

CHAPTER IV

Bad time to sell – Recession – E.R.M. – Building sites bare – No coastal traffic - Spring Exhibition – Ski trip – St Jose final days – Preparing to leave - Flying back – Holiday lets – The Old House – Canadian buyer - Ruff – Black Wednesday – Monks Cottage Bit of a squash - Old House - Heritage Trust - The Chapel – Listed Building - The Old Dairy – Verna Kilsby - Alterations.

In the summer of 1990, we considered Anna's future. The following year was to be her last at school - she was finishing her Baccalaureate. I discussed all the options with her giving full exposure to all the pit-falls and pluses. She had the chance to go to finishing school if she wished or attend a Sotheby's course for dealing with antiques – purchase, restoration and storage, archival and auctioneering.

She wanted to go to university in Britain rather than in Spain - using her educational strong points, compared to her English counter-parts, of Spanish language and History of Art - being her second choice. Both these topics had always been her strong suit, as much by my interests as well as her own natural inclination.

Anna was very sure about retuning to England, She had experienced life in Spain and the macho society – she did not like it. There was no-way that her natural inclinations could be swayed – not that we, ever tried. I was in full agreement with her decision and her choice of subjects. I assured her that if she wanted to return to England then I would too. She was adamant that we should stick together and present a strong front. We consulted the Vanes', by phone, who suggested that Cambridge University might be possibility - that they would look into it and let us know what they had come up with.

Meanwhile, Anna wrote away to every university that had an honours course in Spanish and History of Art; the two subjects Anna felt her strongest suit. Anna chose from the list Bristol, Bath and University College London, UCL, where Rebecca intended reading history.

Beryl Vane phoned to say that she had been in touch with Cambridge University and arranged an interview with a college that taught those subjects. Saying she had paved the way and would let her know what Anna decided. We phoned back telling her the arrangements were fine and that we would be delighted to accept her invitation to lunch to see them and talk over the matter. Both Anna and I went to England in late August 1990, staying at Monks Cottage, Aylesbury, whilst Josephine looked after Ruff in Spain. We had an appointment with one of the Colleges at Cambridge University. Although Beryl Vane had advised reading 'Greats' Anna stuck to her original idea - to read Spanish and History of Art, which meant her qualifications would have to be much higher because she would be up against stiff opposition from English students.

It was all arranged and we flew to England picking up Josephine's car at the airport. We had a lovely lunch party given by Beryl at the Vane's home in Cheltenham. She explained to Anna how best to conduct herself at the interview. The next day we motored to Cambridge for the interview.

In the event Anna was not offered a place for all the reasons the Vanes suggested she might not - later, after we both visited Bristol, she plumped for University College London. London offered not only a better hall of residence but also the added excitement of the capital city with all the premier museums and art galleries would be helpful reading her subject.

Some weeks later, back in Spain, we discovered that Ruff was going to have puppies. It was the fault of small barking dog up on the road, which did the awful deed... Now we had a

pregnant dog on our hands, which needed looking after. When the time came for her to give birth I stayed in the kitchen all night waiting for the event which ended with four tiny puppies - three squealing and struggling to feed finding that the fourth had died. They were a joy and fascination, which lasted until we found a home for all of them. Ruff was an attentive mother.

At last, the Spanish Ministry of Employment, presented Josephine with a Working Permit. It had taken an enormous amount of time and work to accomplish. Now she could negotiate with Banking Institutions, Insurance Companies and Government department as well as making her feel more part of society... the permit came too late for the die had been cast – we were going to sell the property and return to England...

We had picked a very difficult moment to think about selling up and returning to England because the equity markets were down, interest payment high and house sales stagnant both in the UK and Spain. This had not been the case the year before when prices and interest rates were low and employment and growth figures up. In 1988, inflation rates rose from four percent to over ten in one year, the following year rose to fifteen percent.

The property market having doubled in house values in the previous four years now, towards the end of 1989, tumbled by ten percent - over the next three years – the UK housing market was in what was to be known as a, ‘negative equity market’ - caused by inflated mortgages. 1990 and 1991 Britain was in its deepest recession with over three million unemployed. It was a divided nation. This had not been the case a year before when prices and interest rates were down, employment and growth up – all this with a Budget surplus despite tax cuts. In 1988, inflation rates rose from four percent to over ten in one year. In the following year rose to fifteen.

Britain was in its deepest recession with over three million unemployed. It was a divided nation. It became known as 'Black Wednesday' sterling's departure from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992 when there was a peaking of mortgages being taken up. At the same time many loans were in arrears and properties taken into possession

The number of repossessions by mortgage companies - claiming back properties because of an inability to keep up mortgage payments started in the late 80s. This situation continued at a high rate for the following four years and peaked in 1991, and then, only being relieved, after government schemes to help borrowers. This was the scene we found ourselves in - were forced to deal with, when we returned to England - another cyclical event speculators have to be wary of. Not only was the economy in Spain poor but the economy in other European countries were stagnant too. There were English residents to our knowledge who were unhappy with the financial downturn in the economy - who were trying to sell their properties - return to England.

After we had all agreed to move back to England Josephine and I got together to plan of how we should set about it. This was in the autumn of 1990, after Anna had gone back to school - for her final year. We put it in the hands of joint agents a Gibraltar company, run by two women, who we thought would cover people coming to Gibraltar to look for Spanish properties, and with Trevor Dine of Andalucia properties, to cover the passing trade in Spain.

In England, another unhappy event took place. Roger, Sally's brother had died in his bed from a coma brought on by an epileptic fit. For me he was about the best kind of brother-in-law one could have. He was most welcoming to Josephine and from the first time of meeting greeted her most warmly. He was forever good company and friendly and never showed how his

medical condition was affecting him. Probably Thelma and Roger were our best friends and this remained so for Thelma after this tragic event.

Frankly, it could not have been a more difficult period and even though we were by now pretty expert in buying houses and moving this was not a time to be doing either. We made sure the photographs were a near perfect as could be taken and the blurb in the sales brochure was of the highest order. We circulated the brochures to every large business up and down the coast and promoted the property in England in both magazines and newspapers. By March, there were no takers and the situation was beginning to look dire.

Considering how we were best going to advertise Puerto de la Cruz - to entice a buyer, we came up with the idea of a Spring Fair, for the gallery to market craft items from around the surrounding area – from Estepona to San Roque.

At a meeting at the town hall with the Mayor - we were all packed together arraigned on chairs taken from every room in the building, we asked for the town council's blessing to put on this fair. - Emphasising the benefit to the village would receive from the publicity – how we would advertise the event everywhere by posting numerous pamphlets and stickers. We explained there would be a luncheon laid on for all the visitors and free food for the dignitaries including newspaper and radio reporters. Speeches made and toasts given to the far sightedness of the council.

He was most impressed and agreed to our proposals accepting that the fair would promote local businesses and crafts. With his blessings ringing in our ears, we departed to get on with the organisation.

There were potters, artists, dried flower arrangers, furniture makers and specialist sewing and bead workers. There were tours of the garden and drinks served. The date for the opening was decided there and then for the 1st June.

It took all that spring and early summer to get everything in place making sure everyone concerned was fully committed. At this stage, we were still advertising the property.

We finished the decade with a fantastic ski trip to Sierra Nevada - which is an easy car journey up into the high mountains past Granada. The snow that year was spectacular and the whole trip was most enjoyable; pop music swelling out from the restaurant in the valley, sun that was hot – so warm that you could ski in just a shirt and jumper. This was Anna and Rebecca's first initiation into skiing and they both loved it. We met up for lunch before starting again in the afternoons. It was a very happy time. On the way, back we had an impromptu twenty-first birthdays, and New Year's Eve, party for Rebecca who, next day, returning to England - to continue her History course. From then on I went skiing once or twice a year eventually becoming an advanced skier. How I wished I had started sooner...!

A few months later Rachel married Police Sergeant Christopher Yarwood, in Harrow, having arranged to go and live in Christopher's house in Welwyn Garden City. They had met at the police station they were both working at and were looking forward to planning their future together.

Our Spring Fair, arranged for 1st. June, open on time, with everyone present. The gallery decorated and I had worked on the garden to make it perfect. On the day, it tipped down with rain early on making us fear for the opening. As it turned out the sun came out and blue skies returned.... the gallery was packed to capacity and all those promising to turn up did so. Although it was well received and well attended, it did not sell many exhibits and it certainly did not produce a buyer for the property. However, the town was fully promoted and the restaurant did a roaring trade...

Later that year David and Caroline Wood married in Sittingbourne, Kent. They had saved hard to buy a house

together in Epsom Down, Surrey. I was asked by David to be Best Man, which I was pleased to be. This meant a quick return to England and to the future bride's family home to accompany them to the wedding. There, to be introduced to Bill and Dee, Caroline's parents, and attend the wedding service and breakfast. This was a marvellous opportunity to meet up and hear all the news from each of the children and to see all the building alterations Josephine had had done to the cottage.

Whilst staying at Monks cottage, Aylesbury I motored to Welwyn Garden City to see Rachel and Christopher, to hear about all their plans for a family after saving up for the event. Christopher was a very keen under-water diver - he was also proud of his camera collection that decorated their mantelpiece.

We had a number of visitors that summer. David came with Caroline and we all had a lovely trip to Seville, Christopher, Josephine's second son came with his girl friend plus an ex-school pal, Steven Parslow - they stayed at the cottage. Rachel came out on her own for a short visit early that summer - and the Scotts, who stayed at the Pottery, toured the neighbouring historic sites. Anthony and Libby rented a house in the village and the Denham's drove up from Gaucin.

Our good friends the Bowles, Betty and John, remained close pals all the time we were living in Spain meeting up at eating places along the coast on a monthly basis. They lived in a very large house in Sotogrande and throughout all the years they lived in Spain explored many plans to move to pastures new never quite making the decision to up-sticks, even considering developing a site in Casares owned by Prudencio, until they moved back to England just after we left.

Anna left San Jose in June, just after the Spring Fair, obtaining her Baccalaureate - which was, although expected was nevertheless hard earned and an enormous relief passing. Having had an acceptance from London University now knew where she

was going, and how long she had left in Spain. She had come to the conclusion a long time before that she was going to lead her own life when she had the chance to dictate her own will; now the relief to her that being in Spain was all over and that from here-on-in she was her own master. Almost at the end of her time in Spain Josephine, Anna and I took a trip to Morocco by ferry from Gibraltar. This was another interesting experience for us all with Anna riding a camel, which was one up to her.

That summer Rebecca came out for a couple of weeks. She was in her first year reading History at the same university that Anna was attending. They sun bathed together, listened to our compact discs, visited Estepona, Gibraltar and Ronda. I took them on favourite walks with Ruff - knowing that the time was going fast - for Spanish experiences – food, fun and flavour. Rebecca left after a fortnight. It was such a pity that Simon and Benjamin never experienced the delights of this part of Spain, or see the house and garden in its most perfect state.

This was Anna's final days in Casares, not to revisit the house for many years... She was changing from the unsure teenager to a young woman about to detach herself from all that was secure to meet many similar minded folk at university - testing their feelings and prejudices. The past was to be dismembered and put away. Within a short space of time she set up home with a fellow female student and put away all thoughts of Spain behind her. It is difficult for me to imagine what it would have been like being there, having to face the hardships and excitements on my own, without having a receptive, lively and interesting person, to share it with!

In September, I flew back to England with Anna, to be met by Josephine at Gatwick Airport. That week, I took Anna to her hall, at London University College - to see her settled in. This was the moment that Anna had craved for to be on her own and fend for her; to make new friends, share new experiences, both of

which would present difficult choices and even tougher decisions. It was to prove early on: upsetting, unsettling and traumatic... To finally settle down, and prove to be, the start of a lifetime of friendship and fulfilment, unexpected, but nevertheless, very welcomed...

At the end of the week - that September 1991, I flew back to Gibraltar, leaving both Anna and Josephine in England. On the way driving back home from the airport I stopped to pick up Ruff from Ernie and Iris Soule - who had been looking after her - they were such kind friends and always very welcoming.

Josephine did not fly back for five weeks. We still did not have a buyer even with all the work done advertising and contacting the Agents. Not many properties were moving in any part of Spain - it was a bad moment to be trying to sell.

The nights and days were long having no one to cater for. The house was like an empty shell, no longer the happy home, but one to shed... get rid of, for someone else to look after.

I shall never forget that place. The sheer beauty of the locality: the view to Africa, the twinkling lights of Ceuta at night, and the crisp mountain air. The shafts of penetrating sunlight, searching out the shadows, and the tremendous thunderstorms which heralded the torrential rain... Locked inside me will be the random stone paths traversed by Anna and I, taking us to the pool... Ruff following behind... following the terraces, landscaped with banana, almond and olive trees interspersed with prickly pear and bean-tree... shades the olive oil press, outside the pottery. How anyone could not be seduced by its uniqueness. Mainly shaped by the Cravens, added-to by myself, and cared-for by Geronimo. There wasn't one person who saw the property that wasn't impressed. I saw, and felt it, when it was at its best, feel grateful to have been given the privilege, to experience its charm, and its beauty. My greatest offering was designing the front elevation; taking it from a flat plain exterior to grilled,

onion-roofed, bay-windowed elevation, surmounted by, an ornamented scalloped parapet. I leave Casares this, my offering, in grateful thanks, holding out my hand to Pili, Marie, and the Gonzalez family, for their many kindnesses.

Anna was very busy in her first term at university. I never had a phone call or letter which would have eased the blow of her not being there. Any such contact would only have created further unhappiness and unsettledness in her; she needed every ounce of strength to keep on the track of essays and tutorials without circling to calling home! I still persevered in the garden trying to make the garden a haven or little oasis in a rather bleak stony hillside, which still not had recovered from the fire. I went to see the Denham's and friends in the valley but it was not the same. Now I had to fend for myself in Spanish not having Anna there to translate for me.

The Magic of Spain, a holiday company, agreed to take our property onto their books – to rent out in several parts, as a holiday complex. This had taken many weeks to plan and liaise with their head office in England. They had been out to survey the property and to take photographs making a special feature the swimming pool. We had to pose, pointing out the fantastic views and unique features – like the olive oil presses and stone milling area. They were suitably impressed and considered that we had a very desirable site.

That Christmas, December 1991, I flew back to Monks cottage to spend Christmas with Josephine and Anna. Unfortunately, I became so ill that I had to spend Christmas Day in bed. Simon and Rebecca visited and Helen and Anna went with Josephine to see the Oxford Theatre Pantomime staging Scrooge with Albert Finney.

We realised that Monks Cottage was too small. That January Josephine began to look around for something larger in

Aylesbury - meaning to be close to Helen and only a train journey from Anna - in a central position for Josephine to service her clients, whilst keeping in reasonable commuter distance from my own children. Josephine had found such a home; it was in Castle Street and called The Old House.

The Old House built before 1550 subsequently enlarged in the 18th and 19th century. Being timber framed with a projecting upper floor with the roof part of an upper hall. It was in a poor state of repair, needing a massive amount of work and money spending on it to try to put back and improve the structure and internal fittings.

When arriving back at Gibraltar airport from England, in January, I was arrested by armed airport police. There had not long been a bomber threatening to blow up the airport, so they were naturally suspicious. I was questioned and searched eventually being given the all clear. I was picked up by Ernie – my car had been taken to the garage previously, taken back to his house in Torrequeudiaro, to find Lily, his wife setting up the table for me to have a meal. They had been kind enough to look after Ruff in my absence.

The next day I heard the news that a buyer was on the horizon for the property in Casares. Trevor Dine introduced the Canadian and conducted him around the property whilst we had been away. The Canadian Lackner had been out to Spain, looking for properties. After he had seen Puerto de la Cruz flown back to Canada to update his new young wife. He was to return, only this time with his wife, to look at the property again and make an offer. – He still had to look into arranging his finances and sorting out the sale of his home there.

Our Agent had told him about the Holiday firm's arrangements – that they had the property on their books and that client's were being booked for the following year - for the summer of 1992. This contributed greatly in the eventual sale.

After Josephine had flown out in February - made final arrangements about returning back, checked with the removal firm who to do the packing up. When the van left we motored back to England in the Galant smuggling Ruff into bedrooms at night at the various hotels we stopped at along the route. We travelled home to England via northern Spain and France to catch the ferry at Calais - dropping Ruff off - for the isolation kennels van at the ferry terminal. I had tried to get Josephine to agree to - try to smuggle her home - so that Ruff would not have to suffer six months isolation. However, Josephine would not agree, thinking that I would be fined, if Ruff were detected. However, I believed that it was well worth the effort and sacrifice... the moment had been lost; Ruff was on her way to a Buckingham isolation kennels, locked behind a massive grill in the back of a van looking very small, sad and lonely. It was another very upsetting and stressful time, and the six months seemed like a very long time. I hated visiting Ruff because she cried every time I left and ran round and round her concrete and wire cage trying to look for a way to get out.

Later I corresponded with the then government Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries but it was no good they would not budge – it was so frustrating trying to talk to vets and the ministry; there was not any rabies in southern Spain and Ruff had been checked by the vets in Spain and given the all-clear.

Josephine had to fly back to Spain on her own in late February to finalise the arrangements for transferring over the deed and receiving the money. The buyer was very difficult - trying to extract the maximum from our position, but Josephine stuck to her guns and made the best of a very difficult time. The take-over by The Magic of Spain - to use Puerto de la Cruz for a holiday complex, did play an important part in the final deal.

The Canadians flew back to Spain, where a meeting had been arranged with our solicitors in Gibraltar. The atmosphere

between Josephine and the buyer was acrimonious; after a lot of haggling a price was decided upon and a deal done – Josephine was adamant that what had been decided on before should be stuck to, that the buyer was being just plain awkward.

Our Mitsubishi Lancer was in the deal as were all the carpets, curtains, three piece suite and many other unwanted articles – it was best to get them included for we didn't have enough space for them in England or in some cases the need. Josephine had done a magnificent job clinching the deal - considering all that had gone on over the period from leaving England in 1987 until 1991 - arriving back. We had not lost any money, which was the most important thing. What we had gained was a fantastically exciting time in magnificent surroundings - we were neither bowed nor beaten, by the challenges we had been faced with; we ended up certainly wiser and far more experienced - and the future looked equally exciting.

When we returned to Aylesbury, we put in an offer for The Old House, which was accepted - the eventual agreement involved the present owners renting Monks Cottage from us for an interim period.

From this moment on there started a very long building and renovating programme, which lasted over a year and cost many tens of thousands of pounds. Unfortunately, the builders went broke during the first few weeks - which not only slowed the progress but also led to Josephine forming a new company - to carry the work forward. Most of my days spent helping the builders whilst negotiating with the local historical society and local government-planning department.

The Old House had a new roof, the roughcast stripped from the walls and the timber framing exposed. Dry lining the upper floors, installing a new kitchen and stove, plumbing in a new hot water system and re-designing a new garden - taken forward. It was a massive project. First of all the house cleared of

a number of studded, plasterboard partitions, to get back to the original hall-house frame. In all we brought in seventeen reclaimed panelled doors to replace the modern ones completely denuding the local demolition company of their doors.

During the Christmas vacation I started to teach Anna to drive which was continued by a school of motoring – eventually she passed the test. She was as excited as I was and as pleased as all-new drivers are. The MOT assumes massive importance and almost outstrips ‘O’ levels in mental stress.

Beryl Vane died of cancer after a long illness. She had been a wonderful friend and confidant always interested and never short of some good answers to my queries about life. To the end, she always asked after Anna - still as concerned and interested, as she was when we first met in Spain.

Ruff came out of quarantine August 1992 to a great deal of excitement and rejoicing – at last, we were complete again. Unfortunately, she never got over the terrible effects of the separation - the isolation after being so much a part of the family. Within a short space of time, she developed a cancerous growth in the stomach, removed only to re-grow. It would have been unkind we were told for her go through the trauma again so it was advised by the vet to have her put down. It was another of those terrible moments – trials-in-life, I had to go through, to take her down to the vet for the last time – to leave her there, after all that we had been through together first in England and then in Spain. She was seven years old, no age at all.

The effects of Ruff dying made me consider not having another dog – it was so upsetting. If only the breeder or vet had told me that, it is advisable for a bitch to be spayed, if you were sure you did not want her to have puppies. The medical condition meant within three days Ruff died - even if the vets had recognised the problem early and given a massive antibiotic injection it might not have overcome the poisoning and had an

adverse effect. I really did not want to have that happen to me again.

Within a fortnight, my opinion changed. I felt lost and deprived - not having those wonderful walks to look forward to with a keen companion. The quest was on again to find another pet. I consulted The Kennel Club who sent me a breeder's guide and a summary of the different behaviour patterns associated with each type of animal. I had plumped for a pedigree dog to get over the uncertainty of knowing about previous medical hereditary conditions - what the background of my pet had been - so that I would not have to go through what had just happened. Eventually I came up with an English Shetland Sheepdog, which was the size, and behaviour I was looking for.

Now the problem was to find a breeder. That was no easy task and it took me many phone calls to find one, which was in East Anglia. I telephoned and found that she had just one left, a bitch, which was a tri-colour - black, white and tan. That was how I became the proud owner of Tinka, the name I gave her, who was just nine weeks old.

This re-introduced me to the training of puppies with all that that involves. Frankly, it was wonderful, the choice never regretted, and the training went a lot easier than imagined. It was a choice that has been never regretted. I shall do my level best to make sure I shall never be without a dog again!

Tinka was a favourite with the family and a constant companion for me. She always walked off the lead close to my heels, as Ruff would have done but always a couple of feet away. Once again, I never had to use a lead and she would never move away, chase cats nor frighten children.

On September 16th 1992, 'Black Wednesday' was declared. The performance of the pound sterling had been giving the government great concern. The Exchange Rate Mechanism [E.R.M.] meant that interest rates remained above ten percent. As

a result, the property market having doubled in the previous four years now tumbled by an equal amount over the following three years. That September, in 1992, interest rates rose to fifteen per cent. The Chancellor, Lamont announced sterling was to leave the E.R.M. In that three-year period, the position of the pound steadied and eventually Britain's position improved by having a better balance and the economy grew.

Anna's course included a year's study-leave, in the country origin – the language studied. She was keen to do the entire organisation herself. The planning involved finding addresses in Madrid – she was to attend Madrid University, to come up with one that suited her needs – reasonably close to the university and near the centre of the city and museums. Anna sorted out a flat in a typical Spanish town house with a central courtyard surrounded by a gallery – it was charming although rented-out by a young Spaniard. During the planning, she asked me to accompany her to keep her company and offer some protection. As there was only one bed for the time there, we had to share it. I can still see the small room with various curios around the walls.

Whilst there we walked round the city to get our bearings to find out where everything was in relation to the university as well as make a visit to the Prado Gallery to see the main Velazquez picture *The Ladies in Waiting*. I came away with a very clear-cut picture of a charming city full of interesting buildings but only coming to life when the sun went down.

Anna completed her year there suffering the occasional sexual overtures from the property owner, which she slapped down - firmly locking her bedroom door at all times. A year out of her life - that interrupted success after managing her own affairs. Just a frustration after finding sexual liberation so long sought. I do not believe that it was either enjoyable or profitable... it was almost like National Service for me – something to be 'got over'.

I completed a series of paintings of Aylesbury to show off some of the architectural gems of the town – mostly of the old town area close to the church and museum. This was before I saw, in particulars for sale, an old non-conformist chapel in Great Horwood. It was almost hidden from view by the undergrowth growing all around - having its last service twenty years before. I had been in touch with the Ancient Buildings Trust to find out if they knew of any buildings, which needed an owner to renovate and convert the property into suitable living accommodation. They gave me a list, which had on it a former chapel in Great Horwood, which was up for sale. Simon I knew was looking for an architecturally interesting property so I got in touch with him. After talking it over, he initially said he would like to buy it and make it into a dwelling for himself. I contacted the church authorities and negotiated a selling price of seventeen thousand. I believed that I could draw the plans and make the conversion for forty thousand pounds.

That started in progress a chain of events, which led to us all taking part in the development of the chapel to make a going concern out of it – put it back on the market to make a profit. Josephine provided the financial backup, Simon prepared the books, Jack Smith did the bulk of the building work and I was the Architect and at the same time did the decorating and design work of the interior.

This whole business took another year of hard work - for me to make the drawings, obtain planning and building consent, check the registration and make searches whilst negotiating with the church commissioners. Eventually the scheme proved to be profitable but the hope to go on and develop other buildings did not come to fruition.

My first grandchild Fred was born in Epsom to David and Caroline in June 1994, which was another highlight of that year. David was an English Lecturer at Epsom College completing his

Masters Degree on a day release course; Rebecca was in her final year of an Honours Degree reading History at Holloway College before accepting a job with Arthur Anderson the accountants. She was not to know that eventually she was to return to America as Vice President of Fox International working out of a plush office in Los Angeles. Simon, having completed his Accountants exams, had left Knox Cropper and accepted a job with Epsom, the computer printer manufacturer. He eventually landed up in Oxford working for the county council – as Manager of Social and Community services.

The Conservative Government in power tried to give parents choice which school they sent their children. Moves made by government agencies to assess schools and teachers, to find out what was going on and to form a hierarchy of achieving schools – to present a league table. It was believed that if better-off parents selected their child's school they, the parents, would be happier. Those poorer families would not cause pressure on the government to affect change and so leave them alone. As usual, nothing balance up the uneven circumstances of the poorer classes. Not enough money allowed bringing about reform. There were local authorities who maintained a grammar school ethos whilst others tried to make the comprehensive system work.

Always the parents control their offspring's education. If parents were conscientious and insisted upon homework - standards maintained a greater likelihood that their children would achieve better exam results. Naturally, the parents would have to take responsibility - make sure their children were not being bullied and picked on - that there was order in the classroom. This done by taking an interest in what was going on and by being involved with, and through, school governors, and school visits and parents meetings.

From 1994 onwards, industrial strikes were at their lowest. In fact, 1994 was the lowest since records made a hundred years

before. That was not just, because Prime Ministers Thatcher and John Major had conspired to bring that about. It was a whole lot of industrial and social events, which made individuals, become more concerned with their own wants, which came before the supposed good of others. However much that is true it was not the real reason why the trades union were under siege. It was the change in industrial manufacturing caused by cheap labour, low power costs and government intervention by overseas countries – mainly from the Far East. This drew manufacturing away from outdated working practices and machines to the more flexible workforces abroad using robotics and computer controlled machinery.

I have explained about the industry how its labour force was controlled and manipulated not just by the industrialists but also by their fellow union officials and activists. Printing is and was no different to any other having to compete for contracts - producing good work at a low cost. It is only for a limited period that outmoded working practices can continue before the whole edifice starts tumbling down. Manufacturing businesses were overtaken by service industries as the greatest employer of labour spanning jobs such as tourism to insurance sector.

Josephine was now back working for Allied Dunbar - from Hill Samuel's old St James' office in London. Many of her new clients lived in Northamptonshire, which required her to travel north at least fortnightly to service them. Eventually this became onerous to the extent that we considered moving somewhere nearer. On her travels, she had to go through Oundle, which she found to be a very pleasant town having some attractive stone built houses set amid the public school campus. The school has an old charter, which allowed them to hold extensive grounds making the town a most desirable location because the ambience of the place was one of learning and study set amongst extensive school playing fields.

At the Thailand conference, Josephine was approached by the Manager of the Peterborough Branch to see if she would transfer to his office – her sales figures would enhance his team's scores - making it possible for him to improve his standing within the company.

Overtures continued for some months until Josephine decided that the time was ripe to take advantage of the offer. She had already many clients in the region and was always motoring up there to service them. Why not move there and be on the spot as well as having a regional office to work from with all the facilities they had to offer. This made Josephine's position strong enough to demand a better office layout and use of better office facilities - improve her own working conditions.

We visited the town of Oundle - checking all the local estate agents but coming up with very little. At the last moment, one agent said that there had been a property on the market but it had been withdrawn - but believed it would be still available. As a last ditch attempt we arranged to have a viewing and walked to The Old Dairy - which was at the other end of town, opposite the Catholic Church. Although we were not impressed at first glance we carried on with the viewing. The back of the property, with its high stonewalls which afforded total isolation, a stocked garden, circular well and brick and cobbled paths. All this and the deep well, won us over. We decided there and then to make an offer knowing that we would have to do quite a few alterations to make it suitable.

We secured the property towards the end of 1995 and quickly sold The Old House in Aylesbury – it being one of the most desirable houses in the town there was little cause to worry. It transpired that an Accountant further up the street wanted a larger house and this was just what he was looking for.

Our dear friend Verna Kilsby, who was at the time a client of Josephine's, came up trumps by offering to put us up whilst

The Old Dairy was going through those alterations - allowing us to stay with her until all the building work had been completed. This we estimated to be just a couple of weeks - but turned out to be more like a couple of months.

It was a godsend having Verna there making the transition so much more bearable, particularly for me – I returned home at night worn out and dirty. As usual, I was overseeing what was going on whilst helping the builders and doing my own thing landscaping the lower garden.

We were fortunate to receive a council grant towards doing all the work including re-plastering the interior walls after damp proofing had been done, laying new stone and slate roofs, pointing the walls and re-building the main chimney.

It was a listed property being of outstanding architectural interest in the locality and as the name implies had been the local dairy - shop and below the house, the milking parlour. It comprised of a number of separate residences for the owner and workers.

At last, our furniture delivered and all was ready to start life again 'up North' making many friends - giving us a greater understanding of another part of England.

Josephine's daughter-in-law Gina, Christopher's wife, gave birth to a son – named Bill, on 2 April 1995. This was Josephine's first grandchild and much looked forward to. It was a happy event marked by a healthy period in labour and subsequent successful birth.

The Old Dairy had most magnificent garden walls running down each side. To one side was the magistrate's office, town hall and jail; here the wall was sixteen feet high. When the town jail last used in the nineteenth century, the wall was to stop prisoners escaping. On the other side ran one of the Houses of Oundle School. I built several brick garden walls and paths using

reclaimed stock; a pergola, a new wellhead, previously sealed off, and a brick arch.

Thelma, my ex-sister-in-law, felt sure that her life would be much improved, by having a soul mate to share her life with. She had found such a person in Malcolm Brough who made her rather lonely life immediately better. They decided to get married and so organised a magnificent event, which ended up with their wedding breakfast onboard a river barge with a travelling band. It was romantic and extremely enjoyable.

Benjamin was now living in a flat close to his work in Bedford. There I visited him on a number of occasions - to go out and have a meal, and to listen to his latest recordings. He was working for a company interested in cartoon production - animation from a single picture, devising programs, and correcting software.

David and Caroline produced my second grandchild, named Fred, on June 14, almost a year after Rachel's Jack. He had the colouring of his mother, which was a nice change from the Kearey clan. Fred was soon home with Caroline - eager to get into a sound routine. Fit and well, the family was soon back altogether in their snug home in Epsom, which had gone through enormous changes since they had moved in.

Rebecca was never happy at Anderson, the accountants; her interests revolved around the film industry in whatever capacity - whether production or sales; film production, particularly 'the telling of a story', appealed to her sense of creation. As it turned out the promotional side was an even greater challenge...

It was always in mind to make the leap, which she did, taking a part-time course in 'film production' resulting in a Masters Degree at The University of Southern California... the hub of all the major film companies. Without more ado, she elected to go giving up her job with Andersons... after saving

hard to pay for the initial tuition - fees for a part-time and evening class in film production. Whilst there worked in a variety of posts eking out a hand-to-mouth-existence... perfecting her survival skills.

Anthony, Josephine's eldest son, and Libby had, Luke their first child, born at the end of December. This was Josephine's second grandchild and he was soon back from the maternity unit fit and well to begin his new life in Midhurst where his parents had a house close to King Edwards Hospital.

From 1995, onwards people were enormously concerned about achieving personal status through ownership of property, holiday trip, gadget or consumer goods and were almost willing to go through some pain, upset and denial to keep up. Social restrictions were being cast off, Victorianisms dispensed with. 'Treat yourself because you are worth it!' was, and is, the clarion call. Britain was beginning to crawl out of the recession and discover a new prosperity, enjoying a consumer boom – spending on having fun. Gradually there came about – towards the new millennium, the longest period of uninterrupted production and expansion; competition embraced, 'let the markets dictate', 'the consumer is always right', was the cry. The service industries took over from manufacturing – what the latter was losing the former picked up.

Immigrants, poor school achievers and those other individuals with bad social skills will be an underclass of individuals employed as agricultural and hotel workers. Carers, mental institutions, hospital workers and cleaners staffed from this sector of society. Industrial conglomerates and operations needing a large, more literate workforce will tend to come from countries like China and India.

The present high standard of living will only be enjoyed as long as inherited money circulates. When that dries up those one-time third world countries will take over creating the wealth;

having a working population suitably trained and capable of being flexible in what they do. Britain will have to: replan its economy, tighten up on its financial sector, and realign its agriculture - to become, as in the war years, self sufficient.

Tony Blair's 'New Labour' Party tried to shed its link to trades-unionism, and be seen as 'trendy', whilst Prime Minister Major's 'Back to Basics' policy damaged by rebels. 1997 saw Major out and Blair in..., the same year Diana was killed. This was an age of social dunning down. Jeans were cut and frayed to declare uncaring attitude for convention; 'T' shirts proclaimed a similar disregard by the written word; all ages mimicked the young and branding was *de rigueur* especially for those proclaiming to have the 'in thing'. Blair's legacy has been to take the country to war, in Iraq and Afghanistan... Both countries indelibly linked to Britain's past Colonial days – were not success stories. Is the past about to be repeated ...?

My story is now at an end. I have covered sixty years, from 1935 – 1995. In that time, there has been a world war, the demise of Communism and a landing on the moon... Those, and many other major events, and erupting conflagrations, have touched me but little, however, there have been three events that did: [1.] The invention of the word processor - transformed the printing of the written word, the construction and arrangement of printed material, and the reproduction of pictures... my life has been bound up with these processes and influenced by their effects. [2.] Becoming married – twice, and [3.], having children and grandchildren. In the first years of fatherhood, I gave great thought about how I would 'bring them up' - plan for what I considered to be 'important learning experiences'. This blueprint was kept to for a long time – for as long as I was able. Finally, my 'grip'

weakened by: outside pressures, the necessity to keep earning, and my children's cramped living conditions. Needless to say, my grand plan faltered... I was very fortunate to be married a second time, to be allowed to try my hand again. I'm pleased to say it worked. Unfortunately, I cannot offer you any sound advice as to how best to pursue life's journey... only to say, I have received great comfort from reading biographies, whistling a happy tune, listening to French impressionist music, and walking my dogs. If you have been entertained - perhaps enticed to read, or listen to more. If you have picked up some useful tips - on how to evade life's pitfalls, that's great. Better still, if I have made you laugh, or cry, that's even better... my task has not been in vain...

Terence Kearey

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