

CHAPTER IV

Another Cutler home – North Harrow - Sun Litho – Father-in-Law – Building a garage - Page planning – Colour Masking – First Car - Growing Family – Seaside Holidays – Gardening – The Angel Islington – Printing Strike - Wharf Road – Badminton – CCPR. Courses – Golf – Home improvements – Overtime – Shopping – Pushing the pram - Bedtime stories – Christmas cheer.

Number sixty-eight newly built in 1932 when much of the town of North Harrow developed... The construction of suburban homes provided work for a great number of unemployed building workers after the disastrous General Strike of 1926... The new towns followed the Metropolitan Railway Line... running from Aylesbury to London...

We arrived, with our new baby. The few cars, that were owned, parked on driveways leading to tile-hung, lean-to garages, with pitched, tiled roof... the roads bare of parked cars... quiet - residential...

The road was flanked, as the majority, by a grass verge, behind kerbstones... Obligatory crab apple, hawthorn or almond trees planted squarely in the middle – one before each house... It was *infra dig* not to keep the front of one's house tidy... all kept their front gardens immaculate - grass verges and lawns, short... Privet hedges, trimmed - scalloped or castellated... masked the chain-linked fence beneath...

House window frames and doors, painted either green and cream or brown and cream, and most, if not all, had lace curtains. This may all sound rather twee – regimental. Perhaps it was, but it led to a good standard of decoration - uniform behaviour, being normal rather than extreme... A green and pleasant land prevailed...!

These were three bedroomed houses with two reception rooms plus a bathroom upstairs and a kitchen below. The larder was in the hall next to the kitchen with an under stair cupboard. Picture rails and plate racks, dado rails in hall and landing, open spindled stairs-cases, unpainted polished handrails, galleried landings, and wood surround fireplaces on a tiled hearth... These were Horace Cutler homes, built by the same builder who constructed my parent's rented home in Cumberland Road, solidly built with tile-hung, curved bays to the front and french doors at the back. No drive or garage but a rear entrance with wooden fence and gate. The panelled front door was glazed with stained glass and so too the landing window. The kitchen provided with a range that heated the water, a wooden dresser, butler sink and surface plumbing. Previous owners had not altered the house - it contained all its original fittings and fitments...

Opening the back door revealed the garden... and the concrete path that circled the house. Not having a shed - for either coal or tools, gave further proof, to the property's unaltered state. The sixty-foot lawn sloped down to a mature hawthorn hedge... the one-time field boundary..., stretched as far as the eye could see, all along the back gardens, giving shelter, shade and animal byway... thereby ensuring a rural landscape - through all the seasons.

On either side of the lawn, a three-foot wide flower border, held a couple of clumps of bedraggled Michaelmas Daises and a woebegone Phlox. The lawn, such as it was, held indentations where onetime wartime vegetable plots laid out. There was much scope for improvement... it was all ours... we proud owners...!

Our immediate neighbours, Lilly and Bart Walker, had a daughter Janice - the same age as Simon. Eventually they attended the same class at the Primary School just two hundred

yards down the road towards Rayners Lane. On the other side of us was the electricity board sub station and the ends of the gardens from the houses in the next street.

We moved in prior to Easter 1960 and settled down to domesticity. Simon occupied the same bedroom we did - at the front of the house, and continued so doing for three months before taking up residence in the second bedroom - to the rear. It was not long before we invested in a fitted grey hair cord carpet to cover the whole house except the kitchen, bathroom... wood parquet, graced the hall...

By this time I was working at Sun Litho, Ruislip, with most of the work force being of similar age – most, newly married... starting a family. There was much talk of home repairs, improvement and renovation... the latest cars, washing machines and fridges... Arguments would ensue about the relative strengths of certain mixtures of cement to sand, the boxing in of staircases, panelled doors and difficulties hanging wallpaper or fixing wall tiles.

Regular mystery car trips were organised which ended up at a local hostelry. It was all very friendly - learnt over time - to accept and be relaxed in each other's company. It was also a 'go-ahead' firm using the latest industrial methods. A period of boom swept over the print world and thankfully we became part of it...!

My first task after decorating the inside was to build a garage. I drew up the plans and submitted them to the council. There was nothing in the plans to cause any dissent from the planning department and so that summer taking a week off from work I started work. The side fence and gate was cleared away so too the front hedge and brick wall. I began digging out the footings, which needed to be dugout to a depth of four and a half feet to allow for the clay subsoil. Fortunately, my garage only

needed one side and back wall – a lean-to garage, 20 feet x 11, with a corrugated asbestos roof.

When it came to filling in the footings - it was even more of a struggle than digging out... Not investing in a mixer - mixed by hand... what seemed like tons of concrete...? To make it a little easier I started heaving in some of the two thousand bricks ordered for the walls - to supplement the mix...

Building the walls slowly accomplished, taking care of the stability of the single brick, one pier, construction... When it came to building the reinforced concrete joist over the double doors - I nearly met my match... Lifting a bucket of concrete up above shoulder height - to pour into the shuttering, was far harder than imagined, particularly because, my ladder was short... Eventually the job was finished with the roof on, parapet built and doors hung, including the fixed framed window to the rear. Now I had to construct the drive and lay the garage floor...

It took me so long to level out the hard-core, breaking the bricks into manageable pieces, then to mix up the necessary concrete. Sally's father came over to lend me a hand and at onetime I thought he was going to have a heart attack...

To make the job go faster I shovelled up a massive pile of ballast and cement in the road. As I hosed in the water, Sally's father and I started to break down the sides of the pile - to mix up the concrete. Unfortunately, the side's of the well broke and a wet mixture - of half-mixed concrete started to flood out into the road. What a gallop we had to rush round to stem the tide. We furiously mixed as we circled the pile trying to stem the tide whilst stiffening up the mixture. Poor father-in-law had to go in for a cup of tea and a long sit down...

Later on, that summer of 1960, we went on holiday to Bournemouth, for a weeks stay at a hotel, with Cedric, Jo and new daughter Jane... Cedric, doing his internship, and Jo, a

physiotherapist, both worked at Wembley Hospital... Jo being pregnant with Jane, at the same time as Sally - who worked in the secretaries department whilst pregnant with Simon... They became one of a small circle of friends throughout the childrens *growing up* period...

Harry, we were told, had had a mild heart attack, the week before we were due to go on holiday. Because it was considered not life threatening we were advised to carry on with the holiday arrangements. It was during that holiday we heard of his death... Rita, Sally's mother, advised us to finish the holiday before coming home - nothing we could do to help. What a shock this news was and how distressing; he was only sixty one and had so looked forward to retirement – to cycle over and watch Simon grow up and to watch a lot of cricket... things he had been planning to do for so long... I was certainly going to miss him and his steady influence...

Rita continued to live at Priory Gardens after the funeral – being only fifty two at the time, putting on a brave face... to the terrible tragedy, especially when we heard that it needn't of happened if the proper course of action had been taken by the Hospital. She was to take an active part in our growing family making sure each child had all the necessary clothes and school uniform whilst always remaining interested in their out of school activities. Birthdays always celebrated, school reports scanned and problems talked through... No week went by without some contact and monthly visits to her house - for Saturday or Sunday tea.

Making wine was another common fad which many work mates succumbed to. The kit was bought with all the ingredients plus the carboys to hold the wine, siphon, and distil. The chaps at work were continually going on about what a magnificent brew they had obtained – so a craze started. It all ended up with the

whole lot dispensed with - down the drain, and the carboys given away.

I had a vision to create a smart frontage to the property by erecting an oak-railed fence in place of the privet hedge. To complement it an oak door made especially at the local joiners in Harrow - to replace the original stained glass 1930s style door, which was beginning to come apart.

In the late 60s, it was all the rage to remove all the plate rails, picture rails and dado mouldings from the walls. Box in all the stair rails and panelled doors. Knock down the fireplaces and hearths, remove the over mantles and the fire surrounds and replace with electric or gas fires mounted on the wall. This sacrilege went on throughout the country; doing away with the old, and replacing with easy to decorate and simple to clean, gloss painted hard board.

Many years later: conservation and restoration experts declare, 'original fixtures and fittings, to be left - in situ' - replace the original mouldings and fireplaces if possible, put it all back as it was. Thank goodness, common sense has returned and properties now reflect the age and style they were built. Owners now began to appreciate the skill of past craftsmen and the quality of their materials. The many television programmes concerned with renovating old buildings and interior decorating has opened their eyes. House buyers are better educated to appreciate past standards. The philistine age of knocking everything down has passed with the advent of educational television programmes that explain the skills used in the past.

This was the age of the mini skirt and Carnaby Street fashions. Informality was in and strict dress codes were out. Denim trousers for both sexes went with long hair and Beatle haircuts. The BBC launched Radio 1. No longer, did families gather round the radio of an evening to share a programme -

young people had their own channel and in all probability listened to a pirate radio station. I ran a Kay's catalogue and bought all the family's clothes from that source which made dressing the family so much easier.

I was in competition with the next-door neighbour – unbeknown to him... Their garden, with prized lawn, precisely arranged flower beds and regimented kitchen-garden, represented perfection - neatness and colour content.

Two could play at that game: I invested in lorry loads of peat, the latest scientific advances in chemical fertilisers... laying a well hidden, punctured hose, along the edge of the flowerbeds... No vegetable matter was going to be retarded by lack of water, what was good enough for the Nile delta was good enough for me! There, that should do the trick, I thought...!

My beans galloped over the canes and nearby fence – mighty curling vines - thick as a python, with tendrils wrapping themselves around everything. The tomatoes suffered from root rot and wilted; the lawn became yellow and patchy... and my lawn boasted the richest harvest of vetches, clover and moss.

I retreated in ignominy and relied upon the overhanging branches from next door's apple tree to supplement my dwindling horticultural produce.

It was Sally's plan to have children fairly close together – a two-year gap between the first and second. Because Simon had taken longer than planned Sally thought we ought to start earlier - to produce the second. As luck would have it, for Sally, she became pregnant at first try... David Harry [named after Sally's father] greeted life a little early, on 3 September 1961. In those days a home confinement and birth was possible for the second and subsequent children. Therefore, we met as a family, Nurse Foulds, who became Sally's midwife, confidant and friend. She saw Sally through the nine months - we were delighted at the end

result... there I was, running up and down the stairs - with hot water. Even though I had attended the birth and read books I was still remarkable ignorant about procreation and the likes and dislikes of women. David was heavier at birth than Simon was and more even tempered and carefree; made very much more of his teething which must have been more painful for him.

Rita baby-sat for us at every night out we had. It did not take her long to appreciate that it would be very convenient to own her own car. So she started to take driving lessons which were to take her over two years to achieve.

My elder brother Stan had his first child Steven that year too which helped to make their new home in Chesham complete. We watched together that house being built - on farmland which, went to make up a new development on the outskirts of old Chesham. How Stan drove to work in that old Ford I shall never know? Its remarkable, looking back, what one does - taking everything in at a stride, not considering sufficiently the eventual outcome?

Derek, my younger brother was now eighteen. Before he left school at fifteen my father had secured for him a position with the London Underground working in the signalling section. I do not think Derek thought much of that so went to work for Halls timber and hardware store just off Rayners Lane. During that time, he helped me decorate the sitting room renovating the fireplace - helping to scrape the rich brown varnish off the woodwork. He was the proud owner of a large Ford car that required an enormous amount of work to keep it on the road.

It was about this time that my parents received the awful news that the owners of their house had died and that the new owners were putting the property on the market. Initially my father, as a sitting tenant, gave the opportunity to buy it for the sum of two thousand pounds. This of course he flatly refused

one because he said that he didn't have the money and two because it went beyond his principles of never to own his own property. It was a tremendous blow to my mother.

Over a period of many months, every avenue explored to come up with an answer - where they were going to live. Even the Freemasons were involved but they refused to help. The council were informed. Initially they could not help. As time went by their position became more urgent - something arranged to find a home where they would be happy.

Pinner Green had an estate of council flats erected right at that moment. Once again, even though my parents lived within walking distance they never visited or phoned. I found this most unusual could never could make out why? When we did visited them we were made to feel so welcomed and at ease. This was not what I had planned and worked towards for so long - I wanted to play an active part in my children's family life - go on joint holidays, watch my grandchildren grow up, read those stories, play with them, see them take part in sports and go to their school.

As previously explained, my parents did not own their home... they were tenants. The owner died. As sitting tenants they were offered the chance to buy it at a reduced rate... it was then offered to them for two hundred pounds. There was no way she could afford that, having no savings, whatsoever... my Father then declared, 'he did not possess that amount and would not consider borrowing the money...' The opportunity was lost, for neither my brother nor I had that sort of money to invest. This had a tremendous affect upon my mother... never being a town person she harped back to her childhood and all the country things she loved... she would have loved to keep the house in the family. They were given six months to find another home... after trying every avenue - to stay or rent, the Council came up with a

solution – to live in a ground floor flat, one, in a block of flats, in Pinner Green.

Derek, who was living with them, the last child at home, had to dismantle all the fixtures and fitting. Help burn all the furniture not wanted and prepare for the move. What a disastrous thing to happen. My father had all the time in the world to prepare for this moment. It was just his stubbornness, fear and ridiculous principles, which got in the way. It was also surprising, looking back, that we boys could not have got together to find the money... knowing that when they died the sum would come back to us. It did not strike us at the moment that this would have been the solution... which shows, how familiar we now with financial services: mortgages, loans, trusts and wills... the advantageous manipulation of money and resources.

The summer of 1962, Sally decided that we should start to think about increasing the family believing that it would be lovely to try for a girl... there being no girls in the immediate family... it was something to look forward to. We were both pleased to find out that Sally was pregnant again - that August... for a birth sometime in May 1963. It was also that year that Stan and Jean had their second child – Stuart, whilst they were still living in Chesham.

My old Ford van was not suitable for a growing family - further seating needed. Living next door to Rita, in Priory Gardens, was the owner of the local garage in Sudbury. We told him that we were looking for another car and he came up with a red Vauxhall Victor 1500 cc. car, which was only one year old. This seemed like a sensible buy. That car took me to work in Islington for many years... giving excellent service.

During Sally's pregnancy with Rachel, leaning over the settee twisted the umbilical cord. This caused fluctuations to the blood supply to the womb - at onetime we though the pregnancy

would have to be terminated. By taking things steady - not exerting her, the nine months might pass by without trauma... only this time the baby delivered at Edgware Maternity Hospital. At last, Rachel was born on 18 May 1963 - named after Sally's mother - Rachel Rita. The problem over the part strangulated cord did mean that Rachel had not had all the necessary life giving aids and was lighter than normal. However, she soon perked up and became the feted first girl for generations, in the Kearey family.

Our family holiday's were arranged for single weeks never a fortnight at a time. We would spend the first holiday of each year at the YMCA, Eastbourne. This opportunity eagerly looked forward to - it provided lodging and full board. It also had a lot of space for the children to explore, organised evening entertainment and gave us the opportunity to have a laid afternoon tea in the dining room.

The YMCA run as a hotel being directly on the sea front in the middle of town made it perfect. We have to know all the local facilities especially the best walks and sights. This holiday at Eastbourne was eagerly looked forward to becoming a central part of the family's life and continued for many years – it never let us down.

I was fortunate that at this time I had three week's holiday a year. For the other two I planned walking holidays based upon either a farm or lodgings mainly in the West Country. For each holiday, I bought an Ordinance Survey map and carefully planned each days walk to take in as many archaeological points of interest that I could find starting mid morning and finishing mid afternoon. They had to be circular so that we never walked twice along a certain footpath nor saw the same piece of landscape. All the walks planned to follow reasonably flat ground - to allow for the pushchair. Towards the end of each day's walk, the pushchair

had to carry two children, I to carry the remaining tired soul. It was a challenge to come up with such a walk every day for a week and we got into some difficult times when the map was either unclear: the footpath not used sufficiently - the nettles and brambles unflattened or the path went through a herd of cows, or the little stream had become a raging torrent. Perhaps, the village, shown on the map, was either of a few solitary houses or devoid of any habitation at all. All this had to done under any weather conditions usually in the pouring rain, particularly when we visited Wales of the Welsh Marches.

I usually lead being the map-reader and Sally brought up the rear. In between was strung out the children who were enticed by the many and varied games I thought of along the way, with a prize of a few pennies for the winner. Nursery Rhymes sung as a roundelay as well as the alphabet, who can find the roundest stone, who can gather the prettiest posy - usually placed on the oldest gravestone in the graveyard... our walks always included a visit to the church. The challenge was, who can select the most varied group of coloured leaves, who can think of a girls or boys name beginning with each letter of the alphabet? In fact, I made up frequent quizzes and stories to make the journey interesting - keep the children occupied. Many times, I said, "It's just around the next corner". I made the rejoinder so many times that it become a family saying.

By looking at the map I could tell what the geography of the place was in relation to human habitation – so I explained why the houses were built where they were, why the farm was laid out so. The significance of where in the past houses were built relative to the lie of the land and so many other interesting pieces of information recording how past generations lived: how a dry stone wall was constructed, how a hedge was laid, why a ditch drained off the land. The object was to read the map in

such a manner that one could picture the area - the contents and contours. Much of the time, my words were just a voice on the breeze. However, I did hope some of it was sinking in for I found it all fascinating especially when the walk took us to a castle, some other historical building or place with the significance of the crossed swords indicated on the map - and the consequences thereby. Every church admired or criticized for its architecture - every detail; the gravestones checked to see which was the oldest. Our picked bunches of wild flowers were laid on that grave. We savoured the old-fashioned names and epitaphs.

All our holiday followed this familiar pattern with a packed lunch gathered up along the way to be eaten perched upon a rocky wall, gate or mound. The pushchair was the carriage: holder of all the unwanted clothes, after stocking up at the local shop, the source of comfort which would eventually lead to home; at times it transported three children. Even though it was a pain when one had to lift it over a hedge or style, it went with us everywhere.

David had been sleeping in his cot in the small third bedroom. Now that we had another child, that bedroom was to become Rachel's and David went into the larger second bedroom with Simon. This did not cause any upset nor cause any problem - it was a case of necessity.

On one of our visits to Jo and Cedric Selway, we had to bypass Epping Forest. We stopped to have a break and to give the children chance to play. When we left, I found that the car bogged down in mud. Stupidly I made to lift the car out of the mud and to ease it forward. In doing so, I strained my back. With much effort, I struggled into the car and we continued our journey. Now I had the job of getting out. I staggered into their lounge and had to lie on the floor, which I continued to do for the whole of the visit. What an effort it was to get back into the

car and to drive home. . I can sympathise with anyone who has similar problems. Mind you, it was daft to try to lift the car in the first place. It does not take long for anyone who has a permanent illness or disability to become his or her own expert clinician. In my case I soon got round to standing on my feet by getting to my knees first or likewise sliding out of bed onto my knees.

Late in 1964, Sally decided once more on having another child. I was most concerned that, as it was, the family's budget was being stretched and having another child would stretch it! However, Sally insisted that we had ample baby clothes and all the other necessary things - after all, it was the four children that she had always wanted – that we had agreed upon. I did not remember any such agreement but if that were what was necessary to make her happy, perhaps it would be nice.

Now I really had to plan for an enlarged family. All the bedrooms occupied - we needed more space. The first thing was to put in a downstairs toilet. This would not be too difficult because we had an existing under-stair cupboard that had been a walk-in larder. It had too sufficient headroom for what I had in mind. Luckily just outside the small ventilation window was the soil pipe from the upstairs lavatory so all we had to do was link into that. We called the plumber who was a friend of Stan's so his prices were very reasonable, so we pushed ahead with the plan. The window was louvered which gave sufficient ventilation and light. Now all I had to do was redecorate and put on a new door, which I built out at an angle to give a little more space. Overall, it worked out very well especially as we had fitted at the same time a new gas boiler and several radiators.

In 1964 there was few loft extensions built. Still the original layout of the roads, with their grass verges, was intact. The kerbstones were still complete without runways breaking up the sweep of the roadsides. The majority of houses retained their side

entrances and complete front gardens. Few cars parked, hedges abounded and front gates hung. The roads were therefore neat, uncluttered and in the main unspoilt by alterations to the estates original conception. This was so all over Britain. What altered the panorama was the advent of higher wages – increased prosperity, which heightened the individual's will to better themselves. This declared itself by individuals altering the specification of their house and garden.

The country's prosperity and easier planning laws allowed individuals to alter their property to cater for a car. Pavements could be torn up to create a ramp - to cross pavements, garages, built with a flat roof although the brickwork had to be in keeping with the original specification. Lofts converted, front doors changed and window designs altered. These changes were made to houses all over Britain affecting the original design concepts devised by the architects and town planners

The baby boom of the sixties, and the ease of planning regulations and control, gave parents a simple option... It was much cheaper to alter your home than it was to sell and buy anew – a larger version of the same. Children could carry on attending the same school... the routine of living - continue unaltered... This made extending a far more attractive proposition. The appearance of British town's changes forever... gone, calm green vistas and conformity... DIY ruled and cheapness the governing factor to design...!

This happened all over Britain a situation where a vast proportion of properties were beyond the financial reach of a certain sector of the population. First time buyers seeking affordable homes found less and less on the market. Mrs Thatcher sold off council homes and buying to rent made difficult.

I believed that I could provide a better environment for my family if I relocated to the West Country. A larger house, purchased in Somerset or Devon, with the money received from the sale of Norwood Drive, would be a better proposition than staying close to London... Part of the building could be let out for holidaymakers or as bed and breakfast accommodation. The possibility of a larger garden would provide a much better environment for the growing family.

Excited by the thought, of what the future might hold, I made plans about how I should go about it. Sally appeared to be interested in the idea and could see the benefits. I contacted the West Country union offices and enquired about vacancies. One existed and so applied for a 'white card' to receive back a request for an interview. I wrote to some of the local Estate Agents - near Exeter to receive back a sheaf of particulars that looked promising...

It was at the point that Sally said that she did not want to move. This forced me to reconsider all my plans - led me to take out another insurance policy with Provident Life to allow us to have the capital to go ahead with an extension. We also extended the kitchen sideways and redesigned the interior layout - constructing a hatchway into the dining room. On my next holiday, I built a new patio, garden wall and replaced the wooden fence with a brick wall - separating us from our next-door neighbour.

To allow more space in both the second bedroom and the dining room I thought I would remove the fireplaces and the chimneybreasts. Tackling the bedroom first, I started to remove the brickwork, which came away quite easily. Where the breast came up to the ceiling, I staggered the brickwork back to support the breastwork above in the loft. All the rubbish I threw out of the window and then wheeled it to the skip. When I came to do,

the downstairs dining room things were not quite so easy because the massive concrete hearth to the room above not supported. The concrete hearth was six inches thick by four feet long and eighteen inches wide. The question of how to get it down was a puzzle. At last, I had a brain wave. I would lean my ladder against the wall and then hammer it down from the room above. At the first twenty smashes, nothing happened. I could feel the house move but not the slab. Not even a chip flew off. Wishing to get on I assaulted the stubborn block by giving it a tremendous whack. That did it. It plummeted through the floor straight through my ladder, which it was suppose to slide down, and buried itself into the splintered floorboards. I peered through the hole in the floor aghast at the damage done. My new extending ladder bought for me by my mother-in-law was ruined. To remove the slab: rolled - head over heels... through the French doors up a sloping plank into the skip... now I had to plaster two rooms. It looks so easy when you watch a skilled plasterer lying on the coats of plaster dampening down – flicking a brush of water onto the drying surface just to allow easy passage of the float to give the plaster a polished surface. What a performance trying to get it just right. In the end, I relied upon sand papering succeeding coats of plaster to give the wall some semblance of ‘a level professional finish’.

In 1964, Harold Wilson and the Labour party elected. This was a time of industrial failure, out-of-date technology; short term fixes which propelled the country into yet another sterling crisis and inflation. Therefore, off we went again into the annual wage demand to keep up. Wilson stepped back from trade union reform. It was just a few years later that the Labour moved towards comprehensive secondary education.

Talking amongst ourselves at work, I could tell there were higher expectations sought from life. Individuals spoke about

flying to the Far East or America. There was much talk about going out to restaurants and nightclubs. New towns were springing up all over the country. Men at work told stories about weekend parties... and the swopping of front door keys. All sorts of choices in lifestyle were possible and there were shops and stores catered for any deviant behaviour.

Distemper superseded by emulsion paint and the public shied away from having green, brown and cream exterior woodwork - choosing instead, new softer tones. Centre lights taken up to the ceiling. Net curtains frowned on. Privet hedges replaced by brick walls, roads erupted with new driveways and lean-to garages sprouted. The old quiet charm of the thirties went modern! Kitchens were now fitted with everything beneath the worktop surface; the box freezer was the 'in thing'. Fireplaces ripped out, chimney places bricked up and wall-to-wall carpeting finished off the effect of uncluttered space. Gas and electric fires were taking the place of conventional fires for both heating the water and for heating the living space. New 'Do-it-yourself' programmes backed up all these alterations on television.

Overtime for me was now a necessary buttress if I was going to supplement state education by out of school activities like swimming and drama [elocution] lessons... our holidays, had to be booked. Sally's decision not to move to the West Country put an end to all my hopes to try to supplement my sources of income. We had to continue as we were...

In 1965 our eldest child was about to start Primary School; the second had just started swimming lessons at the Swimming Baths, our third was starting to walk and Ruth was about to be born.

Both Sally and I were keen to see that the children kept up to the required standard at school. Because Simon had had such a good start, being in a class at Primary school mainly populated by

girls, the standard of behaviour and learning had been high. The parents too had been interested in their own child's progress. It was natural for us to expect all our children to assume the same progress. We also compared our children with friends and relations children and discussed with them their views. We watched and kept note how each one progressed from birth... Sally filling in the 'baby books' assiduously keen to make sure nothing was missed out...

As a young family, we did without television until our eldest was twelve when the pressure from outside the home became too great to continue without one. This doing without a television was a conscience decision by both of us parents, to prevent addiction to triviality, violence and puerile programmes.

We paid a weekly visit to the library where all the children drew out books - read by the following week. This Saturday trip to the library became a routine event come rain or shine... followed by two ounces of sweets each to eat on the way home. All this started when the eldest became old enough to benefit and continued well after the time television was to become popular entertainment.

I was working at least two four-and-a-half hour periods of overtime on top of my normal hours during the week... on Saturdays, I started at six until two in the afternoon. The midweek rate for over-time was time-and-a-half and for Saturdays double-time. I started off from home during the week at about seven and drove to London by either car or motor bike to be there for eight and arrived back home around six for normal days and getting on for eleven on those nights of overtime.

As a social group, trades union's officials, whether at the union office or shop floor, enjoy power - to satisfy: their

inadequacies, enjoy the excitement of confrontation, look upon industrial disputes as opportunities to sit back, stop work and talk about ‘management unfairness...’ There are those, who make such situations, one to ‘help their fellow workers, right injustices and a few, born leaders of men – who like cream - rise to the top... as well, many others. A few, believe in ‘socialistic philosophy’ – an ideological belief concerned with equal distribution of profit - relative to need... This, world-wide, proved to be: inefficient, unworkable, unfair and socially detrimental and holds back evolution... From my experience, a generalization, none were the most skilled workers...

The workers representative would be called into the works office to discuss unusual jobs, difficult production schedules, annual pay reviews, changes in all workers ‘rights’, overtime payments, clarifying arrangements, discussions about new materials, machines and safety-first and welfare issues etc. All the above are extremely vital factors needing sometimes delicate handling. In many instances the union representative was not up to that delicate task – not technically able...!

When workers are receiving top salary rates and as much overtime as they want there are no complaints. Workers will work in terrible conditions with fearful safety problems - due to poor lighting, dangerous floors, amateurish electrical fittings, draughts and floods.

Between the wars trade unions officials shied away from wielding their strength - as to affect the nations economy – giving way as soon as the national safety declared an issue. Always it was ‘how the economy would not stand a change’. When there is full employment, and not enough skilled workers, then, union power at it’s strongest. This is obvious – reflects scarcity value.

This book covers the period when unions were probably at their strongest –any shortfall, from earlier times, made up by an

influx of white collar unionists, older trainee groups and women workers. The number of strike – days lost an escalating one, and the largest proportion of these, unofficial. As a onetime junior union official – all SLADE & PW members had to take their turn in attending meetings and filling local union jobs, it was apparent that head Office union leaders were not strong enough to control their more activist members. Very often men were forced to ‘toe-the-line’, if not - sent to Coventry. It was not a period of ‘common sense’. The local union officials acted irresponsibly. They never explaining that, ‘by the way, this strike might lead to mass unemployment, work going aboard - lead to industries closing down...’ Point out: the advance of electronics will come about which will alter working arrangements.

The workers continued their overtime habits – now relied upon... a necessity not just to get the job out on time but to pay their own bills... leading to the eventual loss of profits for the firm... delayed introduction of new working arrangements and installation of the latest technology. It was a viscous circle, which no one benefited from, least of all the workers. I have heard men say at a union meeting, “I would rather have this firm shut down rather than give way - on our demands”. There was a hard core of individuals who did not care about the industry – who enjoyed confrontation, who spoiled for a fight. They did not concern themselves with the changes facing the industry - the new ‘reprographic’ printing systems. Although traditional ‘in-plant’ printers were slow to exploit what was ‘new’ – instant print business, they made changes, which swung general trade work towards litho replacing their slower more inflexible letterpress machines. There was a very subtle difference between what the traditional printers estimated and what the competitive small jobbing printers charged. The former boasted faster delivery, quality and reliability and the latter cheapness. However, the

differences were becoming ever closer. New materials, faster make ready times - on the printing machine, and electronic picture scanning, finally made the difference. A century of hand produced coloured posters ended...

British governments continued to employ a policy that held back investment and destroyed confidence - no party had a leader strong enough to stand up to the unions: allow a wages policy, plus degree of unemployment, to force out the inefficient, time wasters and industrial agitators.

It was in this climate that we were bringing up our new family. I had to be very circumspect about what I said at work and how I did my work. Each man looked over his shoulder at the chap at the next bench. Was he achieving a faster, better job, doing more overtime or paid a higher salary? I could never relax because it was essential to continue to earn as much money as I could.

Everything at home, carefully thought through - contributed towards making a good environment for a family - educational trips to the Commonwealth Institute, Museums, Galleries, Concerts, places of interest and the library. Removing the television was paramount... to form a quiet, self-learning environment we hoped would be habit forming.

It was just such a pity that each child could not have their own room to enjoy privacy - have their own things around them. Perhaps more space achieved by building a loft extension, or *in extremis*, moving to a larger house.

I compared my living standard and expectations with my parents. My world was utterly different. It was not just different because of material differences, for they were many, but of expectations and possibilities. Our life was certainly closer to my in-laws - their horizons, tastes and practices, and this set the standard for the children - how we would bring them up - their

speech, manners and horizons. We had hopes that by adopting these ideas we had done our best to raise socially adaptable children - capable of achieving a happy fulfilling life. So far, the plan was working... However, not far away the pressures of the peer group and sexual awareness both might spoil all the good work and effort.

The differences between social attitudes within all classes related to the size of the family. Instead of being surrounded by a number of clambering children the modern family could be enjoyed and this reinforced by better living conditions. Little did I realise then what was to come about...!