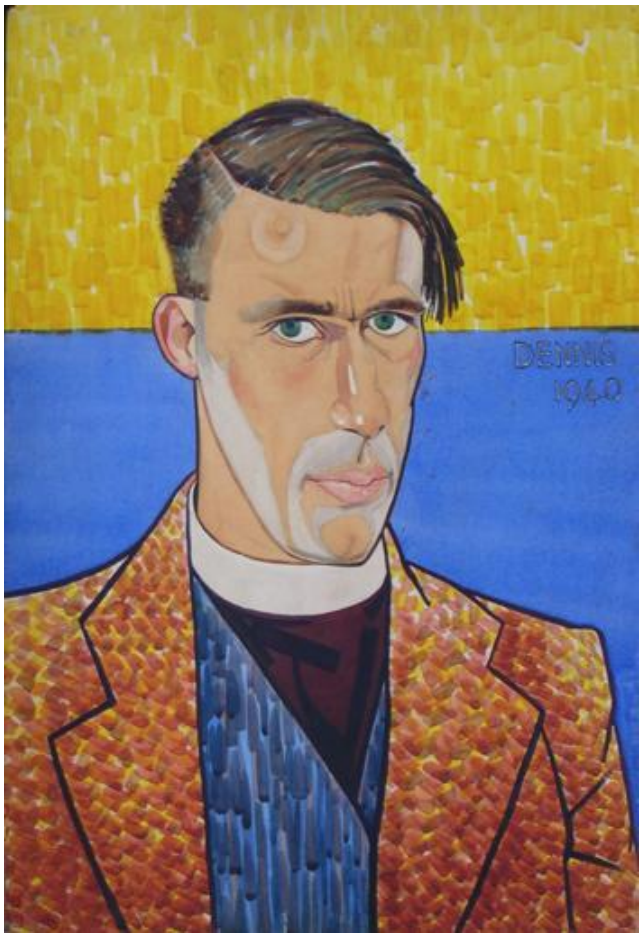
Memoirs and Selected Writings of

Dennis Duckworth

1911 - 2003



Illustrated with examples of his artwork and family photographs

Centenary Edition
September 2011

Foreword

Around 1991, my father Dennis decided to write his memoirs. For many reasons this was a perfectly 'natural thing' for him to want to do. For one thing, he loved to tell a good story and, not surprisingly for a man of his age, he had a good many to tell.

When Dennis died in 2003 at the age of 92, it was said this was the end of an era. Certainly his active life in the New Church spanned such a long time that he outlived nearly all his contemporaries. No doubt it was his reflection on how things had changed during his lifetime that prompted Dennis to put pen to paper (and latterly finger to keyboard) to record memories of his earlier life.
The written memoirs Dennis left to us are composed at different times and some are clearly incomplete. For anyone else embarking on their own memoirs, and wishing to reduce frustration for their heirs, I suggest they avoid stopping their thought flow mid-sentence!
What follows has been distilled from the many printouts and computer disks Dennis left for us to puzzle over. From notes made it is evident he had ambitions to write a complete autobiography, which he got as far as titling "In the Palm of my Hand" but fell short of writing out in full; probably an overwhelming task given the fifty-two sections he managed to list. No doubt his artwork, home and Church affairs kept him busy enough to consider the list forever incomplete.

What we do have, are two or three substantial pieces of writing which together form the best part of an autobiography of the first half of Dennis's life. The chapters "A Childhood in Accrington" and "A Swedenborgian in London" are derived from documents of the same name and have been largely unedited. "College Days" is a chapter which fills in the period between Accrington and his London ministry and is made up of a selection of articles he wrote, some for church publications. These have been chosen for both anecdotal interest and their biographic relevance. As a child of his second marriage, to Mary Talbot, I knew Dad in the last thirty years of his life; so to have these writings is a real gift.

Dennis left us a great many family photographs , and of course his extensive catalogue of paintings. It seems fitting to illustrate his memoirs with these as a way of adding colour to the stories, but also to provide context to the photos and pictures themselves. I like to think Dennis would have chosen to do this himself, if he had been able to access the desk-top publishing opportunities that are now so readily available.

Now we can think back a full 100 years to the time of Dennis's birth and - with great thanks to him - we can read about it too.

Micah Duckworth
September 2011

Dennis and Smiley

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Chapter 1: A CHILDHOOD IN ACCRINGTON

Origins

I was born in Accrington, at 25 Midland Street in what we were pleased to call, euphemistically, the 'Barnfield' district. Not so very long ago I was surprised - nay, astonished - to discover that I was a 'love child'. True, I was not born out of wedlock, but I was certainly conceived out of wedlock, as the register of the Swedenborgian church in Abbey Street makes sufficiently clear. Mother and Father were married on 22nd April 1911, and I was born short of five months later on 14th September. The revelation of this fact has shed light on a number of things in my childhood and youth that have been obscure.

I can now ponder on where this sparking off of my life took place. There is something quite natural in wanting to probe into the origins of one's being. What were Mother and Father doing that Christmas nine months before my advent into the world?

I have a feeling - nothing more than this - that I was conceived at Leemings Farm. At that time Leemings Pad was a cindery track between Sandy Lane and Plantation Mill. Half way along was a tumble down 'fold' - a huddle of stone shippons and barns round a farm house. There, in one of the cottages of Leemings Farm, lodged father's eldest brother Jimmy with his wife Charlotte (a Londoner) and their three young children. It was a dank, gloomy, uninviting spot in wintertime, ideal for the intimacies of love-making.

Willie Duckworth, who was to become my father, was a musician - a French horn player attached to an army military band. In 1910 he was stationed at Colchester, and towards the end of the year at Leamington Spa. He came home on Christmas leave. Jimmy, Charlotte and their family were spending Christmas in London, and the cottage at Leemings Farm was empty. Willie took Salley for an evening stroll 'round by Leemings' - and basic human nature took control of the situation. Of course, I have no proof of this, and nothing was ever said - but I can so easily believe that the spark of my existence was kindled one dark evening around Christmas 1910 at Leemings Farm on the Fringe of Accrington. I have always had a kind of mystical affection for the place.

Salley Smith (she was named Salley after her father's mother) was one of six surviving children of James Smith and Harriet Pinder. James had died in his fifties in 1902. They were a proud, very proper, and rather pretentious Edwardian family; and we can well imagine the effect upon them when Salley was no longer able to conceal her indiscretion. There were recriminations, taunts, snubs, and many sorrowful shakings of the head - especially from the sisters, Polly, Daisy and Bessie. The brothers Jim and Ben were more tolerant; but Harriet their mother preserved a dignified icy silence. Willie's contribution to the fiasco was considered to be beneath contempt.

The marriage took place in the Abbey Street church, and the minister, the Rev. James Robson Rendell, doffing his robes, climbed up to the organ loft and played the Wedding March as the couple left the building - a gesture that endeared him to Salley for the rest of his life.

My Birth

Salley Smith

I came into the world early on a Saturday evening in the little front bedroom of 25 Midland Street. Dr. Fenwick and Nurse Livesey were in attendance and all was well. We must have been pitiably poor at the time, and I was not placed in a cot or cradle but in the big drawer at the base of the wardrobe, pulled out and made up as a bed. Mother was unable to give me human milk; she tried, and the doctor brought his breast pump - which simply drew blood; so I was entirely bottle-fed.

On the day after my birth - on the Sunday evening - a few of mother's young friends came stamping up the stairs to offer their congratulation and to slake their curiosity. The hilarity was so robust that Harriet (whom I shall now call Granny), putting aside her righteous indignation, came in from next door, where she lived, and sent them all away. "Mother and baby need rest" she said decisively, looking down into the wardrobe drawer for the first time and breaking the ice. From that moment everything was forgiven. Granny Smith spoke with authority, for she had had eight babies of her own. I grew into a strong, healthy and very knowing child, and can just remember that upstairs room with the brass bedstead and the bamboo table beside it. The window had a yellow blind and the floor was bare. Gas light lit its poverty. But when the sun shone in from Midland Street it became a palace.

One side of Midland Street has gone - demolished to make room for new houses with trim grass lawns. It sloped gently, and had thirty-two identical industrial cottages - eighteen each side. It was all stone - walls, pavements, and cobbled road; it even sounded stony, as people walked up and down in their clogs and the occasional horse-drawn cart rattled by. I remember it as quiet, cool, and colourless - with blades of timid grass jutting out from between the cracks. The house where I was born is still standing, as is aunt Polly's next door below and Granny's next door above. We were three in a row - three doorsteps, three knockers, three knobs - a situation provoking many incidents and lots of fun.

We rented our house from Aunt Polly. It had four rooms and a kitchen, lobby and staircase, and was stone-flagged completely on the ground floor. The back yard had a closet, coal shed, and ash pit. Ivy framed the living room window, through which could be seen the yard gate - looking, I imagined, like a big profile face, with a snub nose and smiling mouth. This was our home for the first fifteen years on my life - warm and snug in my memory, but gloomy and meagre, I now know, in actuality.

Lying in my bed upstairs (this was before my brother Alan was born three and a half years later) I used to listen nearly every night to sounds rising up from below - lovely sounds, glowing sounds, golden sounds - father practicing his French horn in the tiny front parlour. Before I knew words and language I knew these sounds. The Valkyries rode on the clouds above our chimney pots. Der Freischutz shot his arrows up and down our cobbled street, Til Eulenspiegel gambolled among the ivy in the yard and I fell asleep to the Nocturne from A Midsummer Night's Dream. I knew them all, these French horn excerpts -and many others; and when I hear them now I picture in my mind my father with his silvery hair (he was white in his thirties) and the mouthpiece placed firmly against his lips . He was no longer a military bandsman, but was now working at Broad Oak Print Works as an unskilled labourer in the colour and dye house.

My baby brother had a rocking cradle standing in the corner of the living room. It was a room to remember. A square table stood on the flagged floor. There was no carpet except for what we called a piece of 'matting' and a thick rag rug in front of the hearth (made by cutting up old garments into narrow lengths knotting them to canvas with a carpet hook). The room's centre of attraction was the black iron fireplace, polished 'til it shone. A coal fire glowed behind bars; to the right was the oven

(always warm), and to the left the hot water tank - our only supply.

Above the 'range' was the mantle-shelf, on which we kept our small necessities. Father's 'Vienna' clock hung on the wall and chimed the hours. Three framed and glazed pictures reflected the firelight: a water colour of fucias - a wedding present from mother's artist brother Jim to his sister; a grey and white reproduction of Lord Leighton's famous painting 'Wedded'; and an elongated panel in colour depicting a recumbent Spanish girl gazing into a bowl of goldfish.

A rush-bottomed rocking chair almost touched the fender and the ever useful green stool nearby. The single window had a blind and lace curtains that trailed down to the sill, where an aspidistra stood. There was a gas light only - the sallow brightness of a single mantle. When the kitchen door was open a dolly tub and posser could be seen standing near the mangle, and a tin bath suspended from a hook. There was only one water tap in the house - over the slop stone. It was father's never ceasing job to fill the lading tin and top up the fireside boiler.

When Alan was little over a year old he had severe bronchitis; also when he was two, and again when he was three. The doctor's medicine did nothing - Alan's bark of a cough grew deeper. Mother resorted to drastic measures. His cot was brought down into the living room and he was propped up in bed with a shawl round his shoulders, rubbed front and back with camphorated oil and dosed with spoonfuls of hot water and black treacle with a dash of vinegar. After a month he was better.

"He will have it 'til he is seven", said Dr. Fenwick, "and then he will grow out of it." The prognosis was proved to be correct. Alan had bronchitis for a whole month every year, but after his seventh birthday it left him and never really returned. He had a strong aversion to vinegar for the rest of his life.

Our daily life centred around the warm fireside. Every morning we heard the milkman's call in the street and took our jug into which he measured our pint from one of the two metal churns standing in his float. We two young boys played on the floor, with the large table cloth making a kind of house for us beneath the table. Aunts - mother's sisters - came in to visit; sometimes uncles or cousins, and I have a vivid recollection of their floor length skirts and drainpipe trousers seen from underneath the table. We had few toys - crayons, home-made building bricks, tin soldiers, rag books; but my favourite toys were empty syrup and cocoa tins for building into towers and fortifications.

In winter the toasting fork came into daily use, especially in the late afternoons when about 5:30 we listened for the sound of father's clogs as he approached the back yard gate. Then, sitting round the table, we had our main meal of the day. It was soon bed time, but not until father had filled the two stone beer bottles - our hot water bottles - and taken then upstairs.

Sometimes mother would glance at the fire and cry, "A stranger on the hearth! Quick, knock him off." This 'stranger' was a wisp of soot clinging to one of the iron bars - a certain sign that a visitor would call, unless it was removed by the poker. Occasionally we took no action, and astonishingly the 'stranger' always came - the postman, coal-man, father's friend John Clegg, with his aromatic pipe, or one of the many beggars that walked the streets and knocked on doors in those days. Mother was mildly superstitious and cherished an innocent trust in signs, omens, and Old Moore's Almanac.

Our Mother

People used to say that our mother Salley was the pleasantest and most agreeable of the family. She was mid-way in the list: Polly, Jim and Ben; then Salley, Daisy and Bessie. All the Smith young ladies 'fancied themselves' and thought of themselves as photographic models. We have many, many excellent photographs of mother and her sisters (and brothers) all revealing their good looks and their shapely figures and dress.

Mother used to say that when she was a girl her head was 'like a cherry on a stem'. She used to say that she had had her chances. 'I could have had La-roche', she would say, dreamy-eyed, La-roche being one of the sons of the Swedenborgian minister. 'But I didn't really want him', she would add. She was affectionate and truthful, neat and tidy, thrifty and hard-working. In the early days of our family she went out to work as a four-loomed weaver in a cotton factory and made many good and lasting friends. Our home became the centre of her life and she made it a happy one.

I always felt that Jim had a special fondness for his sister. He called her Sal. Friday night was bath night in our house. The tin bath was hauled in from the kitchen and placed in front of the fire. Alan and I sat in the bath with the warm water up to our shoulders. There was a knock at the door. Jim and Josephine with Kathleen, their daughter, were calling to visit their relatives. Embarrassment all round! 'Never mind, Sal. Just carry on; don't bother about us', said Jim. We were fond of our Uncle Jim. We were fond of Uncle Ben and Aunt Edith too and of their children Salley and Frank but somehow they seemed not quite so closely en famile as the rest of the Smiths.

Father

Our father William was a gentle and kindly person with what we thought was an aristocratic presence. He had a mild personality but a strong dislike of anything resembling authority. Both our parents were home-loving and un-envious of the success of others. Father voted Labour but really had little interest in political matters.

William Duckworth

All his life my father worked in the dye-house at Broad Oak, CPA. How many times with my Aunt Mary Alice did I carry his dinner to him in a wicker basket - though why it Mary Alice and not mother who provided his lobscouse or "finnie-haddock" at that time I didn't know! Probably mother was weaving then. Father had no dinner hour, he simply worked straight through. The dye house was a dreadful place. I remember it as wet, dark, and cold, with wide circular pits of dye sunk into the stone floor, into which frames of cloth were lowered and raised. Big Enoch, dressed in a stiff felt or leather apron, would shout, "You again!" and grasping me round the waist would hold my struggling body over the repulsive liquid in the wells. Little Sowerbutts, sitting cross-legged with his tin of tea, would grim approvingly, and Mary Alice would say, "Let him be, Enoch, we've got to go." This was where my gentle and sensitive parent passed the days and years of his working life, never anything but a "labourer". This was where his strong athletic youth drained away into early old age. He worked with colours. He came home in the evening with hands dyed green, pink or purple, and was ashamed of them.
In playing the horn the right hand is concealed in the bell, but the fingers of the left hand pressing the valves are very visible. Father played at concerts - white shirt front, black bow tie - but with turquoise or orange fingers. He was fastidious over his personal appearance, and scrupulously concerned with high standards of musical performance; to be caught "red handed" at a rehearsal or concert hurt him severely; and all this in spite of repeated applications of what he called "chymic", which I suspect was a weak solution of hydrochloric acid.

Through shyness Father never went to church, preferring to meet his God in the surrounding lanes and meadows. Deity in Church was too aristocratic an idea for him. On many a Sunday morning, after Mother had brought us home from service, he would take his two small sons for a walk in the country. With a paper bag in his pocket, and his yellow handled walking stick in his hand, he would lead us out into the fresh air. "Why is your hand so hard?" I would ask, as we walked past the garden gates of Sandy Lane. " It's the dye; it's the acid." he would reply, looking down at his horny palms.

As soon as we reached the fringe of the green fields at Broad Oak Fold - long since demolished, he became alive. "Listen, that's a lark. As soon as it stops singing it will fall like a stone." With his pen knife he cut little pipes for us to blow. He dug "earth-nuts" from the ground for us to chew; and he would let us chew "sour-dock" leaves and also "bread and cheese" - young hawthorn leaves in April and May. And - the biggest delight of all - he would tattoo our forearms with the round juicy dandelion stems.

The Three Houses

I shall describe them in detail for they were the background to the first fifteen years of my life. There were four houses in a row, but one of them - number 21 - was let out. Then came Aunt Polly's (number 23), our Duckworth home (number 25), and Grannie Smith's (number 27). This last was strongly Victorian; Aunt Polly's was Edwardian or Art Nouveau; and ours in the middle was typical of a working class English home about the time of the two great wars.

We were a happy united family, father and mother, my younger brother and I. Grannie Smith and her two youngest daughters, Daisy and Bessie, lived next door above, and next to us below on her own lived Aunt Polly, mother's elder sister. The three homes kept up a communication with one another either by direct visiting or by tapping and calling through the connecting walls - we in the middle being in an advantageous position to receive or convey messages. This was the centre of our Smith life; the Duckworths were scattered in other parts of the town and the country and Grandma Duckworth lived in Broad Oak Terrace only five minutes' walk away.

Our house - the middle one - had a stone-flagged floor. The main feature of the living room was its large iron fireplace - the fire behind bars, the hot-water boiler on the left and the oven on the right. It was father's job to look after the fire and top up the boiler with the lading-tin, for this was our only supply of hot water. Above the high mantlepiece was the gaslight which burned with a greenish glow and had a soft hissing sound. Sitting round the fireside, mother would suddenly cry, 'A stranger on the hearth!' (a bit of black cinder sticking to a bar in the fire). 'Quick, knock it off. We don't want strangers in the house!' - and the 'stranger' would be dislodged with the poker.

Top Row: Daisy, Benjamin, Mary Ellen (Polly)
Bottom row: Bessie, Salley, James Edward

On the wall was a print of 'Wedded', the popular painting by Lord Frederic Leighton and near it hung the Vienna clock. We had a home-made rag rug in front of the hearth and our rocking-chair stood to one side of it. The window looked out onto the back yard with its ivy-covered walls. There was a stone sink in the kitchen and also the mangle, the maiden, the dolly-tub and the tin bath. In the small front room father practised his French horn, and as far as I know the room was never used for anything else. We had a lobby and a front-door with a knocker. I can hear that knocker still.

Grannie's house next door simply shone with polish. Over most of the main doors hung a pair of cows' horns. In the middle of the floor stood a large table, its four legs wearing stockings. On this table - astonishingly - stood the fire irons from the hearth, gleaming like silver and covered lightly with sheets of newspaper. On Sundays these fire irons were restored to their proper places on the hearth.

On the marble-topped mantlepiece - under glass domes - stood two Chinese figures, and also in a glass case on the sideboard a stuffed pheasant - a reminder from Lincolnshire. A handsome aspidistra filled the windowsill and the Co-op Almanac occupied a nearby wall. I remember a draught-screen, chairs with antimacassars, and the stairs with gleaming brass stair-rods. Most of all I remember the horsehair chaise longue where I would sit in my short-legged trousers and inwardly curse the invention of horsehair upholstery.

Aunt Polly's - next door to us below - was Art Nouveau and had a strong smell of eucalyptus. We used to visit her - an 'imagined' invalid - and find her crouched among her Edwardian furniture smoking a cigarette. 'You mustn't smoke, boys', she would say. 'I do it for my catarrh - Dr. Blosser's Asthmatic Cigarettes.' On the piano a drawing of Mendelssohn looked across the room to a framed print of the Madonna. Bowls of pot-pouri lay about the room and there was a kind of amber or turquoise feeling about everything. It is only fair to say that in her later years Aunt Polly embraced Christian Science and stepped out into a newer and more robust way of life.

Aunts, Uncles and Others

Grannie Smith as I remember her was tall and slim and dressed in black. She wore Whitby jet, had an iron will and a soft Lincolnshire accent. She disdained the Lancashire dialect and never spoke it. The single word that brings her back to life is the word 'proud': she was a proud and fastidious person. Life had been hard for her - steady, circumscribed, strict, but successful. It was all reflected in her personality. She lived in the house next door to us and was a figure of family authority all through our childhood.

She and her two sisters were Lincolnshire people. Mary Anne, Mrs. Bilsborough, had died in her mid-years. The other sister Fanny had also settled in Lancashire and had married a certain William Daft. This was never mentioned and at some time there must have been a change of name. There is a little evidence too that our 'Daft' cousins lived in the Copster Green or Wilpshire district of Blackburn and had some connection with Lovely Hall, still standing. But I would like to know much more about this.

Grannie's two youngest children were Daisy and Bessie. I mention them together; they were unmarried and as far as I know were quite unattached in spite of good looks and average amiability. Daisy became a children's nanny for a Jewish fam-

ily in Manchester; Bessie was a teacher in Rishton, travelling to school each day by train. Daisy then became a housekeeper to Nathaniel Jepson, a retired business-man and bibliophile of Copy Nook, Blackburn. Bessie fell and injured her knee and walked with a stick thereafter. Nathaniel died and Daisy retired. The two sisters died of cancer in their early sixties.

Grannie's oldest child was Polly - very fin-de-siecle, as I have already described. She was my first teacher in the infant class at the New-Church Day School in Chapel Street, Accrington. She took me there at the age of five and taught us all to write and read the alphabet. She wore a long grey dress with a stiff collar and a leather belt. She was severe. You wore a card hanging from your neck by a piece of string and containing a letter of the alphabet. If you could recognize your letter you received a playful pat but if you couldn't you were hit on the head with the card! Aunt Polly had a 'signal' - a piece of wood that made a clicking sound. We (click) stood up, (click) sat down, (click) turned right or left and responded to the 'signal'. Obedience was the key word. The school closed down in 1917 and I was transferred to another school.

Aunt Polly moved to Bournemouth to teach but came back home a year later and retired. She was a fine and gifted teacher and in retirement became what I can only call a brilliant valetudinarian. She was fit and well but not entirely so; she was sick but not terribly so. She imagined she was ill. 'What's wrong with you?' asked her doctor. 'I will tell you exactly,' said Aunt Polly. 'I have a weak heart and a bronchial chest and a sluggish liver and a foul stomach.' 'What a handicap!' said the doctor.

The dividing wall between our two homes allowed us to share some of Aunt Polly's anguish when practising her piano. There was a certain Romberg sonata that she played over and over again. Father would stand in our lobby with a look of disapproval on his normally mild features. 'Listen! She can't do it. It's wrong,' he would exclaim. 'Hopeless. Wrong again!' He was right; none of the women, Smiths or Duckworths alike, had any real musical interest or gift. Aunt Polly was a wonderful teacher and would have loved to play but somehow couldn't just do it.

She was good at quoting Swedenborg but it wasn't Swedenborg that changed her life but Mary Baker Eddy. She suddenly became an extrovert, going out for long walks even in the rain. She decided that Midland Street was too restrictive and moved into a larger house in Burnley Road and then to the village of Bare near Morecambe. She made new friends and explored new paths. I went to see her in hospital in Lancaster, weak and old but still very talkative. Aunt Polly, our mother's oldest sister, died in her late eighties.

But what about our uncles? There were two, Jim and Ben, not at all alike we thought. James Edward was a 'Lincolnshire Pinder' with much of his mother's mannerisms. He inherited her artistic strain, her needle and thread skills. He painted a watercolour of a spray of fuchias for his sister Salley's wedding-present - a nice and generous gift! He was engaged to be married but suddenly changed direction and married a local beauty named Josephine. The family approved, apparently. Ben, the younger brother, was a real Smith, very much like his father in looks and style, with a round pondering expression and a matter-of-fact attitude to life. His wife was Edith. He had the Smith love of music and played the oboe.

Granny

Harriet Smith (ne Pinder)

Granny could be distinguished from the other old ladies of the town by the white silk ribbons of her bonnet. Apart from this she dressed entirely in black. She was tall and proud.
Harriet Pinder, a farmer's daughter from the village of Butterwick near Boston in Lincolnshire, came to Accrington with her elder sister Maria about 1860 at the age of eighteen to work, eventually to marry, and to build up a home and family. It was a brave thing to do, but 'there was no prospect for farmers' daughters in Lincolnshire'. Harriet would not go into service; she was above that, she said. For the same reason she refused to be a barmaid. So she became a sempstress. Her job was to go into all the large houses of the district (Accrington House, Broad Oak House, Foxhill Bank, Hyndburn House), to live in for a month or two and do all the family sewing and dress-making. In this way she met and married James Smith, son of 'Owd Sal' of the Victoria Hotel in Manchester Road.

James Smith

James was 'a publican, a Liberal, and a Swedenborgian'; he was also 'not strong' and 'had a lazy bone in his body'. He died young and left Harriet with a family of six to bring up with nothing but her needle and thread. She was thrifty, careful, economical, and tidy, and as I remember her wonderfully gifted with supportive aphorisms. 'A stitch in time saves nine', she would say, with the authority of one who had tested the truth of it many times. 'Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves' , obviously a favourite of hers. 'Walk a mile to save a mite' - but only on one occasion do I remember her walking a mile. Her small house at No.27 Midland Street became her sanctum and her pride, and as the years passed by it became more and more a model of Victorian propriety. This was the turn of the century, when the lamp-lighter came down the street in the evening and the knocker-up in the morning. 'Six o' clock an' a cow'd day', he would call, and rattle on the upstairs window-pane with his long stick. People spoke the dialect in those days - but not Granny: she had a soft Lincolnshire accent that never left her. One quiet word in that sing-song voice and the storm calmed down.

Dialect

Ellen Ann Duckworth ne Clayton

Our Grandmother Duckworth (Ellen Ann Clayton) lived nearby in Sandy Lane at 69 Broad Oak Terrace. I have very little recollection of Grandmother D. She brought up a family of seven, our father William being the youngest. She was gentle in disposition and had a love of family tradition. She had no other speech than her native Lancashire dialect. My single memory of her is at a Shrove Tuesday family gathering in Broad Oak Terrace, with pancakes galore and lots of fun.

Throughout the years of my childhood in Accrington, Lancashire dialect was spoken freely and fluently by most of the people I knew. Many of us had a double speech: the kind we spoke at church, at school, or in company - still very North-country in accent and style - and the kind we spoke among ourselves, the real thing. Grandma Duckworth spoke nothing but this real thing. Yet, as I was told later, she was a cultured woman, a Swedenborgian like the rest, and much loved and respected by the members of the large circle of Claytons and Duckworths.

Granny Smith on the other hand spoke a quiet soft Lincolnshire, and her children tended to follow her. Mother and father were border-line cases, not ‘as broad as broad’ in their speech, but still recognizably local.

Every real dialect is subtle and quite beyond perfect imitation. Our ears were finely attuned to it. We could distinguish the genuine Blackburn vowels from the authentic Burnley ones, and the Preston twang sounded almost foreign to us. It was remarkable that within a radius of twenty miles a great variety of distinctive local pronunciations was discernible. There was ‘hard’ Lancashire and “soft’ Lancashire - the former pretty raucous and tending to be rough at the edges and the latter mild and mellow, with a pleasing poetic lilt. The nearer one advanced towards Manchester the softer was the speech one heard, or so it seemed to us.

“Stop thi moitherin’,” Grandma Duckworth would say, meaning, “Don’t bother me.”

“Get thi shoon on and stop marlickin’,” meaning, "Put on your shoes and stop messing about.”

Words like childer (children), gradely (first-rate, pretty good) and feckle (to mend, repair) were common-place when I was young. One would say push or shove a cart, but thrutch, meaning to push oneself against it - a kind of reflexive sense.

In my teens a pretty girl was ‘reight fotchin’,’ that is, ‘very fetching’ - the equivalent, I suppose, of the much more recent, 'She sends me.’

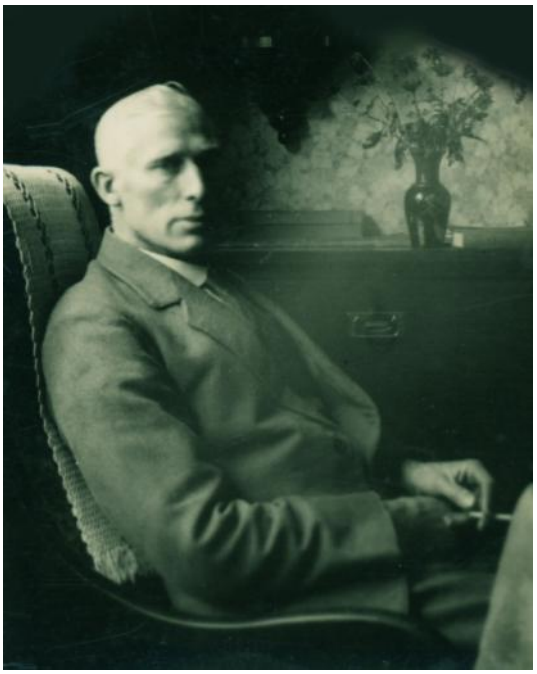
I was once standing at the roadside with a schoolboy friend and a motor-bike roared by. My friend passed the perfectly normal colloquial comment, "Yon mon's oinin' yon bike" ("That man is ill-using that bike."). This common expression to oine, meaning, to abuse or punish, has almost disappeared.

When a lad was feeling belligerent he would shake his fist and say, "Ah'll oine thee" - a dire threat. Or he might say, "Ah'll punce thee" - that is, kick with the clogs on. The mother of a sulky child would say to him, "Don't be so mard" - possibly a contraction of 'marred', spoiled. If he was stupid she would cry, "Don't be so gawmless," and if he was clumsy or unwilling "Tha feckless thing". To squint was to sken. A door latch was a snack or sneck. A narrow passage was a ginnel. A person with wet feet was witshod (wet shod). A woman went to bed in her shift. These belonged to the common speech of my boyhood, but there were many real dialect words that had gone out of general use by the end of the First World War: gallises (trouser-braces), aliker (vinegar), and huishon (cushion).
An often heard question and answer at the time of the Depression in the 1930's was, "Ar' t' warkin'?" "Neaw, ah'm lakin'" - that is, playing, not working.

I remember that the Discussion Class held on sunday afternoons at the King's Hall Picture House was picturesquely called 't' Threapin' 'Oile' - literally, the Argument Hole; and I also remember that I was often told as a child, "stop thi threapin'".

This was the straightforward everyday language of North-East Lancashire in the early decades of the present century. Mother and her three sisters had almost grown out of the dialect and were inclined to be mildly condescending about it. Father's form of speech was 'soft' Lancashire. But all of us to some extent used the rich, fresh, and racy idioms that belonged to the hills and valleys around us. I can still use them today, but anachronistically, alas.

When in the 'twenties father first heard the silvery voice of Stuart Hibbert coming from the loud-speaker of our new wireless set he was appalled. "Ho, ho Listen La-di-da Oh, yes! Oxford accent! Softie!" - and other expressions. Father never swore. What is now considered to be the normal English speech of an average educated person was strange in his ears, and he never really got attuned to it. In the 1960's not long before his death we would still hear him muttering to the radio, "Oh dear! Harken! How Posh!" There was something in the old Lancashire character that greatly opposed to show a pretence. Father would deliberately mispronounce rather than appear himself to others to be affected. This seen in his pronunciation of names of foreign composers . Bach always an embarrassment to him; he stubbornly anglicised Wagner and Tchaikovsky, Chopin quite beyond his tongue.



William Duckworth

Broad Oak

'Broad Oak' is a name that figured largely in my childhood. Broad Oak Fold stood on the very fringe of the town looking east towards the hills and Great Hameldon. It was a group of stone cottages built in the form of a large square and all facing inwards for the sake of neighbourliness and common protection. In the centre of the square stood the large oak tree that gave the Fold its name. Folds of this kind were a common heritage of country dwellers especially in the wilder parts of Northern England.

Broad Oak Fold – now demolished

Just across the lane from the Fold was Broad Oak House, the stately home of Sir George McAlpine and his family. I once saw Sir George - wearing plus-fours, I think - rushing down Sandy Lane. He dropped a coin from his pocket. 'Now,' I thought, 'will a millionaire stop to pick up a shilling?' That is just what he did. He stopped, hunted about, spotted his coin, picked it up and hurried on his way: a story with a moral for my ten-year-old mind!

Broad Oak Lane led down to a large complex of factories, sheds and offices comprising the famous Print Works owned by the C.P.A., the Calico Printers' Association, for whom my father worked for most of his life. Broad Oak employed hundreds of workers, many of them being our friends, neighbours, fellow church people, fellow musicians and so on. Father worked from eight-thirty in the morning to five-thirty in the evening without a mid-day break, all for fifty shillings a week (in modern money, £2.50). Through this complex of stone buildings trickled the stream that in its lower reaches was to become Accrington's river, the Hyndburn, in those days a receptacle for all the waste chemicals and dyes from the sheds.

To walk through Broad Oak and carry my father's dinner-basket was an education in itself. There were machine-printers, block-printers, bleachers and dyers, coopers, carpenters and textile experts of many kinds - all intent on the production of cloth

Dye vats at Broad Oak Dyeworks

mainly for the African market. There was the great boiler house where, as it seemed, human devils sweated night and day to keep up the steam upon which the whole surrounding conglomeration depended. And yet, Broad Oak itself - I mean the wide spacious district with that name - was bounded by glorious undulating and unspoilt countryside, green and fresh and furnished with trees. It was the kind of place to be found nowhere else in the world except perhaps in some similar remote spot among the hills and valleys of Pennine England.

Broad Oak Dyeworks

Our Happy Hunting Ground

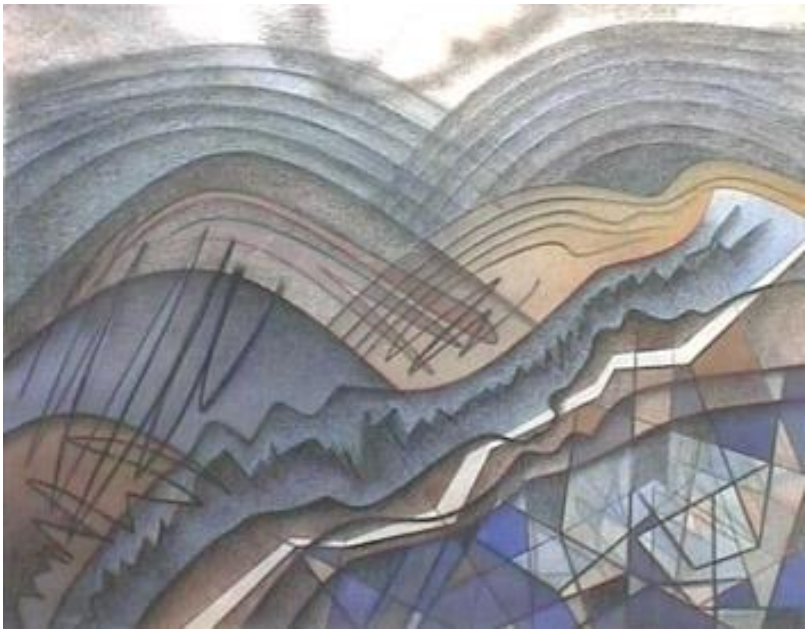
This was not the town of Accrington itself nor the nearby beautiful Ribble Valley nor even the smooth flanks of Pendle Hill (just seen from our bedroom window) but the hilly region of the Coppice, Moleside and Great Hameldon east of the town towards Yorkshire. I came to know every tree and every stream in this wilderness where I was free to roam with my boyhood friends.

Leemings Farm, where I believe my life first crystallized has been mentioned already. Leemings Pad skirted the farm and curved round towards Owl Hall and Plantation Mill, this latter in those days still functioning as a bleaching and dyeing unit. Leemings Pad also bordered the meadow where the Swedenborgians held their Field Day every year in July. Our cousin Robert brought his horse and cart and transported the seats, rugs, boxes of crockery, huge urns of coffee and mounds of buns from the Abbey Street church to the field, while the rest of us - a hundred or two - walked in procession behind. The Field Day was an occasion for cricket and football, tennis and racing, lots of noise and a little tentative flirtation behind the hawthorn hedges. No coffee ever tasted better.

Plantation Mill

Sandy Lane received its name from its sandy soil - the sand ground up by the iron shoes of the horses and the iron rims on the wheels of the trucks they pulled. This was the route between the stone quarries of Warmden and the township of New Accrington, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Building stone was quarried and transported and over the years small stones were ground into sand. I can clearly remember patches of sand in certain spots along the edges of Sandy Lane.

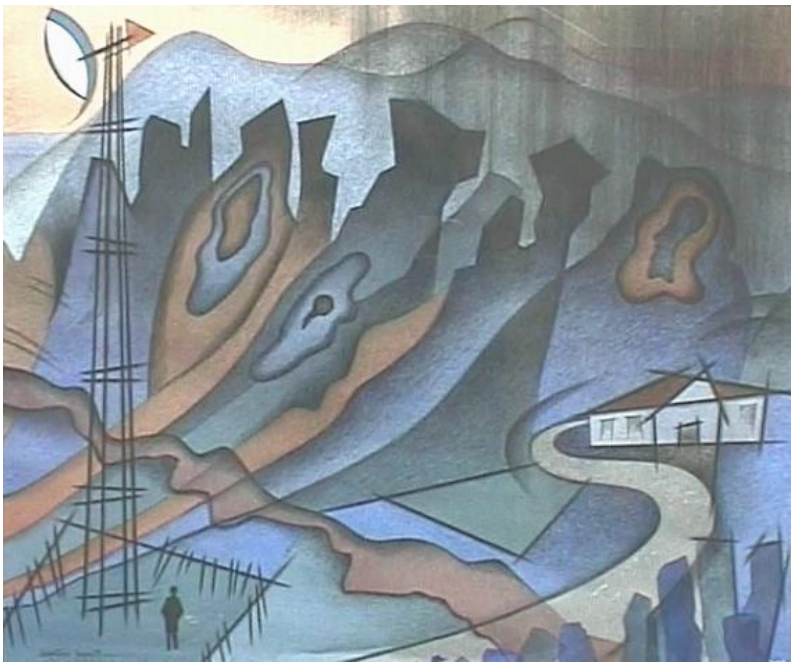
Up above Sandy Lane stood Spire Farm, a building with a kind of square embattled Peel Tower structure, quite a landmark among the hills. Whether its origin was defensive or not I have never known. Nearby was a row of three cottages, Higher Riley, almost certainly the oldest dwellings in the entire region. Higher up still was the quaintly named Blue Slates dwelling standing at a corner and very isolated. And then



Warmden Clough

across a wide wind-swept shoulder of moorland ran the old King's Highway - a ditch, a rocky groove, a ruined line running from north to south but still preserving the remnants of a mediaeval road.

Near here were the hillocks of an ancient dig. When I was a boy this spot was a 'gaming school' - an assemblage for gamblers and tricksters and breakers of the law. There was a man on the lookout who would suddenly appear on the horizon and as suddenly disappear again. Strange markings were to be found on walls and little coloured flags on hilltops. It was mysterious and even risky, but nothing ever happened to worry us.

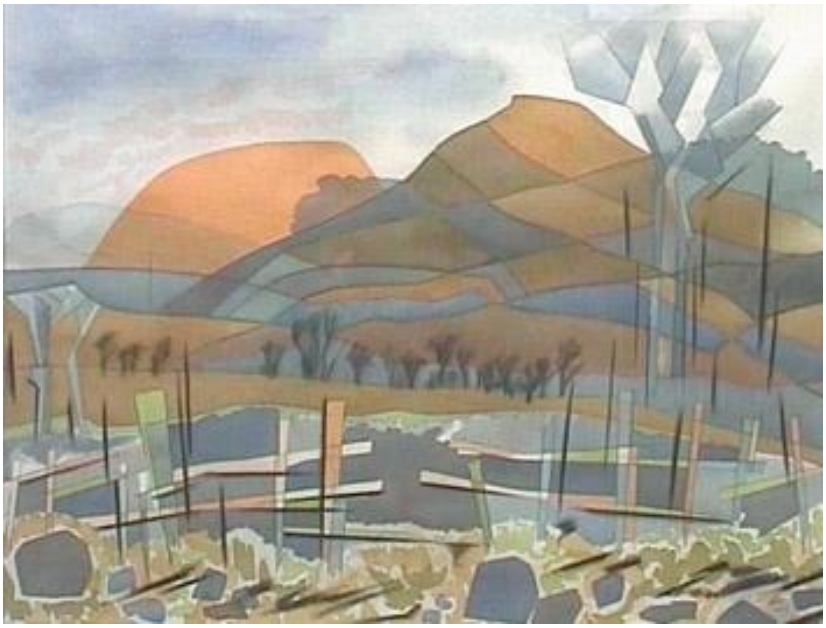


Hapton Scouts

Mary Hoyle's Well (towards Spire Farm)

Higher still, in the foothills of Hameldon itself, was Mary Hoyle's Well - a natural spring of running water, covered over with flagstones but still accessible. In olden times it was a place of pilgrimage on the first Sunday in May when Christians gathered here to confess their sins and celebrate a new life of repentance and forgiveness. But who was Mary Hoyle? There have been many attempts to explain the name but the simplest would seem to be that it is a corruption of the phrase 'Mary's Holy Well' or 'Holy Mary's Well'. From this point it was easy to jump over the style and cross the broad sweep of the hillside to reach the summit of Great Hameldon with its magnificent views of Pendle Hill and the Craven and Bowland Fells. To reach Accrington we could drop down the steep flank of Hameldon on to the broad ridge of Moleside overlooking the town. It was here during the 1922 general strike that we came with our father to dig for coal. Moleside had the remains of an open-cast coal or shale deposit and we came with our trucks and barrows, pulling and pushing them along the narrow country paths. At that time this was our only fuel.

Today the M65 runs across this countryside from Haslingden to Hapton and the sound of speeding traffic disturbs our contemplations.



Pendle Hill

School Days

Like Mother and Father before me I was sent at the age of five to the Swedenborgian day-school in Hargreaves Street. My parents and grandparents had been children there when the school was in its heyday, but I was there at its demise. It was a church-founded, church-sponsored, 'free' school for popular education, a product of early nineteenth century enlightenment and philanthropy, inspired by the wish to instil standards of spiritual truth and good behaviour in the minds of the young. The governors and most of the teachers were members of the Swedenborgian New Church. But by the end of the first World War it had ceased to exist as an educational institution. Increasingly the teaching and training of children was becoming the responsibility of the town and the state, and the problems of the upkeep of old buildings, amenities, equipment, and salaries were growing more and more difficult for private educationalists. So in 1918 the old familiar classrooms were transformed into a Young Men's War Memorial Institute, with billiard tables and dart boards, and we little children were dismissed to go to other schools. Similar catastrophes were happening throughout the entire land, and old style nonconformist education was being pressed out of existence. Was it a mistake? Looking back, I think it was unfortunate, but can the inevitable ever be called a mistake?

Polly (Mary Ellen) Smith

My teacher in the infant class at Hargreaves Street was Aunt Polly, but this did not make life any easier for me. She was not one to countenance any kind of family favouritism. A compelling and unforgettable class teacher, she stood before us high-collared, long-sleeved, leather-belted, and long-skirted, and talked to us as we sat wide-eyed, open mouthed, and spellbound. She made great use of her attractive, melodious voice, and also of what she called her 'signal' - a piece of turned wood against which a wooden peg was fastened with twisted string, so that with a flick of the thumb a sharp clicking sound was made: the signal. It was the age of obedience. The first rule of the school was, to obey. We stood up, sat down, marched, stood still, stopped talking, etc., etc., all to the 'click' of the signal. With our slate-pencils and slates we drew the curves and 'pot-hooks' which were the basic shapes of writing. And we learned to read in the alphabetic way, long before gestalt psychology brought in the 'look and learn' method of' word-pattern reading. I can remember quite clearly the whole class of little children standing in a wide circle, each one with an alphabet card containing a capital letter suspended from his neck. If he could recognize and say his letter, well and good, but if not, he was hit on the head with the card. It was good fun - basic education at its simplest and jolliest. I also remember a rocking horse in the corner of the room, a doll's house, and some building bricks.

When the school finally closed, and I was seven, I was accepted at the nearby Benjamin Hargreaves (St. Paul's) Junior school. This little stone-built school at the edge of the town stood on gently sloping land, giving a playground on two levels. It was bathed - or rather in my memory is bathed - in perpetual sunshine. We sat in class and could hear the bleating of sheep, the braying of a donkey, and the crowing of a cock. The classrooms were just partitions, and the teachers and children alike needed

to raise their voices in competition with their neighbours. The cloakroom had a double row of iron hooks and a single diminutive sink. The outside lavatory was repellent even to young boys - an open drain, two or three door-less cubicles housing high seats over deep holes, and flush-less. Yet eternal spring seemed to surround the school and the vigour and warmth of young life mellowed its imperfections.

The headmistress - Little Bell, as we called her - was a virago who used the school as a whipping-post. Though only slight she could be intensely fierce, and there was not a boy and hardly a girl at Benjamin Hargreaves who did not taste her cane. The teaching staff comprised four elderly ladies and one young apprentice. Mrs. Bale possessed a certain motherly roundness, Miss Spike was bespectacled and thorough-going, Miss Mastairs was a stiff and ritualistic priestess, while Miss Hearty of the reception class - in spite of her name - was gentle and self-effacing. Annie Pendleton, the apprentice, was about eighteen, and the others could have been no more than thirty five - far too old to teach, we thought. Little Bell would be barely forty. They were all devoted to their calling and therefore - as I now look back upon them - wonderfully successful teachers. I remember them as slow in their movements, harsh of voice, somewhat haughty in demeanour, and moving amongst the children as in a restrained and stately ballet. I have no recollection of being taught by Little Bell herself, though her cane left an impression on my mind more lasting than the white and red weals on my hands and legs. My most vivid picture of her is an extraordinary one. She did something quite astonishing before all of us: she summoned the whole school together and then stood on a table in front of us. She said, "The war is over at last. Peace has been declared. The soldiers will come home, perhaps your own fathers and older brothers. It is the armistice." Tears moistened her sallow cheeks. We sang a hymn and the song, 'Keep the home-fires burning'. She pointed through a window to the steep hill overlooking the town. "There, can you see the wood being piled up for the bonfire? It will be lit tonight, and you must go out and see it blazing so that you will always remember." We looked at her with innocent eyes as she was helped down from the table. Mother told me at home that Little Bell's only brother had been killed in action at Gallipoli. But that night we saw the beacon ablaze on the Coppice, sending up its flames to the low November clouds scurrying across the sky.

In my four-and-a-half years at the little church school I know that I imbibed much mental and spiritual sustenance. I have never forgotten what I learned there, and much of what I have discovered in later life has seemed to be simply a further growth from the soil of my early schooling. Why were those years so important? Was it the system, the excellence of the teaching, or the natural receptivity of the child mind? Probably all of these together. The curriculum was ordinary and typical. We were drilled to memorize much from the four books of Palgrave's Golden Treasury I remember the wooden boxes with leather straps which were opened on the classroom floor, housing Hawthorne's Wonder Book and Tanglewood Tales, copies with good black type on thick yellow paper and with Arthur Rackham's superb illustrations. I loved the little naked Pandora and even admired the writhing snakes in Medusa's hair. Tales from the Fairie Queen I found a trifle less inspiring, but greatly loved Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare and the glimpses they afforded of what seemed to me then to be the more devious side of life. Music was encouraged. We sang Handel and Purcell and many a good English ballad: The Lass of Richmond Hill, The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington - and also much, very much, "tonic-sol-fa". The tonic-sol-fa classes stand out in my mind as perfectly representative of the education of the 1920's: the chart hanging on the blackboard, the teacher's cane darting among the soh-la-te's, and the ladder of our scales rising up to the pointed rafters - singing as sweet and strong as on-

ly North country voices could sound.

The adorable one among the staff was the flaxen-haired Annie Pendleton, the 'baby class' assistant. It was believed that her home was in some remote suburb of Manchester, and it was whispered among us that she would go back to teach there one day. This is just what she did in fact, but not before she had befriended the entire school. A few days before the midsummer holidays she took me aside at playtime into her diminutive nursery. "Do you know what you want to be when you grow up?" "No," I faltered. "You have a great talent. Do you know the meaning of that?" "Yes," I said. "Promise me that you will become an artist - now, promise." Of course I promised, and I believe that I have never consciously broken that promise at any time in my life. Annie did not return after the midsummer break and all the boys in the school were heart broken for a whole day.

Some of the children in my class were sparsely clad and poorly shod. My schoolboy friends wore short trousers topped by a woollen jersey or jacket, often in holes. Long trousers were never seen on little boys in those days. Girls wore a knee-length frock or smock over a slip, and sometimes a pinafore. Boys and girls alike wore clogs, but there were some who did not have stockings or socks. Nor did all small schoolgirls wear knickers or drawers, as our rough and tumble games clearly showed. Hygiene was a new word - a favourite word on the teachers' lips, and the tang of Condy's Fluid (potassium permanganate) pervaded the classrooms. Ringworm was common, as were sore eyes and scabs. I do not think that one child completely escaped having nits in the hair, and in those pre-vitamin days there was plenty of evidence of malnutrition - bow legs and knock knees. The appearance of 'spots' was a cause of alarm and rightly so, for an outbreak of serious infection was a much greater possibility then than now. In my few years at Benjamin Hargreaves I can remember one smallpox case, three of scarlet fever, and a diphtheria epidemic in which some children died. We also held the belief - which I later discovered to be a common persuasion of the Pennine towns - that too much fresh air indoors was chilly, draughty, and unhealthily dangerous. There was also some evidence at school of rough treatment at home: the two small Kane sisters sometimes came in the mornings bearing the bruises and scars from their drunken father's belt. Yet in the main we flourished. I think of my schoolmates then as bonny, rosy-cheeked, and full of energy and fun. The boisterousness and rude vigour of our childhood was a part of our simple semi-countrified life.

There was little to disturb the inconsequentiality of my school-days except the appearance of the blue and pink cards on the teacher's table once or twice a year foreboding a visit by the doctor and a medical examination. Nothing daunted me as much as those cards containing the particulars of my name, address, age, sex, height, weight, number of teeth, and whether I had had measles, whooping-cough, chicken-pox, or anything else. Those who possessed my card knew me better than I knew myself. I squirmed with dread apprehension. It was the blood of the commoner congealing with fear - the fear of authority, officialdom, and prying eyes, of bureaucratic documentation and regimentation. When I saw those cards deposited there next to the ink bottle and chalk box I was plunged into instant misery. The Medical Officer of Health came in person to examine us - Dr.Richard Greyloop, fierce, eccentric, and downright, but a very dependable medical man. He was well known in the town. He wore a bowler hat over a Kaiser moustache, had clogs on his bare feet, and rode a horse - which he tethered to the school gate. "Show me your tongue - good! Chest, breathe in. Any spots? Where, let me see? What do you like to eat?" "Jelly," I answered promptly. "So do I," said Dr. Greyloop. "That else?" "Nothing else, only jelly," I said. "Put him down for

the Craven Heifer," he said to the nurse, passing on to the next child. The Craven Heifer was a newly-opened Ribble Valley children's convalescent and holiday home. My parents were interviewed and gave their consent. I went there for three weeks; and it is strange that I have no memory of that lovely old house standing by the river and surrounded by meadows and thickly wooded hills; but only of the taste of the creamy milk on our breakfast porridge and of mother's two Sunday afternoon visits by charabanc when she wore a hat from which a long pheasant's tail drooped gracefully over her shoulder.

I left Benjamin Hargreaves Primary School just before I was eleven to go - to Little Bell's amazement and apparent chagrin - first to the newly opened Central School and later to the Grammar School. I did not leave unequipped for progress and development: I had the Three-Rs, some poetry, some classics, art, music, and what I grew to value increasingly in future years, history taught in terms of the life we saw around us - Miss Spike's speciality and passion. Of all the schools in my life - and there have been many - I feel that I have become what I now am because of the wisdom, discipline, and positive zest which I encountered in those five years at Benjamin Hargreaves. There was far more to my education than the happiness, insouciance, and receptivity of childhood.

Art School

I left formal secondary education at fifteen and about a year later went to Art School. It was clear to my parents and even to me that I had a 'gift' in that direction. The Art School was on the top floor of the Grammar School - a hidden sanctum that I never knew existed. I was there for three years full time and the purpose of our training was to obtain a Lancashire County scholarship to the Royal College of Art in South Kensington. Looking back to that time - the breathing space between the two great wars - it seems to me that at the Art School I experienced a kind of dichotomy: I was taught very little yet I learned almost everything I needed to know. It was one of the happiest times of my life.

These were the late 'twenties and early 'thirties - a time of relief and renewal, a time to branch out and rebuild. When I think of those Art School days a flood of catchy tunes and happy-go-lucky words or lyrics fills and colours my memories.

Happy days are here again; the skies above are clear again;
And we'll sing a song of cheer again. Happy days ARE HERE AGAIN.

You must be wise, you must be gifted; to recognise a face that's lifted.

Yes, the whole world was in need of a face-lift and as we sat at our easels in class we hummed the songs that seemed to vibrate in the air all around us. There was a sense in which we almost exaggerated our bright and bouncy attitude to life.

When the red, red robin goes bob, bob, bobin' along - ALONG, etc.
Who-oooo - stole my heart away?
Who-oooo -makes me dream all day? Who? Who? - no one but YOU.

What did I learn about art at Art School?

How to sharpen a pencil.
How to hold a pencil when drawing on an upright surface.
How to look at a painting with half-closed eyes.
How to work out the laws of perspective.
How to 'feel' the difference between the recto and the verso of a sheet of paper.
How to 'throw' a pot on the wheel and how to make clay 'slip' to decorate it.
Drawing from the 'antique' and from 'life' (male model only).

The methods and the ends in view of the tuition we were given were very practical and completely in key with the surrounding social and ethical attitudes of the town and district. Not a word about the meaning of art. Not a mention of its historical importance and its influence upon civilization. Not a glimpse of the great masters and their productions. All these considerations were for possible future use and interest - elsewhere.

Yet I was happy and fulfilled and made friends - close friends and talented, both boys and girls. We went hiking at weekends and camping at holiday times. We rented a studio over a shop in the centre of the town. We sketched out of doors in the summer sun. We lazed and idled, and sometimes produced a bit of real genius. I felt that all this was 'me', and that if I should miss any of it I would miss everything. It was a wonderful feeling. I look back at it now and see its imperfections and shallowness and serious limitations. Nothing of it remains - except a glorious memory.

The Great Depression

Accrington

The late 1920s ushered in the Great Depression - the lack of daily work and therefore the lack of daily sustenance throughout large parts of our land. I remember the abject misery of it for many of the people I knew: the aimless wanderings in the streets, the queues for the pittance of the 'dole', the shame of being unemployed and idle and the feelings of helpless poverty that so many people had. Men queued for hours to get a day's employment. There were suicides. Many workers stayed indoors, unwilling to go out and meet others who were idle like themselves. Some did not allow themselves to be seen at church or in the Public Library or the Market Hall. It was a severe national malaise.

Some - to eke out a living - turned their homes into little shops, displaying a few goods for sale in the front-room window. It was something similar to this that caused our parents, Salley and Will, to move from our home in Midland Street and take over a grocers' shop in Spring Hill on the western side of the town. We were there for six years. Mother never settled happily in that part of the town but nevertheless showed herself to be an excellent business woman. We were successful shopkeepers. When it was time for us to move we returned to Barnfield, not to Midland Street but to nearby Cobham Road and were able to buy a newly built modern house. 'My only regret,' said Salley, 'is that mother (Harriet) didn't live long enough to come and see it.'

The Great Depression was over. There were tragedies and dangers of a far different kind looming ahead; there were also new adventures and rich rewards.

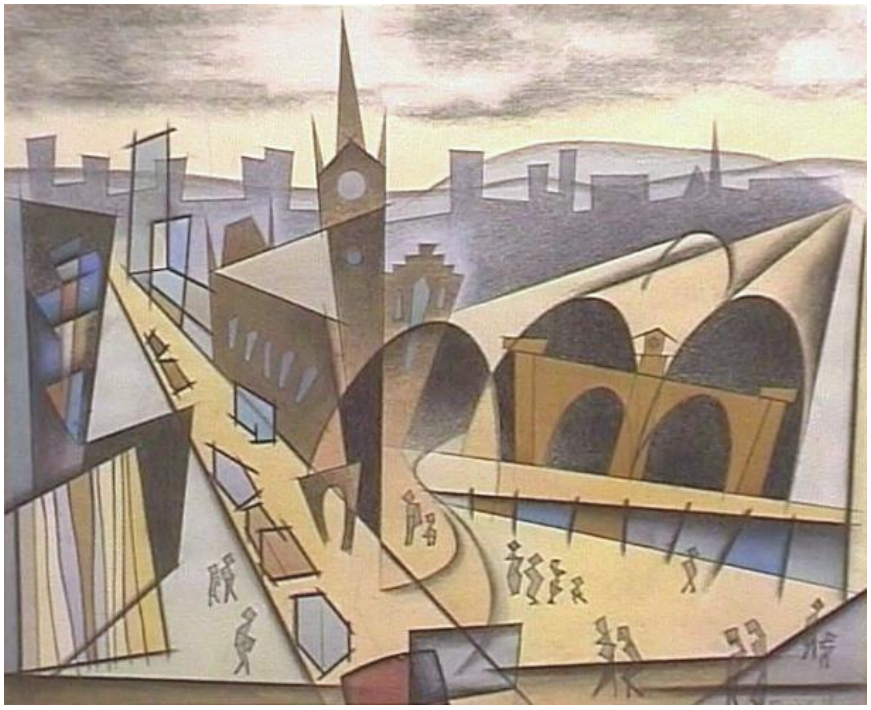
Changes

This final part allows me to say farewell to Accrington, the town of my childhood. It will be something of a jumble reflecting the real jumble of my life in those four or five years leading up to my departure. Grannie Smith died in 1931.

I left Art School. Why? There were two reasons. The Royal College of Art in South Kensington was having a bad press. Art students were being arrested for improper behaviour at the Chelsea Arts Ball and my parents, aunts and uncles looked down their noses with disfavour. The other reason was the more persuasive: I was offered a strong counter-attraction. The pastor of the Swedenborgian church suggested that I should apply for studentship at the New-Church College in London with a view to ordination into the ministry. Parents, aunts and uncles were all for it - a chance to be embraced. I had to pass an entrance examination in five subjects, including Latin - which I hadn't. So I spent two years working for that.

Music took the place of the visual arts; I became a 'cellist. I got to know Ruth Marsden and found that we had much in common. My brother Alan became an apprentice sheet metal worker for Henry Slack & Co., Grange Lane. Bessie, the youngest of my aunts, died in her early sixties. Other aunts and uncles moved to live at the seaside. We had the 'wireless'. Cousin Kathleen got married at the Abbey Street church - a very smart occasion. King George celebrated his Silver Jubilee. The Pot Fair was still held every year in the market-place. The lovely old meadow bordering Sandy Lane became the site of the new Technical College. Father retired.

Latin was no obstacle and I passed the entrance exam. In September 1935 I took the train to Preston and to London. Farewell, Accrington! Farewell, Acorn-town! The acorn becomes the oak-tree. Accrington was my acorn; London became my broad and sturdy oak.



Kings Cross, London

Chapter 2: COLLEGE DAYS

Aunt Daisy and my Bible

Aunt Daisy was a Swedenborgian and was filled with good intentions. She became the housekeeper/companion to an elderly widower named Nathaniel Jepson, who lived in a Victorian house at Copy Nook, at the top of Eanam Brow in Blackburn. My brother and I were sometimes invited to have tea at Copy Nook - something of an ordeal of good behaviour. This was in my art school days, before my admission as a student for the ministry at the New-Church College.

Aunt Daisy with her charges

Nathaniel Jepson had been the Secretary of the Blackburn Scientific and Literary Society, and had known many famous people. He was a bibliophile and had bought and collected many books. His library in a big upstairs room at Copy Nook was a matter of amazement to my brother and me - with cabinets and shelves from floor to ceiling, all filled to capacity with books. We speculated upon their number, and wondered if it was at all possible to read so many.

When it became known that I was to study for the ministry at the College in Woodford Green, Aunt Daisy had a bright idea. I would need books; Nathaniel Jepson had thousands. Would it not be right, and good and proper, for Nathaniel to transfer a few of his books to me? Aunt Daisy could be persuasive. 'You have far more than you will read,' she said to old Nathaniel, 'and my nephew has none. Let him have a few - say, fifty.' 'As long as I haven't to choose them he can have them,' said Nathaniel. 'You choose them.'

Aunt Daisy chose. A minister needs the Bible; so she chose a Bible. A minister should lead his people on a good path of life; so she chose two editions of Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress. A minister might become a missionary in foreign parts; so she chose six or seven travel books. A minister would need a Dictionary, a Book of Etiquette, Shakespeare - even Dickens; suitable novels, such as The Vicar of Wakefield (Oliver Goldsmith) and Scenes of Clerical Life (George Eliot). I remember the day when the large box of books stood on the doorstep, and how we carried them all up to our tiny bedroom bookcase.

Nathaniel Jepson died. Aunt Daisy retired. I became a student at the New-Church College and took a few of the books with me. The fundamental position of the Word of God was stressed in lectures, and Biblical History was regarded as important. We were told of the Bible in English, of Tyndale and Coverdale, and of the Bishops' Bible, leading up to the publication of the Authorized, or King James, Version in 1611. I ran up to my study and pulled out old Nathaniel's Bible. It was the Authorized Bible - a first edition - but with the date of 1613. I showed the Bible to the College Principal, the Rev. Eric Sutton, who advised me to 'let an expert see it.'

Nathaniel Jepsom

It was the Easter vacation, and I was back in the North of England. I had brought the Bible with me, with the intention of letting an expert see it. In Deansgate, Manchester, stands a red-brick Gothic building housing one of the finest libraries of Europe - the John Rylands Library. I walked into the library with a brown paper parcel under my arm, and asked to see someone who could advise me about the Bible. I was taken upstairs and asked to wait. A man came in - small in stature, slim, elderly, with whitish grey hair surrounding a wrinkled face with bright eyes. He took hold of my Bible lovingly and turned its pages. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is a first edition Authorized English Version, a second printing of 1613, published by Robert Barker, and identical with the 1611 volume.' It was a rare and therefore important volume, he said, and asked how I had obtained it. I told him what I knew. 'You must value it,' he said, 'for what it is. Keep it, cherish it, and read it. Love it, and honour it for its place in English history. Don't sell it, but hold it as precious in itself.' We said goodbye. I was taken downstairs. 'Who was he?' I asked my guide. 'Oh, he's the boss, That was Dr. Guppy,' was the answer.

So, that was the famous Dr. Henry Guppy himself - a scholar of world-wide reputation and a leading authority on books and libraries. This great man had willingly and charmingly come to speak to a young student who had brought a book wrapped in a brown paper parcel. I felt greatly honoured; the wand of scholarship had touch my cheek and courtesy had smiled upon me.

And how typical of Manchester, I thought, as I walked back along Deansgate with my treasure in my hand. And back at College after the Easter break I reported my visit. 'You actually spoke to Dr. Guppy?' exclaimed the Principal. I could see that he was impressed.

I still have the Bible. It stands on the top shelf in my art nouveau bookcase, and from time to time I take it down and turn its pages. But there is a further thing about this Bible: in the space following the Introduction there is a handwritten inscription, which I now quote in full:

> "My dear father departed this life, 25th August 1704. The Lord grant I may be a follower of him and others of God's faithful servants, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Elizabeth Lockyer."

This old Bible had once belonged to a certain Elizabeth Lockyer: but who was she? We do not know, but we can make a guess. Obviously, she loved her Bible and she loved and honoured her father. In 1704 - (Swedenborg was sixteen and Queen Anne was on the throne of England) - few women were literate, but this Elizabeth certainly was. I picture her as a 'daughter of the manse,' whose father was the Rector, Anglican Priest, or Vicar in Church Stretton, Ledbury, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, or some other quaint English parish - all of which of course is sheer surmise. How Elizabeth's Bible found its way into old Nathaniel Jepson's library at Copy Nook, Blackburn, is quite unknown. Books travel in mysterious ways.

Today we have many modern versions of the Bible in English: the Good News Bible, the Jerusalem Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the New International Bible, the New King James Bible, the Contemporary English Version, and others. I can see the reasons for such proliferation; it is a matter of exactitude and modern expression. But when all is said and done, the Bible that I love is the Authorized Version that first appeared in 1611 and is with us still. I do not mind the 'thee's and thou's.' "He that keepeth Israel' says more to me than 'He that keeps it.' Biblical scholarship is a wonderful and important activity, but too many versions of anything can be inhibiting.

I sometimes think in this way about our New-Church Writings. Is it really necessary for example to publish three separate contemporary translations of Sweden,borg's work on Conjugial Love? Aunt Daisy, who was a reasonably average Swedenborgian, would hardly have thought so.

He Stole My Painting

Latin is a lovely language but does not always seem to be so. It was a glorious summer's afternoon. I was in my study mulling over Swedenborg's De Caelo — Heaven and Hell —for a viva voce on the following day. It was the chapter on Heavenly Joy and Happiness. I looked through the window. What could be more heavenly than the light on the copper beech seen against the pale colours of distant Epping Forest? In a flash l knew what to do. l seized my drawing board and a box of paints - and was off.

There is a spot on the common — abhorred by golfers and the keepers of small children - known as the Frog Pond. It is weedy and wet, and encircled by bushes with spikes. This is where I went that afternoon, and where - for two joyous hours - I sat and painted. Then I started out to return to college.

In the distance a figure was approaching — a familiar figure because of its stride, its walking-stick, and its pipe. It was the Principal, the Latin task-master - like me, out to enjoy the benefactions of the summer's day. We met face to face, and stood still.

"l thought you were doing your Latin this afternoon."

"I was."

"Are you ready for your viva tomorrow?"

"No," I said.

"What is that?" asked the Principal, pointing to my drawing-board.

"A painting."

"Let me see it," he said, holding out his hand.

I passed it over. He gazed at it carefully for a long time, holding it at arms' length and then close to.

"It is very important that you should do your Latin and do it thoroughly." He continued to gaze at the painting. "You are not at the New-Church College to learn how to draw and paint, but to learn how to become a reliable and understanding minister. We'll meet at the viva tomorrow." He held out the painting ... and paused. "I will take that," he said; and tucking it under his arm, walked on.

I was furious. The golden afternoon suddenly went sullen. He had taken my painting. l strode across the common feeling an outrage. I uttered oaths and maledictions under my breath. Of course, he was right, but to confiscate my painting, to steal it! It was theft! I found myself at the college gate, and went in to tea.

I had a wonderfully happy time at college. I was ordained, and served throughout the war as a minister in Preston. At the end of 1945 I moved to London, and lived and worked there until my retirement. I found myself as Tutor in Sacred Languages at the New-Church College - teaching Latin, but still learning from it: docendo discimus. My old Principal — whom I loved, in spite of the fact that he had once stolen my painting! — died in 1951. His widow became a member of my congregation, and organist at the church.

One day she came to church and gave me a parcel - a thin, cardboardy sort of parcel. I opened it, and there - after twenty-five years - was my painting of the Frog Pond, as fresh and bright as the summer's day when I did lt.

"He confiscated it," l told her, "because l skipped my Latin." "No." she said — "not because you skipped your Latin but because he loved it. He had a great affection for it. He used to take it out of its wrapper and look at it, and say, 'What a clever painting! What happy days they were!"

And so, you see, sometimes our fury is misdirected. We never know what lies at the heart of any wilful action; we can so easily misjudge and misapply. E.A.S. was a philosopher; and what a philosophical conundrum his action poses! He stole my painting. Is it any less a theft because he stole it from a love of it?

The Heavenly Marriage, Top Floor, Gower Street

'The Heavenly Marriage of love-and-wisdom is everywhere,' said the Principal of the New-Church College in one of his lectures. 'Look for it and you will find it. It is in God and in everything of creation. It is in heaven; it is in the Word of God; it is in the church; and it is in all life throughout the world.' Alan Grange and I, two students, found the Heavenly Marriage on the top floor of University College in Gower Street, London, WC1.

We were psychology students, and the Psychology Department was under the rafters on the third floor of University College. Professor Flugel was in charge of Orectic Psychology - i.e., the psychology of the will, the emotions, and love. Professor Burt handled Cognitive Psychology - i.e., the thinking, rational, and deductive side of things. 'A perfect example of the Heavenly Marriage,' said Alan Grange to me. 'Look for it and you will find it.'

Psychology was a 'new' study in those days, and the great name of Freud was all the rage. Our psychology group, as I remember it, was a strange mixture. There were seven or eight Indian students all bent on visual tests. There was a Roman Catholic nun, very pretty and shy, robed in full habit, with rosary. There were Alan and I, Swedenborgians. And there was Renee Bafico, a girl from Aberystwyth who was studying the transmission of hereditary influences, and who kept us all in order. We were encouraged to experiment and we became each other's guinea pigs. Renee regaled us with cups of coffee and probed into our ancestry, and the Indians used us for experiments on 'binocular rivalry'. Apparently our vision depends upon a kind of rivalry between the two eyes - a rhythm or pulsation of seeing, first of one eye and then of the other. 'Of course,' said Alan, 'we see both from our love and from our wisdom. It's an effect of the Heavenly Marriage.'

Here at University College we took part in what was probably the first fully organized IQ test in the country. It was compulsory for all psychology students. We sat in a large bare room on the top floor, sixty or seventy of us, each at a desk of his own. It was a two-day exercise, in which we ticked our answers at top speed to questions on sheaves and sheaves of paper supplied. It was a thoroughgoing and exhausting business altogether. There were two kinds of questions - those reflecting the intellectual side of life, facts and figures, worldly knowledge, and erudition; and those reflecting our likes and dislikes, our choices and sympathies, our intentions and hopes. Here - as I said to Alan later - was another illustration of the Heavenly Marriage, of the presence of love-and-wisdom in all real things and situations. A fortnight after the test we went to get our results. 'You're OK,' said the officer to me 'with 139.' Alan was two points ahead of me, I think.

As a kind of reward for taking part in the IQ test we were invited to a lecture to be given by Anna Freud on 'Child Psychology and Psycho-Analysis.' All this was about eighteen months before the outbreak of World War Two, and Sigmund Freud had sent his daughter ahead of him to London to avoid persecution. I have forgotten the details of the lecture, except that it was given in halting English to a large audience. But one thing pleased us immensely - that Anna seemed to be echoing something of the concept of the Heavenly Marriage; not of course in so many words, but in meaningful outline. Children need both education and love, they need both affection and knowledge, she stressed. One without the other simply wouldn't do. When the lecture was over we went to the front of the hall to thank Anna Freud for her talk.
'We appreciated it,' said Alan. Anna smiled graciously and thanked us for our words.

Back at the New-Church College in Woodford Green we chatted to our Principal. We told him that we had greatly enjoyed the course on Cognitive and Orectic Psychology, and that we had actually spoken to Anna Freud. He seemed impressed. 'We must read some Freud,' we said. 'Yes,' he said; 'Freud is very clever, very Germanic, very perceptive and very original. Read him as much as you like.' Then a twinkle came into his eye, and he said, 'If you read Freud thoroughly you'll find many wonderful things; at least I hope you will. but you will not find anything that is not in Swedenborg. It is all there, in Swedenborg. Look for it and you will find it'.

Freud and Daughter

Amedjo

His name was Humphrey Theophilus Kofi Amedjo and he came from the Gold Coast - from Accra, I think. Before he came the Principal of the College spoke to us in the common-room. "We are to have a black student; you must treat him with respect. You can refer to him as black or better still as African. Do not call him a native or a nigger." Soon after that he came. We were a Theological College and Kofi was training for the ministry.

“Every African has three names,” he told us — “an English name, a classical name, and an African name. Humphrey is my English name,” he beamed at us. “Theophilus is my classical name, and Kofi my African name.” He grinned widely. “Kofi means born on Friday.”

He settled in, and shared a college study with Jitters. He was provided with a bed -sit at the back of Paddington Station. He came into college every day - fifteen miles on the Underground. It was a mistake. But we liked him - and he liked us.

He invited us to Paddington. “I will make you an African meal.” We went—up the stairs to his garret and gas-ring. It was mutton, stewed with potatoes in a paprika sauce.

“Good,” we declared, sitting on the edge of his bed.

“But in Africa we use yams,” - and he pointed his spoon at our dishes, “On Saturday I will introduce you to my fiancée.”

“Jitters!” exclaimed Jitters.

Saturday came. Malinda was black, neat, pretty, and too shy to speak. “We are pleased to meet you.” we said politely. Kofi was wearing his new rug-like yachting-coat, camel-hair with wide pointed lapels — “to keep me warm in the English winter,” he explained.

One day he brought a dead rabbit to college, pinned to a board – “for dissection purposes,” he said, “biology.” He stood it on the mantelpiece. A rabbitty smell began to creep through the college.

“You will need to get rid of that rabbit,” suggested Jitters.

“How?" asked Kofi.

"Bury it or burn it." He decided to burn it — on the smouldering coke stove in the cellar. The smell was intolerable, and lasted for days.

“I would like you to meet my fiancée,” said Kofi.

"We have already done so," said Ted, our senior student.

“No, I mean my second fiancée.” said Kofi. She came - Betsy, a lively coloured girl, round-faced and chatty.

It was Kofi’s turn to conduct our morning prayers. It was mid-winter and the chapel was cold. Kofi put on a black cassock, over which he then donned his thick yachting-coat with its lapels turned up above his head. Over this he draped his white surplice. The effect was both impressive and comic. As he walked down the aisle with becoming dignity our faces lit up with approval and pleasure.

“Let me now introduce you to my new fiancée,” said Kofi. It was clearly time to intervene.

“Do you mean Betsy?” we asked.

“No, this one is Claire, an English girl.”

“But Kofi, you can’t be engaged to three girls at once!”
"You can in Africa — two, three — five or six; even wives.”
"This isn’t Africa. It can’t happen here.”
"No problem for me. I’m an African.”
"If you’re going to be a minister of the church, it simply can't happen. Think of the girls; think of the teaching of the church.”

It was decided by the college authorities that “Mr. Amedjo be placed in lodgings near the college.” Why not at the college, like all of us? No, that would not be acceptable. Again, it was a mistake.

He was housed in a room in Whitehall Road, just off the High Road to Epping - kept by a person named Mrs. Love. He attended classes at the college and joined in our fun and games. He gave me the nickname of Father D.D.

But the stalking began, and the pattern.

Mrs. Love complained. Mr. Amedjo was interfering with her tenants. He was writing notes to her young lady lodgers, against their wishes. He was entering their compartment on train journeys to London.

The pattern was intriguing. Kofi appeared after breakfast, beaming and benign. At 10.30 Mrs. Love drove her Austin Seven up to the college door. There was a meeting in the Principal’s room. Mrs. Love drove off and the Principal called for Kofi. Several minutes later the Principal and Kofi emerged — grey, glaring, and muttering.
“He doesn’t understand me. He cannot see my point of view."
In the afternoon Kofi departed.

This was the daily pattern, with tantalizing variations. The Principal took the rest of us into his confidence. "These notes that he writes — I ask him why he writes them. ‘To improve my English,’ he says. I’m beginning to think that he’s not very suitable as a student.”

Kofi left Mrs. Love's and found accommodation in a sleazy club and guest house nearby. This was the biggest mistake of all. There was talk of drink and gambling and debts. There was talk of dismissal from college and return to Africa.
“Father D.D., what shall l do? I don’t want to go back.”
I said I thought it was all for the best
“But what will you do, Kofi, when you get back home?”
“Dry-cleaning," he answered. "There is no dry-cleaning in Accra, so that will be my chance.”

The day came for Kofi's departure. A plan had been arranged. He would be escorted to the train at Euston, and seen on to the ship at Liverpool by the Rev. George Colborne-Kitching. We lined-up in the sun just outside the college door. Kofi - very trim in his yachting coat - shook hands with the Principal and his wife, and then with each student in order of seniority, even patting Brownie, the college dog.

Joby, Jitters, and I provided the guard. We travelled by bus to Euston.
"Wait for me here; I have an errand," said Kofi.
"I will come with you," said Jitters.
"No need at all," said K.
"But I will come," said J.
"I am going to the seed-merchant's," said K.
"So am I," said J. They went.

Joby and I had a coffee. With five minutes to spare, they returned - black as thunder. We saw Kofi on to the Liverpool train. His last words, as the train began to move, were – "Jitters, you will become a very bad priest indeed."

Did he reach Accra? Did he plant his seeds? Did he begin his dry-cleaning business?

Six weeks after his departure, I was called to the telephone.
" Father D.D.?"
"Kofi! Where are you?"
"Tottenham Court Road Corner House. Can you come here for tea?"
I went.
Kofi was on his way to Glasgow to become a medical student.
"I couldn't stand the Gold Coast. I got the next ship back to London."

Nearly two years later — a month or two before the beginning of World War Two — the Principal came into the common room with a letter in his hand.
"Who would like to have Mr. Amedjo back as a student at the college?"
I raised my hand. It was a letter from Paris, from the Medical Faculty at the Sorbonne, where Kofi was a student.

"Will you have me back at the college? I am willing to forego this important and lucrative profession, if only you will take me back in London."

Poor Kofi! Poor Humphrey Theophilus K! He must have been desperately up against it to write such a letter.

Well, seven years after the war was over — in the 'fifties, when I was living in Upper Holloway, London — the Swedenborg Society rang to say that Dr. Amedio had called in, and would like to meet me if possible. I went down to Bloomsbury but he was not there. He had left no address or telephone number. I never saw him again.

Years later I was told by a West African acquaintance that Dr. Amedjo had been a much respected gynaecologist in his own country, and had died in a mental hospital in Accra.

First Ministry

Just before the Second World War I was on holiday in France. In the Champs-Elysees posters were displayed with the words - in English - WAR IS IMMINENT. I thought it best to get back to England as quickly as possible, and was able to catch the midnight ferry from Dieppe to Newhaven. The ship was so packed with people rushing home, as I was, that I thought it might sink with its weight in the middle of the Channel.

The Third of September 1939 is memorable for two reasons. Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany that morning; and during that morning I was inducted into my first ministerial pastorate at the New Church in Preston. We were all very tense. As soon as I began my sermon a lady on the left of the church fainted, and was carried out. Just before I finished the sermon a lady on the right of the church fainted, and was carried out. I wondered what kind of a sermon I was preaching, because - as I say - we were all very tense.

I lived in Preston throughout the war - six and a half years. I used to say that I could find my way in Preston blindfolded, because I knew nothing but the blackout. These were hard days and restless nights. Winston Churchill issued an edict: ministers of religion should stay with their congregations; they should not volunteer to become chaplains in the Forces, but should stay at home with their people, and care for the elderly, the children, the sick, and the bereaved, and seek to preserve sound moral values in society.

Care for the bereaved! Two of our church boys went into the army and we never saw them again. I remember the anguish of ministering to the bereaved at that time. But we kept our church open as something sound and vital in our lives - all the more vital to us because of the surrounding uncertainties and dangers.

Preston Searchlights

Manchester survives the Blitz

Preston remained unscathed, but Liverpool and Manchester were very badly damaged by bombs. I remember going to a meeting in John Dalton Street, Manchester, on the morning after the blitz. Everywhere, I walked on broken slippery glass. Great craters yawned left and right. Masonry hung loose and crooked, and telegraph poles slanted across the pavements, their wires trailing everywhere. There was a church - the Unitarian Church in Cross Street, I think - that was a ball of fire, red hot and glowing. I shall never forget it.

Going home to Preston that evening in the train I sat in the compartment with a young man of about my age. He was going to Preston too, and told me that he was the Jewish Rabbi at the synagogue there. I told him that I was the Swedenborgian minister in that town. We chatted easily. 'Let's keep in touch,' he said as we parted on Preston station. We became friends, and visited each other's homes. His name was Raphael Levi, and he became a fine and even famous precentor in one of the top London synagogues.

It is a matter of amazement to me that throughout the whole period of the war the annual meetings of the General Conference of the New Church were held in various places, including twice in Manchester and twice in London.

When the war was over I received an invitation to become the minister to the Camden Road Society, Holloway, North London, which - against nearly everyone's advice - I accepted. I have never regretted that decision.

(extracted from "Rosebay Willowherb—an article for the Millennium" originally published in the New Church magazine 'Lifeline')

A SWEDENBORGIAN IN LONDON

We came to live in London on the 26th November 1945. It was a long snakey journey by train from Preston to Euston. As we walked along the platform I saw that my wife Ruth was limping slightly. She denied it, but it was real. The two young boys were a handful; we were tired and downcast. We were stepping into the unknown.

Camden Town was wrapped in mist. We stood beside a church waiting for the bus to take us to Holloway, and I looked at the shops and houses near the crossing. Everything was grey and black, but it was London. I remember looking at the roof-tops and seeing chimneys and wires and gutters. But it was London. We had come to stay and there could be no turning back. The 29 bus bore us off into the northern suburbs.

39 Cheverton Road, Upper Holloway, was at the elbow joint of a mid-Victorian terrace of houses. Three steps up to the front door, a long passage, and three steps down to the kitchen - and a gulp of hot tea. The boys were soon asleep; we followed. It was a night for forgetting. In the morning we planned out our new life, beginning with unpacking the suitcases. There were two shadowy rooms on the ground-floor, three bedrooms, and a last-century bathroom over the kitchen. The back-garden sloped upwards to the base of two huge trees - pear trees, we discovered later; and the front bedroom window overlooked an orphanage. We sat near the gas-fire and waited for our furniture to arrive.

We had come to London because I had been invited to become the minister and pastor of the Camden Road Swedenborgian Church. I had accepted their invitation against the advice of friends and the advice of 'the powers that be.' We were aware that we had taken a risk. But I had been at college in London before the war and had a

Camden Town

strong desire to return. Now we were returning to a war-battered, broken-down city, full of cracks and crumbling walls and unsightly and dangerous gaps.

One evening, coming home from a church meeting, there was a thick fog and the bus would go no further. I groped my way along Junction Road and was joined by a dark-skinned African girl who begged to walk beside me. 'I'm lost,' she said. 'Where do you live?' I asked. 'St. John's Way near the Archway Station,' she said. We walked in what seemed to be total blackness, and parted by the station entrance. This kind of thing was typical of those gloomy conditions of post-war London life at that time.

Upper Holloway is on the fringe of the London Borough of Islington. The Great North Road slices its western extremities, with the famous Archway spanning its traffic. We pushed the go-chair to the Archway and paused to sniff the fog, and went on into Highgate Hill. Old shops and brown brick cottages, pressing up against the green slopes of Waterlow Park. London was beginning to emerge and I was longing to discover it. Soon after this I rushed home one afternoon to announce the good news: Hampstead Heath is not far away; trees, woods, paths, hilly slopes, extended views over the London basin, Jack Straw's, the Spaniard's. Upper Holloway was not so bad after all! One could even see the spire of the Camden Road Swedenborgain Church on a clear day.

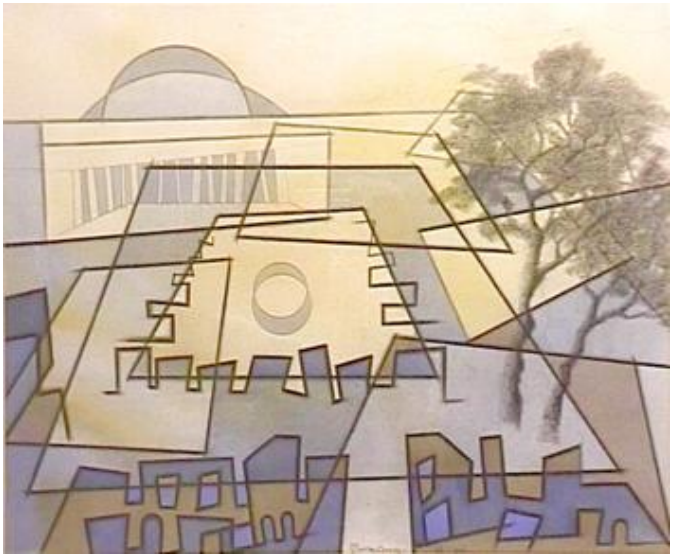
Hampstead Heath

This was the church to which I had come as minister. It was at the junction of Camden Road and Parkhurst Road, at a spot known as the Athenaeum, exactly opposite to the entrance to Holloway Prison. The war had left its scars. I discovered I had a congregation of about ten elderly ladies sitting together in their pre-war clothes, five eccentric men, and a Sunday School of a hundred children recently back home from their 'evacuation'. The Victorian gothic church itself was large, cold, and gloomy, in need of a coat of paint. It had a useless gallery and a troublesome steeple. Why had we come, against the advice of our friends, from the snug security of Preston to this North London horror? Moreover, it was a leasehold property and had the Sword of Damacles hanging over it. Let me say now as I look back that I have never regretted my stubborn decision to come. The Camden Road church - perhaps because of its dreadful blemishes and oddities - was a challenge with a touch of magic.

Holloway was a colourful district, and anything could happen at almost any time. On our way to Sunday School we'd see a prison van, a get-away, and chasing policemen and policewomen. In the Athenaeum rooms next door to the church Sir Donald Woolfit the actor kept his stage props and scenery, and passing by, we'd see palm trees on the pavement, gondolas and Venetian bridges leaning against the walls, and Prospero's ship in the forecourt - all ready to be transported by van to the Old Bedford Theatre in Camden High Street. Our Sunday School children, who came from the nearby Hillmarton, Hartham, and Hungerford Roads, simply poured in to us week after week. This became an almost full-time job in itself.

About a month after our arrival in London I received an invitation to join the Library and Documents Committee of the General Conference of the New Church. I made my way to Hart Street, Bloomsbury, and was taken down into a basement room. Here I found the secretary of that committee, Mrs. Annie Friend, standing near the top of a high ladder and replacing books on their shelves. This room, the so-called Gardiner Room, had been the war-time air raid-shelter for the staff at Swedenborg House throughout the war, and there was still a strut in the centre of the room to support the ceiling. My immediate job apparently was to empty the tea chests in which the books had been stored and hand the books, one by one, to Mrs. Friend on her ladder - keeping up a long and lively conversation all the time, filled with innuendoes and grumbles. This was my first London committee, consisting of two members - Annie Friend and myself.

Soon after this I became a member of the Council of the Swedenborg Society too. The war was over and the early part of 1946 was a kind of nodal point in the Society's history. Chairman of Council was Fred Chadwick, and Dr. Freda Griffith became the new Secretary. Others I remember at that time were Colley Pryke and his son Martin, from Colchester; Eldin Acton, Dan Chapman, and Eustace Mongredien; there were others that I do not remember exactly. New-Church Press occupied the shop at No.20 Hart Street with Bernard Rowe in charge, and there was strong opposition to this because of the untidiness of the Premises. The Press was given notice and was moved into a basement room, the members of the Board of the Press voicing their resentment. I suspected a little jiggery-pokery by the Swedenborg Society and was scolded by the Chairman for 'speaking out of shop'. I am sorry now that I did not



Bloomsbury

St. James

speak out more clearly at that time. But I remained a member of the Council on which I later spent many happy and productive years. The Swedenborg Society has proved to be one the mainsprings of my ministry and life in London.

Back home in Upper Holloway our two boys were thriving and the two great pear trees in the back garden were in flower. Ruth's limp was more pronounced and I persuaded her to see a doctor. We went together to the nearest one - let us call him Dr. Theakston, in Hornsey Lane next door to St. Aloysius School. Quite definitely he said she had incipient rheumatoid arthritis. He told us that he was a specialist in rheumatic diseases and advised what he smilingly called an impossibility - complete rest. 'You are a mother of two young boys and so I cannot ask it. If I could have my way I would order complete rest in bed for six months, but it cannot be. I'll give you some medication, but rest is what you need.' From that time onwards Ruth walked with difficulty. She had many different kinds of treatment, all slightly effective but nothing to suggest a cure. She just coped with her problem in a wonderful way.

My church work was taking up most of my time. I bought a bike, and as spring advanced into summer visited my people in their homes in Tufnell Park, Caledonian Road, and Kentish Town - many of them elderly and long-suffering, living in top-floor and basement flats built in late Victorian times, and most of them mild, patient, willing, welcoming, and hard-up. The Sunday School too was growing fast, and I felt I had a kind of rapport with those cheeky London kids in my class with their ready answers and their basic pliant good humour.

Just before leaving Preston I had written a story for the BBC with teenage listeners in mind. The story had been accepted. I remember

The Vale of Health

going into a newsagent's in Ferme Park Road to buy a copy of The Radio Times, and seeing my name in print. The story was based on the life of Johnny Appleseed and was the first of many.

One day, crossing the Archway on our way to Highgate Village, we saw the Dome of St. Paul's in the basin of London City in the distance. Ever since our arrival it had been hidden by the London smog, but Easter had revealed it. It became a kind of talisman for us - a sign that our coming had been right and that our stay would be assured.

Leslie and Thelma Woolford occupied a small rented flat in Hartham Road, Holloway, just a few steps away from the Camden Road church. They were newly married, with a baby girl. When Leslie discovered that I played the 'cello he pressed for the formation of a trio - himself as pianist and someone known to him, Herman Grunewald, as violinist. Grunewald was well-experienced and had played with the Vienna Philharmonic; he had lived in Montmartre and had personally known Modigliani - so he said. We found that he played the violin with style and a certain flamboyance.

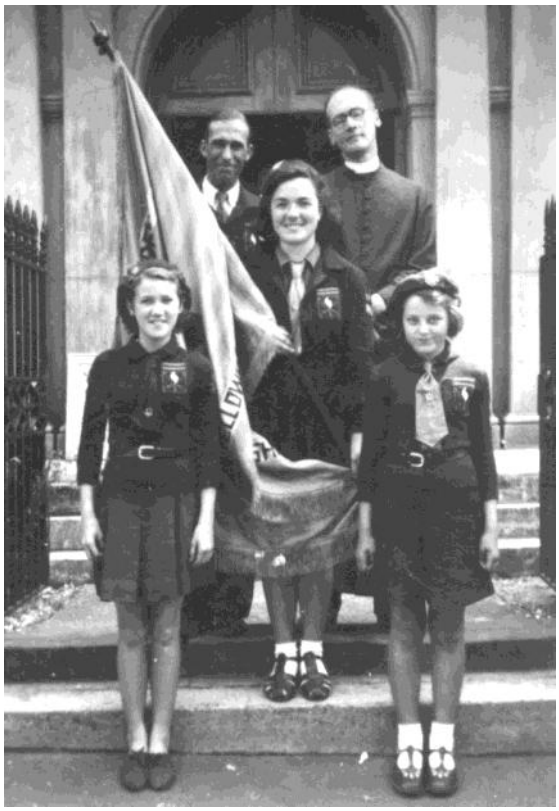
We met fortnightly either at Hartham Road or Cheverton Road, never at Grunewald's place near Swiss Cottage because his wife suffered from severe manic-depression, as he explained. We concentrated upon Beethoven and made a point of rehearsing and refining the Archduke Trio. Grunewald asked if he might bring his wife one day and we agreed. She came, but sat crouched over the fire all evening with not a word to say. Grunewald told us that she was to have electric shock treatment - 'inhuman', he called it. A month or two later she came again - stylish, elegant, talkative, and communicative, very much in command of the situation and able to converse knowledgeably on the subtleties of Beethoven. Astonishing!

Grunewald went down with the 'flu and I went to visit him in Fairfax Road. The violinist himself came to answer the doorbell and took me upstairs into his large bare sitting-room, bereft of furniture but containing hundreds of oil-paintings stacked against the walls, glowing with colour and filled with energy and life. 'Whose?' I asked. 'My daughter painted them,' he said. Grunewald insisted that I should have a cup of tea; it was the worst infusion of luke-warm water I ever had, sweetened with packet sugar picked up in some cafe. Poor Grunewald! Yet his daughter was a genius.

Mid-European hopelessness can sometimes produce flowers. Soon after this the Woolfords moved to Wolverstone near Ipswich and our trio ceased to exist. I kept in touch with Leslie and Thelma, but Grunewald has gone for ever.

Sometime fairly early in our new London life I was invited to become Tutor in Hebrew at the New-Church College in Woodford Green, Essex, on the fringe of Epping Forest and about ten miles along the North Circular Road in an easterly direction. Of course, I accepted, chiefly for two reasons: my love of Hebrew as the language of the Old Testament, and my admiration for the Principal of the College, Eric Sutton. I travelled to the College by bus every Tuesday in term time. Teaching Hebrew was followed at a later time by Latin and then New Testament Greek, and later still by lectures drawn from Swedenborg's works and by Sermon Preparation and Delivery. I loved the College, housed in a small Victorian mansion surrounded by an almost perfect garden.

My pastoral cares at Camden Road were bucking up. The older girls and boys formed their own group and we had some great times. The morning and evening church services drolled on. One of the older men who sat in his place in church quite often was Thurlow Halfpenny, who lived nearby in Stock Orchard Crescent. He had been a 'cellist in the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Sir Henry Wood and knew many musicians, as he told me. He had also been a dentist. 'Yes,' he said, 'I pulled all John Baptist's teeth.' My face displayed my ignorance. 'What do you mean, pulling John the Baptist's teeth?' I asked crossly. 'Yes,' he said; 'Barbirolli's. That's what we called him; that's his real name.' (The conductor Sir John Barbirolli had been christened Giovanni Battista.) Thurlow Halfpenny offered to take me to meet some of his former musical friends and we went by bus to a building near Oxford Circus. I remember meeting members of the Croxton family - Harold, I think, a pianist, and Janet: was she an oboist? All this was a long time ago. Thurlow's wife was an elocutionist - something of a Grande Dame, who could be persuaded perhaps to recite at one of our important church social gatherings every other year or so. Thurlow's son Tony became a BBC actor and was a member of the Islington Borough Council, and Coral, Thurlow's daughter, was a teacher and trainer of troupe dancing for children in pantomime. Coral's little girl was in our Sunday School.



Summer led us on into autumn. The bomb-sites to be found all over London were thick with rosebay willow-herb (chamaenerion angustifolium) with its bright purple fronds. We took our two young children onto Hampstead Heath - a joy for us and for them Autumn lingers on the Heath, with its colours and shadows and skies, and always with new paths to discover. The great copper beech at the end of the terrace near Kenwood House was still standing - soon to

topple over. Winter came, but we still braved the Heath covered with snow and with absolutely no view of the Dome of St. Paul's. The magnolia on the slope before the House was showing its buds, with the promise of things to come.

The telephone rang. Would I go at once to the Great Ormond Street hospital to baptize a baby seriously ill and with little chance of life? I remember the journey that freezing morning with opaque windows in the bus and all lights on. I was taken upstairs by a staff nurse and introduced to the young father, pale and apologetic. He was a French-Mauritian youth and knew my name. The baby's mother was wheeled in, looking weak and bewildered. In a small private room stood an incubator. 'The baby boy is very poorly,' said the nurse. 'He's had three transfusions but to no effect. He will have one more today; but the parents think it wise to have him christened.' She then showed me how to lift the lid of the incubator and sprinkle the water. The baby was still and dark-skinned. I named him Pierre - with a silent prayer in my heart that he would live. The father thanked me; the mother could not speak but her eyes shone with gratitude. I said goodbye.

The next day the 'phone rang again. It was the father, delirious with joy. The child had had his fourth transfusion and it had taken. Pierre was breathing well and looking better. 'It was the baptism; it made all the difference.' He almost screamed his gratitude into the telephone. I too was elated. The winter sun shone past the curtains and into our front sitting-room. The baptism had made all the difference. But - was it the baptism? Or was it the transfsion? Or neither? Or both? The ways of Providence are amazing, I thought; at times like magic. But being a humble Swedenborgian I opted for the last of my choices - Or both? Yes, both; yes, both - I kept on repeating. Swedenborg was never the enemy of science, I concluded. Science and religion go hand in hand to achieve what is good. The one needs the other.

Svenne was a journalist working in London for a Stockholm newspaper. He was a typical Nordic type - tall and rugged, dolichocephalic, and fair-haired. He began to take an interest in the Swedenborg Society and to chum up with some of its younger members. At his invitation I went to a Santa Lucia celebration in mid-December at the Swedish Church in Harcourt Street, off Old Marylebone Road. Two things only remain in my memory - a stately procession of girls with glowing candles on their fair heads, and a tripping and swooping dance tune that I still strum out for my own amusement. Svenne went back to Stockholm and we saw him no more. But why - oh, why - have we not cultivated contacts such as these for the sake of friendship itself and for the sake of Swedenborg's name?

My story-writing for the BBC continued, and Johnny Appleseed was followed by other stories of a similar kind: Pastor Oberlin, Helen Keller, The Pudsey Shillings, Eleanor Roosevelt, and so on, most of them having a slight Swedenborgian connection. The Helen Keller story had a surprising result.

The Council of the Swedenborg Society used to meet once a month, sitting round a large table in the Wynter Room on the top floor of the premises in Hart Street. At one of these meetings it was reported that Helen Keller would be in London shortly and would welcome a visit. Who would go? Sydney Goldsack, a member of the Council and an up-and-coming executive with the firm of William Collins the publishers, agreed to go. He was handsome, sporty, debonair, and attractive - just right! I mentioned my story and that it was to be broadcast in two weeks' time. Then you must go too, said the Council. Sydney said that he would pick me up at Hart Street by taxi on the day of our visit.

It was a Thursday morning. We raced through the West End and along Piccadilli to the Hyde Park Hotel. An attendant showed us up to Miss Keller's suite. She was expecting us, and her companion Miss Thompson opened the door. Helen was charming; she was smiling, gracious, and even talkative, with a slightly metallic intonatiion in her voice. Her responses were immediate, and it was almost impossible to realize that she was completely sightless and deaf and that our entire conversation was a matter of the transmission of words through Miss Thompson by means of gentle finger-tapping. We chatted easily, about the Swedenborg Society and its work and about Helen's world-wide activities on behalf of the blind and the deaf, and especially the training of children. Helen was on her way to Africa. I asked her whether she enjoyed flying. Very much, she said. 'Of course, I can't look through the window and see what's below but I can feel the movements of the plane, rising and falling.' I told her about the story of her life that I had written for the BBC. 'We must listen to it, Polly,' she said - Helen being quite deaf! Sydney and I took our leave, and I walked with him as far as his office door in St. James Street.

About two weeks later the story was broadcast. At home we sat and listened to it as it was read beautifully by a professional story-teller. At the end of the story the presenter added, 'And now we have a surprise for you. Miss Keller is in London on her way to Africa, but before she goes she wishes to send a message to you all.' Helen Keller sent her greetings to all young people in our island, urging them to be loyal to what is good and true and to be compassionate and helpful, especially to those who are handicapped or deprived; and to hope and work for peace and friendliness throughout the world. It was a simple message, true and straight, from a great and adventurous person.

Ruth Duckworth with Julian, Simon and Paul

Rosebay Willowherb

Poor war-battered London! I remember its fogs and its smogs, its pre-war taxis crawling along the streets and its horse-drawn carts and lorries - petrol being scarce and strictly rationed in those days. I remember the winter freeze-ups and the fish-shop queues. I went everywhere by bike in those days - to Swedenborg House in Bloomsbury, to the West End via Charing Cross Road and Piccadilly, to Hampstead Heath, to visit my people in their homes in Tufnell Park, Crouch End and Muswell Hill, Highbury and Caledonian Road, Belsize Park and Kentish Town.

On the bomb sites - the many, many bomb sites all over London - I noticed that weeds were beginning to grow. As spring passed into summer I saw that the weeds were getting greener and taller, even shoulder high. As summer passed into autumn, the tall green fronds broke out into a glorious purple florescence, bringing colour and life into the picture. This was Rosebay Willow-herb, or to give it its Latin name - Chamaenerion angustifolium, sometimes called Fireweed. Its presence on the bomb sites all over greater London brought joy to our hearts. The textbook gives its habitat as 'abundant on waste ground, railway banks, heaths and clearings in woods, also on mountain slopes.' To which I can certainly add 'bomb sites.' The weed has an affinity for scorched earth or burnt soil, hence the name Fireweed. As I passed by on my bike, the Willow-herb seemed to embody a message and to speak to me in the language of a parable.

The Soho Madonna

There is always the possibility of revival and resurrection. Divine Providence, working through the wonders of the natural world, is over all things that happen. Wars and catastrophes come and go; great cities like London, Manchester, Liverpool and Bristol are shaken to their roots; the grime and greed of selfishness and ruthlessness are visible before our eyes. Bomb sites abound, scarring the scene. But then comes the Rosebay Willow-herb - the weed, the shoot, the glorious flowers bringing a transformation to the picture. It seems to me at the time of this millennium that the life of religion in our country is at a low ebb, and that this is causing concern to many well-meaning people - even within the New Church to which we belong. We must strive and pray for better things. We must not despair, but look around with intelligent and understanding eyes. We can survive and we can grow. It is the parable of the willow-herb. The organized New Church has a place in all this. The millennium is a time of renaissance, if only we can see it. Divine Providence is over all things, bringing good from evil, and truth from error. Look for the signs.

I have seen London grow from its war-battered shell into the fine and beautiful city of today. I see Manchester in the same way - trim and clean in its millennial garb. There is much to see that is colourful and bright: go for it, and rejoice.

(extract from "Rosebay Willowherb—an article for the Millennium" originally published in 'Lifeline' the New Church magazine)

The Four-square City