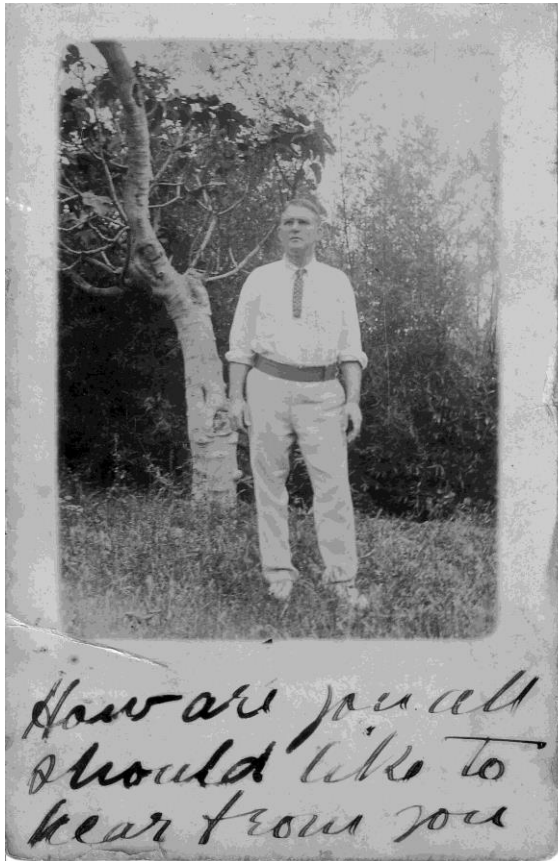


Ambrose Adams and his Sons

In contrast to the amount of information that I had about my Blaxland grandfather, when I started work on this family history, the only information that I knew about Ambrose Adams, my paternal grandfather, was his name, the fact that he had died when my father was a child and that, at the time of my father's birth, he owned a hotel in Funchal, Madeira. Among my father's papers I found one photograph and this, apart from a family group photo, is the only picture that I have of him.



It was obviously taken in Madeira and the reverse is a postcard, addressed to his mother (see the section on Josiah Lyon Adams II). On the front, he has scribbled "How are you all. Should like to hear from you."

Some digging in the General Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths revealed his full name: Ambrose William, as well as date and place of birth – 1857 in Birchington, near Margate, Kent. More hunting produced a death certificate: 12 March 1916. So he was only 59 when he died, but this was not unusual for this period, when life expectancy, particularly of the working classes, was much lower than it is today. My father would have been nine at this time.

From Ambrose's birth till 1881, I had no information at all about him, though I knew that he must have left home by this time, as neither he, nor his elder brother, Arthur, figured on the 1881 Census as still living with their parents.

A chance Internet hunt provided the explanation. I found him listed at Petty Officer, Plumber's Mate on the HMS Lord Warden, ships in port at Queensferry, Edinburgh. He was 24 years of age. This is a picture of the ship, also found on the Internet.

His naval records from the National Archives at Kew reveal the whole story. He signed up for 10 years on 19th May 1876. His height was 5'7", his hair dark, his eyes brown and his complexion dark. His trade was shown as plumber.



He had three periods of service on the "Pembroke", three on the "Spartan", one on the "Garnet"

and one on the “Lord Warden”. His conduct throughout was described as “exemplary” and he was discharged at the end of his ten years of service.

This information makes some sense of why the family went to Madeira. Ambrose would have known the port of Funchal well from his naval days and, perhaps, had developed a liking for it. My grandmother, Ena’s health might well also have been a factor, as Madeira was often visited by invalids. I don’t know at what point my grandmother contracted tuberculosis.

After Ambrose left the Navy, his next appearance is as a domestic servant at Holdenhurst, Hampshire in the 1891 Census.¹ He is described as “attendant”. On the 24th August 1895, also as a servant, he travelled on the SS “Fort Salisbury” to Durban, Port Natal, South Africa. A year later, as a valet, he went to Tenerife, Canary Islands on the SS “Ruahine”²

In 1898, Ambrose married Ena Annie Flawn at Ticehurst in Kent. This is on the border between Kent and Sussex. Their first child, Eric Ambrose, was born on 5 September 1899 in Croydon, Surrey. Ambrose is shown on the birth certificate as a “Travelling Medical Assistant”. This would seem to link up with his work as a valet. Maybe he accompanied passengers who were travelling but in poor health? Did he, perhaps, take them down to Madeira, an island that people often visited if they had health problems?

I was unable to find him or Ena on the 1901 Census, so maybe, by this time, the family was, by then, in Madeira. The 1911 Census told me that their second child, Harold Wilfred was aged 11 and was born in Folkestone, Kent. So, he must have been born around 1900. Maybe the family left England not long after his birth. .



At the time of the birth of my father, Roy Leonard, on 19th February 1907, the family was definitely living in Madeira and Ambrose owned the Royal Hotel. I knew the name of the hotel from the postcard that I found in my father’s desk. I also found a

card with a record of my father’s baptism at the English Church in Funchal, so these both gave me a starting point for my quest.



Mr. Adams - His sons
Royal Hotel
Cliché n° 25.023
26 May 1904
Fotógrafo : Vicentes Photographos



¹ His employer was Henry Harper, aged 69, living on his own means. The address was “Broomfield”, Chine Crescent Road, Holdenhurst, Westbourne, Bournemouth. Also in the house was Janetta Harper, aged 62, wife, Elizabeth Taylor, aged 35, companion, and 3 female servants.

² Source: Find my Past.com

In 1997, I tried writing to the Madeira Tourist Information Office to see if they had any information about the Royal Hotel, but they were unable to help. So, I came to the conclusion that the only solution was to visit the island myself to pursue my research in person and this we did in 2003 and 2004.

I started my search at the Tourist Office, who pointed me in the direction of the Reference Library where I browsed for some time through English guide books to Madeira, dating from the late 1800's. There was no mention of the Royal Hotel; however, the information from that period made both interesting and amusing reading, so I think it is worth quoting some extracts from the "Handbook for Madeira" by James Johnson, published 1885:

"The language spoken by the natives is Portuguese, one of the Latin tongues, but there is no need for visitors to take the trouble of acquiring it...."

Nothing new there then!

"The streets are crooked, narrow and ill-paved, few possessing even the semblance of a side walk, and above all, are not particularly well cleansed. The houses are generally mean and unpretentious and irregular in construction with stucco fronts coloured red, yellow, white, orange, green or some equally brilliant colour, though it must be confessed that, in that brilliant sunshine, these bright colours do not seem gaudy or out of place – but in the heart of the city, near the Cathedral, there are some houses that are more stylish."

It is interesting that the Mediterranean style, which we find so atmospheric, was not admired by Victorian and Edwardian visitors.

And finally:

"Funchal is well-provided with comfortable hotels for the reception of invalids and other visitors. Some are in the town, others in the immediate neighbourhood, so that there is a considerable choice as to position"

This might explain why my grandfather decided to make his venture into the hotel business.



A "caro" or iron shod bullock sledge with awnings and curtains. These were used as taxi cabs to collect visitors when they first arrived at Funchal Harbour.

One final useful piece of information that I gleaned from the library was the cost of a one way steam ship ticket from England to Madeira in 1885: £15-15s-6d 1st class, £10-10s-0d 2nd class and £7-7s-0d 3rd class.³ I wonder in what class my grandparents travelled?

³ Based on the RPI, these figures are equivalent to £1039 1st class, £693 2nd class and £485 3rd class in today's terms.

My next port of call was the Vicentes Photographic Museum, which is housed in an actual photographic studio, established by one Vicente Gomes da Silva. The business passed down four generations of the same family, and only closed down in 1973. So, it certainly covered the period when my grandparents were living in Funchal. During this time, it amassed an archive of 380,000 photographs documenting life on Madeira, its notable visitors, events and disasters, and, of course, a large selection of its inhabitants. Even more importantly, Vicente kept meticulous records of every photograph and customer, a practice continued by his successors.



I was able to make an appointment to see the museum curator, Maria Helena Araujo, a very friendly and helpful lady, who seemed most interested in my researches, and clearly pleased that someone wished to make use of the local archives. I showed her my snapshots, which she said were not taken at the studio but that she would try to hunt through their database, which they were in the process of computerizing, to try to see if my grandfather had commissioned any professional



Antiga Pensão Sheffield, mais tarde Royal Hotel
1913 - José Dias do Nascimento adquire o Hotel
e passa a se chamar "Savoy Hotel"
[negativo reprodução]
Fotógrafo: Derectrollas Photographos

This is the picture that she subsequently sent to me. It says: "The old Pension Sheffield, later the Royal Hotel. In 1913, Jose Dias do Nascimento acquired it and started to call it the "Savoy Hotel" What a charming hotel – I would have loved to have stayed there!

photographs. However, she was fairly sure that the Royal Hotel was on the site now occupied by the Savoy Hotel, and that the name had been changed by subsequent owners, so that was a definite step forward.

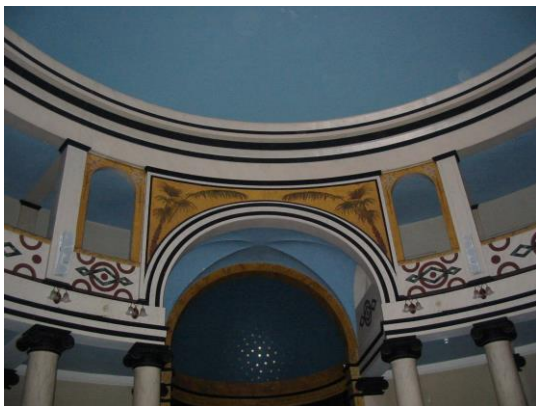
My final visit was, of course to the English Church, where my father had been christened. The church, set in a quiet garden, proved to be a fairly simple square building with a dome, and a pillared portico – rather Venetian in style. On the list of incumbents, the first Chaplain to the English residents took up his duties in 1815, and the church was completed in 1822. As is the case with most “colonial” buildings, the style, for its time, is distinctly retro, and therefore looks



Façade of English Church



back to the late Georgian period, rather than the excesses of the Victorian age. By the law at the time, Protestant churches had to be different from Catholic ones, a fortunate circumstance. The Chaplain at the time of my father’s christening was one Rev. Bickerton C. Edwards – see above.



Ceiling of English Church

At the end of our holiday, Maria Helena visited our hotel and brought me the information that she had found a number of photographs that had been commissioned by my grandfather. She promised to send me copies. So I returned to England excited and highly satisfied with the success of my visit.

By the following summer, and, despite tactful prompting, I had not received any information from Maria Helena, so I decided that the only way that I was going to get to see the photographs was to return to Madeira myself. So, we booked another holiday in Funchal. In the intervening

months, a CD of photographs arrived but, of course, we decided to continue with our holiday plans to return to the island. The CD contained two photos of my father as a baby, one of his two elder brothers (see earlier in this chapter), the early photo of the Savoy Hotel (see previous page) together with a map (see below). There were also three photographs where the subjects were unknown to me. I have subsequently guessed that two of them are of Josiah Lyon Adams II and Ann Adams (nee Hogbin). These are shown in the chapter relating to the Adams Family from Thanet. There is one portrait of a woman, who is completely unknown.



So, on the second visit, I, of course, returned to the Vicente Studio but was also very keen to go to visit the Savoy Hotel, which I had passed fleetingly the previous year. This is set in the Hotel Zone, near to the famous Reids Hotel, up the hill overlooking the centre of Funchal town. The Savoy was completely rebuilt in the 1960's and has now been voted the "Second Best Resort Hotel in the World". It is totally unrecognizable from the charming 'pension' that my grandfather owned

and resembles my idea of holiday hell!



Guia Panorâmico da Madeira
planta da cidade do Funchal e seus arredores
Propriedade do Dr. Luiz R. Gaspar e Francisco Bento Gouveia
[1896 - 1912]

However, setting my reservations to one side, we climbed the hill to the Savoy and marched into the opulent reception area. Here, we saw the Public Relations Manager, who showed us round the hotel and told us about its history

and construction. She was very interested in the story that I had to tell and took copies of all the photographs and documents that I was clutching.



When she left us to wander in the grounds, we were able to walk over a footbridge and look along the little lane that separated the two hotels, the Savoy and the Royal Savoy, that make up the complex. This was the original main road in my grandfather's time. We also walked and looked at a pretty little old chapel alongside the hotel that definitely existed in his time.

Footbridge over the lane, which was the original Avenida do Infante. The Savoy Hotel is to the right, the Royal Savoy to the left, as is the sea. Visitors to the Royal would originally have come by boat.

My final piece of the jigsaw in Funchal was a telephone conversation with the present Chaplain of the English Church. On my behalf, he had spoken to

the present owner of the Savoy Hotel, a Mr. Dias, who confirmed that his grandfather had bought the hotel from “an Englishman” about 1912. This would clearly have been my grandfather.

The old chapel alongside the Hotel Savoy



So, I felt that I had come to the end of this particular part of my quest and that I could discover nothing else in Madeira. I had really succeeded beyond anything that I could have ever hoped for.

I shall never know why the family went to Madeira, nor why they returned to England. I would guess that the enterprise was one of many ambitious schemes that Ambrose embarked on which ended in disappointment.

The final photograph from the time in Madeira shows the family in the garden of the Royal Hotel, around the time of my father’s birth on 19 February 1907.



Ena is sitting in the chair with my father in her arms. Ambrose is leaning on the back of the chair and, again, looking worried, as he does in the earlier photo. Eric is sitting in the foreground and Harold, (in some kind of smock-like garment) is standing on something at the back. The older couple could perhaps be Ena’s parents visiting at the time of Roy’s birth. Or maybe they

worked with my grandfather at the Hotel. I shall never know. They all look very serious, but this, of course, was customary when people were posing for photographs.

My father always said that he returned to England when he was a year old and I have a photograph of him with his mother, looking about 15-16 months, taken by a studio in Tunbridge Wells.



Mr. Adams - His son
Royal Hotel
Cliché n° 32.851 A
18 February 1908
Fotógrafo : Vicentes Photographos



Mr. Vicente photographed him in his studio in Funchal on the day before his first birthday. I found a badly damaged copy of this photograph in my father's desk and we saw similar painted backdrops in the Photographic Museum.

However, Ambrose was clearly still on the island in April 1909, as he commissioned some copies of photos from Vicentes. So Ena and the children would appear to have returned to England before him.

On the 1911 Census, Ambrose is not shown, though Ena and the three boys are all listed. It seems likely that he was still in Madeira winding up his affairs out there. Ena has filled in the form and there is a real thrill in seeing her handwriting for the first time. They were all living at 43 Woodland Road, Tunbridge Wells.

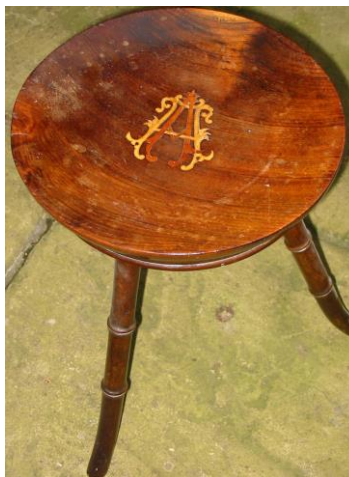
Very little other than this is known about it and it closed in 1922, some time after Very little other than this is known about it and it closed in 1922 some time after Ambrose's death. In Kelly's Directory for 1913, it is listed under Cinematograph Halls. It is interesting that he chose to put his entry under the name, Adams, rather than Picture Playhouse. This would of course, ensure, that his cinema came top of the list.

After 1922, the building became a billiard hall and is now a homeopathic pharmacy and I found it in 2004. It is possible at the back to see how the building has been built up to accommodate the height needed for projection equipment.

The last piece of information that I have about Ambrose is his death certificate. He died on March 12th 1916 of cancer. At the time of his death, he was working as an Army Contractor's Assistant and was in Salisbury, Wiltshire.

When I started I only had scraps of evidence on which to base my picture of my paternal grandfather. So I am very pleased to have been able to build up this picture of him. Clearly his naval career was exemplary but I have the impression that, once he had been discharged from the Navy, he couldn't really cope with life in 'Civvie Street'. I get a sense of a man who was fine when he had the structure of his job in the Navy to support him but that he drifted from one job to another after he left this organization. Obviously he had a lot of initiative and was somewhat of an entrepreneur – but not a very successful one!

My father once said that there had been somebody in his family who was a gambler, and I suspect that he was referring to his own father. I think, again, from something that my father said, that he was a man who operated on a very short fuse – my father was frightened of him. I feel so sorry for my poor grandmother: what a life she must have led, yo-yoing between affluence and poverty, in increasingly poor health and never knowing where his latest scheme was going to take the family.



Other than the photos that I have mentioned, I only have two physical mementoes of my grandfather, Ambrose, and these are a wooden box and a stool, which he made. They have the initials AA inlaid in marquetry work. Again, this intricate handiwork ties in with his career in the Navy.

I shall now turn to Ambrose's sons: Eric, Harold and my father, Roy. I know very little about my father's two elder brothers, Eric and Harold, but I shall record here what I have discovered.

Eric Ambrose Adams – 1899-1961

I have described earlier in this chapter that Eric was born on 5th September 1899 in Croydon and that his father was a ‘travelling medical assistant’ at this time. One of the photos that I obtained from the Vicentes studio in Madeira shows him, as a little boy, with his younger brother, Harold. This is shown earlier in this chapter.

I know that Eric tried to look after my father when his mother was ill, but, as a young man who was just starting work, was not really able to do so. Apart from this, I knew practically nothing else about him and, with a common name like “Adams” it would be very difficult to find out anything else. I did know that he had married twice and understood that there were two sons from his first marriage. In 2004, an internet search led me to a Jensen Adams, but the information that he gave me was very vague. He did supply a photo, though.



This tiny image is of Eric and his second wife, Elsie, at a family wedding.

However, in 2009, Genes Reunited came up trumps and provided a link to Eric’s granddaughter, Marilyn Bradley and more of the story was revealed. Eric’s two wives were, in fact, sisters – Ethel Maria Archer (born c 1898) and Elsie (born 1896). Their father was clearly in the Army, because Ethel was born in Aldershot and Elsie in Valletta, Malta. (The 1901 Census finds them in Barracks in Aldershot).

Eric and Ethel had four children: Zelma (b. 1923), Royston Ambrose (b. 1925), Beryl (b. 1927 and died in infancy) and Marilyn Doris (b. 1929). They were all born in Southampton where Eric worked as an engineer of some kind in the dockyard. Marilyn (b. 1948) is Zelma’s daughter. Zelma died in 2009 but Royston Ambrose (known as ‘Blue’ – a retired publican) is alive though in poor health. At the time of writing, Marilyn Doris is still in good health.

It appears that, at some point, Ethel left Eric, taking the children with her, and went off with somebody else, moving away to Worcester. ‘Cousin’ Marilyn was unable to tell me the background to this family skeleton in the cupboard. She did not remarry until 1961. I wonder if Eric refused to divorce her; at that time, she would not have been able to divorce him. However, as Uncle Eric died in 1961, she would then have been able to remarry.

So, although Eric got together with Ethel’s elder sister, Elsie, it is quite likely that they never married. According to ‘Cousin’ Marilyn, they had one son, David. They lived at 29 Paynes Road, Southampton and I always got a birthday and Christmas card from “Uncle Eric and Auntie Elsie”, along with ‘half a crown’.

Marilyn remembers meeting Eric twice when she was younger and says that he was very tall. She also says that he and Elsie came to stay with her grandmother, Ethel, in Worcester, for a holiday. It all sounds like a most interesting ‘menage a quatre’! I can quite see why my mother might not have approved and why Uncle Eric did not figure very much in my childhood!

Harold Wilfred Adams – c.1900 - ?

Ambrose and Ena's second son, Harold was born in Folkestone and, as he was aged 11 at the time of the 1911 Census, must have been born around 1900. Apart from this, I know nothing else about him, other than the fact that he married a woman by the name of Olive. Having been the baby of the family for seven years, I suspect that Harold was not very amused by my father's arrival on the scene. I understand that Harold and Olive came to visit my mother after I was born but I do not think I ever heard anything else about him.

Roy Adams – 1907 - 1996

My father's story has appears in fragments throughout this family history – in that of his parents, his uncle and aunt and my mother. However, I wrote an address for his funeral in 1996 and I am going to reproduce it here as it brings together all the threads of the life of the father that I loved.

“Most of you here knew my father in the last few years of his life when his health was failing and Alzheimer's disease was robbing him of his memory. I would like to talk about the man that he was and what he meant to those who loved him.

Roy was born nearly 90 years ago in Madeira, where his parents ran a hotel. He was the youngest of three brothers. I know very little of his early years, as his parents died when he was a small child and he was brought up by his uncle and aunt, along with their own daughter, Dorrie, who was several years older than him.

After initial jealousy and resentment, Roy and Dorrie developed an affection and closeness which lasted for the rest of their lives. They spent happy years in the Elham Valley in Kent, where Roy developed a love of the countryside and a knowledge of birds and wildlife which gave him immense pleasure. He also discovered a sporting talent, both for cricket and tennis. He used to talk of how he got a detention at school for working out cricket fixture lists in class time!

The family moved back into Folkestone in Roy and Dorrie's teenage years. This was the town of their family's roots and it was here in the 1920's that he met my mother, Marguerite (who was always known as Peg). They enjoyed the social life of the town – groups of young people on the beach, dances at the Leas Cliff Hall and the tennis club. They both really enjoyed dancing and were very good at it. I believe their tango was something to behold!

At this time Roy, who spent family holidays at Wimereux near Boulogne learned to speak French fluently. This was something that never really left him and, right to the end of his life, when his failing memory meant that he couldn't speak or understand English well, he still had a few words of French. One of my earliest memories is of him singing French nursery rhymes to me.

Roy joined Lloyds Bank after he left school and spent all his working career with them. He started to work in Canterbury and Ashford branches and used to tell of writing in large ledgers in 'copperplate' handwriting, using a dip pen and ink. While his ordinary handwriting was almost illegible, he could, if he wished to do so, produce the most beautiful written script.

He and my mother announced their engagement and started to save to get married: the bank wouldn't allow you to marry unless you could support your wife. They also discovered another shared interest which was to important to them both for many years, when they started to collect antiques. In the early 1930's, "going for a song" really meant that and they began a collection of furniture and other beautiful objects and pictures which gave them both great pleasure. My father used to be so enthusiastic about the pieces that he collected. He loved their romance and history and their feeling of age.



My parents married in 1933 and set up home in a flat in Hythe, near Folkestone. Dorrie was also married by this time and the two couples shared holidays together. One notable one (and I have all the photos to prove it) was a riding and camping holiday in the Quantocks. This was a holiday with packhorses, which subsequently proved to be useful experience for my father in the War. Roy was a fine horseman and, to the end of his life, always enjoyed seeing horses.

Then came the War. My parents were living in Romford so they experienced the Blitz at uncomfortably close quarters. They used to tell me about the fire watching from the top of the bank office building, looking for incendiary bombs and seeing the whole of the East End of London ablaze. Roy was also a special constable, while my mother worked at a first aid post.

Roy joined the Army and, after initial training was posted to the Intelligence Corps and then went to an Officer Selection Board and received a Commission. At this point, the Army asked the question "Does anybody know anything about horses?" My father was, of course, able to answer "yes", so found himself in pack transport in Scotland, training for the invasion of Norway.

He clearly enjoyed this time; the life of an army officer suited him and I have photos of him on horseback or relaxing, with his cap at a rakish angle. My mother visited him in Scotland on leave, where poached wild salmon and game made a pleasant change from the wartime austerity of Kent. They also spent some of his leaves together in London and, on one memorable occasion, stayed at the Savoy Hotel. They used to talk about dancing to the famous Savoy dance band.



Then the Army, having trained Roy for snow and mountain warfare, sent him overseas to Palestine where he remained till 1946. He found the Middle East fascinating as it was then little changed from Biblical times. As a child I loved to look at his photos and he would tell me about the places that he had visited.

My mother was expecting me when Roy was posted overseas, so I didn't meet my father till I was over a year old. To my mother's great relief, as I was at a stage when I was suspicious of strangers, we made friends immediately. Roy brought back silk dresses for me and brocades for my mother (which she wondered when she would ever wear). There was a Palestinian doll, whom we called Jasmine, who went on top of the Christmas tree from that day to this.

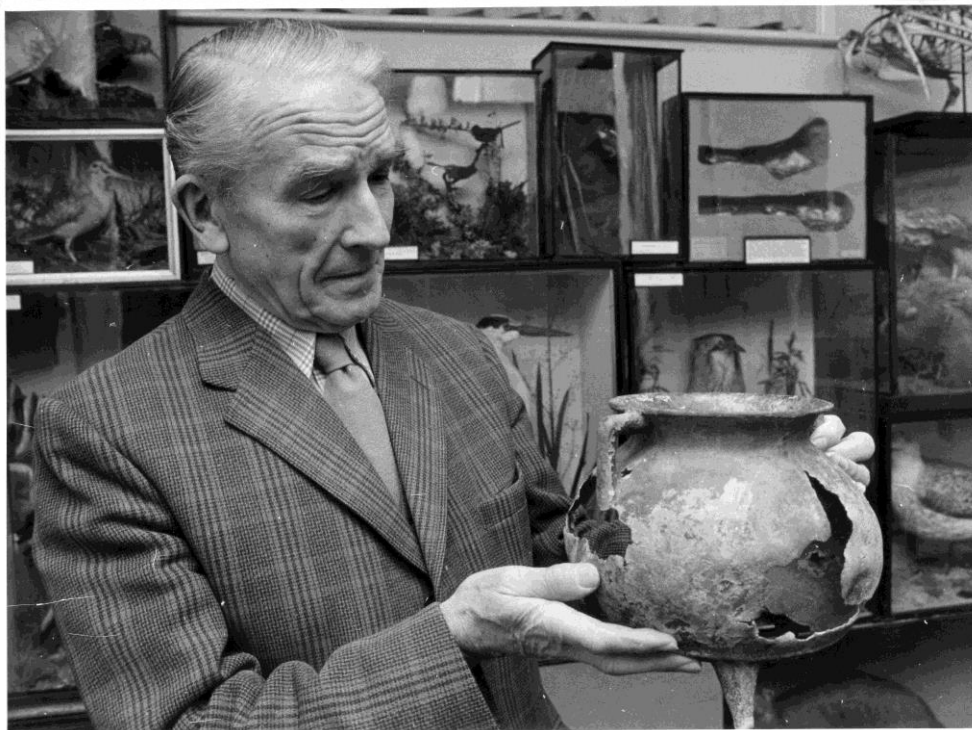
Roy settled, with some difficulty, I believe, into the routine of the bank in Gillingham, Kent. This was alleviated by going to Hunt Balls and Dances at the Naval Barracks in Chatham. The brocades from the Middle East came in useful after all.

The Kentish countryside where we lived was still unspoilt and I have happy childhood memories of walks with my parents in the woods and cherry orchards. A particular weekend treat was to build a fire in the woods and cook our Sunday breakfast on it. Bacon and eggs tasted wonderful.

When I was eight, my father received his first appointment as a Bank Manager, and we moved to Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. During my teenage years, I enjoyed visits to London with parents to exhibitions, the theatres and to the little restaurant in Soho that they had discovered in the War. My maternal grandmother and aunts were frequent visitors and we also visited Dorrie and her husband, Frank, in Folkestone. The other regular holiday venue was Southwold in Suffolk, and it was there my parents moved when Roy retired from the Bank, nearly thirty years ago. They bought two small 17th century cottages and converted them into one house, which they called "Barnaby Cottage". A new life opened up for them. They discovered the delights of foreign travel together and had a particular passion for Italy. My mother taught herself Italian and they had some wonderful holidays exploring the Renaissance treasures of Florence and Venice. This interest in the past was extended when my father accepted the appointment as Honorary Curator of the Southwold Museum.

There were the excitements of local archaeological and historical finds and arranging special exhibitions at the Museum.

Southwold became a refuge for me from my life in London and my friends and I visited. They bought two small 17th century cottages and converted them into one house, which they called “Barnaby Cottage”. A new life opened up for them. They discovered the delights of foreign travel together and had a particular passion for Italy. My mother taught herself Italian and they had some wonderful holidays exploring the Renaissance treasures of Florence and Venice. This interest in the past was extended when my father accepted the appointment as Honorary Curator of the Southwold Museum. There were the excitements of local archaeological and historical finds and arranging special exhibitions at the Museum. Southwold became a refuge for me from my life in London and my friends and I visited



regularly, enjoying my parents’ hospitality, my father’s generosity and charm as a host and my mother’s excellent cooking. Father could mix wonderful cocktails and I remember one Christmas, he and I attempted to work our way through the Savoy Cocktail Book, leaving my mother struggling with the turkey in the kitchen! I think we got as far as ‘F’!

I married and Michael my son was born. I know that he also has memories of staying with his grandparents and enjoying trips to the beach and local nature reserves. The Suffolk Coast is an ornithologist’s paradise and he remembers going out bird-watching with his grandfather.

With the advancing years, my parents’ health began to fail and I eventually managed to persuade them to move nearer to me in Belton-in-Rutland, near Uppingham, and it was here that Liz⁴ came into our lives. Initially, she looked after both my parents in their own home, and then, after my mother died, in 1992, my father moved in with her, James and Rachel. Their care, love

⁴ Liz Muggleton, who was a trained geriatric nurse

and support made the last few years of Roy's life as good as they could be and I shall always be deeply grateful to them.

Roy's life ended peacefully and, as the months and years pass, I shall remember him more and more as the affectionate and loving husband and father that he was for most of my life."