

# Arc of Truth

by Martin Nelson

## *Some reflections on Life*

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## A Life Being Lived

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*  
Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

The morning sun rises, bathing the bedroom in a warm soft light. Slowly the night departs and the daylight arrives. She opens her eyes and looks at the shadows dancing on the ceiling. In the distance she can hear the cocks crowing and the crows squawking. Sensing her breathing, she feels a pulse tapping lightly in her head. Another day, another chance - she is alive. She lies still awash in the moment of being. No one else is near. She is completely alone. She moves one arm then the other, one leg and the other. They respond painlessly. She has passed through another night and the new day waits.

The sound of her phone suddenly shakes her. She reaches out and picks it up. She recognises the familiar voice,  
‘Hello Gran, I love you.’ It’s her eight-year old grandson Andrew going off to school. They have a special rapport. She lies back on the bed feeling a warmth in her heart for him so young, so alive.

For her the tensions of youth have gone. She no longer dreads the melancholy that she used to wake with, nor the fearful fluttering of her heart facing the new day not knowing what she would have to deal with. Would the world find out at last that she was a fraud, frightened and unprepared for life?

All that was behind her now as she faces the day ahead. She remembers so many friends who were no longer. A close school friend with whom she shared a study at school and later a flat had died last year. Why her and not me she ponders? So many questions remain to taunt her to challenge her peace.

Last night as she looked up at a star-lit sky with the full moon casting shadows on the trees she marvelled at the universe and wondered. She could do no more than wonder. So felt so many issues remained unanswered. She thought that with age would come a greater understanding of who she was, why she was alive and how she came to be, but if anything she seemed to comprehend less as her knowledge increased.

Brought up in a believing family she soon saw the fallacy of faith. It was too easy to appeal to an invisible power, to put one's hopes in an omnipotent supremacy. But if not that what was left? Was there no other purpose than to live and die and become a memory, and not even this was a guarantee.

But now, the day stretches ahead providing another opportunity to live and love.

Where had the time gone?

She was a child waiting impatiently for the school bus to come, why did it take so long? Suddenly she was a teenager late for school due to oversleeping from a late night out. It seemed only a minute later and she was an adolescent with her gawky legs growing out of her skirt forever unable to finish her homework on time. Then college, on her own away from home, in her own place learning to cook and wash her smalls, shy and uncertain watching the other girls cope so well. Waiting for her results and celebrating with her parents. She was a quarter way through her life already.

Now she was attending her first interview, scared and unprepared while the other hopefuls looked so mature and confident. She blushed, stammered and stuttered through the questions and failed. She watched enviously as the successful ones entered the committee room to be told they had the job. She slunk away.

Try, try, try again they said and one day you will be selected and it happened. Her first job, a house doctor after five years in medical school. Then followed a steep learning curve with many slips on the way. She now knew that nothing would come easy. Life was going to be a battle to stay on top, there were too many like her wanting to take her place. Her first operation as a young surgeon was fixed in her memory. The surgeon had completed the procedure

and turned to her to sew up, handing her the instrument, she froze. Sister whispered,

‘It’s the same as sewing up a tear in your stocking.’

Later, that time when she was the surgeon about to operate on a young girl whose familiar face she saw momentarily before the gowns covered it up. For an instant she was unable to function, acutely aware of what she was about to do.

Then that special moment, the one she would always remember, when he asked her to dance. She had seen him many times but their eyes had never met so she had almost given him up. It wasn’t to be she had decided. But then it happened and time stood still. It was the only moment in her life when the clock stopped. But it didn’t last long and once again the years rushed by. Her second child a boy was born and then he was leaving home.

Her love suddenly died and she was alone. He was too young but she comforted herself with the knowledge that she had loved, and this was a priceless gift. The next twenty years, passed like a flash and she was retiring. Her children had departed, building their own lives. But a whole new world was opening up. The opportunity to do those things she hadn’t had time to do before.

She thought back to her teens when she loved drawing and painting. Somehow that had got lost on the way so at the age of sixty, she returned to college and found herself studying with fellow students the same age as her children; learning to draw and paint all over again, something she had always wanted to do. Not satisfied with doing she began to teach and having retained the confusion of learning, she was able to understand and share the difficulties of her students.

At the weekends when the weather was fine, she would sit on the lawn in her garden and look around for something to draw. Inevitably her eyes were attracted to the lowly dandelion standing aloof and defiant. It was a plant she had always admired, as it seemed to her to epitomise the life cycle, the journey from life to death and back to life. For most gardeners it was a weed, a tiresome blot on the landscape but to her it was a survivor. She studied it carefully and learned about its life cycle. Its single tenacious root from which it drew sustenance that could search out the smallest break in a rock or in the soil to anchor itself and to resist removal.

As the spring approached each plant produced a series of yellow petals forming what looked like a flower head but which on close examination was a densely packed bunch of florets. Within weeks it slowly faded and out of the now dormant flower arose the fluffy seed head that so fascinated her, that spherical miracle of design containing the maximum number of seeds, each having a set of bristles to help them soar on the wind.

She knew all these details by heart as she drew. Over the summer she had produced a series of charcoal drawings depicting all the stages in the dandelion’s life cycle. In trying to express her wonder of it, she made her

drawings of the seed heads as tall as herself so that they could adorn the whole side of a room.

She had learned a vital lesson about getting older, to take each day at a time, not to plan too far ahead and to leave plenty of slack. Many of her friends had routines, which they followed religiously but that didn't work for her. She needed freedom, the spontaneity of discovery; time to respond to the spur of the moment and to let serendipity guide her.

She was acutely aware that time was running out, knowing there was still so much to do, so many questions which would remain unanswered. She knew that she would never find life's purpose beyond the fact of living, loving and giving. Now she felt tired and needed to rest. She lay down, closed her eyes and the world was no more.

# The Sun

It is almost midday as I leave the shaded coolness of the café and walk into the sunlight, its brightness and heat suddenly strike me and for a moment I am both blinded and dazed by it. The covering on my head protects me otherwise the UVL would quickly burn my thin scalp. I look down and see I am walking in my shadow, as the sun is now almost overhead, we are within 400 kilometers (250 miles) of the equator.

Sunlight is essential for all life on earth. It is the source of all energy even that stored in coal and oil as these were originally trees and when they died they became nature's great carbon storehouse. The sun reacts with chlorophyll the green pigment in leaves and plants to produce starch, one of the stable forms of energy used by the body. It is this equation that captures the sun and tames it. Without vegetation, the world as we know couldn't exist.

Most of us are unaware of the power and danger of sunlight and apart from the obvious heat it emits, it comprises dangerous rays that while invisible can be very damaging to the body. White sunlight is composed of a rainbow of colours. Those we cannot see beyond the blue end, include UVA, UVB and UVC. UBA and UVB cause sunburn whereas UVC is almost completely absorbed by the earth's atmosphere.

Now some facts, the sun is the largest object in our galaxy. It is composed of 70% hydrogen and 30% Hydrogen. Slowly over time, the Hydrogen is being converted into Helium with the release of energy-sunlight. The sun is 4.5 billion years old. After another 5 billion years it will have converted all the Hydrogen into Helium and its energy will run out. The result will be the end of all life on earth.

The ancient Egyptians had a clear understanding of creation and the heavenly bodies. They believed that Ra was the sun god and the creator of ancient Egypt. He was usually shown as wearing the head of a hawk with a fiery disk depicting the sun as his crown. Ra had two children, the sun and the air. Their children became the earth and the stars. Horus their grandson cried one day and humans were made from his tears.

The Greeks had their own beliefs about the sun. They worshipped Helios, a clean-shaven handsome man in purple robes with a golden aureole or corona. At night he would return from the West to the East by floating on a golden cup in a stream called Ocean- the mythical river, which encircles the earth.

For the Romans it was Apollo one of the more important Gods, the God of the sun. He was thought to have an association with healing including the conquering of the plague. Legend says that he had a great victory against Python the earth Serpent.

Apollo was shown to be correct because in the 1920's, scientist identified vitamin D, a hormone in the skin an essential for the growth of healthy bone. A deficiency in childhood leads to rickets and in adults, osteomalacia. Studies confirmed the essential role of sunshine in producing it in the skin. In Rickets the growing ends of the bones, the gristle especially in the long bones fails to convert to bone resulting in stunting of growth and deformity leading to permanent disability. Exposure to 30 minutes of sunlight in fair skinned people will produce the daily requirement. In dark skinned people it requires a slightly longer exposure.

In recent year there has been a growing belief that sunshine has an important psychological effect also. The acronym SAD (Seasonal affective Disorder) had been coined to describe individuals who become depressed during long dark winters. It is said that the incidence of suicide increases in northern countries during the winter when the sun may not appear for up to six months. The use of a light box, exposing the individual to artificial ultraviolet light can be therapeutic.

What of the future? Man has already begun his flight from the earth when he first stepped onto the moon. By the time, this earth is doomed; Man will be safely settled on another Earth somewhere in the galaxy.

## **A Family from Australia**

The smell of fresh toast wafting into his bedroom at the B&B in North Yorkshire prompted him to go down to breakfast early. It was the third time he had stayed there. Helen a friendly but rather sad lady ran the place. She and her late husband, he had died 6 years ago, had planned to run it in their retirement but fate overtook them and she found herself alone. After a difficult few years she was now back on her feet and had a thriving business serving the many budding pilots who came to practice on the nearby aerodrome.

On his first visit, they sat in her gazebo drinking wine late into the night, remembering their past and the sadness that they shared. He seemed to recall that he got quite drunk and they cuddled a bit consoling each other in their own thoughts. He stayed with her over the next few days and they talked about many things, in particular the future and how she would cope alone. She welcomed the opportunity of speaking to a sympathetic ear about her concerns. On his second visit, she was being helped by a local man who did not stay in the house but came early in the morning to help her with the breakfast and other chores. By the third visit, they had become an item,

because towards the end of his visit, they went with some friends down to London to the flower show together, leaving him to take care of the house.

On entering the breakfast room, he noticed four carefully laid out tables, set in the corners of the room. Sitting at one of them was a family from Australia just beginning to settle down to eat. The man was tall and dark haired with a full beard. His partner was fair haired with a soft Australian twang. His sister whom he later learned was an opera singer in London accompanied them. What struck him immediately about her was her size. Although still young she was grossly overweight, although she appeared to be unconcerned about it by the size of her breakfast order of bacon, eggs, sausage and mushrooms together with two rounds of well-buttered toast.

You may be surprised how he remembered what she was eating. For some time now he has been troubled by the assertion that fat people eat no more than thin people so he had begun a personal study of the eating habits of people he met in his travels. He knew this was not a controlled trial but it is the best he could do and had resulted in his conviction that, yes! fat people eat more than thin people and what is more, faster. They gobble their food as if they are racing for a train. Because he was not comfortable in the company of fat people, a small voice kept saying, how could they have allowed it to happen and why aren't they doing anything about it, he ended up going quiet or addressing his remarks to the other people present. He was sure the fat person must be aware of this and he have tried very hard to control it but unsuccessfully.

So it was not until the following day when another guest arrived at breakfast who spoke at length to her, that he learned a bit more about her. She lived in London and trained at the Royal College of Music. She sang and taught at the Royal Opera House. Once talking about Opera and singing, she became passionate and excited describing in great detail some of her students and how she disciplined them. She gave a fascinating account of the profession she loved.

He introduced himself and immediately fell into conversation. Australians are like Americans. They speak easily and comfortably to strangers often sharing their most intimate details within a short while of being introduced. He learned that Arnold and his partner Gail were in Rufforth, this small village in North Yorkshire to learn flying at the aerodrome nearby. His sister had met them there to spend a few days together before parting for London the following day. Arnold was having lessons on a Gyrocopter, a sort of flying two seater motorbike with a rotor blade above and a motor with a propeller behind. It is part way between a helicopter with a powered blade above and a Microlyte with a wing above. Gail was also learning to fly one.

They asked him what he was doing there. He explained that ne was in Yorkshire to spend a week carving with his sculpture friend Gerrit, a talented stone carver originally from Holland who he had lived in his present home, a Yorkshire farm cottage for over 15 years. They had met when he joined the Yorkshire Sculptor's Group from Yorkshire.

By chance Arnold who trained as a geologist wanted to take up Sculpture when he had time and was keen to visit the studio. He said he had always been fascinated by stone. As a small boy he described how he had walked in the hills near his home picking up and examining the many stones that lay on the paths, well trodden by hikers. He became aware of their many different appearances, roughness and weight and began to read up about them. Soon he had a wide knowledge and could easily distinguish marble from quartz and sandstone from limestone. He gained good results at school and went onto University where he studied Geology. He would often fantasize as he stood holding a rock, wondering about the many generations who had gone that way before him. To him stone was history, the story of the world. Arnold was interested in meeting Gerrit and I offered to take him to Gerrit's studio. As a sort of thank you Arnold made a deal with me, that he would arrange a lesson for me in exchange for the visit to my friend's sculpture studio.

There are three centres where it is possible to train to pilot Gyrocopters in the UK: Preston, York and Oxford. The centre which he was visiting was in York just outside Rufforth, a stones throw from our B&B. Having had his lesson, Arnold arranged mine which occurred after he and Gail had returned to Australia, I sent him an Email describing the experience.

On the appointed day, he arrived early and parked behind a porta cabin and then went to find Phil, the boss of the flying company. He was in the hanger, an enormous structure in which were housed a large number of planes, including fixed wing planes, helicopters, Microlytes and Gyrocopters. Some were privately owned and were garaged in the hanger. Several of the Gyrocopters were owned by the company and were available for training. The Gyrocopters are fascinating little vehicles; they are brightly coloured and the red ones look like wasps. He was to fly in a black one owned by the trainer, a young man who had only recently joined the company from Wales. He was in his mid-40s, stockily built and full of enthusiasm for his job. He spent a great deal of time reassuring me about the safety of the vehicle, and in particular that, should the motor fail, the plane would simply slowly come to the ground lowered by the revolving rotor above.

Despite his reassurances, He still had some reservations. His natural feeling was that because he could not see air, it did not exist and was therefore not able to support him as for example might water. But his brain conquered his heart and feeling both excited and slightly nervous, he changed into a flying suit, put on a helmet and gloves and stepped gingerly into the cockpit in front, the one usually occupied by the pilot. Because both pilot and trainer share the same controls, it is possible for the trainee to sit in front, and for the aeroplane to be flown by the trainer behind, the only connection being by means of the intercom.

He had seen Arnold earlier in the week doing the usual checks before flying. So he was happy to get in without seeing them repeated. There were a number of things which he as the (pilot) had to do and that included starting the engine and switching on the lights. Initially, the rear engine would turn the



rotors but as soon as the rotocopter was airborne, the rotors would turn on their own by the force of the wind created by the engine. With all systems go, they taxied down the runway, gathered speed, and very soon were airborne. It was so smooth that only by looking down, was he aware that they had left the ground. Slowly we gained height and turned to the left, leaving the runway far below. By now, he felt quite comfortable, until the cockpit veered to the left, and he felt as if he could have fallen out. He grabbed the side of the cockpit and steadied himself. We soon righted, and he relaxed.

He was now able to look about and see the extraordinary view of the countryside below. In front of him for as far as he could see was the bedspread pattern of fields, varying in size and shape and in different colours of green – everywhere was green ranging from a bluish green to a yellowish green. Small groups of houses were widely separated by fields, and he was reminded of that song by Burl Ives, 'little boxes little boxes, we all live in little boxes.' In the distance he could see the York Minster with its enormous tower thrusting upward, together with the ancient wall. In the far distance he could almost see the sea at Scarborough.

Above, the sky was a deep blue becoming paler towards the horizon. Wisps of clouds, high up above us were moving slowly. Because of the helmet he was unable to hear the engine and his only contact was with his instructor behind. They were travelling at about 70 to 80 miles an hour into a frontal wind of about 30 miles an hour. By slowing their speed, it seemed that they were stationary above the ground, a not unpleasant feeling. The instructor suggested that he take the steering stick, but he was still quite nervous and didn't feel that he could move it gently enough not to cause the vehicle to veer and lose height. They climbed slowly and then began to take a slow turn to the right.

Once again, he had that feeling that he was going to fall out towards the right, and as there were low sides to the cockpit. he held onto the steering column with his knees. His instructor told him to look to the opposite direction and this helped to avoid that feeling. gradually he became more confident and watched a combine harvester, working a large field of corn. To their right he could see the river Aire winding slowly towards the coast. The A64, a four lane dual carriageway could be seen clearly with vehicles travelling in both directions. He saw the turnoff to York and the main road continuing on to Scarborough. They came upon a large tip in which trucks were working, dumping rubbish. He was feeling more confident now and relaxing more. In fact, he was beginning to enjoy it and could see the appeal to the many men and women who enjoyed this hobby.

His half an hour was soon up and they slowly made their way back to the runway. Coming into the wind they descended slowly, such that he didn't feel the wheels touched down and then they coasted into the hanger and stopped. He got out rather shakily and was pleased to have his feet on firm ground. It was a wonderful and memorable trip, giving him an insight into a simple flying machine and the breath-taking view from the skies, of the land, fields and houses.

# Angola has over a million active land mines.

*Angola has over a million active landmines buried in its countryside. Each year thousands of men, women and children are killed or maimed by this unseen menace euphemistically called 'the Perfect Soldier.'*

John arrived home late that evening. In the past he had often lingered at the factory watching the conveyor belt carrying the finished mines. After being checked they were neatly packed into boxes. But now he saw them in a very different light. No longer were they beautifully machined objects, not since the conversation he had had with his son.

They were on their way to school in the morning when his son asked him how a mine worked.

'It's very simple,' he had said without realising that he was being led into a trap.

'The explosive is packed into a small metal container with a pressure sensitive detonator and buried under the surface of the earth so that it is not visible. Any pressure applied to it would detonate it.'

'Including me walking home from school,' Oliver said innocently

'Yes! Of course, it would explode and main or kill you.'

And then he stopped. He could hardly breath when he realised what he had said. For a moment he had a vision of his son, his beloved son whom he loved so much lying maimed in the road, both legs blown off and bleeding profusely. Oliver saw his Dad go pale.

'What is it, are you alright Dad?'

For a moment he didn't hear what his son had said and then,

'I had a vision of you being maimed by a mine that I had made.'

Oliver saw the pain in his Dad's face and despite his youth leaned over and hugged him. He saw tears begin to appear in his Dad's face and he himself began to cry. They were crying for all the innocent men, women and children who had been maimed by these appalling weapons.

John recalled how he got the job. He had left school at 16 with three O levels, not a very good performance. But he didn't give up and enrolled in a technical college where he studied engineering and came out with a good diploma. He saw an advert for the Army tank corps and 6 months later was one of a team maintaining the latest Chieftain tanks where he became proficient in maintaining the tracks, a very specialised job. It was during this time that he first learned about mines and was fascinated by the ingenious mechanism within them. Leaving the Army, he was unemployed for 12 months before his present job came up. Meanwhile he was married with a baby on the way. At no time had he thought much about the weapon he was producing that is until his son asked the question

Now he was a troubled man. He went into work feeling guilty. He became morose and impatient with his workmates and once in the canteen, had raised the question of why they were making a weapon which was so destructive to innocent people. At first he was ridiculed but gradually as he brought the subject up again and again, he was slowly winning more and more supporters who like him began to question what they were doing.

He had started to sleep badly, waking up several times during the night and then laying awake unable to free his thoughts from the terrible images he had seen on the TV and in the papers that now plagued him. He began to realise that he had in truth always been ashamed of his job and wondered how he could have done it for so long. Of course he needed work to pay the bills but at what price. One night when he was staring at the ceiling trying desperately to sleep, he felt a movement by his side and realised his wife was awake.

'What is it dear?' She asked touching his arm.

'It's nothing, I just feel restless and can't sleep.'

'Would it help if I relaxed you?'

He moved away from her. 'No, I'll be all right.'

Later that night, she heard him sighing.

'There is something, isn't there? Tell me please.' She whispered.

'It's me job; I can't do it anymore. I'm so ashamed of what I do.'

'I don't understand, it's a job, a job like any other,' she said.

'No! It isn't,' he shouted, sitting up, 'It is not like any other job, I help to make things which maim and kill people, innocent men, women and children.'

'I know but if you didn't others would do it?' she whispered trying to calm him.

'That's what everyone always says but it's no argument. I have to do what's right and what I am doing is wrong, very wrong. I've talked about it with some of the men at work and they agree. We are meeting the management next week to see what can be done to change what we do.'

'Be careful Jack; go gently people don't like to be shouted at,' she said.

The days passed slowly until the meeting. It was to be held in the manager's office at the top of the building. By the time Jack had arrived, there were already about ten men waiting outside to go in. He was greeted with applause and he realised that they expected him to lead the conversation. The door opened and Mr. Thompson the manager appeared and beckoned them in. Short and stocky he had the air of someone who always got what he wanted.

They entered a long room with an extended table down the middle with seats for about twenty people.

'Please sit down,' said Mr Thompson pointing to the chairs. 'I am expecting the deputy manager and the accountant,' he said.

The two men dressed in dark suits arrived a few minutes later and sat down at the top end of the table next to him forming a phalanx of authority.

'Jack, I believe you are the spokesman so please tell us what your grievance is?'

Jack began,

'May I stand?' he said, getting to his feet. 'It's like this; the men and me don't want to make mines any more. We've talked about it and feel that a mine is an invention of the devil. It's a weapon that continues to kill and maim long after the battle has finished. We don't want to be associated with these terrible mutilators any more.' Jack looked around for support.

'Hear, hear, we agree,' came from several of the men. Mr Thompson surprised turned to his colleagues for support.

'What do you think about this?'

The deputy Manager, a tall burly man spoke, thumping his hand on the table.

'This is all nonsense; you men come to work here on your own free will. No one forces you. You knew what we made here and until this man,' pointing to Jack, 'put these ideas into your heads, you were very happy to work here. So what has changed?'

'We have,' came a voice from the back. Jimmy stepped forward, a small slight man with greying hair and a thin moustache.

'Jack, here,' nodding in the direction of Jack, 'has shown us what we should have seen all along, and now that we have, there is no going back.' The rest of the men banged the table in agreement.

'Where do we go from here, then?' demanded Mr Thompson to the whole assembly, putting his hands up in despair.

'We want to change what we do, we don't want to make mines any more,' came a chorus of voices.

Suddenly a suggestion came from Johnny, a young fair-haired man who had just entered the room so had only heard the last few comments.

'Please may I speak,' he began. 'My brother, has designed a metal detector which he thinks could be modified to become a mine detector,' he said. 'It's remote controlled by means of a computer. He has made a trial one which he could demonstrate to you?'

There was a pause in the conversation and then Mr Thompson spoke,

'Look men, this has come as a surprise, the management needs to think about it. We will meet and let you know what we decide.' There was a general murmur of agreement although Jack mumbled to himself, it won't matter what they say I am not going bac

Mr Thompson met with his Deputy Manager, Accountant and secretary Mary the following day. They had all been giving the matter a lot of thought. After all if they got it wrong they were all out of work.

Mr. Thompson began, pompously,

'We are meeting today to decide the future of this company.'

'We all know that!' interrupted the Deputy, banging the table, 'lets get on with it?'

'Alright Deputy, what do you want to say

'I think it is a storm in a teacup. Jack is the ring leader if he hadn't started it we wouldn't be in this mess.'

'What are you suggesting?'

The deputy turned to Mary,

'Don't record what I am about to say.' He paused, 'I reckon we could get Jack on our side, offer him a golden handshake to get another job and it would all be over.'

Mr. Thompson sat pensively rubbing his chin,

'I don't think he will agree and in any case I think he's right.'

'What do you mean, right?'

Mr Thompson stood up and turned to the Deputy.

'I'll spell it out to you. Making mines is wrong, morally wrong and Jack has had the courage to stand up and say so and I agree with him.'

'What! You've gone mad, we've been making mines for years.'

'I know, I know to my shame, but it's got to stop and now.'

'Well, if that's your attitude, I am leaving,' said the deputy and he stormed out of the room.

'Good, he's been a pain in the neck for years, I'm glad he's gone,' said Mr. Thompson under his breath.

Then turning to the Accountant, he said,

'I need some figures. What is our financial situation and our outstanding orders? Let me have the details as soon as possible and Mary, schedule a meeting with the men for tomorrow afternoon.'

'Yes Sir,' Mary nodded.

The following day, the workforce assembled in the main hall. Word had gone around and everyone wanted to be involved. Many were standing at the back. Jack had lit a flame that was not going to be easily extinguished.

'Gentlemen,' Mr Thompson began, 'your management have discussed the proposal and have all agreed.' There was silence at first and then a roar of approval broke out, men were clapping, some shouting, others stood solemnly letting the words sink in. Jack looked around, he felt so proud of this moment.

'OK, if we are all in agreement then we need to organize everything again. It will be as if we are starting this business from scratch. First of all, Finance, are you prepared to halve your pay to give us a kitty to investigate this piece of kit? If you are, my executive and me are prepared to do the same;' Mr Thompson nodded toward the accountant who reluctantly agreed.

'So let's get started,' he said, shaking Jack by the hand. The men left the room excited at what lay ahead. That night, Jack arrived home feeling exhilarated and happy, he was whistling as he entered the house.

'What are you so happy about, I haven't heard you whistle for years,' asked his wife?

Taking both her hands in his and looking into her face, he smiled,

'Today I changed the world.'

## Capsized

Without warning the boat keeled over and suddenly he was in the water and struggling to stay afloat. It all happened so quickly that he was unable to prevent it. Being a strong swimmer and wearing a life jacket, he felt no fear

only surprise and then realisation. He felt himself pulled into the upright position by his buoyancy aid and was immediately able to survey the situation. The boat was completely overturned with the hull uppermost and the keel sticking upwards. The water was remarkably warm and for a moment the thought flashed through his mind, how would he have coped in the cold water around the UK? By the time he had recollected his senses, the safely boat was at hand and the master immediately began to shout instructions.

This was not the first time however. Many years earlier, while on holiday in Spain, he had taken out a small sailing boat. The wind suddenly came up and without warning, caused the boat to heel over acutely and overturn. He was with his wife at the time and unfortunately she was very frightened and never ventured on a sailing boat again. Throughout the many years of their lives together he had hankered after returning to sailing but was put off by her fear and reluctance to try and overcome it.

On this occasion he was on his own. He had decided to renew his love affair with the sea and wanted to become proficient again, having sailed in his youth some fifty years earlier while at University. The boat was a Topper, a flat hulled single sail vessel ideal for beginners such as himself. He was in the company of cadets from a local school who came to the club every Saturday to learn to sail.

Despite his age, he was not intimidated by their youth and hoped to learn quickly with a view to obtaining his own boat. His performance today made him seriously reconsider the wisdom of such a decision. The capsized experience was however invaluable as it taught him how to right a boat after a capsize and how to avoid a repeat capsize once the boat was righted.

He was instructed to pull out the keel as far as it would go so that it protruded from the hull and grabbing it with both hands pull himself on to the upturned hull. Once standing on the hull and still holding the keel, he was told to step backwards towards the edge of the hull at the same time pulling the keel towards him and leaning backwards. As his weight was applied, the boat slowly began to right itself. Then a last strong pull and it was upright. The next stage was critical. It was necessary to grab hold of the mainsheet and the tiller, pulling the mainsail in and holding the tiller in the midline. At this point, the sail fills with wind and the boat moves off. If as he did the first time, he failed to control the sail allowing the boom to swing out and dip into the water, the boat immediately turned over again.

Looking back over the whole episode, he considered what he had learned. Firstly, that his sailing skills were still very rusty and that a lot of practice was required. Secondly, he was no longer afraid of capsizing, as he now felt confident to up right the boat. Thirdly he realised that his weight and strength were vital factors and he needed to learn how to move about the boat more quickly without losing control of the tiller and the mainsail, especially when tacking or jibing. He knew that this would require a lot of practice.

# **Caveat Emptor -let the buyer beware?**

For generations, buyers have known that the responsibility for selecting the item that they want remains with them. 'Let the buyer beware' is a phrase which has come down from Roman times, to remind us that in the end he who pays the money selects the goods and is responsible for any error. In recent years, however, with the growing complexity of technological products, the buyer has depended more and more upon the information provided by the seller.

The seller is required by law, to describe the product as accurately as possible. In theory, that requirement should provide the buyer with all the information he or she needs to make a correct decision. In practice, this is far from the truth. Manufacturers use a wide range of methods to deceive the buyer. The simplest one is to print the product information in very small print in a format which is often unintelligible, but which contains essential information. In the case of visual advertising such as is seen on television, the information is often provided at great speed by, a well-known celebrity, whom one can be assured has never used or intends to use the product, but nevertheless describes it in glowing terms.

Perhaps the most confusing is in the area of finance. Financial products are designed by banks and others ostensibly to help the public find a safe and reliable place for their savings. In practice, these products persuade the public, by virtue of their generous offers many of which are dubious at the best, and frankly dishonest at the worst. A typical example is the investment bond with a high initial return which is offered for only a limited period say nine months to a year. Thereafter, the rate may be considerably less, but the purchaser when he buys this product has no idea what that rate will be. Nevertheless, he is deemed responsible for the choice despite having available to him, limited information for a limited period on a product that he may initially wish to keep for five years or more.

With a wide range of choices in the electronics field, such as televisions, radios, mobile phones etc. the buyer is faced with a multitude of products, each of which claims one or more advantages over its rivals. Many of these facilities are not required by the buyer, but nevertheless are provided and inevitably lead to confusion when the item is used. Technical terms such as Pixels, Megabytes, and various terms describe the speed at which a product may function, are offered to the buyer who often has little knowledge of what they mean, and particularly their significance with regard to the efficiency of the product.

While it is reasonable for the Manufacturer to expect the purchaser to have some basic knowledge of the products, I think it is perverse to expect him or her to have a detailed knowledge. Increasingly, arguments arise over the confusion that can follow when an item is purchased that doesn't do what the buyer wants it to do.

The manufacturer provides information in the form of documents, but they are often written in semi- technical language, with no glossary of terms to allow the reader to find out what a particular technical word means.

In summary, the mantra that, a buyer must beware, has been used by the manufacturing world to produce poorly described and over complicated products, knowing full well that the majority of the purchasers will be left totally confused by the description provided. It is suggested that the phrase 'buyer beware, is no longer a reasonable defence and that if a buyer purchases an item, which is poorly described (with little information), then the buyer should have a right to demand a refund on the basis that he has been sold an item for which he cannot, no matter how hard he tries to find out enough about it, to make a reasoned decision.

## **Circumcision (literally to cut around)**

I am standing in the doctor's surgery holding my small boy who is just three months old. He is squirming under my hands and I am trying to keep him still. Why because he is about to be circumcised and I am asking myself why I am an accessory to this act of mutilation. No-one knows for certain when this tradition began. Although initially a Jewish ritual it was later adopted by Islam and became a requirement for all Muslim boys.

*'I am ready to fulfill the commandment to circumcise my son as the creator Blessed be he has commanded us. For it is written in the Torah. And God said to Abraham, You shall keep My Covenant, you and your children after you throughout their generations . This is My covenant which you shall keep between Me and you and your children after you ; every male among you shall be circumcised Genesis 17, 9-10*

So it is written in the Torah, the 'Bible' of Judaism and has been practiced by religious Jews since time immemorial. Like me, I think most fathers approach the circumcision of their son with trepidation. Some will accept the law and celebrate with delight, others are less committed and although usually complying, do so with both sadness and a joy. Sadness for the pain inflicted on their offspring and joy that he has complied with a law of the Torah. Today was such a day when Sean a three months old African boy, my adopted son was subjected to the operation. Not after the traditional Jewish way carried out in the home by a Mohel with appropriate prayers and celebrations but in the sterile space of a operating room and by a gowned surgeon and assistants.

According to tradition the father holds the boy during the procedure while his mother is being consoled by family and friends. Today happily it all went well and we were soon on the way home. But we had not anticipated the response



of his 4-year old brother Andrew (circumcised when he was three months old) who when he saw what had been done to Sean's 'shushu' broke down in tears and shouted,

'Why have you done that to him, why?' Of course this small boy with no knowledge of tradition was correct, correct to be upset, correct to ask why? This father was once again struggling to find an answer. The simplistic answer that it is cleaner and hygienic has long been rejected. Today another reason has been found to continue the practice, namely that research has shown that the circumcised male is less likely to contract aids during sexual intercourse than his uncircumcised colleague so.

The issue is further complicated by the universal abhorrence to female circumcision which as an act is no different in principle to that of the male. In native societies, male circumcision is seen as part of the rite of passage to adulthood and is carried out in the teens. It is not however a tradition which is part of Christian practice. but since the Royal family is reported to support circumcision, it is widely practiced in the UK. In the Old Kingdom of Egypt, there was a God of Circumcision to guarantee the fertility related to the Nile River, and early Egyptian myths tells that blood from circumcision of another god fell down and created the universe. In one document from ancient Egypt, a man is stating that he was circumcised with 120 males and one hundred and twenty females. Today, it continues to be practiced in all parts of the world. It is a relic from a former world but few Jews or Muslims have the courage to refrain from its practice.

'Forms of Prayer for the Jewish Worship', 1977, ed by The Assembly of Rabbis of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain

## **Fair Play**

In a world stricken with conflict and strife, sport can still provide the opportunity for gamesmanship and fair play. Such an occasion occurred in the second cricket test between India and England in July 2011. Ian Bell had just hit what he thought was a four boundary but in fact the ball was fielded just before it reached the boundary. The players were only able to run three runs when tea was due to be called. Bell anticipating this walked off his crease. The Indian wicket keeper realizing that the ball was still in play removed his stumps and appealed for run out which the umpire after asking the third umpire signalled OUT.

Shock went round the ground, with incredulity and surprise on the faces of Ian Bell and the whole English Team supported by the England supporters. They turned to each other unable to believe what had happened. With heavy hearts they tramped to the tearoom with hardly a word spoken. Tea was taken in silence and hidden anger, so unlike the usual happy conversation that was the norm. During the tea break, the English captain Strauss and Trott discussed the decision and decided that something had to be done. They agreed to challenge the decision with the Indian captain and went to the

Indian's changing room. After a friendly discussion, the Indian's captain Dravid withdrew their appeal.

This was unknown to the crowd who booed both the Referees and the Indian Team loudly when they came back to the field to resume the game. But their boos soon turned to cheers when Ian Bell appeared to resume batting and the crowd realised what had happened. This decision was one that showed maturity and an appreciation by the Indian team that the spirit in which a game is played is as important if not more so than the rules. It is to be applauded. Listening to the commentators, it is apparent that they didn't fully appreciate what has happened on the field. That day a nation's sportsmen had stood up and been counted, counted amongst the great who put integrity and honesty above short-term gain. It is hoped that this example will be reflected in other major sports especially football

Sadly, this is a far cry from the behaviour of the players of what has been called our national game. Football the beautiful game in which the result seems to be the only thing that is important no matter how it is gained. Highly paid dilettantes use every means to obstruct, injury and sometimes maim their opponents. Time and again a blatant foul is committed with the offender pleading his innocence. Players have bitten; head butted and tripped an opponent. A first warning by means of a yellow card is often ignored. The FA looks on, unable or unwilling to control these misdemeanors. Many believe that they deliberately do nothing in order to increase the appeal of the game as if the conflicts are more important than the skill.

## **Give me my money back now!**

I heard this loud and demanding request while I was shopping last week. I was one of a number of customers at Argosy that afternoon when a man began shouting at the assistant and then all hell let loose. To my shame I stood by like the others, an onlooker, watching a stranger lose control. It was as if I was at the movies, a voyeur watching a make believe story unfold before my eyes.

He was in his early fifties dressed informally in a T shirt and jeans. I later learned that he was a soldier on leave due to return to his regiment the next day. He had gone into the shop on an impulse and had seen a piece of electronic equipment that he fancied. He paid for it, but when the lady went into the back to get it, she discovered that it was out of stock.

'Sorry she said, 'I will order it for you. It should be in in a few days' time.'

He explained that he was on leave, and had to go back to his station the following day. He asked for his money back, and that's when the problem started. It was four o'clock by then, and the lady manageress who was not that helpful, said that unfortunately the cash register was closed and that he would have to come back the following day for his money.

'I want my money back,' he repeated but she was adamant that she could do nothing. As he became angrier she seemed to become more distant and dismissive presenting an aggressive and arrogant demeanour and this clearly upset him.

'I want my money back now!' He demanded, grabbing the cash register on the desk.

'I can't give it to you now, you must come back tomorrow,' she repeated, with some impatience. This aggravated him more and he repeated his demand now, almost shouting it.

It was at this point that the people in the shop became aware of a commotion and began to look in his direction. He was beginning to lose control and was shaking the cash register, angrily.

'I want my money back now!' he demanded, and then he lost it completely. He grabbed the cash register and the computer on the desk and threw them onto the floor and then he turned round and grabbed whatever he could. There were a number of items on a table nearby, and they went crashing onto the floor. Nothing could now stop him in his anger, a red rag had been pulled across his eyes and he responded like an angry bull, tearing around the shop, pulling everything on the floor kicking it in breaking it.

The manageress had no choice, she called the police who arrived soon after, and escorted him away.

'Why didn't I do something, anything? What could I have done? I could have gone to him and held him and calmed him down and made him realise that what he was doing was going to get him into trouble. I could offer to pay the money to him and get it back from her the following day. I could have given him the money.

But I did none of these things. I just stood like everybody else watching this drama unfold, distancing myself as if I was watching a film make-believe play, not real life. Even now as I recount the story, I'm ashamed of why I've failed to act. At the time, I rationalised and said to myself, there's nothing I can do; if I was to intervene he could well attack me. But of course, that wasn't true; the chances are that if I'd gone to him, he would have calmed down.

Why did he react like this in the face of authority? Could he be reliving some deep, long forgotten relationship perhaps with his father or some other authority figure? He saw the manageress as such, an image from which he had suffered all his childhood.

'Don't do that, finish your dinner, you could do better if you try and so on...'

And so when the manageress, in her authoritative voice told him that she could not give him his money back he reacted subconsciously. Maybe it was his father again, telling him what he couldn't do. It had happened too many times, and now he saw red and responded in the only way he knew. Rejecting the command, after all, he was now a man, a soldier. He didn't need to be told what he could and couldn't do.

The rest is history. He was taken away by the police, and no doubt held in a cell. He would have been reported to his captain, and even had a short spell in prison. All this has gone through my mind since the event. I know that I could have stopped it and it sickens me that I didn't.

## **The Guildhall, Bristol**

Empty corridors reverberated with footsteps and voices as the great and the good walk back and forth, intent upon their business. Their clients remain seated waiting to be called. The be-wigged barristers amble by clutching large files under their arms. Then, apart from distant voices, quiet descends. Professionals can be recognized by their dark suits, white shirts and ties. The clients on the other hand, wear everyday clothes. The pale yellow walls are decorated with photographs from Third World countries, desert scenes, close-up of faces, seascapes. These are all attempts to soften an otherwise bleak and depressing space.

It is now 11.50am and my case looks like settling. The two barristers have conducted their bartering and have probably agreed a figure which will settle the case and cancel the court appearance. Professor Solomon could have agreed our evidence, without the need for going to court. His estimate of six month's disability was clearly inappropriate and unacceptable by the client. The case has been going now for almost 10 years and this is ludicrous, in view of its relative lack of importance.

As I anticipated, the case settled and we were all told to go home. I met Professor Solomon later in the corridor and we exchanged pleasantries -- we talked about African sculpture, and he said that there was no indigenous sculpture in South Africa. It was not clear why that was but we both wondered whether it was because the native population of South Africa had come from elsewhere and had settled in South Africa. They had not brought anything with them of their culture or of their sculpture, unlike the people of Zimbabwe, who had a long history of fine sculpture, going back many centuries.

This conversation made me think about the whole nature of African sculpture and how it arose. I thought this would be a very good source of study under the heading of "African sculpture, its origins and sources. The study would have to include an understanding of the way in which the people of Africa, had moved and settled within the force boundaries, which had been defined by the British and other European leaders.

On the way back to my hotel, I stopped at a travel agent and arranged to change my flight time back to Leeds. I had about four hours to wait and decided to have a light lunch in a restaurant before packing and leaving the hotel. I arranged a taxi with the concierge and went up to my room. I changed into lighter clothes, putting my suit in a carrier and went down to the restaurant. There were very few people in the restaurant, and I was soon served with a chicken and salad sandwich. I ordered a glass of orange juice, and after some ten minutes, my food arrived.

There were two young women, seated at a table nearby, and I got into conversation with one of them, who told me that they often came to the restaurant, during their lunchtime to have a break from the routine of their jobs. I felt quite at ease and comfortable, and ate leisurely. There was a copy of the Independent paper available, and I read several articles.

I returned to my room, packed my clothes and watched a little television. My taxi had been booked for four o'clock, and at about three thirty, I came downstairs with my luggage and sat in the foyer. The taxi was a little early and I saw him waiting outside the hotel through the window. I signaled to him and he saw me and waved back. I wheeled my luggage out to the waiting taxi. The driver took my luggage and placed it in the boot, while I got into the back seat.

‘Where do you wish to go to?’.

‘To the aerodrome please’. We set off, and he said that this was his last job before he finished the day.

‘What will you do then?’ I said.

‘I will have a rest.’

It took about 30 minutes to get to the airport, which was fairly crowded. I found a trolley, paid the driver, and loaded my luggage onto the trolley. I was too early to sign in, and so I found somewhere to sit while waiting for the desk to open. The waiting area was very crowded but I found a table and chair and sat for a while looking around and watching the people. I was near a coffee shop and ordered a latte and a bun and returned to my chair.

As I had my computer with me and put it on the table and decided to review the article on Harjeet Grewal which I had not yet completed. I also wanted to write something about my experience in Bristol in particular with regard to the Guildhall. The notice board had by this time, announced that my flight was delayed by 45 minutes. Eventually, our flight was called and I went to the desk and got into a line waiting to board the aero plane. The flight was a little bumpy, but we arrive safely into Leeds and I soon got a taxi home.

Larne my housekeeper was at home and was clearly pleased to see me. I was very tired and had a light meal before retiring. I watched a bit of television, and then went to sleep. Thinking about the events of the previous day, I was pleased that the case has now settled, and that I can now forget about any more medico-legal cases. I worked out my fee and expenses and sent an email and a letter to a solicitor. It seems such a waste that it is often necessary for the cases to come to court before they are settled by discussion. In this case, I think it could have been settled out of court, if Professor Solomon had not been quite so obstinate with his opinion.

## **I am going to town**

It is about seven in the morning when I leave my house in Nyali, a suburb of Mombasa the second city in Kenya and make for town. The morning's

overcast clouds have cleared and the sun is now shining in a bright blue sky. A short walk and I arrive at the matatus' stop; a vaguely defined place where I know from previous experience the matatus will stop. As I stand waiting, one comes screaming to a halt with the conductor hanging on to the open door. It is a 14-people carrier. He motions to me to enter but before I can, two locals push by and fill the only seats. Not concerned the conductor points to his own seat and I get in. He is now standing outside holding on to the door and leaning over me.

I admire the way in which he carries the fare money. The notes are carefully folded lengthwise and held between the index and middle finger of his left hand with the coins in the palm. When he receives a note, he carefully folds it and tucks it with the others between his fingers. He uses the other hand to open and close the sliding door. He collects fares by pointing or jolting the passengers who then begin to rummage for money as if they had thought that the journey was free. No words are exchanged unless there is an argument over the fare. If the passenger is not prepared to give way, the conductor usually acquiesces. I have learned always to have the exact change as if I don't; I am usually overcharged or not given my change when I alight, the bus simply driving off

We are soon off at breakneck speed. The music is screaming but the passengers sit without emotion crushed together on the narrow seats. I glance at the driver. He is holding his mobile in his right hand and changing gear with his left, the steering wheel is steadied between his knees. One of the levers from the steering column has been connected to the car horn which makes a variety of sounds from a bip,bip,bip to a long moan like a fog horn. The driver uses it constantly, to attract the attention of would be passengers or to warn other vehicles to keep out of the way.

Although there is no space to overtake he is undaunted and takes to the near side scattering pedestrians as he races over rubble and stones eventually forcing the bus between two slow going vehicles. No one seems concerned. Most drivers let him in as they are simply trying to avoid being bumped. There is a constant conversation going on between the driver and the conductor who despite his speed turns repeatedly to look at the conductor as he speaks. We have now reached Bombolulu, a very busy area with shops and cafes fighting for space. Seated on the pavement are women nursing their Gikos (small charcoal burners) on which a variety of food is being cooked from chips to fish to meat.

It is lunchtime for many and people are standing eating from small plastic bags. We stop suddenly to let a bus from the opposite side do an unexpected u-turn and stop in front of us. There is a heated exchange between the two conductors. Then the driver manages by turning the wheel full circle to get free and we are off with brakes screeching as we nearly hit an overtaking truck which our driver didn't see. Meanwhile my fellow passengers are in their own thoughts staring vacantly ahead with the occasional musical phone call answered by a loud conversation. They really don't need their phones I thought; they speak so loudly and could have heard each other without them.

The traffic slows as we approach Kongawea, a busy open market where local people come to buy food, clothing etc. It is always crowded with customers milling around waiting for the matatus. We stop to let off a lady of enormous size carrying a large sack of potatoes. She squeezes past me and alights. We reach the lights which today are controlled by a police woman, she beckons us on and we arrive at the Nyali Bridge. This is a dual carriageway low road bridge built by the Japanese some years ago, with a central crash barrier now distorted in many places by previously colliding vehicles.

Now begins a frantic race to reach the other side as there is no stopping on the bridge. Vehicles career from side to side to find a place to overtake. A truck belching black smoke proceeds slowly down the outer lane encouraging vehicles to move to the near side to overtake. Suddenly rear brakes lights flare ahead as we come to an abrupt halt at the red lights. Ignoring them, the matatus on the nearside filter through just avoiding a hand pulled cart loaded high with bananas. We are now in Digo road which will take us into the centre of town. The traffic has become much denser and moves more slowly. Tuk Tuks (three wheeled vans with two stroke engines) dart in and out like flies, generating a lot of anger and impatience. It is hot and everyone wants to get to their destination. Many on my bus are on the way to the Ferry, an old poorly maintained system of ferry boats plying the narrow channel between Likoni and the South Coast. Crossing is a painful and slow experience, much patience is required.

I have now reached Posta, the main central post office where I alight to catch a Tuk Tuk to the Yacht club. Despite my concerns about the driving, it was an exhilarating journey but I am pleased to have arrived in tact.

## **My Father and me**

It is now over twenty years since my father died and throughout that time I have never ceased looking for him, trying to find the man but without success. I have no sense of him like I have of my mother, my brothers or friends, just a shell, a visual container which when I look inside seemed empty. Yet he was a man like any other. Was it the war and the long separation? Five years, during which time I changed from a seven-year-old to a twelve-year-old, from a child to an adolescent with all the uncertainty of youth. From a seed to a plant still young and swaying in the breeze but changed and this change occurred without his influence and presence. No father figure to guide me; no role model to shape me and affect me. Five long years, a lifetime of absence so that even his memory had faded. I cannot recall ever thinking of him, it was as if he didn't exist in my life. But I know that he wrote to us. Mum used to read his letters out but I can't remember anything about them. What if I try and concentrate, ask my brother who being two years older might recall more and in greater detail.

Was he a good father before we went away and lost him?

What is a good father? There are so many definitions and all are satisfactory to some extent. Let me try one or two.

A good father is one who is there in his children's lives, seeing them in the morning; sharing breakfast; accompanying them to school; helping with their homework; supporting their school activities. Someone who reads to them at night; is at home before they go to bed.

A good father is one who has a deep empathy with his children, is young enough to share their fun and pain.

A good father is one who is on his children's side, who chides them but doesn't punish them. Who is firm but not hard. Who leads and supports. Who understands their fears and uncertainties of growing up?

This has prompted me to read a number of accounts of sons writing about their fathers. Paul Auster 'The Invention of Solitude', Edmund Gosse 'Father and Son', Sean French 'Fatherhood'. There are innumerable accounts of sons searching for their fathers.

Fatherhood is not a natural caring state. Unlike motherhood it has to be learned. The father to be has to have had a nurturing upbringing, an example to guide him; he does not come to it by nature. There is no archetype as Jung would posit to guide him. And so generation after generation live and die without ever knowing or understanding the nature of a father's love.

So many sons become failed fathers' ad infinitum; a legacy of failed love stretching back it seems to infinity. Yet some break the mold and experience the special relationship that is 'a father and son', each giving to the other strength and support. The older guiding and advising, the younger acting as a bridge to the new world that is unfolding with the passage of time, teaching his father to master modern technology- computers. Game boys, mobiles- to understand and accept the changing relationships of the modern world, a world in which the young are brought up with the knowledge that the press of a nuclear button can annihilate us all; a world in which respect is no longer taken for granted but has to be earned. a place where youth is exalted and age and experience less admired. The list is inexhaustible. And so the search for my father continues. What did I find? A series of fragments scattered over 30 years. Do they contain the essence that I am searching for? I don't know yet until I have explored them here on these pages but I have a number of facts, the foundations on which his life was built.

## **The STRAND**

I was probably no older than about five when I recall a journey with my father in a large car, It was an open topped vehicle possibly a Chrysler or some other large American car. We were travelling down the Strand in the direction of Trafalgar Square. I recall it as an enormously wide expanse of road, such that I could hardly see the far side. Dad was wearing a white blazer and was singing in a high pitched falsetto voice. Looking back now, it all seemed surreal and of course the road is actually of normal dimensions, not excessively wide at all.

## **83A DOWNS PARK ROAD**

We lived in a detached house built in the grounds of Grandpa and Grandma Zussman, Mum's parents. Behind were the open downs, in front was a large



council estate. Nearby was a well known school, Grocers Grammar School? I have scanty memories of the house except an occasion when Dad swore at Mum when we were about to go out. She went back into the house and burst into tears. I can see the car in the drive on the left side of the house leading to the garage. I don't know what car it was but I know Dad was one of the first to have a car perhaps because of his connection with the garage.

## **HOMECOMING**

One of the abiding memories of my father, the one that remains clear in my mind despite the passage of time is the first sight I had of him standing on a pile of wicker boxes on the platform at St Pancras station in 1945. My mother pointed through the train window, as it slowly came to a halt, at a small fair haired man, an unfamiliar figure and said, that is your father. I saw a stranger, a face of which I had no memory. We had returned from Bermuda where we had spent the war years and I was by the window as the boat train steamed into the station. We alighted and he said Hello to me. It was a meeting of strangers and it remained so sadly until his death. I recall that we went to live in his flat near Marble Arch but soon moved to Ealing, Gunnersbury Avenue. I went to the local school, Acton Grammar School for a short time. At the same time Grandpa Harry, dad's father came to live with us. He did quite a lot of the cooking as Dad was often late from the garage and Mum was running a Millinery shop with a partner in South Kensington. It was at this time that Dad's affair with Marie came to light culminating in the divorce but not before there was increasingly conflict between Mum and Dad. There were constant arguments as to why he was so late from the Garage (It turned out that he was seeing Marie.)

I interrupted a telephone call from her to our house and received a sound beating from Dad with a hairbrush in the bathroom a memory that is still painful to this day. Dad left and we were alone. Grandpa sadly died and we moved into Ivor Court and later Strathmore Court near Lords. After the divorce which was particularly acrimonious, Geoffrey and I went to Mill Hill school a strict traditional boarding school as boarders and Donald went to Bedales, a progressive co-educational school with free discipline quite different from Mill Hill. I can only speak of my experience at Mill Hill. It was an unhappy one. I had arrived on the Winter term, one term after my peers and they let me know it with teasing, bullying and beatings.

But it was at Mill Hill School that something unexpected and I think life-changing happened. It was in the Science sixth form that I met the teacher who would change my life, Donald Hall. It was he who suggested I become a doctor and who arranged to adjust his teaching to allow me to fulfil the London University Requirements of four A Levels, in Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology to study Medicine. I was admitted to the 2nd MB course at St Mary's Hospital Medical School in September 1951 and qualified MB BS in 1956.

Dad, his full name was John Lewis Nelson, was born on the 24th June 1901 the eldest son to Matilda and Harry Nelson. They had eight children in all, four girls and four boys, Bertha John, Sam, Lilly, Albert, Sadie, Molly and Sydney. Harry was a tailor and Matilda ran a shop in the market. I have a memory of a photo of her standing in the door of a shop, the window of which was covered with writing advertising the goods she was selling. Bertha the

eldest girl was very bright and was sent to college. Dad went to Grocer's school and then to work as there was no more money to educate him. He always resented that and thought the money should have been spent on him and not her. She went on to be very successful and eventually went to the USA where she married and had a family. He left school at 14 and began work in a paint factory, but was sacked as he was always late for work. At the age 21 he did the knowledge and began driving a taxi. He was described as a smart dresser, and was a womaniser despite his short height and bright red hair. He met Mum, Sophie Zussman through her brother Joe with whom he was very friendly. They married in 1928 and their first child Geoffrey was born in 1930. I followed in 1932 and Donald in 1934.

Dad rented a garage beneath the railway arches in Richmond Road in 1933 and by 1939 had about 25 cabs.

## **FRAGMENTS OF RECALL**

Visits to The Bishops Avenue on Sunday

While attending Medical School at St Mary's Hospital, I would see dad every Sunday in his home in Bishops Avenue where he lived with Maris. I would usually find him in the garden still in his dressing gown and wearing Wellingtons. We often shared breakfast, he insisting on me eating Bemax a cereal said to contain all the Vitamin Bs. He ate it every morning. We talked about this and that. Although having a limited formal education Dad was well read and well informed. I would stay until about midday and then would take my leave. I waited for pocket money-£6 a week. Dad would play a teasing game but eventually gave me the money.

## **Introducing Diana my wife to be-**

Diana and I had decided to get married and I wanted to introduce her to dad. arranged to take her one Sunday to meet Dad. He was very polite until I told him the we were planning to get married. He then became very aggressive and blurted out, 'if you marry her she will destroy your career.' It was a very unexpected response

## **Marie's breast lump:**

It was a usual Sunday. I had taken the bus and got off at Hampstead near Kenilworth and walked don the leafy Bishops Avenue admiring the large detached houses set back from road, dads house was set back with a semi-circular lawn in front. Dad was not as ease. he looked strained and spoke very abruptly. I felt that something was wrong but I waited. After breakfast he suddenly turned to me and said I would like you to have a look at Marie, she is upstairs. Uncertain what it was all about I was greeted by a frightened Marie and ushered into her bedroom. Without saying anything she uncovered her left breast.

'I have found a lump,' she said hoarsely, 'would you tell me what it is?' I began to examine her breast with the flat of my hand and

immediately felt it, a lump the size of a walnut, round and hard, very hard. I immediately knew what it was. I think Marie saw the look on my face. "Is it serious?" she stammered. I said, 'I think you should see your doctor as soon as possible.'

Dad died in 1968 alone in hospital. He was suffering from severe Alzheimer's and cancer of the stomach. That year, I was visiting Michael my cousin in Boston with Diana and 2 year-old Sarah. We were musing over our lives one evening when I told him about my poor relationship with my father now dead. I

felt powerless to get beyond it when he suggested that I write to him.

'But he is dead,' I said.

'It doesn't matter, write to him tell him how you feel.'

So I did. I poured out my anger and frustration at his failure to be the father that I wanted. But something very strange happened. I began to understand his life, the hurdles he had and the successes he had made despite very poor beginnings as a second generation Immigrant. By the time I

had finished I had changed my view. I now saw him as a success overcoming amazing challenges and doing the best he could despite the many obstacles he had to overcome.

I was able to forgive and to understand and was grateful to him for the opportunities he gave me to live the life I have.

## Paolozzi's Head

It was late when I came home and feeling tired but not ready to sleep, I settled myself on the settee and adjusted the cushions so as to support my head and neck. I was beginning to relax when the plaster head sitting in the centre of the mantle piece caught my eye. I had placed it there some time ago but had almost forgotten it when the light coming through the un-curtained window suddenly lit it up. It is cleverly shaped in a cuboid style with sharp angular planes defining the face and head. A high chiseled forehead, thick eyebrows, deeply sunken eyes and pouting lips complete the form. From the side, the face was defined by a pointed nose beneath overhanging eyebrows. From the rear the skull was formed by step like planes meeting in the midline. I assumed it was made by pouring plaster of Paris into a mold made in four parts which left behind raised seams running from front to back and from side to side and a flat base on which it sat.

Then I remembered when I was given it. It was one of many casts made that day some years ago in Edinburgh at the request of the late sculptor Paolozzi. He was a heavily built man usually unshaven with thick jowls and overgrown eyebrows. He looked to all the world like a bull, but he was very talented and over the course of his life had made some memorable sculptures. I cannot

pass the over life size statue of Isaac Newton in the entrance of the British Library without thinking of him and that fortnight my late wife and I spent at his sculpture course in Edinburgh. I can't remember now where we heard about it but as we were both free at the time decided to attend it. We were in a company of about 15 others, mainly women but with a smattering of men. I was one of the oldest. The head was a gift to each of us on the last day and we lined up to get the great man to sign it. Diana couldn't be bothered so her's remained unsigned and I gave mine away when I moved south from Leeds.

What do I remember of that fortnight? Not much, images of him prowling around picking out the young females for his attention. We each had a bench and materials and were encouraged to draw and mould. It was the summer holiday and full time students were away so we lived in the college residence and ate our meals in the canteen. As I think back to that time more than ten years ago I have very little recollection of the details and haven't thought about it until today when the head caught my eye. The piece is typically Paolozzi recognised by his style of casting from common objects and mixing them up. I think Paolozzi's contribution to the art movement was to cast ordinary objects including children's toys in plaster altering their size and placing them in unusual places. The idea of Damien Hirst's oversized cast of a toy human figure has been stolen from Paolozzi although as far as I know, no attribution has been given.

Eduardo Paolozzi was born in 1924 and died in 2005 He was the eldest son of Italian immigrants. He studied at the Edinburgh College of Art.

## The Paralympics

As the second week of the 2013 Paralympics comes to an end. it is opportune to analyze the significance of this extraordinary public event. A hundred and forty-six countries sent athletes to London to compete in the same magnificent facilities used by the Olympics a month earlier. The overwhelming impression was one of enormous courage, skill and sportsmanship.

To find out how this amazing competition begin, we need to go back before the second World war and the story of one man. Professor Ludwig Guttmann was born in 1899 in Germany and was raised in the Jewish faith. In 1918 he began studying medicine at the University of Breslau having been turned down for military service on medical grounds. In 1928 he was invited to start a neurological unit in Hamburg and remained in that post until 1933 when the Nazis forced all Jews to leave Aryan Hospitals. In 1938 at the time of Kristallnacht, he was a neurologist to the Jewish Hospital in Breslau and by 1937 was elected Medical Director. By chance he was sent by von Ribbentrop to treat a friend of the dictator Salazar in Lisbon. On his return he was granted permission to go to England for two days and took the opportunity to emigrate there with his family. The rest is well known. He became the director of the Spinal Injuries Unit at Stoke Mandeville and it was there that he revolutionized the treatment of the spinal injured patient. The first Paralympic games was held in Rome in 1960.

The method of classifying disabilities was complicated and inevitably some degree of inequality stepped in. For example, single and double lower limb amputees competed together. It is debatable whether that was a fair match. Similarly, in swimming, upper limb and lower limb ablations were treated as similar handicaps. Many more examples can be quoted. Putting that aside, the competitors gave the spectators an insight into the challenges faced by them on a day to day basis. Races competed by blind athletes assisted by guides were particularly humbling.

The games gave to the observer another and arguably very important insight namely a bird's eye view of the incidence and causation of the conditions underlying the disabilities. The physical ones comprised, in no special order, trauma, cerebral palsy, polio, drug induced limb deformed such as Thalidomide, blindness, birth or acquired etc. etc. Of these the following are either treatable or avoidable, much trauma, polio, birth trauma leading to Cerebral Palsy, much blindness etc. Thus although the games reflected the enormous resilience of human beings there is a sadness that many of these conditions hadn't been avoided for example, by better birth care to minimize Cerebral Palsy, Inoculation to prevent Polio, Public health measures to prevent secondary blindness, withdrawal of drugs as in Thalidomide etc. etc. In an ideal world, none of these conditions would exist and that is a target to which all countries developed and developing should aim.

## **Patient power is key.**

Yet another cliché, coined by a medical correspondent to solve the so-called ills of the NHS. He reports details of another plan by the government to improve the health service. This time it is to introduce new financial incentives for surgeons. As your correspondence rightly states, there is in fact no evidence that surgeons are failing to perform at their best, because they think they're not paid enough and would do better if they were paid more.

He decries the fact that this would involve more administrators and comes to the conclusion that the real answer to the health service is to give powers to us the patients. Yet a careful analysis of this conclusion reveals the faulty thinking inherent in this proposal.

How do patients, in fact decide which doctor or surgeon to go to? Most patients know very little about the workings of the health service (and most don't want to –they just want good reliable medical care) and in particular the nature of surgical practice. They will choose a surgeon on the basis of a GP recommendation, a friend's recommendation or a report in the media. Many choose a Consultant because they or their friends like the look of him

The most reliable of these is of course the patient's GP, who would have selected the surgeon on the basis of her/his experience of that surgeon's

results over many years. The most unreliable, is the friend's recommendation or a note or article in a magazine. Anecdotal information is notoriously unreliable as a single good or bad result means nothing.

He then chooses to emphasize that old chestnut, namely, the incompetent doctor, and yet he knows that statistics show that the number of incompetent doctors in England is miniscule. Every review of the health service has confirmed the high opinion of patients of their doctors and specialists.

Finally, he commits the unpardonable error of, on the one hand decrying the increasing number of administrators and yet on the other, in his last paragraph, emphasizing the importance of information to enable patients to make considered decisions. How does he think that the information is obtained? Surely he must know that to obtain information you need to record, review and analyse data and it is very labour intensive activity. Consultants traditionally do their own individual reviews of conditions in which they are interested and report their results in the Journals. But to get an overall picture it is necessary to review, summarize and publishing the results of a large number of observations, hence the need for more administrators.

No! The answer is found in what makes the health service so successful, namely a high standard of training at all levels and for all personnel. A consultant surgeon for example may have to undergo up to 6 interviews by his peers before being appointed, the interviews being at intervals over the eight to 10 years of his training. And so by the time he becomes a specialist any significant shortcomings or weaknesses would have been revealed. It is no accident that United Kingdom doctors, and nurses are admired and in great demand throughout the world

My advice to the Minister is to scrap the majority of the fact-finding reviews, and make sure that our doctors and nurses are well trained and updated yearly and dare I say most important of all trust them, yes, support and trust them in the same way as we trust our pilots, train and bus drivers etc. Passengers traveling on planes, trains or buses, do not request details of the pilot or driver's record before deciding to travel. They trust that the employing organization will have done the job for them.

By removing the need for detailed multi factor information which by its very nature is usually of little help, the money saved can be used for the purpose of the NHS namely to prevent and treat disease.

## **The Reunion**

There is something both appealing and disturbing about a reunion particularly if, as in my case, I hadn't seen most of the people for more than forty years. So I was approaching it with some trepidation. Most of those present would be well into their seventies and so it would be a meeting of old men and despite my age I didn't feel I fitted that description. I set off early, which turned out to be a good idea as it was not an easy place to find, and arrived at Trafalgar

square. I planned to spend a short time in the National Gallery nearby before making my way to the club, which I had assumed, would be just around the corner. I had taken the precaution of checking the address, 1 Whitehall place and assumed it would be off Whitehall but just to make sure I asked two policemen who were walking by. Neither of them knew where it was but reassured me that it was nearby. So with some spare time, I began walking along Whitehall towards Westminster, when I came upon Whitehall place. Turning left into the street I saw a smartly dressed man walking towards me.

‘Do you know where the Liberal Club is?’ I asked and happily he pointed to a building with a tall spire in the distance,

‘It’s that building with the odd spire,’ he said pointing to it. On my left was a building which was being restored and I stood for a moment watching workmen climbing an outside staircase in order to reach the roof about eight storeys above. It was a perilous job with the possibility of a fatal fall but the men seemed oblivious of the danger. In the road a forklift truck was being manoeuvred into position to lift a large pile of metal sheeting. The sheeting tended to slide off the pallet but once centred remained secure. Having completed the job, the truck set off down the road and I continued my search.

Crossing the road, I came upon a memorial to men of the Tank brigade who had fought in the Second World War. *‘From mud through blood to the green fields beyond.’* This modern bronze sculpture by Vivien Mallock, completed in the year 2000, faces the building where the first ever tank was designed in 1916. The two trees behind the memorial were shipped from Canada to mark the close links between that country and the regiment, in Whitehall Place SW1. Five oversized bronze male figures dressed in military gear are standing shoulder to shoulder each with an arm over the shoulder of his neighbour. They are looking to their left into the distance; all young, confident and good looking men.

I stood for a while thinking about the war and the sacrifice men like these had made to ensure our freedom. While I contemplated the statue several people walked by without pausing and I wondered if they ever stopped to think about these young men who sacrificed their lives so that we could walk freely. On the next corner I found it, the Liberal Club, an imposing white fronted limestone building and entered through heavy mahogany swing doors. I entered a small lobby with a high ceiling and spoke to the porter on duty. Happily I was able to confirm that not only was I in the correct place but also the correct day and time.

I was about 30 minutes and so I returned to the street and continued towards the river. I hadn’t realised that the Embankment was behind Charing Cross Station although if I had thought about it I would have realised that it had to be. I even recognized a Sail shop which I had visited during my last trip. I had got there by tube not realising that it was so close to Trafalgar Square. Walking on I came to a well-groomed garden with statues of two well-known figures. The flowerbeds were just being renewed for the winter with wall flowers and geraniums. I returned to the square and entered the National Gallery. It was very crowded at that time with many groups of students. Sitting

on a bench, I got into conversation with a young woman who was part of an art group. She had been given an assignment to select a picture and write about it. She had chosen a landscape by a Dutch artist from the 16th Century. We talked about the difficulty of understanding 16th C art from a 21stC perspective. We agreed that unless we really understood the culture and politics etc. it would not be possible to do more than describe why we liked the painting.

Returning to the Liberal club, I was directed to the Cloakroom and then went upstairs to the Lady Bonham Carter room where we were having the Luncheon. Ronnie Aye Maung was already there. For a brief moment I didn't recognise him, now somewhat bowed and wizened (like us all I guess) he received me warmly. Soon others arrived and finally we were ten in all. After a drink, I had a Gin and tonic; we sat at a long oval table with plenty of room. Conversation was mainly about the school and the rugby in which we had all been involved. On the back of the menu was a summary of the games played by the 1st XV in the three years, 1948, 1949 and 1950. I was secretary of the team during those years. My main job was to arrange the following year's fixture which I did with my opposite number at the end of each game. We would search out the other and settle the details there and then as trying to arrange the next year's fixture later by mail or post was often very difficult.

Now as I try to recall my feelings, they are ones of acquaintance rather than friendship. I didn't really have anything in common with these men apart from school and the game. Inevitably our school experience would have been very different and we have all gone on different paths since. There remains a feeling of nostalgia bordering on disbelief that it ever happened, as it now seems such a long time ago. Apart from RC, I didn't get a chance to speak to anyone on a personal level so it was all a bit, 'Bon Homme!!' and 'Hail fellow well met.' I don't think we will do it ever again. Time has unfortunately beaten us.

## **The Urbanization of Alwoodley**

My family and I arrived in Alwoodley, Leeds, Yorkshire in 1969 and lived at Number 1 Sandmoor Ave. It was a 1930s detached house with 5/6 rooms set in just over a half an acre of land and was one of the many large attractive family homes in the triangular area of Alwoodley between Sandmoor Avenue, Sandmoor Drive and Harrogate Road. Primarily professional families who work in the centre of town and were able to commute along Harrogate Road occupied these homes. The neighbourhood was one of the most sought after in Leeds because of its leafy and pleasant environment

Life went on undisturbed until about 1980 when the first inklings of what was to become an invasion began on the east side of Harrogate Road. One by one the large houses in capacious gardens were replaced by blocks of flats, By 1990, the appearance of the roadside along Harrogate road had changed from a mature residential site into a row of high rise blocks.



Over a 25-year period the owner of 2 Sandmoor Ave, my neighbour opposite had tried to have it developed into blocks of flats. Six applications, two of which went to appeal were turned down and then the seventh one was passed without any apparent difficulty and two blocks of flats were built in the grounds of 2 Sandmoor Ave and 509 Harrogate Rd. The most eastern of the blocks remains empty to this day.

About two years ago number 501 and 503 Harrogate Road were knocked down and two blocks of flats are currently being built. I attended the planning committee meeting to discuss this project and was horrified by the fact that although the committee has up to 10 members, by the time this project was discussed only four remained and it was passed on the nod. The public is allowed no appeal. At that time, we were becoming increasingly aware of the need for green projects and although I pointed out to the committee that in building these two blocks of flats, 10% of the ground cover previously built upon was now being replaced by 80% that is a loss of 800% of green area, they took no notice. Furthermore, by replacing lawns with asphalt and bricks, a significant area was no longer able to absorb the rain resulting in pooling and flooding.

There is now an application to build flats on 507 Harrogate Rd and Larama. (the first house on Sandmoor Avenue,

I am dismayed at the progressive urbanisation of this previously delightful leafy suburb This latest proposal will overlook my house as has the development at 503 and 505. When I come out of my back door, I can be seen from the upper flat. This is an intrusion into my private life.

## WHO IS BRITISH?

He was tall and thin, and walked with a slight stoop. As soon as he spoke, I saw his teeth were stained and irregular. We had met by chance as we were both walking in the same direction along Edgware Road towards Marble Arch in London. He had turned to me as if speaking to himself.

'There are too many of them?' he had muttered as he walked past me. I stopped.

'Who do you mean?' I had asked innocently.

'Them!' He had said pointing to the crowd standing at the bus stop.

'Them!' He had repeated, 'there are too many of them. They shouldn't be here, they don't belong. Look at 'em. There ain't a white face amongst them, and look at 'er over there on the pavement she's a Somali begging; for God's sake.' We walked on together.

'How old are you?' I had asked,

'75 and proud of it,' he had replied pulling back his shoulders. 'I went through the war. I suffered for this country and I was proud to be British. Now any Tom, Dick or Harry is British. British! What a joke. It never used to be like this, the country's going to the dogs. We don't need them at all. They should be made to go back to their own country and leave England to the real English.'

I listened as he went on and wanted to ask him who he thought the real English were but I refrained. He was angry and disillusioned. His pension was buying less and he was worried about the future. He thought of these people as stealing his life. But the truth was that it was he who had been cushioned all his life although he wouldn't agree. He wouldn't want to think about the millions in the world living in poverty, real poverty, grinding poverty not what passes for poverty in this country.

I wanted to say to him, how lucky he was to have a pension, so many people in the world don't, and to live to 75 when the average life expectancy in the world was below 50 but I knew that he wouldn't appreciate my preaching. He was bleeding and he was blaming the immigrants for his pain. But this complaint isn't new. Ever since Britain became a nation with a common belief, people have been coming here initially through invasion and conquest and later to escape persecution or to seek a better life.

I wanted to remind him that it all It began in earnest a long time ago with Julius Caesar in 54 BC and again with Claudius in AD 43. During the 400 years of occupation, Roman soldiers based on the mainland settled, married and became Britons, bringing Latin into the language. It has been estimated that 40% of modern English words are based on Latin. Not long after came the Anglo-Saxons from Germany and France and throughout, the centuries, Irish immigration had been a continuing movement varying with the state of their economy.

Nor did he want me to remind him about the invasion from the Vikings in 800 AD followed by armies and settlers bringing their own distinct culture and language ultimately leading to Danelaw which was gradually replaced by the Anglo-Saxons. The Normans under William the Conqueror settled leading to an Anglo-Norman population. So many others followed adding to the richness and variety of the language and culture in particular the Huguenots around 1700. At the same time, the rise of the East India Company with the recruitment of Lascars as crews resulted in many remaining in England and establishing families. The Navigation Act 1660 was passed specifically to limit the employment of Indian crews.

The 18th century saw the impact of African slavery. It is thought that up to 15,000 Africans settled largely as servants in upper class families and have now settled as citizens. The 19th C saw the movement of large number of German to England but anti-German feeling at the beginning of the First World War saw the number decrease. The Jewish migration at the same time had a significant impact on English life. Of the 2 million Jews that left Russia as a result of persecution, 120,000 settled in the UK. The Alien Act in 1905 and the Alien's Restriction Act of 1914 were passed as a result of strong anti-Jewish public opinion.

So what is different about the present emigration? Is it different at all? He clearly sees something different. Undoubtedly the establishment of the Welfare State in 1946 significantly changed the ground rules. Previously each

wave of emigrants had to survive on its own wits, each movement succeeded as a result of the hard work and application of the individuals but that all changed when the welfare state came into being. It provided benefits for the unemployed, the disabled and the family, and these benefits were available to all. Now those being admitted to the UK can claim the same benefits as the general population.

The two devastating European wars in the early and middle parts of the 20th Century provided the impetus to establish a European State. In 1957 six countries signed The Treaty of Rome. Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany, They chose a new currency the Euro and relegated their old currencies to history. In 1973 the EU enlarged to include Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom; Greece in 1981; Portugal and Spain in 1986. In 1990 with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the former East Germany joined with West Germany to form Greater Germany. By 2011, there were 28 members. In 2008, with the financial collapse following the USA's Prime Mortgage scandal, the UK has been saddled with an enormous debt which has prompted an austerity programme from the government.

My own story is informative. My grandparents came from Eastern Europe at the time of the pogroms. My father was a taxi driver. He had three sons, One became a national service pilot and businessman, the second an NHS surgeon and the youngest a solicitor.

So is the stranger correct? Is he right to resent the current influx of foreigners, and is there a limit to the numbers our economy can sustain and if so how do we know when we have reached it? Meanwhile we are facing a demographic explosion with the numbers of people living to over 80 increasing year by year, and at the same time our birth rate is declining. So logically we need new immigrants, young and fit men and women to do the jobs, which fuel our economy, pay for the health service and the retirees' pensions. These and many other questions remain to be answered before we can ever fully understand the implication of the present influx of foreigners.

Since this was written the fiasco of Brexit has consumed the country and the MPs who have despite over three years of wrangling have come to no agreed decision. 'The people voted to leave,' is the mantra of the Brexiteers, 'but they had no idea what they were voting for,' shout the Remainers.

Hidden away in the argument is the fact that The EU has been the most significant force for peace in Europe which had until 1945 been torn apart by two devastating world wars. Should the EU fail and we return to pre-war politics, what hope for the future?

