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Victorian London

A family's account

Setting the Scene

The Kearey family did not find it easy, then why should they? Life in London in the 1800s was fast becoming an impossible place to live. Not that that put Thomas off. He remembered what it was like in Dublin... and this was better..., here there was hope. He held the first-born's name of Thomas - given throughout the ages, and no one doubted his intention - he was out to prove himself!

Kearey is not an Irish name but an anglicized version of Ciardha - who populated land in today's northern Tipperary. The O'Ciardha was a clan - part of the Ciar Tribe, who sided with the southern Uí Neil's. Didn't they send an invite to Henry II, to help them retrieve their homelands...? What a mistake that was... later the battle of the Boyne, and that put the lid on it. The Celtic Irish, and particularly the O'Ciardha, never recovered...

Now the clan was scattered – everywhere. There were those who joined other clans - adopting their name and habits; some, as Catholics, knew the ways of the Spanish and moved there; others sailed to America to try their luck in the gold fields, and a few travelled to Australia, taking their joinery skills, as coachbuilders, with them. All however were seeking a new way of life, away from 'the troubles'.

Those of the clan who remained hidden from the Anglo-Irish - up in the hills, or in inhospitable places in lowland bog... had their homes burnt - being forced out by the bailiff. At onetime they could have been gallowglass and fought it out... but it was now a hopeless task!

Thomas made his way by coach to Westminster – a part of London where the Irish felt at home – where there were many other Gaelic speakers. A few years later, there would be more Irishmen in London than in Dublin. The rookeries gave them shelter... Later, when times were better, a place to move away from...

There was no turning back - for nothing could be worse than to admit defeat, so they all had to go on... to forget the past, and make a life for themselves. That the majority did so was a reflection of their fortitude. This story gives a picture of those times and the way they integrated... Being used to fighting – thinking back to the days of Viking incursions and interclan cattle rustling, they knew a thing or two about keeping their heads down. There were two more wars to come for them to show their mettle... and they did so, with distinction. England had much to be grateful for...

Thomas adapted to the conditions he found. Gradually he hauled himself out of the Rookeries to start a business close to the city's western boundary. Having a skill stood him in good stead and like others before him, the time was ripe. The city fathers called for better hygiene: introduced piped water, a proper main drainage system and storm water drains. All accompanied the introduction of mains water. The water had to be piped in... and it was Thomas, amongst others, who benefited, with their knowledge of smelting – lead and tin being the conduit and container.

CHAPTER I

Leaving home

John Keary - Union between Britain and Ireland – Struggle for Catholic emancipation - Thomas Kearey leaves Ireland for St Giles in London – The Irish ghetto - The canals - Railways – Booming economy – Buildings galore - Factory Acts – Dickensian Life – Metal smelter - Tinsmith or Whitesmith – Carter – Worker in metal – Tin-plate.

John Keary was born in the middle of the eighteenth century. He had five children the fourth of whom was called □ Thomas... all first born sons in the family were called Thomas – it was a tradition. Thomas saw the light of day in 1791... that he would later spell his name with an ‘ey’ was propitious if he were to shrug off his Catholic religion - to make his way in London. Using the old Gaelic-Irish spelling of Ó Ciardha would not be helpful.

Ciardha is Irish Gaelic - denotes a family of people. In this instance, ‘Ciar’s People’. Ciar in Gaelic defines a nondescript colour – black, grey, brown, tan or dun and may refer to hair, colour of skin or clothes worn. The clan name was drawn from an abbreviated form of Máel MacGioha Cheire – one of the devotees of Saint Ciardha, 620-680AD. Ciar’s People were a sept of the Múscraighe [Musciarraige]. A tribe from north Munster – close to Lough Derg – east of the River Shannon, where the Abbess Saint Ciardha ran her religious house, later [Cell Cére] - a

nunnery for thirteen postulants. The Ó before the name means children of/from the male line. The Ó Ciardha clan are a senior branch of Cenel Cairpri, a vassal group of the southern Uí Néills. The clan chief was 'lord of Carbury [Cairbre] in Co Kildare [Leinster] – Ireland's central plain. [See, the demise of an Irish Clan].

Thomas - to be my great, great-grandfather, made his way by ferry from Dublin to Liverpool; seeking a better way of life... He hoped that prosperity lay ahead, for there was nothing in Ireland but trouble and strife. Little did he know that for the rest of the clan and all his fellow compatriots there was worse to follow...?

Ireland was in rebellion and Britain at war. Britain was in a period of economic growth stimulated by war with France. Now was the time to exploit the need for skilled workers for the new industrialized society.

When he marched down the gangplank in Liverpool Thomas was excited by the challenges, which lay ahead. He sought passage to London by coach; relying on his skills as a worker in metal to find work – perhaps start a business... for Dublin's silversmiths and goldsmiths were recognised as highly skilled craftsmen. These skills, working with precious metals, carried over to working with tin and lead – metals more closely allied to the home – servicing water-tanks, pipes, buckets, cauldrons washing and cooking pots and all other metal containers. Not only was he skilful shaping metal but also had knowledge of joinery and the manufacture of carts.

Thomas described himself as a whitesmith, which today maybe better described as a tinsmith... and as a smelter, an extractor of metal from an ore. The O'Ciardha clan originally occupied the hills and lowlands on the east side of Lough Derg. The ore washed down from those hills would have been a

combination of any number of metals. It would not be surprising to find local people adept at smelting that ore and either coating hammered out sheets of metal with tin, or combining tin and copper to make bronze or smelting lead and tin to make pewter. The smelter of one ore would be knowledgeable enough to work with any number of base or precious metals. Tin wares were produced in London in the early 1600s producers becoming incorporated by 1670.

The skills of a whitesmith was more concerned with cutting, shaping and hammering-out sheet metal, making joints and seams... using a mixture of lead and tin to make solder - to give a watertight joint. He may have worked in silver making jewellery. However, when working in London it was highly unlikely that Thomas would have been working with this expensive metal. He would have been devoting all his energies working with lead and tin in a household environment, making and repairing pipes and cooking pans, pots and utensils for a working population.

He was quite prepared to seek work of a more mundane kind - to start afresh... hopefully, with better prospects for long-term employment... especially after taking the plunge to leave home. His family, having gone through years of persecution, exploitation, and finally eviction, now had to split up and find their own way, away from the country they loved.

When the Irish immigrant travelled to London, he made for Westminster...it was here that he felt most at home. The Irish populated Soho and the surrounding street and alleyways. There are many written accounts about St Giles-in-the-Fields, in the early 1800s, appearing as a maze of cellars and tenements based on the boundaries of St Giles High Street, Bainbridge Street and Dyott Street. This was about the time that gas lighting first started to be installed in London, initially in Pall Mall.

Within the area about St Giles, New Oxford Street was developed...to lay waste to the slums of Church Lane, Maynard Street, Carrier Street, Ivy Lane and Church Street, which was a mass of courts, alley ways and hiding places. These countless tenements were described as 'Rookeries' or perhaps as 'Little Dublin' or 'The Holy Land' – whatever, as an area populated by the Irish.

The area of Westminster, Tothill Street, York Street, and Castle Lane was another locality given the deriding term - connecting Oxford Street and Holborn... the area of the abandoned of both sexes. The whole area was sold for redevelopment by private contract in 1844. Even today's congested streets and heavy traffic does not suitably depict the area of that time... the noise, the horses, shouts, cries of the passing traders, street urchins darting here and there, the sandwich men, the dust, dirt, droppings, puddles and stench... all underfoot. The omnibuses disgorged passengers, ponderous wagons turned down narrow lanes completely blocking them forcing all to proceed ahead of them to burst out into the street at the other end. It was described as a howling wilderness.

To Thomas, Georgian London must have seemed intimidating. He was here to escape poverty but was faced with it... peace and space, deigned both. His bad of tools, at onetime a mark of industry - here the bag felt like a burglars haul. However, it was no good berating his bad luck he just had to make a go of it... he was not ready to throw in the towel. Now he had adopted an English spelling for his name he could not face the scorn of the rest of the family by going back.

It was there, shortly after taking lodgings, in 1818, that he met and courted Hester Pepler, eventually marrying her on the 17th October 1819, at St Anne's Church, Soho... fathering two boys and five girls.

Hester was born and christened in 1794 in Great Stanmore; a small village on the outskirts of North London, just off the Great North Road, and died, March 1872 in Westminster at the age of 79. She was buried at the same church she was married in sixty years before. Hester's mother before marriage was named Mary Collins. It would be interesting if she were any relation to the Collins of Chard, my mother's family.]

In 1816, the building of the Grand Junction branch canal was being dug out on the Paddington Estate. At the same time, houses were being built along its banks to furnish the builders with homes. In 1801, there were only 324 houses in Paddington; this was a time of expansion in keeping with the canals and the development of steam engines. Connaught Place in 1807 was the start to the development of Tyburnia between Edgware Road and the Uxbridge Road. A couple of years later the degradation mounted causing concern... not before time. By then Paddington had 879 inhabited houses to give shelter to 4,609 persons. It was not long before Paddington acquired a terrible reputation. The area on the north side of the Paddington and Marylebone Estates was as far as the more reasonable living conditions stretched... for the time being! Beyond that lay mean streets, alleyways, huts, reservoirs, wharves and warehouses. The building of the Great Western Railway reinforced this division in the 1830s with its terminus and goods station. Land between the railway and canal intersected by Harrow Road deteriorated into slums. A large percentage of those living there were displaced Irishmen.

This whole area began to be redeveloped. The people was gradually pushed out, whole estates raised to the ground and the builders moved in. It became a period of massive building projects that made the way for the prosperous suburbs of Bayswater, Paddington, and Kensington, when rich trade's people, developers, merchants, and professional men followed

the gentry into taking over the new houses giving a further boost to the area with their lavish life styles. Westbourne became the place to be, reaching to the southern most end of Westbourne Green. By 1860, the feverish pitch of building started to end. Thirty years of rapid development

Thomas and Hester's eldest son, born 1820 in St. Giles, Middlesex, was named 'Thomas - as was the custom. He was my great-grandfather and trained, after leaving school, as a whitesmith and tinsmith taking over much of the trade from his father. He married Hanna Raybould when she was twenty-one [her father Henry was also a whitesmith] in 1841...at St Andrew by the Wardrobe, Holborn. It was thought, at that time, there were 1,000 Irish paupers entering London each week, congregating around this area, all seeking work.

The 'railway age' started in 1825 when Thomas was five. By the start of the First World War, almost every part of the country was covered. It was very unusual for anyone to work in a factory that employed more than ten people for this was the average staff content of most stately homes and people were just not used to controlling more. It seems strange that businesses had this almost mental limit for group practices. The railways broke this barrier. The rapid decline in agricultural work. The operation of the Corn Laws, which blocked the import of foreign produce, ensured that farmers received a better rate of pay for their harvests. Only about a third of the population lived in large towns or cities but this was soon to change as industrialization took hold. The government restrictions on the employment of women and children although resisted by the working class were passed. Factory Acts ensured a fixed working week and day, even though a fourteen-hour day was not unusual dropped to ten later in the century. Schooling for all ages was a matter for individual parents to decide what was best. There was no co-ordination

between competing educational establishments. Only about fifty per-cent of adults could sign their names.

Thomas's brother William, 1837–1902, sixth child of Thomas and Hester, was born the same year Queen Victoria came to the throne. He became a much-respected Westminster City Councillor for fourteen years - about the same time the London County Council was established. He was a coal merchant, baker and boot merchant [his wife's father was a Leather Dealer]. During his two marriages, he had fifteen children - four of the births are recorded in St Anne's Church, Soho, [*St Anne's Church was the same church Thomas was married in eighteen years before*] nine of William's children had connections with the Borough of Brompton where they were all born. There is a plaque erected in Westminster City Hall in his honour for his, 'loyal and faithful work to the people of Westminster particularly the poor'.

William's father Thomas, immigrated to England from Ireland in about 1812 by that time Kilkeary Parish was recorded as being situated in Upper Ormond, four miles south-west of Nenagh of 2,524 acres, containing 662 inhabitants. It lay twenty-seven miles from Limerick, in County Tipperary in the diocese of Killaloe. Kilkeary and Ballynaclough formed a benefice linked to 'the deanery'. The deanery was endowed with sufficient capital to provide the enlarged parish with a private school capable of providing education for 70 local children. The farmed land alone brought in tithes amounting to £120, which went towards the rector's stipend. The growing strength of the British economy had an effect not only on Irish manufacturing but also in siphoning off capital from Ireland's farming community. Thomas's move away was precipitant for when his son William was eight years old the people of Kilkeary were locked in famine conditions. Gradually the eldest boys of poor families in Ireland moved into the cities... thereafter making their way to Dublin

and onwards to England and London. It was a desperate situation alleviated by the new industrial society - its quest for power and need for swifter transportation... accomplished by construction of better roads the birth of canal navigation and the manufacture of bricks and steel. The invention of steam locomotion and the construction of the railway network added to the demand for even more coal. Once this movement was afoot – the gravitation from a rural existence to town and city life coupled with the invention of machines to mass produce everyday products there was no stopping the need to continue the process. Fortunately, there was sufficient labour available...

The 1841 census of London registered nearly two million citizens. Three years later parts of Soho were described as ‘a sort of petty France’. French immigrants predominately owned most shop; there were schools, wine shops and restaurants mostly catering to ‘the French’. The proximity of ‘The Rookeries’, in St Giles and elsewhere, gave ‘foreignness’ to this whole neighbourhood of London. None of this mattered to the new citizens. They were only interested in earning money to pay for food and board. Other niceties could come along later. As agricultural workers were laid off, a rapid change was noticed in the countryside. Only just over twenty per-cent of the population worked on the land the difference was felt by the industrial towns and cities as people began to flood in. Construction – the making of things not just building, took half of Britain’s labour force. Free Trade was now the call in all but agriculture. In 1842, the budget introduced income tax. Although declared a temporary measure never removes taking the place of tariffs.

There was scarcely any drainage or sewerage, where the gullies were open a foot or more of offal, garbage, dung and sand overlapped the sides, buckets of human waste was still thrown out of upstairs windows adding to the indescribable mess and

stench. The corpses of the poorest were just thrown into open marshland around St Bride's Church. On Wednesdays, the ground was opened up again to receive more bodies. Low-lying districts often flooded resulting in the Great Stink of 1858. Many Irish immigrants were engaged in the construction of the new sewer system. Labourers were paid in 1859 18s a week, skilled workers double that and engineers, the latest skill to be picked-up and developed - by associated tradesmen, 35-37 shillings.

CHAPTER II

London 1814

Immigration – Soho – Building the Canals – The Great Exhibition – The Railway Age – Street Sellers – Chimney Sweeps - Sutton Street - London's economy – Factory Acts – City Life – The Metropolitan Railway – Servant Life.

When Thomas arrived in London, he settled in Soho, which was a popular living area and meeting place for the immigrant Irish. He had to take care not to be exposed to 'the Irish fever', probably typhus, which one thousand Londoners died from in 1847. Epidemics occurred several times between 1840s and 70s. It was this health risk, which persuaded Thomas to up sticks and move to Holborn still working as a whitesmith. Holborn then was a far more congenial place. As was the custom, his eldest son was called Thomas. His brother Alfred was born in 1854... to become my grandfather.

Most of the meat bought and sold came from the principle market at Smithfield - where in two days of trade 5,000 cattle, 30,000 sheep and 2,000 pigs traded. They all had to walk there

and depart, when sold, through the streets whether in frost or snow, sun or rain, driven with shouts and calls by the drovers - to the excited screams of the watching children keeping clear of the long horned cattle and butting rams.

In Regents Park and Hyde Park, opened to the public in the 1840s, the wealthy drove along the avenues in their carriages served by powdered attendants displaying their beautiful horses and splendid equipment... past herds of cattle, sheep and goats and the populace going about their normal business, with elegant women in satin and lace twirling their parasols. A scene that emphasised the difference, not only between the several layers of social structure in England, but also demonstrated the uncaring attitude they had for what was happening in Ireland - in a land controlled by accident, birthright, eviction and brutality.

Back in Ireland in the mid and latter part of nineteenth century, the state was still 'a source of great anxiety to the English parliament.' Ireland had been invaded and conquered several times but never mastered... it was still hostile to England, even more so after the famine. The remaining clan members based around the ancient family lands in the Ormond's' suffered like everyone else by the potato famine. Bands of starving men roamed the county, begging for food, trying to find work. In Nenagh, County Tipperary, the Board of Works' Inspecting Officer reported on October 31st. "Gentlemen from Relief Committees are continually filling up places for work to the extent that there are no places left and people are dying from hunger". Mr Bayly, Chairman of the Board of Guardians, was attacked... and now fearful of being shot! The town was in uproar. The 8th. Royal Irish Hussars provided an escort for the Judge of Assizes; they were only allowed to pass through the barricades one at a time. The Bishop of Killaloe refused to take action and led twenty parishes, amongst them Kilkeary, into armed insurrection.

The full force of the potato famine was experienced in Ireland, not only did this checked the recent population growth but further prompted immigration. The potato blight left much of the agricultural community without their basic food. The British government's efforts to bring about relief were very inadequate and between one and 1.5 million people died. Queen Victoria was averse to declaring a public Day of Fast in 1847 for the famine in Ireland. The Government decided to advise her that it would be a proper gesture. The 1854 Day of Humiliation was the only Fast Day.

In the later half of the nineteenth century, Kilkeary Parish covered an area of 2,272 statute acres, which provided for a population of 345 inhabitants made up out of 59 families. Prior to the Great Famine, as numerated, there were 698 persons all told divided up from an equal number of families. The old Kilkeary School stood on land owned by the Cash family less than half a mile from Kilkeary Cross.

Between 1841 and 1911, 1 million individuals left Ireland for British cities. There was little choice: it was either selective depopulation by frantic emigration or fever and death by staying put. Eventually many of the remaining Keary clan left as immigrants - boarding ship to Liverpool... eventually move to London, which held the greatest number, followed by Glasgow and Cardiff. The remainder boarded ship bound for the new colonies. Children of nine or ten still worked a full twelve hour day and women worked on the land, their children looked after by the workers in turn even in the vilest of weathers.

After the worst of the potato famine was over the reduced population became better able to support itself. Gradually the harvests improved as the land became reworked. The number of children born to a marriage in Ireland was always high. The couples were mostly young which gave rise to high fertility. After the Famine, the rate of marriage fell, as did the fertility – well

below that of Britain. The later marriage and greater control spaced children apart. Couples making joint decisions about the size of their families according to what they could afford bought about this. Increased health education and a greater knowledge about illnesses improved the mortality rate. Some people were now living to fifty and it was felt morbidity started to increase as the mortality rate decreased.

There was a move towards starting a new life abroad, particularly to America. Eventually America held a greater number of Irish - more than Ireland itself...and this was particularly true of the Kearey clan. Still, we are concerned here with that part of the family, which chose England to make a new start, those who used the 'K' and 'ey' form of spelling the name.

My grandfather Alfred Kearey was born 13th. April 1854 in Sutton Street, Kensington. He was the third son of □ Thomas and Hannah, nee Raybould. His eldest brother was named □ Thomas in accordance with family tradition, which went back many centuries, [he was the last 'eldest son' to be so named].

Giving up this tradition demonstrates the need to cast off any connection with the past. Any recognition or acceptance of past allegiances washed away - to start afresh and take onboard a new life, which London had to offer.

It was during Alfred's time at school that he witnessed the almost total development of the entire railway network servicing London. It was this expansion of the railways, after the building of the canals, which soaked up the Irish migrant workers. Steam tugs started to arrive on the Thames in 1848. The hay and straw for London's vast horse population came down the river in barges with the tide. Those same barges were loaded with manufactured goods to take them to the ships lying beyond the bridges in the Pool of London, where clipper ships were moored.

The mainline stations were like palaces catering for vast crowds of excited travellers. The railways became a conduit of communication and commerce. One hundred thousand people were displaced in the process of construction. When he left school, he was apprenticed as a house painter and stainer, a skill that was in great demand... London was experiencing a massive growth in land development.

It was only a few years before that London Bridge Station was opened shortly before Euston. It was a time of enormous expansion to the extent that 6.7 per cent of British income was invested in railway shares. Fenchurch Street station was the first station to be built within the city. By 1852, King's Cross was opened sixteen years before St Pancras and by 1870 the main railway network had spread all over England.

In 1861, there were one hundred and seventy eight thousand Irish immigrants in London - nearly all of them were Catholics accommodated in concentrations based around Holborn, St. Giles, Whitechapel and Southwark. Nine years later, there were more Catholics in London and Rome than in Dublin. Engels described London as having 'indescribable', 'countless ships', 'endless lines of vehicles', hundreds of steamers', and hundreds of thousands of 'streets, classes, alleys and courts', all with a 'nameless misery'. In the 1871 census, there were nearly two million servants in London.

It is not surprising to learn that the railways ran where the poor lived. The inhabitants were suddenly uprooted...whole streets were dispossessed...no suitable accommodation was available. The Metropolitan Railway destroyed 1,000 houses in the slums, which made homeless 20,000. This caused considerable unrest until housing societies were started. Peabody Building were opened in 1864, they were five-stories high round a central courtyard. Later there were estates in Islington, Shadwell and Chelsea and more built during a ten-year period.

The first water closets were installed around the time of the Great exhibition in 1851...within half a dozen years 200,000 were flowing – previously earth closets or buckets were used to be emptied by the night-soil men who emptied the cesspits selling the contents to farmers on the outskirts of the city. Like the dustmen, the job could be financially worthwhile and sometimes double the rate charged for night's work. Refuse was removed by the two-man teams shouting 'dust oy-eh' loading up their high-sided carts to be deposited at the dust-yards. It was at the dust-yards that sifters worked; teams of women, sorting out the rubbish for the result to be sold-on, nothing thrown away.

Men ruled the household and set the standard... women carried the plan through. Men were out at work whilst their partners maintained the home and family - made the decisions that made up their social circle. Both Hannah, my great grandmother, and Martha my grandmother, were strong characters and strict disciplinarians who supported their husbands. The houses their large families lived in were rented, as were the majority of properties. People either paid weekly rents or were offered leases. 90% of all accommodation was lived in under these conditions and it was considered 'useful' to be able to move at a moments notice. The houses were small, which demanded good housekeeping and a disciplined order - pattern to life.

This was a time of expansion in all trades for more houses were being built to house the vast numbers of new city dwellers and these houses in the main were terraced, where you could not tell one house from the next. There was a gradual movement away from the city centre into the suburbs not only to seek fresh air but 'a better way of life'. Victorian life was one of segregation and classification; home was seen as apart, private and guarded. Local municipal regulations stipulated certain standards for street planning, parks, community amenities and building details. There

was an enormous difference between the social classes all living within a few hundred yards of each other.

This was a time the streets were filled with an incessant stream of horse-drawn, motor driven and steam propelled traffic all limited to twelve miles per hour. There were no traffic lights, one-way streets circles or rights-of-way it was all subject to the rate of the horse and its vagaries. The omnibuses were mainly for the middle-classes where women travelled inside and the men climbed a ladder to sit on a bench seat on the top...later versions had a staircase inside which led to the exposed roof.

There were two kinds of omnibuses, the light-green Atlas and the dark-green City Atlas. The light green, with two horses in hand, served particular routes with a first class compartment. The dark-green ran a return journey every hour...both had iron-shod wheels and curtains at the windows. The driver clad in his old-fashioned cape and tall felt hat, driving three horses abreast in bad weather, carried a load of twenty-two passengers under cover from Paddington, via the Yorkshire Stingo, to the Bank. A newspaper was provided to pass the time of day and the conductor called the route. He stood to the left of the door holding onto his strap signalling to the driver by banging on the roof. One of his jobs was to bend down and help women with their whalebone hoops onto the step and through the narrow doorway. A women's clothing weighed almost forty pounds and when it became saturated with rain, it was difficult to walk. The men passengers who climbed the iron ladder and sat on the 'knife-board' a central bench running lengthways either side of a backrest. Passengers sat back-to-back with their feet against the roofs edge, on a footboard. It was no joy for women either: they had to contend with parasols, umbrellas sticks, canes, and numerous parcels. The rumbling, swaying, jerking and jolting set your-teeth-on-edge: the possibility of fleas, nits, colds, crushed toes and pickpockets all contributed to an uncomfortable

experience. There were a number of turnpike gates that had to be negotiated – one at Marylebone another at Lisson Grove and a third at Great Portland Street. It was possible to stop the omnibus at any point along the route. There was no fixed charge and speed sacrificed for profit. ‘pea-souper’ fogs – which were plentiful – which further slowed progress continually interrupted what timetables were attempted. Even when there was no visible fog the soot, particles in the air created a diffused light and soiled clothing.

Traffic jams were a daily nuisance. The passage of animals and scurrying cabs made reasonable progress impossible. Paths and pavements were forever congested to the extent that they became so smooth that workers were engaged to roughen them. There were nearly eighty main toll-bars and a hundred minor ones – charges mainly paid by tradesmen; tolls were not removed until 1864. The main roads were faced with granite blocks [setts] later replaced with tarred blocks, which proved dangerous under water or in winter frosts.

Street seller abounded selling baked-potatoes, oysters, sheep’s trotters or stewed eels. The butchers and their assistants were always recognisable in their stripped, blue and white aprons and smocks. They would be taking their orders for the day. Later, the butchers’ boys would deliver the order with the customers name skewered to the joint. The baker delivered his pies, buns and bread daily and the milkman conveyed his milk by yoked pail; potboys sold beer. There were orange sellers near theatres, pie-men, sherbet sellers, muffin-men, cockles and mussels, cats meat men, watercress [came from Camden Town and watered by running water from the River Fleet], cherries and strawberry girls, herbs, apples, matches, sandwiches and flower girls. It was normal to have eight-year-old girls clad in a thin cotton dress, with an equally thin shawl round her shoulders, out in all weathers selling produce off a tray slung round her neck.

Shoeblocks, dripping sellers and knife-grinders; chairs were mended on the street, pots were beaten and soldered and sweeps shouted that their boys 'climbed narrower chimneys'. Many of these vendors had their own calls by voice and bell. The street sweepers were employed by the parish - to give some employment to otherwise idle youths, foundlings and those poor unfortunates who were disabled. Sometimes they worked in pairs sweeping the horse droppings and waste into piles to be picked up later by a horse and cart. All roads were attended to for the waste was sold to farms skirting the city boundary.

By the 1880s barrel organs, piano organs and the hurdy-gurdy man accompanied by his monkey, played in the streets. Dancing bears and performing dogs and the one-man-band who clashed his cymbals. The Punch and Judy man, puppeteer visited their pitch on a set rotation. The organ grinder travelled to wherever a crowd gathered - outside the theatres.

Water was only piped for mass use in the mid-c19th. It came from the mains supply in the street by lead pipes into the scullery or kitchen. The supply was intermittent - early on in its inception, the water ran for only one hour every day, three days a week and never on Sundays. It was not until the turn of the century that a constant supply was available on demand.

Many children went bare footed sleeping in alleyways, beneath bridges and under railway arches. The Metropolitan or Underground railway had carriages lit by gas lamps, the tracks provided a smooth and comfortable journey compared to the swaying jerking progress of a horse drawn carriage. The stations, platforms and bridges mainly built of brick, as were the embankments and tunnels. The provision of construction material carted to the various sites for railways use competed with material for house construction. It was a massive undertaking making the already overcrowded city into an even greater hive of industry.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the middle and upper classes could not have existed without servants... from maids-of-all-work upwards to cook, governess and housekeeper... for men: both in or out of livery, gardener, footmen, coachmen and butler. One in six women was servants and a high percentage hired on a daily basis.

CHAPTER III

Kensington Gardens – Parochial Schools – Salem Gardens – Vicar of London – Lord Mayor's Vicar – The Sutton family in Sutton Place – The Working Class – The Royal Parks.

There are many accounts about the living conditions and make up of Victorian Britain. All are very interesting but far too general. We are more concerned about north London – north of the river Thames. To pin point the area more precisely, northwest London, around Bayswater and Paddington. In the period that introduces the Keareys' to this place, just after The Great Exhibition, it was on the outskirts of the city – there were green fields not far away... just up the street, with farms, hedges, woods, trees and all the delights of the country.

Still, we must not get ahead of ourselves - the picture filled out in more detail... Bayswater or Bayswatering as spelt on Rocque's 1748 map lies due south of Christ Church. St. James Church built and made parochial in 1845. It was new being partially rebuilt with the exception of the tower and spire. The pest house indicated so prominently on the map was almost on the site of Craven Terrace Chapel. Lord Craven gave a site at Soho to be used as a burial ground... and knowing the problems

faced by the citizens during the plague of 1665, land for a cottage hospital too... The streets of Paddington were not conveniently built having to walk the whole length for the lack of a side street before moving to a parallel terrace. Further, northwards, on the west side of Petersburgh Place is the church of St, Matthew, built with a very high spire consecrated on May 20th. 1882...the church had seating for 1,550 of which 355 were available free.

The borough boundary turns out of Kensington Gardens into Palace Gardens... crossing the Bayswater Road, it travels northwards, between Ossington Street and Clanricarde Gardens. North of Moscow Road, a Greek church stands impressively by. Given the name of St. Sophia, was built of red brick with a high central dome... It reminds one of a storybook picture of a Russian church. Close by, a small Baptist chapel, neat and compact fitted in, to be built at the back of Porchester Gardens. Moving across Queen's Road, there stands St. Matthew's Parochial School. Built in 1831, found not large enough, then enlarged, losing most of its playground in 1861. Further northwards in Queen's Road are the large buildings housing Paddington Public Baths and Washhouses.

Alfred Kearey courted and married Martha Sutton, named after her mother, born 11th. July 1857. Both of her grandfathers were vicars in London. In the first nineteen years of married life, they had ten children. They started out their married life in a small terraced house, 5 Salem Gardens, Bayswater, just off Moscow Road and Queensway [Queen's Road] - opposite Olympia.

Martha's father, William Sutton, was a trained carpenter His father, also named William, died in 1870, in office, as a Vicar in London. William had his carpenter's shop at the bottom of his garden, making doors and windows. They had two sons and seven daughters. One of the sons was also named William joined the Royal Marines at Deal and took part in the Egyptian War in

1883. He was wounded and invalidated out of the service, dying less than ten years after returning home. The remaining son and five of the daughters married at an early age, leaving daughters Emma and Tottie at home... to help their mother.

Martha had been a trained schoolteacher even though she was not paid a great deal. In Victorian society, it was frowned on for woman teachers to be married so she had to give up her job. Wishing to provide for an increasing family, she started and ran a successful hand laundry from home in a large washhouse in the garden. It required enough space on the range to boil the coppers of washing and sufficient room to do the ironing next to the drying room. She employed other women to do the large amount of washing and ironing that was taken in. Laundry work was labour extensive and for anyone wishing to use those facilities a major part of the family's budget. It was a known fact that infections from mixed washing were possible. In sensible laundries, the washing was separated hung to dry and suitably aired. W H Lever began to sell soap in one-pound bars, ready wrapped, in 1885. Every large house in those days sent out for its laundry to be done - Bayswater was a fashionable part of London forming the North West corner of Kensington Park, so there was a ready business to satisfy close at hand.

The washing was sorted on Saturdays and Sundays and entered into the washing book; this was checked at the end of the process by my great-grandmother. Sheets and linens were covered with luke-warm water and a little soda and left overnight. On Monday, the fires to the boiler were lit two hours before the rest of the household came down to breakfast. As soon as the water was hot, the sheets and linens were taken out of the overnight soaking water, rinsed in hot water ladled out of the copper, rubbed, and beaten with a dolly or passing stick. The sheets were then wrung out, and the water reused - to be used for soaking-water. It was a long process from soaking, three

washes, one boiling and a number of rinses. Within all of this were special stain removal processes and fabric conditioners – some items unpicked and resewn after processing.

Once the first washing had been completed, it was hung out to dry or if wet hung under covered ways - this could take several days. The starching process was complicated in that all materials needed a particular treatment. Unconditioned linen or cotton quickly became creased and rumpled.

The ironing was done on tables. Flat irons were used in pairs – whilst one was in use the other was reheating. A dozen irons were arraigned on trivets over an open fire. Each iron before use was cleaned on a rubbing cloth, any adhering starch cleaned off; irons, which were still dirty, were rubbed on an emery board. Box-irons and goffering irons all had their special uses. Items for repair were set aside and all aired before wrapping - made ready for collection.

There is no doubt that Martha had to be extremely organized to run both the house, large family and family business. The fact that she had been a teacher indicates that her own education had been above average. Coming from a middle-class home gave her the spur to maintain her position for both herself and her children. The family owe much to this hard working woman.

Martha's grandfather, Samuel Elyas Pearce, was a Vicar of one of London's city churches and Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London. "The patronage of the Lord Mayor included the appointment of a chaplain who lives and boards in the Mansion House have a suite of rooms and a servant rides in a state carriage and attends the Lord Mayor whenever required. He was presented to Queen Victoria at the first levee, and received fifty guineas from the Court of Aldermen, and a like sum from the Court of Common Council. His wife, my maternal great grandmother, often told my father, that when she visited her

great grandmother she would be told many frightening things about events which happened before and after The Great Fire of London in 1666.

In Victorian times, the main reception room presented the public face of the family and it conformed to the accepted strictures of the society. It displayed, on shelves, tables, what-knots a variety of small object both expensive, and inexpensive which were reminders of people and places. Tablecloths came right down to the floor with plants in heavy pots and planters. Covers were placed to protect furniture from coal dust and fire-embers. Window curtains suspended from poles and rings were tied back to reveal net curtaining obscuring the view outside. Slip rugs positioned at the fireside left exposed the polished wood floor.

My grandmother Martha named after her mother, Martha Pearce, was the eldest child in the Sutton family. It was usual in those days that the eldest girls in the family took on a great deal of the housework by rota. This would include the cooking and work in the laundry. It was held as convention that this was the way a girl contributed to the home and was properly prepared to bring up her own family, when and if the time came. However, it is clear that there was little affection in the home especially by her mother. When grandmother showed independence by wearing a new hairstyle she was told to, 'leave the home and do not return'. This seems on the face of it a hard thing to do but her mother had to control the situation. It was a small house and a large family and her mother could not afford for the situation to get out of hand and lose respect. [Fortunately, all came right in the end]

In the late nineteenth century, most women in England were excluded from political and economic power. Wives and daughters were legally subservient to husbands until the Married

Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1880s. Protecting women from beatings by the husband did not come about until 1891.

Martha sought help and comfort from a girl friend that lived not far away in Caroline Place. She was also a laundress and worked from home. It was not a large house and there was no more room for another person to sleep so a place was found for her under the ironing table. My grandfather Alfred Kearey who knew Martha before this event quickly saw in her a person he could befriend. Shortly after this, the Sutton family were reunited and they were married in 1878. A house found for them for lodging in Sutton Place. [The name is a coincidence]

The owner of Salem Gardens, who was incidentally the founder of the building firm William Whiteley, demolished the whole site – to prepare it for redevelopment. Whiteley was enormously impressed by the Great Exhibition and all that it offered as an introducer to new fashion and industrial development. He opened a shop in Bayswater, which was then considered in 1863 a fashionable district of London. This shop was a success and he gradually enlarged it, taking on more staff, whilst improving his stock. Eventually his stables were one of the largest in London having 145 vehicles and 320 horses able to deliver anything 'the same day'. It eventually became one of the new 'department stores' – he called it the 'Universal Provider', boasting that he could provide 'anything from pin to an elephant'. Thomas Lipton called his early shops 'Irish markets' probably because he sold Irish butter and eggs. There was a great deal of competition between Lipton and the others providers particularly those who catered for the working class and poor. These lower ends of the market traders did not worry Whiteley for he was looking to the middle-classes to make his fortune.

As a child, Whiteley had gone to school with my great grandfather, and therefore, well know to him. Unfortunately, William, who was married at the time, went out with one of his

female staff. This was not an unusual behaviour pattern for him to do and caused great bitterness. Years later one of the children took revenge on the father - for bringing such unhappiness to his mother and family, and shot him.

My grandmother was very conscience of her grandfather's position in the church, of Christian principles towards other people who need help. Her own large family gave her knowledge and understanding about women in labour and child delivery. She became the local unpaid midwife taking on the responsibility not only being at the birth of neighbouring children but helped nurse them, and their mothers too. Martha did this not only to help the family budget but also to relieve the hardships found at that time in the surrounding streets. Her mother had been trained as a schoolteacher, which inculcated a desire for learning – passed onto her children. This prompted her to always take an interest in her children's education... in later life my father attributed to her his love of learning.

The 1870 Elementary Education Act was introduced to ensure all children would be eligible to go to school. This was the first time a school place was available in a building set aside for the purpose under a certified head teacher. Previously most children could only rely upon instruction by the main religious bodies from 1833 and philanthropic organizations such as the Anglian National Society in 1811, and the British and Foreign School Society in 1814.

The Victorians found pregnancy something to be hidden and not talked about. Fathers were ignorant as to what was happening and mothers too were unclear about the physical side to life. Martha's visits and ministrations were much valued... it says much for her fortitude, knowledge and experience; in a time when these were hard to find... that, she did these things without payment.

In the middle to late 1800s religion was the all-permeating influence not only of the family but the greater society. The parish church was the centre of the social system – the keystone that propped up the government. The main creed was obedience. ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’ was to be heard every Sunday at church. Church was also a social gathering where everything was discussed, evaluated, and equated. The dissenter was an unsocial person, to be wary of. The average person was not so concerned about dogma but of difference. The clergyman was the father of the parish linked to a great system which had gone on for ages.

The landlord was the lawgiver the representative of the parliamentary system - one of their own – born in the district. He could be seen every day walking about in and out of their houses. He knew them and their troubles, their ideas, their wants, dreams and desires...after all, they were identical to his views as well. It was here that the word and philosophical understanding of ‘rights’ had a place. This influenced every living hour of their day. They knew where they stood and they knew their worth.

In the middle to late 1800s individuals still did not regularly bathe. Underclothes were worn as either summer clothes or winter and not removed except to replace. Strip baths were the only means of washing either at the outside sink or tin bath. Those elders who were considered fussy used the public baths which children were encouraged to use – mainly to remove vermin – to stop scratching. This state of affairs lasted until well into the 20th century.

This is how the working class understood the world they lived in and this is how the middle class saw their place in the grand scheme of things. It was based upon a rural foundation..., which was to change. It was not long ago after all that most were onetime hewers of wood, tillers of soil and drovers of stock.

In the second half of the nineteenth century London's rich and middle class moved away from the city centre, which was being swamped by immigrants, particularly Westminster, where the Irish, French, and Jews congregated. The rich preferred Sydenham in Kent and Barnes and Richmond on the Thames, the upper middle class: Hampstead and Ealing, north and west of the city and Penge, south. The lower middle class: Camberwell, Hammersmith, Leyton, and Balham. Those men who worked in 'city-offices' preferred Bayswater, Brixton and Clapham... All these were at the time the city's outskirts.

Bayswater lies at the top left-hand corner of Kensington Gardens. Kensington Palace is south, three quarters of a mile down the road and Notting Hill Gate about the same distance west. It was an ideal place to live, close to two royal parks.

CHAPTER IV

Albert Kearey

Bayswater – Salem Gardens – Queen Victoria – Poor families – The parlour – Education Act – Church School – The church – Perambulations around Kensington Gardens – Abduction – Board School – Piano lessons – The Music Hall – Steam engines.

My father, christened Albert Edward - Albert after the Prince Regent; he was the fifth child, born on the 21st March 1889, at 6 Salem Gardens, Bayswater. After my father's birth, three sisters and three more brothers were added to the previous four children... making eleven in all. He recognized later, all his

brothers and sisters were most fortunate having parents who were so considerate and caring.

In the late Victorian age many children from poorer families were thought of as ‘an investment’ and put out to work as errand boys, carriers of beer, street cleaners and railway station porters. Others held horses, carried trucks, and delivered parcels, they stood at doorways ready to call a cab and helped cabbies who were drunk, – and the number occupied thus was estimated as between ten to twenty thousand. Many became match boys and street sellers, carried food and fruit. They did even the smallest thing to make what they could to help at home. As soon a dawn broke, they were to be seen outside every market place ready to take up a barrow. Others traded by the queues of shops and theatres to entertain and amuse by ‘their antics’.

Workmen of the period sported heavy moustaches; wore heavy boots with hob-nails, thick twill trousers, coarse worsted jackets, a waistcoat supporting a watch or key chain, and a cap or billycock hat – a short top-hat, but all very well worn - probably cast-offs! Some may wear smocks, overalls or wear a uniform that would distinguish him from other workers.

A middle-class man whose face was richly adorned by hair in the shaped of muttonchops, full beard with moustache, wore a universally prescribed silk-plush, top hat on a stiff blocked base made of canvas. A black or dark blue frock coat, with a fashioned waist and skirt, with straight edges to about knee height open at the front by curving or wrapping the skirt-front round to the back. A pocketed, silk lined, velvet waistcoat with a man’s watch usually on a silver chain. Trousers were fashioned tight in white, grey, fawn or striped, held up by braces. A pinned satin cravat beneath a studded collar-band topped a mid-thigh length shirt with separate, point up, starched collar and linked secured, folded cuffs. For special occasions, a starched, frilly shirt front and tied silk bow. Beneath all would be one-piece long

johns and silk socks held in place by garters thrust into ankle-boots.

By 1865, the very wide skirts for women, supported by crinolines, which took over from tight-laced corsets, were being superseded by tunic dresses; waisted blouses with a bustle at the back soon to be replaced. A waterproof cloak with hood, heightened boots, the essential hat, and parasol, completed the picture.

My father lived with his parents, Martha and Alfred Kearey, at 6, Salem Gardens, Moscow Road, Bayswater... Salem Gardens, which was later demolished, is now called Salem Road, which is to be found just off Queensway, and Bayswater tube station - which forms a square. On the other side, backing onto the gardens is Moscow Place and Moscow Road both forming another square with Queen's Mansions, just a few doors up from his paternal grandparents. It was a small rented house with just four rooms, two up and two down, a kitchen and an outhouse. It had a back garden, which stopped at the Queens Mews stable wall belonging to a house in the next road.

Within the homes of father's friends, elaborate rules of etiquette were observed. In middle class homes, one had to dress for dinner in full evening dress. Lace curtains were *de rigueur* and Sunday best clothes worn. No games were played; no shops were open, no theatres played, and only the bible read. No running in the road and parks - decorum was observed at all times, and no shouting ever! The parlour was used as a 'special room' for Sundays, entertaining guests and visitors, high days and Christmas.

Albert attended Sunday school aged four in 1893, at the school in Queens Road [now Queensway]. The girls and boys were formed up in ranks of two... Then, holding hands, marched off to Saint Matthews Church, Saint Petersburg Place,

Bayswater... led by a Master and Mistress. It was here that Albert spent two years at the Infant School.

It was thought important, by the government, that, as more people were taking up the option to vote they should be educationally equipped to make proper decisions. At the same time, it became apparent that Britain industrial base was lagging behind some European countries. Both these factors suggested that elementary education should be expanded. The 1870 Elementary Education Act ensured this would happen and school boards were set up. In 1895, the voluntary schools still provided half a million more places than the board schools. Poor families complained that sending their children to school instead of to work prevented the rest of the family from eating.

The Kearey family was relatively well off - having a father skilled in his own painting and staining business with a full order book. The school fees were *1d.* or *2d.* per week; there was, however, a considerable variation of fees depending on the numbers of children from one family going to the same school or whether there was sickness or lack of footwear – a fairly common occurrence. By 1891, sufficient money was made available by the government to provide free places. When Albert went to school in 1893, he did not have to attend school with his fee in his pocket. The minimum age children could then leave school was eleven... It would take another six years to push this up to twelve.

At that, time education in London led the way in curriculum innovation promoting music, drill and object lessons – some instruction about the world around them... about science, history and geography. Lessons other than the three Rs were considered ‘class lessons’. For the older children two other specific subjects were included. The question about the provision of a piano was much debated finally it was left to the head teacher knowing what funding from grants was available.

At around the age of twelve children who went to church were confirmed... afterwards allowed to attend communion services. For several weeks before confirmation, there would be classes of instruction to learn The Creed, Ten Commandments, The Catechism, The Lord's Prayer and other religious works. On the day of communion the girls would wear white long sleeved dresses, white shoes and veils and the boys their best suits and well shone shoes, starched collars to their white shirts a buttoned up waist coats. In the late Victorian era, Sunday's were a special day, no work was to take place, and no games played. People who did not attend church were considered wicked or lacking in respect.

Most children went to Sunday school and attended one proper service – morning or evening. At Christmas, they went twice a day. The Sunday school lessons consisted of bible reading, instruction and righteous stories with a moral theme and learning the collect [single prayer of the day]. Picture stamps of bible scenes were collated and mounted into an album. Hymns for young children were sung to the accompaniment of a piano. All the people were dressed in their Sunday best. Children in particular were clothed in shirts stiff with starch. The congregation knew where to sit and usually always in the same pew. The congregation knelt down and said a prayer or to ask for forgiveness for wrong doings, before the service began.

The High Altar, a covered table, was reached by several steps around which were displayed several oil paintings depicting biblical scenes. The chancel was imposingly large being separated from the body of the church by a wrought iron grill. There were always on hand many servitors - functionaries, in high-church dress. The service was intoned and sung, except the lessons.

There was a special service for woman who had not long given birth. This was called 'Churching for Women' and was a service to cleanse her and release her from sin. There was no

such thing as feminism or a feminist movement. Why this should only be for women was never explained nor how they had been sinful.

At St. Matthew's Church, pews could be rented. When the Upper Classes – particularly the Nobility and Aristocracy, attended the service, a footman followed them. He was dressed in frock coat, white skin-tight trousers and buckled shoes - whose job it was to carry a bible and prayer book – to be handed over to their masters at the door. Pew-openers directed the ordinary parishioners into their strictly graded, rented and paid for seats. My father went on to say that in his mother's day these titled folk were ushered into their pews, which had doors and sometimes separate internal roofs, by attendants who saw them in and spread blankets over their legs. These attendants were women who had black poke bonnets and white aprons. Services were known by heart particularly the hymns. The sermons were often long and difficult to hear because of the echo.

The rector constantly instructed his parishioners that they should worship all day Sunday. However, the evening services were those best attended. The aristocracy attended church in the mornings; in the evenings by their servants, who were too busy at their household tasks and looking after the horses and farm animals, to find time during the day.

In the winter months, the church interiors were lit by the soft glow of oil lamps, which cast mysterious shadows over the walls and pillars - making the gloomy, cold, and damp environment eerie – to small children, frightening. The congregation sat in the same seat every week and woe betides if you sat on somebody else's pew. You always had to be on your best behaviour. My father knelt down with everyone else and said a prayer, asked forgiveness, before waiting for the service to

begin. He was supposed to read the collect for the day or a psalm. Everyone knew the service order by rote and most of the hymns. At the collection, a halfpenny would be dropped in the plate. It was not unusual for the gentry to have their own family pews and the added luxury of a couple of heated rooms where they could meet, entertain, and retire to. The beadies kept order and the poor out.

At the end of the service, the parishioners walked out into the blackness of the night and those who had a long way to get back home would light candles in their lamps that flickered on the footpaths and disappear into the night. However distant the journey there was little fear of being accosted by vagabonds or scoundrels for the congregation all left together. You could hear the happy 'goodnights' all around you as the cheery calls echoed through the night air... The clear night sky would enable you to recognise the constellations and sometimes see a falling star and get a wish.

It was a ritual on a Sunday for the ladies and gentlemen from surrounding churches to perambulate around the squares and gardens, after Matins. This walk ended up strolling down Lancaster Walk past Speke's monument and further still onto the Albert Memorial. This walk was termed 'The Parade'. It was here that the bonneted women and attending dandies would be bobbing and nodding to their acquaintances all showing off their latest fashions.

The riders had a similar parade; both men and women wore top hats, the women rode sidesaddle, the society dandies and their simpering belles disporting in their barouches whilst chattering loudly fluttering their fans. Some of the small children would be riding their ponies besides their parents giggling and chattering like sparrows.

The nannies would be pushing the enormous sided prams, the largest of which displayed wealth, kept to the railing paths.

Regents Park, planned by Nash, displayed the Zoological exhibits – was a favourite place for them to go...needing one shilling for the pleasure.

This display, performed by the rich, occurred in all of London's royal parks. This droll, ostentation by the bourgeoisie had a great effect upon my father who saw it as a display of wealth – from those who might also cast a glance of disdain on the unfortunates who did not have an equal social standing.

Although he always voted conservative, he was fully aware of the injustices in society and could not abide pomposity.

After church, my father would walk to the top of the road towards Kensington Gardens. At that time Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, occupied The Royal Palace of Kensington. When he got to the park, he had to walk and never run because the Park Keeper would soundly admonish him for desecrating the Sabbath Day.

Regent's Park was never just the preserves of aristocrats, about a third of occupants of Nash's terraces were in business. Kensington Gardens was not open to the public for its first ten years after its inauguration but kept as a great private estate for Royalty and the aristocracy.

City life was one of organised chaos. There were few women particularly in public areas – there was a changing shift of people mainly men to and from work. Clerks were in abundance being the main form of employment for the non-servant classes; they would not only populate their offices but be rushing delivering letters, plans and manuscripts.

The water carts would be out laying the dust, crossing keepers dressed in their uniform, keeping their particular spots clean of mud and dung. The potboys and shop staff lifting open the hatches to the cellars, rolling back the blinds and pulling open the shutters. The street life during the day was cosmopolitan with a frantic grating, crunching, swirling of

speeding horse drawn traffic, the hackney drivers vying with each other to get back to the pitch as soon as possible - were the worst, darting here and there without a by-your-leave'. During early mornings and after work the streets returned to almost village life... over and behind the shops family life progressed. There were three main commercial and business groups: the sellers, the buyers and the providers. This last group contained the service and maintenance staff, builders and repair people who lived in the so-called village.

Babies at the turn of the century were not often weaned until they were at least one year old. It was not only expected, not to give up breast-feeding, but cheaper and more convenient. Babies were kept in long gowns and nothing was done to disturb them or excite them. They were not expected to sit up until the age of at least six months. Their prams had large wheels, high sides and were fully sprung. Trying to help the child to walk before the age of two was frowned on because it was thought the childhood become bow-legged.

In summer, many of the children went to the London parks. As most children were from large families, the eldest daughter kept an eye on the younger-ones. The prams were pushed by their owners some hired other by the child's nanny... picnics held beneath the trees or by the lakes. Drinking water was to be had at the fountains, ducks fed on scraps of stale bread and peacocks gazed at in awe.

He remembered an incident when he was a toddler when his brothers came out of the park to return home. They had forgotten him - he was quite innocently trotting off in another direction. A chimney sweep saw him apparently all alone, picked him up placed him on his barrow amongst all the brushes and bags of soot, and made off with him. The brothers meantime had reached home still engrossed in conversation to find him not

bringing up the rear. There was panic at home and his mother ran up to the park frantically searching for her son.

In Victorian times the slums of Notting Hill, which is the other side of the park, had an evil reputation for kidnapping and extortion and it was because of this reputation that she made her way there. Fortunately, she found her son Bert perched on the barrow parked outside a public house. The sweep was celebrating his successful abduction inside the inn.

Sweeps and slum factory owners wanted cheap labour - frequently resorted to child theft. Small children were used by sweeps to descend narrow chimneys, especially the bends used in the chimney to obtain a better draught, being lowered from the top scraping and sweeping whilst they were lowered, the soot being collected at the bottom. Sweeps, as a form of promoting their services, used very small children, declaring that, 'they could clean smaller chimneys than any other sweep.'

There was an argument on the pavement between the police officer and the sweep - vigorously holding onto Bert. The sweep was heard shouting, 'I know my rights, he's my child and I'm defending and protecting him!'

The interested onlookers gathered around, some coming from within the public house. They heard my father calling out to his mother, whilst furiously trying to clamber into her arms. The crowd supported my grandmother calling to the police officer to do his duty.

That decided it for the police officer who, taking the infant from the cart, returned the child to its parent...telling the sweep of a possible summons, if he did not be quiet!

CHAPTER V

The Great Western

Paddington Station - Fashions – Moscow Road – Sunday best – The parlour – Queensway – Voluntary Schools – Good works – St Matthew’s Church – Churching for Women – Lancaster Walk – Regents Park – Bayswater - Marylebone Station.

On January 10th 1863, Paddington railway station was open to the public; it was The Great Western Railway Line, and the Metropolitan Railway. The railways construction had resulted in many families evicted from their houses, so that they could be demolished. The broad staircase lead down thirty feet to platform level but long before reaching the bottom the small of smoke and steam pervades the air. You could feel the draught the closer one found the underlying cause. The gas burners light the way as we jostle along – for there are a steady stream of would be passengers also making there way along the smoke filled tunnel. At last, the train is reached; it was just over a mile away from home in Salem Gardens.

That same year, riding in ‘The Row’, in London’s Hyde Park, the latest carriage style included the Victoria Phaeton, the Mail Phaeton, the Four Wheel Dog Cart, the Light Waggonette, the Brougham, the Parisian Phaeton and the Stanhope Phaeton. The bicycle too changed with improved tyres, gears and brakes. By 1900, the cost of an average car was £385, which was about ten times that of a farm workers yearly income. Paddington was now a borough with tree-shaded roads and squares. There was an enormous disparity between the various districts. This was apparent when getting near to Hyde Park and those houses along the canal. The areas around the railway terminus, the shops, and

entertainment centres in Westbourne Grove, Queens Road, and Edgware Road gave variety and colour.

In 1900, horse-transport was the usual mode of travel for both individuals and groups of people. Most of the carriages were privately owned although there was a public horse drawn system called the omnibus. Some people had a pony and trap or small governess cart, drawn by very small ponies. Occasionally goats pulled the country carts.

Every shop had its errand boy who delivered goods by hand; the older boys, doing a bigger round, used a pony drawn cart. Very few people carried their own shopping relying upon the shop's delivery service. Men drove Brewer's drays drawn by four huge horses, with their jingling horse brasses and bells, with bowler hats sitting high up at the front covered with a tarpaulin wrap fastened over their knees. Carrier Vans collected and delivered heavier goods on either two or four wheeled carts. Two paraffin oil or acetylene lamps lit his way. These vans travelled around a particular route known by the inhabitants. If their services were required, a note had to be pinned to your door or gate. Deliveries were also made from the railway stations guaranteeing a door-to-door service.

It was alongside Kensington Gardens that the stagecoach route ran from Central London. During school holidays, my father would sit in the public gardens and watch the coaches bowling along the road to Windsor or Hurlingham with the guard whipping up the horses and blowing his coaching horn. All traffic travelled at the pace of a horse. Carriages of many different styles abounded.

On every first of May, a rustic pageant called 'Jack-in-the-Green' was enacted. The sweep's boys decorated with garlands of green leaves cavorted around the streets. Maid Marion, was the traditional May Queen who was pulled by hand-cart to her throne.

When father's family were asked to leave Salem Gardens, they rented a house in Bayswater. It was here that my father started kindergarten in 1892 at the age of three. His starter class, attached to the infant school, was well attended; taught by senior girls, at the age of fourteen - considered fit by their studies to consider teaching as a profession. Parents had to pay perhaps 4d per-week for the first child then, on a sliding scale, less for additional children; the rate was flexible according to the parent's income. These fees were only just beginning to be scrapped after an extra government grant for elementary education brought into being. The minimum leaving age was twelve by the time Albert started school... at the same time attendance for all children compulsory.

Saint Matthew's Infant School, Poplar Place, Moscow Road, was a small Church school for very young children and was to last for two years. There were no desks or individual seats but galleries amounting to eight rows of broad steps. He had to sing his multiplication tables and alphabet every morning. These were not the only form of learning by rote there were others: spectrum colours, kings and queens, months of the year and many other useful facts. Common words learnt by 'heart' and religiously checked every day by his teacher. Proper pronunciation of words, the correct use of grammar, national tunes, mental arithmetic, countries of The Empire all given a place in the curriculum. By the end of the two-year period a great deal was learnt and committed to memory.

Girl teachers, who were very patient and kind knowing as they did how important it was that their charges could cope with the curriculum at the Junior School, gave the lessons. His girl teachers were fourteen, the age when pupils left school - were the brighter girls from the top class - who were in teacher training. There were no grants training had to be paid for by the parents. There were few jobs for girls. To be a nurse the training

was the same. The parents paid the fees. Some worked in local hospitals but were not able to qualify without going to College to receive their certificate. My father was very happy at St Matthew's school and did well coming out top of the class. At this age, he began piano lessons, which he persevered with - years later achieved a professional standard.

CHAPTER VI

Church School

Saint Matthew's Infants – Learning by rote – The harsh winters – Charity Funds - Junior School – Church School – Children's complaints – Industrial society – The laundry – School Board – The Underground System - Boy's Brigade – The Volunteers.

When he was five years old, he went up to the Junior School of St Matthew's Church, which was in another building, also in Queens Road. It was only Class 1 that had a separate room - known as 'The Bottom Standard'. There he was taught the Prayer Book. At the same time, instruction given so that pupils could recite the Ten Commandments: the creed, the Catechism and the Lord's Prayer. This was to prepare them for 'confirmation'.

In subsequent years, the higher standards were taught in a large hall, which seated about five classes. The head teacher was Mr Dexter who had an assistant and three female staff. Boys were separated from Girls, who had their own hall. At this time, education was not compulsory - there was a voluntary charge made throughout the year of two pence per week for lessons.

Discipline was vigorously exercised to keep noise levels down so as not to disturb the other classes. Lessons arranged so that singing in one class taught with sewing or drawing in another so that one would not affect the other.

These large rooms, or halls, were very cold in the winter for they had large windows and lofty ceilings. Each large room had a coal heater set in the middle of the floor with the chimney pipe running up to the high roof. The floor, uneven through use, showed raised nails - was of bare wood, which gave off clouds of dust when anyone moved. Colourless flaking lime-washed walls white peppered the surrounding floor, which added to the general dust.

My father spoke of the severe winters and dense fogs, which made going to school something to be dreaded. In the winter of 1894-5, which was particularly severe, hot meals were provided and warm clothing distributed to the needy and boots to those without. It was reported, by a school's medical officer, that at least one third of all children had not had their clothes off for more than six months and that a high percentage of these had their underclothes sewn on them. These children smelt - nobody wanted to sit next to them; others continually itched and could not sit still. Schoolroom was fumigated and teachers wore bags of sulphur sewn into their hems- to ward off vermin. A great many children worked before and after school as messengers, street sellers and errand boys. It was a case of having to, to provide for a single or sickly parent. For twelve-year-old girls leaving school domestic service was the most popular job available.

Many of the children were fed by charitable funds provided by rich neighbours and philanthropic action by societies. It was only at the start of the First World War that the Board of Education compelled all authorities to provide meals. The health of schoolchildren was a matter of concern and

provision made for the medical inspection of all schoolchildren. By 1914, just over three-quarters of London's Boroughs made health, eyesight and dental checks. The improved provision of continuous tap water helped children's health. Skin complaints began to disappear and infections from various bugs reduced to the degree that fumigation tailed off.

These were dreary winter days... when the teacher lit the gas mantle held in the wall bracket... to produce a depressing yellow glow. This light could hardly penetrate the gloom, not only because of the lateness of the hour but the denseness of the London fog outside which seeped into the room. It is difficult now to imagine... although understandable when we consider their Mondays' in particular, when all the boilers lit for washing. It was difficult to breathe the sulphurous air: the fumes from candles, oil lamps and various heaters made even the inside of homes smoky. To go out was a trial... continually tripping over milk churns and dustbins, negotiating horse dung and rotting waste, into a world of a pale golden colour with humps and hillocks... ghostly bodies set lurching into each other... all groping to find their way.

The high-hung school bell, set on the roof, rang at nine and one o'clock. The children had to form up outside until let in... to form queues that were led snaking into the classrooms. There was no talking and no running every movement was regimented and orderly. Slates were used to write on which made a squeaky noise when the slate pencils were used. No provision was made for cleaning the slates so children spat on them and rubbed them with their sleeves. Slates, hung from pegs around the wall, were used for minor lessons and practice - to save paper. When writing perfected using slates 'writing books' and 'pen and ink sets' passed out by the monitor.

By the turn of the century, a system of elementary education had been worked out and some two million children

attended board school. This was the direct result of the 1870 Education Act coming into fruition. All of England was divided up into school districts where school boards were set up with powers to levy rates and build schools. This was done and the results can be seen today – those schools are still in being although perhaps not as schools any more. The Education Act of 1902 was the basis for all branches of education – from elementary to university, included in this were church schools. County, district and borough councils who formed local education committees [LEAs] replaced School Boards. By the end of 1902, fifty-three secondary schools set up. It took a further ten years to add three hundred more.

The working population of large British cities, particularly London at the turn of the nineteenth century, was described graphically in Dickens's novels. They were people intent upon holding their jobs, maintaining their position in the social order and putting on a brave face - to cover up any differences of order or hardship. Amongst these citizens were the Kearey family - one of many who succeeded. They eventually considered themselves Londoners and were proud of it! In addition, what was different about them, from many such families, was that their paternal great-grandfather Thomas Kearey had been born in Ireland – of ancient Gaelic roots...

My father was very aware that he was fortunate... his father had a skilled job that enabled him to be self-employed. This was at a time when a number of events, in both Britain and the rest of the world, came one after another to create 'the industrial society'. Steam engines were invented to pump out water from the mines - allowing more coal to be extracted. This power source was adapted to drive mills and traction engines. Canals were built to move heavy materials across country. Railways took over the transportation of goods and passengers. This movement of people stripped young people away from the

countryside. Houses, factories, railway cutting, tunnels, and docks had to be provided. To clothe, equip, furnish and supply the factories and their workers ancillary businesses blossomed. Once this train of event happened, there was no stopping the development of a new 'industrial' society that had far-reaching social effects. Into the birth of this new world, Thomas galloped to start a new life and eventually generations of Londoners. His son Thomas, took over the reigns to pass them to my grandfather, who benefited by the building boom, allowing him to start up his own business.

My grandmother also ran her own business. The laundry operated from home and provided work for local women. Once again, it was an opportune time to own such an enterprise especially in the middle-class area of Bayswater. It too prospered. This was a loving, secure, home environment, which provided my father with grounding for organization and management.

If you were to see a film of London's population at the turn of the nineteenth century, you would be able to pick out those people who had a lot of money, from those who had little. Their dress would give them away. The rich women wore long dresses made out of silks and satins, wore flamboyant hats and fur stoles, and carried a parasol. They did no work but run their house through the effort of servants and cooks planning the weeks programme and menu. Their husbands, many were absentee property owners, living off the rents of property, stocks, and shares, wore: frock coats, bowler hats, and astrakhan collared over-coats... Income tax was very low allowing surplus money to be spent on clothes, houses, horses, and carriages. It was a very unequal society.

The poor children wore rags, went barefooted, and were frequently undernourished. They lived in tenements and back-to-back houses with no sanitary arrangements except a community

lavatory and tap. Many children lived away from home - under bridges and populating derelict houses.

All the different strata of society wore clothes appropriate to that level – not attempting to copy their so-called betters, but maintaining their station in life. The rich looked upon the poor as ‘unfortunates’ some socially minded did so with embarrassment, others felt guilty - that there wasn’t greater equality. The mass of the population were struggling with the day-to-day survival. Three-quarters of all adults earned less than £160 per year. The gap between paying income tax or not widened during the Edwardian period. Almost sixty per cent of the population were living more than two to a room.

Many of these unfortunates were housed in the workhouse on a diet of half a pint of milk and five ounces of dry bread for breakfast. Dinner, the main meal of the day, consisted of an ounce and a half of fatty roast beef, four ounces of potatoes or other vegetable, and six ounces of some sort of pudding – usually a concoction of suet and flour. In addition, for supper, a half pint of, water and milk mix, of cocoa and a quarter pound of seed cake. This diet exceeded that of a workers family whose wage might be twenty-shillings a week... thirty shillings was considered a good wage. Alfred, a self-employed painter, earned about forty-shillings a week. Fortunately, these were times of feverish activity industrially and economically. Employment was high for Britain was preparing its defences and the work demanded by the railways and house building kept the labour market busy.

The working week was sometimes more than fifty hours and even though employment was high there was always a fear of be laid off – of being out of work. Trade unions were weak and the law gave very little protection for unfair dismissal. There was no unemployment insurance or social security. The property

owner for any trifling excuse could throw a family out of their house.

As there was already, a piano in the house it was not difficult to accord him that desire. It did not take long for him to reach the first grade and his teacher declared that he had a natural bent learning not only the practical side but the theory too. Soon he was able to play the hymns sung at the school assembly – he was often required to accompany singers at Christmas time and within a few years diligent practice proficient enough to play for the local film show, keeping pace with the black and white films. He continued to play for the rest of his life reaching a high enough standard to play for Masonic meetings.

To have a piano in the house at the turn of the nineteenth century was the popular means of home entertainment. It is estimated that there were between two and four million pianos in Britain - one instrument to ten to twenty people. It was a skill considered to be, 'one of social inclusion', especially for girls. To be able to play well - able to accompany singers entertaining company, a mark of distinction... it was also a guarantee of inclusion, for a skilled player was always wanted for every social gathering. The piano in the parlour was not just a butt for jokes but a matter of fact. Between 1877 and 1902 'The Lost Cord' sold fifty thousand copies of sheet music per year making Parry a very rich man. The family singsong around the piano, singing the songs of the day from popular music hall acts, operettas, national tunes, and hymns looked forward to as a means of social discourse – bringing family and friends together. Even during the Second World War, every weekend, it was my task to gather the music together sort out the tunes to be sung and prepare the piano - making sure the action had been aired - free from damp before the fire. I had to sing my party piece before visiting aunts

and uncles: Cherry Ripe, The Tree, The Miner's Dream of Home and The Teddy Bears Picnic; my father with, The Village Pump and Captain Ginger, and a selection from Gilbert and Sullivan.

My father stayed at school until he was seven years old when the family moved to Kensal Green. His next school, Princess Frederika Higher Grade School, had the sexes still separated. He tells us that it was a miserable place staffed by elderly teachers who were always unsmiling, stern and dressed as if in morning. He was glad when he moved yet again to the London School Board at Amberley Road, Paddington. {This school is still there and backs onto the Paddington Branch of the Grand Union Canal. One end of the road is Harrow Road in Westbourne Green}. Whilst my father attended this school Queen Victoria died and Edward VII was crowned King. All children were given the day off to celebrate and street parties were arranged. Later that year my father joined the 6th. London Boys Brigade Company, which was attached to the school's church. The captain who ran the company was J.A.Robson a remarkable man enrolling more than a hundred boys. Most years winning the area cup and shield for band and drill competitions.

The Boy Scouts were based upon trekking and scouting. The Boy's Brigade linked to a military style of light infantry training. The Boy's Brigade, founded by Sir William Smith in Glasgow at the end of the 19th.century. The object of the Brigade was to produce good citizens. In 1904 throughout the country there was said to be 54,000 boys between the ages of 12-14 in the organization. Baden-Powell became honorary Vice-president and Inspector General that same year. It was thought by many, both in the Army and Government, that here was an organization that could be a source of recruitment for future officers and men of the British Army. 'A strong force behind the Volunteers and the Army – a third line in defending our shores'.

Now at last my father was happy. The Headmaster at the London school Board was Mr Williamson who although strict was kind and fortunately ably assisted by capable teachers in six separate classrooms. He could master the three 'Rs' and was taught elementary algebra, composition, drawing, geometry, French and woodwork. He had great affection for this school and never forgot the headmaster - what he owed him for his many kindnesses. Discipline was looked on as something essentials and necessary and so too punishment for wrongdoing and slackness. There was a punishment book called 'The Board School, cane and Punishment Book'. The children with great awe regarded this and so the threat of entry into this book was sufficient to deter misdoing.

At the start of every day, prayers were said and hymns sung in the main hall. At the end of each day, the same thing happened. Pupils were expected to pay respect to older people - hats should be raised and taken off to masters and mistresses, to say 'Sir' and 'Miss' when spoken to. When leaving school caps were to be worn at all times. Father played the piano for the school assembly and in the evenings for the local picture palace where silent films with sub-titles were shown. This required dexterity and a knowledge of many tunes to follow each part of the story line.

English lessons, which were taught every day, had as their main content the spelling of words and note taking. Writing with a hand in copperplate script was the standard necessary and much practiced. Mental arithmetic was greatly encouraged by giving every class every day a problem to be solved. Teachers taught all subjects and knew their charges intimately, their faults and failings, their successes and strengths.

In 1900, the underground railway system was electrified. For the price of a tuppenny ticket, the passenger could travel as far as he wished. This became so successful that the underground

railway was extended which in turn paid its way. The first transatlantic wireless message was sent the following year. The industrialization continued apace each year that passed more inventions and discoveries were made.

My father started work at the age of fifteen in 1904 [the same time the Russo-Japanese War started]. He joined the Great Central Railway Company whose head office was at Paddington Station as a junior clerk. Because there was no vacancy at that post, to start with, he had to serve out his probationary period learning to pack parcels and load wagons in the Goods Yard. A few months later a vacancy for junior clerk occurred on the staff of Thompson McKay and Company, who were Carting Agents for the G.C.R..., which he took. Office work included dealing with street accidents, claims for damage to goods in carriage, stoppages, overtime and bonus payments, accounts, detention charges, correspondence and ordering feed for the horses. In retrospect; if my father had waited for a vacancy with the railway company and not gone to a private cartage company, he would have benefitted enormously both in eventual retirement benefit and rising in the far larger concern.

The Cartage Department then came under the jurisdiction of the District manager who had six hundred horses, a Miles Daimler 5-ton, iron tyred, motor with rack and pinion drive and a 10 ton Yorkshire Steam Wagon. All the horses were young and some had to be trained. Some 'car-men', the term used for drivers, were detailed off as 'young-horse car-men' for breaking in these animals. As 'Agents' Thompson McKay & Co. carried out town cartage work as well as more general work... particularly orders for Lots Road, Electric Generating Station, which was speciality work... some being very heavy. In cases where the cartage of 40-ton boilers was, necessary twenty horses were used at a time pulling a special heavy-duty wagon.

Steam engines were invented to drive pumps and move heavy goods for the mining industry at the turn of the 18th. Century. By 1903, Ford had built his first petrol driven motorcar and the first steam tractors for farm and roadwork designed.

My father enjoyed his work and was interested to learn more outside his normal duties. By this time, his various tasks included visiting local markets and the docks and learning how to service extra heavy loads. This started his never-ending love for London, its street and all the business, which went on within its boundaries. He did anything, which would help his career and increase his knowledge of the cartage industry. Gradually more and more motors were obtained to deal with the increased workload. Drivers had to service their own motors and for this, parts and lubricants had to be ordered in. Throughout this period, he kept abreast of all the latest methods adopted to transport goods, for a personal interest drove every vehicle, and got to know its working.

It was now just three years after the end of the Boar War. Previously Britain had invested the Empire with a rosy glow, after the war the glow was not quite so warm. Although the period was one of growth – the necessity of putting back what the war had drained away, the change in society, not quite as large as that experienced after The Second World War, was large – the people did have more and there was a definite improvement in the nation's health. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that the 'golden age' of Victorian Britain was over.

Most of the middle and upper classes were quite prepared to tolerate extremes of poverty so that they could indulge themselves in luxury. The working class saw the need for communal action to improve society. Britain's economy and growth had been greater and faster than at any other time. As time has gone by it becomes even clearer how substantial these changes had been. When an individual, group, or even country

produces such wealth it becomes envied – produces a jealous reaction..., the Second World War, in this case, was the result ...

The Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, held an election just after Christmas – in January 1906. It was a wise move for the result was a landslide victory for the previous Liberal Party gaining eighty-four seat majority over all other parties. The election had been fought on issues of Education, Chinese slavery and tariff reform - which the Liberals presented as a likely increase in the cost of food. It was an exciting time for those who left the Boys Brigade witnessing the massive public excitement. They all went to Trafalgar Square to see the huge screens erected there displaying the projected election results. It was agreed by Parliament, 31st March 1907, ‘That a sum of £2,353,000, be granted to His Majesty, to defray the Charge of Barrack Construction; for Works, Buildings, and repairs, at Home and abroad [including purchase of land]. This was a bill acknowledging that something had to be done about modernising the Army - improving the living arrangements. On the eve of war, there were 132,000 private cars on the roads.

During the last few years before the outbreak of the First World War Britain had developed department stores, chain stores and Cooperative stores. It was unusual to buy items direct from the manufacturer or farmer. Costly items such as suiting and shoes might be ordered ‘made to measure’... but most goods were made in standard sizes and weights. The middle classes graced Harrods and Selfridges; Liptons, Co-op, and Grand Universal Stores had been built up on the needs of the working class, catering for volume sales with small margins.

British society had become more tolerant. It was possible to alter ones class – to move up. There was greater understanding for the poor, homeless and handicapped. The Factory Acts did protect workers. Reforms allowing trades unions and the introduction of the Welfare State continue to this

day... Britain was becoming more civilized... This improvement in living standards came from invention, new technologies, and entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER VII

Enlisting

Elgin Avenue - Thompson McKay & Co – City of London Volunteers – Territorial's - The Kensington Regiment – WWI – Colour Sergeant – Ypres - The Somme – Gommecourt – London Rifle Brigade – Combles - Hero's Return – Back to Normal – GCR – Freemasons – Grand Rank - The Old Contemptibles – Marriage and Home...

In 1906, at the age of seventeen, my father left the Boy's Brigade as a Sergeant and enrolled in the 4th Middlesex Rifle Volunteer Corps at the Drill Hall in: Adam and Eve Mews, Iverna Gardens, off High Street Kensington. Previously, the Corps was known as the West London Rifles but altered in 1905 to, The Kensington Rifles, when the Borough adopted the regiment. Three years later, when the Territorial Force was raised, there was an amalgamation of two Corps to form the 13th Battalion. It was this force that became known as the Kensington's having their Colours presented by King Edward VII at Windsor on the 19th June 1909 - which my father attended. Four years after the colours consecrated Princess Louise gave her name to the regiment - now becoming the 13th Princess Louise Kensington Battalion, the London Regiment.

When my father joined in 1906 his knowledge of drill, gained in The Boy's Brigade, stood him in good stead for he quickly became a Lance Corporal in charge of a squad of men.

This was the start to a permanent connection with the regiment – he stayed close to its organization for the rest of his life. That promotion, to Lance Corporal, began a series of promotions over the next eight years until the start of The First World War. By that time, he was a senior Sergeant in the regiment. To an extent, the Kensington's were a 'pals' regiment, although not strictly so being a Territorial unit. The term was not used until much later in the war when recruiting began to be difficult. The Regiment was made up of men drawn from the local area, mostly from boys clubs, Scouts, Boy's Brigade and Church Lads as well as a sprinkling of unattached youths. They knew each other and where they lived - were friends, brothers, cousins and schoolmates. Father was twenty-five when war was declared, one of the oldest non commissioned officers. He lived for the regiment - its company and its men. He did not intend to be made an officer, when asked opted to stay with the men he grew up with. By the time the Battalion was put on standby – to take part in the British Expeditionary Force, he had been in the regiment for nearly ten years. He was by then the most senior non-commissioned officer in the regiment.

Once again, the family moved house northwards towards Maida vale, northeastern Paddington – not far from the Regents Canal. The house was 80 Elgin Avenue, Paddington. Before 1886, the road was called Elgin Road. The district was mainly residential although there were a few new shops permitted near some original, which had been converted houses. One of the main contractors was William Henry Pearce built a hundred houses in the neighbourhood in the 1890s. Some of the flats built were in the direct control of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who acquired long leases from the lessees. The southern part begins at Little Venice – white stuccoed area spaciouly laid out – like most of Maida Vale – in a neo-Georgian manner. Sidney was the last natural child Martha had; he was

born in 1900 dying seventeen years later in France – unburied on the battlefield. He was the seventh son – a brother to his three sisters.

It was not long before the Kearey family moved again to 7 Errington Road, Paddington. Albert was twenty-four and a Sergeant in the Territorial's and about to be balloted for membership to The Kensington Battalion, Masonic Lodge. It was November 1913 just nine months before war broke out. By the following January he passed to the degree of Fellow Craft in the Lodge and raised to Master Mason on the 4th March 1914.

The second week of July was put aside for summer camp. The billets were almost empty, no carpets or curtains, just the regulation iron beds. The majority of men were in bell tents set in a square. Physical training was the start of every day followed by musketry training – firing in the butts and lectures on trench building and the importance of patrols. Route marches, map reading, patrolling and elementary first aid; square bashing an essential part of each day until all the orders became second nature. Bayonet practice had to be done with the maximum vigour to achieve a lifelike effect... how to parry and lunge, all the features of hand to hand fighting. The Company Sergeants taking their Company off to practice on their own - to give the sergeants responsibility and leadership skills. All the commands whether arms drill or marching was done by numbers and most forced and route marches included full pack, including rolled greatcoat, full water bottle, bayonet, box respirators, and entrenching tool, fitted behind the pack.

It was at rifle practice that Albert excelled. He was already a champion shot – a marksman - shooting for the regimental rifle team. He was an expert with crossed rifles on his sleeve. Most weekends saw him on the rifle ranges of Bisley or Purbright with his fellow team members. Now it was up to him

to teach the new recruits who were not to know they would be shortly going into battle.

From the 27th July, Britain began to respond to the gathering crisis in Germany. Two days later, all regular soldiers were recalled from leave. By chance, the Territorial Force had just been assembling for summer camps able to mobilize.

On Tuesday, 4th August 1914, Britain was at war with Germany. The stated aim was to secure Belgium's neutrality but the underlying motive was to reduce Germany's growing power. Initially it was a war of manoeuvre – 'to outflank' and 'cut off', but ended in 'stalemate' and 'static line'. The major battle that first year for the British was 1st Ypres in October, fought by the BEF. In the last days of December 1914, twenty-two Territorial battalions marched to join that British Force in France and within two further months, another twenty-six followed them. Amongst these men, my father paraded his men and marched them out of Kensington Barracks keen to get to grips with the Germans. Together, these Territorial made up the New Army.

The Kensingtons moved slowly up the narrow gangplank leading from the dockside up onto the accommodation deck of the paddle steamer. It was quite a packed space with dazed troops jostling to find their separate sergeants who were falling them it to make a body count. As the ship drew away from the dockside, a cheer went up from those left behind. All the lights onboard had been extinguished and no one could smoke. The ship was shepherded into convoy by the two destroyers who were to accompany them over the Channel. All that could be heard was the paddles slapping into the water and the thump of the engines. At last, they were on their way to war and the waves

breaking around the boat seemed to push the further away from home...

It was nothing to write home about! The weather for the crossing had been bad and it was no better that day the Battalion was ordered up to the front line. They marched through the town of Ypres that had been flattened, other than the church spire that retained the angel statue clinging onto its base at an acute angle. The ancient guildhall – Cloth Hall, was in ruins. They could appreciate the fine building it once was.

The men were strangely silent understanding that what had happened to the buildings was now likely to happen to them. They moved in companies each taking their turn marching into the communication trench along the duckboards halting now and again until they got their bearing, then into line and the men spaced themselves out. It was not long before the Germans began to lob quickly followed by some mortar fire. This was the Battalions baptism of fire, the exploding shells, the utter filth... and what on earth was that strange smell? They were to get used to that. The calls for stretcher-bearers rang out. It was no easy task to find your way along the narrow trench with a stretcher even if it were empty.

The land was low-lying. The incessant rain had raised the water table. The duckboards in the trench were under water. God knows what were under them... bits of uniform, webbing, and scraps of paper? They all soon got used to the mud and the seeping water, making sure they kept their packs lodged high enough to escape. It was useless to try to dig down because as soon as you put the spade in water filled the hole. It was a lucky man who stood out of the water. Frequently the Company Sergeant made his rounds checking that there were no casualties inspecting at random the rifles to see that they were clean. Woe betide is there was any mud in the barrel.

If it were raining, which for summer it seemed to do so more often than not, they put their groundsheets on, keeping their rifles dry as possible. Not only did it rain all that summer but it was cold too. It was impossible to be warm enough to sleep. The bottom of the trench was under water with the duckboards floating above the ground. As the wiring and ammunition parties moved about, being undisturbed most unlikely... the tramping feet pressed the boards down with a splash. All the supply teams were who made their deliveries late at night, often did so at the same time the hot food was being moved forward... It was at night, which seemed endless, the men could move around without inviting the snipers to wreak their toll. As the sun rose, the ground mist gathered in patches. It was no good thinking you were safe in a patch of mist because the Germans had their machine guns on fixed lines aimed at gaps in the wire and likely communication tracks.

Each man took it in turns to stand guard and keep lookout. The firesteps provided enough height to scan the front, any movement, or unfamiliar happening was reported to the patrolling lieutenant who made it a point to check every reporting with his binoculars. The officer was the only person who could order a starshell to be fired which exploded with a bang dividing into dozen of cascading lights blinding all those foolish enough to disobey orders and look into their shimmering brilliance. The others, keeping their heads down and without moving peer under their helmet to catch a glimpse of a hand or face. Any movement or even suspected movement was shot at. Nothing was left to chance if a night attack was about to be launched.

After a few days and nights of this, the men would start to drop off to sleep, and concentration to wane. A reserve battalion, The Irish Fusiliers, changed positions... moving up through the communicating trenches to take up a forward

position. This was done using the greatest stealth. If the German's knew what was going on they would lay down a barrage knowing that there would be chaos in the trench as men were trying to get past each other without making any noise or obvious movement... for not only were men moving but they were bringing their own weapons. The ammunition and grenades were left to tide them over until the next supply due the following night.

When they were settled in and the fronts features and geography pointed out we went back into a holding position. Now it was somebody else's responsibility to be alert. Our job ten was to service them with ammunition, food, and wire, tidy up and rebuild the damaged trenches, and fill in the new shell holes in the road.

The dawn heralded the hate barrage, returned with compliments. Shortly, when both sides realised nothing was happening, the guns were silenced. The squad corporals and company sergeants gave the order to mount the firesteps to look to see what was happening. Periscopes, made by using a mirror fixed to the bayonet lock - of the rifle, were raised to sweep over the raised ground in front. All appeared to be still. The order was given to stand down and the troops started to clean themselves up after the disturbed night... comforted by the daily rum ration metered out from the pottery container. Breakfast of bully beef and biscuit washed down with lukewarm tea. Now there was a chance to catch up on some sleep before the mail arrived.

By September 1915, the British Army had fought four battles that are more important: 2nd Ypres, Aubers Ridge, Neuve Chapelle, and Loos. They were the prelude to the Somme Front...

There was not a National plan for Britain's Defence. Not for sixty years had the British fought a war in Europe. It was questioned in Parliament what should be done to avert another

shambles such as that experienced in South Africa. The war in France was fast becoming a similar fate. On Saturday 1st July 1916, at 7.30, that fine morning, the Battle of the Somme commenced. This was going to be biggest battle so far - conceived to take the strain off the French who were beginning to buckle at Verdun.

This region of France formed part of the old province of Picardy; an old Roman road linked its cathedral city Amiens and two smaller towns of Albert and Bapaume. The region was crossed by two rivers the Somme and the smaller Ancre. The Germans were defending their gains. The Allies intent upon pushing them back. The former, constructed deep secure trenches and dugouts whilst developing small villages into miniature forts. The latter, believed such tactics opposed to aggressive behaviour laid scant regard on such wasted effort - their policy was, mobility and attack. What was typical, the Germans held the high ground... not only could they observe what was going on but knew that any attack had to be made uphill!

Britain's main concern is the northern end of the front line between the British Third and Fourth Armies, opposite the salient village of Gommecourt, its chateau and Park, the wood and famous tree, the Kaiser Oak, and cross-roads. In parts of the front line, the German trenches were only fifty feet away. The attack on Gommecourt was to be a diversionary attack made by two encircling flank-divisions; both made up of Territorial's, the 46th North Midland, to the north and the 56th London to the south. Within the London division were three Brigades each comprising of four Battalions... the 1/13th London [Kensington's], being one of the four. There were no reserves for this part of the battle...

In overall command was General Haig. The Third Army led by General Allenby, its VII Corps by Lieutenant General

Snow and the 56th London Division by Major General Hull. Snow stressed that no movement should be made towards Gommecourt until the German defences had been destroyed by the artillery.

Before the battle, Major General Hull was ordered to construct a completely new trench halfway across 'No Man's Land', which was 800 yards wide. The Germans observed this.

The artillery had exposed the German trenches with continuous fire. This provoked return fire. The attack went in at 7.30 after the Kensington's had been very patient. Just before setting out men knelt down and prayed, some started to shake staring at photographs of their loved ones, one went berserk another kept crying crouching down ever lower to the bottom of the trench. The British barrage stopped, whistles blew, and section leaders shouted as long lines of men set off making sure they were in line... they walked through the gaps in their own barbed wire made the night before.

The Germans were on the alert they had been warned by the bombardment and their lookouts had raised the alarm. The machine gun started to hammer out their awful chorus. The long lines were easy targets. The Germans had seen the gaps in the wire and had laid down fixed lines of fire to cover them. Men bunched up to get through but the terrible machine gun fire flattened them.

Things on the left were going badly. The night's rain had turned their trench into a morass some of the men were knee deep in mud all night long. It was difficult to get the men out in time. As they appeared in drips and drabs on the top, they were machine gunned down on top of others trying to get out. There were long rows of dead and dying men. In spite of the terrible fire, the men went on forward trying to keep in line at a steady pace. The German wire was supposed to be cut by the artillery fire but was untouched. Trying to get over the wire the strands

were being caught in their equipment or wrapping itself round their legs.

At Gommecourt, the Kensington's had achieved success. Making use of the new trench dug before the battle started a smoke screen had confused the Germans. The whole front-line system had been taken. On the left, the hard-pressed North Midlanders had not reached the German front line. If they did not achieve their goal, the Kensington's would be in trouble and left stranded.

At last, the facts began to be assembled. It was clear that the British High Command had failed even though in places it had achieved its objectives.

The next morning the Kensington's found they had reached part of their objective. The night had been spent in the German trenches taking it in turn to stand guard, which was an eerie sensation with all the cries for help coming from the wounded and the stretcher parties from both sides collecting up the bodies. It was in the original plan to seize the German trench system on the right hand edge of the salient then link up with the North Midlanders who were coming from the opposite side. It was hoped to cut off the garrison of German defenders in the village. The Kensington's were acknowledge to be part of a London force that was second to none – having the greatest period of training prior to setting off to France, and had been in the fighting force since the war had begun. The London force were mostly well educated pre-war volunteers from the commercial heart of London and many would have been made into officers in any other division. The advance the previous morning got off to a good start. In the first hour and a half the 168th Brigade, attacking from the newly dug trench in the middle of No Man's Land, had reached every one of the German trenches in their objective. A fifth of the attacking Londoners were either dead or wounded. By reaching the final trench, they

secured for themselves a safe position. The rolling barrage had moved forward as had been planned and the Kensington's and the other three battalions had moved up with it. The London Rifle Brigade was on the left of the right-hand division, Gommecourt Park with its wooded acres before the village was to their left. The German second Guards Reserve Division pushed back almost out of the salient but still holding Fricourt in the front line. What was left of the brigade entered the German trench, which was the first objective ready to repel any German foolish enough to try to take it back.

After a period of four hours the London Division was still in position, although the Westminster's had returned to the First Objective line - along with the rest of the division - this still held to the original plan. This line was to the rear of the German Trench, which was in British hands. As explained, there were no reserves so to make a concerted effort to link up with the North Midlands more men would have to be found. The worst decision was to do nothing for the Germans were beginning to take stock and recover.

At last, information was beginning to get through to Head Quarters. The corps commanders controlling the diversionary attack at Gommecourt were determined to carry on with the encircling movement. Lieut-General Snow ordered the North Midlanders to repeat their attack that afternoon - to link up with the London Division..., which by then was being, counter-attacked... gradually being forced back to the captured German trench, behind them. Snow must have known that the diversionary objective had been achieved. Someone was turning this into a separate battle!

Although the London Division was being hard pressed it retained coherence, being in the German trench gave the men cover and time to sort themselves out. The Germans, on the other hand, over their initial shock and were getting stronger by

the minute. It did not take them long to understand the significance of the British move, not that they understood the battle of Gommecourt was a diversionary one, but that these two divisions were trying to encircle them and join up... They intended to prevent that happening. The German guns were ranging in, joining together to bombard the position. Gradually the British troops began to run out of ammunition. Most of the senior officers who had set out in the morning were now either dead or injured. The afternoon wore on and the fighting continued. By 4 pm there were only four officers and seventy men remaining gathered together holding the German front line trench... it was now touch and go whether there was going to be a total rout. Of the seven battalions to start out seventeen hundred men were dead, two hundred were prisoners and over two thousand wounded. Most of these were lying about on the battlefield. The Germans systematically raked these with machine gun fire to kill them off annoyed that now and again one of the wounded would start firing.

By evening, when the light was poor, stragglers started to drag themselves in. They were tired, hungry and distressed having got so far and not in the end succeeding. The Germans were moving about in No Man's Land not only finding their own wounded but directing their first-aiders and stretcher-bearers to find the English wounded too. This concern for the wounded was reciprocated. There were 4,314 casualties in the London Division alone out of nearly 60,000. It was a seven to one battle, in favour of the Germans.

Back in Britain there was a call for volunteers. It could be seen that the war was not going to end soon – that there were going to be more large battles and many more deaths before the Germans defeated. Quickly men rushed to join the colours. In the first eighteen months, two and a half million men were volunteers. It could be seen that the pick of these men were the

finest the nation could produce. The Battalion was withdrawn to re-equip and to train the new intake coming from the call for volunteers.

The Kensingtons had been initiated and even though not many weeks had gone by, they already felt like veterans. Now they were out of the front line they had been doing many supporting jobs: making wire entanglements, improving the communicating trenches, and revetting others, laying duckboards, mending roads, filling shell holes and moving up and stacking provisions and munitions. All battalions out of the line supported the pioneers and supply staff.

Equipment and organization even with the best men is a lost cause without proper training and good leaders. In this instance: the foot soldiers were attacking fixed positions without proper orders. They did not know where the enemy was; they did not have suitable covering fire; they did not know what position they were to take and what to do if they did?

Officers did not know who their Commanding Officer was – they were not properly briefed, sergeants were not told of any contingency plan if the first aim not achieved and the men were not trained in field craft. ‘Press on Regardless’ was the order of the day which leads to slaughter.

The London Battalion was ordered to leave Millencourt and march to St. Riquier where it entrained for Corbie, reached by mid-morning. Marching to Daours the troops were finally re-routed to Sailly-le-Sec by which time the transports had caught up.

It was now early September; receiving orders to relieve the Irish Fusiliers, the Kensington’s linked up with the Warwickshire Regiment. The Officer Commanding the Kensington’s was ordered to extend his line from the south corner of Leuze Wood and dig-in as close to the German trench as possible. During the night, the Kensington has moved out to attack the German

trench. Unknown to them the Germans had reinforced that part of their line. A bombardment was laid down by the Germans on the British troops, as they surged forward. They fell back, to try again that evening.

The battalion had been fully up to strength regarding men but officers were in short supply. They, with the help of a flanking French battalion, were to advance upon Combles as the Germans, it was believed, had left it unoccupied – the General Staff thought the Germans would be in retreat after such a bombardment... this was not the case!

In the morning the regiment advanced towards the trenches in front of Combles, they stumbled, upon uncut barbed wire, which had been hidden by the long grass. Very heavy fire from both machine gun and rifle was directed on them. A third of the regiment fell killed or wounded the rest fell back taking cover where they could. They started to try digging a trench to connect the shell-holes together.

The Kensington tried to take Combles again that night but by then the Germans had reoccupied their trenches and alerted to this possibility. The Kensington's were again strongly opposed only this time they had the added trial of a German barrage. These shells straddled both the newly dug trench and their original positions...the Kensington's were caught in the middle, where they huddled in shell holes all night.

After being berated by high command, the Commanding Officer decided to try again the next morning... The following day, on the Sunday, a third try was prepared. The morning dawned clear and sunny... again the troops were ordered forward. There was only about half the regiment left and most of the officers had been either killed or wounded. It was a gallant effort but again it failed...!

The Commanding Officer was ordered to report to the Battalion Head Quarters where he was asked why they had failed

to occupy the trench and conduct patrols to strengthen their position. He reported that he had not been ordered to do that in the first place and that his original orders had come from another brigade; he went on to report, that his orders came via another brigade and that he did not know who was in charge of the operation. High Command ordered him to recommence the attack...

After another tremendous bombardment, the artillery fire lifted to range onto the German second line trenches. The day's rations eaten before the shelling had stopped washed down with water. The feeling was that they might as well die with a full stomach rather than have to carry extra weight. It also stopped the men from thinking about the tremendous racket made by the shelling. Many were feeling quite petrified although there was nothing one could do to relieve the tension. Cigarettes were passed round and lit. It was clear that if one talked continuously it made waiting that much easier. The conversation was about nothing in particular just idle chatter. Overhead the Germans had raised balloons to observe the fall of their shot. The Royal Flying Corps were up taking pot shots of the balloons to try to bring them down. Some companies had moved forward into No Mans Land. My father and his company climbed over the parapet and went towards the German lines. There was a great deal of other fellow lying about dead from the day before. By moving rapidly, they reached the German trenches... there was not anyone about? It was not realised by the Allies how complicated and well constructed the German positions were... the Germans were below ground in deep dugouts Shortly afterwards the German machine guns went into action. They had been hiding in their deep bunkers perfectly safe. As soon as the British shelling had stopped to allow their troops to move forwards up they popped pulling their guns up on ropes. The trenches had been prepared to take the machine guns to give them fixed lines that covered

their front. They continuously fired their guns putting down a carpet of fire mowing everyone down. My father found he was the only one standing either everyone else was dead or wounded. He immediately jumped into a shell hole where he found a few others who had survived. There they stayed whilst the machine guns continued to blast away. Eventually the fire lifted and my father found they were up against the German trench parapet. Organising an advance he lead his few men into the German trenches again only this time they knew they had to eliminate the Germans in their deep bunkers which they did with grenades.

This battle continued long after it was realised it was a hopeless cause. Urged to maintain pressure on the Germans to relieve the French at Verdun these battles continued well into November. The ground resembled the imagine landscape of the moon. It was a shocking wilderness of mud, shell holes, flooded trenches and parts of bodies lying amongst discarded equipment. Four and a half months of turmoil had resulted in an advance of five miles. Both sides had lost nearly half a million men each. The Kensington's were drawn back from the front to rest shortly afterwards.

I relate this isolated battle to illustrate how awful life was at the front. This was not an isolated battle where casualties were higher than the gain warranted. Haig never visited the front nor witnessed the carnage wrought. The war had a profound effect on my father whose life afterwards was never the same again. He relived his time in French throughout the rest of his life, as I am sure many more did. Over the next two years, he lost his brothers and his friends that he had grown up with. My father never trusted his officers again and certainly not those taking staff positions. He thought them inefficient and uncaring. His experiences played an important part in shaping his military service in the next war.

There were throughout the war a series of small victories and massive set backs which cost the lives of many troops. My father quickly made up to the regiment's Colour Sergeant. He refused to accept or apply to be an officer. He could not bring himself to join the officer's mess and improve his conditions whilst his friends needed his experience and guidance whilst living in squalid holes scooped out of the mud.

He also fought at Mons and Ypres being awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal [second only to the Victoria Cross]. He received it for taking over the regiment when all the officers had been killed leading an attack on a German position. As he had to show 'the right spirit' he did this directing the attack with a walking stick, his revolver securely kept in its holster. He realised that his demeanour of confidence rubbed off on his men – they had faith in his ability to see them out of the bad times. Later, he receives two mentioned in dispatches. He ended the war a hero but with deep scars that never healed.

In Albert's citation it makes it clear that he considered his men first at all times and felt responsible for their wellbeing...

'He showed the greatest energy and efficiency. Determined and cool in action. He has set an inspiring example to all the junior non-commissioned officers and men of his company. He was present at the First Battle of Ypres and Cambrai in 1917, the enemy offensive at Vimy Ridge in 1918, Arras the same year and later at Maubeuge'.

In 1918, there was a unity of command between the English and French Armies under the French Commander in Chief, Marshal Foch. The British and French had relied upon, to a major degree, a continuous sustained firepower from the artillery. This depleted the German Army, a fact not recognised until later by the High Command. Had they followed up immediately victory would have come sooner? As it was the eventual counter attacks made by tanks later on lead to ultimate

victory breaking the moral of the German Army. Luderdorff and The Kaiser both realised that the war could not go on. The Treaty of Versailles settled the fate of Germany and directed the course of events over the next twenty years, which lead to The Second World War.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the experiences gained by my father in the First World War made an enormous impression on him. He could not stand poor leadership and sloppy behaviour. These feelings were reinforced losing four brothers. He was an excellent leader of men and knew it. He was respected and liked by his caring behaviour and could be always 'do his stuff'. His general demeanour raised the standards of his men who respected his bearing. Being previously a member of the Territorial - slightly older than the norm - had greater military knowledge, was called upon by the officers, who were often much younger, to advise and assist. It was in the Regiment's interest to keep him looking after the men.

He felt close to ultimate realities, sustained by a profound and unassailable conviction that all would be well – that he would survive come what may. It was a ghastly experience - the mud, the uniform, the equipment, gas mask and rifle, bayonet and ammunition all in preparation for possible extinction. There he stood so often having to show confidence without fear ready to lead his men on the racked battlefield. It is no wonder that these thoughts remained with him for the rest of his life. He could be forgiven for any mistakes he made in later life.

By the end of the war Martha, my grandmother, lost three more sons. □ Thomas the eldest died in his first year in 1881 and Elsie in her third in 1894. In all, by 1920, Martha had lost seven of her children. Now there were only four left. Albert, my father was now the eldest, Lillian and Edith, the two girls, and William the youngest. Edward was adopted that year because Martha so pined for another son. Since that time, she always wore black in

morning and on Sundays wore their medals in turn as a mark of remembrance. When I knew her, she was never without her bible, which she read every day.

The cry by the post war generation was 'Back to Normal', whatever that was! At the same time, there was an equal desire towards making social conditions conform to 'a land fit for heroes'. Soon after the war my father was demobilized and he went back to work for the Great Central Railway, at Marylebone Station. Whilst he had been away they had taken over T.M.& Co. plus G.C.R. employees, were always going to be associated with their original parent company and my father was always going to feel an outsider especially when applying for upgrading.

Owing to the congested state of the Railways bought on by the surge in industrial production and the movement of people, the Government allocated twenty-four motors to the G.C.R. Company. My father was now running the Goods department and did not have sufficient drivers to service all the transport available. His task was to enrol temporary drivers from a pool of unemployed men and test them to see if they were experienced enough to drive heavy goods vehicles.

On the 29th January 1919 back from the trenches – taking up his old job as Cartage Manager, he continued to attend the Kensington Lodge. With seven other Brethren presented with his Grand Lodge Certificate. Later that year at the 1st October, Installation Meeting, appointed Lodge Organist. By now, the family was living at Harvest Road, Bayswater.

He was also a founder member of the 'The Old Contemptible Association' - an association of men who had been in the original mobilization of the Territorial Army in 1914. His hobby, which last until he was married, was photography. He had his own plate glass camera and tripod and did his own

developing. During this period, he still lived at home in Amberley Road, Paddington.

The railways were expanding after the restrictions felt during the war. Many of the army wagons were passed to the railways to relieve the build-up of vehicles parked in dumps. My father realised the changes this would make to an organization limited to horse transport. He submitted a plan to the Senior Management - a scheme whereby horse teams would be retrained onto motor wagons by rota – making provision for suitable cover. The plan was accepted and he was placed in charge of running the training.

Gradually, by the introduction of motors, sharing rounds and districts, whole areas could be integrated, eventually leading to an enormous transport system. He personally drove a wagon to check each delivery round... ensuring that the times estimated for each delivery were possible. His methods were adopted, becoming so successful that he was asked to introduce a similar scheme for both Kings Cross and the Bisopsgate Depots.

The Grand Central Railway was a collection of lesser Midland Railway Companies and was, by the time of my father's birth in 1889, an amalgamation of provincial railway lines. Eventually it ran routes to London from Manchester and from Grimsby to Immingham linking up with other Midland cities. The Railway Act of 1921 amalgamated, by government regulation, the existing one hundred and twenty lesser companies into four massive concerns. This rationalization made enormous economies, standardizing equipment, schedules, and fares.

The name London & North Eastern Railway, which was the formation of three 'Great' railway companies, became a reality and the name used in 1922. The formation of the L.N.E.R. railway company linked together a vast conglomeration of harbours and docks together with an enormous fleet of ships.

That March, Albert was appointed Inner Guard at the Masonic Lodge whilst still maintaining an active role in the running of the Kensington Battalion Shoots at Bisley.

The discontent of the railway workers was still being felt in the industry. Wages were very low and unemployment high. The men were, through their union, threatening to strike to try to force up wages.

There was a Railway strike that year and my father was asked to drive and deliver a load using a motor wagon – to help maintain deliveries and at the same time break the strike. He also helped feed and harness the horses whilst still keeping up his office duties. If there were a motor left at the station by the time the Senior Manager arrived – forty minutes after my father, the matter would have to be explained and accounted for. The following year the Conservatives won a convincing election. What was significant was the Labour Party becoming the second party for the first time.

The following year he was installed as Worshipful Master of the Lodge at a meeting held at the Clarendon Restaurant, Hammersmith. At the Ladies Festival, later that installation year, 145 people attended the dinner and dance with tickets costing 18/6 each.

My father was 37, was regarded as Thompson McKay personnel. This meant that the workers were barred from applying for cartage work on the Great Central Railway – it was a ‘closed shop’. This restriction was eventually lifted because the railways complained that there was not freedom of movement and that if Thompson did not remove the ‘ban’ work would be given to another company – it was with drawn. However, being trained and employed by firms other than those within the railway industry meant that workers were stigmatized when applying for work in any of the railway companies.

So serious was The General Strike, two years before, on the well-being of the company that it was agreed in 1928, for all the staff to accept a two and a half percent reduction in fees, salaries and wages. The previous trade boom ended a depression saw markets shrinking. Industry was declining and unemployment figures rising. This situation continued until 1930 and even then, there was an agreement by some trade unions not to seek a wage review until the end of that year.

In 1933 in conjunction with the other three main railway companies the old, established cartage firms of carter Paterson and the Hay's Wharf Transport Company being part of Pickford, were purchased. The same year saw the unification of London's transport brought into being and the creation of the London Passenger Transport Board. By the time father left home in 1933, to get married, Paddington, Marylebone, and Bayswater were becoming crowded. Many of the houses had been turned into flats and where old houses pulled down blocks of flats were put in their place. There was rising child mortality cause by overcrowding due to lack of provision and bad leasing arrangements

Although my father eventually achieved the title Cartage manager on the Great central Line every time he applied for a higher position he was reminded that he had insufficient experience of railway matters and turned down. This was an excuse to engage him on a lesser salary.

At the Annual Bisley, National Rifle Shooting event, held on Sunday 18th June 1933, Albert won the Secretary's Cup with a score of eighty-four.

The First World War broke the pattern of British social life. Ridged class barriers that existed are hereditary and the passing on of land was now falling to those 'in trade' who accumulated money. The comradeship felt from hardship experienced in the trenches was gradually eroded by a class

struggle between 'the workers and the management'. Women's work during the war allowed them to experience a freedom from the previously expected role of 'mother'. It was a less ordered society and the demand for 'equality for all' was becoming more strident.

The four railway companies provided their own regular long-distance trains establishing a network of suburban commuter services. Almost all the London suburban lines were electric taking over from buses the bulk of passenger transport.

Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich in 1932 and from that time until 1936 concentrated on the total establishment of his own personal dictatorship. It was during this time that my parents were married at Tatworth Church, South Chard, Somerset, in 1933, renting a house in Maybank Avenue, Wembley. My father was 44 and my mother 25. My brother Stan was born the following year, 11th June 1934.

Early the next year, when my mother was pregnant with me, my parents moved to 31 Cumberland Road, North Harrow, where the family enjoyed a larger house and garden. My father's rank in the Territorial Army was now Regimental Sergeant Major and the force slowly geared itself up for mobilization that loomed ahead.

From 1939 onwards until the privatization of the railways in 1948, the government under the Emergency War Act controlled the railways. In September 1939, the British Army was unprepared for war in manpower, equipment, training and battle hardened experience. It tried to stop in 1940 a German Army better lead, with a properly worked out plan plus superior equipment. It was again like the previous war, a shambles perpetrated by inferior general Staff Officers and previous Governments planning for appeasement. Tanks, aircraft and weapons need mass production methods and that favours the aggressor because he has a previously worked out set of plans

and knows when they are wanted by. Britain's unpreparedness led to a mass retreat, loss of heavy equipment and to a greater effect, loss of moral.

There was a two month pause before Hitler ordered an air attack and during that lull Britain tried to make up for the lack of material and men. A voluntary force was formed by Winston Churchill called the 'Defence Force Volunteers' – later know as the 'Home Guard'. The vast majority of the men that volunteered were veterans of the First World War, too old to join up for the regular army but able to serve as a defence force. At first, these men were not able to receive a uniform or weapons but had to content themselves with suitable replacements like pick handles and iron bars.

My father was immediately called up to be made second in command of the 17th. London Division Home Guard, with the rank of Major. He was loaned a car for the duration of the war, given a telephone line - and relieved from his post with the railways. His task was to enrol and train a division of men to defend North London based on The Kensington Regiments Drill Hall in London ... the training area Epping Forest... this was during a critical period. He was fully aware of the secret operational bases in and around the area he controlled and it was up to him to supervise the Royal Engineers to construct such bases in Epping Forest. These bunkers were hidden in such a way that any German attack and occupation would bypass these linked posts allowing surprise attacks to hinder their movements. The men who had been selected to operate these bases were specially chosen for their knowledge of the area and not part of the normal Home Guard detachment.

His man management skills and planning abilities were put to good use. Frankly, I am sure he enjoyed the challenge and could more than cope with the task.

After the war, my father was appointed to the position of London Grand Rank of the Freemasons when he returned to the railways, only this time into a Nationalized Railway that came after nationalization of the Bank of England and the coal mining industry, in 1947... The railways had been all but nationalized between the wars. After this, there would be only four railway companies left to complete total nationalization of the railways. The railways were then 'British Railways'. The Transport Act, which brought about these changes was passed in that year and came into operation in 1948. It was also to affect road haulage concerns - the 'British Road Services' was the result. He believed that, with the amalgamation of the four railway companies - into British Railways, he would stand a better chance for promotion... He thought his wartime record and his standing with LNER would stand him in good stead, particularly in the reconstruction of the railways - necessary just after the war. Time proved him wrong...

lready we have seen that the O'Ciardha clan chiefs were 'vassals', under the protection of another – in this case the Ui Neills. They in turn had vassals...and so on. If one or another lost power there was a readjustment...if one clan was split-up through inter-clan wars they lost status - in some cases the clan became extinct - their land, and therefore their rights, forfeited. For clans to survive their chiefs had to demonstrate, usually by strength, they were needed having the necessary allegiances to ensure security? The O'Ciardha was part of the Eoghanacht as were O'Sullivan, O'Donoghue, O'Mahony and possibly the McCarthy's... as well as others. It is impossible to say which were more senior or who favoured most.

The clan system worked through the rent of land – the chief owed his position to an overlord... to whom he had to pay either cash, cattle, service or all three for the land. He was expected to supply men to fight the lord's battles and to give succour and a safe haven in times of defeat...all to contribute towards 'payback'. Every family in the clan

did similarly only towards the clan chief. In its simplest form it worked but when more complicated broke down, especially when there was nothing with which to repay the loan.

This hieratical grouping of families with a corporate entity gave a political and legal involvement recognised by those around them. A single person or group could represent the clan as long as they had political influence or property. Over a period, the clan rulers multiplied by birth and marriage and in so doing displaced those lower down the social scale. Even if you were a part of the 'leader's' nuclear family your position in the hierarchy was not guaranteed.