Lives Well Lived

by Bramwell J P Tout

Cover Pictures:

Front cover Alfred Sewell c1915

Rear Cover Amy Tout (centre) with husband Bill

and her sister Gwendoline

Inside cover Amy Tout (top)

Gwendolyn Braaten (bottom)

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I am grateful for the support and patience of my family during the hours spent in researching my family history. In particular I am grateful to my wife Carol and my daughters Amy, Lauren, Eleanor and Caitlyn for their encouragement in my task.

I am grateful to friends and relatives who have checked parts of the manuscript for this book. Any errors or omissions are entirely my own.

For Amy Violet Tout

More than 'Just' Granny

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Introduction



I am writing this small book for my sisters, Dawn and Tarnia as a Christmas present. Some time ago I developed my interest in our family history and began to research it in earnest. Both Dawn and Tarnia have taken an interest in the findings of my research, as well as providing encouragement to keep searching.

I was keen, as most family historians are; to see just how far back in history I could get and as a result I have learned of family as far back as the 15th century. This type of tree building was not enough however, I wanted to find out more detail and to answer questions about my more immediate family that I seem to have had for as long as I can remember, certainly since early childhood.

It is just possible that this book is read by someone other than my two sisters, perhaps by our cousins in America, and therefore to describe the people from the past in terms of their relationship to me may be confusing. I have included illustrations of some branches of the family tree and used people's names for ease of identifying who I am writing about in each section.

The book begins with a description of my formative years during the 1960s, to give some background to my questions about my family history.

The illustrations in the book come from a variety of free sources, and include photographs taken by Alfred Sewell in the Ontario region of Canada where he lived in the years immediately leading up to the First World War.

Alfred Sewell was the person I most wanted to find out about and the person about whom I knew the least. Alfred William Sewell was my paternal Grandmother Amy's brother and was killed in the First World War. The only things I knew about him were that he went to Canada (which proved to be true) and that his name was carved on the Menin Gate Memorial as he had no known grave (which proved not to be true). In finding out about Alfred it was inevitable that I would discover something about

my Grandmother Amy, and her sister Gwendolyn (I have used this spelling as it appears on American documents, so seems likely to reflect her preference, I am sorry of I have this wrong. It also helps to distinguish Gwendolyn from her aunt of the same name). All I knew about Granny' sister was that she went to live in America. At the point of starting my research I did not even know her name.

What makes us who we are depends upon many things, our genetic makeup, our upbringing and our experiences. How we respond to and develop from those experiences help to determine our character and personality. In researching the past I have discovered things that have not been spoken about by the people concerned, and so have tried to be sensitive in the way I have used them. My discoveries show something of how Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn developed into the people they became, and give a context to their individual and collective influence on their children and subsequent generations.

This book tells the story of Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn as far as I have been able to discover it to date; giving something of their own family history, their experiences and the example they set. What I have discovered has reminded me that without letters or diaries much of the material is based on factual data. I have found little that indicates thoughts and emotions felt or shared by our forbears. This leaves a collection of incidents that in themselves almost inevitably raise more questions and lead to conjecture which can be misleading.

Within our professional lives Dawn, Tarnia and I have learned to be non judgmental. It is important to approach the past in such a way. I find that my love for my grandmother makes me very protective toward her in regard to information I find and as a result I have to review and re-evaluate the information and my reactions to it in order to regain a balanced view.

The life and times of the late Victorian and early Edwardian ages, the standards, expectations and 'norms' were very different from today. Indeed in our own lifetimes we have experienced significant shifts in standards, attitudes and life experiences. Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn Sewell were born and raised during those years of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I hope that after reading this book that you will agree with me, theirs were indeed *lives well lived*.

Bram Tout June to November 2012

Chapter 1: The 1960s & early memories





School photo of me from Cowleymoor Infant School age 7; picture on page 12 shows me, Mum, Dawn, Tarnia and Amy Tout c1962

Having been born in the mid 1950s, my earliest memories are really set in the 1960s; a time of great technological, political and sociological change.

I begin by looking back at my childhood, teenage years and adult life remembering influences and traits. Sayings that come from my lips have their roots in my parents, grandparents and their forebears. Mannerisms and views about subjects are often passed through generations, after all we learn by mimicking sounds and speech; understanding and independent thought come later.

I was born in November 1956, and as a premature baby with a negative reaction to my parents' blood types, I was kept in hospital until mid January the following year, being allowed home just for the day at Christmas.

The blood condition I had been born with required an immediate change of blood, carried out by connecting fine rubber tubes to the veins and arteries through the umbilical stub remaining after birth. This operation was in its infancy at this time with success rates being 40%. My own chances of survival were not rated highly by the surgeon who carried out the procedure. He told my parents that my chances were about the same as those of my brother born just a couple of years earlier. Far from being an encouragement, this statement must have sent a chill through their hearts. My brother had died only hours old.

I had three complete changes of blood, each procedure both improving the possibility of survival while also increasing the risk of death. So having survived and responding to the treatment I was kept in hospital to gain weight and remain under observation.

The home that welcomed me for my first Christmas was in a fairly new house, built as part of the post war developments and rented from the local council. The family had moved in when it was newly built, and my mother lives there still. As well as Mum and Dad there were my two sisters Dawn and Tarnia, both war babies and desperate to play with their little brother. There was another member of the family to welcome me home, my grandmother, Dad's mum.

When my sister Dawn was younger she had been used to having Granny at home, and so when she met my mother's Mum and discovered she was also Granny, she said "oh another Granny", This meant that my Mum's mother became known as 'nother' Granny, which in turn meant that Dad's mother became 'just' Granny. It's funny how such things stick. All the time I knew them they referred to themselves as 'nother' Granny and 'just'



Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital where I was born 1956

Granny, even when signing Christmas and birthday cards and presents.

It is said that the early years are very important for our development. Much is made of the importance of bonding between parents and children; certainly in the first few weeks of my life the opportunities for this were limited.

My Dad was the manager of a local shop; Pincott's, Which supplied decorating materials and equipment, wallpaper, paints etc. The firm also carried out building and decorating work in the local area, and sold and serviced radios. The radios were pre transistor valve sets and it was Dad who serviced them.

Mum was an auxiliary nurse and worked nights at the local hospital. In fact there were three hospitals in Tiverton then; the District Hospital where Mum worked was the main one while Belmont hospital, an old converted Victorian workhouse, was for the elderly and the third hospital was Post Hill on the edge of the town which was used as an isolation and convalescence unit.

So when I say that many of my memories of home are with 'just' Granny there it is because she was there when I came home from school at lunchtimes and in the afternoon, cooked me dinners and read me stories. I must say my Mum and Dad were the most significant presence in my life, and I felt like I was the centre theirs. We were a family, and 'just' Granny living with us was one of the last examples of what is now termed the extended family.

While the extended family was unusual then, and is the subject of much interest and debate in these days, it felt special. In fact the more I look back on those times, the more special they seem. Perhaps that is just the natural mellowing over time, nostalgia, but I think it is also that I have become increasingly aware of 'just' Granny's influence on me.

My other Gran, 'nother' Granny, lived quite near to us and as I grew and was able to venture out on my own I would go and spend time with her and Granddad Stevens.

Music has always played an important part in my life. Perhaps it's my Welsh connection; 'just' Granny was born in Pontypool, and my mother was born in Caera near Kenfig Hill. However the Salvation Army background is the more likely explanation. If you were to ask for three images that reminded people of the Salvation Army they would probably be the 'bonnet', the tambourine and the brass band.

Both my parents were musical. Dad played the cornet (and most brass instruments), having been taught to play by his father. Mum played the piano and also sang alto like her mother,

('nother' Granny had a beautiful alto voice with a lovely welsh lilt, a lasting trace of her time living in Maesteg, all the more intriguing as she had been born in Norwich, Norfolk).

Mum was the leader of the junior choir in the Tiverton Salvation Army (called a Singing Company). At some point someone had criticised her conducting and she had refused to conduct again. Dad however had no such inhibitions and so he took over the conducting and Mum played the piano accompaniment.

On a visit to Scarborough Aunty Madge had shown my sister Dawn how to play a tambourine to music in set routines and movements. Up until then people just used to shake tambourines to make a noise. This new way of playing was introduced by an Australian chap by the name of Athol England. Dad had been very taken with it and so taught the singing group to play tambourines in group displays. They were very good and recognised nationally for the quality of their displays. My job was to change the records on the record player.

Mum and Dad took the group all over the country and I went with them, dressed in shorts, white shirt and red bow tie. By the time I was 5 years old I had been with them to such renowned venues as the Royal Albert Hall and the Guild Hall in London.

I've already told you that Dad managed a shop, Pincott's in Gold Street, Tiverton. I was later to discover that one of my Mum's relatives also ran a shop, alongside a pub in Norwich. (The pub was called The World's End and the shop was part of it; my great, great grandfather William Drage was the landlord as was his son William after him, both were fined 21 shillings or a guinea, for selling drinks after hours).

Shop work was to feature in the family somewhat, both my sister

Tarnia and I have enjoyed this line of work at different times. I remember Dad asking me once what I had sold that day. When I told him he then enquired what the customer had asked for. He then explained the simple principle that if you sell the customer only what they ask for you haven't made a sale. It's only when they buy something more than they wanted that you have made a sale.

Even in the current recession the major supermarkets are making profits, increasing the range of goods and services they provide so that they are now almost a high street in one store.

Such is the dominance of the supermarkets today that it is hard to believe that not so long ago (for those of my generation) they didn't exist. I wonder if there will come a time when they cease to exist.

The predecessors to the supermarkets, at least in terms of range of stock and services, were the department stores, and while the likes of Harrods and Selfridges have adapted and built on their international reputations, others such as Alders of Croydon and Bobby's of Exeter have changed significantly or closed down.

Of course a small market town like Tiverton didn't have a department store of the type and size found in the cities, but there was a local version, Eastmond's that was the local 'up market' store.

Looking back to my childhood there were other means of shopping, not the out of town shopping centres of today, or the high street or even just the local shops at the end of the road. There were a whole host of traders who brought their goods and services to your street if not your door. In the early to mid 1960's you could buy fruit and veg off the van from Mrs. Toogood (yes Mrs. Toogood has to be true!), paraffin for heating from the

tanker sent around by Heals the ironmonger, fish and chips from the mobile shop (a piece of fish was a shilling and chips were sixpence). Clothes and furniture, carpets and lino could be bought from firms that sent reps on weekly rounds. There were two of these that called in our road, Blundell's and Stevens, the latter always calling on a Friday and was known as 'the Friday Fella'.

People who know me now would find it hard to imagine me as particularly fashion conscious, but in the 60s most youngsters were. There was a time when trousers that had a lower waistband and hung on the hips were all the rage. Hipsters as they were known were highly sought after; very few were seen in Tiverton and none at Elmore School.

Now it just happened that the Friday Fella didn't have any hipsters for sale, but the Blundell's' bloke did. Somehow I persuaded Mum to buy me a pair. I couldn't get to school too soon and sure enough I was the envy of the school. However I hadn't thought about the restrictions of playing in trousers of such a tight cut. As a result before the end of the week I had split the seam on one of the legs, much to the delight and laughter of my friends. Much chagrined I traipsed home and showed Mum the sorry state of my new hipsters.

I should tell you at this point that Dad hadn't been keen on me having hipsters in the first place so I was afraid he'd say I couldn't have a new pair. But my luck was in, the Blundell's' bloke was there so Mum showed him the hipsters and he said he would replace them. Great I thought I'll have a new pair for school next week. But when he went to his van the only pair he had were a bigger size. I said I'd have them because I was desperate to take a new pair back to school.

When I showed them to Dad he was very cross, I had to use a belt to pull them in at the waist. "I thought you said they were hipsters" he said, "those look more like clown trousers". I was quite upset and come Monday refused to wear them. Dad was adamant, "You wanted them so you'll wear them" he said. So off I went to school with my new 'super size' hipsters. Of course all my friends howled with laughter and I had learned an important lesson about trying to impress others. As Dad would continue to remind me for many years 'above all to thine own self be true'! The new trousers proved much more durable than the first pair,

The new trousers proved much more durable than the first pair, but eventually I wore a sizeable hole in the knee so that I really couldn't wear them any more.

In addition to the mobile shops mentioned before, the Corona soft drinks company had a lorry that you could buy bottles of



Tiverton Singing Company c1960 Back Row: Far right Dad, next to him Mum, 4th from right Dawn; Second Row: Far left Tarnia, far right me in front of Dad.

'pop' from, and get sixpence back on returned empties. Now that was an incentive for recycling, getting paid for handing in the bottles, as opposed to now when you can be fined for not recycling properly, and end up with a criminal record. Not all change is progress or for the better!

Household goods could be bought from the door to door salesmen of Kleenezee or Bettaware as they can today, while the rag and bone man collected any unwanted items sometimes for cash, sometimes for exchange.

Bread and cakes were available from the baker's van with Wonderloaf, Sunblest and Mother's Pride among the more popular brands of massed produced bread from the large national bakeries. The smell of the cakes wafting from the wooden trays was very enticing. After leaving 'the shop' Dad worked on a bakers van for a time before 'going on the buildings' and then joining a local engineering firm.

The Norman Wisdom film 'The Early Bird' about the emergence of the large national dairies was very popular. Tiverton still had local dairies such as Williams' and Island Dairy down at Lowman Green (of Lorna Doone fame). Door to door delivery was provided by the Co-op and by Express Dairies. I remember that the electric milk floats were an easy distinction between the two companies. The Co-op used a 4 wheel float while Express Dairies used a 3 wheel float. I can't remember the name of the guy who worked for the Co-op but the Express Dairy driver was Jack Wood. He was a great sport. An older man who would join in our fun, especially during school holidays when we were all playing in the street. When we saw his milk float come around the corner the shout would go up "IT'S JACKERRR!!"

We'd run down the road and start whooping like red Indians

from the cowboy films (or should that be making authentic sounding war cries of the indigenous American population as portrayed in western popular culture?). We would pretend to attack his milk float as if it were a wagon or stage coach. Some would jump up beside him for the ride and to defend him against the attack, Jack would fire his pretend gun like John Wayne, or Clint Eastwood in 'Rawhide'.

As he disappeared into the distance he'd give us a cheery wave and the game would be over until the next day. The only thing to do then was hunt for empty pop bottles to see if we could raise enough for a bottle of pop to share.

Music is one of my loves and the changes in music over this time were tremendous. Following the development of Rock and Roll during the 1950s, the 1960s saw a veritable explosion of performers and styles of music. The 'charts' contained a rich diversity of musical styles so that at any time the new sound of The Beatles (She loves you yeah, yeah, yeah) and the raw sound of The Rolling Stones (I can't get no satisfaction) were competing with the piano of Russ Conway (Side saddle), Cliff Richard (Summer Holiday), Jim Reeves (Welcome to my World) 'nother' Granny's favourite, Louis Armstrong (What a wonderful world) and of course The Joy Strings (It's an open secret).

The recordings were sold from special outlets and sold in various sizes unlike the older style records that had been available before. Gramophone records we called them, mostly 78s, that is to say 78rpm records made of shellac and these were what Dad used for the 'timbrel' group. 45s were the single song/tune records that were released by record companies while LPs or long playing records, later referred to as albums were bigger



Dawn and Tarnia at the beach with Mum, Dad & 'Just' Granny



Dad holding me outside St Peter's Church Tiverton



In Croydon with Dawn and Tarnia, I was about 12



This looks like I was reading, but I suspect I was looking at the pictures.



This was taken at Tiverton Park, the red football was my favourite



Mum and a very young me standing in front of Dad's second car, an Austin 16



Just Granny, Mum, Tarnia, Aunty Madge, cousin Christine and me aged about 5-6



Me as an Air Cadet aged 14 in front of a 'Chipmunk' trainer at Exeter airport



1976 I was playing cornet then, note the hair length, often it was a bit longer



The beach holiday spans the generations, me with Lauren on my knee and Amy.



60s Chic (or cheek) Tarnia & Dawn trying to tan.



"Does my bum look big in this?" Tarnia and cousin Olwyn try out the tin bath again!

records with many 'tracks' on each side.

I well remember the record player, an old square shaped Dansette that had some valves in it hidden behind a sort of baffle screen. The records stacked on the spindle rising like a spike from the centre of the turntable, which was itself a spinning platform on which the shiny black discs whirled around as if afraid of slowing and losing the music they contained.

The warmth from the front of the player where the valves were, the orangey glow through the ventilation slits like flames dancing to the music, created a special aroma of warm electrical circuits that you don't get from the CD players of today, so that you could almost smell the music as well as hear it, because music in this form was multi sensory. Not only something that was heard, but that was also visual, and aromatic, while the warmth gave an almost touchable, tactile element to the experience. I remember very clearly peering through the ventilation slits to try and see the little people who made the music, much to the amusement of the rest of the family. I was convinced the little people were there and that if I looked hard enough I would see them.

I was fascinated by the grooves on the records that seemed to disappear down the hole in the middle, then reappear on the outside edge as if by magic. Constant in their reappearance, relentless in their attempts to disappear, not so much transient as trance like, so that they had an almost hypnotic quality.

I did discover that if you rubbed plasticine into the grooves it would make the arm that contained the needle jump. Dad was not amused by this and told me off for spoiling the records, but those old 78s were durable and I was able to get enough of the plasticine out to make them playable. I refined my methods by

filling a single groove with sufficient plasticine so that it was hard to see at a glance, but made the arm jump alarmingly, like a skittish horse startled before a fence.

It was Sunday lunchtime. We were looking forward to our roast dinner, chicken with yorkshire pudding. I was hoping we would have peas and not cabbage to go with the roast potatoes and carrots that made up the rest of the meal. I'd been put off cabbage ever since my sister Tarnia had found a caterpillar in her cabbage some time before and, although I had laughed at the time and frequently teased her about it, (saying it was better to find a whole one than a half!) I had carefully avoided cabbage ever since.

Seated at the kitchen table I looked around the room that was the hub of family life. Dad standing at the back door sharpening the carving knife, with a steady rhythm, and a sound of Cerrr chk Ccrrr chk, Ccrrr chk against the door frame of the Cornish Unit house in which we lived. Mum standing at the sink, draining the vegetables, a pair of miniature curtains on a wire covering the 'cupboard' under the sink, the 'New World' gas cooker in the corner beside the door leading to the dining room that was used as a family lounge where the piano and television set were kept. In the alcove created by the airing cupboard was the cast iron solid fuel stove which kept the kitchen warm and heated the water. Running home from school on winter days to the promise of putting your feet up in front of the fire and toasting bread is a fond memory. The drying rack suspended from the ceiling to dry the washing from the heat of the stove (Monday was washing day, no washing machine then but the luxury of the 'wash house' equipped with gas washing boiler and mangle mounted on

sink). The green patterned linoleum or 'lino' as we called it, covered the kitchen floor and was chipped in places. The valve set radio was playing Two Way Family Favourites (a request show for families to keep in touch with people serving or living abroad). There was a length of wire or 'flex' as Dad called it from the back of the set to the gas pipe that ran around the ceiling to serve as an ariel. I remember Dad telling a rather pompous visitor, who had asked why the radio was connected to the pipe, that he was 'testing one of the new gas radios'. Dad had a great sense of humour, perhaps that's where I get mine from, but who did he get his sense of humour from?

This particular day lunchtime was to be shorter than usual, there was a bustle about the place as Mum seemed in a hurry to get the dinner on the table. "Go and get me the milk and a handkerchief," said Dad. Puzzled, I did as he asked, "and bring your band cap as well." I was intrigued and watched in amazement as he tipped some milk onto the handkerchief and proceeded to rub it over the peek of my cap. "This is how we used to polish them when I was in the RAF, "he said "you have to look your best today, you're coming with us to Culmstock for the Remembrance Day ceremony".

I watched again as he got the shoe polish and brushes from an old metal deed box that Uncle Lionel had used, and the steady rhythm with which he polished my shoes to a bright shine. When I asked what it would be like, Dad explained that we would play in the church, "and it has a tree growing out of the tower" he said. This had to be another joke and I was convinced he was pulling my leg.

Having learnt to play the Cornet during the summer this was to be my first time travelling away with the band, although it was only a few miles it felt like a really special occasion. The excitement grew as did my nervousness, I was afraid of making a mistake and I was anxious about marching with the old soldiers. More than anything I was excited about making music, my part perhaps not prominent but an important part of the whole sound.



The 'Big Penny' at the Cenotaph

It's an excitement I still feel today, the nervousness I feel is just as intense.

I thought about the national service of remembrance in London and wondered if the afternoon would be the same.

I had watched the Cenotaph service from Whitehall on the black and white television that morning and my Dad had told me to remember the sight of the old soldiers marching. They were 'the old Contemptibles', from the first British Army in France in the First World War, and Dad said they wouldn't be marching for many more years because they were getting too old. Little did we know then that some 45 years later the last survivors of that war would still be laying their wreaths in memory of their fallen comrades. It was a grey day, typical of November, cold but with the threat of colder weather to come. It was 1964 and the previous winter had seen the heaviest snow for many years. We were just hoping it wasn't going to rain because that

would mean the march would be cancelled and the afternoon ruined. Thankfully the rain stayed away, although the wind was lazy "going through you instead of 'round you" as we used to say in Devon.

November was a good month, a special month. Of course it was when I had my birthday so in that sense it could only be bettered by December which had Christmas. But November also had the Festival of Remembrance from the Royal Albert Hall and the Cenotaph service. Strange things for a young 8 year old boy from Devon to be interested in you may think, yet in those days (as still) they formed an integral part of the calendar of events that marked my year.

In fact by the time we got to November the time was fairly racing toward Christmas. These days the supermarkets rush to get Christmas stock on the shelves before August is out. In those youthful days of the mid 60's and the 'pop revolution', life in a Devon market town had a gentler, less frenetic pace.

There were far more than four seasons in the year. There were the football and cricket seasons of course played at school in the playground and in the official teams, and in the streets and parks near where we lived, or 'up the farm' at the end of the estate, where town met country and cowpats served as goal posts. Of course fresh cowpats were avoided but if possible we would try to choose ones that were still soft in the middle so that the goalkeeper (we all took turns) had to risk a telling off at home for getting covered in dung, or the derision of his friends for being afraid to dive through the cow pat!

Other seasons included the marble, primrose picking, conker, jam jar fishing and kite flying seasons, while activities were also governed by the time of year. Swimming was very much a summer activity in the open air pool, just a 'thrupenny' bus ride

to the other side of the town, or the salmon ponds, specially made salmon pools in the river Exe. The attendant at the swimming pool took great pleasure in writing the water temperature on a blackboard for all to see. Teachers made us line up around the side of the pool and we all had to jump in together, ability to swim was irrelevant! The shrieks and screams as children were immersed in icy cold water could be heard for some distance. The queue for hot drinks such as OXO and Bovril (I could never understand anyone wanting to drink gravy!) changed to queues for ice creams as the weather got hotter, as it seemed to each summer.

Progression through the year was also marked by occasions, some more special than others, such as the 'beating of the leat' when the historical course of free water to the town was traced to its source, and the 'penny scramble' a mad scrum to pick up the pennies thrown by the mayor.

The carnival and numerous fetes and fairs also marked the passage of time but the television brought national events such as the F.A. Cup final, Wimbledon and the Horse of the Year Show ('just' Granny's favourite) into the home. Thus the run up to Christmas began for me with the Royal Tournament in August, with its field gun competition shouting encouragement to the Devonport team 'pleased as punch' when they won. Following the Last Night of the Proms in September, 'just' Granny's birthday in October came next followed by Guy Fawkes night with bonfires and fireworks and then the Festival of Remembrance and the Cenotaph Service.

Now we were getting ready to play our own part in an act of remembrance.



The Church Tower at Culmstock Devon

As I look back on that grey November afternoon a number of images and sounds come to mind. The fir tree growing from the Church tower is a picture that is etched on my mind and still fascinates me to this day. The sound of the British Legion Sergeant Major barking out the orders for the march and the sight of the vicar standing above us in the pulpit with a medal pinned to his surplice come to mind every year.

It seemed an incongruous image then, a vicar wearing a medal as I associated medals with soldiers and battles, but what struck me

about this man was the gentleness and quietness that seemed to reach out from him and transfer a great sense of calm to you.

It seemed to me that bestowing this gift of calm was at some personal cost, as if he was struggling within himself to make sure that what he gave was right for you because you mattered to him. My flawed memory is that he was somewhat hesitant in speaking from the pulpit, pale and shy, but these are the memories of almost 50 years ago. What is important is the impression he made on me, that in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of life there is a place for quietness, that gentleness can demonstrate an inner strength and that even the briefest of encounters can have a lasting influence on others.

Although I had played 'on the march' before, this occasion was memorable for the difficulty of playing while marching down hill. I should explain that I was playing a cornet in the Tiverton Salvation Army band, my Dad taught me to play over the course of several months. Instead of just listening to records I was now one of the 'little people' making the music.

Now playing a brass instrument is not difficult once you have mastered the basics. Marching is not difficult when you have mastered the basics; however putting the two together at age 8 is something of a trial.

You have to play the instrument, keep the music straight so that you can read it, get the notes right, not drop your music, keep in step and not trip up. Quite a lot to concentrate on all at the same time while the guy at the back is shouting LEFT RIGHT LEFT RIGHT and you sneak a look at your feet and look back at the music and whoops you step into a pothole you hadn't seen and stumble so that the mouthpiece of the cornet nearly goes up your nose, then your cap wobbles so you make a quick grab to stop it

falling off, your book drops to the ground and somehow Dad has seen all this, picked up the book and given it back to you and muttered "it's ok keep going" out of the side of his mouth and not broken step!

Following the shorter service at the war memorial we marched back through the village to the British Legion hall where we enjoyed a scrumptious cream tea. Something of a tradition with the band was a tea drinking competition and I was quite proud of my 8 cups which put me first among the juniors playing in the band.

The following Sunday, as we talked about the visit to Culmstock and listened again to Two Way Family favourites on the radio, Granny's brother was mentioned in the conversation. It was said that he had been killed in the First World War and that his name was carved on the Menin Gate because he had no grave.

Then there came the revelation that she also had a sister who had gone to America and no-one knew where she lived. I didn't know that she had any family and couldn't understand how you could have a sister and not know where she lived. My elder sister Dawn was in London and we knew where she lived. Why didn't we write to 'Family Favourites' I asked, she was bound to hear that!

It was during this time that the two questions that have nagged away at the back of my mind ever since where first formed. What happened to Granny's brother and where did Granny's sister live?

These questions have been with me for almost as long as I can remember sometimes receding to the back of my mind but always resurfacing to nag away at me, always accompanied by another, how can I find out the answers?

As years have passed the general awareness and interest in family history has grown. My Uncle Malvern and Aunty Doreen spent many years researching their family histories, particularly Aunty Doreen's.

After Uncle Malvern died and Aunty Doreen went into a nursing home I helped to pack up their home and was intrigued by the range of magazines and computer discs about family history that they had accumulated. I wished I could have asked them about the subject and sought some guidance from them. I remembered some of the things they had told me in the past and determined to make a real effort to try and answer those two persistent questions.

I began to watch a particular programme on the television, 'Who Do You Think You Are?' in which famous people and celebrities are helped by researchers to discover their family history and a story is told about one or two interesting characters. Inspired by these programmes and determined to answer those persistent questions that had dogged me for nearly half a century, I set out to discover 'my family tree'.

One of the first decisions I had to make was which family line to trace first. For as much as I have a family name it is quickly evident when looking back at family trees just how many different families have been linked over time.

On consulting some of the magazines and web sites available on the subject of family history I found some guidance that proved useful. Try to discover as much as you can about your family back as far as your great grandparents to start with.



The home in Chapel Street Tiverton Granddad Bill (Tout) on the bike, Just Granny (Amy Tout) in the doorway.

I linked this to other advice I mentioned earlier, namely to put down what you know and what you think you know including family stories. I thought about the television programmes I had seen where people had made startling discoveries about their ancestors. Would there be any links to famous people? It seemed unlikely and my purpose remained to try and answer those nagging questions about 'just' Granny's family. One of the things one learns in tracing family history is that it can grip you so that you develop an almost insatiable appetite for knowledge about people in your family past. As a result you may discover things that the people of the time wanted to keep secret. In these cases you become something of a custodian of not only their memory but also the memories and viewpoints of the rest of the currently living family, and the stories that pass into future generations. So where I have made discoveries about relatives and their past I have taken care to be sensitive not only to the current generations of our family, but also to the memory of the

relatives concerned, and where the wishes of past family members are known, or are made known to me, to respect those wishes.

My family tree begins of course with myself and my wife Carol and our four girls; Amy, Lauren, Eleanor and Caitlyn. I then trace back the lines of my family and have four family names at my grandparents' generation: the Tout (Tiverton), Stevens (Tiverton), Sewell (Pontypool) and Drage (Norwich) families. At my great grandparents generation there are also the Hole (Bampton), Berry (Holcombe Rogus), Edwards (Bristol) and Smith (Norwich) families.

Tout is my family name and as my immediate predecessors I have my Dad and his father William (Bill). Bill's wife was Amy Sewell known to me as 'just' Granny. They had two sons, Lionel and Bernard (my father). They lived in Chapel Street in the town of Tiverton in Devon, the town where Bill was born and the street where they lived for many years. They lived in the lower half of Chapel Street where the houses were on one side, the opposite side being a wall to prevent the river Lowman from flooding. At the end of the street was the beginning of the town centre, Lowman Green with its clock tower and just a bit further on toward the railway station (now demolished) was Old Blundell's School mentioned in the R D Blackmore novel Lorna Doone. Amy Sewell had come to Tiverton in 1907. In 1901 she was with her grandfather Thomas Sewell in Pontypool where she was born, and in 1911 she was with her 'uncle' Harry Firth in St Andrew's Street in Tiverton. Here she worked as a telephone operator for the telephone exchange which was in St Andrew's Street as well. Her sister Gwendolyn was in service to a Methodist minister in Cardiff in 1911 and later also lived in

Tiverton, seeming to be in service with a family that lived in Tidcombe Lane, near the new Blundell's School. Alfred was by this time in Canada.

Bill Tout my Grandfather was someone I never met. As I look back on family members who have had an influence on me, either directly or indirectly there are a number that I have known of, but whom I have never met.

Bill was employed in various labouring jobs through the years, although at age 14 he was an errand boy for a draper's shop, which would have been in Gold Street Tiverton. He was a member of the Salvation Army, perhaps from childhood as his father James Tout had joined the organisation before Bill was born. Bill played cornet in the band and later taught his two sons to play.

In the First World War he volunteered and joined the Devonshire Regiment serving in the 10th Battalion. After training in England the battalion was briefly in France near the Somme, before being shipped out as part of a multi national force to the Balkans. There they were in the Salonika Campaign until 1919 fighting a predominantly static campaign against the Bulgarians. The Salonika Campaign was not one I had heard of and the forces serving there were often described as the 'forgotten army'.

I wonder how he felt about that. Was he bitter in any way that his war seemed to count for little compared to those who had served in France or the Dardanelles, or even the Middle East? It is said that as many men were afflicted by cholera and dysentery in the Salonika Campaign as were wounded by enemy action. What were his employment prospects now that the war was over? His father and grandfather had been labourers, was this to

be his lot also? Did he want more for his sons as so many fathers do?

On return from the war he married Amy Sewell and they were together as a family with their two sons until just before the outbreak of the Second World War, when he left the family to set up home in London with someone else. These days divorce and family breakdown is not an exceptional circumstance, but in those days it was something of a disgrace generally in society and the more so in Christian circles such as the Salvation Army. The two boys stood up for their mother in a way that I think both surprised him and forced his hand for within a week of his affair being discovered he had gone. Lionel the older son went to see him off at the railway station, Bernard, who he had struck and whose nose he had broken when lashing out in temper, would have nothing to do with him. In fact Bernard never spoke to his father again and Amy wouldn't agree to a divorce. He sent money to her for some years until after the end of the Second War. My sisters remember seeing him a couple of times and being made to cross the road and told not to speak to him. He died in London in the early 1970's.

I may be wrong, but my Grandmother Amy as I knew her always taught me not to bear a grudge and to forgive and forget. As I discovered she had much heartache in her life, so much sadness from an early age I have a sense that she forgave him in some way, and that she would want me to forgive him too, and in that spirit there is much I would like to have asked him, especially about his own upbringing and earlier generations. Some of my family may find this hard to understand, but somehow I'm sure that my Gran would, because she would realise that it stems from my love for her.

It is from Bill Tout that I (and by extension my sisters and cousins) inherit my Tout genes and name. Those physical and psychological characteristics that have been passed between generations, yet which are in truth also tempered and melded with those of families that have married into this particular Tout line over the years. As I came to realise, the Tout family was much larger than the small circle I had been brought up into.

Those earlier ancestors had been quite prodigious in the production of offspring with a number of male lines leading off the earliest discovered ancestor, not to mention the female lines that had taken the Tout attributes into other families, thereby enhancing those families' own traits.

And in so saying I have immediately identified one of those inherited traits, whether it is genetic or socially learned is a matter for debate elsewhere. Nevertheless I was brought up with an ingrained sense of......?? Of what exactly? It wasn't superiority because we were too aware of our place. It certainly wasn't inferiority, no definitely not that. It was more a sense, or perhaps it felt more like a knowledge, that we Touts had been better than we were now, and that we would become so again.

Physically I do inherit some features from my grandfather, more so in fact than from my father, who seems to have inherited his looks from his mother. The nose, height and hairline I have are more Tout than any of the other bloodlines that influence my genes; the double chin is definitely from the Drage line from my mother's side of the family. Comparisons with family members and photographs bear out these observations. The 'Tout nose' was described by my Dad as an aquiline profile and is generally

said to be big. Of course Dad had his nose broken which probably made him more aware of his, while I have worn glasses since the age of 11 so have managed to keep it relatively hidden. I also have the Tout temper; this trait or characteristic was evident in me from an early age. My father kept his in check and proffered to me the advice on many an occasion "he who loses his temper loses the argument". I suspect that this lesson was one that was hard learned by him over the years, at times perhaps even painfully so, and a lesson he would have me learn as soon as I could. It was however a lesson at odds to some degree with the 'knowledge' of our 'rightful' place.

My grandfather Bill also had a fearful temper as I have already described and so did his father, who is remembered by my mother as "someone you wouldn't cross or fall out with". Bill's Sister Lucy, known to my family as 'Aunt Lou' was the archetypal matriarchal figure, whose word was law and who let you know in no uncertain terms if she disagreed with you, as I well remember. So strictness was also part of the Tout persona, although a sense of humour is also a significant component. It may surprise some who were on the receiving end of my father's ire, to learn that he had a sense of humour, and yet he was often telling jokes and it was one of the things we shared. I wonder if his father was similar and that this too is part of the Tout trait. At a recent family gathering I met up with my cousin Kevin who I had not seen for the best part of 40 years. As ever with our family, and I suspect others are similar, we were soon all chatting away as if we'd last met the day before, and Kevin and I were telling jokes and it was one of the things we shared. I wonder if his father was similar and that this too is part of the



Just Granny, Lionel, Dad and Granddad Bill outside the home in Chapel Street

Tout trait. At a recent family gathering I met up with my cousin Kevin who I had not seen for the best part of 40 years. As ever with our family, and I suspect others are similar, we were soon all chatting away as if we'd last met the day before, and Kevin and I were joking together and making the others laugh.

So perhaps this similarity between Kevin and I is evidence of a Tout trait, at least in our paternal line. My father's cousin, known to us as 'uncle' Ken also has a great sense of humour, and while Kevin and I may have 'learned the behaviour' as the younger members of our family, this is not the same in 'uncle' Ken's case.

I think my grandfather Bill has had some influence on me



Dad, Lionel in front with Buck their faithful hound

(although I think my father would have preferred it otherwise) in respect of both the way I look and who I am; how I react, how I think, how I feel. Some of the influence he has had on who I am is as I have described through family traits and characteristics. If the saying "we parent how we were parented" is true, and that this descends through generations, then part of his influence is also in how he was as a parent, which from what I have come to understand may explain some of the strictness in me. But I am also aware that I have very little information on which to base this assessment since neither my father nor uncle is here to ask.

When I think of those who I haven't met who have influenced me then I must also include Uncle Lionel. Uncle Lionel was my Dad's older brother, born in 1920, almost a year after his parents were married. Uncle Lionel and Dad were very close, seemingly inseparable, Lionel being the taller of the two. They were both born in Chapel Street, Tiverton and were brought up in the Salvation Army. They went to Elmore School in Chapel Street, as did I, and had the strong will they had definitely inherited from their father and determination and inner resolve that they will have got from their mother and perhaps their father as well. When the Second World War came both brothers volunteered to join the armed forces, Lionel went into the Army and was in the Royal Corps of Signals; Dad went into the RAF and was a wireless mechanic.

Lionel was sent to Canada for training following to a degree the footsteps of his own uncle who had joined the Canadian Army in 1915. As part of the British Eighth Army, Lionel served in The Western Desert, Italy and Belgium. He married Marjorie (Madge) Kirkham and after commencing married life in Tiverton they moved to Marjorie's home town of Scarborough where he stayed until just before his death in 1953, three years before I was born. They had three children, Christine, Olwyn and Kevin. Kevin was only three years old when his father died. Clearly their loss and the extent that they missed their father during their childhood and formative years is something with which my own sense of missing him cannot begin to compare. Indeed some may say that since I never knew him, I could not miss him, but to do so is to miss the point.

During my childhood, and also during adulthood, my father would compare me to Lionel. He would speak of him at times but not enough to give me any detailed insight into Lionel's life or persona. Except that whenever I did anything that pleased

him, or he and Mum were trying to encourage me, I would be met with the words "you're just like Lionel".

It was in speaking of Lionel that my Dad first told me about our ancestry. It was one of those humorous moments when he would laugh at himself. He'd knocked his nose looking inside an old valve set radio he had brought home to repair, and I'd said it was because he had a big nose. His reply was that it ran in the family and that we were descended from the Huguenots, which could explain the 'huge nose'!! It was a typical Dad joke.

When I asked him what he meant he explained, as he did each time I asked him over many years, that Uncle Lionel had worked for a local solicitor, and that he and their cousin Vera (one of Aunt Lou's three daughters) had tried to trace the family tree. Using some documents found at the solicitor's office they had traced the family back to the Huguenots in the 17th century. The Huguenots were French Protestant refugees, and being descended from them added to the aura and feeling of 'being different' or special in some way.

All through my life, until I undertook my own research I have been under the impression that my ancestry has its basis in France. I have not been able to find the documents Lionel is said to have found, but my own research through census returns took me back to 1835 and my great great grandfather James Tout born at Marriansleigh Devon. I was lucky enough to find a relative through this ancestor via the internet. Dennis had been researching the family history for some thirty years and generously shared his research with me. By following the leads and checking the data he gave me I was able to trace our line back to John Tout who was born in Bishops Nympton in Devon

in 1490, before the Huguenots arrived. I also looked up names in the Huguenot records and can find no trace of the name Tout.

So it very much seems that we have not got Huguenot ancestry, but are descended from good Devonshire stock (people not gravy!). Given my recent family's urban roots and apparent surprise at my marrying a farmer's daughter, it is somewhat ironic to discover that our historical roots are in agriculture. That said there were some other surprises to discover from some of our other family lines.

When thinking of family members I have not known I am drawn back to 'just' Granny's brother. I first learned of him after the first Remembrance Parade I went on. The strange part of this discovery is that although he had not been discussed for sometime, there had been a period earlier in the family when the Death Plaque Granny had been sent in remembrance of him had been played with by my older sister who referred to it as 'The Big Penny' (see picture on page 28).

The story in the family was that he had gone to Canada to live before the First World War and had joined the Canadian Army. He was killed during the war and had no known grave, and so his name was carved on the Menin Gate.

Up to this point in my life when I was aged 8-9, I cannot recall his being mentioned, and even after this he was not talked about often. I think that part of the reason was that Granny was the only one who had known him and that so much else had happened since his death that she preferred to keep his memory, as with that of others of her family, to herself.

As a result I cannot say that he had an impact or influence on my life in the same way that Lionel did. But there was something

about him and his story that intrigued me. During November and December 2008 I tried to find out about him.

I started by trying to find a reference to his name being recorded on the Menin Gate but without success. This was confusing because I had heard for years that it was there. I repeated the searches and tried others over a few days but still found nothing. I had been given the 'Big Penny' after my father died and went back to have a look. It had some information that I checked out on the Commonwealth War Grave Commission search facility. It came up with two possibilities by name but further checking showed that only one could be the Alfred Sewell I was looking for. I was able to gain more information and went looking through the Canadian Government website and the 'Great War Project' website, a Canadian record of the First World War and those who served in it.

I found scanned copies of what may have been his Attestation (signing on) papers. Up to this point I was following a line of enquiry about someone who was possibly maybe even probably my great uncle, but which was not certain or proven. I was excited to have found the call up papers but also apprehensive as they could as easily confirm I had to continue searching and this was by far the most promising lead I had.

Unusually hesitant, my finger hovered over the return key, twitching with tension, my heart beginning to beat faster, my temperature rising, mouth slightly dry. How would I face up to the disappointment of the record I was about to see not being that of my great uncle? Forty years of questions were possibly going to be answered, what we had thought we had known perhaps to be disproved and our view of history rewritten. "Come on boy, get a grip!" I told myself, and, holding my breath I pressed the

key.

A new field began to open on the screen of my laptop computer; the small box appeared with the bar across the bottom showing how much of the file had been downloaded. Seconds passed, 10, 20, 30, 45, slowly, inexorably the bar moved forward. A minute passed and still the file had not finished downloading. Anxious looks at the internet connection, come on come on don't cut out on me now!! And then suddenly the bar zipped to the end of its range, the box disappeared and there it was the scan of a document over 90 years old. The name was right, the place of birth was right and there, under next of kin, was a name I hadn't even thought of seeing, the name that confirmed beyond any shadow of doubt that this was the record of my great uncle. The name and description of my grandmother; Amy Sewell, sister, Wales. Those few stark words seemed to leap from the page. My heart raced, my eyes began to sting, I held back tears as, lips trembling, I read through the document.

I thought back to the times I had watched celebrities filmed during such a moment, not understanding how they could be so emotional just looking at an old document, a dusty relic of history. Yet here I was, equally emotional, goose bumps tingling and the hair on my neck and arms rising, holding back the tears, desperate to tell my family that I had found him. I had found Alfred.

But it felt like more than that, it was not just that I had found him, nor that by going back to the Commonwealth War Grave Commission website I had found the exact location of his grave and a picture of the cemetery in which he was buried. It was as if he had come home. I can understand that this will sound strange, even far fetched, but that is exactly how I felt, that he had been

separated, isolated from his family, buried in an unknown grave in France near the Vimy Ridge battlefield, distance in miles gradually being superseded by the ever increasing distance in memory diminished by time and the passing of generations.

And now he was home, in some inexplicable way he was reunited with us and us with him.

Thoughts raced and whirled through my mind, 'I must tell the family, I must ring....... I wish Dad could know', and then of course the obvious, the most pressing and urgent thought of all, 'oh how I wish I could tell Granny'. How I wished I could tell her that I had found her brother, but of course that was not only not possible, but it didn't matter, because Granny had made her peace about that so very long ago. "Do you wish I could go to see his grave"? I could almost hear her say, "I don't need to



Alfred Sewell's grave in the military cemetery, Mont St Eloi, near Vimy Ridge and Arras.

now, but you could go for me, and let him know he was always remembered". I followed a number of leads on Canadian Government websites and discovered that it was possible to get a copy of his service record. Most English records for servicemen from the First World War were destroyed or severely damaged during the Second World War as a result of bombing raids during the blitz.

The opportunity to find out even more about Alfred Sewell was irresistible; my thirst for information was like the thirst of a camel that had walked across a vast dessert. I had to know more, I must pursue all the avenues of information that presented themselves, because what had started as the need to answer a nagging question had evolved into something of a quest. One of Granny's sayings drove me on, "if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again".

I had visited the Peace Tower, part of the Canadian Parliament building, on the one occasion I had been to Canada back in 2003.

I had seen the book of remembrance and the stone tablets

marking the battles in which Canadian soldiers had died, and wondered which had been the one in which Alfred Sewell had died. I must find out all I could about him or I would be letting down the rest of the family, past and present.

Without hesitation I made an application via email for a copy of Alfred Sewell's service record and was told it would be sent in a matter of 5-6 weeks. One morning in January 2009 a large envelope was delivered. I eagerly opened it on seeing the Canadian Government franking mark and looked through the documents enclosed. The papers included the casualty reports for when he died and the disposal of his pay that had accumulated while he was in France, the payment of mess bills etc. Suddenly I paused; reread the section I had looked at again, and again, and again. There could be no mistake, the next of kin and contact

details included Granny's sister Gwendolyn Sewell. Not only that but they were updated with changes of address and importantly her married name! This was unbelievably good fortune, from not knowing who Granny's sister was I now had addresses where she had lived and her married name.

I hastily went to search marriage records and by cross referencing entries for bride and groom was able to put a name to her husband, Kristopher Braaten. I remembered another 'family story' from my childhood about someone that I thought of as the mystery man.

The story is told of a visitor to my Gran's house during the Second World War. It was just before the D-Day Normandy landings and my mother, who was also living at the house in Chapel Street, was at home. Gran was out working, she worked at Blundell's School as a cleaner and domestic. There was a knock at the door and when Mum answered it she saw an American Officer standing before her. He was an officer in the American Navy according to Mum and very smart looking.

He asked if this was the house where Amy Tout lived and if she was in, he was married to her sister. It seems that he had taken a wrong turning in trying to find the house and as a result lost quite a lot of time.

Mum explained that her mother in law was at work and would be home later. The officer said he couldn't stay as he had already lost time and needed to get the train back to port so that he could rejoin his ship. Unfortunately Mum didn't get his name or where he lived in America.

From that time on his visit was the subject of discussion and became part of my need to discover more about gran's sister. Now that I had the married name of Gwendolyn I could try and find records or reference to her in America. I looked up passenger lists to America and found that Gwendolyn had sailed with her daughter Thelma to London Connecticut in 1921 on the



Kristoffer Braaten, husband of Gwendoline Sewell, the 'mystery man'.

SS Olympic, sister ship to the ill fated Titanic. A search of census records in America gave me where they lived in 1930 and a search of Social Security records showed me when and where she had died.

At this point I had reached an impasse. Try as I may I could make no further progress in tracing our American cousins, from knowing nothing about them to discovering what I had was good progress, especially as I had found the information within 4 days of receiving the information about great uncle Alfred from Canada. But that saying of Granny's kept pounding away in my mind, 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again'.

It was late in the evening and for want of inspiration I typed Gwendolyn's name into a general search and found an entry in an American telephone directory. It was one of a number of entries but I suddenly realised that this one had the same address

as the social service record I had found a few minutes before. Carefully I looked at it again only to discover that the directory was dated some 20 years after Gwendolyn had died. Confused, I went back and rechecked all the records I had found to date making sure that I had not made any mistakes, but everything seemed in order. The only explanation that I could think of was that Gwendolyn had another daughter who was named after her. I rang my sister Tarnia to tell her about my discovery and said I was unsure what to do next. To ring would be quicker, but how would it seem from the other end with some strange voice saying 'Hi I'm your long lost relative from England who you've never heard of'. It would sound strange at best and frightening at worst probably a hoax. Perhaps I should write, but then if I had no reply was that because they were no longer there or didn't want to make contact?

Persuaded, I decided I would ring the number I'd found, which I did the next day. I got through on the third attempt and asked to speak to Gwendolyn Braaten. "I'm her daughter came the reply" and I replied in turn "You probably won't believe this but I'm your long lost relative from England."!!

I guess that to investigate mysteries or questions that have been with us for so many years and find answers is something that should bring satisfaction. Certainly I have felt satisfaction in finding out and discovering what I have already, but I am still not satisfied. There is more to find out, more to discover and as I find the answers to some questions new questions arise.

To think of relatives of whom I have known and not met who I feel have had a bearing on my life, would not be complete without the inclusion of someone of whom I have thought often during my life. Someone who has not influenced me by example, nor by genetic influence. Nonetheless there is someone the thought of whom has driven me at times, encouraged me at others, and has also been a source of comfort. That person is of

course my older brother Lionel, the baby that died.

I can't remember how old I was when I first learned of my brother, certainly I was 7-8 years old I think. I had been pestering my Mum to know why there was such a gap in age between me and my two older sisters, both of whom had left home by the time I was eight. It felt very much as if I was an only child in some respects as they were adults while I was still a child. Finally giving in to my pestering Mum told me that there had been another baby between me and my sister Tarnia, who was stillborn and who would have been my brother. There after I often thought about him, what would he be like, what would he be called? It was only recently that my sisters told me what he would have been called because he wasn't talked about when I was growing up, or indeed after that in my adulthood.

I had seen the film Edward My Son, starring Spencer Tracy when I was a child, and for some reason had taken to thinking of my brother as Edward. He was someone I could talk to in my mind, especially when I had fallen out with friends. He became my ideal, so that he would have been able to do all the things I couldn't do, be the person I couldn't be, almost like an alter ego, my deficiencies all compensated for by his abilities as I imagined him. In this way my brother has been with me throughout my life, sharing in successes such as they have been, and helping me through difficulties by showing me what we can be.

I can see that there came a time when I began to push to achieve myself rather than take refuge in the thought that he would have succeeded where I didn't, having gained or developed a measure of self confidence that I didn't have in earlier life and so it had seemed as if at times I as not only living my life, but his too.

I think back now and realise that there were times when I felt almost guilty for having lived when he had died, yet I also came to understand that I had an opportunity to make something of my life that he had been denied.

During my late teens I wrote poetry for a time. Nothing

sensational, I was no budding Keats or Shelley. I had taken to the poetry of Wilfred Owen, one of the First World War poets. I kept my poems away from view, they were introspective rather than for public reading. One short verse remains in my mind and sums up the drive that takes hold of me.

The past has no doors, only windows; The future has no windows, only doors; And the present is all we have With which to make our mark upon time.

It had not occurred to me that when searching for answers about my Grandmother's family that I would find out more about my brother. Having found out a name I tried to search on the internet for information, but without success.

There was a new driving force to this part of my research, one that at times seemed more of a nightmare than a memory. When I was at grammar school we had somehow been taken to see some sort of exhibition that included unborn babies preserved in some kind of glass jars. I had known about my brother by this time and remember quickly turning away, afraid that he was among those babies in the jars. Even as I write, I can see them still. I remember some of the other lads messing about, mixed emotions of anger and fear began to rage within me, anger at the lack of respect shown by my friends and the people who had put these 'babies' in the jars, fear that my brother was one of them. I remembered that Mum had told me that after he had died 'the baby' as she always calls him, was taken away from her and wrapped in a shawl, she was taken to another small room to see him for the last time before the nurses took him away.

I think it was after I told Mum about this incident that I learned from Mum that he was buried in a cemetery in Exeter.

I remembered that Uncle Malvern had contacted the Devon Family History Society on one of his searches and so I did the same. To my amazement they were able to provide me with information about the cemetery where my brother was buried, where his grave was and also a copy of the burial record. They also gave me a contact name in case I wanted to visit the grave.

I made the arrangements and one cold February morning I drove along the road beside the river Exe, the river that seems to have flowed through the Tout generations of my family like an artery through time. Mum had told me once or twice of the many times she had travelled the same road and looked across to this cemetery and wondered about her son. She was too ill to attend the burial, and having attended himself, Dad never went back.

On this specially arranged visitor day I was one of few attending to discover the grave of a long lost loved one. I looked again at the grass below my feet, the resting place of my brother Lionel. I thought of the hopes there would have been before he was born, the dreams for his future and the love building to support his life. I thought of the grief and pain, the torment following his death and wondered how his death had affected my parents and my sisters.

I cannot completely empthise with how they felt then, I have thankfully not experienced the pain of losing a child. The closest experiences I have from which to empathise are the miscarriages Carol had, the pain of which remain with me still, although my pain is of nothing to the anguish she must suffer and have suffered. I can see us standing on the landing of our first home in Chapel Street, on the 10th November, I was holding Carol in my arms, trying to comfort her as she told me of the miscarriage, the tears stinging my eyes as I choked them back while trying to comfort her. The hopes, the dreams for our unborn child all gone in an instant, but the love for the child remains as strong if not stronger than ever, perhaps the more so because of those images burned in my memory from that school visit long ago.

I use the time of this, the first of our miscarriages to remember each of them, Remembrance Day for me is about remembering

them too. As I stood at my brothers grave I asked him to look out for my unborn children until the day that I can.

The words of a poem by Leo Marks came to mind, it seemed to sum up how I felt, to describe the relationship I have had with his memory, almost as if my brother Lionel were speaking them himself:

The Life That I Have

The life that I have
Is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours.

The love that I have
Of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours.

A sleep I shall have A rest I shall have Yet death will be but a pause.

For the peace of my years In the long green grass Will be yours and yours and yours.

I looked again at the long green grass beneath my feet, heavily covered with dew. I thought of my brother Lionel who has been resting there for almost 60 years now, and knowing that I was the first of the family to visit his grave since his burial it felt as if in some way he too was brought home to the family. A cold, bitter wind swept across from the river, and as I turned away to go back to the car, I shed a tear for Lionel, my brother, for all those lost years, and the strange sense of release that I felt from having found him.

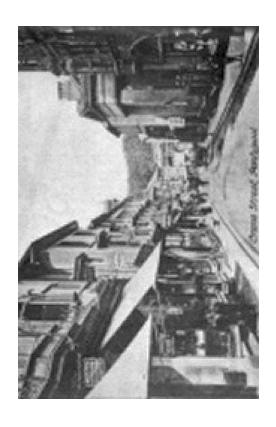


Cemetery plan

Site of our brother Lionel's grave

I can clearly see that members of my family who I knew of but didn't ever get to meet have, in various ways, been significant in my life. But by far the greater influence on me has of course been by those who I have known and lived with, and of those the influence of 'just' Granny has been both enduring and significant.

Chapter 2: Pontypool and the Sewell Family



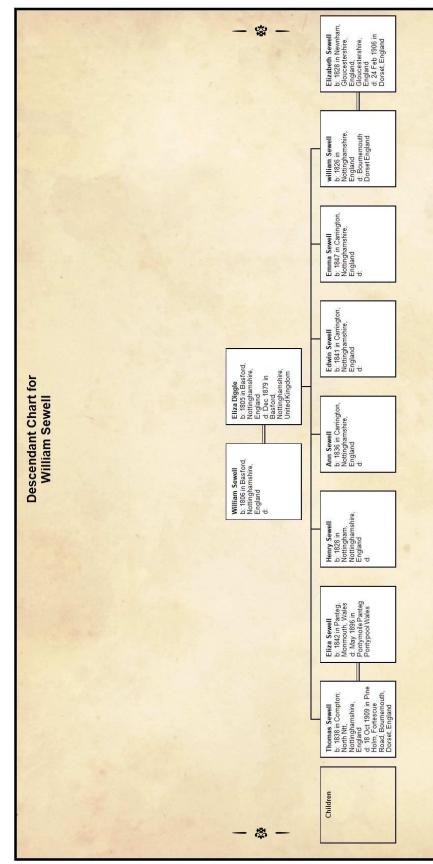




St Mary's Church Arnold Nottingham opposite, Pontypool today, with places of interest marked.

Although we will concentrate on Pontypool in Monmouthshire South Wales, our initial introduction to the Sewell family begins here at St Mary's Church Arnold in Nottingham. William Sewell was married here and his children christened. Two of his children, William and Thomas, moved to Pontypool to find work. The family charts for William the elder and his son Thomas are found on pages 61 and 64.

Looking at this second generation we find our Sewell family living in Lower Mill Row, typical Welsh cottages below the canal that was built to bring materials into and out of the steel and iron mill complexes that provided much of the employment in the town. The 40 foot high bank of the canal towered above the small cottages, the great expanse of the mills, and the railways that had superseded the canal spread southward toward



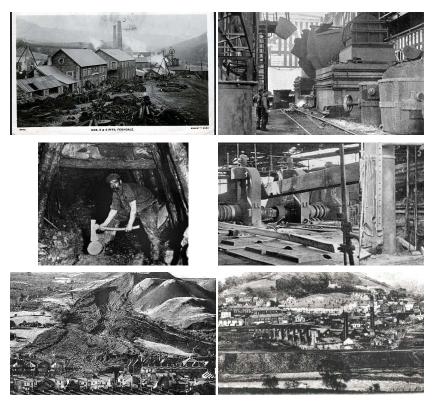
the mouth of the valley.

For most of this period and even later years there was an import of labour into the valleys of South Wales and Pontypool led the way. People came from England, like the Sewells, but also from other countries, particularly Italy. It was during this era that many of the Italian imigrant families set up cafes and ice cream parlours as well as the menfolk working in the mines. The mines of South Wales attracted immigrants from Cornwall and Ireland, the iron works had brought skilled labour from Shropshire and the midlands of England, particularly during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Away to the east was St Mary's church of Panteg, where the family of Thomas Sewell was christened, and where his wife Eliza is buried. It is Thomas' grandchildren that we are interested in, Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn, all born in

Pontypool during the 1890's at the end of the Victorian period,



Crane Street Pontypool opposite page Family chart for William Sewell of Nottingham



Colliery and mill scenes of the time, middle left Pontypool miner 1900, bottom pictures are Pontypool late 19th century.

and whose experiences were to forge their character in the face of adversity, part of the character which my sisters and I have inherited. Pontypool had been something of a boom town during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The ironworks and collieries grew during those years, with Pontypool leading the world in the production of Japanedware which was exported across the world. Iron foundries, rolling mills and steel mills were clustered together and surrounded by a huge network of railway lines and canal systems. The canals had been introduced

Descendant Chart for Thomas Sewell

Notting Marshire, England d: 18 Oct 1909 in Pine Holm, Fortescue Road, Boumemouth, Dorset, England b: 1838 in Compton; North Ntt, Thomas Sewell

d: May 1896 in Pontymoile Panteg Pontypool Wales b: 1842 in Panteg, Monmouth, Wales Eliza Sewell

Ernest William

Children

Nellie Edwards b: 1869 in Bristol, Somerset, England d: b: Aug 1867 in Pontypool Wales d: Aug 1900 in Gwent, Monmouthshire, United Kingdom

Gertrude Eliza Sewell b: Jun 1873 in Pontymoile Panteg Pontypool Wales

ď William Pardy b: 1870 in Odcombe Somerset England d:

d: Jun 1958 in Boumemouth, Hampshire, England

Laura Sewell b: Jun 1879 in Pontypod, Monmouthshire, United Kingdom

Alice Sewell
b: Mar 1881 in
Pontypool,
Monmouthshire,
United Kingdom d: Sep 1923 in Bedwellty, Monmouthshire, Wales

Thomas Morris b: d:

Gwendoline Sewell

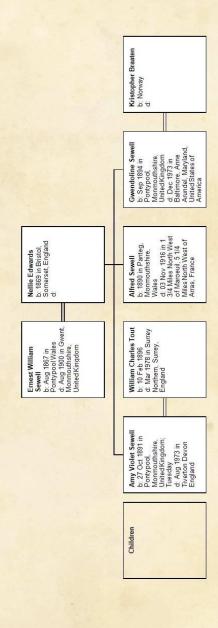
Mabel Sewell
D. Mar 1878 in
Pontypool,
Monmouthshire,
United Kingdom
et. Jun 1878 in
Pontypool,
Monmouthshire,
United Kingdom

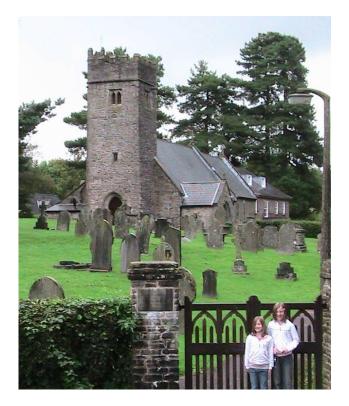
United Kingdom d: Mar 1880 in Pontypod, Monmouthshire, United Kingdom b: Mar 1875 in Pontypool, Monmouthshire,

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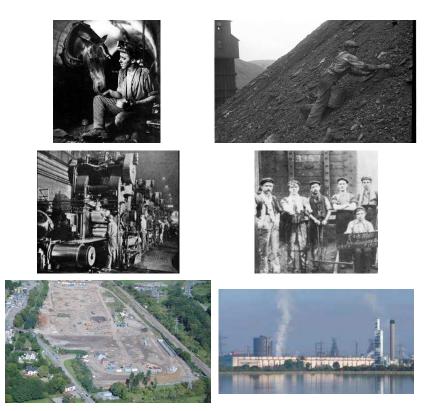
Descendant Chart for Ernest William Sewell





St Mary's Church Panteg with Eleanor and Caitlyn Tout

as a means of transporting goods more effectively than by road. The advent of steam power led to the growth of the railway with huge marshalling yards developed to cope with the immense amount of traffic that developed. The old map of Pontypool on page 71 shows part of the network that served the mills in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It must have seemed then as if the railways were the future of travel, and yet many tracks were later torn up and destroyed.



Top pictures pit pony, and miner crawling on slag heap for coal to use, middle pictures rolling mill and steelworkers from near Pontypool, bottom pictures Lower Mill area after demolition and new steel works in Panteg.

The area today is very different from the time when our Sewell ancestors lived there. Little trace remains of the rail network and the industrial complexes of the foundries and mills have succumbed to new developments and new roads.

The map on page 59 shows some of the main areas of interest as they are today, the workhouse is now the county hospital, and the site of lower mill row is now a Premier Inn hotel.

The eye is taken with the green of the hills, the trees lining the towpaths of the canal and the fresh paintwork of the houses. How different from the soot blackened monochrome of the

Victorian era.

During the latter part of the 19th century heavy industry and mining was growing across the Welsh valleys. The key to the growth of industry was coal, those parts of England and Wales that were near to coal deposits often saw heavy industry develop nearby.

Coal was also important in the development of the most revolutionary transport system up to that time, the railways. Rail took the coal itself to other industrial areas and the seaports for use in steam ships, for if steam was the driver of the industrial revolution, coal was its fuel.

In Pontypool there were several iron and steel mills, fed by the local pits, just a little further up the valley the Blaenafon iron works were supplied by what is still known as Big Pit, now a tourist attraction. Pontypool mills were the leading producers of Japanned ware, this was pressed steel lacquered with black and then highly decorated, the range of household goods produced were very popular as exports, particularly to America.

Another development to originate from Pontypool was corrugated iron sheeting. For some years Pontypool mills were the main world producers of corrugated iron sheeting with America again the largest export market until American steel mills began to produce it for their own market. Some of the corrugated iron sheeting used in the trenches of the First World War was produced in Pontypool.

However progress is a hungry beast and today's innovation is tomorrows' relic. The mills at Pontypool seem to have lost out to Ebbw Vale and other growing Welsh mills which were investing in newer technology meaning they were more productive and more profitable. Indeed the main Pontypool mills were taken over by the Ebbw Vale companies and the industry went into decline. Harder times were heading for Pontypool and this also













Top pictures Pontymoile canal, Pontymoile corner, middle pictures inside of restored cottage and Clarence corner, bottom pictures Clarence Hotel and Pontypool High Street

seemed to herald the beginning of hard times for the Sewell family, times that would almost tear it apart.

The pictures shown in this book can only portray a little of the sights that would have been familiar to the Sewell and Edwards families from our past. They cannot portray the sounds and smells that accompanied them.

Among the many thousands migrating to Pontypool were two brothers from Nottingham, William and Thomas Sewell. Their

parents were William and Eliza Sewell of Basford, Nottingham. While William the younger worked in the hotel trade Thomas worked mostly in the mills as a wages clerk.

Born in 1838 Thomas married Eliza Jacobs on the 18th Dec 1862 in St Cadoc's Church, Trevethin. Until then Thomas had been living in the Panteg area of Pontypool with his brother William who had by this time also married.

Thomas and Eliza's family grew: Ernest was born in 1867, Gertrude in 1873, Laura in 1880, and Alice in 1882. Evidence that life was very different then is highlighted by another daughter, Edith Mary who was born in 1869 and died aged 10 years in 1879. The 1881 census shows the family living in the Old Estate Yard, Lower Mill, in a cottage, Thomas was employed as a clerk at the iron works.

In 1889 Ernest Sewell married Nellie Edwards at St Mary's

Church Panteg on the 10th June. Nellie was born in Bedminster Bristol in 1869. They set up home next to Thomas and Eliza and their first child, Alfred William was born on the 6th June 1890, followed by Amy Violet on the 27th October 1891. Their third child, Gwendolyn was born on the 19th April 1894.

During this time both father and son worked in the iron works, Ernest as an engine fitter, Thomas as a clerk.

We do not know what happened to Ernest but it becomes obvious that he did not hold on to this job. At a later date we see that he was working as a labourer felling trees and that he had something of an itinerant lifestyle. We do not know all the circumstances leading to this significant change in fortune. The records of the times show clearly that times were hard and becoming harder. What had once been a strong export market to America was becoming an import market. Competition and new ways of working meant that mills and works that could not keep

pace with technology were left behind, becoming unprofitable. For some the answer lay in emigration, we should remember that this was still a time when it was possible to travel abroad to start a new life. The Salvation Army was actively encouraging people to go overseas and together with Barnardos and other charitable institutions was actively involved in sending children to the 'colonies' of Australia and Canada.

For those who stayed the life remained hard and became harder. We can easily paint pictures of what we imagine life was like but the reality remains vague at best, a mystery for so much of the story we would like to discover.

For many of us our first introduction to life in the Victorian period is through the works of Dickens, who paints a harsh picture of daily struggle. The story of Black Beauty paints an equally harsh scene, while the Edwardian tale of the Railway Children is hardly more encouraging. So when we think of Ernest and Nellie and their three children, do we think of a romantic scene or something closer to Bleak House? The answer of course is that we can't be sure. The map on page 74 is our only guide as little remains today of the Pontypool and Panteg of their day. The proximity to the mills and steel works would seem to indicate that the accommodation would have been of a poor standard, yet Ernest's father was a clerk, but then again so was Bob Cratchitt in Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Then again Nellie's father was recorded as being a millwright, while Thomas Sewell was recorded as having a servant. perhaps this shows two families trying to climb the slippery rungs of the social ladder. However the area where Ernest and Nellie lived was close to the mills, where washing was hung out white to dry, and taken in grey with the soot and smoke.

There would have been little in the way of sanitation although investments in this area had been made, but nothing to compare with today. We should remember that we have seen significant changes in our own lifetime, wasn't it Dawn and Tarnia who were still bathed in a tin bath in front of the fire? That tin bath remains in the family still (see picture on page 24).

And what of the family atmosphere, surely we can picture a happy home, even within the poorer part of town? I'd like to think so but I fear the truth is somewhat different. In this I am guided by records that describe the family at a particular point in time, giving a brief glimpse into the circumstances they lived through. Circumstances that were to lead to such different futures.

By 1900 Nellie had left the family home, described as having left it some 4 years before. This means that she would have left when Alfred was 6, Amy was 4 and Gwendolyn still a mere babe.

It is hard to imagine what led to a mother leaving such young children, where did she go? The honest answer is that we still don't know really. She is said to have gone to America and this view is certainly a matter of record, although I have yet to find evidence that she did go, or that she didn't.

Why did she go? Well if it was America it would have been planned to an extent although she may have left the home and decided to emigrate later. It would appear from records that Ernest was not a good husband with one particular record stating "he was an idle and worthless man who treated her badly".

Was he like this because he was unable to keep a job? Was he drinking, was he violent? We don't know, but we do have an answer to the next question, what happened to the children? It seems that rest of the family were unable or unwilling to take them in. We should remember that these were very different times to our own. In some families the children would have been sent out into service or kept with servants until they were of an age to enter service themselves. In other families they would



Pontypool workhouse just a few hundred yards from where Thomas Sewell lived in Sunnybank Griffithstown

The long walk to the workhouse.

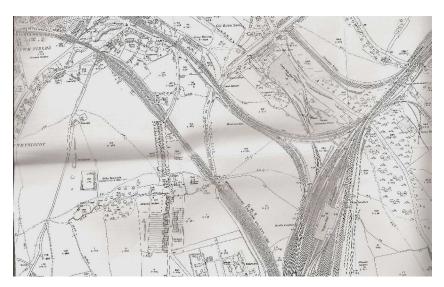
have been taken in and treated with love. When these options were not possible there was another option and records show that on the 20th Jan 1907 the children were taken by their aunt Laura a few hundred yards from their grandfather's house to a new home, the Pontypool Union Workhouse.

Terminology changes over the years ,what was acceptable in one era is thought derogatory in another. Our understanding of illness and conditions and our responses to them as a society also changes. We should remember that this was still the era of the lunatic asylum. The word asylum itself refers to a place of safety. People with varying degrees of mental illness were shut away from the rest of society in asylums, and these places were stigmatised. I remember in my childhood that as children we would tease each other with the phrase 'you'll end up in Digbies'. The Digby hospital in Exeter was a large psychiatric hospital, formerly an asylum. I little knew that one of my great grandparents had been admitted there. Why is this relevant you ask? Perhaps because records describe two of Thomas' daughters, Laura and Alice, as feeble minded. This was a term used to describe people who may have had what we call learning difficulties.

Thomas' elder daughter Gertrude moved to Bournemouth and

was I believe a companion for Thomas' brother William and wife Eliza. William had managed the Clarence hotel. It is not certain whether or not he owned the hotel but it would seem that he was able to at least save substantial funds. He died before his wife who inherited their house in Bournemouth as we shall see later. His death was reported in the local Pontypool newspaper so it would seem that he was either popular or respected in the town. Laura and Alice remained with their father in Pontypool before he also went to live in Bournemouth where he died on 18th Oct 1909.

During the mid to late 1990s Thomas Sewell was living in Sunnybank, Griffiths town. The road is on a hillside overlooking the valley and on the edge of Pontypool. By 1895 Nellie Sewell had left the family home and the children had stayed with their grandfather Thomas Sewell. But in January 1896 Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn were taken a few hundred yards to the



Map showing the workhouse, lower mill, lower mill row and old estate yard

Pontypool Union Workhouse. The picture below and on the next page shows the entry record for their admission to the workhouse, they were signed over by their aunt Laura. Amy and Gwendolyn were to stay in the workhouse for almost two years being discharged into the care of their father in January 1899. The records also show that just prior to Amy and Gwendolyn leaving the workhouse their father had been imprisoned, having been sentenced to one month of hard labour for not paying toward the cost of their keep.

Alfred on the other hand did not stay long at the workhouse, records show that he deserted probably on the first day. We cannot be sure where he stayed for the next couple of years, it is possible that he stayed with his father moving around looking for work but this is conjecture. Amy would have received some education and Gwendolyn was looked after by a nurse. The stone buildings of the workhouse were austere and the conditions hard

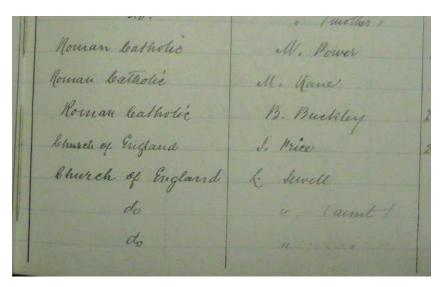
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Entry showing Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn Sewell admitted to the Pontypool workhouse

years in the workhouse in Pontypool.

although not as hard as those portrayed in Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens. Food was based on a range of diets and inmates were assessed to determine the diet they needed. Children were not made to work but provided with basic education to provide them with a better prospect for the future. After this Ernest took the children with him as he moved around looking for work. Records show he stayed at various lodging houses. He seems not to have worked at his trade of engine fitter for some years.

The picture on page 80 shows where he was working in the summer of 1900 when he was trimming and felling trees. There was a timber merchant in the area by the name of Thomas Edwards but this was not his father-in-law who had died in May 1900, his wife Elizabeth having died four years earlier in 1896. It is worth remembering that by this time Alfred was only 10, Amy 8 and Gwendolyn 6 years old. Their mother had left some four years before and the two girls had lived for around two



Entry in Pontypool workhouse register showing L Sewell Aunt as the person admitting the children to the workhouse.

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Entry to the workhouse, this shows which diet each person was put on.

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Close up of entry record.

Lives Well Lived by Bramwell J P Tout

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Discharge record 1899 for Amy and Gwendolyn record shows the last meal (dinner) before discharge.

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next page of the discharge record shows Amy and Gwendolyn were handed back to their father. We can also see that their diet had changed by this time.



The family that may have supported them at this time was I think distanced from each other in terms of relationship rather than geography. This is not unusual and if we look at our own families today we see evidence of this. In such cases it is not always easy to turn to others for help and yet there are some anomalies here at this time. Ernest's sister Ellen (see page 64) seems to have married into a family of agricultural engineers, William Stone of Newport, yet this once thriving business was in decline. In 1901 records show they were staying with George Jacob, who was the brother of Thomas Sewell's wife Eliza. earlier records show that Ellen may have been living there prior to her marriage. With Gertrude having moved to Bournemouth it seems that Alice and Laura where the only two of Thomas's children living with him at that time, and they were described as 'feeble minded'. Laura was also described as a hunchback. This type of terminology is not used in these days, however we should remember that historically people described as hunchback were often looked upon as bringers of ill fortune, cursed and to be avoided. The stigma of two afflictions such as Laura suffered could reflect on the family. Yet Thomas did employ a servant and so held down a reasonable job and his daughter Ellen seems to have made a good marriage. His brother William seems to have been a successful hotelier. His mother in law, was recorded as an inn keeper, while his brother in law was described as a tinplate manufacturer, owning his own business.

It would not have been unusual for the two daughters Laura and Alice to have been 'put away' in an asylum perhaps, yet Thomas and Elizabeth his wife have seemed to try and keep them in the family home. Following Elizabeth's death in 1896 I think that Thomas may have found it increasingly difficult to cope at home. Records show that around 1900 things went from bad to worse.

I wonder what the expectations were for the new century of 1900. Certainly for us the build up to the year 2000 was immense and the hopes for a brighter future fuelled the optimism

of the time. Any such hopes and optimism that the Sewell's may have had for the new century were soon to be dashed. Laura gave birth to an illegitimate child and the explanation, questioned in some quarters, was that she had been assaulted having been plied with alcohol. If this is true, and we have no real evidence to doubt it, it would be the equivalent of what is today referred to as a date rape. Given that she was the 'hunchback' it may have been more sinister.

This had a severe impact on Thomas and was followed in August by the death of his son Ernest. Quite what the relationship was between Ernest and the rest of that family we cannot construe. The report on page 83 from the Western Mail shows that Thomas had no real hand in the arrangements of his son's funeral, although he did take the children into his home. Ernest was buried by charity, which indicates he was buried in a pauper's grave. Thomas was described as being "at the point of losing his mind".

With their mother Nellie having left home, perhaps pregnant with a fourth child, although this is uncertain, arrangements would have to be made for the care of Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn. At this point we encounter a man who was to have a significant input into the lives of the three children, Thomas Wintle. He was a minister of religion and may at one point have lived near to Thomas Sewell when he lived at the Old Estate Yard. Thomas Wintle was on the board of governors for the Pontypool Union. This group was responsible for administering poor relief, for ensuring that the workhouse was of a good standard, including the food and accommodation, and for placing poor children with what we would now describe as foster families. It was Thomas Wintle who now took control of the situation following Ernest's death. His correspondence of the time show his concerns for the wellbeing of the children and his view that their grandfather's home was unsuitable for them. The resulting decisions were to impact through the generations. The following is a transcript from the Western Mail, Tuesday 4th September 1900, original in the British Library.

THE FATALITY NEAR USK

CORONER AND JURY

At the Sessions House, Usk, On Monday before Mr. B.H.Deakin (coroner) and a jury (of which Mr William Jones was foreman), an inquest was held on the body of Ernest Sewell, aged 34 years, who was killed at Trostrey on Friday last, by a spur of a tree he was trimming falling on him and fracturing his spine, death being instantaneous. Evidence having been given, some of the jurors desired to have the doctor who saw the deceased after he was carried to his lodgings called, but the Coroner said it was not necessary, and remarked that he had more quibbles in Usk than in any other part of his district.-The Foreman also said the jury felt very much the fact that the man had been lying dead in his lodgings since Friday in a very bad state, and that it was a pity some means could not have been found to have had the deceased interred before now. -The Coroner replied that he had received the intimation of the death on Friday night, and he could not come on the Saturday, as he had to fulfil a longstanding engagement. A telegram sent by the police was opened and replied to by his wife after seeing the police at Monmouth as to the usual thing done in such cases. Had he been at home and known the case to be urgent he would have sent the order for burial by post.- The Foreman asked if the widow with whom the man was lodging could not be recompensed for the inconvenience she had been put to, to which the Coroner replied that he had neither the power nor inclination to grant anything. Subsequently the Corner advised the foreman to make representations to the urban district council for the provision of a mortuary for the town.- Ultimately the jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death".







Alfred Sewell in the uniform of the Canadian Expeditionary Force

Thomas Wintle began the processes to rehome Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn that were to lead to the three siblings being separated once again. As we have seen previously Alfred was apart from his sisters while they were in the workhouse. Now he was to be separated by more than the walls surrounding that building. Thomas Wintle contacted Barnardos in London and they agreed to take Alfred into one of their homes. The information that we have about Alfred's life from this point onward comes from records kept by Barnardos, of which we have copies.

During the Victorian era infant mortality was high, however the number of orphaned children was also high, testament to the



Alfred Sewell picture taken on entry to Barnardos 1901

harsh lifestyle of many of the population and to the impact of many contagious diseases that swept through populations such as consumption otherwise known as TB (tuberculosis).

The Victorian age was also one of philanthropy and social reform through men like Barnardo, Booth, Rowntree, and Shaftesbury, women such as Florence Nightingale, Mary Secole and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. The changes brought to social policy and public consciousness during the Victorian times had as significant an impact as those that were to occur during our own lifetimes. Children had been brought into general education. Previously a benefit for the wealthy, changes in attitude meant





Leopold House, one of the homes where Alfred stayed in London

Stepney Causeway where Alfred also stayed in London

that all children were given an opportunity of education. Children were also provided with a home when separated from their families. We read today of child exploitation and this is indeed a serious issue. In Victorian times this was a huge problem highlighted by Charles Dickens in his novel Oliver Twist.

Alfred was taken from the family and sent to London, it is probable that he was accompanied by Mr Wintle or another of the board of guardians. He was approaching 11 years of age. I wonder what thoughts raced through his mind as he boarded that train, what was he told of his future. Did he know it was unlikely that he would ever see his family again?

I remember that at that age I had regularly travelled to London where my sisters lived. Steam train journeys gave way to diesel train rides although most often we travelled by car. My biggest concern was whether I would pass the 11 plus exam and so gain a place at the Grammar school.

For Alfred the future was as uncertain as his past had been. Moving from place to place as his father sought work, being reunited with his sisters when they came out of the workhouse, yet his mother having left the family home when he was only 6. Knowing that his father had been killed and going back again to his Grandfather's house to live had brought what we would





SS Dominion the ship Alfred sailed to Canada on.

SS Dominion covered in ice

maybe consider to be a lifetime's trauma into his early years.

I suspect that these experiences had hardened him somewhat to the difficulties of life. He was about to experience a way of life that he had in all probability never dreamed of.

Arrival in London, probably at Paddington Station, was followed by a journey across London, marvelling at the buildings and the numbers of people until arrival in the East End. Here he stayed for a year, first in Leopold House then at Stepney Causeway. Barnardo children were prepared for the future by being taught skills that would help them to gain employment and look after themselves. This was true of most of the charitable organisations that provided homes for children.

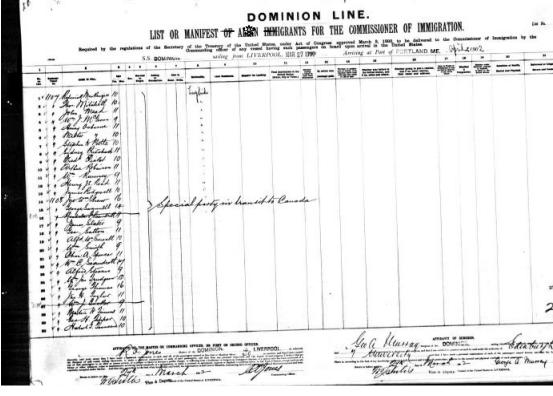
Alfred's Grandfather Thomas Sewell had signed a consent form that allowed Barnardos to send the boy to Canada. During the period 1869 to 1930 over 100,000 children were sent abroad to Canada. Known today as 'home children' many stories have surfaced about the way they were treated. Organisations were paid for each child they sent abroad, people in Canada could apply to have a child.

In the worst cases the children were exploited and abused, treated as little more than slave labour. Some were made to sleep in barns with the livestock and worked all day with little rest. I first discovered that Alfred had gone to Canada with Barnardos



Home children often worked long hours, here we see ploughing a lonely furrow, boys in a workshop, children travelling on their journey from the port by train, two fishing scenes from lake Erie and Home children outside a home in Toronto.

by finding a copy of the passenger list of the ship he sailed on, the SS Dominion of the Dominion Line. This was one of a number of ships that regularly crossed the Atlantic with their cargo of children. The onward journey by train, still one of a large group of more than a hundred to a temporary stay in or around Toronto and then the move to the family they had been allocated to. This was the process experienced by the children with emotions running riot and fears often outweighing hope.



Above is a picture of the passenger manifest showing Alfred Sewell as a member of a Barnardos group. Barnardos own list confirms this although there is an error on the form regarding his age.

Alfred was to stay briefly at an orphanage in Toronto before moving to his first family. In 1902 he was placed with William Armstrong on a farm in Palmyra Ontario. The records show that he was visited once a year by a Barnardos inspector to see how he was and how the situation was progressing. There was also correspondence between visits. The reports of visits to Armstrong's farm indicate that Alfred was good with livestock and horses. Initially things went well and it appears that Alfred was relatively happy there. However something changed toward the end of his stay and he asked to leave, although there is no indication of what caused the change in atmosphere. Alfred made sure that he received the money he was due, and he had accumulated some savings during this time.

In 1907 Alfred moved and was placed with William Thompson on a farm at Waterdown Ontario. Again things went well and he



Photos taken by Alfred Sewell. These were during his stay with Charles Grey where he worked as a fisherman on lake Erie. Note the horse used to pull the boat to the jetty. Pictures on opposite page show a farming scene, the type of fish trap used and a winter scene.

stayed here for 3 years, before moving again in 1910, now aged 20, when he was placed with William Street in Palmyra Ontario. There is nothing in the records to indicate any problems during these times, each of his employers spoke well of him, describing him as hard working, honest and conscientious. It was here that he celebrated his 21st birthday. He had now reached adulthood, yet interestingly Barnardos still kept up their interest with regular correspondence and visits to check on his welfare.

It was 1912 when Alfred moved to the shores of lake Erie. Here



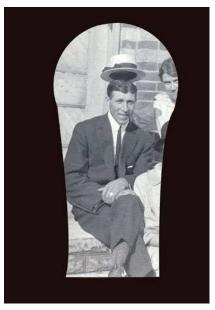
in the St Thomas area near Port Stanley Ontario, he stayed with George Grey who was in the fishing industry. This was quite a change, moving from agriculture to fishing. When I first read that he was a fisherman I wondered what that entailed. Knowing the size of the great lakes I thought he may have worked on something like a trawler or one of the smaller fishing boats that fish in the coastal waters of Britain such as we see in the fishing villages of Devon an Cornwall. I researched fishing in Ontario prior to the First World War, but my biggest discovery came in one of those try it and see moments when I put in a general search for pictures of Alfred Sewell. I was not expecting any results so I was very surprised to see a website listing photos

taken by Alfred Sewell. This was followed by moments of frustration as the website had a section about old photographs of Ontario, which had a sub section of photos believed to have been taken by Alfred Sewell before he left for the First World War. Would you believe it, the section I wanted wouldn't open. Try as I might I couldn't see the pictures. I scrolled down the web page and saw contact details for the web site owner and sent an email explaining the problem in viewing the pictures, I also explained why I was looking for them. Within a couple of days I received a reply from the lady who owned the website with the pictures attached and some more information. Alfred had stayed with the great grand parents of this lady and had given her grandmother a doll when he left for the Canadian Army, which is still kept in the family.

This was the first real indication of any sort of relationships that



George Grey, one of Alfred's employers.



Alfred through the keyhole.



This picture shows the boat used to collect the fish caught in net fish traps in Lake Erie. Alfred is standing on the left of the group.

Alfred Sewell may have had, and it began to add a context to the positive statements I had been reading. However even this period of what seems a happy stable life, entering adulthood was not without its problems. The local newspaper carries the report of Alfred being arrested. The account describes an incident when Alfred picked up a purse dropped unnoticed by a lady and kept it. He was seen by a man who reported it to the Police. As a result Alfred was arrested and appeared in court where he was released having paid back the money, \$30 Canadian, not an inconsiderable sum given that Canadian solidiers in the First World War earned \$1 Canadian a day.

Alfred moved again this time to work again as a fisherman for Matthew Driver, it was from this job that he enlisted. The pictures he took during these years give us a unique opportunity to see the world through his eyes. During this period of his life Alfred applied to join the Foresters, a mutual aid type of organisation, and was also a regular attender at a Methodist Church.

While Alfred was making a life for himself in Canada, there was uncertainty spreading across the world. Political and nationalistic rumblings were building in Europe. In the cauldron of the Balkans nationalist fervour was being translated from words into action as young Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip and his group put into action a plan to assassinate Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand, nephew of the Emperor of Austria-Hungary, and heir presumptive. They carried out the assassination in Sarajevo on the 28th June 1914 and as a result Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. We should remember that while the incident was related specifically to the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the political situation of the time was to see a localised incident mushroom into an international conflict and world war. Following the imperialist expansions of the 19th century, France, Russia and Great Britain began looking for alliances with other countries to safeguard their empires. Britain was still recovering from the Boer wars (in which my great grandfather William Drage served), France was still grieving the loss of Alsace-Lorrainne following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, while Russia was insecure following defeat in the Russo Japanese war of 1905.

After the Napoleonic period that had seen war waged from Spain to the gates of Moscow, war on a continental scale had been carefully avoided through diplomacy. The relationships between the royal houses of Europe often had significant influence, however this was to recede as national interests began to take president. As the map on page 96 illustrates, the international diplomatic alliances developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; during the early lives of Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn; were to plunge the continent into war on a scale previously unknown.

France and Great Britain, historical enemies for hundreds of



years recognised the benefit of reaching agreement over existing empire territorial claims, which led to a series of treaties collectively known as the Entente Cordiale. Great Britain was also negotiating with Germany during the last years of the Victorian reign. However when Edward the VIIth came to the thrown he stopped these negotiations, this further enraged Kaiser Willhelm II. Russia was keen to engage in Diplomatic alliance fearing German expansion into Russian territory.

Russia was also concerned about the Ottoman situation in the Balkans and the potential for Germanic expansion into that area, while also coveting warm water ports bordering the Mediterranean Sea. France, Russia and Great Britain signed the Triple Entente, while Russia also signed treaties with Serbia. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy signed the Triple Alliance while Germany also sent military advisors to Turkey to try and safeguard the Ottoman Empire's influence in the Middle East and the Balkans as a bulwark against Russian expansion.

Italy played safe by signing separate treaties with France and effectively neutralised itself.

So the Triple Alliance (minus Italy) declared war on Serbia, Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary and Germany, which brought France and Great Britain into war with Germany and Austria Hungary. The countries of the Empire would support Great Britain, particularly Canada and Australia.





Diplomatic activity continued throughout June and July 1914 in a series of attempts to avert war. A British Foreign Office telegram from Sir Edward Grey (Foreign Secretary) dated 20 July 1914 to Sir Edward Greschen, British Ambassador to Berlin, indicates that the major powers were very concerned with avoiding open conflict. The hopes were that Austria would not be excessive in the demands placed on Serbia following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand.

By the end of July the situation had deteriorated to the extent that Austria was declaring war on Serbia, and Russia was mobilising forces to support Serbia. Germany and Britain were working to prevent an escalation of hostilities while still supporting their respective allies.

However each of the powers was also taking steps to prepare for war should hostilities commence. A significant part of the diplomatic activity on a daily basis was spent in responding to mobilisations of forces and preparations for war which were evident among the potential combatants.

A telegram from the Embassy in Constantinople on the 29th July indicated that Austrian intentions extended beyond Serbia toward Salonika. This would reinforce Russia's fears of Austro-Germanic expansion. Interestingly this epicentre of the onset of war would be reduced to something of a sideshow once war broke out. An international force under French command would be based in Salonika to prevent Austro-Bulgarian forces invading Greece, my Grandfather William Tout was part of this force.

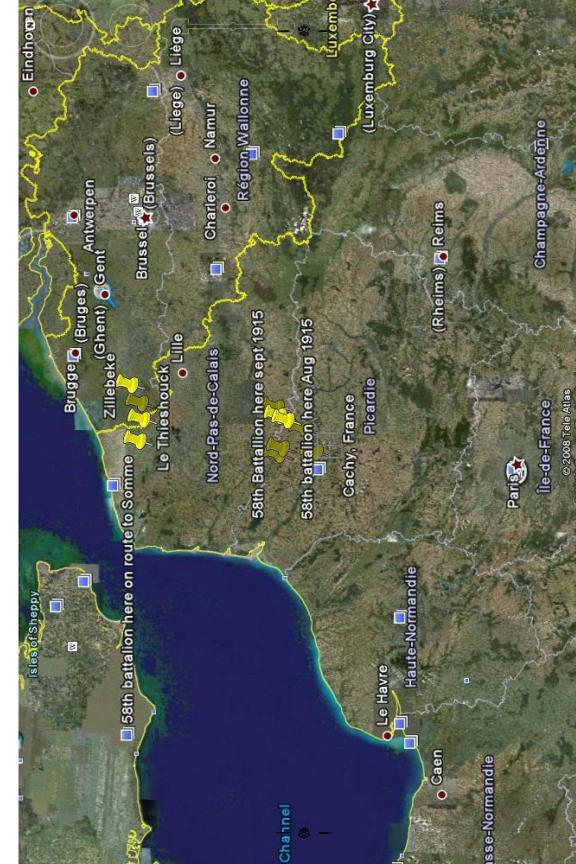
Thus war broke out across Europe, with the fighting mostly on the Western front between Britain, France and the Austro-German forces, and the Eastern front between Austro-German forces and Russia. I remember Dad telling me that there was a quote by Sir Edward Grey describing the outbreak of war, "the lights are going out all over Europe, I doubt we shall see them lit again in our lifetime".

ATTESTATION PAPER.

No./23329 FTRIPLICATE 123329

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS	EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. FURTHER 12332
Date QUESTIONS TO BE PUT	BEFORE ATTESTATION. (ANSWERS.)
Oth O.S. BN., C.E.	- 11 - 11
What is your name? In what Town, Township or Parish, and in	alfed William Sewell
what Country were you born?	Porty pool monnithatier
3. What is the name of your next-of kin?	any Lewell Portet Wal
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?	Tweetro seconder says
5. What is the date of your birth?	June 6 1890
6. What is your Trade or Calling?	
7. Are you married?	March 1
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or revaccinated? 2noculated a w	S. Jes
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?	ao
 Have you ever served in any Military Force? If so, state particulars of former Service. 	Re
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?	Jes
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the	Fes
Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionally Force?	allowd W Lewell (Signature of Man.)
	Dalis First (Signature of Witness.)
	E BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.
between Great Britain and Germany should that we the termination of that war provided His Majesty discharged.	ar last longer than one year, and for six months after should so long require my services, or until legally
	1 8 +
Date 7/9/(5 191	(Signature of Witness)
OATH TO BE TAKEN BY	Y MAN ON ATTESTATION.
bear true Alfgiance to His Majesty King George in duty bould honestly and faithfully defend His M Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and o and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So	the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as lajesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and bey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors,
ω	fred W-Sewell (Signature of Recruit)
Date / /9/15	Carling Lient (Signature of Witness)
CERTIFICATE	OF MAGISTRATE.
questions he would be liable to be punished as provi The above questions were then read to the Ro	ne that if he made any false answer to any of the above ided in the Army Act. ecruit in my presence, question, and that his answer to each question has been as made and signed the deplaration and taken the oath
before me, at SMAM this	The day of September 1915.
Mylon	(Signature of Justice)
I certify that the above is a true copy of the	Attestation of the above named Recruit.
	Ewilan Lieut) (Approving Officer)
M. F. W. 23. 200 M7-:5.	M. G. Section

Apparent Age years months.	Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital
to be determined according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.)	peculiarities or previous disease.
	(Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will, unless the man acknowledges to any previous service, attach a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer).
	Approving Officer).
leight 5 ft 7/4/ins.	
	deal
Girth when fully expanded	1 tank
Range of expansion J ins.	Mandeclong
Complexion Hair	appendectory dear
Plus	
tyes Wull	
Inir N. DIOWN	8 9
Church of England X	29
Presbyterian	
	iii k
3 · §)	9
o i (Baptist or Congregationalist	3.2
Other Protestants (Denomination to be stated.)	
Roman Catholic	
Jewish	
I have examined the above-named Recruit	EDICAL EXAMINATION. t and find that he does not present any of the causes
I have examined the above-named Recruit f rejection specified in the Regulations for Army 1	t and find that he does not present any of the causes Medical Services.
I have examined the above-named Recruit f rejection specified in the Regulations for Army I He can see at the required distance with e	t and find that he does not present any of the causes Medical Services.
I have examined the above-named Recruit of rejection specified in the Regulations for Army I He can see at the required distance with a ree use of his joints and limbs, and he declares the	t and find that he does not present any of the causes Medical Services.
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The map on page 101 shows the positions of the 58th Battalion after Alfred joined them in France. The pictures above are: SS Lapland the ship he sailed on as a troop transport; Canadian soldiers marching on Salisbury plain and the camp at Bramsholt; Canadian soldiers marching in France; the trenches at Zellenbeke in Belgium where the battalion was before moving to the Somme.

Across the world men were volunteering to join the armed forces as countries mobilised for war. The empires of the major powers encompassed Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean. Canada, Australia and New Zealand recruited men to serve in Europe. Many of the service records for Great Britain were destroyed or damaged by German bombing during the Second World War. Canadian records survive largely intact. The

illustrations on pages 99 and 100 show the Attestation or signing up papers for Alfred Sewell. We see here he lists his sister Amy as next of kin and gives an address in Tiverton England. This proves knowledge, through communication, of her whereabouts since at the time of his leaving Pontypool she was leaving for Bristol. I believe that Mr Wintle and Barnardos had some hand in helping the siblings keep in touch with each other, as so many families in similar situations lost contact with each other even when in the same country.

The Barnardos inspector described Alfred's enlistment as "this young man saw fit to answer his country's call". A somewhat poetic description that was applied across the empire to young men who, for a variety of reasons, joined the armed forces.

In Britain vast numbers of volunteers came forward during the first months of the war. The regular standing army including reserves was 710,000 but only 247,432 were regular troops, by 1918 it had grown to 4,000,000 with 673,375 killed or missing and 1,643,369 wounded. Kitchener, the famous general and Minister for War developed a system for turning these civilians into soldiers. However it was to be in 1916 that many were to have a significant impact on the war.

In Canada the regular standing army was similarly small made up of 3,100 regulars plus 75,000 militia (reserves), however during the course of the war some 619,636 enlisted. The Canadian Expeditionary Force was brought into being with the First Canadian Division sent to Europe in October 1914. Canadian volunteers were formed into battalions along similar lines to Britain, each battalion comprising around 1,000 men. A number of battalions had reserve numbers attached to them and were expanded, others were formed from scratch. On enlisting men were often assigned to a local battalion but could be moved to another unit. As an example my Grandfather, William Tout and his brother in law Harry Osmond, both in Devon were assigned to the Devonshire Regiment, Harry to the 9th battalion,

William to the 10th. My other Grandfather, Charlie Stevens, also in Devon, was assigned to the Royal West Kent Regiment.

Training was standardised and for the early years of the war followed historical patterns, eventually changing to include training for the trench warfare that had developed. Trench systems were set up in Britain for training purposes and also in the rear areas behind the lines in France. The first part of training after enlistment was to build fitness and an immediate unquestioning response to orders. Keeping ones self and equipment clean were essential as were how to live in the field. Some Canadian soldiers described their experiences in diaries and letters. One describes arriving at a new camp and putting up tents and sharing the tent with a number of others, all sleeping with their feet to the pole. This was standard throughout the war where tents were used. Seemingly endless hours of drill, marches and fatigues or work duties were designed not just to build discipline but also stamina. When they got to France they would march from place to place unless provided with rail transport for long distances.

There was no room for being shy in the forces and any personal reserve was soon stripped (literally) away. Toilet facilities often consisted of no more than a pole suspended over a latrine trench, something still used in the Second World War as described by Dad's cousin 'uncle Ken' in his books. Similarly baths and showers were often communal and certainly were once they got to France.

Once the basics had been mastered, recruits were sometimes assigned to specialist roles, in Alfred's case he was part of a machine gun team. This would have comprised 4-6 men, each trained to set up and fire the gun but also to support the team. Carrying the weapon parts and ammunition on the march, fetching and carrying ammunition, moving the weapon and setting up were part of the routine.

Most Canadian troops seemed to be sent to camps on Salisbury Plain, Bramsholt was a common destination. The chalk of the plain was to be good experience for the landscape of the Somme and many letters home during 1915 referred to continual rain which turned the camps into seas of mud which at times came over boot tops. The only time there was any degree of relaxation on keeping kit clean was time spent at the front line so this mud would have to be constantly cleaned from kit.

Long route marches and long periods without food were not uncommon, particularly on first arrival, one letter home describes a 15 hour march to the camp arriving at 10pm with no food.

The Canadian forces were kept together as units with the whole being formed into four Divisions. Not all battalions saw service, some were stripped down to provide replacements. At the camps in Britain or France these units were gradually reduced in strength until what remained was transferred completely to a new battalion. One soldier described the frustration of constantly seeing friends and others leaving in a draft to join a new battalion while he was left behind until it was his turn to go. By that time he was more relieved at not being left behind than afraid of what he was going into. This kind of thinking was due primarily to concern at being thought to be trying to 'work a ticket' and not go to the front.

Alfred Sewell went to France in May 1916 with the 70th Battalion. It is entirely probable, indeed almost certain, that before leaving for France he had at least one period of leave during which he was able to visit family and given the accuracy of the information in his papers regarding his sisters I believe that he saw them during this time. Amy had applied to become an Officer in the Salvation Army, it was one of few denominations at the time to have women ministers. As such she would have little need or desire for any money that Alfred would



Colt machine gun of the type used by Alfred Sewell.

leave in a will. Gwendolyn was by this time living in Cardiff working in a munitions factory and she became Alfred's heir. The two sisters were still in contact at this time and I believe that they were still in close contact with Alfred when he went to France.

It was from a camp in France that Alfred with a number of others was assigned to the 58th Battalion, part of the 9th Canadian Brigade and Canadian 3rd Division. The Canadian Army used its own equipment, while the British Army used the Lee Enfield rifle the Canadians used the Ross rifle. However experience soon showed that the Ross was particularly unsuitable for trench warfare, constantly jamming and misfiring and so it was replaced with the Lee Enfield. The Canadians also used a different machine gun, the American manufactured Colt. This was nicknamed the potato digger as its lever action was liable to dig into the ground when fired from a low position. Although it was eventually replaced by the Vickers and Lewis guns, it was still used in late 1916, firing 400 rounds per minute.

When in the trenches the machine guns and gunners of both sides were targets for enemy snipers and trench mortars, as a result the machine guns would be regularly moved to new positions in an attempt to avoid casualities.

Battalions in the front line suffered casualties, men were killed or severely wounded and unable to fight. When the battalion was taken out of the front line they would receive replacements for the men they had lost. Around the 20th June 1916 the 58th Battalion came out of the front line and received replacements of 151 other ranks (non officers were referred to in records as other ranks, (ORs). In official war diaries only officers were referred to by name unless a particular incident was noted. Among the 151 ORs joining the 58th Battalion was Alfred. The first few days were spent in integrating the new men into the battalion. Accounts of soldiers experience of the time show that this was sometimes a difficult period. The 'old sweats', the soldiers who had just come out of the line tended to keep together. They had been through experiences that the new replacements had not. They had been shelled, fought with the enemy, carried out tasks under fire, seen pals killed alongside them or horribly wounded. They had shut down most thoughts and feelings except those related to day to day survival. Now they readjusted to life outside the front line. Often they just wanted 'a bon time'. Local estaminets would serve wine of various and sometimes questionable vintage. There would be bath parades when companies would march to the baths houses and strip for showers while their clothes were deloused.

Some would receive parcels of food from home and these would be shared, food parcels intended for those who had been killed or badly wounded would be shared among their comrades.

The use of the word comrades is important as this was how they often described themselves. Some men described friendships, others comradeship, having shared experiences and thoughts and emotions, men who would not have been friends in civilian life had that real sense of comradeship that active service can bring. It would not be until they had shared the rigours and experiences of the front line that the new replacements would begin to fully integrate into the battalion.



Top left a Canadian soldier watches from a trench, top right and centre, typical scenes of devastation in the trenches, bottom pictures, soldiers marching along a trench and back from the front.

As a machine gunner Alfred was required to fit into a smaller group and among this group was Charlie McEwen who was also part of the Colt machine gun team, and quite probably one of Alfred's mates.

After a short time of drill, parades, gas helmet training etc. and an inspection parade by General Byng, commander of the Canadian forces, the battalion went back into the line at Zellenbeke. This was part of the Ypres sector in Belgium. The front line of trenches stretched from the English Channel to

the Swiss border. At Ypres it had a sector that protruded into the German lines and was known as the Ypres Salient.

British trenches in this section were observed by the Germans on three sides. The area often came under heavy shelling and had been the scene of some fierce fighting as the Germans sought to push the British back. The Canadians had been moved to this part of the front to relieve battalions that were being sent to the Somme sector as part of the build up for the summer offensive. Here the Canadians were involved themselves in fighting at Mont St Eloi (near Ypres) and Mount Sorrell. Among the war diary entries of the Battalion at this time are descriptions of two experiences that were a regular part of life in the line, and that proved to be a bloody introduction to life at the front. On the 6th July the battalion was subjected to heavy artillery bombardment first at around noon and the second later in the evening. In the first round of selling German guns fired some 300 5.9 inch high explosive and 77mm shrapnel shells onto the battalion positions. Records show that there were four casualties from this first attack: three men were wounded and one suffered from shell shock. There were no casualties from the second artillery attack but the headquarters kitchen was damaged. The following day there was further shelling resulting in three killed and five wounded.

On the 8th the battalion took part in a trench raid. These raids were designed to gather information about the enemy facing the unit, gauging strength and defence capabilities often in preparation for a major attack. On this particular occasion one party found the trench opposite empty while the second party found the trench heavily defended. No casualties were suffered on this occasion. By the end of July the battalion had suffered a number of losses, 10 killed, 39 wounded and 2 shell shocked.

Literally millions of shells were fired during the course of the war, many were duds that failed to explode. Even today almost 100 years later unexploded shells are being discovered in



Top left shell burst, top right gas mask parade, centre left stretcher bearers, bottom left Canadian trench mortar or 'Stokes Gun', bottom right one of the m ost familiar images of the First World War, carrying a wounded comrade from the trenches.

farmland, while some areas such as Vimy ridge have so many unexploded shells in a small area that the areas are left and marked as unsafe and dangerous.

Soldiers could distinguish between different types of shells by the sound they made and if they were exerienced could also tell roughly where the shells would fall . Among those most feared were the shells fired by trench mortars. These were sometimes described as sausages due to the shape of the shell being somewhat similar to a German sausage. These shells would tumble end over end as they fell making a distinctive wooooh wooooh sound as the shell tumbled end over end through the air. Because they were fired from short range and it was so difficult to predict the target, they were much feared by troops and caused many casualties. By the time the soldiers had realised the mortar shell was going to land by them it was too late to take effective cover. Gas shells were the most horrendous of all the weapons used, causing burns, choking, blindness and death. Gas masks were clumsy and could almost suffocate the wearer. Such was the danger of gas attacks that regular drills were carried out. Even horses were provided with gas masks as the picture below shows.

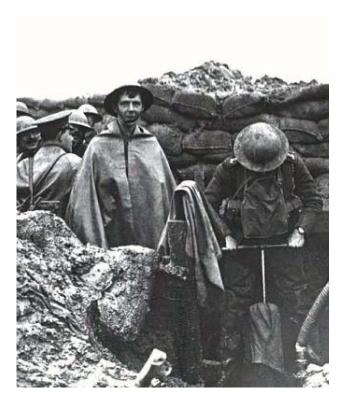
Below: Map of Ypres Salient; Canadian machine gunners in gas masks, chlorine gas on the battlefield, horse wearing gas mask.









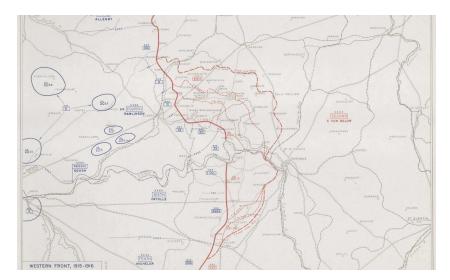


Pumping out the trench, one of many regular tasks to keep the trenches in good condition.

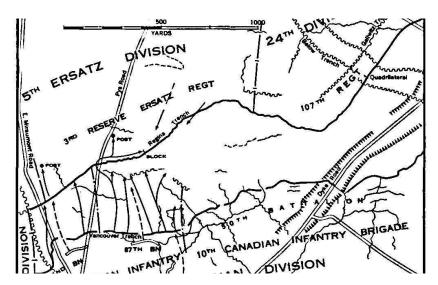
Gas attacks were not only aimed at the front line troops, reserve areas were also targeted and on the night of the 29th August the battalion was put on alert for a gas attack while in reserve. It was around this time that the battalion had its Ross rifles replaced by Lee Enfields. There is no record of complaint from the battalion about its Ross rifles, but there is a record of a private from the 31st Battalion finding a Lee Enfield in front of his trench, it had been there for some 10 months after its previous owner had been killed. Within half an hour it had been cleaned up and was firing, thus emphasising its superiority as a weapon over the Ross.

The 19th of August shows the range of experiences soldiers like Alfred often endured in the front line. The battalion had again been moved forward after four days in reserve, during which they undertook supply work to the front line as well as training. The British and Germans both carried out tunnelling operations at this time, the British often using miners to dig tunnels underneath the German lines. These tunnels were then filled with explosive under the enemy trench and exploded. Tunnelers from opposing armies would try and dig alongside the enemy tunnel and explode 'camouflets' where the enemy were digging with the aim of bringing down the tunnel and killing or trapping those inside. At times the aim was to break through into the enemy tunnels and use them as a means of gaining access to the enemy trenches. Fierce fighting took place underground and soldiers detested this part of the fighting more than any other.

At 9.45am on the 19th the enemy exploded a charge under the battalion's trench, causing injuries among the tunnelling company and B Company of the battalion was put on alert in anticipation of an enemy attack through the tunnel. At 2.20pm the enemy fired trench mortars at the battalion's forward and support trenches. The following day there was a gas alert, the diary records a quiet morning and afternoon, yet also records 9 killed, 16 wounded and four disabled with shell shock. battalion then moved into the reserve or support area for a few days, providing work parties carrying supplies to the front line trenches before moving to the rear areas at Popperinge. Popperinge was the home of Toc-H, set up by the Reverend Phillip 'Tubby' Clayton who saw the potential of setting up a soldiers club in a house in the town. The idea was that it would be a home from home and open to all regardless of rank. Indeed a sign was hung by the door which read "All rank abandon, ye who enter here". Thousands of soldiers visited Toc-H (phonetic for Talbot House in signallers terms) and it is very likely that Alfred was among them. During this period out of the line the battalion was training for an attack and this was obviously the



Trench map showing the Somme front 1916 with advances of the front line.



Section of the Somme front between Courcelette and Miramont, records show the 58th Battalion had been in the sector between the two roads on the left.

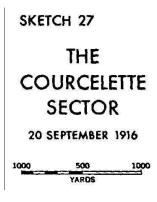


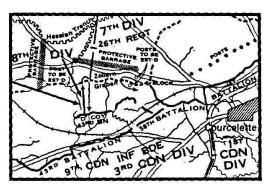
Top left German trench mortar, Top & Centre right original trench signs, Centre left looking back to Courcelette from Canadian lines, Bottom left looking up to German lines, Bottom right, looking from German lines to Canadian position.

preparation for a major attack. The Canadian divisions were to move together to the Somme where the battle had commenced at the beginning of July. What is often forgotten is that the battle continued into November. It was the first time that Canadian divisions were used as a complete force and also saw the first use of tanks. The battalion moved to their first base near Pozzieres by marching, trucks and rail. The rail transfer was in cattle trucks, 36 soldiers to a truck. First hand accounts describe the

awful conditions of these trucks, the fortunate or clever managed to sit by the door, although cold it was better than the stifling heat and intense stench suffered by those crammed into the corners. There was no room in the railcars to lay down and progress was often interrupted by shelling.

On reaching their destination the battalion were moved into the line as part of a series of attacks to take the Zollern Graben Trench at Courcelette. This area contained a number of strong defensive positions and heavy fighting took place with many casualties. Part of the work of the battalion was to prepare the 'jumping off trench' from where the attack was launched. This included digging and building the infrastructure of the trenches, often at night under fire from the enemy. This was heavy work, digging out, filling and stacking sand bags, making the fire step from which the troops would climb out of the trench, lining the floor of the trench with duck boards and trying to make minimal noise to avoid giving the activity away to the enemy.





Once the attack was launched the fighting was so intense that battalions were often moved into and out of the line for shorter periods of time than usual. The first attack was launched on the 6th September, a clear day with a wind from the northwest. It was not until 12.10 pm that they received the order to move up toward the front line, but there was to be a further wait until 4.30 pm when the battalion was ordered to provide support to two other battalions, the 52nd and the 60th who were to attack through the Zollern Redoubt. This was an intense period of waiting. Alfred and his comrades had been training for an attack and so knew they were to take part in fighting. The dawn was the traditional time for such an attack and vet it was not until mid day that they made their first move and not until late afternoon that they moved to their fighting sector. Nerves will have been stretched as the noise of artillery and small arms fire resounded all around them. This was added to by the noise of the tanks used here for the very first time. There will have been a great deal of interest in this new weapon which carried so much hope.

The attack failed to reach its objective and so there was more digging as a new line was created just outside Courcelette.

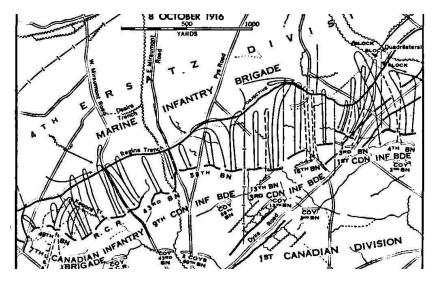
There was another move into the front line trench and the enemy responded with heavy shelling.

Fighting around Courcelette continued and the Canadians made gradual if slow progress, the advances being measured in hundreds of yards such was the depth and strength of the German defences. At the beginning of October the battalion was again ordered into the front line in the area of the East Miramont Road as the Canadians prepared to assault Regina trench, the longest German defensive position on the Western Front. The preparation for this attack was anything but ideal with the battalion being moved into and out of the front line on an almost daily basis for three or four days. This meant carrying kit and equipment, setting up, packing up and setting up again. When not in the front line trench and not on working parties in the support area, Alfred and the others would have been cleaning

their weapons and trying to exterminate lice, an enemy to both sides. Running a candle or match up the seams of clothing to try and kill the eggs was one of the most common methods. Rats were also a constant presence, feeding on the many corpses that littered the battlefield. Men would often just swat them away as the rats ran across their bodies. In the front line men like Alfred would close down into the situation they found themselves confronting. There was no room for emotion or thought in the front line, survival of self and others was uppermost until a spell in the support trenches came around.

On October the 7th the battalion returned once more to the front line trenches, covering a sector of around 600 yards either side of the Courcelette to Miramont Road. Three companies were in the forward trenches, the 4th was in 'Death Valley' as support. The Lewis guns, being lighter, were used by the attacking force, the Colt gun that Alfred used was kept in support. On a day described as fair and warm the attack started at 4.50am. There was fierce fighting and two sections actually got into the enemy trench and held a section for some time before being forced to withdraw. They had run out of ammunition and supplies could not be brought to them because of the ferocity of the German defense. Casualties were high including two Lewis gun crews. The Germans followed up with attacks on the Canadian lines and Alfred was part of a spirited defence that beat off the Germans. The Colt machine gun was an important part of the defence of the battalion trenches, making it a prime target for trench mortars and artillery. Such were the losses suffered by the battalion and the 9th Infantry Brigade to which it belonged, that it was moved back to rear areas and subsequently to a new area near Vimy Ridge.

While researching Alfred's time in the First World War, I found the war diaries of the 58th Battalion which gave a day to day account of the events he experienced. I also found trench maps and sketches which showed the locations of trenches and battles. I was able to use Google Maps to look up these references and as



Sketch Map of the Canadian attack on Regina trench 8th October 1916. Note the position of the 58th Battalion across the Pys Road.



The area of Courcelette, Miramont and Pys as it is today.

a result find some locations on today's maps. So when I had a holiday in France in 2010, I was able to navigate from Courcelette to the area where the 58th Battalion was in trenches and attacked Regina trench. Some of the pictures I took on that day are included on page 115. There were some workmen mending the small country road leading from Courcelette to Pys and the road was blocked. I was certain that I was in the right place, so clutching my printed copy of sketch 33, as shown on page 119, I asked them if they could confirm that I was indeed in the right place. They were very interested in the map, perhaps they had been warned about unexploded shells, nonetheless the confirmed my ideas, and so I was able to stand and survey the quiet agricultural scene around me and imagine what it may have been like on the 8th of October almost 100 years before. The picture on page 121 shows a trench map overlaid onto a Google Map image.

Casualties during this month were almost a half of those suffered up to that time, with 37 killed, 165 wounded, 5 suffering from shell shock and 110 missing.

During mid to the end of October Alfred and the men of the 58th Battalion were moved toward the front at Vimy Ridge. They stayed in a number of towns and villages around St Eloi where Battalion HQ was eventually established. On the 31st of October the battalion was again put into the front line. The build up of the Canadian Divisions was to continue over the coming weeks as part of the preparation for a major assault on the ridge in April the following year. After the experience of the Somme the Vimy Ridge sector was relatively quiet.

They moved into the front line trenches in heavy rain, managing to complete the changeover by 9.45pm.

On a rainy and windy day on the 1st of November the temperature turned cooler. A patrol was sent out to inspect the barbed wire defences which were in poor shape. Enemy trench mortars were active and two soldiers were wounded. The enemy trench mortars continued their shelling the following day which





Top Left ruins of the abbey Mont St Eloi, Top right looking back to St Eloi from Vimy ridge, Centre left support trenches today, Centre right preserved front line trench. Bottom left view from front line trench to German front line trench only 70 yards away, Bottom right the remains of a German trench mortar. was also wet and squally, there were 5 soldiers wounded, 1 killed and 1 died of wounds.

The diary entry for the 3rd November 1916 records more enemy trench mortar shelling which 'badly smashed up the trenches of the right and left companies'. 'The Colt Gun was hit during the night and blown to pieces'. Two soldiers were killed, one was Alfred Sewell, the other was Charlie McKewan. Page 123 is a copy of the war diary for November 1916.

MY. PAL. OF. YESTERDAY. (DEDICATED TO LANCE CORPORAL MODDWORTH, OF MONAREAL . KILLED IN ACKLON JANUARY IGIT AT YIMY RIDGE FRANCE) BY. PRE. HARRY MORRIS 12th BRIGADE MENCH MORKAR BANGERY. PADDARS TO LATEM 21 BORNEY LHO OF WHOM I WAS SO FOND ALAS! HEIS NO LONGER WITH ME BUT OUT IN THE GREAT REYORD. DUSK, AND THE PRENCH MORKAR GUNS ARE BOOKING HARK SO NERVE-WRECKING DUEL GRASH! A HUN SHELL GERS MY COMRAGE GOD, BUTTHIS WAR IS CRUEL. BACK OF KNE RIDGE AK YIMY, LIES BUE OF FAIR CANADA'S SONS AND THERE HEIS PEACEFULLY SLEEPING UNDISKURGED BY THE YOICE OF GUNS. 1906! HE WAS SOMEBOOKS LOVED DIE DAADE OID ZOARD BIL BRANGMENDE

SOMEBOOY'S FOND HOPES ARE SHAMERED. SOMEWHERE A BROKEN HEART.

LIKE A. MAN. HE ANSWERED THE CALL OF HIS CONTRY
HE FOUGHT THE GOODFIGHT AND IS GONE
AND ALTHO, HE IS SLEEPING AT VIMY.
HIS SOUL UP ABOVE, STILL MARCHES ON.

Pages 124 and 125 show a poem written for a comrade killed at Vimy ridge, it shows something of the comradeship shared by the solidiers in the trenches. I was able to visit Vimy Ridge where the Canadians have an information team permanently stationed. Talking to the historian there and looking at the maps of the time we discovered that the trenches I was able to see (see page 122) were those that the 58th Battalion had been in at the beginning of November 1916. Once again I was able to walk in Alfred's footsteps and 94 years after his death, to see where he had died.

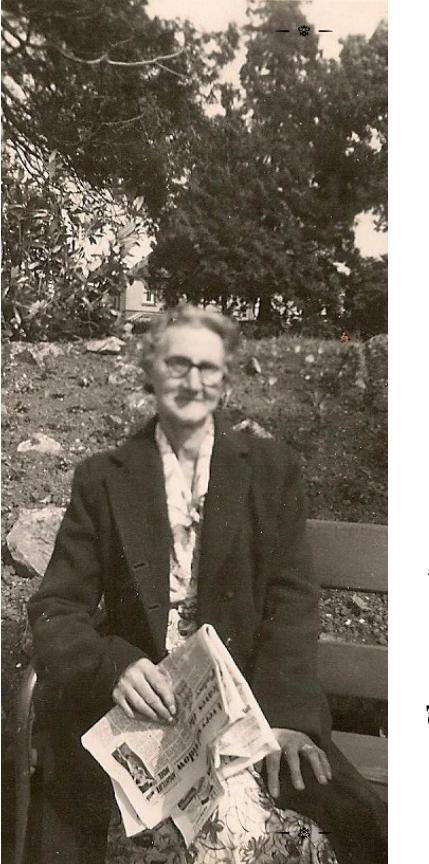
A few days after he was killed, Amy and Gwendolyn received the news, by telegram, that Alfred had been killed. I think that as they read the words on the telegram a light went out in their hearts.



Ecoivres Military Cemetery Mont St Eloi near Vimy Ridge



Laid to rest, alongside to the right is the grave of Charlie McKewan



Chapter 4 Amy



Print of the Muller Orphanage complex, now in the middle of a built up area. Amy was in House 3 to the right of the building as we look at it.

While Alfred was on the way to London to the Barnardos orphanage, his sister Amy was to travel a shorter distance to Bristol. Thomas Wintle had approached the Muller Foundation and arranged for Amy to be taken in by the Bristol orphanage (see letter page 145).

Originally it was intended that Gwendolyn would also be sent to the orphanage with Amy. This proved difficult as Gwendolyn was in the care of a nurse who had left the district. Attempts to find them by a number of enquiries proved fruitless, so it was decided to send Amy on her own while further enquiries were made to find Gwendolyn.

Amy was taken to Bristol by train, probably the first time she had been on one, and will have travelled to Montpelier station in Bristol. This will have been followed by a short journey to the



House 3 as it is today, now converted to luxury flats.

outskirts of the city (as it was then), to the hill above Ashley Down and over looking the city.

The Muller orphanage was a huge complex of buildings by this time, with five separate houses each accommodating around 400 children.

George Muller was a German born Christian Evangelist who settled in England, spending most of his time in Bristol. The orphanages were part of his work and were funded entirely through donations. Muller provided an education for every child and sought to find employment for every child that left the orphanage. Such was the commitment to education that he employed a schools inspector to make sure that standards were maintained. This pioneering and forward thinking approach was to be beneficial not just to the children themselves, but to generations. subsequent Rather than just providing accommodation for the children under his care, he sought to



The Dining Hall at Ashley Down

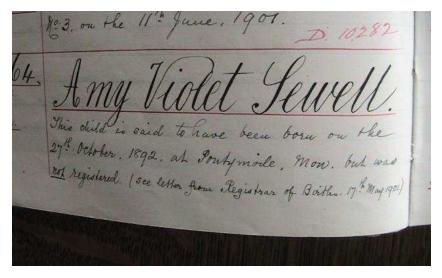
provide a more secure future. I can't help but think that there is much that we can learn from his approach when I see young people discharged from care homes today when they reach 16 to 18, often ill equipped to cope and unable to claim full housing cost and left in a vulnerable position, often unable to earn a living.

I also wonder how Amy felt during that time, as she moved to Bristol and began her life at the orphanage. She was eight years old and had been living with her grandfather and two aunts for almost a year since her father had died the year before. In the three to four years before that she had lived in the workhouse for two years and then lived in a number of lodging houses with her father and siblings as he moved around the area looking for work while at the same time finding someone to look after the children. She arrived in Bristol on the 1st June 1901 accompanied by Thomas Wintle. Was she fearful, did she feel abandoned, was she afraid of this man who was taking her away from her family such as she knew it? Was there some sense of relief and did she feel unwanted by the two aunts who had been at home with her while her grandfather worked? There must have been a real fear that she would never see her brother and sister again.

I think of myself at eight years of age, happy at school, out playing with friends everyday, feeling at the heart of a loving family with this same Amy now 'just' Granny doing so much to show me I was loved and cared for. What a polar contrast to her own life at the same age.

My sister Tarnia told me of a Christmas 'just' Granny (Amy) described to her which I think may have been when she was at her Grandfather's house with her two aunts Laura and Alice. We should remember that they were described as "simple minded" a condition that can exhibit a childlike cruelty. Laura was also "a hunchback" and had born an illegitimate child said to be as a result of some form of rape. The home was deemed by Mr Wintle as unsuitable for young children and he wanted Amy and Alfred out of there as soon as he could arrange it (see page 145) although this was delayed by some months while the search for Gwendolyn was carried out. Tarnia remembers this particular incident as taking place in Bournemouth and Amy did stay with her Aunt Gertrude, where her Grandfather Thomas and Aunt Laura also lived for a while.

Amy described a Christmas in her childhood when she hung up her stocking on Christmas Eve and came down on Christmas morning, I imagine as excited as any eight year old to see what present had been left; not expecting large presents, (no 'i-pods' or



Photograph of the admission register

Fathor's Name.	Eruest Sewell.
-Occupation.	Engine Fitter.
Mother's Maure.	Kellie Sewell, formerly Edwards.
Marr of Farents.	
	the Parish of Pantey, in the bounty of
	Monworth.
Beath of Father	
	Thostrey: "Accidentally killed by fallen thee.
	and registered (after boroner's August) or
THE REAL PROPERTY.	the 5th September. 1900, in the Sub. District
Moule of he as	of Usk, in the bounty of Monworth.

This entry gives the detail of where Ernest Sewell died

Tell Laborator	of MSR, in the bounty of Monwouth.
Death of mother.	"The mother went away (supposed to america)
	about 5 years ago, and have not seen
	heard of suice" J.B. See letter from 15
THE ROLL	Tho! M. wintle , (the Applicant) dated 9. Mont 1900
Brought to	the Orphan House by the Applicant.
Relative v.	Tho Sewell, (G. Father) Suny Back Rd. Griffiths Town.
	Laura Sewell. (tent) " " " " "
	Laura Sewell. (Aut) " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "
	Mrs. M. Stone. (.) Bryagwyn Toad. Newport. Mon.
	Mr. M. a. Jaylor (") George St. Pouty pool. mow.
Applicant.	Mr Thos. M. Wiitle, Bethaug, Poutymoile, Intypool,

Confirmation that Mr Wintle brought Amy to the orphan house

thill lived before coming to the orphan Nouve in the
Windertakings Signed by the first four named Relatives,
The Applicant, and the blenk to the
that admitted who the north Wing of Orphan Fouse. 123.
10.265 d
200 Jarid Chas Alexander &
Low 4th January 1000 The Wall the

The record that shows Amy lived in House 3 north wing



House 3 at around the time Amy was there, view toward the north wing

'i-phones' or equally expensive gifts that children want today). I wonder if she was hoping for, a candy cane, a doll perhaps, maybe a book? Had it been snowing to add that special almost magical atmosphere of a white Christmas? Was Alfred there, or Gwendolyn to share this special day? I think not as she didn't mention them. I suspect that it was rather cold and I imagine that the excitement quickly turned to despair. There in her stocking was some coal and some sticks with a note that said "you're a big girl now, light the fire".

The cruelty of this stark statement is heightened when understood in the context of her past. I cannot really remember a Christmas before I was 5 or six years old, although I do have some memories that are earlier than that age. I wonder what Amy's memories were, Christmas in the workhouse, cold, damp and bleak, helping with cleaning or fetching and carrying? To have hope for something different, something special and then



The Nursery where children were kept to age 5

have it dashed deliberately would break many children of her young age.

What is certain from Amy's own story told to Tarnia is that she spent time in Bournemouth and this is confirmed by the records.

The Muller orphanage was run very carefully. Children had to be in good health in order to be admitted. Among the many documents that had to be signed to admit a child was an undertaking by the family or institution responsible for the child to take them back if they fell ill. TB, that killer of the victorian period was a particular fear, perhaps because so many of the children came from poor housing. The picture on page 133 shows the names of Amy's relatives who agreed to take her back if she had to be discharged from the orphanage.

The children had different experiences, some record stories of harsh treatment while others seem to look back on their time



Christmas in House 3



Picnic on Ashley Down

Samuted	11th June, 1901, under Nº 10264.
	0. Budman having certified that
	she was not strong enough to be passed
	on to the Domestie Department, she was
Sent	26 K Oct 1907 to Mr St. Firth. Agent of
	the National Telephone Co. as Twenton,
A SHOP	to aid in caring for his children, and
	to be trained in the working of the Telephone
A SECRETARIAN	1 believer

Muller record showing Amy not fit enough for domestic work and sent to Mr Firth of the National Telephone Company

with some degree of fondness. Amy didn't speak of her time at the orphanage so it is difficult to gauge her view of her time there. Certainly the letter that she wrote (see page 138) while staying with her Aunt Gertrude seems to indicate that she had some positive experience at the orphanage.

Children were taught a range of practical skills as well as receiving an education. All children were taught to knit and some report that they had to knit a pair of socks on their first day. Among the sounds of of my childhood is an almost constant clicking of knitting needles. The sound of knitting needles has been replaced today by the sound of mobile phone keys clicking as people text almost ad nauseam. Knitting is something that has almost been lost by my own generation, cheap imported clothes mean that it is quicker, easier and more convenient to go and buy a jumper or cardigan than knit one. Amy loved knitting and it was one of those skills that became instinctive, so that she could, like others, watch the television, have a conversation and knit all at the same time.

If the picture of 'just' Granny sitting in her chair knitting is an enduring memory and a typical one of her, another is of her reading. As a small child I would sit on her lap and listen intently as she read me stories. I think this brought her as much pleasure as it did me.

Amy loved to read and I'm sure that this love was brought about by the education she received at the orphanage. I wonder if her grandfather taught her to read and do her sums while she stayed at his house? Did she sit on his knee while he read to her, as I had sat on hers? I would like to think so but I have no indication of this. Certainly her letter to the orphanage speaks of her desire to have books sent to her. This little cameo provides us with an interesting insight. Once again Amy is living in a different place, this time with her aunt in Bournemouth, how could this be since she was placed in the care of the orphanage by Mr Wintle? It would seem that the few, short years of hardship, moving around

Fine Stolm
Fortescue Road

Bournemouth
Dear Dec 1904

my dear Gir

I now write

to wish you a very happy Christmas and a bright new year & I must thank you very much for the six stamps you so kindly sent me sam very glad to tell you that I have not had any cough & when I am weighted again

that I take Cod lever-oil you please to ask miss I danesay they will be Durn if she will please very glad to tell you that shat she was heeping I like Bournemouth for me while I was there very much and 3 go Dear Sir Will you kindly Christmas 3 or 4 times Teachers & Guilo & accept out a great deal. Thave remember one to all the you fell the directors that I like them, will aunty will write and play- mates that I play tell you Dear Liv Will a Sam glad to sell you been down to see Father Firectors a North wing pleased to know. Tam send me the books and the shops are all the same yourself I am your Truth dressed for christmas. I have found some poorer housing and living in the workhouse had taken its toll on her frail young body. She had contracted TB, otherwise known as consumption.

One of my earlier memories is of our family doctor, Dr Pembury telling me to look out of the window in his surgery to see the birds in the garden. Suddenly there was a sharp pain in my arm and then he was dabbing antiseptic on it with a cotton wool swab. I had just been vaccinated, and it really hurt, making me cry out with pain and anger "What did you do that for?" I was soon pacified with a sweet 'for being a good boy'. Other vaccinations were to follow including one for polio taken by soaking the vaccine onto a lump of sugar, no problem with that one then.

It is very easy to forget what an impact these diseases can have on communities. Because the young were most susceptible these killer diseases were a significant contributory factor in infant mortality. Diptherea, whooping cough, measles and others were accounting for a high proportion of deaths among the young, even during the between wars years of the 1920s and 1930s when my parents were children. South Wales and Monmouthshire experienced higher than national average levels of death from these diseases even up to the 1930s.

Among all the vaccinations and tests that we had in childhood, the one that seemed almost barbaric at the time was the heaf test or daisy prick. This test had a monster syringe with 10 or 12 needles which were held over a flame between being used on each child. The test had the needles puncture the skin and then after a while a raised circle would appear on the arm. The purpose of this test was to identify if you had a natural immunity to TB. If not there was another vaccination at age 12.

When Amy was a child these vaccinations were not available. There were a number of potentially lethal diseases, with Cholera and TB among the killers of the age. Cholera was spread by poor sanitation so the massive developments to improve public

sanitation and cleanliness of the Victorian era was a public health response to eradicate a killer disease. Cholera outbreaks were still common during Amy's early life, but by far the more feared at this time was TB. Often referred to as consumption, TB accounted for one in four deaths during Amy's parents' lifetime. During the early 1900s in London one in four deaths was due to TB, even in the 1920s in Monmouthshire it still accounted for almost 10% of deaths. As a county Monmouthshire experienced a lower level of death from TB than other areas that were more heavily industrialised, with Cardiff having the highest levels. It is an airborne virus although it can also be spread through contact. TB was also passed to humans from cattle through milk prior to the heat treatment of milk process developed by Pasteur. We sometimes wonder at the concern about cattle contracting TB from the badger population, yet with the cessation of blanket vaccination against TB the population is again at risk. The World Health Organisation suggests that today around a third of the world's population may have TB.

When Amy contracted a form of consumption while living at the orphanage the immediate response was to have her removed. One of the remedies of the time was a change of air. This simple remedy was a response to the number of inner city cases of TB attributed to poor air quality. We have seen earlier how Amy and her family were living within a small area where heavy industry was powered by coal causing severe air pollution. Respiratory disease was rife throughout such areas where fog was so thick when mixed with the sulphurous discharges from industry and home fires that they were described as pea soupers.

I remember visiting one of my Mum's relatives, Aunt Gert, in London when I was about five or six years old. Dad was sent to get some milk from a dispensing machine in the next street (the milk was in waxed cardboard containers that were a pyramid shape and I remember you could get ordinary milk or strawberry

flavour like milkshake). On this particular evening there was a thick fog and I begged to be allowed to go with Dad, and succeeding with my pleas experienced for the only time a real London pea souper. We couldn't see more than a few inches, the air had a weird yellow colour to it and Dad said we had to hold handkerchiefs to our mouth and nose. It was an eerie experience but one that Amy's generation was used to.

So in 1904 Amy was to move again, this time to Bournemouth, on the coast of Thomas Hardy's Dorset, in the hope that the sea air would have a curative effect on her consumption. In understanding this we can now read again the letter that Amy sent to the director of the orphanage and realise the importance of the news about her cough improving. This was Amy telling the orphanage that the sea air was indeed helping her to recover. Other letters between the orphanage and her Aunt Gertrude show the doctor at the orphanage advising on medicine that would also help with Amy's cough. This correspondence also shows that the orphanage continued to provide for Amy who had not yet left on a permanent basis. Money was sent for clothing and Gertrude informs the orphanage that she has bought shoes, stockings (socks) and a hat with the prices for each.

By this time Amy was 10 years old and her young life had seen many twists and turns. Was this to be the beginning of a settled period with members of her own family?

When we read of those times or watch films or television programmes about them, we often wonder at the attitudes of those times. We have seen not only technological change but also significant cultural and sociological change. Our forebears would not recognise the attitudes and standards of today. In looking at Amy at this time in her life we need to do so in the context of the times she was living in. A reference to Downton Abbey may be helpful, the family set up there shows three generations, the elderly matriarch played by Maggie Smith, the middle and 'lead' generation represented by Hugh Bonneville and

the younger generation represented by Michelle Dockery. The matriarch steers the family and gives it they values the hold to from the past, the 'lead' generation still having at times to defer to her while the young generation try to take the values of the past and marry them to the changes they see for the future.

Amy was sent to her Aunt Gertrude who was also living with her own Aunt Eliza. Aunt Eliza was a Victorian of Thomas Sewell's generation and had married his brother William. Amy's great Aunt Eliza had worked in the hotel trade with her husband William Sewell, they had built up a business at the Clarence Hotel in Pontypool, one of the major hotels in the town. It is probable, though not certain, that they owned the hotel. They moved to Bournemouth, perhaps for health reasons, in their old age and they had no children of their own. Gertrude went to live with them some time between 1891 and 1901. She married a musician, William Pardy in 1898 at the age of 25 and their fist child Mollie was born in 1906. William Sewell died in 1902 leaving his estate to his wife Eliza. She in turn died in 1906 and left her estate to her niece Gertrude. The estate amounted to the value of £3514-19s-6d, a considerable sum in those days. The estate included the house Eliza had lived in but that would not have been the value of the whole estate and the indication is that there was some level of investment or income as part of the estate. The difference between the position of Gertrude and her brother Ernest, Amy's father, is marked, emphasising that within the family across a number of relatives, there existed the means to help him out of his difficulty, and if not him then certainly his children. However this help was not forthcoming to that degree, and Ernest's children were seemingly viewed as tainted by their father's problems. In some sections of Victorian society the family that took them in would also be tainted. This shows us that the wider family of the Sewells was more complex than we could have imagined at the beginning of our

Amy lived with her Aunt Gertrude who was about to inherit a substantial estate relative to her station (she also inherited £250, 15s from her father in 1909), and Amy's health seems to have improved. Things were looking up, yet Amy' health had improved sufficiently for her to meet the requirements of the orphanage in Bristol, so back she went. Her family in Bournemouth didn't want her to stay any longer than necessary it seems, even though the indications are that they had the means to provide a home for her, Alfred and Gwendolyn.

Amy returned to the orphanage in Bristol in 1905. We must remember that she was at the age (13-14) where the orphanage would be training her for domestic service ready for employment when she left for good.

Once again her health became a problem as doctors informed the orphanage that she wasn't strong enough for domestic service. The reaction of the orphanage to this news was to contact Mr Wintle and invoke the clause requiring the family to take Amy back. This treatment seems very harsh, but the rules of the orphanage were very strict and were very strictly adhered to.

There followed a volume of correspondence between Mr Wintle, the orphanage and the family. Thomas Sewell was unable to take Amy back, Gertrude was said to be unable to take Amy permanently. Of the signatories to the original document this left Mrs Taylor and Mrs Stone, both aunts of Amy. Mrs Taylor was away from the district and couldn't be contacted, Mrs Stone was still living in Newport, her husband a businessman with an agricultural machinery business. Mrs Stone and her husband wrote explaining that the business was not going well and they could not take Amy in. They subsequently emigrated to Australia.

It was at this stage that providence stepped in. The orphanage received a request from Mr Firth, of Tiverton, Devon, for a girl to help look after his young children and learn to work the

the child anies sake it will be a freal mercy to have her removed as early as possible. The Grand Father Thomas Sewell has a daughter aged 22 living at home, (really Keeping house since her mothers death. this formy woman within the last month has given brills to an illegitimate Child therefore it is not desirable that anie should remain there any longer than it is absolutely recessary to make the arrangements for the to be taken inte du Sielilulion Dr. Barnardo has consented to take the boy and I shall Jeel very grateful if you will take the girl at once without waiting to find the other chied

Wrote oct 122/09/ andrew Sl Liverton Oct 19 of Mr Bergu Dear Sir 18 to hand. Fours of the all for say regarding the girl you mention have her pleased to everything can be Satisfactorly arranged I will meet you at honday nest at fon suggest

telephone exchange. The orphanage saw this as an opportunity for Amy and made arrangements for Amy to go to Mr Firth. The letter on page 146 from Mr Firth confirms that he wants the girl (Amy) and will meet at Taunton station. The letter goes on to give a description, including the wearing of a Geranium, so that the representative of the orphanage would be able to recognise him.

So in the latter part of 1907 Amy, aged 16, moves once more, this time to Tiverton in Devon, to become part of the household of Mr Firth.

Mr Firth had asked the Muller orphanage for a good christian girl who could learn to work the telephone exchange. He had also said that he and his wife were willing to adopt the girl as their own. This statement shows that they were not looking to exploit the girl they took or to treat her as anything other than a family member.

Harry Firth was a member of The Salvation Army, a christian denomination established by William Booth during the latter part of the Victorian era. The organisation grew rapidly on an international scale, being established in America, Canada, Australia and India among a number of other places. It has been both highly regarded and derided, being the subject of a play by George Bernard Shaw called Major Barbara.

The Muller orphanage will have been pleased with the opportunity to place Amy in a christian environment, and after vetting the Firths they agreed that Amy should be sent to them. This move was to provide at last the stability that had been missing in her young life up to this point. Amy was also with people who wanted her there with them, I can't help feeling that this in itself was something of a new experience. The Firths were to have a profound influence on her.

Amy seems to have settled into life with the Firths and their home in St Andrew's Street, the picture of the 1911 census on page 148 shows that Harry Firth describes Amy as his niece

<u>6</u> WALES, ENGLAND AND OF CENSUS

Number of Schedule (To be filled up by the Enum

The entries should be written in Ink Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns.

Colony, Structure of the County, Cr. of fronger minister and the County of the County, Cr. of the County of the Cr. of the Cr. of the County of the County of the County of the Cr. of the County of t INFIRMIT The contents of the Schedule will be treated as compidentied. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpos I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief. 1000 P County, state in name to the vise by parcents country, and flows a way other part of (2) "Naturalised the British Empire, write British and the Dependency, jee," giving Colony, etc., and of the year of man-rilesium. of every Person born in a Foreign Country. State whether:—
(1) "British sub-(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Read of Pamily or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.) Liverton To write the Colony, etc., and of the Alloudings, A.M. Thomas of State.

B. opposite ha. (3) If form in a Foreign Country, Countr (1) If born in the United King-dom, write the name of the County, and Town or Parish. Lever at Home Portypool Halles Lyones. theks Lan not Human Quon Chamorganchere BIRTHPLACE of every person. Postal Address 10 St Audowy St Signature Harry Bay Forth Bradminch Haworch. James C. Liverton the motories of the the winker Portus 5 hat the to the water This question should gener managed by stating the business carried on by It-the employer. If this is a clearly shown in Col. 10 (at clearly shown in Col. 10 the question need not be be answered here. No entry needed for Domestic Servants in private employment.

If employed by a public body (Coverment, Mumicipal, etc.) state what body. Government (See Instruction 9 and Examples on back of Schedule.) Industry or Service with which worker is connected PROFESSION or OCCUPATION Persons aged ten years and upwards. Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Rices, Temenent, Count the hitchen as a room but do not count sentliery. Indiding, 10by, closet, hathroom; nor wavelenus, office, shop. 6 roons reply should show the precise branch of Profession, Trade, Manufacture, &c. 403810 engaged in any Trade or Manufacture, the particular kind of work done, and the Article made or Material worked or dealt in should be clearly indicated. back than the preparation of Statistical Tables. 281 See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on of Schedule.) Baloy Operator Dreesmaker Personal Occupation. Betman Housewete Schoolgist Bresomaker The # Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7). 9 years 3 8 None who have Died. State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of :--PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE, Children still Living. 3 Total Children Born Alive. a "Single,"
"Married,"
"Widower,"
or "Widow,"
opposite the
names of
all persons
aged 15 years
and upwards. morred Single For Infants
under one year
state the age
in months as
"under one month,"
etc. - 1000 Ages of Females 18 dast Birthday) and SEX. \$ 01 00 Ages of Males. 38 2 (To be filled up by the Enumerator.) Daughte State whether
"Head," or
"Wice," «Son,"
"Daughter," or
other Relative,
"Visitor,"
"Boardor," or
"Servant," RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family. Daughter Son Bounder miles Head Mr. this Schedule are entered in the proper sex col-ten and sex and females in Colomns 3 and 4 seys maps and their sum with the total number of pers the reseasar enquiries. I have completed all enter the which appeared to be defective, and have, or Jenus 1 every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who (2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. (1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and (For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.) Jones Leay Freth Belith Hay Fuch Sumle was alive at midnight, or Initials of En NAME AND SURNAME No one else must be included. " Cetella Mary nesta many I certify that:

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C 135

THE SALVATION ARMY



ARTICLES OF WAR

THESE ARTICLES MUST BE SIGNED BY ALL RECRUITS WHO WISH TO BE ENROLLED AS SOLDIERS.

baving received with all my heart the Salvation offered to me by the tender mercy of Jehovah, I do here and now publicly acknowledge God to be my Father and King, Jesus Christ to be my Saviour, and the Holy Spirit to be my Guide, Comforter and Strength; and that I will, by His help, love, serve, worship, and obey this glorious God through time and through eternity.

Believing solemnly that The Salvation Army has been raised up by God, and is sustained and directed by Him, I do here declare my full determination, by God's help, to be a true Soldier of The Army till I die.

I am thoroughly convinced of the truth of The Army's teaching.

- I believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and conversion by the Holy Spirit are necessary to Salvation, and that all men may be saved.
- I believe that we are saved by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and he that believeth hath the witness of it in himself. I have got it. Thank God!
- I believe that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, and that they teach that not only does continuance in the favour of God depend upon continued faith in, and obedience to Christ, but that it is possible for those who have been truly converted to fall away and be eternally lost.
- I believe that it is the privilege of all God's people to be wholly sanctified, and that 'their whole spirit and soul and body' may 'be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' That is to say, I believe that after conversion there remain in the heart of the believer inclinations to evil, or roots of bitterness, which, unless over-powered by Divine grace, produce actual sin; but these evil tendencies can be entirely taken away by the Spirit of God, and the whole heart thus cleansed from anything contrary to the will of God, or entirely sanctified, will then produce the fruit of the Spirit only. And I believe that persons thus entirely sanctified may, by the power of God, be kept unblameable and unreprovable before Him.
- I believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the everlasting punishment of the wicked.
- Therefore, J do here and now, and for ever, renounce the world with all its sinful pleasures, companionships, treasures, and objects, and declare my full determination boldly to show myself a Soldier of Jesus Christ in all places and companies, no matter what I may have to suffer, do, or lose, by so doing.
- J do here and now declare that I will abstain from the use of all intoxicating liquors, and from the habitual use of opium, Izudanum, morphia, and all other baneful drugs, except when in illness such drugs shall be ordered for me by a doctor.
- J do here and now declare that I will abstain from the use of all low or profune language; from the taking of the name of God in vain; and from all impurity, or from taking part in any unclean conversation, or the reading of any obscene book or paper at any time, in any company, or in any place.
- J do here declare that I will not allow myself in any falsehood, deceit, misrepresentation, or dishonesty; neither will I practise any fraudulent conduct in my business, my home, nor in any other relation in which I may stand to my fellow men, but that I will deal truthfully, fairly, honourably, and kindly with all those who may employ me, or whom I may myself employ.
- J do here declare that I will never treat any woman, child, or other person, whose life, comfort, or happiness may be placed within my power, in an oppressive, cruel, or cowardly manner, but that I will protect such from evil and danger so far as I can, and promote to the utmost of my ability, their present welfare and eternal Salvation.
- J do here declare that I will spend all the time, strength, money, and influence I can in supporting and carrying on this War, and that I will endeavour to lead my family, friends, neighbours, and all others whom I can influence, to do the same, believing that the sure and only way to remedy all the evils in the world is by bringing men to submit themselves to the Government of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- J do here declare that I will always obey the lawful orders of my Officers, and that I will carry out to the utmost of my power all the Orders and Regulations of The Army; and further that I will be an example of faithfulness to its principles, advance to the utmost of my ability its operations, and never allow, where I can prevent it, any injury to its interests, or hindrance to its success.

	5	and	J	do	here	and	now	call	upon	all	preser	it to	witness	that	I	enter	into	this	und	lertaking.	and	sign	these
Articles	of	War	of 1	my	own	free	will,	feelin	g the	t th	e love	of Ch	rist, w	ho died	l to	save	me,	requ	ires	from me	this	devoti	on of
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The Sal	vati	on A	rmy																	1	1	PM	out

Date September 13 1912 Corps Siverton

whereas others are described as boarders. Amy began to attend the Salvation Army and became a full member in 1912, see picture on page 149.

St Andrew's Street was also home to another family that went to the Salvation Army, the Touts. Among the family of James Tout, known as 'Drummer' Tout, was his son William, who Amy was to eventually marry.

The telephone exchange that Harry Firth managed was part of the National Telephone Company, one of several telephone companies that developed and grew in Britain during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. The National Telephone Company was American and grew its coverage by buying out smaller companies. This was a successful strategy, however the Post Office had designs on the telephone revenue, first seeking to impose license arrangements as it had for telegrams, then by taking over the entire national telephone network itself. This happened in 1912.

Amy continued to develop her Christian faith in The Salvation Army, regularly attending services and becoming an active member. In 1915 she made a significant life changing decision and entered the Salvation Army Officer Training College in London. Few records survive of those pre Second World War days, following the London blitz when the organisation's headquarters were bombed.

In those days the training of officers was undertaken at Clapton, the regime was hard and the hours long. After two years in the workhouse and time at the Muller orphanage the regime at the training barracks was nothing that Amy was unable to cope with. Upon completion of her training she would become a minister within The Salvation Army, expected to lead services, preach sermons, provide support for the congregation, minister to the sick and dying and encourage non believers to become



National Telephone Company Exchange of the type Amy would have used.



Advertisement for the National Telephone Company showing the Brighton exchange.

christians.

I can imagine that Amy felt as if her life up to this point had been something of a preparation for her coming life within the ministry. In addition to a strong sense of vocation I imagine that she also felt a sense of purpose and belonging that she had been missing for so many years. I wonder what Alfred and Gwendolyn thought about Amy becoming an officer in The Salvation Army. Certainly it would appear that Alfred was a regular attender at a Methodist church back in Canada, it may also explain the change to Alfred's will as recorded in his paybook, as Amy would not have wanted to be a beneficiary.

I imagine that during these three to four years Amy felt both a sense of fulfillment and latterly a sense of dread and testing of her faith, as once again her health failed and she had to return to Tiverton.

The First World War had ended and Amy married William (Bill) Tout in a chapel in St Andrew's Street Tiverton, Harry Firth gave



Clapton Congress Hall, home of the Officer training college that Amy attended.

her away. Bill had been in the Balkans during the war and on his return undertook work as a builders labourer. Amy and Bill were to set up home in a small terraced house in Chapel Street where they raised two sons, Bernard and Lionel. Bill's grandfather also lived in Chapel Street as did his sister Lucy (known to me as Aunt Lou).

The boys went to Elmore school in the same street and Bill taught both to play brass instruments, Lionel played euphonium and Bernard played cornet like his father. Amy worked as a domestic servant at Blundell's school, disproving the view of the doctor at the orphanage that she was too weak for this kind of work.

This was the time of the 1920s great depression, the financial cost of the First World War was enormous. Soldiers returning from the war were looking for employment. Some employers had promised to keep jobs for returning soldiers, some of the soldiers had joined up straight from school and had never been in employment. In Britain the economy began to slump in 1920 and did not recover for some 25 years. In some way this was to prolong the difficulty, although it did have the effect of protecting the country to a degree from the severe depths of economic collapse experienced in America for example.

Lloyd George who was Prime Minister during the latter part of the First World War led a government that sought to reduce the impact of the economic situation by reducing public spending, increasing taxation and increasing import tariffs, this was a Liberal government in a coalition with the Conservatives. These policies were continued by the Labour government of Ramsey MacDonald which was then formed into a national government and the reduction in public spending continued with a primary focus on reducing the cost of welfare benefits. The outcome of these policies was that the economy didn't grow and the depression continued for much longer. This all sounds rather familiar today as we live through what may be the deepest

financial downturn since the 1920s.

Across the world countries responded differently to the crisis. America returned to a policy of isolationism and sought to work its way out of the depression with President Roosevelt and his New Deal. Major projects included the construction of dams, bridges and public buildings such as court houses and libraries.

In Britain the government couldn't agree on major projects, however Britain left 'the gold standard' which lessened the impact of the depression. Germany experienced severe hardship, the Weimar Republic was financially crippled with the repayment of reparations to the allies following the end of the First World War. Inflation spiralled out of control and the government printed money in an attempt to stem the financial flood. Such was the breakdown of financial policy that ever larger denominations of notes were printed, one million Mark notes were commonplace, workers took their wages home in wheelbarrows.

One of the consequences of this was that there was a rise of nationalism across Europe, particularly in Germany, Italy and Spain. In Germany the National Socialist Party wrested power from the Riechstag and introduced an economic expansion through public works and military development even though the latter was prohibited under the terms of the armistice.

The seeds for the Second World War were being sown.

As war loomed again Bill left the family to set up home with someone else, moving to London where he lived until his death in 1978.

I can only wonder at the mental strength and fortitude of someone who, having suffered so many set backs in her life, could once more pick herself up and continue to raise her family during such harsh economic times, and on the brink of another world war. By this time her sister had moved to America to live and they kept in touch by letter. It is difficult to gauge how close they were as sisters, since Amy and Gwendolyn had had very

little opportunity to be together, indeed for most of their childhood they had been separated. There was a brief period before the First World War when both lived in Tiverton, before Amy went to the Salvation Army College and Gwendolyn returned to Wales. What seems certain is that by this time Amy had lost or severed all contact with her parents' relatives. The illustration she shared with Tarnia was a rare and exceptional reference to her own childhood and family, she never mentioned them to me.

The pictures below are left: Bill Tout; right: Lionel with Bernard standing. Pictures on page 156are top: Lionel in Salvation Army uniform and British Army uniform. Botom: Lionel's photo of the area of the pyramids.

Page 157: Top, Women's meeting, Amy 5th from right front row. Centre Lionel's wedding, Bottom Outside the prefab, Amy with Lionel, Madge and her father and mother.

















Bernard and Thelma Tout's Wedding (Amy seated on the left)

As war broke out Amy was to enter another phase of her life. Having lost her brother in the First World War now she faced the possibility that Lionel or Bernard may be killed or wounded. As her sons went off to war, Amy was alone once more. Lionel joined the Army and was trained as a radio operator in the Royal Corps of Signals. Attached to the British Eighth Army he saw service in North Africa, Italy and Belgium. He met Marjorie (Madge) Kirkham who was in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. Lionel married Madge in 1945 and they lived in Tiverton initially with Amy. Bernard joined the Royal Air Force and was a wireless (radio) mechanic. He saw service in Bomber Command and was stationed at RAF Waddington. Here he worked on some of the first of the famous Lancaster bombers to come into service. I think he worked on the Manchester bomber which was a twin engine earlier version of the aircraft until then.



Amy with Dawn and Tarnia on the beach.



Amy holding my cousin Christine, Dawn and Tarnia standing in front.



Amy with baby Dawn who was to name her 'just' Granny.



Amy far right next to 'nother' Granny and me with her hand on my shoulder.

In Dec he married Thelma Stevens. The wartime wedding was to show the impact of rationing with spam sandwiches and a chocolate wedding cake making up the meal. Bernard had 24 hours leave and then had to return to the base at Waddington.

He also spent some time at RAF Locking near Weston super Mare and that was prior to his discharge from the service on health grounds.

A look at his stomach at any time after his discharge would show that he had been operated on. The scars were such that it seemed as if he had several belly buttons. He told me, following one of those "Dad what happened to your tummy?" questions that I used to ask during my childhood, that he had first had problems as a child. He told the story of playing on an old lorry chassis when it suddenly tipped up and pinned him against a wall. This had damaged his intestine and as a result it had grown scar tissue over the years. While he was in the RAF this scar tissue had restricted the intestine severely and he would pass out unexpectedly. The scar on his stomach was caused in part by an operation to remove the scar tissue from the intestine. It was also caused by the premature removal of the stitches following the operation.

Being a member of The Salvation Army he was tea total so it came as something of a surprise when he was ordered to drink stout to help his wounds heal. The Squadron commander had to get the local Salvation Army Officer to visit and tell Bernard that he could drink the stout for medicinal purposes. The others in the ward had all been telling him to take the drink to give to them,

It was some time later that he left the hospital and was sent to RAF Locking for light duties while he served out his time until his medical discharge.

On returning to Tiverton he and Thelma lived with his mother Amy in the little house in Chapel Street. It was here that Dawn and Tarnia were born, as Amy took on the role of grandmother. As the war drew to a close Lionel married Madge in 1945.

Bernard worked at Blundell's school, still troubled by health problems that were to continue well into the 1960s. Amy moved with Bernard and Thelma when they moved into one of the post war prefabricated bungalows known as prefabs. She moved with them again when they moved to the house that was to be the family home for over 50 years, in Beech Road, Tiverton. Lionel and Madge lived in a house around the corner and the two families were close. Lionel and Madge had three children, Christine, Olwyn and Kevin, and Amy took to the role of grandmother and gave all the love that she had so often seemed to have been denied in her own childhood.

She would read, play games, help to learn arithmetic and teach how to recite poetry, something that she often did as she had a gift for this now lost art. One of the poems she was often asked to recite was I believe one of her favourites. It illustrated the difference God can make to our lives (see pages 165-166).

Lionel and Madge moved back to Scarborough her home town, and Amy would visit on holiday with Bernard, Thelma, Dawn and Tarnia. These were happy, halcyon days for Amy and her family, her determination to try and contribute to a happy childhood and family life for her grandchildren showing in her selfless contribution to the family.

Tragedy was not far away and these happy days were cut tragically short by Lionel's illness and untimely death in 1952 at the age of 32.

I wonder what Amy's thoughts and feelings were at this time, having seen Lionel come home from the war unscathed to lose him now must have been so hard. Did she have flashback to the time of her own father's death as she thought of Lionel's family? She focussed more on Madge and the children than on herself. She also focussed on Bernard who had lost the brother he had always looked up to.

As I have said before Dad often used to speak of Lionel to me

when I was a child and the way he held Lionel as his ideal was obvious even then. Lionel seemed to be everything Dad had hoped to be and I think that in that way he influenced my thoughts of my own brother, because I saw myself as being like Dad and desperately wanted to be like him.

Amy stayed in Tiverton with Bernard and his family, while Madge returned with her children to Scarborough. Her children were so young when their father died and their grandfather, who we knew as Grandad Kirkham, was I believe very influential for them. He was a lovely man, a true gentleman.

For Amy there was soon a new grandchild to look forward to as Thelma gave birth the following year, 1953. Yet tragedy struck once more, and my brother died.

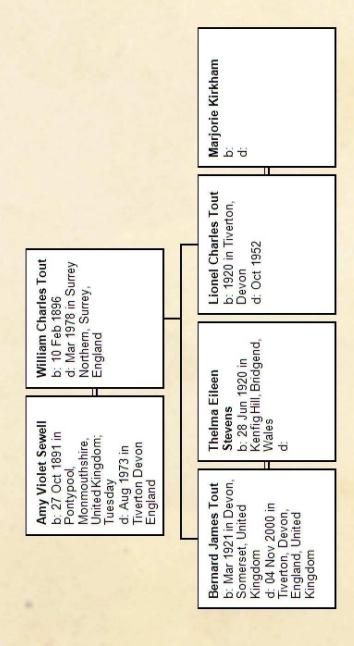
During my very early childhood we would go to Scarborough to visit and sometimes Madge and her family would come to Tiverton. I remember Granny packing up parcels for Madge and her children and I'm sure they often included things she had knitted for them. She missed them and I believe that in her heart she would have liked to be near to them as well as to us, so that he could have spent more time with them and given more of herself to them.

My own memories are of her reading to me, telling me stories, coming with us for day trips to the seaside. I remember her singing in the Over 60s choir that Mum used to run, and learning to play the tambourine as her grandchildren had done many years before. I remember her humour and her enjoyment of simple things. I also remember what seemed to be a contentment, rare then, rarer now. Above all I remember her sense of fairness and her desire for things to be dealt with fairly, I believe she had a strong sense of justice and this has influenced me greatly. She was always keen to see the others' point of view and take the side of the underdog. She liked things done well, and encouraged us to always do our best. For someone who gave so much of

herself, often giving the few pounds or shillings that she had, she never gave me the impression of asking anything of others. I know that after their father left Lionel and Bernard said they would always look after her. I think that perhaps in some way she held on to that, and having found out more about her past, I can understand why, as this was her family saying they wanted her, cared for her, and loved her, and this was so rare in her life. I'm grateful that I can remember telling her that I loved her too.

Amy died in Tiverton in August of 1973. I remember it well, Mum and Dad and I were on holiday in a touring caravan in the New Forest, near Bournemouth. We had been away for several days and we saw Dad's name on a blackboard beside an AA man (the AA is a motoring breakdown organisation and Dad was a member). Dad went and spoke to the man who explained that my sister Dawn had been trying to get in touch with us. It seems strange in these days of mobile phones, that in 1973 it could take days to contact someone. The funeral was reported in the local press and I have included a copy of the report on page 167.

That quiet, unassuming, caring life was genlty taken from us, yet the inspiration and influence continues today. I often hear myself repeating sayings to my own children, that I learned from 'just Granny'. These may have come from her own family, they may have come form the orphanage, whatever their source the relvance and truth of them remains today. 'Just Granny's' words live on.



The Touch of the Master's Hand

'Twas battered and scarred, And the auctioneer thought it hardly worth his while To waste his time on the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.

But, No,

From the room far back a grey bearded man Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings,
He played a melody, pure and sweet
As sweet as the angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said "What now am I bid for this old violin?"
As he held it aloft with its' bow.

[&]quot;What am I bidden, good people", he cried,

[&]quot;Who starts the bidding for me?"

[&]quot;One dollar, one dollar, Do I hear two?"

[&]quot;Two dollars, who makes it three?"

[&]quot;Three dollars once, three dollars twice, going for three,"

[&]quot;One thousand, one thousand, Do I hear two?"

[&]quot;Two thousand, Who makes it three?"

[&]quot;Three thousand once, three thousand twice, Going and gone", said he.

The audience cheered,

But some of them cried,

"We just don't understand."

"What changed its' worth?"

Swift came the reply.

"The Touch of the Masters Hand."

And many a man with life out of tune All battered with bourbon and gin Is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd Much like that old violin

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, A game and he travels on. He is going once, he is going twice, He is going and almost gone.

But the Master comes, And the foolish crowd never can quite understand, The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought By the Touch of the Masters' Hand.

Myra Brooks Welch

LONG-SERVING MEMBER OF S.A. DIES AT 82

ONE of the oldest members on the roll of the Salvation Army at Tiverton. Mrs. Amy Violet Tout, of 25. Beech Road, Cowley Moor, died at Post Hill Hospital on July 29 at the age of 82. A funeral service was held at the S.A. Citadel on Friday and interment followed in the cemetery.

The service was conducted

at the age of 82. A funeral service was held at the S.A. Citadel on Friday and interment followed in the cemetery. The service was conducted by Capt Ray Bates of Yeovil, and the organist was Mrs. I. Davey,

Born at Pontypool. Mrs. Tout moved to Tiverton in 1907 when she began work at the telephone exchange, in St. Andrew Street. In 1915 she left to attend the Salvation Army training college at London and became an officer. She was forced to leave after four years because of ill health.

On returning to Tiverton she married and took a domestic job at Blundell's School for many years.

She was treasurer of the Tiverton Salvation Army Home League for 31 years and was a regular singer with the Silver. Lining Club choir

THE MOURNERS

The family mourners were: Mr and Mrs. B. Tout, so and daughter-in-taily. Mr. and Mrs. H. Salmer, Mr. and Mrs. W. Knott, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. The Mr. and Mrs. W. Green and Mrs. W. Green

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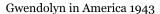
Chapter 5 Gwendolyn



Ernest and Nellie's youngest daughter was Gwendolyn. Born in Pontypool in 1894 she was barely two years old when her mother left the family home. I can find no trace of her mother Nellie after she left her family and it is possible we may never discover just what happened to her.

As described earlier Gwendolyn spent some little time at her Grandfather Thomas Sewell's house before being taken with Alfred and Amy to the workhouse in Griffithstown, Pontypool. She was around 5 years old when her father took her from the workhouse with her sister Amy and began an itinerant lifestyle. While in the workhouse Gwendolyn was in the care of some of the women who had the role of looking after the very young children. While moving around with her father she will have been left with the landlady while he went to work, often very long hours would pass before he returned home. Within the first







Thought to be Nellie Edwards, mother of Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn

few years of her life she was in the care of quite a number of people, there would be no consistency, little love and exposure to poor diet, cold and often damp conditions.

When her father was killed in the accident in 1900, Gwendolyn was, with her siblings, kept in the same house as their father's body. I cannot imagine what that would have been like, especially when reading the Coroner's report. The trauma of losing their father was surely compounded by the knowledge that his body was in the house. Given the time of year, it is quite probable that the house was filled with the smell of the body decomposing, I wonder if Alfred was reminded of this when he was in the trenches. In those days it was not unusual for the bodies of the deceased to be laid out in the family home waiting for burial. It would appear that Ernest was not in much contact with his family at this time, although another newspaper report of the inquest states that his father Thomas Sewell was present. Certainly his family did not pay for his burial.

The records from the Muller Foundation and Barnardos indicate that following Ernest's death, the people he was staying with went to the Swansea area, taking Gwendolyn with them. At the time this wasn't known and a search was undertaken for Gwendolyn in order to send her to Bristol with Amy. Because of the time it was taking to find her, the decision was taken to send Amy on her own. From this we can deduce that within the first eight years of her life Gwendolyn actually spent comparatively little time with her brother and sister. By the time that she was brought back to Pontypool, around 1902, Alfred and Amy had been gone for a year.

The lady who brought Gwendolyn back was described as a nurse, although this term may be misleading as it was used in the context of the day, for someone who delivered babies and cared for young children.

Further checks with Muller's and Barnardo's confirm that Gwendolyn was not sent to their orphanages. It was evident that she was not readmitted to the workhouse but was put in what we

would now describe as a form of foster care, with a family that took children on behalf of the Board of Guardians. As with the orphanages the next step from the workhouse and also the foster care arrangement was to go into service, and this seems to be the path that Gwendolyn followed, there is no record to show that her health was delicate as in Amy's case. The 1911 census for Wales shows Gwendolyn in service to a minister, the Rev. George Howe, of the Calvinist Methodist Church. George Howe either had a large income from the church or had independent means, as the household for him, his wife and only child consisted of three nurses and 14 servants. Gwendolyn was aged 14 while she was here and it is quite likely that this was the first position she held and that it was found for her with the help of Mr Thomas Wintle. She told her daughter Madeline that she had been an upstairs maid.

I would imagine that in such a household the servants were required to attend the chapel of which their master was the



3 Hillands Tidcombe Tiverton where Gwendolyn lived c1916

Large Schedule, with space for 100 names.				CE	CENSUS	s o	OF ENC	ENGLAND	ONA C	WALES,	1911.				Number of Schedule (To be filled up by the Enum	e 2/
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(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at a midnight, or	State whether "Head" or Wife," "Son,"	under one year state the age in months as "underonemonth," " one month," etc.	rear "Single," "Married," "Midower," "or "Widow,"			Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no Children born alive write "None" in		should show the		This question should generally be answered by stating the business carried on by the employer. If this is clearly shown in Col. 10 the question	Write opposite the name of each person engaged in any Trade or Industry, (1) " Employer" (that is employing persons other than		and lown, or tarisa. (2) Hoom in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony, stu., and of the Province or stu., and of the Province or State.	age." (2) "Naturalised British subject," giving year of naturalisation. Or	Deaf" or "Deaf and Dumb," (2) "Totally Blind," (3) "Lunatic," (4) "Imbecile."	(2) If able speak V only, w "Welsh."
(z) attreet in tust reveiling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere. No one else must be included. The order of entering mass es Examples on hard of page 4.	"Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant,"	Ages of Males.	Ages and upwards.		Total Children Born Alive.	Column 7.) Children Children chill still Living I	Children have (See Instruction of page 4.	the any trade cular kind of a nade or Materia I be clearly indic	the greet in materials of work dones in the practicular kind of work dones in Article manner of Markalla worked or death in should be deathy indicated. See Instructions 1 to 8 and Examples on back of page 4.)	where the sainwared here, No entry needed for Domestic Services Variate in private employment. If employed by a public body (Government, Mannethl, ec.) Sea are with took of the Sexus. ples on back of page 4.)	donestic servants), (2) "Worker" (that is working for an employer, or (3) "Own Account" (that is neither employing others nor working for a trade employere).	name of each person regring on Trade or Industry at home.	of the form is a growing Country, write the name of the Country, write the name of the Country, XVRX.—In the case of purvous born aleawhere than in Finginal or Wales, state whether "Resident" or "Visitor" in this Country.	(3) If of foreign nationality, state whether ''French,'' ''German,'''	or "Feeble- minded," state the infirmity opposite that person's name, and the age at which he or she became afflicted	speak on write Boo write Boo No entry to made in columnfor ren under years of ag
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minister, although this is not certain.

Most of the information about where Gwendolyn lived between this point and her move to America comes from her brother Alfred's Service record. The number of address changes shows that Gwendolyn was in regular communication with the Canadian Army following the death of her brother. We are also given an indication of her being with her sister Amy.

The records show that in 1916 she was living in Tiverton, in a house in Tidcombe Lane near Blundell's School. Here again she held the position of a domestic servant, in all probability in the household of one of the school masters. We can conjecture at this point as to how Gwendolyn came to move to Tiverton and again I see Thomas Wintle's hand in this. He knew that Amy had been placed with Harry Firth and was living in Tiverton and I believe he provided the information that enabled Amy and Gwendolyn to keep in contact.

It is remarkable when we consider just how little time Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn were together at any point, let alone as a family, that they kept in contact at all. Yet when we examine the historical evidence we see that while in Canada, Alfred was able to state where Amy lived, and while in France on active service, he was able to state where Gwendolyn lived. This proves to us that there was communication between them. Perhaps in all the turmoil of their young lives, when the families of their parents may seem to have abandoned them, they clung to each other as the family they belonged to.

I think of the letter Amy wrote thanking the director of the orphanage for the stamps she was sent. It seems strange to send a young girl stamps. Books or clothing I can understand, or even money. I have drawn the conclusion (perhaps wrongly) that the stamps were to help her stay in touch with her siblings.

So we know that Gwendolyn moved to Tiverton some time between 1911 and 1916. Since Alfred was in England briefly during 1916 it is probable that they met during this time. I

wonder what that meeting was like. The last time Alfred had seen Gwendolyn was 16 years before, when she was very young. Just think what they would have to tell each other, we can almost imagine the conversations, the early memories of Gwendolyn moving around South Wales, Alfred telling of the time in London, if Amy was there tales of the orphanage in Bristol and time with their aunt Gertrude. Alfred telling of the passage to Canada, of the farms he worked on and the sights he saw, tales of fishing on the lake. I imagine them talking of Amy and her training to become a minister in The Salvation Army. Questions about their mother and what became of her, memories of their father and what kind of man he was. Then, all too quickly, Alfred was taken away again to go to France for a few months, living, fighting, dying on the front line.

With Amy gone there was no connection with Tiverton for Gwendolyn and so she returned to Cardiff to work in the munitions factories. It was here that she met a Norwegian sailor



The terraced house in Cardiff where Gwendolyn lived when she married Kristoffer Braaten.

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Cardiff CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Marriages in the Registration District of TYSTIOLAETHWYD ei fod yn gopi cywir o gofnod mewn copi y tystiwyd iddo o Gofrestr Priodasau yn Nosbarth

day of dydd o fis 19th Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office the Fe'i rhoddwyd yn y GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, o dan sêl y Swyddfa a enwyd y CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. @ CROWN COPYRIGHT

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2009

March

WMXZ 217872

who had emigrated to America, called Kristoffer Braaten. Gwendolyn lived near Barry Docks to the northwest of Cardiff and then moved to the house pictured on page 174, in Minister Street near the main Cardiff docks. It was this house that is recorded on the marriage certificate, and in all probability where she stayed while Kristoffer was away at sea.

The First World War came to an end and the munitions factories either closed or converted to the production of civilian goods. Many women such as Gwendolyn and my grandmother, Agnes Stevens, who worked in munitions factories were laid off and had to give up their jobs to soldiers returning from the war.

At some point around 1919 Gwendolyn returned to Tiverton. Her sister Amy had married and Gwendolyn went to live with Amy and her husband Bill in their house in Chapel Street. It was here that she gave birth to her first child, Thelma Braaten on the 22nd December 1919 (see picture on page 177). There was to be a

arrily name	Given name or names
BRAATEN	KRISTOFFER KRISTIANSEN
Address	
176 Howard St.	New London Conn little and location of court
Certificate no. (or vol. and page)	litle and location of court
2166	NEW LONDON COUNTY CON
Country of birth or allegiance	When born (or age)
Norway	
Norway Date and port of arrival in U. S.	Date of naturalization
	June 5, 1923
Names and addresses of witnesses	
	MILITARY
	migration and Naturalization Service. Form No. 1-IP. 14-3202

Copy of Kristoffer Braaten's naturalization record.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 1025961-1

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CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Births in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the

March

day of

2009

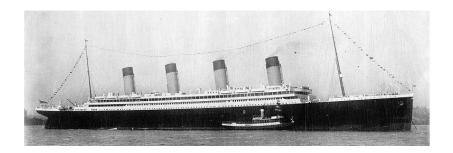
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brief time during which Amy and Gwendolyn were reunited as a family, sharing their grief at the loss of their brother and their joy at the birth of baby Thelma. I do not know if Gwendolyn worked during this time, it does seem obvious that there was no contact with her parents' families. Her husband Kristoffer was a Norwegian by birth but later became a naturalized American citizen in 1923.

The stay with Amy and Bill was a short one. Again we discover from Alfred's service records that in 1920 Gwendolyn was living in North West London. At this point she was preparing to move to America. I wonder how the two sisters felt about this. The first time they were together when of an age that they could remember was in Tiverton, and Amy left to make a new life as a minister in The Salvation Army. This time it was Gwendolyn who as leaving to make a new life. Did they make plans to meet again in the future? Had they developed a close relationship that



The SS Olympic

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASS

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bridged the gap of time? Did they talk about Amy and Bill going to America as well, and if so why didn't they? All questions to which we cannot find answers, but a natural part of what may have taken place.

Having moved to London in 1920, Gwendoline and Thelma left England for America on the 6th April 1921, almost 20 years after Alfred had sailed to Canada. The passenger manifest on page 176 shows that they sailed on the SS Olympic, which was a sister ship of the ill fated Titanic. The destination is shown as London Connecticut, Alfred had lived near London Ontario. Amy and Gwendolyn were destined never to meet again.

As we have seen Kristoffer became an American citizen, continuing to work as a merchant seaman. The family began to grow and we next see additions to the family recorded in the 1931 census (see pages 181 and 182). The first thing we notice is that Kristoffer is in the US Coast Guard Academy, and Gwendolyn now has four children at home; Thelma aged 10, Christopher aged 5, Madeline aged 3 and John aged 1. The family were living in New London Town, Connecticut, presumably to be near Kristoffer.

Having been torpedoed during the First World War, Kristoffer had joined the US Coast Guard in 1921 and by 1931 had graduated to the academy.

The American economy fluctuated greatly during the 1920s and 1930s. The country was built on imigration, with a significant proportion of the population coming from Europe and Scandinavia. This may in part explain the strong desire of Americans not to be drawn into the European conflict that became the First World War.

America was also seen across the world as the land of opportunity, the place where dreams could come true. It was also a place where those dreams could be realised inside or outside the law. The 1920s were nicknamed the Roaring 20s and saw social and technological change as marked as that of the 1960s,

DEPARTMENT OF C FIFTEENTH CENSUS POPUL neso hip or other Institution Unincorporated place (Enter name of any unio sion of county rated place baving approximately 500 labe PLACE OF BIRTH HOME DATA PERSONAL DESCRIPTION EDUCATION CR OF ABODE NAME RELATION Age at first marriage Attended scheelor celloge any time since Sept. 1,1829 Whether abte in read and writes Place of birth of each person enumerated and of his or her pa the United States, give State or Tegritory. If of foreign birth which birthplace is now situated. (See Instructions.) Dia French from Canada-English, and Irish Free State from No Number of Mumber of dwelling house in order of visitation this family Marital conof each person whose place of abode on April 1, 1930, was in this family Relationship of this person to the head of the Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any Include every person living on April 1, 1930. Omit children born since April 1, 1930. 15 PATHER 13 14 15 16 17 8 9 | 10 11 12 3 4 Bluert Holph & Pallay Low 6! Brall France Head 50.00 10 20 14 Levas Veras M 16 Lexas misson 33 23/200 M AB Head MISSOUN M 31 no no MI W/33 Head Denma 30000 700 B Denmark Venmark Graensen Hans Total 43 M W 40 P Touva Jodenn Gustar 33 M nouvay Teach 72410 Lareen floredo THOO Llouta no ho 35 00 Ge 70 771 M Morway Sprmany Llugar laren Erika Fleindt Luduch Jane Frank Gead John 44 M 18 40 1/60 Moreray Jouvay 11 Homain Jerman W M no mo Sunder W 37 3 Treland Loth Henry L. Hend Head 5 7500 B 70 14W Jork Lymany 41 no Hes New York M 14 W Ofinas W 75 17 no les Olid M Maliana Ohio Had Honsylvania 53 M Kogani Herbert 0 5000.00 00 no German Hermand New York Washington no his Mayland Licobs Peter W 41 John S Jon Head 8 36 new to Andlock wan I Joll Min a Linduson Louge I Wachingto no Wo 40.00 1 M W/3/ M 126 Miss our Head 4000 30 no 31 14 30 no 1/10 Kennsylvaine Connections W numberaly Winman W 30 S 30 Denmark IN Heras Germany Hode Tolan Hiland John X adamek Jarry 3 1 1750000 Rigo WBYM 74 no bes delas Levas lead M Misconsin Thode Island M German don w 5 no res Maroach Gright Goverett Jean 10.00 12 40 Ann M WN 1 19 Morth Carolina North burling nord be New York no the Thole Soland Hea 0 95000 co Met birgi Gam Georg 91 WHO S lechan Whitney 5 W 30 Illinos M S Ollingin Illinoi 20 10 Illumois Illinois W 41 1 31 Carpart alfred Don M W 30 M 74 hes Lisher Warne lead 40 Haly Massachs i Longrelo Hinselfe 5 MI W41 lon Maine ou Grow 6 May achivetts MI 1/10 / 7/20 ligd W 78 M 76 70 00 West Dinginia War big M W 33 3 no ho That ber Inia Vandevander barl In Ohio Porway Ohio Velliquette Chrid B. Brabten Fristoffer F Brason Willif O yn Tead no Vye MI W 30 9 Olio M W 34 M V4 Tho nouvin 70.00 20 140 M huo South Barolina W 15 M 13 Sul Bu Jund 30 00 400 no Ireland them Mr. Intere Pobert & Why S no hea houthern V 1611 nes Louislana Louiseans Barron Hirgila WIN Louisuna D En Gilliam Solve Co Gik, John Norman & Jose, Wichart W. Hesty, William Yogly, Villiam no nes Masachusetto W 75 S AN/ Hand no yw Ohio no yo Illinois No yes new Xisey 19 W718 Thio Termany Termon Frish Ste Jana Jana MI N 15 Jungin 5 Trish Still Ja S W 75 M W /3 M 2 Bohl, Chedyick Graygow Jenny D. 4/cs German Lennene W 38 S Termany MI 601 WY6 110 outh barolina Mususa 111 10 100 Hiscory Justland Thancist WINNIN M inconsin Car Rho John Hawley Neith Rouis, Bruly Loof 1600 WHIM ich huttate banada M no hes Denmark Denmark In W 74 S Wenmark Ganad Hungas Dustrio don no My Mason chusette banadatud MI W 2. 14 no hus had hork MW YY 3 Haulold Sylvery Spu umany 30.00 3000 73 Mo Lussia Head

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and there were some similarities between the two decades. The contrast between Britain and the US at this time was quite distinct. While there was an initial post war boom in Britain at the end of the First World War it was over within a couple of years and a long period of economic difficulty ensued. In the US the growth lasted for the next decade before ending with the Wall Street Crash.

The 1920s saw a great change in music, with the advent of radio broadcasting as a new way of bringing music to the mass population. There were other new media introductions, the cinema really took off during the 1920s, with the big Hollywood studios feeding the public demand for (silent) films. Stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Gloria Swanson became household names, every bit as famous as the stars of today. Toward the end of the 1920s talking pictures, films with sound track, were introduced with the Jazz Singer starring Al Jolson the notable first, heralding a new dawn of cinema.

Music styles changed as did dance crazes such as the Charleston and the Tango. Jazz music was in, making its progression to the big band swing of the thirties and forties. Attitudes also changed, with the role of women, particularly in America being central to moral and social change.

While the 1920s saw revolution, particularly in what became Soviet Russia, it also saw the introduction of mass production. Gwendolyn and Kristoffer were living in exciting times with a range of goods being brought to the consumer that were barely available in Britain. Cars were among a host of goods made available to the mass market, along with household goods such as refrigerators.

In a growing economic climate with seeming luxury goods being produced to be affordable to the bulk of the populace, Gwendolyn and Kristoffer must have been convinced that they had made the right move. Did they try to persuade Amy and Bill to move to America? I cannot help but wonder if this may not



Top pictures USS Mendota, one of Kristoffer Braaten's ships.Centre pictures USS Samuel Chase troop ship

Bottom pictures iconic images of the D Day landings on Omaha beach taken from landing craft of the Samuel Chase

have been the case. The Great Depression of the 1930s will have had a significant impact on Gwendolyn, Kristoffer and their family. Kristoffer was in the Coast Guard and I suspect watching with concern as once more war clouds began to gather over Europe. When on leave he would take on carpentry work (he was a carpenter's mate in the navy), while Gwendolyn took in laundry to earn eaxtra money. As Britain and Germany fought



Gwendolyn and Thelma



Thelma



Thelma



Thelma



Karl



Willy, Marilyn and Judy



Madeline, Dianne and Susan



Madeline and Jesse





Madeline and Karl (Willy) with Gwendoline

John and Madeline



Christopher (Spike) and Honor



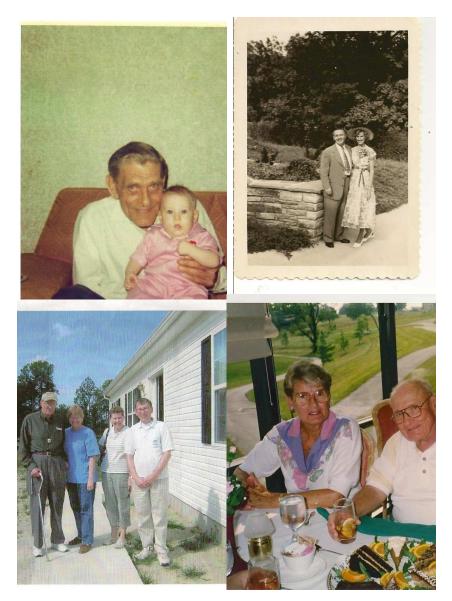
Spike, Honor, Willy and Marilyn



Madeline



Madeline and Marilyn



Top Left: Kristoffer Braaten. Top Right: Madeline and husband Jesse Haugh. Bottom Left John Braaten with daughters Susan and Dianne. Bottom right Madeline and Jesse.



John Braaten's family

during 1939 to 1942, President Roosevelt strove to keep America out of the war, while also providing some support for Britain. Goods and supplies from America were sent by ship in convoys to Britain. During the early years of the war, the US Coast Guard cutters would escort the convoys out into the Atlantic, helping to protect against the terror of the U-Boats. I wonder if Kristoffer was employed on convoy protection before he transferred to the troop ship. The Samuel Chase, known as the lucky Chase took part in five assault landings; North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Normandy, South of France and also service in the Philippines. It was while he was training for the Normandy landings that Kristoffer visited Tiverton to try and see Amy. Again I wonder what may have happened if they had met. Had Amy and Gwendolyn begun to lose touch by then or did that happen later?

Just as Amy had Lionel and Bernard in the forces, Gwendolyn was to have not only Kristoffer her husband serving, but also her son Christopher, also known as Spike. Spike joined the army and was in the Engineers, he saw service in France, and I believe he was in northern France, as well as Belgium and Germany. In the vagaries of war it is possible, if not probable, that Spike Braaten and Lionel Tout may have been in Belgium at the same time. it is also likely that Spike was not far from Arras, near Vimy Ridge where his Uncle Alfred was killed almost 30 years before.

Gwendolyn had to raise the rest of the family, knowing that both her husband and elder son were fighting in Europe.

The Samuel Chase had a reputation for being in the thick of the fighting. During the North Africa landings the ship landed troops in Algeria, coming under heavy attack from enemy aircraft. The crew of 'The Chase' shot down three enemy aircraft, earning 'The Chase' the nickname of 'The Battleship' by the British.

Following a refit in Norfolk Virginia during early 1943, the ship returned to the Mediterranean and took part in the landings at Sicily and Salerno, Italy. During these operations the ship earned the nickname 'The Lucky Chase' as it didn't lose a man during the assaults. Perhaps evidence of this came during the Salerno landings, when the ship was returning from the beaches through a channel cleared in a minefield. Once again the ship came under attack and bombs fell so close to the ship that the water spouts from the bomb blasts covered the ship. The ship returned to home port for repairs during October and November 1943 before undertaking training prior to sailing for Glasgow in February 1944. Each crossing of the Atlantic meant runing the gauntlett of the U Boat packs.

This was the prelude to the invasion of the European mainland. The Samuel Chase was assigned to be part of the assault on the sector that would prove to be the most fiercely fought part of the invasion front, Omaha Beach. What became known as bloody Omaha was one of two American landing sites, the Samuel

Chase was tasked with landing elements of the US First Infantry Division (known as the Big Red One) on to a specific part of the beach. The beaches all had code names and were divided into sections to make sure troops landed in the right place. On Omaha beach a cross current carried many assault craft to the wrong parts of the beach. Some discharged their troops where they made land, others backed off and tried for the right place. The landing craft from the Samuel Chase were heading for the Fox Green sector. Although the crew were experienced, having taken part in three landings already by this time, nothing prepared them for the intensity of fighting they met at Normandy. Although the ships out in the bay were in 'relative safety', the landing craft approaching the shoreline on a rising tide were under heavy fire. The rising tide meant that as the day progressed the landing craft had to go ever closer to the shore to land troops and equipment.

While visiting France in 2010, I went to Normandy and Omaha beach. The scene today is one of tranquility, the remnants of bunkers and fortifications show that there was fighting there, but there is nothing to show the ferocity and intensity of the battle for this strip of coast. The pictures on page 192 show the Fox Green sector of Omaha beach as it looks today. There was something timeless and poignant in the sight of British and German children building sandcastles on the beach where just over 50 years before, death and destruction tore across those sands in a maelstrom of bullets, shrapnel and explosions.

A month later and the Samuel Chase was again in the Mediterranean, picking up troops in Naples for the landing in the South of France on the 14th of August. The troops were landed in the Bay of Panpelonne just west of St Tropez.

In October 1944 the Samuel Chase returned to Boston Massachusetts for a refit and sailed again in January 1945 to Pearl harbour and duty in the Pacific.

Following the end of the Second World War Gwendolyn and



Map of Omaha Beach showing the sectors marked for landing craft.



Omaha beach after the landings.





Heading in to Omaha beach on D-Day Building sand castles on Omaha, two

Building sand castles on Omaha, two German boys do the same behind.



Looking up to the German positions from Fox Green sector.



Eleanor, Caitlyn and Bram on Omaha beach.



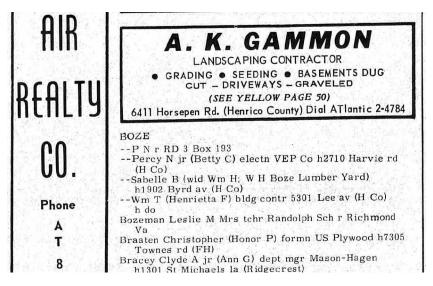
Caitlyn outside a defensive bunker above Omaha beach



Looking out to where the Samuel Chase was moored.

Kristoffer continued to live in Maryland and watched as their family grew. Thelma had married Milton Bush. They had four children; Judith, Gerald, Keith and Dennis. They lived in Baltimore where Milton worked as a carpenter. They had met in Norfolk, Virginia when Milton was in the Navy. Judith (Judy) lived mainly in Baltimore, although she did move to California for a time. She has worked in Family and Children's Services for a non-profit organisation which provided counselling, child abuse treatment, foster grandparents and employee counselling.

Christopher (Spike) married Honor Paterson, they had four children; Kathryn, Gwendolyn, Robert and Charles. Spike and Honor lived in Richmond Virginia. At one point they lived at Townes Road, Spike seems to have been employed as a foreman at the US Plywood Corporation. This was a large lumber products company that had been formed in 1937 by the merger of three smaller companies. In 1967 it merged with the



Directory showing Spike and Honor living in Townes Road Virginia.



Spike's daughter Kathryn Braaten from her college yearbook.

Champion Paper Company and the fortunes of the two companies grew, I'm not sure how long Spike worked here. One of the many jobs I have had was in a company that manufactured industrial band saws for the lumber industry. I remember we had a quota to produce, working in pairs we had to build 12 a month, hard yet satisfying work.

John married Margueritte Berger and they also had four children; Dianne, John junior, Stephen and Susan. After graduating from Baltimore Polytechnic Institute John worked as a sheet metal mechanic; thereby, perhaps unknowingly, echoing the work of his grandfather and great grandfather, Ernest and Thomas Sewell. John went into business and helped to establish a sheet metal company, Metacond, where his son Stephen still works. The family lived and grew up in Baltimore City, where Margueritte worked in a bank. On retiring John and Margueritte

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Directory listing Madeline and Jesse living at Northland Road.

built a house on Fenwick island, Delaware. Dianne atarted her working life in the insurance industry, after having her children she became a teacher in Finksburg Maryland. Susan is a nurse working with people with learning difficulties in Lewes, Delaware. John told of Christmases when the stocking contained only fruit and some nuts. He used to be paid to sing in a local boys choir in Norfolk Virginia, until his voice broke. I wonder if Gwendolyn used to sing?

Madeline married Jesse Haugh and they lived in Woodlawn in Baltimore County until moving to Stuart Florida on a permanent basis, having spent a number of winters there. Jesse had worked in the insurance industry, and the directory listing above shows him working at this time as an actuary for Calvert Fire Insurance Company. After retiring he continued to be active as an Insurance Examiner for the State of Maryland. Madeline also

worked for an insurance company.

During the 1980s British manufacturing industry was badly affected by the policies of the Thatcher Government. After being made redundant three times I tried my hand, quite unsuccessfully, at selling insurance. I do remember the thrill of one client telling me some years later that he had made a 200% return on an investment I'd advised him on, so I wasn't a complete washout at the job!

Madeline now lives alongside a golf course where she plays most days. Madeline described living in a big old house with steps down from the back door. Apparently as a child she collected tin cans (probably as part of the war bond drives) and one night emptied a sackful down the back steps waking everyone in the house, then pretending to be asleep when the rest of the house were up. I gather she got her reward for the prank. she also describes her mother as 'a very special person', she says that while her father was away so much the burden of raising the family fell to her mother, which could not have been easy. Madeline says 'she was always there for us'. This simple statement helps to convey something of the character that Gwendolyn had developed; a giving, thoughtful and considerate person I think, someone determined to make sure that her family enjoyed a family life that she herself had been denied.

Karl (Willy) was in the Korean war. Just a few years after the end of the Second World War America was no longer intent on an isolationist policy, seeing itself as the bulwark against the spread of communism during the years that were to be known as the Cold War. From time to time Russia or China, the two communist super powers, would support communist groups in other countries and civil war would break out. The Korean war was one such war where communist North Koreans attacked the South with Chinese support. America provided the bulk (88%) of the United Nations force that supported South Korea. Fighting



Marilyn from the Freshman Year section of her college yearbook.

continued between 1950 and 1953. Once more Gwendolyn knew the anguish of a mother who's son was serving in military combat. Willy returned home but wasn't employed. He followed his interests of American football and baseball. He didn't marry and lived at home with his mother and sister Marilyn.

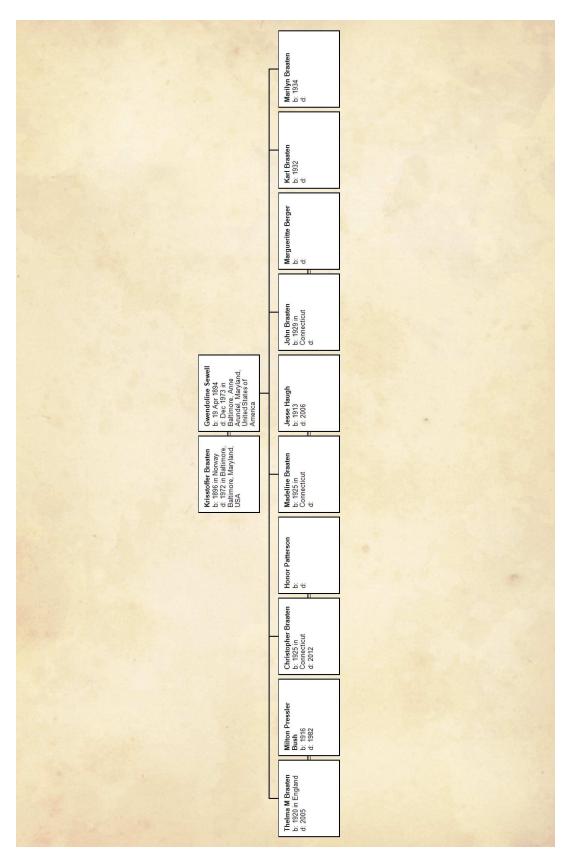
Marilyn was a nurse and then worked in day care for the elderly. In her spare time she loved knitting and work with plastic canvas. I wonder if Marilyn had learned knitting from Gwendolyn, perhaps Gwendolyn had been taught to knit in her foster homes just as Amy had learned to knit at the orphanage. Marilyn didn't marry and lived at home with Gwendolyn, her mother. After her mum died Marilyn and Willy continued to live in the same house and amazingly and fortuitously they didn't change the name in the telephone directory which led to me being able to make contact. Marilyn was the first member of our

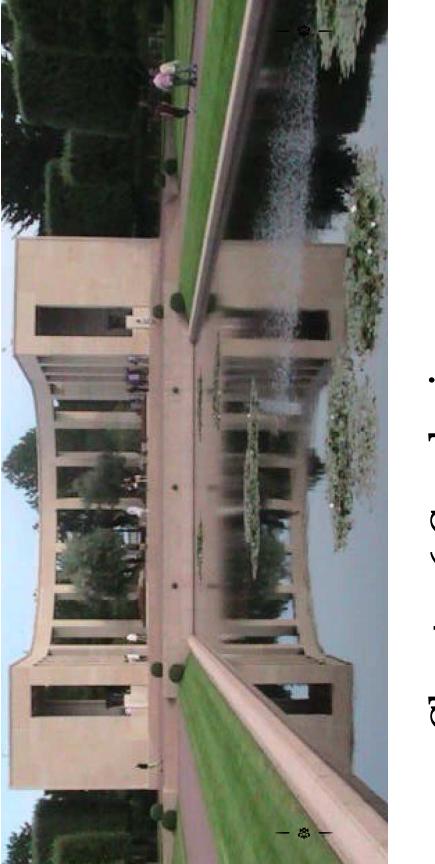
American part of the family I spoke to and she sounded as excited as I felt. I remember her saying "We always wondered what had happened to you guys.".

The picture on page 199 shows the enlistment card for Kristoffer Braaten in 1918, showing him joining the US Navy during the end of the First World War, giving him the distinction of serving in both World Wars.

I am amazed when I look back on the information I have found and been given by her family about Gwendolyn, that someone who didn't experience a stable family background in her childhood became such a stable figure in the lives of her own family. Gwendolyn has been described to me as someone who was quiet, unassuming and above all kindly. From the difficult times of the depression and the fearful years of the Second World War to the developing affluence of the 1950s and the social change of the 1960s, Gwendolyn was the constant presence that her family could rely on. She was the mother figure to her children that she had not known in her own childhood.

Unite	REGISTRATION CARD No. 330
1	Name in full nestoffer Draster 22
2	Home S/SWm OBrian Fott of Fourseaux ase
3	Date of hirth January 26 1876
4	Are yould a natural-born citizen, (2) adaturalised citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or here you declared your intention (specify which)?
5	Where were Aurum Moreway (Nation)
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? Morway
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office?
8	By whom employed? on Goard Steamshipe "William O'Breen
9	Hare you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, salaly dependent a you for support (specify which)?
10	Married or single (which)? seingle Race (specify which)? Courses
11	What military service have you had? Rank
12	Do you chain exemption (Clouine exemption sect secured in
1	I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.
100	Christ Bruster





Chapter 6 Conclusions

English clergyman and poet John Donne is often quoted, and one of the most often used comes from his meditation XV11, "No man is an island, entire of itself".

This statement reminds us of the way our lives touch, and are touched by others. We do not live in isolation, we absorb stimuli from others; and as a plant absorbs light and turns it into a life force, so we thrive or wither through our interaction with others. For in as much as interaction with others can create encouragement, inspiration and aspiration in us, so too can it create despair, despondency and depression. Our response to life circumstances can be influenced by the example of others, for better or for worse. We do well to remember that we similarly affect others. The influence or affect may be immediate, it may occur over time, and it may also be passed on to others in a kind of ripple effect, ripples of influence spreading across the lakes of time and humanity

In working through the research and writing of this book, I have used as the basis the way I have been influenced in my life. In looking at some of the many people who have influenced me, it became immediately apparent that when we pause even briefly to consider such a premise for ourselves, the number of people who have even directly influenced us is vast. The number of people who have indirectly influenced us is innumerable. Influence descends through the generations, its origins are sometimes lost in time, half remembered sayings, attitudes and beliefs that are almost instinctive, yet rooted in those of preceding generations.

In my adult life there have been many influences, people I have worked with, studied with or made music with. By far the most influential has been my wife Carol, who's quiet guidance and example has worked a change on me that has curbed my temper, encouraged my compassion, and helped me become more of the person I wanted to be.

For some people there comes a time when we are confronted with who we are and how we see ourselves. For a number of years I identified myself by my work and the position I held, as if this were some kind of validation of who I was. A difficult time at work some years ago led me to re-evaluate my view of myself and to understand who I am. It was during this period of introspection that I once more began to look at the people who had helped to shape my character, particularly in childhood.

My sisters would not recognise how they have had a significant role in shaping my character, yet Dawn was a great example of giving of oneself to others without seeking anything in return. Tarnia always argued with me and helped me stand up for myself, I can hear my mother's voice now saying "For goodness sake stop arguing you two, you're arguing over nothing." Which was often true as we enjoyed a good argument for its own sake. One of the outcomes of this is that I've often talked myself into trouble and then talked my way out of it. I also learned to think through my views and opinions and held more secure beliefs as a result.

The most obvious influence has been that of my parents and I readily recognised and acknowledged this. What was equally obvious was that they had been similarly influenced by their own parents and so it would seem to continue, back into the mists of time. Except of course that isn't how things work out as our story has shown. I was also very fortunate to have my Grandmother Amy living with us and she had a very great influence on my early years. I was keen to understand what had influenced her and to learn more of her family. I have also sought to include some historical information to show the major world events, as well as personal events that they experienced and lived through.

The story that has emerged is not what I expected and has had

many twists and turns. Amy, Gwendolyn and Alfred had the kind of childhood that was so completely the opposite of my own, that I included references to my own childhood and experiences as a comparison. I felt that by doing so I was able to emphasise the experience that Amy, Gwendolyn and Alfred had, particularly for the later generations that follow my own.

In reading the story that has unfolded it may appear that this has been a sad tale, one of desertions, abandonment and neglect. Three children at their innocent age who were exposed to the harsh provision and privation of Victorian welfare. A mother leaving her family, never to be heard of again, a father who seemed to slip down the social ladder, apparently estranged from his family. Children placed in the workhouse, an institution established to help the poor that became in later years a byword for degradation and abuse. Children who were seemingly spurned by their relatives and separated from each other, sent to different orphanages and even different countries. The bare facts indicate a very sad tale and yet to stop at this as the outcome of the story would be entirely erroneous.

While all of these things are true there is another narrative that runs alongside the bare facts. It is one of determination, adaptability, making the best of things, being persistent, living in hope and faith. Above all it is a story of triumph over adversity and as such it is a tremendous example to us all.

Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn didn't give up. They didn't give up on themselves or on each other. Despite the most desperate and extreme circumstances they maintained contact with each other, and that in itself was a remarkable achievement.

Yet more than this they took the hard learned lessons and experiences of life and applied them to build a future, a future for themselves and their families. Their individual and combined displays of fortitude, the way they faced hardship and adversity shines like the brightest star in the night sky. They didn't succumb to despair, they didn't wallow in self pity, or allow

disillusion to dilute their determination. Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn met the challenges of life head on and overcame them. They may not have financial wealth to show for their efforts, but their characters show a richness that is beyond measure.

In learning more of Amy and Alfred and Gwendolyn, I feel that I would like to have known them all, yet feel privileged to have know even one. In the age of celebrity when character is exaggerated and blown out of proportion, I find that there are virtues such as kindness, caring, compassion and humility that are undervalued. Ambition can be a really positive force in life, aspiration can also provide a positive drive. To be as good an example to others as Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn is something to aspire to.

There comes a time when we wonder if or how we will be remembered. Perhaps it should be enough that people could say of us, as we can of Alfred, Amy and Gwendolyn, theirs were indeed 'lives well lived'.

Sources

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BT National Teleohone Company Archives

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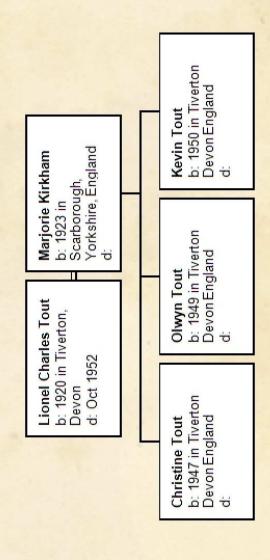
Alan Wakefield and Simon Moody

Undertones of War

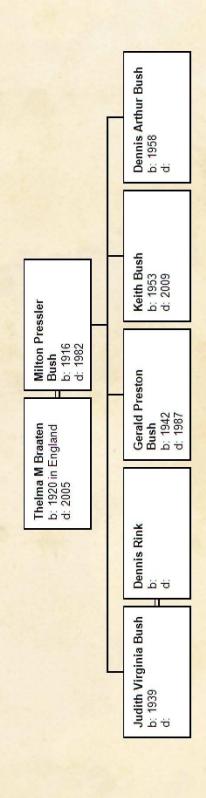
Edmund Blunden

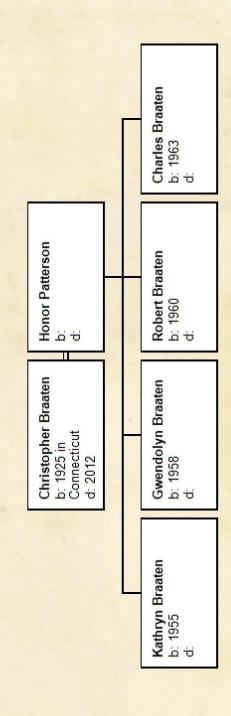
War Letters of Fallen Englishmen

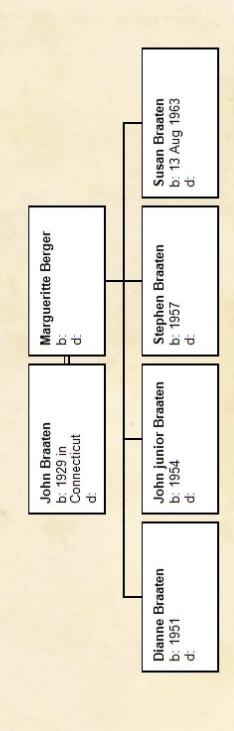
Laurence Houseman



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Bernard Tout (Dad) in RAF uniform



