Childhood Lost and Found:

the Memoir of a Wartime Evacuee

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My father as a small child with his parents and a friend, New Modderfontein, South Africa. c. 1898-99

Early Years in Lancashire

When war was declared in September 1939 I confess I felt great excitement. Life in Withnell, a small village in Lancashire, was fairly dull. We lived at the top of a steep hill called Bury Lane and my greatest excitement, up to then, had been riding my drop-handled bicycle headlong down the hill on errands for my mother. The excitement was heightened by the near absence of brakes, requiring skidding shoe leather to bring the machine to a halt.

My father was headmaster at St Paul's Church of England School [1] where my older sister Kitty and I were both pupils. His route to this position had, though, been long and challenging. He was born in New Modderfontein in South Africa where Hugh Mather, my grandfather, worked in a goldmine.

My father spent the first few years of his life here before the family fled back to England during the Boer War, leaving money and some possessions in the goldmine. Hugh died a few years after, probably from silicosis, when my father was only six.

My father was the eldest child of three, and with his own father's death grew up to assume a good deal of responsibility. He had to leave school at fourteen, despite his intelligence, in order to help support the family. Shortly after, however, the outbreak of war occurred, and offered an escape from this drudgery. He enlisted in 1914 at the age of 17.

He was wounded early on while in action in France and was sent back to recuperate from a bullet in the lung. [2] He was barely fit when he volunteered again and this time was sent to Africa. He loved Kenya and his principle war-time memories were about Africa – the clarity of light, the air and the beautiful vistas of land and mountain. By contrast, he said little about trench warfare in France. The only reminders of that time lay in a trunk kept in the spare room at 101, Bury Lane. The trunk contained a bizarre miscellany of things: assorted medals, an unexploded grenade, documents and various small trophies. My sister Kitty and I used to spend rainy


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CERTIFICAAT VOOR SCHIETARBEID.

In termen van Art. 89 van Wet No. 12 1897, (Mijnregulaties)

uitgereikt aan Hugh Mather

thans werkzaam op de NEW MODDERFONTEIN G.M.CO.,LD. mijn.

Gecontrasigneerd dd. 21 March 1897

dd. 13 April 1897 Boksburg, Transvaal. Mijninspecteur.

Hoofdopzichter.

My grandfather's S.A. work certificate, permitting him to work in the mines with explosives

afternoons rummaging through these treasures. The trunk had a distinctive smell. The contents conjured up a dangerous mysterious world, never described to us by my father who must have felt this episode too difficult to talk about.

Also on the landing of 101, Bury Lane was a large harmonium. I used to sit on its seat, pump the pedals and strum madly, convinced that sheer energy would generate sweet melodies. From the outside, meanwhile, the house was tall and narrow, perched at the top of a steep hill.There was rather a bleak atmosphere about it and in the winter the wind would sigh and whistle through doors and windows.

Next to our house, separated by a narrow bed of rhododendrons and a sycamore tree, was the Catholic church, St Joseph's. On hearing processions making their way up the drive to the church I would climb up the tree and hang over a convenient branch to watch the priest being carried on a sedan-type chair with robed attendants swinging incense and singing hymns. It was all far more lavish than the ceremonies at St Paul's C of E, which Kitty and I compulsorily attended each Sunday. The vicar of St Paul's seemed a harsh domineering figure. As I sat in the dim interior, wearing a hat which made my head itch and listening to his fulminations against sin, I felt my first stirrings of rebellion against organized religion. The only happy aspects of church life, for me, were the Harvest festivals. Then the church was decked out with fruit, vegetables and flowers and there were fetes in the village.

1. This school was finally closed and the building demolished in 1968. See ***www.townandvillage.co.uk/withnell*** for useful information on this village
2. An injury that was ultimately to lead to his premature death. See p.20, fn 29

St Paul's Primary School Christmas party, with my parents centre back, framed by the picture

My father was an excellent gardener. He lavished time and attention on the school garden which was a short distance from home and from the school. Our own home had only a small strip of land that could be planted out, but the school owned a large section of a local field and this was cultivated with herbaceous plants, shrubs and vegetables by my father and the senior boys. A serious part of the boys' education was learning to garden, both decoratively and for the kitchen. Girls were not involved, being occupied with needlework and cookery instead. But boys learnt to dig and to hoe, and to plant and maintain flowers and vegetables. All of this occurred away from the school itself, on a plot of land known by all to be school property, but not intended as a decorative addition to school buildings. It is worth noting, too, that the boys' enthusiasm for this activity was far more muted than their teachers'. For my father, the school garden was a paradise escape from the stresses of day-to-day work. He escaped there after 'tea' – our light evening meal - and restored his spirits by working till sunset. And although officially a male preserve, I often went up after school to join him and pottered about 'helping'. There was a little tool shed which smelt gorgeously of tar and oil. It was filled with neat rows of well-kept implements, seed trays and insecticides.

Life outside school was filled with outdoor activities. On each side of our house were bleak red-brick terraced houses. However, looking up and across and above the village was open moorland which seemed to fringe the village. In summer, Kitty and I would climb up through the heather and bracken and pick win berries whilst skylarks wheeled overhead. We would sink into the heather and eat the fruit. In some years the weather was hot and the tarmac on the road melted and stuck to our legs and shoes. We removed it with butter. Natural herbal treats abounded. A favourite food was hawthorn leaves, but as children we used to eat all sorts of plants and had theories about the benefits and dangers of everything – organic and otherwise - in our environment. The graveyard was a favourite place. We jumped over graves and climbed on border stones and over statuary. If you stood on a grave it meant eternal damnation. Favourite games were hopscotch, ball 'exercises', skipping, and whip and top. Marbles were played by pairs or groups of children. 'Tig' was a favourite game of mine as I loved running.

These children's activities tended to occur within demarcated groups, often along sectarian lines. Although it was a small village, Withnell had separate schools for the two main religions and there was great rivalry and enmity between the Catholic and Protestant children.

Playing on Morecambe beach, pre-war, with a cousin (left) and my sister Kitty (centre) and baby Diana

The schools – St Joseph's for the Catholic children, St Paul's for the Protestants - were on opposite sides of the road and there were many brawls at the end of the school day as the boys emerged from the school gates itching for a fight with their enemies. It is interesting, however, that although my father was headmaster of the Protestant school his best friend in the village was the catholic priest, with whom he went on long walks. In this small community they were among the very few who had had an education and felt an intellectual affinity with each other.

Holidays away from home were a rarity. Our sole holidays were spent at Halton, near Lancaster, at my maternal grandmother's house, Lilac Cottage. They were blissful times. My grandmother was a marvellous cook and her pantry was typically filled with home-made pickles, biscuits and cakes, and dandelion and nettle beers. Morecambe was 5 miles away and there were trips to the seaside. The railway station at Morecambe was called Greenaire and the platform was carpeted in sand and had hanging baskets of flowers. It was a delicious invitation to the sea. We would take picnic hampers and find a place on the rocks. The adults would sit there in full dress whilst we would run back and forth in our swimming costumes in and out of the water, making sand castles, riding the donkeys or watching 'Punch and Judy' shows. It seemed like heaven, and not only to the children. My mother was absolutely content here and at Halton, never quite losing the feeling that Lilac Cottage was really her home.

In October 1935 my sister Diana was born and with her birth a new and less happy era in our family lives dawned. At a very young age, Diana began to suffer from asthma and dermatitis and quickly emerged as a headstrong child with a volatile temper. She was humoured and indulged by our mother and caused a difficult shift in all our relationships. I loved her as a baby sister and was pleased to take her for walks and amuse her, but essentially I became her little helper. I was no longer the baby of the house and my sister and I were now both relegated to a far more peripheral place in our mother's attentions. Our mother was kept utterly occupied by Diana, was utterly preoccupied by her, and Kitty became something of a surrogate mother to me – washing our school blouses and keeping us respectable.

The 'Diana problem' continued round the clock. As her dermatitis was aggravated by her compulsive scratching of her skin at night, my mother brought her into the parental bed where she could help control this. My father, needing decent sleep in order to cope with his job,

My maternal grandmother, Rachel Shearson, outside Lilac Cottage, Halton

was driven out into the spare room. My parents grew more distant. Meanwhile my school life, and Kitty's, suffered too, and there were financial worries for my father in a pre-National Health Service era of costly medical bills. We had been a happy, normal family in the years up to this time, but these good times really seemed to have come to an end.

World War 11 and Evacuation to the Dominions

This was the situation in 1939 when World War 11 broke out, but out of the crisis of war an astonishing and utterly unforeseen change in our family life was to occur. In June 1940, schools across the country were notified that their pupils could apply to be war 'evacuees' to the British dominions. This was a far more ambitious project than the purely functional one of removing city children to safety in the countryside. Operated by the Children's Overseas Reception Board under junior minister Geoffrey Shakespeare of the Dominions Office [3], it was a scheme which engaged the dominions in far-flung parts of the world in the 'war effort' [4] while at the same time giving safe haven to a select group of children.

There was an overwhelming public response to the scheme; in the brief time that it was open for applications (just a fortnight between 20 June and 4 July) the board received over 21,000 applications [5]. Geoffrey Shakespeare's conclusion was that this deluge "revealed a deep current of public apprehension" [6], but many applications could have been motivated by youngsters' desire for excitement and adventure. Certainly this was my feeling, and Kitty's, when our school announced the scheme. We were instantly excited by the prospect of spending part of the war in one of these distant countries and we persuaded our parents to let us submit applications and state our preferences from a list of countries: Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and the U.S.A. Our third choice was South Africa. For our parents it must have been a difficult decision, but as well as promising physical safety, the dominions seemed to offer the prospect of a better education than could be had at home and the relief of one's children being cared for well in a healthy, relaxed country far away from the tensions and constraints of war. And then there was the fact that few realised just how long the oversees evacuees would be away. Two years was the general estimate; it turned out to be five.

Our applications submitted, we awaited news from the authorities. Events moved very quickly. A letter of 13 August from the Blackburn Education Committee followed an earlier, undated letter from the Children's Overseas Reception Board informing my parents that our application had been successful, and that our allotted destination was South Africa. Once the Blackburn authorities contacted us, we were given only days to get ready for departure; this letter, dated 13 August, informed my parents we should be in Liverpool just four days later on 17 August (a letter a couple of days later amended this to 19 August), and enclosed labels for attaching to our luggage and our "outer garments". We were given identity numbers: 2421 for my sister and 2422. [7] I am still baffled by how the selections were made, and when I see the statistics, surprised at our luck. Of the thousands who applied, only a small number were sent overseas in the brief period in late 1940 during which these evacuations took place, and we were among them.

Before being finally accepted for evacuation, procedures such as medical tests had to be completed. There was a deadline for the receipt of final parental agreement and then we received a list of the clothes and accessories we were required to pack for the voyage. It was surprisingly light on vital underwear requirements ("1 pair warm knickers" for girls, "1 pair khaki knickers" for boys), but required that we pack a "Bible or New Testament", our ration card and a gas mask, as well as a modest range of outer garments. [8] Finally the day came for us to leave. We were immensely excited – had no doubts and no regrets, just an impatience to be off! Photographs were taken of me and my sister with our new coats and hats, gas masks and labels, ready for the departure by train from Cherry

3. See Ponting, C. *1940: Myth and Reality,* Cardinal, 1990, 146-7
4. It seems quite likely that it was the dominions that suggested the scheme. See the reminiscences of Madge Wear, adult escort to the S.A. evacuees: "The four Dominions had asked our Royal Family and Government to send them any of our children who lived in vulnerable places, to be taken care of by them for the duration [of the war], in safety." Wear, M. '1940-1990', unpublished reminiscences, 1.
5. Ponting gives this number as 210,000, but in the notes from one of the escorts on the SA voyage it is given as the more likely 21,000. See Madge Wear, '1940-1990', unpublished reminiscences.
6. Shakespeare, G. *Let Candles be Brought In,* Macdonald, 1949, quoted in Ponting, op.cit.
7. Letter from G. Hall, Director of Education, Blackburn, to my parents, 13/8/40

My sister and I in our garden, moments before our departure for Liverpool docks and the voyage to South Africa. We are both labelled and carry gas masks over our shoulders!

Tree Station to Liverpool. On arrival in Liverpool, however, we had an unexplained four-day delay, billeted in a local girls' high school. It is unclear what caused this, but ironically it was potentially very dangerous, as frequent night-time air-raids testified. [9]

Finally, on 24 August, we set sail. Our ship was the small *Llanstephan Castle*, [10] a 27 year-old Union Castle vessel that had been rescued from break-up for the purpose of evacuation. There were 308 child evacuees on board, ranging in age from as young as 5, to 15 (no citizen in Britain over the age of 16 could leave without special exit permits at this time [11]). Kitty and I were 15 and 12 respectively. We, along with the others, were put into small groups and accompanied by 'escorts', adults (many of them teachers) selected to care for us for the duration of the sea crossing and initial arrival in South Africa. The crossing took four weeks. It was a marvellous month, after the initial sea sickness had worn off. There were deck quoits, table tennis, swimming - activities I really loved. In the evenings there were special entertainments, including stage acts, and singing and stage competitions for the children to enter. I was desperate as a child to 'make a fortune on the stage' and so was an eager volunteer for these competitions. Meanwhile the accommodation and food seemed luxurious. Kitty and I had a two-bedded first class cabin decorated in white and gold and we enjoyed delightful meals accompanied by smartly-printed menus in silver and gold. Hedonistic pleasures aside, we were intensively indoctrinated with patriotic fervour during that month at sea and disembarked at Cape Town ready to fight to the death for king and country.

Like most of the children, I gave no thought to the dangers of this crossing. In a confidential letter to my parents, attached to the first notification that we had been accepted for the scheme, a CORB official writes that "the Government cannot take responsibility for sending children overseas under the scheme without adequate naval protection" and assures them that "the ship in which your child (children) is (are) to sail will be convoyed. If at the very last moment there were to be a sudden change in the situation and the Admiralty informed the Board that the ship could not, after all, be convoyed, *the arrangements for the sailing would be cancelled forthwith* and you would be duly notified." It asks them to speak to no-one about this, and to advise their children to do likewise. [12] Given these assurances, it is interesting that our convoy disappeared after 4 days, and that dangers at sea continued. This is documented by escort Madge Wear: "four days out of Liverpool, our convoy scattered at night, and next morning I was told by excited boys that we were all alone! I'd already seen this, and I think we all felt the sea looked very lonely, after being surrounded by numbers of ships on all sides." She recalls the *Llanstephan Castle* dropping a depth charge at this time and recalls, a little later, a destroyer "coming towards us at top speed...Apparently the destroyer wanted to check we were what we'd said we were. We were an odd looking vessel – 27 years old, and camouflaged, but when they drew near enough and saw all the hundreds of children lining the deck they sent a message 'God speed, and happy landing!'". [13] She

8. Letter to my parents from CORB, 45, Berkeley St, London, undated.
9. See Madge Wear's recollections of this Liverpool interlude: "later that night [the first night] the sirens went, and we had to take our respective groups to the Air Raid shelters across the other side of the playground. Searchlights were playing all around the sky, and soon guns could be heard in the distance…This went on the three successive nights we were there." Wear, M., '1940-1990', unpublished reminiscences.
10. Named after the Chairman of the Union Castle Line, Lord of the Manor of Llanstephan, at the time of its launch in 1913
11. See Ponting, ibid.
12. Letter from Arthur Mullins of CORB to my parents, undated. Original emphasis.

notes that as the ship 'crossed the line', some days later, "we...could not have the usual big ceremony for fear of danger", and that the ship "took a zig-zag course to dodge any U-boats."

A little earlier in the voyage, news of a terrible disaster at sea had reached the crew of *Llanstephan Castle*. Wear recalls: "before [crossing the line], when we were in the danger area in the Atlantic, we Escorts were called to the Captain's cabin and told that the *City of Benares* had been torpedoed with grave losses of both children and Escorts". [14] The *City of Benares* was another ship transporting oversees evacuees, in this case to Canada. It had left Liverpool shortly after us, on 13 September, and was torpedoed on the night of 17 September. Of the 406 on board (including 90 child evacuees), 256 were killed, including all but a handful of the children.[15] With the *Benares* disaster, the war cabinet rapidly announced to the public what they called a 'temporary suspension' of the oversees evacuation scheme. In fact, they had decided to end it permanently and soon after we left, all transportation of oversees evacuees ceased. [16] Meanwhile Madge Wear, and presumably other escorts, had to make their way back to London. She recounts returning on the *Cape Town Castle*: "it was quite a voyage back. We ran into a terrible storm and our lifeboats were smashed. We were told that we were in danger from U-boats as our speed was so reduced, and we had to sit up all one night with life jackets on." [17] It seems extraordinary now that so much danger attached to these voyages, and even more extraordinary that it affected the children so little. To most of us, I think, the whole trip seemed nothing other than the most exotic and delightful adventure!

Our Arrival in South Africa

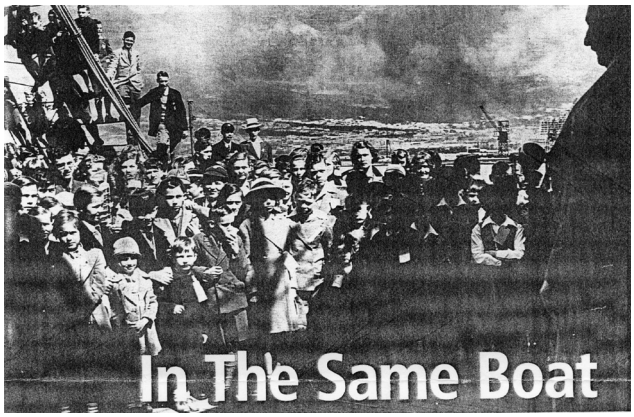
The port of Cape Town looked wonderful as we sailed in, on 20 September 1940, with the marvellous panoramic view of Table Mountain before us. Huge numbers of people came to meet the ship as it docked, and the press interest was considerable. [18] Photographs were taken of us in rather heroic poses massed on the boat deck, eagerly looking to shore, and then it was time to disembark. We were sorry to leave the ship after a month of fun but were excited at the prospect of what lay ahead. I, for one, felt no fear of the future and was boundlessly optimistic. We were divided into three groups and billeted in different parts of Cape Town. The main groups were sent to Westbrooke, official residence of the Governor-General, and Montebello in Newlands, property of Lady Michaelis, who offered the temporary accommodation and generous funds for the evacuees. [19] Kitty and I were sent with a third group to the Jewish Orphanage in Oranjezicht. A final small group were left unassigned to temporary homes and were taken to some accommodation at Muizenberg on the coast. We who were billeted at the Jewish Orphanage were treated with great generosity. The children there were very welcoming and concerts and entertainments were laid on for us.

While we were there, other Capetonians came to take small groups of us out for the day. One day was notable as there was an eclipse of the sun and our host family took us to Bloubergstrand and then to Sea Point beach where we watched the eclipse through smoked glasses. We stayed at the Orphanage until the day of the train journey which was to distribute the evacuees to locations throughout South Africa.

The day came and the journey took three days. We would wake in the night and hear the clang of doors as children were deposited on the platform to be met by evacuation officials and taken to their allotted families. We were among the last to leave as the train drew into its final destination - Durban. There was still an air of unre-

13. Wear, M. '1940-1990', unpublished reminiscences, 2-3.
14. Wear, ibid. Contrast the account given to Capetonians by the *Cape Argus* on the day of their arrival: "The 'children's ship' had a safe voyage all the way to the Cape, thanks to the protection given them by the British Navy. Not once did the enemy break through the Navy's guard." *Argus*, 20/9/40
15. Accounts vary as to how many child survivors there were, but there seem to have been no more than between 8 and 13 of them. It was particularly distressing, and unfortunate for CORB, that 82 of the crew, by contrast, survived the disaster.
16. Ponting notes that there had been an earlier disaster in July 1940 when the *Arandora Star*, carrying civilians and internees to Canada, had sunk. This had also led to temporary suspension of the evacuation scheme, which was resumed in August. This first disaster was a warning of the dangerousness of the scheme, but many ministers, including Churchill, disliked it also, from the outset, because of its perceived effects on British morale. See Ponting, op.cit.
17. Wear, M. op. cit., 3-4
18. The *Cape Argus* of that day recorded that "thousands of Cape Town people cheered as bus loads of happy children, home sickness forgotten, were driven to Westbrooke through the main streets of the town to the accompaniment of a peal of bells from the City Hall tower." *Cape Argus*, 20/9/40
19. See the reminiscences of Jean Lawrence, vice-chairwoman of the SA branch of CORB, *Weekend Argus,* September (?), 1990.

A view of our arrival in Cape Town. My sister and I are standing together, far left



We arrive in Cape Town, 20th September 1940, with Table Mountain in the distance. From a newspaper of the day.

The group who stayed at Cape Town's Jewish Orphanage. Back row: Dorothy King (also from Blackburn Girls' High School), Kitty, myself, unknown boy, Johnny Berswetherick (stayed in S.A. after the war)

ality about the whole experience. The last 5 or 6 weeks of transient experience and travel had been an amazing time. It was hard to imagine that it was coming to an end.

In Durban, Kitty and I were told that the family who were to look after us were delayed up-country by floods. In the interim we were looked after by a delightful Norwegian family called the Aardensons who were very warm and welcoming. The dream was to end, however, when the family arrived on whom we were to be billeted. Reality dawned. We were obviously not the little children they had hoped for but two adolescent girls. I learnt quickly the meaning of severe homesickness. Kitty and I were more or less confined to a small room with two beds and not much space. We emerged for meals and the atmosphere was chilly, with some unnerving gentility as when the family's daughter asked at the dinner table if we would 'condescend to pass the salt'.

It was against this background that we were enrolled at Durban Girls' High School. By contrast with our new 'home', the school gave us a wonderful welcome and we felt immediately happy there. We made friends quickly and – something that astonishes me still - Kitty's confidences to her new friends about our home situation led to our being moved. These kind friends had reported to their parents that we were unhappy, and the parents, to their eternal credit, contacted the authorities about this and

urged action. We did not know about these behind-the-scenes discussions at the time and were surprised when we were invited to visit the Wills family. We discovered afterwards that they had been asked to meet us in order to consider whether they could take us over from our current host family.

The Willses lived in a lovely house on the Berea in Durban with a long drive bordered by shrubs called 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow' which threw out a sumptuous perfume. Both 'Pop' (Alfred Gordon) and 'Marty' (Muriel) Wills were English and had emigrated to South Africa when Mr Wills had been gassed in the first World War. [20] They had four children; the youngest two, Pam and Peter, were very close to me in age. Two older children, Susan and Bill, were away at Grahamstown University and with the South African Air Force in North Africa respectively. Despite the fact that they had a large family already, these kind people loved children and agreed to take over the care of my sister and myself. Shortly after our initial visit to them we were told of the plans, left our initial hosts and went to live with our new family at 60a, South Ridge Rd in Durban's Berea.

An outing with a Cape Town family while staying at the Jewish Orphanage. Walking along the beach at Bloubergstrand, from left to right: the son and daughter of the host family, myself, Dorothy King, and Kit.

Life with our New Family in Durban

So began a five-year period that was full of new experience and much happiness. The Wills family had a rambling house with verandas and balconies. The house was furnished in a style of upper-class English faded elegance. Books were plentiful and were a great source

The Jewish Orphanage group takes a walk through Oranjezicht soon after arriving in Cape Town. My sister is at left and I am third from left at the front.

20. Pop Wills was a lawyer and belonged to a Durban partnership called Breeds, Brett and Wills. His main role was in the property area of the firm and unusually, for this period, he represented many Indian business men

Soon after our arrival at the Wills's home in Durban. Marty Wills and the gardener. Kit and I at right.

of pleasure to me [21]. In living rooms there were valuable exotic objects on display – ivory figurines, netsukis, and carved wooden cabinets containing Chinese porcelain. On the front verandah was a large aviary of tropical birds and at the back of the house Pop had a small room of archaeological specimens and, nearby, another with rare orchids. Outdoors, there was a lush garden and a tennis court edged by a double fence covered with a dense creeper. We used to perch on the top of this thick web of growth and eat chocolate biscuits and swap stories. Five Zulu servants worked at the house. There were two houseboys, a cook, a gardener, and later a rather imperious young woman (the daughter of a chief) who came to care for Susan's baby after she married 'Tiny' (Edgar) Pentz. [22] After the austerity of wartime rationing in England, food in South Africa seemed abundant and luxurious, and our formal evening meals at the Willses' house were very different from the more cramped affairs at home. Fresh orange juice, unobtainable in England, was available at breakfast-time, plus cereals and traditional bacon and egg. For dinner we sat round a large dining table served by Humbine the Zulu houseboy. There were at least three courses, with wine, and conversation flowed.

Two worlds co-existed in this household: that of the family and that of the servants. A strangely feudal arrangement bound the two together, and Kitty and I were perhaps more inclined to socialise with the servants than any of the Willses would have done. In hidey holes in the garden Nyamazan, the African cook, used to bury his casks of shimian – a forbidden beer made from potatoes. He was often very jolly in his kitchen domain - obviously fortified by the beer – and Kitty and I loved chatting to him, unaware of how socially odd this was thought to be. He told us the meanings of the Zulu nicknames given to members of the family by the servants. (Mine, 'short one', was perfectly legitimate given that I was well below the South African average). Meanwhile, the kitchen on Nyamazan's day off was rather sinister in the evening. If one visited it then, and turned the lights on, masses of scurrying cockroaches fled for cover from the walls, floors and work surfaces.

21. The only one I was not allowed to read was E. M. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*

22. Tiny was so called because, though over six foot and well built, he was small compared to the rugby team he played for at University.

Soon after our arrival, Mrs Wills took us down to the city centre and to the department store Greenacres where she bought us shorts, shirts, sandals, and extra items of school uniform. With these new clothes and new shorter haircuts, she gave us a rather different image from the one we had arrived with – something less decorative, more austere and sporty. We emerged a little closer to an upper middle-class colonial norm. [23]

Holidays, Friends and School in Durban

Our new colonial life was utterly different from what we had known in England. We slept on the balconies upstairs most of the year, only sleeping inside when it was coldish in what passed for winter in Durban. Out on these balconies I was plagued by mosquitoes during my first few months and had to sleep under a mosquito net. Weekends were great fun. The Willses had a cottage in the nearby riverside area of Isipingo and we were allowed to invite friends along so there would typically be a crowd of young teenagers together on these weekends. There were canoes and a rowing boat and the days were spent swimming and boating on the river. On rising, pyjamas were changed for swimming costumes which stayed on until bedtime with the change back into pyjamas. The three family dogs joined in with us, swimming and rushing about in a frenzy of partying. The river had mango trees whose roots protruded through the river banks. To get to and from the riverbank, one had to wade through two or three feet of mud – strange at first but nice once one got used to its warm, slushy depths.

One day we were swimming near the river mouth and discovered a body on the beach. An RAF man had drowned in the treacherous current as the tide was going out. At that time I was captain of the school life-saving team and I desperately tried to revive him. The mechanical exercises I had learnt seemed woefully inadequate. It was my first experience of a dead body.

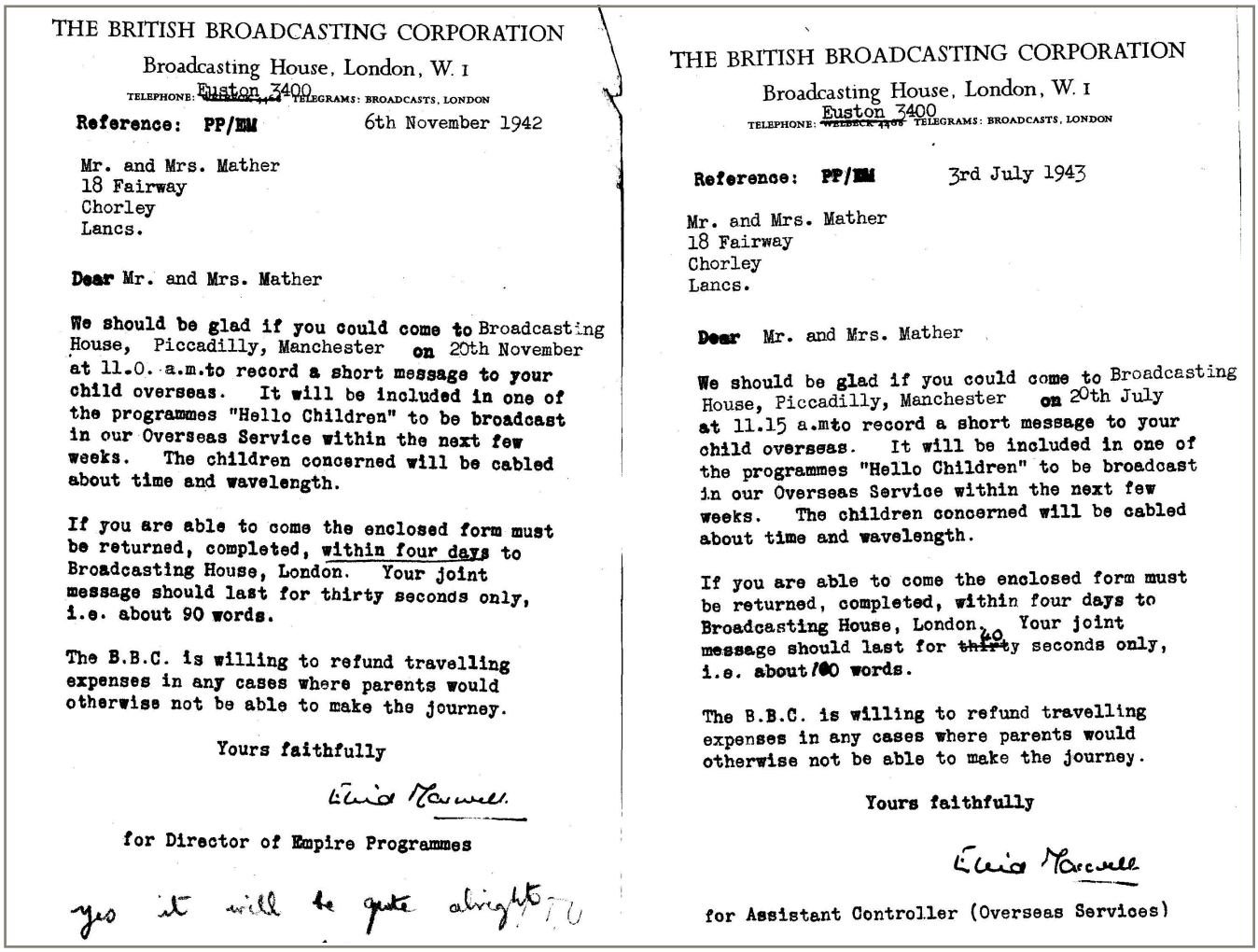
My friend Helen Heath, myself and Kit, Durban city centre, c.1941. Picture taken by street photographer. These photographers were a common feature of S.A. cities.

I found it hard to forget the cold meaty feel of the flesh. The incident briefly brought the war's reality to us. Most of the time we thought of it as a far-flung adventure seen at the cinema in news clips. We knew it was to do with 'home' but the awareness was vague. Weeks and months were passing and though letters were sent to, and received from, Chorley, where my parents now lived, [24] their reality was also fading.

Another event from Isipingo remains in my mind. An old Indian man looked after the cottage while it was not in use and one weekend we were there, I saw him tying a piece of cord round his leg below the knee. I approached and though neither of us could speak the other's language, sign language sufficed. He pointed to two dramatic puncture marks near his ankle and I realised with horror that they were from a snake bite. I rushed for help and within minutes Mr Wills was racing back with him to Durban to get medical help. He was successfully saved from poisoning and, after his recovery, his son delivered a fantastic Indian meal to the Willses, as a thank you gift. It was my first experience of genuine Indian cooking, and delicious.

We made friends with various boys and girls at Isipin-

23. In addition to the bought items, many of the basics were hand-sewn at home. In the following years that we were there, Rita would descend annually on the house. She was a 'coloured' (half-caste) dressmaker, with an acerbic tongue. She and Marty would sit and sew for a week on end, making school uniform items and other things. We dreaded some of the results. The pairs of knickers were particularly embarrassing. Navy blue and enormous, their leggings had to be rolled under the elastics to prevent them looking like clowns' bloomers. Requests that they be made smaller fell on deaf ears; Rita insisted that they were perfect as they were.
24. There were live calls, too, but they were a much rarer event. Just over a year after our arrival in S.A., Kitty and I were involved in a radio connection with evacuee parents organised by the African Broadcasting Company. Poignantly the reporter notes "it was obvious that their mothers, particularly, were deeply distressed and at times their replies were hardly coherent." See *The Natal Daily News*, 'Radio Talk to Parents', n.d. A local Chorley news paper reports that we broadcast home also in a 'Children Calling Home' feature in February 1943, but that this time our broadcast was one-way. Source unknown, 'Calling Home', 26/2/43. My parents were also contacted in July 1943 about another 'Overseas Service' programme in which they could send us a joint message of "40 seconds only". Letter from Enid Maxwell of BBC, 3/7/43. See p. 12.



THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Broadcasting House, London, W. 1

TELEPHONE: Euston 3400 TELEGRAMS: BROADCASTS, LONDON

Reference: PP/EM 6th November 1942

Mr. and Mrs. Mather
18 Fairway
Chorley
Lancs.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mather

We should be glad if you could come to Broadcasting House, Piccadilly, Manchester **on** 20th November **at** 11.0. a.m.**to record a short message to your child overseas. It will be included in one of the programmes "Hello Children" to be broadcast in our Overseas Service within the next few weeks. The children concerned will be cabled about time and wavelength.**

If you are able to come the enclosed form must be returned, completed, within four days to Broadcasting House, London. Your joint message should last for thirty seconds only, i.e. about 90 words.

The B.B.C. is willing to refund travelling expenses in any cases where parents would otherwise not be able to make the journey.

Yours faithfully

Enid Maxwell

for Director of Empire Programmes

yes it will be quite alright TU

THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Broadcasting House, London, W. 1

TELEPHONE: Euston 3400 TELEGRAMS: BROADCASTS, LONDON

Reference: PP/EM 3rd July 1943

Mr. and Mrs. Mather
18 Fairway
Chorley
Lancs.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mather

We should be glad if you could come to Broadcasting House, Piccadilly, Manchester **on** 20th July **at** 11.15 a.m**to record a short message to your child overseas. It will be included in one of the programmes "Hello Children" to be broadcast in our Overseas Service within the next few weeks. The children concerned will be cabled about time and wavelength.**

If you are able to come the enclosed form must be returned, completed, within four days to Broadcasting House, London. Your joint message should last for ~~thirty~~ 40 seconds only, i.e. about 80 words.

The B.B.C. is willing to refund travelling expenses in any cases where parents would otherwise not be able to make the journey.

Yours faithfully

Enid Maxwell

for Assistant Controller (Overseas Services)

Parents of evacuees occasionally had an opportunity to broadcast messages to their children. These letters from the BBC to my parents document two such initiatives. Lasting only seconds however, and pre-recorded, these broadcasts must have been meagre comfort for the parents involved.

go. One was Dougie whose father was an architect and who lived in a fantastic house built on a rocky promontory above the river mouth. Dougie became a particular friend of mine and used to arrive at our cottage early in the morning to go swimming . Apart from swimming, one fun idea of ours was to upturn the canoe and walk under it through the water, breathing the pocket of air underneath. We had happy times at the cottage. There were no servants and in their absence the children did the cooking. It was rudimentary and high in cholesterol! We made bacon and eggs, sausages, mushrooms, tomatoes, and baked beans. We crammed into the tiny kitchen, entertained by Peter's friend 'Mac' (Owen McClaverty), who was very funny. We cooked. He told jokes. Marty and Pop sat on the veranda and drank whisky and soda. The sun sank vividly below the frieze of river and mango trees whilst mosquitoes and moths battered themselves against the paraffin lamps.

School terms came and went. We were both happy at Durban Girls' High School and were surprised by the mixture of nationalities there. Blackburn High School had been populated by girls from the town and surrounding districts, but in Durban there were girls of Afrikaans, Norwegian, Jewish, Dutch and English origin. There were also some girls whose fathers were in the forces and one of them, Helen Heath, became my best friend.

School started early and lunch was an informal affair. We sat on the field near the tennis courts and ate sandwiches. One friend brought an avocado, every day without fail, for the duration of her school life. (I chiefly remember her, though, for the bizarre fact that she wore her brassière over her vest!) As we sat in the warm sunshine, the grounds were often visited by monkeys who waited till the end of lunch before they ventured forward to pick up scraps. The school was a happy place. The teachers were friendly but firm. Miss Newman, my History teacher, was interesting and witty, and often eccentrically dressed. The Art teacher, Miss Fowle, was ex-

My class at Durban Girls' High School, 1942, with teacher Miss Newman. I am sitting second row, fourth from right.

cellent. I loved art and she encouraged me and brought the subject vividly to life so that I still remember, over sixty years later, the course work I did for

Matriculation. The art room was on the top floor and overlooked Durban bay. I enjoyed sitting there in that room, conscious of the ships and flying boats and tugs. But apart from coursework, there were plenty of opportunities for sports. In summer I went swimming every day after school, to the open-air pool on the Marine Parade. In winter we played netball, with practices in our lunch-hour supervised by Miss Oxley whom I remember fondly.

Apart from our Isipingo weekends, Kitty and I sometimes went alone to East Griqualand in Natal during the school holidays, to stay with a family called the Dornings. We did not know this family when we first visited them and I remember feeling very upset when Pop Wills explained the surprise invitation by saying that it would give the Wills family a break from us and us a break from them. Too young to understand the difficult adjustments they were making to accommodate our presence, I simply felt mortified that they would want a break from us. But the visits proved a success and were happy times. The Dornings, with their two sons, may have felt they were helping the war effort by hosting two unknown British girls; at any rate, they were extremely kind to us and we enjoyed some lovely holidays with them.

They had a farm, called Fearnley, surrounded by trees in an isolated area, where they lived in a simple quiet way. The farm covered a vast area and occasionally Vaughan (one of the sons) and I rode round the perimeter fence to check all was well. It took much of the day. Mrs Dorning was a sweet person and taught us domestic things like how to bake fairy cakes and other good food. In cold weather, the family lit a fire of fir cones and it smelled wonderful. On Sundays we went with them to the nearest farm, a very large cheese farm owned by Mr

The staff of Durban Girls' High School, 1942

Pam Wills and Kit, off to swim at the open-air pool on Marine Parade, Durban. We swam each day after school in summer.

At the Wills's weekend cottage at Isipingo, just outside Durban. We were allowed to bring friends to share the weekends at this cottage and it was always a hive of activity and fun. Back row, left to right: Pop Wills, unknown, Kit, Susan Wills, Pam Wills. Front row: Peter Wills, myself.

Pam Wills and I in the garden of the Willses' home. We attended different schools (she was a pupil of Durban Ladies' College), but we were very close in age and spent much time together outside of school, laughing, swapping stories, and generally having fun .

Dorning's brother. Sunday dinner here was an enormous feast made by the women in the family who were large, with creamy complexions and lovely hair. And the cheese manufactured was a type of Cheddar and the most delicious I had ever tasted.

One or two holidays with the Wills family were spent at Cathkin, in the Drakensburg mountains. Here guests slept in rondaavels, small dwellings based on the model of African huts – round and thatched with hardened mud floors. Meals, however, were eaten in the hotel. It was a glorious place, mountainous and threaded with streams and rivers. There were horse rides, walks and climbs arranged. I found my one or two horse rides thrilling, especially the one on a day when a storm broke and my horse decided to head for home at a gallop. There was a swimming pool here too which was occasionally a haven for water snakes. But we enjoyed ourselves tremendously here and made good friends who would all get together to play tennis, table tennis and many other games, formal and invented. A favourite one of the latter was simply to jump from stone to stone on the river, seeing how long one could go before running out of stepping stones or falling in.

This world of children and their games seemed to be what satisfied Pop and Marty Wills most of all, and there were relatively few adult visitors and friends that I can recall. One who does notably come to mind, however, was a man called Bill Sykes. A very different kind of Bill Sykes from Dickens' character, he was a good-looking, charming man who had caught TB and made a full recovery. In gratitude for this, he had opened a settlement outside Durban where mainly Indian TB patients were cared for. We once visited the settlement on a special occasion and were entertained by an orchestra playing Indian music, but Bill Sykes often called on the Willses and was given generous cheques which helped him keep the settlement viable. Meanwhile, a very different sort of visit I remember was that of a major in the British army – a relation of Pop Wills. This man brought with him a lady friend other than his wife, and I suspect to register his moral condemnation of this behaviour, Pop Wills talked through the woman's after-dinner singing recital, much to the embarrassment of us all.

There were occasional family visits to other people's homes or to school events, and again one sometimes

Fun at Isipingo with friends. Sitting on top of a water tower, from left to right: Derek Damp, myself, Kit, unknown, Pam Wills, Gerty Tremearne.

sensed a slight atmosphere of social disapproval. Peter's friend, Owen McLaverty, lived in an expensive part of Durban and his parents invited us all to their house. It was ornately and comfortably furnished but I could tell from Marty's expression that it failed some vital test of good taste. She had the same slightly disdainful expression when she attended a social occasion at Durban Girls' High School. Noticing it, I felt the evening was ruined but couldn't quite work out why. Ironically, then, in this far-flung part of the one-time British empire, I was made far more aware of the English class system than I had ever been at home, and yet on the whole Kitty and I were unaffected by it I think. We tended to make friends easily and with a broad range of people and had many friends outside the family.

One weekend we were invited to stay at a friend's house out of the city. The family had a big sugar farm and we enjoyed messing about in the outbuildings and plunging into the long grass and sugar cane. I had a dreadful shock though, as I undressed in the evening to have a bath, to find a huge bloated tick nestling in my groin. I snatched at it and pulled it off but the horror of it is still vivid. Another nightmare brush with nature took place in the primitive outside lavatory at Isipingo where I casually looked round to see a large snake hanging from the gap between the corrugated iron roof and the cement brick wall. Snakes were fairly commonplace at Isipingo. In our walks through tangled paths to get to the river mouth, one could often be seen or heard rustling out of the way into the thick shrub at each side of us, while the river was alive with all sorts of birds and the surface was abuzz with hovering insects.

Back in Durban, my school career was drawing to an end. Kitty had already left DGHS in 1942, and

The swimming team, DGHS, 1942, including Mary Lesley (back right) and myself (centre middle). I swam a great deal during the time I was at DGHS, a habit which greatly benefited my swimming technique and my general health. From being prone to frequent colds in England, I became extremely healthy in South Africa.

Pam Wills, a friend (doing handstand) and myself at the river-mouth at Isipingo. The riverside café is in the distance

With Vaughan Dorning, whose family Kit and I stayed with occasionally in East Griqualand, near Kokstad

A holiday at Cathkin in the Drakensberg mountains. I am front left and Peter Wills is behind me. The others are friends we made there.

had started to work in the city library. She had done very well in her matriculation exams and could have gone on to University but, with a problem of funding, librarianship was felt to be an alternative good option. In 1943, when she was old enough, she joined the Wrens and was stationed at Simonstown near Cape Town until 1945. She loved the life there and made many friends. Meanwhile, as I reached the end of school I decided I wanted to pursue a training in art. I joined the Durban Technical College School of Art in early 1945 and I loved it all. But the tide was turning in the war, and my return to England was looming. A chronic sneezing allergy that I developed at this time might have been caused by an allergen in the air at the art school or by my giving up my daily swimming. My sense, however, was that it was triggered by a realisation that the war had ended and that my return to England was imminent. When the news finally came, I felt a sense of bleak despair. Memories of home and parents were very faint. I was now 17. Everything I knew, all my friends and my interests, were in Durban. Mr Wills, realising my apprehension, told me that if at the end of two years I still wanted to return to South Africa he would pay my return passage. The return was made slightly easier with the knowledge that there was an escape plan.

The Return Home, 1945

On 20 June 1945, my parents received notification from CORB that "now...hostilities in Europe have come to an end, we are arranging for the children evacuated to South Africa under the Children's Overseas Reception Scheme to return to the United Kingdom as soon as possible". [25] They were advised that this may take some months; in the event I began my return journey in early

Peter and Pam Wills at South Ridge Rd, c. 1943

Kit and myself, South Africa, c.1942

25. Letter from E. Nicholas, Deputy Director, CORB, to my parents, 20/6/45. See p. 28.

September. A telegram from the Willses to my parents, dated 9 September 1945, reads "Margaret sailed yesterday all well and looking forward meeting you".

I sailed back on the Mauretania, embarking in Durban and stopping briefly at Cape Town. On the ship there were 5,000 RAF personnel who were being repatriated. In addition, there was a small group of returning evacuees, eight girls and six boys. Contrasting with the luxury of our voyage out, all eight of the girls were crammed together in a cabin on this voyage. Our escorts were a couple of nurses who insisted we go to bed at eight pm whilst they could be heard laughing and talking to sailors in the next cabin. Conditions were immensely hot and uncomfortable. It only added to my feeling of misery. When the Mauretania docked briefly in Cape Town, Kitty and a friend of hers came on board to see me and after a while I found myself bursting into tears. All the bottled-up emotion of leaving Durban and my world as I knew it burst forth. I tried to control it but was unable to. Kitty did her best to cheer me up and eventually the two had to leave. I went miserably below deck to the overcrowded hot cabin and the other seven ex- evacuees.

The Mauretania was huge, with long corridors and many places which were forbidden territory. It had none of the jolly atmosphere of the Llanstephan Castle, but I found a soulmate in a sailor who was being repatriated. A tall, good looking man, he confessed that he had left behind a married woman friend in South Africa. We were able to be miserable together. We used to have long conversations, sitting watching the waves break over the deck as the ship took us nearer and nearer an unknown future. [26]

We reached Liverpool in late September 1945 after a three-week voyage. [27] I received a message that my mother and aunts were hoping to collect me the night that we docked. However this, apparently, was not allowed, and relatives had in fact been told that they should wait till the following day to collect their relatives. I was unaware of the change of plan. We disembarked and were left with our luggage in a huge warehouse on the dock to await collection. Time passed. Everyone else was met by relatives or friends while I still waited, with three vast cabin trunks too heavy for me to lift. I was alone in this cavernous warehouse and it was decided eventually by a port official that I should make my own way back to Chorley. I had to catch the train and change en route – a fearsome experience with my luggage – and the whole episode made the return home particularly bleak. I don't know why my parents let this happen but I felt bruised by their apparent indifference to the enormity of the situation.

Things did not get much easier. Once met by my family, I had to undergo the embarrassment of being reabsorbed into a home to which I no longer really belonged. Demands for intimacy seemed appalling and premature, and despite these it quickly became apparent that my younger sister still occupied centre stage in the family drama. My father's role in my homecoming was odd. Both he and I were tense and nervous. Looking back on all this from my parents' perspective, however, the whole situation must have seemed equally strange and complicated. Two daughters had left home as young teenagers five years earlier; one never returned to live permanently at home, the other came back transformed from a gauche twelve-year-old with a Lancashire accent into a young woman with a much smarter accent and foreign ways.

Life at Manchester School of Art

Despite his helplessness to control events at home, my father did what he could to keep my life on track. Within three weeks, with my Uncle Lance's help, he had me enrolled at the Manchester School of Art to continue the training begun in Durban. This was a daunting experience. The foundation course was already underway. There were far more students here than I was used to, and the studios were far bigger. The course, based on the principles of the German Bauhaus, and was very enlightened and seemed far more sophisticated in conception than anything I had encountered

26. Another evacuee who travelled back also on the *Mauretania* wrote recently that it had puzzled him for years as to who was "the young girl 16/17 years old who befriended me [on the voyage] but who was terrified to go back home as she had completely grown away from her parents. She was in tears for much of the time and I have often wondered how she got on after her return to the UK. To me it was a little incongruous as many were upset on the way out, but she was the only one I can recall who physically and mentally dreaded the return to her own parents." Ken Humphrey, SACORB newsletter no.6, Dec. 1993, 3. I was the girl described by Ken Humphrey and have confessed this to him recently.
27. This return trip of the *Mauretania* broke the speed record at the time for the journey from Durban to Liverpool

at the Durban college. And then the other students seemed immensely talented, causing me initially a severe loss of confidence.

The mere business of getting to the art school was complicated too, and, in those early days of my return, added to my sense of being physically and emotionally out of my depth. I had to leave home very early in the morning. There was a walk first to catch a bus, then another walk to the station, a forty-minute train journey, then another walk, another bus and finally the art school. In the late autumn and winter of northern England I felt terribly cold and the South African clothes I was still wearing were highly unsuitable. As well as thin and light, they were all of pale colours, a feature which made me stand out freakishly against the people around me. One morning as I approached the ticket barrier at Manchester Victoria station, the collector called out with that characteristic mix of joviality and sarcasm, 'Hey up, summer's coming!' I was a source of some amusement in that damp, grey climate.

There was an interesting mix of students at the art school. Many servicemen were being demobbed and joining the courses; some had survived the war without mishap, some were disabled. By contrast, a number of the female students seemed to be seeing the place as a finishing school. Different worlds collided. My new friends and I used to go to lunch at a place called Pauldens, while one of our favourite cafés was the Kardomah in Oxford Rd. [28] It was often full of business men doing deals over coffee or lunch. As we made our way through the Manchester streets there were many signs of bomb damage, and in these days before the Clean Air Act the air was sulphurous and full of specks of soot. Fogs were frequent. I was horrified to see gobs of phlegm on the pavements. There were still women wearing shawls and clogs. I missed the sun. I knew it was there above the grime but good sunlight never filtered down. It was six thousand miles away.

A particularly happy thing happened, however, in these early days at the art school: I made one special friendship that was ultimately to change my life. This was with fellow foundation-year student Boris, and on meeting him my spirits really began to lift for the first

Back in England, at my parents' house in Chorley

time since arriving back in England. Boris sat near the front of the huge first-year room while I sat with one or two friends at the back. After a while, however, he caught sight of me and we began to talk. At first I thought he seemed very confident – even arrogant – but in fact that proved not to be the case. He was very witty and full of life and we became great friends. Boris had a buoyant personality and made me feel happy and optimistic. We had good times, but in early 1946 as he turned 18 he was called up to do National Service. By the spring of that year was on his way to Ireland where he underwent a six-week crash course in typing before entering the Royal Signals. From the army training camp at Catterick and then Thirsk, the Signals trainees of the Intelligence corps were sent to the Hook of Holland and then on to Germany – to Bielefeld, to the Rhine Army Headquarters at Badenhausen, to Plon and then Gluckstadt – before being demobbed. These

28. These of course were far more austere meals than I had known for the past few years. Rationing was still in operation in Britain, so the lavish food which was the norm in South Africa was not available.

Signals trainees had been divided into two groups – the Land Line section who laid cables, and the Codes and Communications section which Boris belonged to. They were part of the vast allied post-war occupation of Germany, involved in running and rebuilding that shattered country.

After Boris's departure I continued my studies at the art school and I as got used to my new working environment I began to do well and to love the work. But despite the pleasures of art school life, tensions at home continued to take their toll. My younger sister jealously resented my arrival back into the family and made life fairly unpleasant. When Kitty, my older sister, returned to England in early 1946, she was disturbed that I had lost weight and appeared tired and depressed; being still in the Wrens, she herself would spend very little time back in the family home, and she suggested I should move out partially too, and live with my Uncle Lance and Aunt Connie during the week, returning to my parents' home only at weekends. We decided to give the idea a try. My aunt and uncle were extremely kind to me, but ultimately this arrangement was still not the solution. Their house in Moses Gate near Bolton was a rather gloomy place, part of a terrace of brick houses facing a bank which led up to the railway line. Large posters warning against the dangers of VD were arranged prominently on stands and these were lit up by dreary orange street lighting as darkness fell. This street lighting remained on all night – and with my bedroom facing the street, an orange glow pervaded the room and lent it a sense of funereal dinginess. There was no central heating in those days of course and I was still struggling to readjust to the English climate. A cold dampness at Moses Gate was ever present. And during these weekdays I felt constantly hungry. My uncle and aunt – both teachers – ate large hot school dinners at midday and evening 'meals' consisted only of a light afternoon tea. After a few months I fell ill and returned to live full-time with my parents.

Marriage and a New Home

These early months were undoubtedly the most difficult and after some time I was able to settle down and come to some accommodation with my home life, while carrying on happily with my art training. Time passed. I made new friends and had one or two boyfriends, but

Our wedding, 30 July, 1949

none seemed quite as interesting as Boris. He, however, was demobbed from National Service in early 1948, was able to spend a few weeks on an art course at Gottingen University (a sort of rehabilitation exercise by the army) and then returned home in June. With the aid of a grant, he returned to Manchester art school in September of that year where he had to begin his studies all over again. Our friendship resumed. We socialised a lot at the art school and increasingly began to see each other also on the weekends, events which entailed complicated train journeys and all-too-brief meetings. At the end of my fourth year and my graduation, it suddenly seemed a good idea to marry. We had no money but knew Boris would be allowed to upgrade his army grant to a marriage allowance. We married on 30 July 1949 and moved into a tiny terrace house, in Moorhey St., Oldham, that my parents-in-law had found for us. With their help we began to furnish it; my parents supplied a kitchenette and other items and we had enough to get started. I was finally, permanently, out of my childhood home.

The house was a 'two up and two down' with only an outside lavatory. The kitchen had a flag floor and there were uncarpeted stairs up to the two little bedrooms. For a time until we could afford a stair carpet I washed the wooden stairs by hand. Without modern appliances, and with virtually no knowledge of how to cook, the early days involved some hard work, but I loved having my own house. I liked the area too. Though Moorhey St was in an industrial part of Oldham, there was something about

the smoky atmosphere and well-trodden pavements that I liked. Meanwhile, while growing into this new life as homemaker, I was also embarking on a teacher training course. This involved an extra year at the art school and was my father's idea. I had no particular desire to become a teacher but he was desperate that I should secure a useful professional qualification. I embarked on the course slightly reluctantly in the beginning, but since in the event I went on to become a teacher for most of my working life, my father's advice turned out to be invaluable. [29] My first teaching post was a part-time one at Oldham Municipal Art School, where I was largely based in the Junior Art School but with occasional classes in the senior school teaching students, including ex-servicemen, who were, or seemed, very much older than me.

Our house at Moorhey Street was two or three miles from Boris's parents and we used to go there for Saturday lunch. Boris's father, Frank, ran a watch and clock repair business from his home. The house was a terraced house like ours, but a little bigger. The front room overlooking the street was the workshop and was filled with clocks of all descriptions, from very large to very small. There was a cacophony of noise in there, with chimes and ticking and bells pealing. Behind the workbench, there would be a fire in the hearth in cold weather. A powerful smell of benzene pervaded the air. Through the shop one entered the main living room, past a narrow steep staircase. The living room usually had a blazing fire too, and was spotless. Anything polishable shone and dust was nowhere in evidence. Gerty, my mother-in-law, had a horror of dirt.

My father-in-law was thin and agile, with dark eyes and big white teeth. Gerty was rather pale and quiet but with a very charming smile and manner. She was innately good and kind. There was an older sister, Barbara, full of life, funny and quixotic. She was already married to Andrew, a jovial man who had been in the navy during the war. We all got on well together and often met and went to a pub in the evening. These visits, though great fun, were a trial for my eyes which used to smart and water in the smoke-laden atmosphere. Everybody smoked; it was the norm. The pavements, for many months of the year, seemed to be damp and stained. Yet, in a funny way, there was a romantic quality in the streets - a Lowry atmosphere. The street lamps made pools of light which punctuated the shadows and in Oldham and Manchester there was a sense of excitement and buzz. When the pubs closed at 11pm, however, this atmosphere changed. It became more intimidating, with women's strident voices and men's oaths as they stumbled out of pub doors. This was all very different from the respectability of South Ridge Rd in Durban.

Life in London and Beyond

As Boris was about to graduate from Manchester he was invited by a visiting lecturer from the Slade School of Art in London to apply for a scholarship there. The Slade staff member, arbitrating on the exam marks of the final degree works at Manchester, had seen Boris's work and been impressed by it. Boris's application was successful and we received the results with great excitement. We would have to move to London. I would have to give up my teaching at Oldham Municipal Art School. I decided I would attempt a career move rather than teach in a big city school. Boris opted to pursue a sculpture course at the Slade School rather than continue as a painter.

We moved in 1952. It was exciting to be in London, although surviving on an ex-service grant left us very short of money initially. I found work in a photographic studio, a brief break from my teaching career. We moved from one apartment to another; from a semi-furnished flat in Notting Hill to one in Brent owned by friends, from here to an attic flat in Hendon, and on to a flat in Crouch End. It was now 1954. I became pregnant and my Aunt 'Queen', who had a large flat in Maida Vale, found us a basement flat not far away in Sutherland Avenue. This offered more space and opened out at the back onto a tiny garden. It seemed a big break. We were still very short of money so we bought second-hand many of the things needed for our first baby, Victoria, who was born in December 1954. Boris had graduated from the Slade in July of that year and began a series of temporary jobs until he too took up a post as a teacher at a high school in South London in 1956. With this job, by an indirect route, came a rented house and we moved in in the same year. It was a big roomy semi-detached Edwardian house with a long garden at the back, full of fruit trees. The garden abutted onto a wild wooded area at the bottom. With little money still, our furnish-

29. He did not live to see how invaluable his advice had been. On 4 November 1952 he died, while only in his fifties. His terminal lung cancer was likely caused by the bullet lodged in his lung during the First World War and never removed.

ings were sparse, but our home was beautiful and large enough for our growing family.

We were still there in 1958 when our second daughter, Anna, was born, and with her birth our family was complete. Two years later we moved out to Kent and a new chapter in our lives began. It was thirteen years since my return from South Africa. Much had happened in that time, but always, when I thought of my life in Durban I felt a sense of deep nostalgia for the marvellous years I had spent there in the early 40s. In a very real sense, this had been the most important era of my childhood life, and it was one that I continued to revisit in memory in the years that followed. I reminisced about it often to my husband and children too, so that they became almost familiar with the central characters and events of my South African life! It is a sad fact of life that we rarely acknowledge the people who have meant most to us. Hopefully, this memoir reveals to some extent my profound gratitude to the South Africans who helped create my second happy childhood.

Epilogue

When I left South Africa in 1945, I kept up a correspondence with Marty and Pop and letters would arrive from them each Christmas, accompanied by a special box of glacé fruits for the family and an embroidered handkerchief for myself. As time went on, the writing in their letters became more shaky as their health and eyesight deteriorated. The letters brought back the details of my former life, but I assumed I would know it henceforth only from a great distance. I was wrong. My links with South Africa were to be re-established entirely unexpectedly, many years later, via my youngest daughter. In 1980, her fiancé quite suddenly received a surprise job offer at the University of Cape Town. Deciding to take the plunge, they left their home in Oxford in early 1981 and started a new life in Cape Town. Bizarrely, South Africa had re-entered my life.

On one of my early visits to my daughter and son-in-law's new home, in 1983, we made a nostalgic trip up to Durban. It was their first visit there; for me, it was a return after 38 years and was appropriately poignant. We drove up, pretty much following the route of my original steam train journey in 1940. The miles of empty, dry land, punctuated by vast farms, brought back memories of that early trip. In Durban, much had changed. Pop and Marty Wills had died a few years before, [30] but I was distressed to find that the lovely house at 60A South Ridge Rd had gone too, to be replaced by a stark block of flats. The old English-style garden had been replaced by concrete. The views of Durban Bay and the Drakensberg mountains once visible from the house were now obscured by other apartment blocks and houses. Here it was as if the past had been obliterated.

Much remained however: smells, sights, sounds. Many of the roads in the Berea were familiar from the past and Durban Girls' High School seemed unchanged to me, as I gazed at it from outside. Down in town, Durban had become a big modern city with busy streets. The rickshaws were gone, as were the Indian buses that used to race down from the Berea into the city centre, covered with flamboyant decoration. The city's Indian market was still a bustling place, though not quite the same as in the 1940s. The beachfront was very different.

How strange it seemed to be back! Most of the Wills family were gone – along with Marty and Pop, Bill, their eldest son had also died. Pam and Sue were living in Zimbabwe. But Peter was still in Durban, after some years spent away, and nowadays owned a pharmacy at Warner Beach. We met at the apartment here where he and his wife lived, now their sons had left home. The meeting was astonishing, but poignant and sad. The young teenager I had last seen [31] was now an elderly man, his former relaxed manner replaced by something more reserved and regretful. In his hushed apartment, with the Indian Ocean waves crashing onto the beach in the darkness outside, we relived past memories and tried to find common ground in the present. He had been a kind young man, and an affectionate friend and 'brother'. I was glad I had seen him. We spoke some years later, briefly, but never had the opportunity to meet again.

On this first trip I also met up with two of Kitty's and my friends from the past – Ruth Trehearne and Gerty Tremearne – both now married too. On a hot sunny

30. Pop Wills died in 1976, Marty in 1980

31. Last seen in England not long after my return, when Peter visited me at my family home

On my first trip back to S. A. in the 1980s, I tried to find Cape Town's Jewish Orphanage. This, I think, was the building. It has since been demolished.

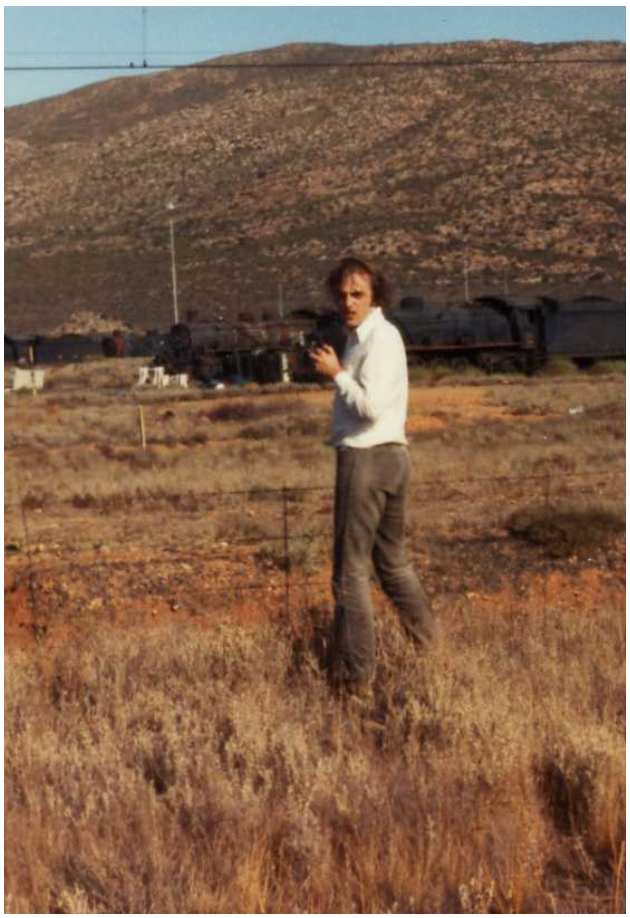
Reunions have taken place for the Llanstephan Castle evacuees. This image of the ship in Cape Town bay decorated the invitation to the largest reunion of recent years.

afternoon, we sat out in Gerty's garden and relived old memories, of the Isipingo holidays that Gerty was often a part of, and Durban Girls' High School that we had all attended together.

I made two further visits to Durban. The next, some years after the first, was with my husband who had listened to so many accounts of my South African life when I first met him in Manchester and was keen to see Durban for himself. I arranged to visit DGHS this time and to give a talk on my work as an artist and on art in Wales, where nowadays I lived. Through a contact we were invited to stay with the Headmistress, Ann Martin, and the next day I made one of my most poignant journeys into the past with a return to the school. Unlike my old Durban home, much here was comfortingly unchanged – most bizarrely, the swimming shield bearing my name and others' was still hanging in the main corridor! The gym hall was reassuringly familiar, as was the art room, with my favourite spot at the back where the window overlooked the bay. I had last seen all this in 1944 but it felt like yesterday. Unchanged too was the atmosphere of the school which was still palpably happy. The senior art class I spoke to were engaged in exciting projects and talked about them animatedly.

A few days later we visited Isipingo, another place of happy memories. It had changed out of all recognition. Once a deserted peaceful country place, it was now an area of heavy industry and I found it impossible to locate where the Willses' weekend cottage had been. The river we had played in looked dark and forbidding, and my husband found it difficult to equate it with my accounts of the halcyon days of the 40s. It was perhaps a mistake to go back there. Other places, though, were more familiar. We walked through the Botanic Gardens, visited the Town Hall and Art Gallery and traced, on the beachfront, the club that Pop Wills had belonged to. In this grand building, in the 1940s, we had had occasional celebratory meals typified by rich food and sumptuous desserts. Somewhere in this beachfront area too had been the cinema – in those days called the bioscope – where the seats had had trays attached to their backs and where viewers had been served refreshments by Indian waiters. All gone, as was the mini-zoo on the Marine Parade which had boasted a sheep with five legs.

I have been back a third time, this time with my daughter. We stayed at a small guest house in the Berea



My son-in-law photographs the steam trains still in use at Touws Rivier in the early 1980s. I was making my first return trip to Durban since 1945, the car journey following almost exactly the train route of the original trip.

and enjoyed this still lush and tranquil part of the city. One evening there, on a sudden whim, I phoned Peter again. His death not longer afterwards made the call particularly poignant. Who knows whether I will return to Durban. It may surprise me again.

Margaret Mather

Durban Girls' High School swimming team with medal, myself at right.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLACKBURN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

G. F. HALL, B.Sc., Director of Education.

EDUCATION OFFICES
BLACKBURN
Telephone Nos. 7161-2-3

Please address the Director of Education and REFER to

DGH/AL

13th August, 1940.

Dear Sir and Madam,

Children's Overseas Reception Scheme.

I am informed by the Children's Overseas Reception Board that your daughters, Katherine B. Mather and Margaret R.J. Mather, have been accepted for inclusion in a particular party of children proceeding to South Africa. Your children should reach Liverpool not later than 6 p.m. on Saturday, the 17th August, 1940. Further details regarding the time of the train from Blackburn will be sent to you in due course. The enclosed gummed labels should be fixed to the children's suitcases, whilst the tie-on labels should be fixed securely to the children's outer garments. Your children's numbers are: Katherine, 2421 and Margaret, 2422. The Board now informs me that "in order to avoid waste each child should carry only a sufficient supply of food and thirst quenching fruit to last twelve hours (instead of twenty-four hours previously indicated in correspondence with them from this Board); that no bottles should be carried but that it is very important that each child should take a carton (half pint) filled with either milk or water; that no chocolate should be included. They should also be asked to arrange that nothing which the child may require for two or three nights (e.g. identity and ration cards, sleeping clothes, soap, towel, tooth brush and tooth paste) shall be packed in the child's suitcase but carried in a separate haversack or attache case." N.B. (1) No child who has been in recent contact with infection should be sent to the port of embarkation: (2) "It will be appreciated that it is of the utmost importance in the interests of the children that the least possible publicity should be given to the port of embarkation and to the commencing date of the voyage."

Arrangements will be made for the children to proceed under escort to Liverpool, and if, in the present uncertainties of shipping, the date is being postponed, you will be informed immediately.

Yours faithfully,

G. F. Hall.

Mr. & Mrs. Mather,
101, Bury Lane,
Withnell, CHORLEY.

Detailed arrangements for our departure from Liverpool to South Africa.

Telephone:
Mayfair 8400.

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD,
45, Berkeley Street,
London, W.1.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Dear Sir (or Madam),

I am writing this personal letter on the instructions of Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare who is the Minister responsible for the administration of the Children's Overseas Reception Scheme. Mr. Shakespeare is sure that you will appreciate its reassuring nature.

You may have heard over the wireless, or have read in the Press, that the Government cannot take responsibility for sending children overseas under the scheme without adequate naval protection.

In the accompanying letter you are informed that your child (children) has (have) been accepted for evacuation overseas. This does not necessarily mean that they will be sailing at an early date but only that they have been placed on the waiting list from which children are selected as and when shipping accommodation becomes available. You should, therefore, make no special preparations until you have had further notification. This will be either direct from the Board if your child(children) is(are) at a non-grant aided school or from the Local Education Authority if at a grant-aided school. When you receive that notification you may conclude that the ship in which your child (children) is(are) to sail will be convoyed. If at the very last moment there were to be a sudden change in the situation and the Admiralty informed the Board that the ship could not, after all, be convoyed, the arrangements for the sailing would be cancelled forthwith and you would be duly notified.

In the interest of the safety of your child(children), and others who will accompany them, we ask you to regard this information as confidential - that is to say, you should not discuss the matter even with your neighbours, and you should ask your child(children) also not to talk about it. We know we can rely upon you in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Arthur Mullins

S.D.L. 18(R)

B.

The letter from CORB, confirming our acceptance into the overseas evacuation programme.

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD,

45, Berkeley Street,

London, W.1.

The following is a suggested outfit for each child undertaking the journey:-

BOYS.	GIRLS.
Gas Mask.	Gas Mask.
1 overcoat and mackintosh if possible.	1 warm coat and mackintosh (if possible).
1 suit.	1 cardigan or woollen jumper.
1 pullover with sleeves.	1 shady hat and beret.
1 pair of khaki knickers.	1 woollen dress or skirt and jumper.
1 pair flannel shorts.	2 pairs stockings.
1 panama.	1 warm vest.
2 shirts, flannel (1 to fit, 1 a size larger).	3 summer vests.
2 khaki shirts, cotton.	1 pair warm knickers.
3 pairs stockings.	3 cotton dresses or overalls with knickers.
3 undervests (without sleeves), strong cotton.	1 pair strong boots or shoes.
2 suits pyjamas.	1 pair plimsolls or sandals.
1 pair boots (or shoes).	6 handkerchiefs.
1 pair sandals (or plimsolls).	2 towels.
6 handkerchiefs.	1 hairbrush and comb.
1 comb.	1 toothbrush and paste.
1 toothbrush and paste.	1 face flannel or sponge.
1 face flannel or sponge.	Sanitary towels.
2 towels.	1 linen bag.
1 swimming suit.	x 1 suitcase - about 26" x 18".
x 1 suitcase - about 26" x 18".	1 small case or haversack.
Stationery and pencil.	3 pairs pyjamas
Ration card.	1 bathing costume and cap.
Identity card.	Sewing outfit.
Birth Certificate (if possible).	Stationery and pencil.
Bible or New Testament.	Ration Card.
	Identity Card.
	Birth Certificate (if possible).
	Bible or New Testament.

x No trunk will be permitted.

All clothing should be clearly marked in indelible ink with the child's name and the Children's Overseas Reception Board registration number.

No passport will be required.

Each child should carry a sufficient supply of food and thirst quenching fruit to last 24 hours. It is particularly requested that no bottles should be carried. The following are suitable and can easily be packed:-

Sandwiches, egg and cheese.
Packets of nuts and seedless raisins.
Dry biscuits and packets of cheese.
Barley sugar (not chocolate).
Apples, bananas, oranges.

The kit list sent to our parents before we left for South Africa.

KEN

"LLANSTEPHAN CASTLE" 1940

IN THE BLUE FOLDER IS THE ORIGINAL DIARY WHICH I KEPT FROM THE BEGINNING OF OUR ADVENTURE - SADLY PAGE ONE IS MISSING AND THE DIARY STARTS RATHER INTRIGUINGLY ....."and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool".
I HAVE EXTRACTED VARIOUS PAGES WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST TO READERS AND THESE ARE BELOW. COULD ANYONE OFFER THE CONTENTS OF PAGE 1 & PAGE 2?

and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool.

COULD IT BE NO AIR RAID WARNING?

23rd Friday (N a r w) (these letters mean nothing to me)

Go to docks at 12.30 p.m., get on board at 3.00 p.m. Sail up river for 1,000 yards. Have supper/dinner. Get settled, have good night.

24th Saturday

Have boat drill and then dinner. After dinner we have rest during which we sail. Destroyers pass us and an "Anson" kept diving on us. Fairly good weather.

25th Sunday

Had church from 10.30 - 11.15. Sat astern and then read in cabin. Many people over side as we enter Atlantic. Pass Ireland on left and Scotland on the right. Many people left dinner table feeling "rill ill" as boat was rolling considerably. At 4.30 p.m. didn't feel too good but was better after tea. Had bath at 7.30 only soap would not lather. In bed at 7.50p.m.

26th Monday

Wasn't too good but brightened up before dinner. After dinner played cards in cabin. Had some long trousers fitted. Sea very rough. I had 2 helpings of beef and 2 helpings of college pudding followed by two bananas. So far we had 35 ships, 3 destroyers and a Short Sunderland flying boat in our convoy.

27th Tuesday

At 10.30 p.m. we leave convoy and go at 14 knots, a few shark fins are sighted and 2 whales.

28th Wednesday

More whales and sharks sighted 14 knots,

29th Thursday

Many of us got up with violent tummy ache. Had awful medicine! 14 knots.

30th Friday

Friday got very hot - 14 knots and sea like a mill-pond.

3rd Tuesday

Not so hot, rougher 14 knots. Swimming was erected on deck but it was a failure. In the evening went to a whist drive and got 94 tricks out of 15 games.

4th Wednesday

Not so hot - 14 knots. After a super dinner we saw hundreds of flying fish leaping in shoals out of the water , some flying for 100-150 yards. In the afternoon, I went in pool with one foot of water in and had super fund.

6th Friday

Had a quinine tablet. Went in the pool and had super fun.

7th Saturday

Saw a cruiser of the Shropshire Class. Saw Freetown at 11.45 and after dinner went and saw the town composed of native huts and one or two brick buildings. Many canoes came out to the side of the ship but we were not allowed to buy.

8th Saturday

Many rainstorms as Sierra Leone's rainy season had just begun. S.Leone is a succession of mountains running along on which are native huts and a few brick buildings on the mountains, palm trees and grass. We re-fuelled with water at 10.00 a.m. and watched the natives in the boats.

9th Monday

Heard of news of 400 killed and 3;000 injured in raids on S.E. England Oil tanker Spondilus filled us up with oil. In the afternoon we got some button souvenirs from the tanker. Hot! In the morning an officer caught a big fish offthe stern. At 5.00 the tanker left us and at 7.00 we sailed. Stopped on deck until 8.00 and in bed at 8.30.

14th Saturday

Had a super concert in the evening given by escorts and officers. Went on bridge and steered the ship.

15th Sunday

Church in the morning in which we (the choir) sang "from Thee oh Christ" as a solo. Chicken and ices for dinner.

16th Monday

Many albatrosses followedus - rough. (We were followed for many days by albatrosses)

17th Tuesday

13 knots - calm and warm. Played table-tennis at 1 to 2.30. In the morning we had some paraffin put on our hair! All began to feel excited as we came nearer to Capetown.

19th Thursday

Very rough as we came into Cape Rollers. Had Birth Certificates and Identity Cards given back. Packed for disembarking. Had prize-giving in the afternoon and had a super tea-party in which we had crackers and streamers. I got a bell souvenir. Finished packing had a bath and bed.

20th Friday

Sight Capetown at 8.00 a.m. Had breakfast and looked over the side till we docked. When we docked we were singing. We had many photos taken and after dinner I spoke into a "mike" and had a photo taken with a few others on all fours. (This photo is in the folder)
At 2.30 we landed and went by charabanc to a big house where I sent a cable home to mum. After we had afternoon tea consisting of 25 biscuits and 5 pieces of cake. Then we were all sorted out into parties. Then at 6.00 p.m. there were about 20 of us left with nowhere to go. So 9 of us went to Muizenberg. On the way we had some loquots which were like small apples and taste like pears. Then we arrived at the foot of a high mountain. We then went on to a posh hotel, where we had dinner. In bed at 8.45.

/ THE PARK HOTEL AT MUIZENBERG NOW PULLED DOWN

22nd Sunday

Went to scouts (I think they were Sea Scouts) in the morning and had some boating. Went mountaineering in the afternoon and did 8 miles. Had a lantern lecture in the evening and in bed a 8.30.

The diary then continues whilst I was at Muizenberg and it was only on the 1st October that I finally arrived at my first host family in Gardens. This was a cultural shock for the young lad from a middle class family to be thrown into the high life of cocktail parties and other social events. My host family - The Ralphs - Mr Ralph was Managing director of the American ~~Chevrolet~~ PONTIAC Company in Capetown.

Several things are interesting on reading the thoughts of a fourteen year old - why no mention of the sinking of the Benares when we were told about it?

Food was always in my thoughts. No other names appear in my diary - not even the name of my escort - Miss Crocker. No mention of Poppa Eiliff, although I still have the diary. No mention of any schoolfriends or others whom I befriended on the journey.

No thought of danger of the possibility of being torpedoed or of dying. No thoughts as to the safety on one's parents who were in the middle of the "blitz". No thoughts forward as to what one's new school would be like or whether the syllabus would be similar.

I wonder how many other diaries were kept on the "Llanstephan Castle" and more importantly - how many exist today?

IT IS STRANGE TO LOOK BACK AT THE THOUGHTS OF A 13 YR OLD

FOOD !

UNION-CASTLE LINE.

S.S. "LLANSTEPHAN CASTLE"
Children

DINNER

Potage Balmoral

Darne of Fresh Haddock Parsley Sauce

Stewed Steak Jardinière

Potatoes: Boiled

Vegetable Marrow Béchamel

COLD

Galantine Américaine

College Pudding

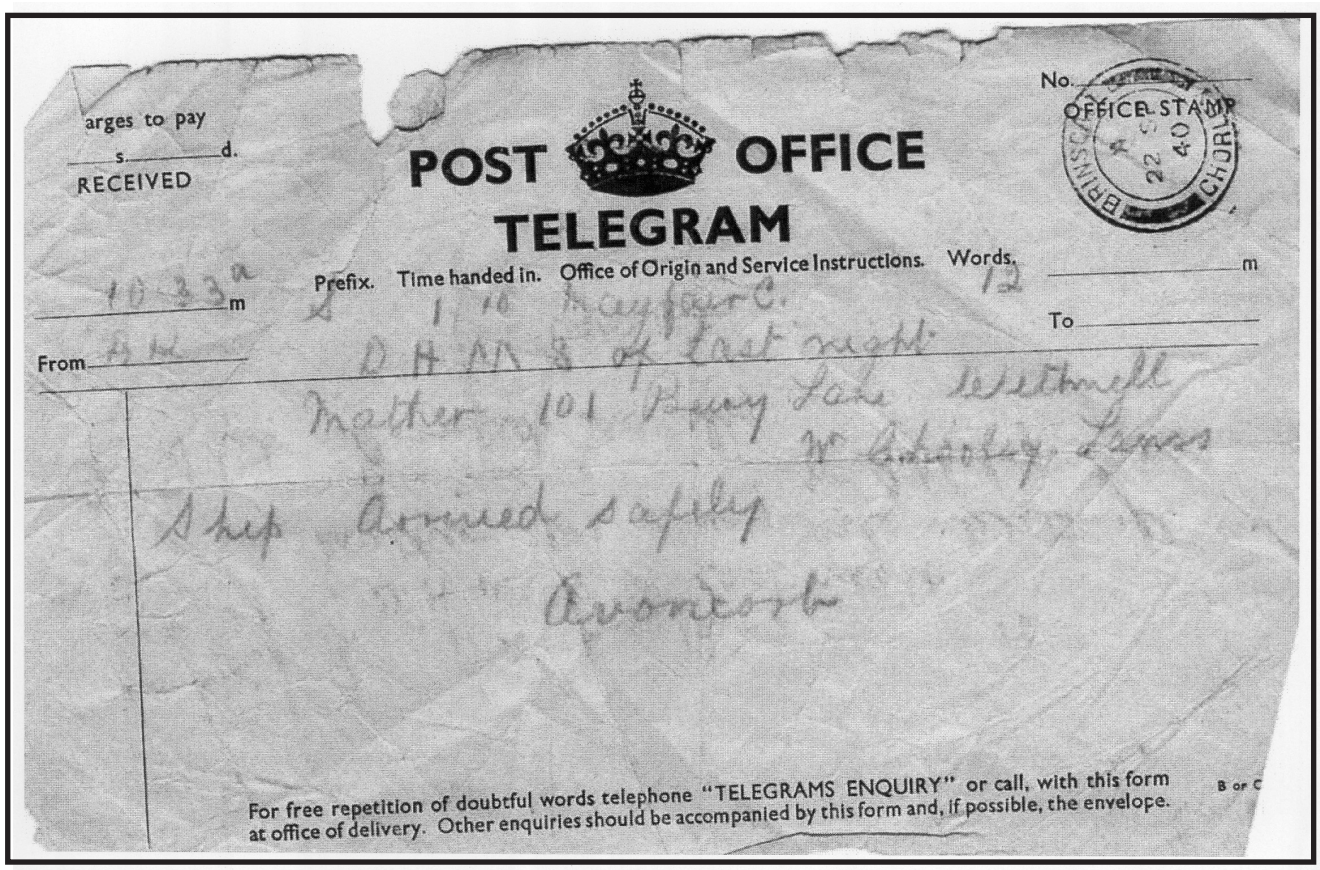
Rice Custard

Fruit

September 7, 1940

Passengers are requested kindly to refrain from smoking in the Saloon.

Menu from the voyage out to South Africa.



Telegram confirmation to our parents of our safe arrival

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD,
Devonshire House,
Mayfair Place,
LONDON, W.1.

5th May, 1945.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Although the passage accommodation available for civilians travelling from South Africa is still very limited, and it is impossible to say at present how long it will be before groups of C.O.R.B. children in the care of official escorts will be able to return to the United Kingdom, we are anxious to give parents who wish their children to return as soon as possible the benefit of any opportunity which may occur.

A list is, therefore, being prepared of all the children whose parents would like them to have this opportunity, and if you wish your child/children to come back as soon as possible, please complete the enclosed form and return it to this office at once. It should be signed by both parents, unless the husband is overseas, or one parent is the sole guardian.

Parents who ask for the return of their children must realise, however, that so long as hostilities continue there is danger in the voyage. All practicable precautions are taken to safeguard ships against enemy action, but no extra precautions can be taken for those carrying women and children. When making their decision, parents should consider this carefully.

If this form is signed and returned to this Office we shall arrange for your child/children to return whenever the opportunity occurs, without consulting you again, and you should keep us advised of any change in your address or plans. Passages may not, however, be available for some considerable time.

Yours faithfully,

E. S. Rutherford

Deputy Director.

A.C.104.

Notice of our imminent return to the UK with the ending of the war.

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD,
Devonshire House,
Mayfair Place,
London, W.1.

Tel.No. MAYfair 8866
Ref.No.

20th June, 1945.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Now that hostilities in Europe have come to an end, we are arranging for the children evacuated to South Africa under the Children's Overseas Reception Scheme to return to the United Kingdom as soon as possible. As the passenger accommodation available for civilians is limited, however, and there are many demands upon it, it may be some months before passages can be allocated.

You can rest assured that your child/children will be brought back as early as possible. If you have not done so already please complete and return the enclosed form* so that no opportunity may be missed. The form A.C.75 which you signed last summer enabled us to make preliminary plans, but this second form must be received before sailing arrangements can be completed.

We shall be able to advise you about two to four weeks before the children are likely to arrive in this country, but at the moment it is impossible to indicate when this is likely to be. Then, when they do arrive, you will be told when and where to meet them, although it is unlikely that you will be able to go to the port.

I realise that this uncertainty may cause some inconvenience but as long as hostilities with Japan continue, military requirments must come first and plans for civilian travel can be made at short notice only.

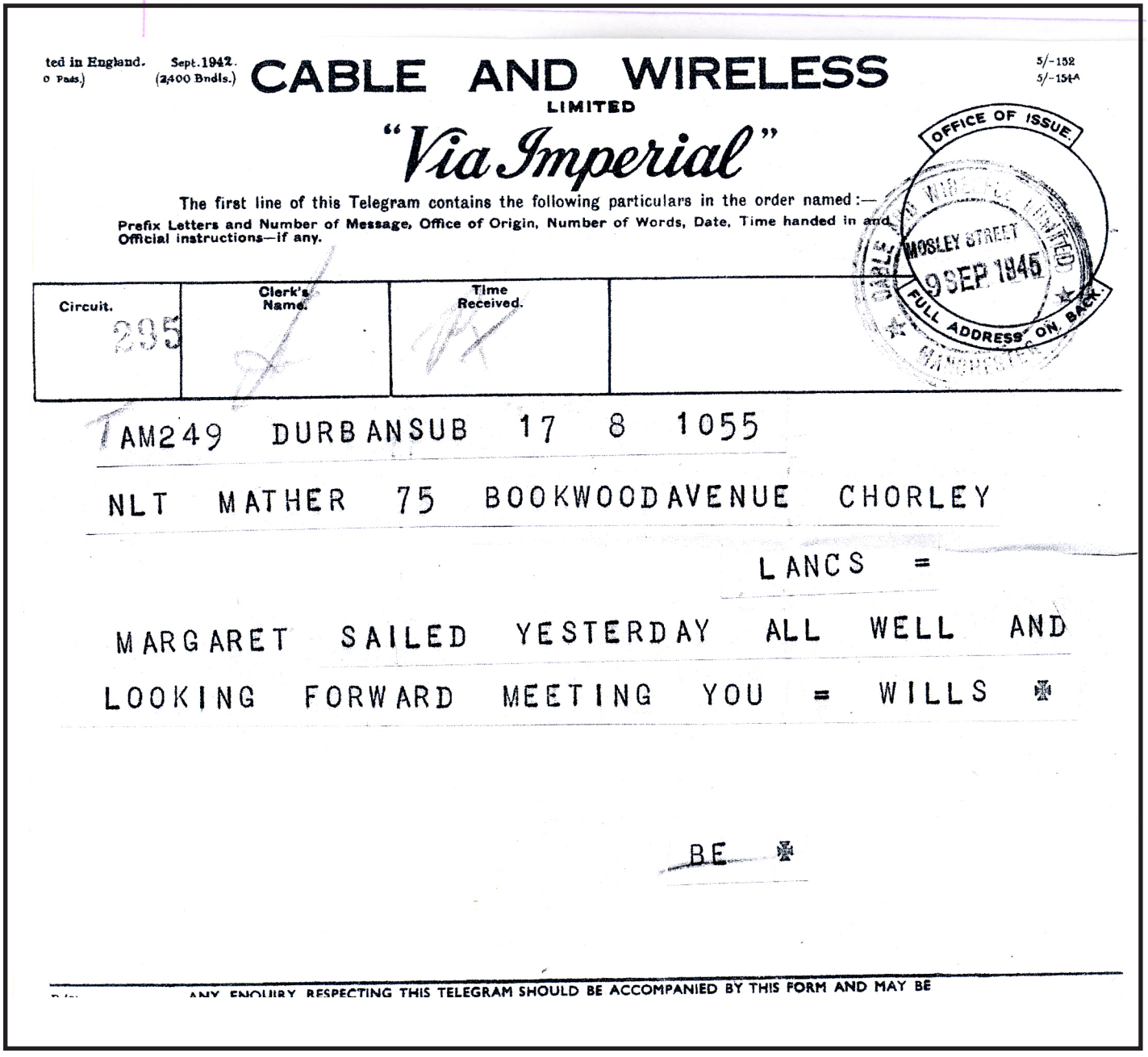
Yours faithfully,

E. S. Nichols
Deputy Director.

A.C.107.

* Already completed.

A further letter to my parents indicates that my return might take longer than initially expected.



ted in England. Sept. 1942. (2,400 Bndls.)

CABLE AND WIRELESS
LIMITED

5/-152
5/-154A

"Via Imperial"

The first line of this Telegram contains the following particulars in the order named:—
Prefix Letters and Number of Message, Office of Origin, Number of Words, Date, Time handed in and Official instructions—if any.

OFFICE OF ISSUE
MOSLEY STREET
9 SEP 1945
FULL ADDRESS ON BACK

Circuit.	Clerk's Name.	Time Received.	
295			

TAM249 DURBANSUB 17 8 1055

NLT MATHER 75 BOOKWOODAVENUE CHORLEY

LANCS =

MARGARET SAILED YESTERDAY ALL WELL AND

LOOKING FORWARD MEETING YOU = WILLS

BE

ANY ENQUIRY RESPECTING THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY THIS FORM AND MAY BE

Telegram to my parents from the Wills family, dated 9th September 1945.