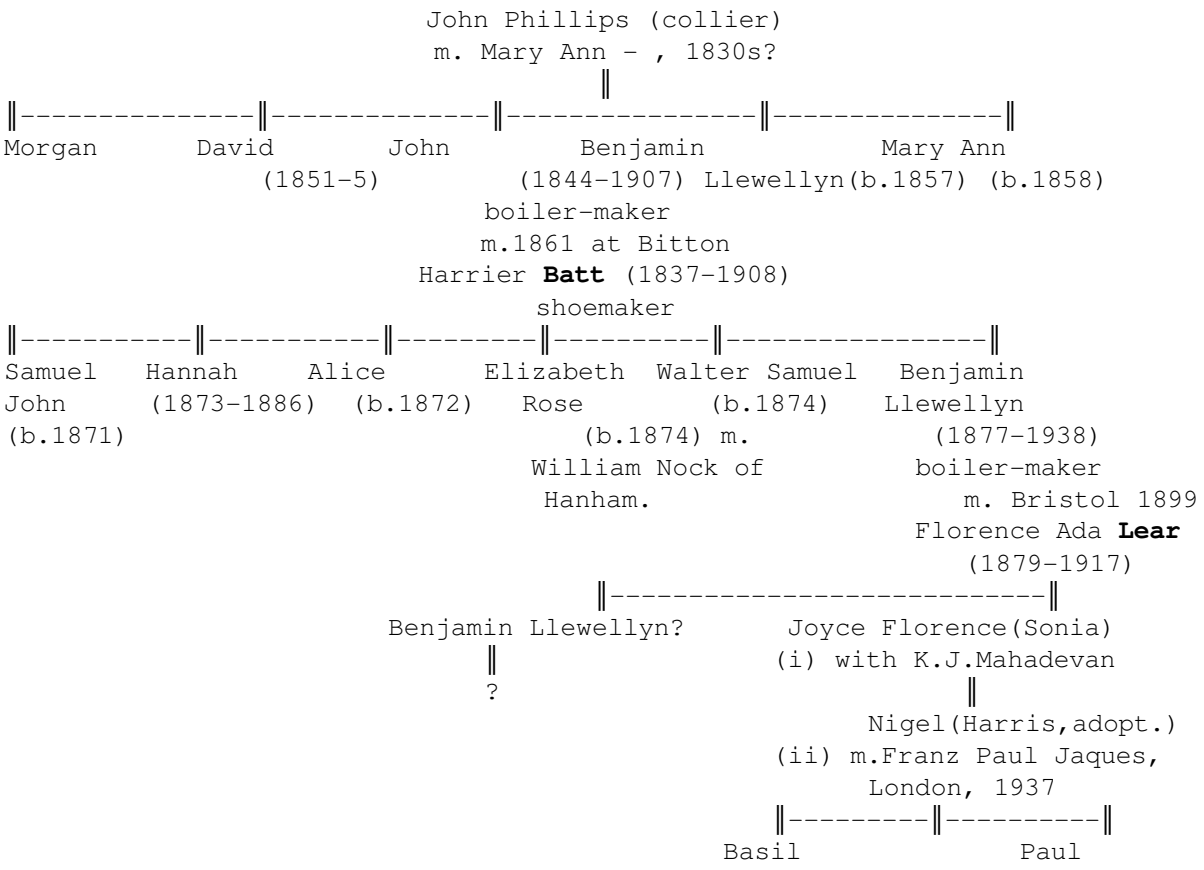
Consider also the strange interweaving in quite different parts of the world of those Jewish threads – the Baloghs of Budapest, the Jaques of Hamburg, the Sassoons of Baghdad and Bombay. Yet on the other hand, one can be impressed by how quickly memories are lost, families dispersed, despite the struggle to hold together some identity: one can reach a different conclusion, that families are essentially ephemeral, spanning in memory only one or two generations. Thereafter, they reinvent themselves in quite different forms. To tell the stories is not to discover a truth, hitherto unseen, but to invent a fiction.

But the overall structure within which her story takes place is reasonably clear – and fascinating in the unseen network, binding and unbinding relationships. Mere biology, in my case, is the least interesting issue, but rather the powerful social parameters, the arbitrariness of relationships, and the extraordinary upward and downward mobility. There also parallels – the great opening up of the upper class social structure between about 1770 and 1830 which made unrivalled opportunitis for Tirril's family to rise, similarly opened up for part of the working classes after the first World War – so most of the descendants of the Stokes rose into the middle classes.And consider the strange interweaving in quite different parts of the descent of those of Jewish origin – the Baloghs of Budapest, the Jaques of Hamburg, the Sassoons of Baghdad or Bombay. Prehaps, with a little probing, all families turn out to be of comparable complexity – and the idea of single pure line descents, ethnic homogeneity, families limited to one place for hundreds of years, is a myth.

Appendices:

Phillips

- the descent of Sonia(Joyce) Phillips, mother of Nigel Harris and of Basil and Paul Jaques.



Nigel Harris
(1935-) m.
Tirril Olivia Gatty
(1940-)

Kate Stella (1965-)
Dilip Benjamin (1967-)

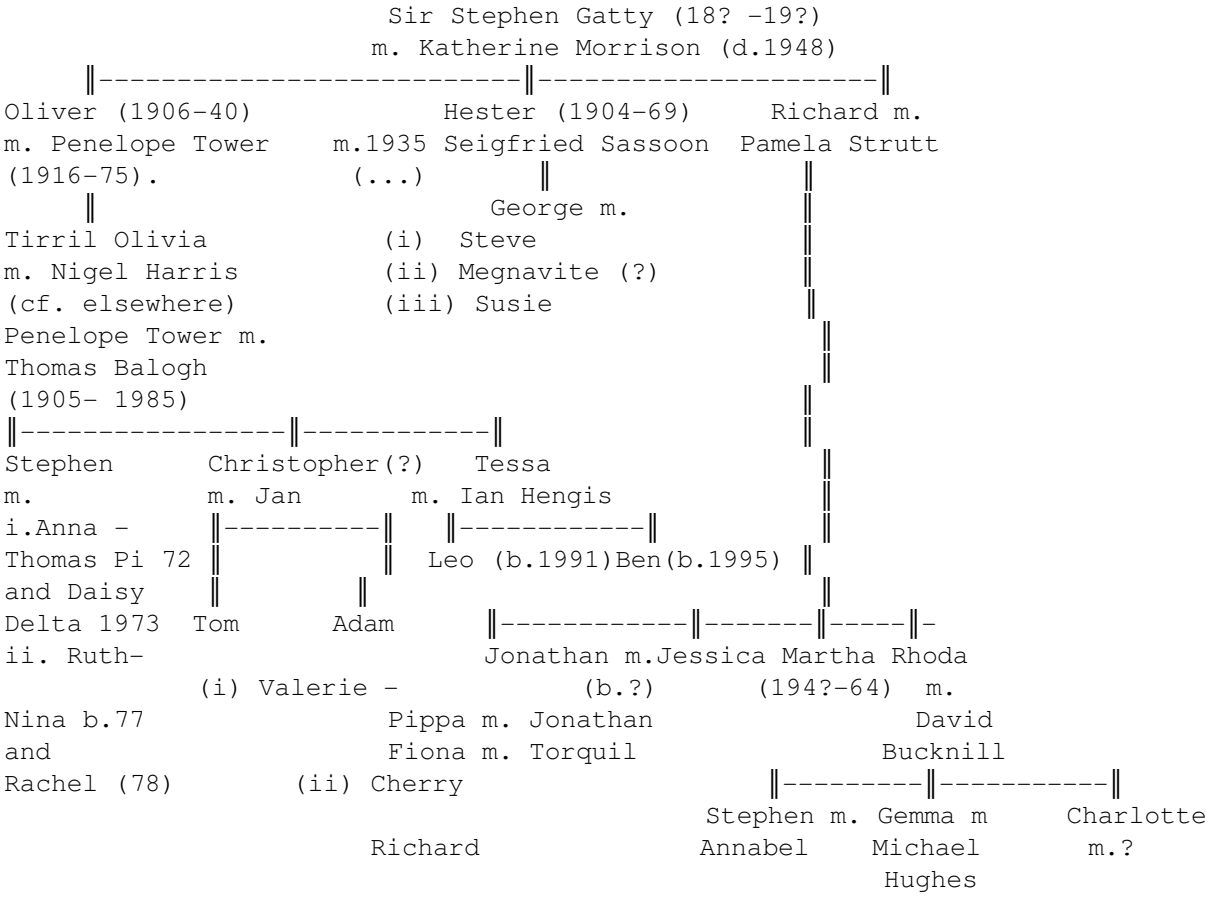
Basil Jaques (1938-) m.
Penelope (1940-)

Timothy (196?)
Adam (198?)
James (198?)
m. Anne 198?
Petra
Rebecca
Joshua (b. ?)
Daniel (b.?)

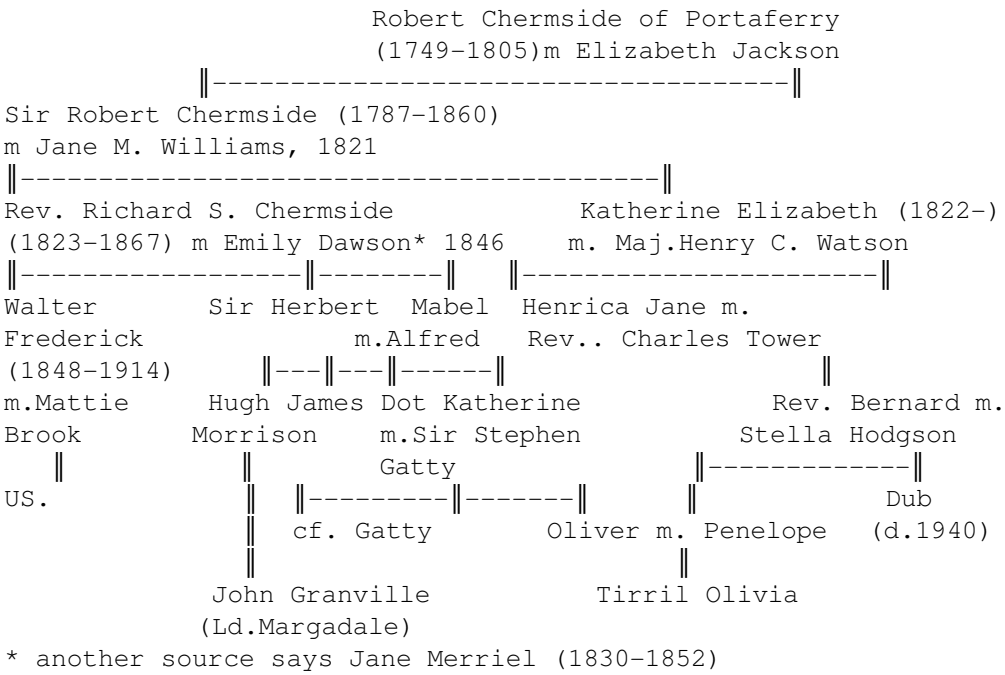
Paul Jaques (1940)
m (i) Nol (19?)

Rhîan (b198?) m.
(b.?)
Jane (b.?)
Benjamin (b.?)
m (ii) Beatrice
Christopher (b.199?)

Gatty


Sir Stephen Gatty (18? -19?)
m. Katherine Morrison (d.1948)
Oliver (1906-40)
m. Penelope Tower
(1916-75).
Hester (1904-69)
m.1935 Seigfried Sassoon
(...)
Richard m.
Pamela Strutt
George m.
Steve
Megnavite (?)
Susie
Tirril Olivia
m. Nigel Harris
(cf. elsewhere)
Penelope Tower m.
Thomas Balogh
(1905- 1985)
Stephen
m.
i.Anna -
Thomas Pi 72
and Daisy
Delta 1973
ii. Ruth-
Nina b.77
and
Rachel (78)
Christopher(?)
m. Jan
Tom
Adam
(i) Valerie -
(ii) Cherry
Tessa
m. Ian Hengis
Leo (b.1991)
Ben(b.1995)
Jonathan m.
Pippa m. Jonathan
Fiona m. Torquil
Richard
Jessica
(b.?)
Martha
(194?-64)
Rhoda m.
David
Bucknill
Stephen m.
Annabel
Gemma m
Michael
Hughes
Charlotte
m.?

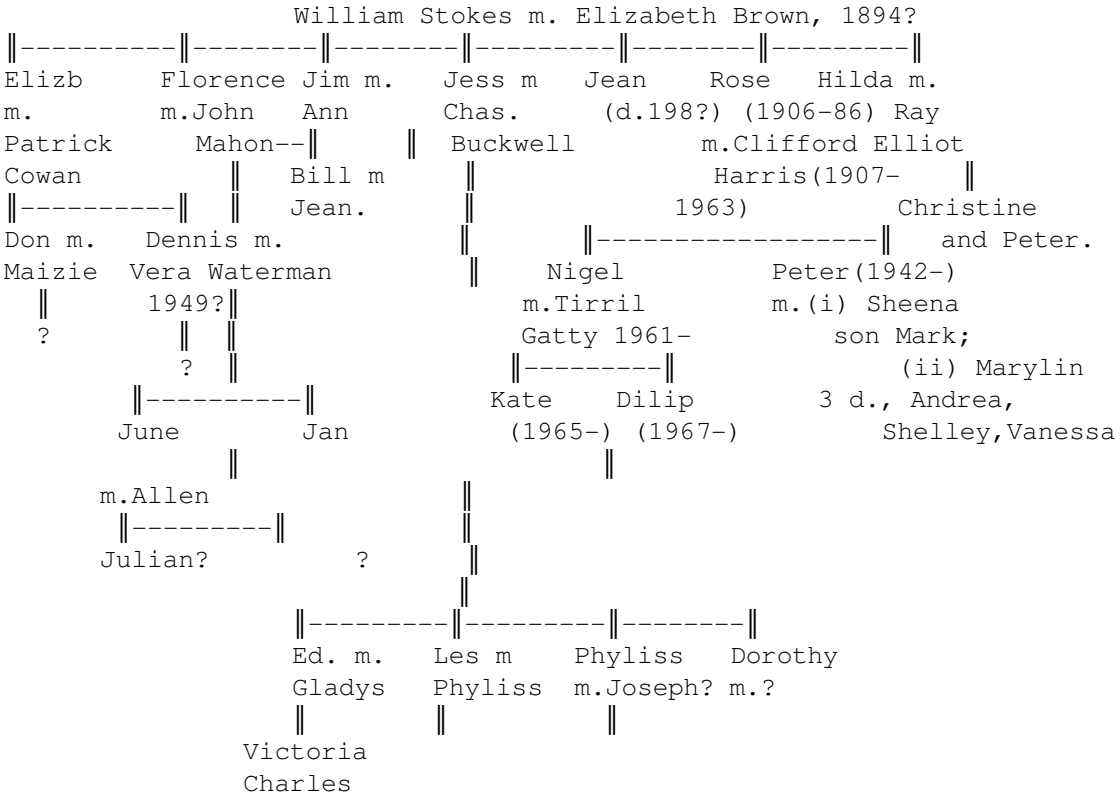
Chermside-Gatty-Tower



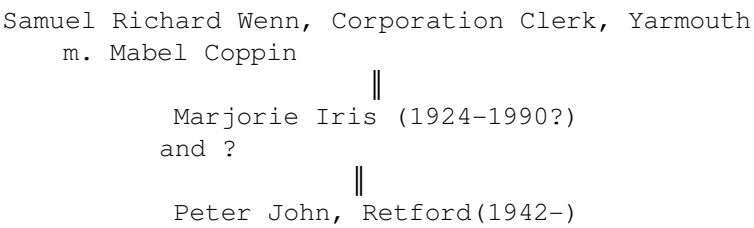
* another source says Jane Merriel (1830-1852)

cf. elsewhere for Chermside descent

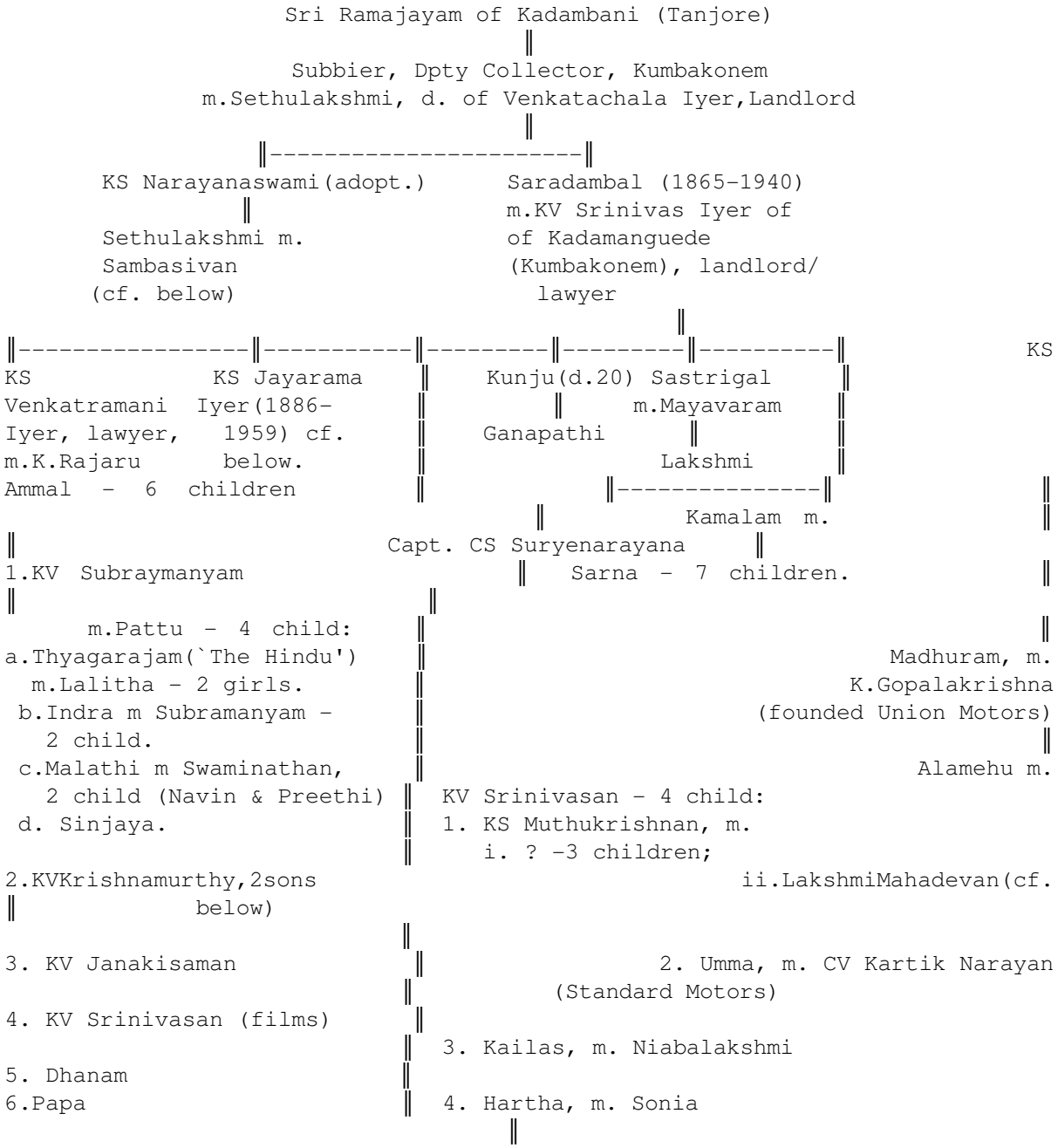
Harris/Stokes



Peter Harris



Mahadevan


Sri Ramajayam of Kadambani (Tanjore)
Subbier, Dpty Collector, Kumbakonem
m.Sethulakshmi, d. of Venkatachala Iyer,Landlord
KS Narayanaswami(adopt.)
Sethulakshmi m. Sambasivan (cf. below)
Saradambal (1865-1940) m.KV Srinivas Iyer of of Kadamanguede (Kumbakonem), landlord/ lawyer
KS Venkatramani Iyer, lawyer, m.K.Rajaru Ammal - 6 children
KS Jayarama Iyer(1886-1959) cf. below.
Kunju(d.20) Sastrigal m.Mayavaram Ganapathi
Lakshmi
Kamalam m.
KS
Capt. CS Suryenarayana Sarna - 7 children.
1.KV Subraymanyam
m.Pattu - 4 child:
a.Thyagarajam(`The Hindu') m.Lalitha - 2 girls.
b.Indra m Subramanyam - 2 child.
c.Malathi m Swaminathan, 2 child (Navin & Preethi)
d. Sinjaya.
2.KVKrishnamurthy,2sons
3. KV Janakisaman
4. KV Srinivasan (films)
5. Dhanam
6.Papa
KV Srinivasan - 4 child:
1. KS Muthukrishnan, m.
i. ? -3 children;
ii.LakshmiMahadevan(cf. below)
Madhuram, m. K.Gopalakrishna (founded Union Motors)
Alamehu m.
2. Umma, m. CV Kartik Narayan (Standard Motors)
3. Kailas, m. Niabalakshmi
4. Hartha, m. Sonia

K.S.Narayanaswami Iyer,lawyer
m. Tripurasundari Ammal

Sethulakshmi(cf. above, KS Narayanaswami): Pamini m.Justice Ratnam
Umma

Alamehu m. Col. Anatha Narayaman - 2 sons, 1 daughter.
Bharath, m. American girl, - 2 children.

Shanthe, m. Raman - 1 s., 1. d.

Mahadeval (cont.)

K.S. Jayarama Iyer (1886-1959)
m. Alamelu (1894-1966)

KJ Mahadevan (1910-71) with film-maker/actor (i) Sonia Phillips (1917-1989)
Nigel (Harris) (b.1935)
m Tirril Gatty(b.1940)
Kate Stella (b.1965)
Dilip Ben (b.1967)

KJ Natarajan (1923-1980) banker, m. Lakshmi (1944)
Ranji (d.1980, without issue)
Padmavarti (Bethe), m Ashok Anantra
Kadamberi

K.J. Sukumaran (1929-), bus. man, m. Lalitha
Sri Ram Narayan, m. Gayatri

3 others (dec.)

(ii)m. Nagamani (b.1922),1937,
Lakshmi (b.1939) m. S.Muthukrishnan
Sharad (b.1945) m. Jean Lartet

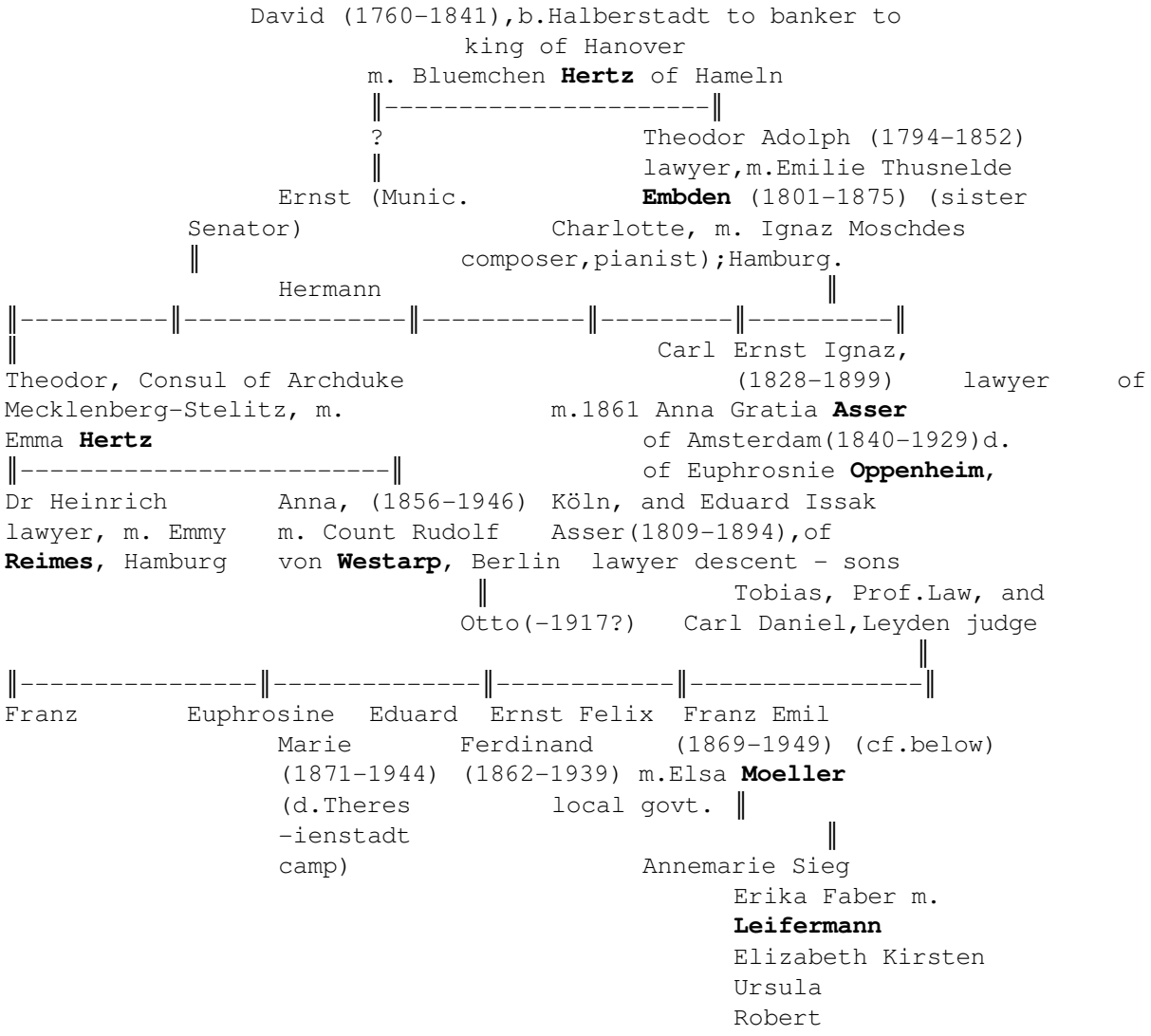
Nagamani - maternal descent:

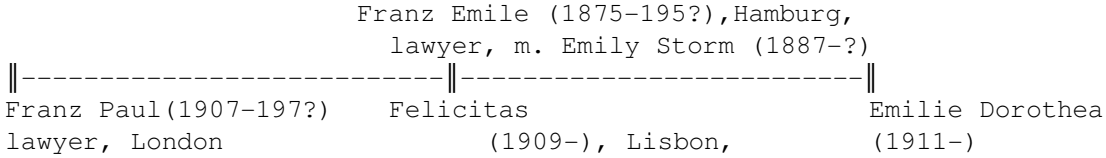
T.V. Venkatrama Iyer (lawyer and landlord, 3 villages)
m. Valambal Ammal - ten children:

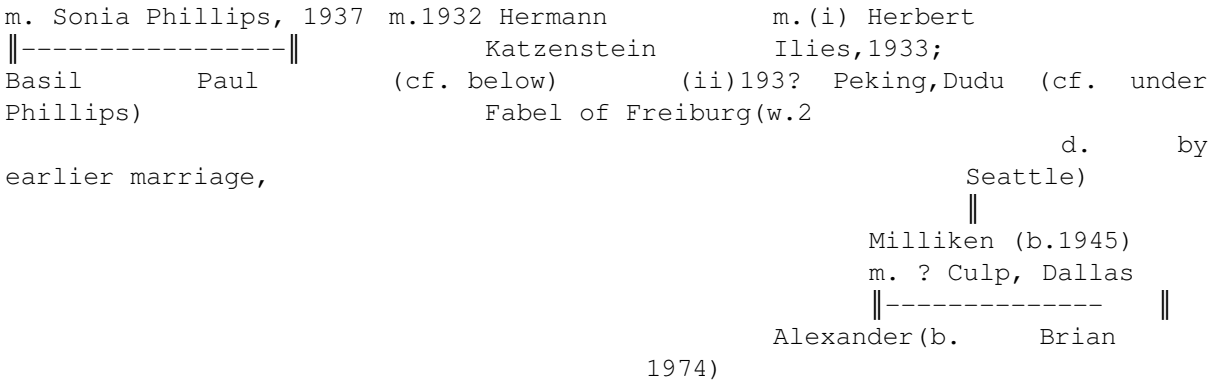
1. Janaki, m. Viswanathan Iyer - 3 children.
2. Subbalashmi, m. Ramaswamy Iyer - 4 daughters.
3. 1 daughter dec.
4. TV Ramanatha Iyer, m. (i) Saraswathi(dec.) - 1 daughter, Malathi. (ii) Lakshmi - 4 children.
5. Thangam, m. ? - 1 daughter, Rayam, m. Nageswaran, 1 daughter.
6. Savithri, m. Rajagopal Iyer - 5 children.

7. Rukmani, m. ? , 1 daughter.
8. Visafani, m. Doraiswamy Iyer - 2 daughters.
9. TV Vaidyanathan Iyer, m. Rajalakshmi - 2 sons (TV Venkatraman and TV Srinivasan).
10. Yoganbal m Sivaswamy, only daughter Nagamani.

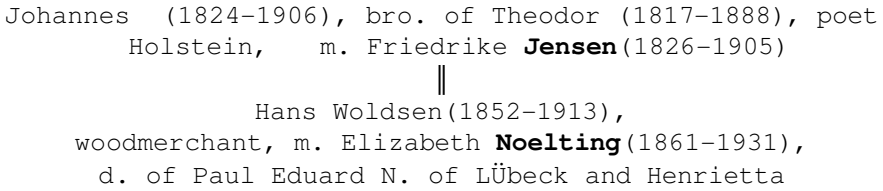
Jaques/Storm/Castanha families

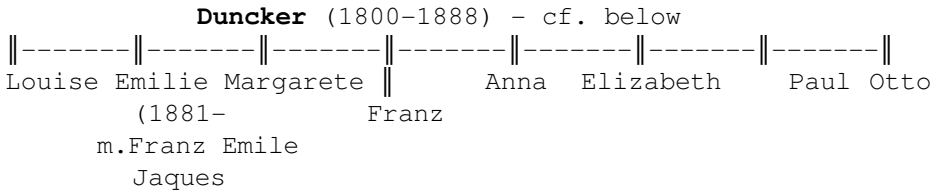




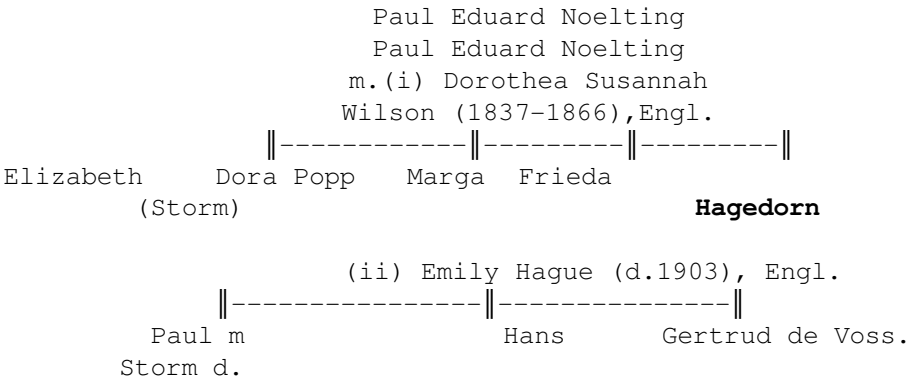


Storm

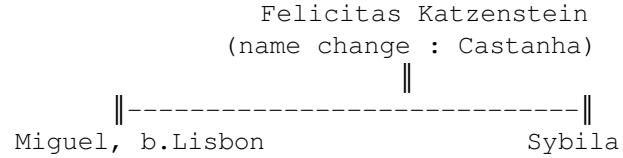


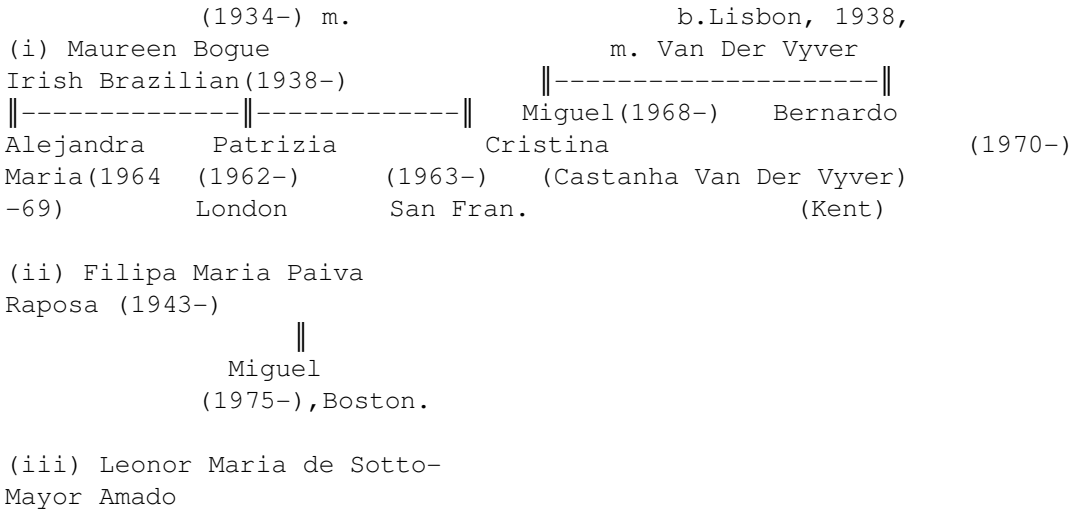


Noelting

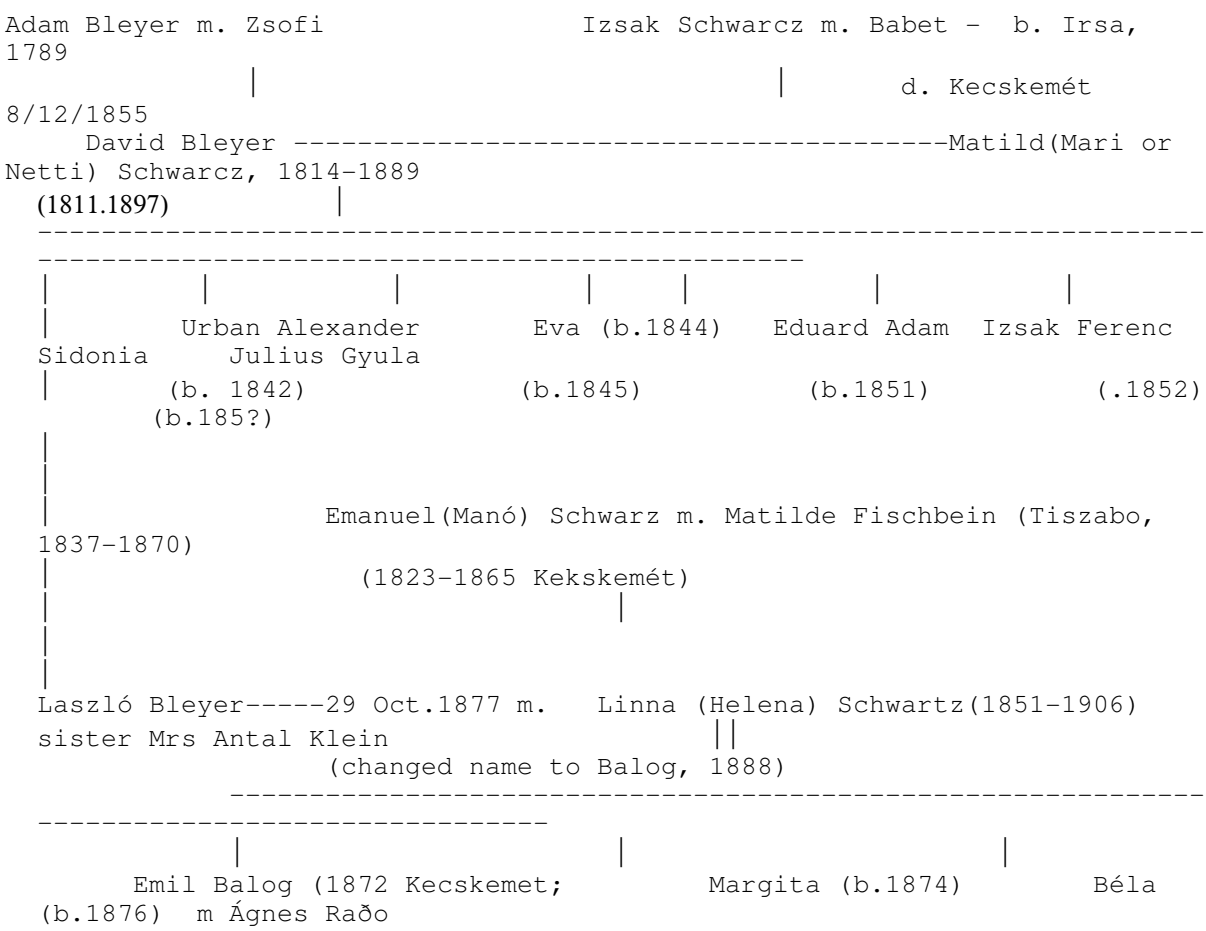


Jaques/Castanha (cont.)




(1934-) m.
b.Lisbon, 1938,
(i) Maureen Bogue
m. Van Der Vyver
Irish Brazilian(1938-)
Miguel(1968-)
Bernardo
Alejandra
Maria(1964
-69)
Patrizia
(1962-)
London
Cristina
(1963-)
San Fran.
(Castanha Van Der Vyver)
(1970-)
(Kent)
(ii) Filipa Maria Paiva
Raposa (1943-)
Miguel
(1975-),Boston.
(iii) Leonor Maria de Sotto-
Mayor Amado

Baloghs


Adam Bleyer m. Zsofi
Izsak Schwarcz m. Babet - b. Irsa, 1789
d. Kecskemét 8/12/1855
David Bleyer
Matild(Mari or Netti) Schwarcz, 1814-1889
(1811.1897)
Urban Alexander
(b. 1842)
Eva (b.1844)
Eduard Adam
(b.1851)
Izsak Ferenc
(.1852)
Sidonia
(b.185?)
Julius Gyula
Emanuel(Manó) Schwarz m. Matilde Fischbein (Tiszabo, 1837-1870)
(1823-1865 Kekskemét)
Laszló Bleyer-----29 Oct.1877 m.
Linna (Helena) Schwartz(1851-1906)
sister Mrs Antal Klein
(changed name to Balog, 1888)
Emil Balog (1872 Kecskemet;
Margita (b.1874)
Béla (b.1876) m Ágnes Raðo

d.London)

Ágnes/Eszti/András

m. Éva Levy (b.Budapest 1881, d. London)

Tamás (Thomas, Lord Balogh) (b. Budapest 1905;d. London 1985)

Dénes (Dennis) Balogh (b.Budapest 1912;d.Exeter 1989?)