

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After leaving school in 1967 Nick Black travelled extensively in the Middle East and North Africa before involving himself in various creative projects including Theatre, Pottery and Music.

His writing abilities then were confined mostly to personal travelogues, poetry and letters. He finally embarked on this current biography in 2006 taking the form of his father's life-story, a mammoth undertaking with five years research. For the last thirty years Nick has lived in the charming market town of Stamford in Lincolnshire. He is married with two children

Dedicated to all those who have somehow managed to keep alive the 'Bad Old Days' of British Motoring

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TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

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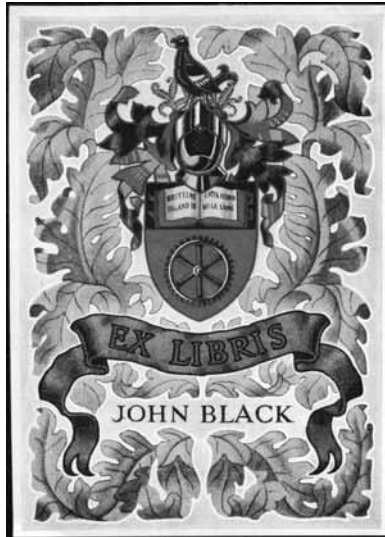
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OBSERVATION

Looking back over the days of our Motoring History involves a lot more than just nostalgia. Primarily it is a question of consolidation of resources but also a matter of appreciation for practical accomplishment. We can always learn from those times of such differing values and principles of workmanship. Effectively by understanding past achievements we can move forward with greater resolve. It is almost as if we are being pushed on relentlessly by something that could easily have been lost in obscurity or forgotten in time. Perhaps, as a consuming society, we need to take stock of what we actually have achieved and put to better use what has already been manufactured rather than continually throw away our next item of choice.

We have inevitably reached the stage where 'overkill' has become a byword for mass production and 'recycling' an excuse for overindulgence. It's the whole package that has changed and not merely the wrapping. Yes we have the technology but where is the sense of it all? What is this 'Methodology of Madness' that seems to propel us on towards ever increasing destruction?

So let us look back with admiration at what our predecessors were able to accomplish with rather limited resources despite the problems they had to face. Let us remember those individuals who managed to overcome challenges both in their public and private lives. And finally let us find the confidence in ourselves to endure in the face of such hardships which may never be experienced in quite the same way again.



INTRODUCTION

(Kenneth Richardson, Senior Lecturer at Lanchester Polytechnic)

Among many factors, something can be attributed to the drive, ambition and self-destroying energy of Sir John Black (1895-1965), Managing Director of the Standard Motor Company. Like many others, the young John Black had come to the West Midlands after the First World War with his officer's gratuity in his pocket. He had been demobilised with the rank of Captain from the Royal Tank Regiment, and Clough Williams-Ellis, his former C.O. and the official historian of the R.T.R., remembers him with respect as an intelligent and able officer. Black had no formal engineering qualifications, but had obvious gifts of command and sufficient knowledge of petrol-driven engines to make him worth a job on the sales side of any car firm. He was, therefore, recruited by William Hillman in 1919, and two years later he married one of the six Hillman daughters. Two other daughters were also to marry young men fresh from the wars; one, Captain Spencer Wilks, and the other, Major Sydney Dick, who had been one of those leading the first tanks into action by walking in front of them.

A time of decision came to all three men when, in 1927 and 1929, the Rootes Group broke into manufacturing by acquiring control of first the Hillman, and later the Humber Company. All three left; Sydney Dick to become Chairman of Auto Machinery Limited, Spencer Wilks to save Rover from extinction and John Black to join the Standard Motor Company, where Reginald Maudslay, founder of the firm, was still Chairman and Managing Director. When Maudslay died in 1934 John Black was appointed sole Managing Director.

Black could well see that immense prizes were still to be won in Britain through volume production of cars for the ordinary family. The useful Standard Nine, introduced in 1927 before he joined the Company, was supplemented by a whole range of models known as Flying Standards. In 1938 the cheapest of these, the open Tourer version of the Eight, sold at £125, and the most expensive, the Twenty, at £325. Production totals were small compared with those of today, but Standard was already using a track with subdivision of jobs in the thirties. Much of this was due to Frank Salter, an excellent planning engineer who had come with Black from Hillman. Black's expansionist policy brought its rewards; bank debts were paid off, and by 1937 the Company's dividend was running at the rate of over 20 % each year and Black had been invited to take part in the first Shadow Factory Scheme.

His imperious military manner and flamboyant personal spending were apt to disguise the fact that, almost to the end, Black was a very prudent Managing Director. He was in advance of his time in paying proper attention to safety, and to the cleanliness and appearance of his factory. He always dressed impeccably himself and had the old army officer's liking for white lines, combined with the artist's eye for bright colours. In 1936 he introduced a non-contributory pension scheme for men on the shop-floor, long before he thought of one for executives. He took on student apprentices with a higher standard of education than was average in the thirties and, after the war, sent some to university. He appears to have kept the number of executives down to an absolute minimum and always took pride in moving around the factory personally, so that he might see for himself what was going on. At first sight John Black appears the last man to justify the description of Victorian, but his belief in personal oversight was in direct line from Sir Alfred Herbert, one of the many people who did not like him. In any balanced judgement of his achievements, these things are more important than the complexities of his personal character.

He was actually the son of a Civil Servant, keeper of a section in the Public Records Office. He received the good grammar school education of those days but nothing more, and was already articled to a solicitor when the war came in 1914. The Blacks were an artistic and intelligent family of the professional middle class in Kingston upon Thames, but those who knew him later in Coventry would never have guessed at these comparatively modest origins. He often gave the impression of playing the part of the aristocrat and old military man. He always wished to excel in everything, taking lessons in sports and working hard to ensure that he could not be outshone. A Coventry businessman once recalled how, on being advised by his doctor to give up tennis, he was invited by Sir John Black to play a last foursome. He was surprised to find that their partners were to be Fred Perry and Dan Maskell. On one occasion Black is said to have asked how to get a really good education quickly, and on another to have claimed that his father was a university professor. From these and other incidents one can only guess at the tensions, the deep sense of inferiority and the overwhelming desire for compensation, which must have lain behind that resplendent exterior.

Extract from "The Age of the Individualists".

20th Century Coventry (1972) by Kenneth Richardson

(Senior Lecturer, Social and Economic History- Lanchester Polytechnic Coventry)

Chapter 1

EARLY DAYS

I suppose it all really started when I was researching my family history, something that has always fascinated me. I realized quite early on that I actually had a considerable reservoir of information, stories, anecdotes and images which had been handed down to me by my mother who had sadly died in the year 2002 at the ripe old age of 90 years. Sifting through the family photos became a veritable ritual when visiting her at Villa La Follyette, that gloriously pink hillside villa above Montreux in Switzerland which she inhabited during the last 40 years of her life. I came to put names to faces and places that otherwise may well have remained anonymous. After her Demise, as she would often refer to her departure from this worldly scene, I appreciatively inherited that photo collection. These mostly encompassed the 40's era of our family's life but with some going back to an unknown world of lost values and etiquette, only glimpsed at nowadays, when you could be betrayed by the way you held your knife and fork. I soon discovered that my father had already led an epic life of adventure long before marrying my mother in 1943.

So what did I really know about this intriguing character? He was born John Paul Black on February 10th 1895 at 151, Kings Road, Kingston-upon-Thames



**1914-John Black aged 19
RNVR- Beginning of his
love affair with the Sea**

in Surrey, as one of six sons and two daughters. His father, John George Black, originally from Lancashire, was a clerk in a Public Records office in London at that time. His mother, Ellen Elizabeth Marion Smith, was born in Hastings, Sussex. Judging by the Victorian corner-shop style of their house, Ellen Black may well have run a business on the premises to assist her large family. My father's early years are a bit hazy but I do know that at the age of only 7 he was climbing a tree with a couple of his brothers when one of them tickled him under the arm. He was swinging from a branch at the time resulting in him breaking his neck which at that age could have proved fatal. This was something that would affect him for the rest of his life, often looking rather rigid when walking and making it extremely



1917-Trench France, 2nd Lieutenant John Black (at rear) was a 1st Class Machine Gunner.

difficult while attempting to reverse a car, as he couldn't properly turn his head to look round. The only other thing I heard about those early years was that if there was ever any dispute between the brothers at home their father would make them fight it out together with boxing gloves in a makeshift gym that they used for such purposes. With two younger brothers, Robert and Leo, and three older brothers, George, Norman and William, there must have been plenty of choice! His two sisters Florence and Norah were older than him with the latter going on to become an accomplished artist.

He was educated at St. Paul's School in London and would later study Law at London University, his father's preference. His first job on leaving school in 1910 was with Stanley Popplewell & Son, the Patent Agents. This was something which would bring him into contact with the Morgan Motor Company. In 1911 he joined Granville Bradshaw, later one of the founder members of ABC, who was building aero engines at Brooklands with a staff of six, including a young John Black. After University he became articled to a solicitor in 1914. But the First World War brought an end to his future prospects in Law progressing at that time.

Two of his brothers, George and Norman, were killed in action prompting him to sign up for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

He was 19 years old then and his family had now moved to No. 213, Park Road, Kingston Hill, a handsome Victorian Villa in the area.

The National Archives at Kew reveal some intriguing details about his career in the Armed Forces during the 1914-1918 period of the Great War.

Entered the Royal Navy Department 13 August 1914

Name:	John Paul Black
Number:	London 10/3610
Address:	213, Park Road, Kingston Hill, Surrey.
Height:	5 9 ½
Chest:	L. 37 D. 34 ½
Colour of Hair:	L. Brown.
Colour of Eyes:	Blue.
Civil Employment:	Articled Pupil.
Previous Service:	Signalling and Buglering.
15 September 1914:	Rating A.B. (Able-bodied Seaman)
18 February 1915:	Rating ACT. L. S. (Acting Leading Seaman)
28 December 1915:	Rating ACT. P.O. (Acting Petty Officer)
23 December 1916:	Qualified as 1st. Class Machine Gunner
26 May 1917:	Discharged appointed to a Commission.

Evidently too when in the Naval Division in 1915 he served with the Drake Battalion being sent to Gallipoli where his Company landed at night on the Peninsular, although not being involved with any direct action there. They subsequently returned to a Naval Base on the Greek island of Mudros where they could generally recuperate before moving on. Many during that campaign suffered with dysentery.

After progressing to the Machine Gun Corps (Heavy Branch) he was promoted to Second Lieutenant in 1917. That Corps developed into the Tank Corps where he gained the rank of Captain in 1918 while serving in a Reconnaissance Brigade as an Intelligence Officer. There was talk of him escaping at some point from a Prisoner of War Camp, not heavily guarded, and also evidently being gassed, no doubt at Ypres where he saw action with the Tank Regiment (It was reported that 2nd Lt. J. Black of 16 Company was wounded in 1917). Although not being able to substantiate all these details as historical fact, my mother passed on a lot of information over the years about his early life that he had personally related to her. He definitely became one of the youngest Captains in the British Army at the time, being barely 23 years old.

The two medals he was awarded were the Star and the Victory, customarily given to soldiers for services rendered in that War. (London Gazette reported that he was later made an Honorary Colonel on 12th. August 1939). Quite a record!

Whether it was actual shell shock that contributed to him losing most of his hair when relatively young is not certain but his noticeably baldhead in later life definitely became part of the Black hallmark! The War Diaries of the 11th Battalion Tank Corps remind us of the startling reality that a great number of those leaving these shores for France were still very young indeed. It reads: “For the first eight days in January 1918, recreational training was carried out in bitterly cold weather. Route marches, Battalion Runs, Snow-balling and Bob-Sleighting were the chief items.”



Captain in the Tank Regiment 1918

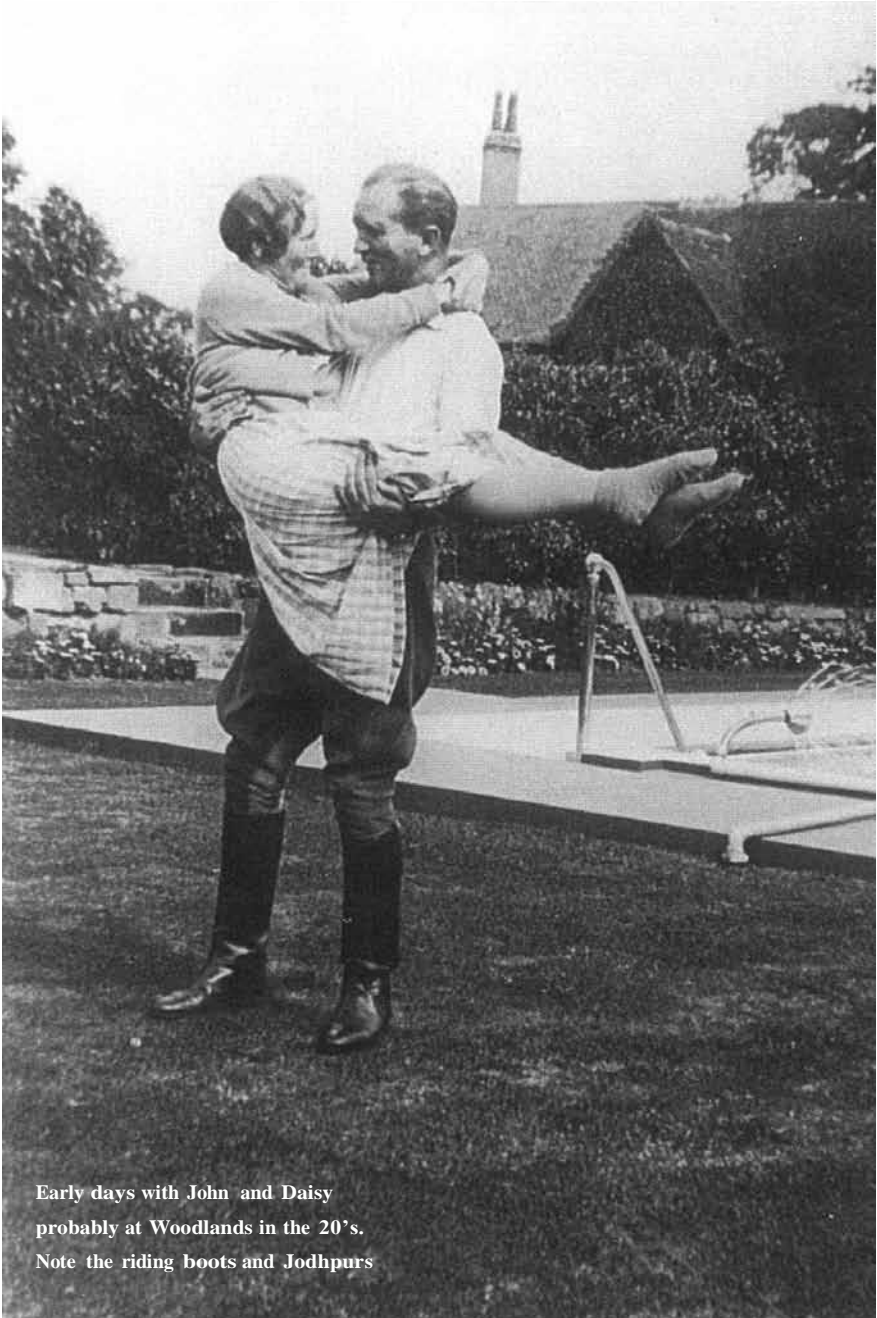
After the First World War he was no doubt reunited with his family down at Kingston while recovering from those wartime experiences and earnestly contemplating his future. But the chain of events which now shaped the next sequence of his life would prove to be highly providential. One day he found himself sharing a railway carriage with an old compatriot of his from the War. Having no plans of his own at this stage he was pleased to learn that his comrade could introduce him to one of William Hillman’s daughters who was not only of a mature yet marriageable age but would guarantee any future husband a job in the lucrative Motor Industry.

The travelling companion in question was most likely a certain Thomas Sydney Dick who had also served in the Tank Regiment reaching the rank of Major, during which time he managed to have married one of Hillman’s daughters himself, namely Dorothy Ann in 1915. He began as Joint Manager of Hillmans in Coventry, later to become Managing Director of the Auto Machinery Company, a subsidiary of Hillmans. Furthermore his nephew Alick Dick went on to work for Standards, eventually taking over as Managing Director after my father’s sudden departure.

By the end of 1919 Black found himself fully ensconced in a caravan at Daw Fields, a 17 acre plot at Corley outside Coventry, where he stayed for the next six months. He finally succeeded in setting fire to this temporary abode which presumably necessitated the search for alternative accommodation.

¹ *The obituary of Thomas Sydney Dick can be found in the Appendix*

In the 1920's when most other motorists would have been sporting those old-fashioned 'hooters' to alert fellow drivers of their existence, Captain Black had a 'Bell' fitted to the



Early days with John and Daisy probably at Woodlands in the 20's. Note the riding boots and Jodhpurs



Shooting in the early 30's. The pursuit of many a country gentleman then.

Conveniently, Alfred Pargetter who actually owned Daw Fields, decided with his wife to move from the solitude of their own country home opposite, which they had built in 1913, and put it up for rent for a couple of years. My father was about to arrive as the new tenant of White Cottage where water was pumped from a well by a wind pump and a shed containing a series of batteries provided lighting for this pleasantly primitive property.

Now known as Captain Black he joined Hillman Cars initially as a Sales Manager going on to marry Margaret Verena Hillman on April 20th 1921 at Keresley near Coventry. Her father William Hillman the motor magnate lived at Keresley Hall, a manor house he had built in 1894 after all six girls had been born. Margaret herself lived there from the age of seven until her marriage. (It is now the Royal Court Hotel and one of the largest in the region). Actually William Hillman died the same year as his daughter's marriage to Captain John Black in 1921, after handing over the running of the family business to him and Spencer Wilks, who also married one of his daughters Kathleen Edith in 1910. Wilks went on to become Director of the Rover Company. The connections between the Hillman family and the Motor Industry are so vast that I understand a complete book is now being researched on the subject!

According to their marriage certificate John Black was 27 years old at the time and Margaret Verena was 34 and so 7 years his senior. He being humbly described as an Engineer, his own father now being promoted to Professor of History which well fits the apparent achievement of translating the Domesday Book, though not single handed, as my dear mother often reassured me. Witnesses at the wedding ceremony were Percy Rowland Hill who also married a Hillman girl, Evelyn, together with Spencer and Kathleen Wilks.



William Hillman and family headstone at Keresley (Laying flat on ground to left of main gate.)

So it must have been a real family affair. The story goes that on their honeymoon my father actually attempted to drown his new wife Daisy, as she was known.

But they soon managed to settle down to married life while living at White Cottage in Corley which was in fact only about two miles away from Keresley. Their daughter Margaret Rosalind was born there on June 26th 1922. John Black was now described on the Birth Certificate as Director Motor Car Company. An interesting 'Deed of Family Arrangement' pertaining to William Hillman's Will dated 1924, dealing with the distribution of his Estate in favour of his widow, identifies Percy Rowland Hill and Spencer Bernau Wilks as the Trustees. William's Widow Fanny Moreton and their

only unmarried daughter Fannie Mabel were still resident at Keresley Hall. One of the Beneficiaries in the document is named as Margaret Verena Black who is shown to be living at Woodlands, Keresley. So John and Daisy had now moved house again, although obviously staying locally. Their first tragedy, though, was to appear soon after when their son John was born in 1926 at Woodlands. He died only four hours later of a lung disorder. In fact his name along with others of the Hillman family is engraved on William Hillman's headstone marking a family plot in St Thomas' cemetery at Keresley. The other names on the gravestone are: William Hillman 1847-1921, Fanny Moreton Hillman 1851-1927, John Spencer Wilks 1927-1929 (another child), and Fannie Mabel Hillman 1874-1964.

In 1928 my father joined the boards of Humber and Commer. But after Hillman, Humber and Commer had become part of the Rootes Group he relinquished his position and took up a new post. By 1929 and at only 34 years of age Captain John Black became General Manager of the Standard Motor Company, after accepting the invitation from Reginald Walter Maudslay. The Company was in dire straits but within nine years he managed to pull things round again by increasing production from around 7,000 cars annually in the year 1930 to nearer 50,700 vehicles in 1939. He became Managing Director of the Standard Motor Company in 1934, the year when Maudslay died (He was joint M.D. with Maudslay in 1933).

1935 brought the distinctive 'Flying Standard' range into play, giving a fresh identity, building up to the best selling year being 1939 obviously cut short by the War.



1935 - John Black on the left riding to the Warwickshire Hunt, one of his sporting passions

Alicia Joan Pears Linton 1930





Temple House on the Arbury Estate earlier inhabited by the Knights Templar

I have very few photographs of those Daisy Hillman days but there is one of a house they were evidently living in during the early thirties. Temple House on the Arbury Estate near Nuneaton is a rather imposing fortress-like structure which is not surprising when you consider that it was actually named after the Knights Templar when it was bequeathed to them in olden times and used as a Cell. By studying a map of the area it soon becomes evident that all the locations where the Hillmans and Blacks lived were really quite close together in a circle between Coventry, Nuneaton and Leamington Spa. I know also that during that period my father used to go riding a lot at Kenilworth with the Warwickshire Hunt and on examining the brass buttons he was sporting on his blue velvet smoking jacket, which I still have, I discovered the initials A.H.C. below the figure of a fox. This refers apparently to the Atherstone Hunt Club. There are also a couple of photos of him on horseback evidently at one of those events. Incidentally Frank Golding, a well-known chauffeur of his, had been a groom before and had no doubt met his future employer in that capacity somewhere around the Stables. His passion for riding even took him into the workplace. He would occasionally be seen on a Saturday morning riding into work!

It would be safe to say that his sporting prowess covered such a wide range of activities that he could be described as a real 'all-rounder', in the true sense of the word. He enjoyed Fishing, Shooting, Sailing, Riding, Squash, Tennis, Skiing and Golf, not to mention his love of Cards, if that could be termed a sport!

He told us once that he'd survived a whole week down at Monte Carlo on the proceeds he'd earned at the gaming table (his Butler, Tom Thorne, later kept a tray of money on hand for such occasions).

It was in 1933 at a dance somewhere near Nuneaton, that he first met my mother Alicia Joan Pears Linton. She was 21 years old at the time, while he was 38 and a married man. She had endured a sheltered upbringing, to put it mildly, from which she spent most of her formative years trying to escape.

'Joan', as she was always known, on sharing the same first name with her mother and grandmother, had been brought up in the locality at Arley Rectory (2 miles from Corley) by a Reverend Uncle by the name of Marmaduke King and a suitably strict Aunt, Catherine Primrose. Her parents James and Alicia Linton were abroad in Persia then, pursuing their respective careers in Church and Medicine. My mother Joan had been born out in Isfahan in 1912 with her four brothers to follow, before all children were to move over to England for school. Her premature birth occurred while on a camel caravan, resulting in her father having to cut the umbilical cord in the middle of the desert!

But now in 1933 she was living at Handsworth Rectory, a quiet Birmingham suburb in those days, presided over by her father who had returned from Persia with her mother and who was now the Assistant Bishop of Birmingham. I remember her telling me that the neighbours were horrified to notice the "Bishop's daughter wearing slacks in the garden"! How times have changed.

She had never really met anyone quite like my father before, as she often recalled. At the same time she never realized what a 'merry-go round' of a life she was about to embark on. They used to meet mostly in secret, often in the middle of a wood where their car headlights would light up the darkness that enveloped them.

It is strange, sometimes, how we can find ourselves being entertained by fictional accounts of such goings on yet when faced with the reality of a scandal in our own personal lives and relationships it is almost impossible to bear. Fiction and Reality do, on occasions, appear to merge together in the paradox which is somehow part of our human nature. We struggle to preserve our moral integrity but easily become desensitized by the decadence displayed all around us in the Media, which in turn can serve to influence our attitudes and ultimately our behaviour toward our fellow human beings. Ironically, as soon as we attempt to recount the 'story of our life' it becomes almost fictional by losing the reality of the moment and becoming just another narrative. To a certain extent, Life is a compromise between Birth and Death, those two great realities which seem to bind us all together on this great journey of ours.

Chapter 2

MALLORY AND THE THIRTIES.



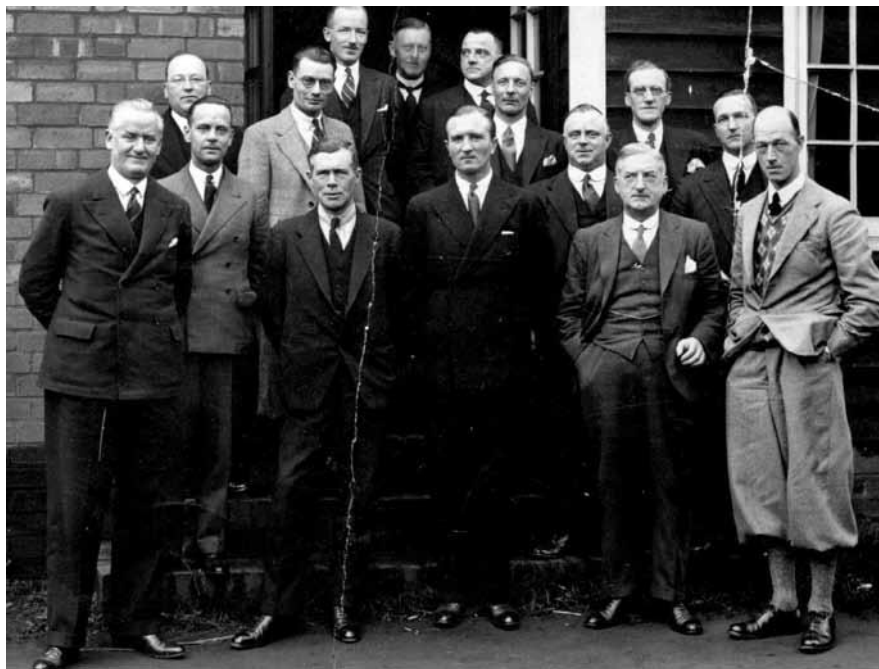
John Paul Black in his newly equipped Director's office in 1933, the year he met Joan.

There has always been a fascination with the Thirties Era. For some it must have been an enchanting time but for others, of course, a time of turmoil with low birth survival rates and high poverty. In reality it is not an easy period to define as it accordingly must have meant different things for different people. But as a Decade it stands out unique with its individual style and even culture. Life, it appears, was not in any way governed by the Media, things were much more on a local level, people were generally considered to be important and there was a style somehow that has never quite been captured or repeated since. Oh yes, every family has a story to tell about their forbears living interesting lives but it is particularly that age and that era that I find so intriguing.



The Duke of Gloucester (2nd from left) collecting his Standard Ensign 16 on the occasion of the opening of the Standard Social Club in 1932 with Capt. John Black (3rd from the left).

Photo courtesy Nigel Maudslay.



The Standard Managers in the early 30's with John Black in the middle, Leslie Dexter on right

Perhaps life was, as they say, still in black and white but there's something rather comforting about that. Anyone who experienced the Colourful Sixties, by comparison, would have found the more basically down-to-earth and even sedate life back then far more endearing, if not refreshing. Historically of course the Thirties were a time of Depression, despite being coloured in part by the film and literature world. What would we have done without Agatha Christie, P.G. Wodehouse or possibly Noel Coward, who I once saw above Montreux in Switzerland, gazing out over Lake Geneva from some vantage point, wearing a salmon pink dinner jacket? However it does also appear as a time when people could sacrifice themselves on a far deeper level for something they believed in. Furthermore they were, it seems, fundamentally more aware of personal accomplishment. There was definitely an object to the exercise coupled in with such a thing as the 'Law of Cause and Effect' which was somehow embedded in the Nation's consciousness. By working hard to achieve your objective or goal you could in turn produce the results you required, giving the future a clarity which in recent times has been sadly lacking in focus. We had the B.B.C., Whitehall and something called 'The Establishment', whatever that was. And if those curiously enduring symbols did in some way stand for some form of stability, they must have meant something to the general populace back then. Yes Nostalgia is a powerful force in our lives and sometimes the Past is a more comfortable place –but only in hindsight! We never really learn from history. We can observe it, acknowledge it, respect it and then move on.

Combined with all of that there was obviously the decadence, despair and degradation that accompany any generation and every society yet Morality was not a forgotten word. Lacking the so-called Welfare State the emphasis was far more on personal responsibility and achievement. Apart from the obvious technological advances we all benefit from today I certainly do question the substance and even significance of this Modern Age of ours!

It was at Mallory Court near Leamington Spa that all the main dramas of my father's life would unfold. He actually bought this Country Home in 1936 for £11,000 and lived there for the next 14 years until 1950, 3 years of which with Daisy, 4 on his own, followed by 7 years with my mother Joan. Built in 1916 Mallory typifies the romantic revival period with its gables, stone dressings, mullioned windows and gothic-style fireplaces. Also the delightful balconies and wood-panelled dining-room are a joy to behold. These days it is a magnificent Country Hotel, having been extended with tastefully designed additions to accommodate the 30 sumptuous rooms now on offer. In the thirties the Black household were living there in some style. The Electoral Roll, for instance, of the 1938-39 year gives a list of those inhabitants including, naturally, John Paul Black, Margaret Verena Black and their daughter ¹Rosalind.

¹ See *'The Quest for Rosalind'* in the Appendix pages 96-99.



1939 - Mallory Court with John Black bowling, Rosalind on the left and an unknown couple

Occupying the House also were Matilda Clarke, Laura Griffith (nanny), Doris Sely as well as Gustavus and Florence Dyer living in The Gardeners Cottage. So a good team of staff were on hand at that time. Regrettably I have only one photo taken at Mallory then, showing my father playing bowls on the lawn, his daughter Rosalind looking pensive on the left while an unknown, more mature couple to the right, stand together waiting for their shot. If the photo was taken in 1939, which somehow fits the time frame, then Daisy, who probably took it, would have been 51, my father 44 and Rosalind a mere 17 years. Significantly an issue of *Auto-car* magazine of 1939 made reference to Captain John Black buying his daughter a Flying Standard 8 Coupe for her 17th birthday. Now this is where things started to get interesting. I had made various efforts over the years to find out exactly what happened to this half-sister of mine, who of course I had never met, but she proved to be extremely elusive. Firstly, an enquiry on the internet brought forth the suggestion that she had died a long time ago somewhere in America yet that proved inconclusive. I'd also found out that 1939 was the year that my father and Daisy were divorced so the whole jigsaw puzzle was now beginning to take shape at last. All that my mother ever said on the subject was that "Daisy went off with the chauffeur while Rosalind took up with a Garage Man" (keeping it in the family business, as it were). My father never mentioned anything about his previous marriage or his daughter and we never thought to ask.

But then I learnt of the tragedy. An elderly lady with Hillman and Triumph connections, who remembered Rosalind from many years ago, informed me through her son, that she had actually died comparatively young in an accident through falling downstairs. And that to me brought great remorse, as not only had I been bereft of a half-sister in a tragic accident but it also seemed that the search was now over with nothing else to ascertain.

Furthermore, attempts to find either a marriage or death certificate in the U.K. proved fruitless while nothing became evident in the U.S.A. either, with very little in the way of actual proof of her ever having moved out there in the first place. It was now literally a dead-end.

So my father and Daisy's married life had been blighted with tragedy once again. Where Rosalind died remained a mystery at that time until much later when I discovered, through a chance conversation on the phone, that indeed Rosalind had teamed up after the War with a certain William Barnett, an engineer by trade. For some reason her father Captain Black disapproved of their relationship, severing contact soon afterwards. William would become the proverbial 'garage man' after moving to Devon where he ran a garage on a property near Exeter, while also keeping a small farm. They had two children, Jimmy and Dawn, before Rosalind eventually died in 1975 after an ill-fated accident on the stairs at her mother's house near Torbay in Devon.

And something of intrigue did come to light concerning Daisy Hillman too. A few enquiries had been circulating among contacts in the Hillman family when it was divulged that Daisy had indeed eloped with a man named Blanchard who ended up running a Car Dealership at Pembroke Dock in South Wales, selling Standard and Triumph cars, which seemed appropriate somehow. According to the Census Records, Louis Blanchard lived at Elsdon's Service Garage, 40/42, Bush Street, Pembroke Dock from 1946-1969.

It also transpired, from another source entirely, that in 1939 Captain Black did indeed have a chauffeur by the name of Blanchard. So evidently this incidental piece of information about the chauffeur, communicated to me through my mother, was in fact correct. A drama was beginning to unfold and I felt it was now time to start writing it all down before it became completely lost in obscurity.

Whether it was the need for a Bolt-hole, in lieu of his failing marriage, or perhaps, more realistically, a growing passion for the sea and personal privacy, but something continued to kindle in 'The Captain' an increasing enthusiasm for accomplishing his love of sailing and boating. So in 1938 he built a Sailing Haven he named Mallory-y-Mor (Mallory by the sea) in North Wales situated between Harlech and Barmouth at Pensarn. Extremely isolated and completely lacking any road access whatsoever 'The Bungalow', as it came to be known, was located right on the edge of an estuary. Effectively it became a secluded retreat but one that many would appreciate in the years to come.



Louis Blanchard and Daisy at Barmouth in North Wales. They married in 1949.

Having had it designed and prefabricated down at the Standard Works in Coventry it was then transported up by train. Apparently the plans, according to my father's specifications, were drawn up professionally by Messrs. T.R.J. Meakin and Son and then left to 'Jock the Hut', who later worked on the manufacture of Mosquito aircraft, to put it all together with his team back at the Canley factory.

I found out a while ago that a special Mini-Rail had been implemented, leading off the main train-track opposite the site at Pensarn to make it easier to unload the enormous quantity of timber and materials used in its construction. It was really a ship-like structure with six cabins, two of which were double rooms, four of double bunks, a spacious saloon, a decent-sized bathroom and a compact kitchen gracing a Bell-Board on the wall for when service was required by visiting guests. Around the square perimeter of this nautical box-like edifice ran a 5ft. Deck made of teak completing the maritime theme. The whole structure was supported on cast iron stilts elevating it off the ground to the height of about 7ft. Positioned by the estuary, which usually flooded in winter, it would then be left only approachable by boat from the other side where there was a boat yard. It was even possible to walk over the railway bridge which spanned this estuary, preferably when a train wasn't crossing at the same time, but it was never advisable. A rambling footpath from the Llanbedr road about a mile away presented the only other access to this remote hideaway. Generally, however, it was the landing stage on the estuary right opposite the main approach to the property that provided the most suitable mooring used in normal weather conditions.



The Bungalow on stilts “Mallory-Y-Mor” built at Pensarn in 1938 and still there today.

Conveniently in 1939 a military airfield was built in the vicinity just near the idyllic Mochras Island, or Shell Island as it was known in English. This would prove invaluable in the future for more urgent accessibility.

He must have spent much time up there towards the end of that 30's decade which had brought him so much drama, while this important episode in his life was now drawing to a close. The production lines at the Canley plant in Coventry were bustling with activity nonetheless. During 1935 the factories were completely re-organized to handle increasing demand by utilizing conveyor systems and also electric trams. At the end of that year 144 cars a day were being manufactured. The first Shadow Factory known as Fletch South was built in 1936 on the site of the old Company Golf Course when the Government realized the stage in Europe was now changing and that Britain had to prepare itself for greater air power. Also those graceful Flying Standards were being produced between 1935 and 1939. Decisive times no doubt, but in those critical days his romance with my mother must have spurred him on by giving him some of that dynamic momentum and general impetus he became so famous for. Their courtship would last ten years encompassing an era that could well be described as romantic. Various attempts were made by her parents to prevent this controversial relationship. They just did not approve of their daughter marrying a divorced man, notwithstanding his being seventeen years her senior! Out of desperation she was eventually sent to Nassau to forget him but to no avail. He wrote to her every day during that year and even sent flowers!



Elegant publicity photos of Standards from the 1930's.





Saxon Mill, Warwickshire. Photos courtesy Phil Homer of Standard Motor Club



Captain John Black's Secretary Edna Taylor, who later married Drummond Phillips in 1937 (also of Standard) , was used in this publicity photo along with Doug Gardiner son of Charles Gardiner, Chief Buyer at Standard in the 1930's.

Chapter 3

SWITZERLAND - THE BRITISH SKIING TRADITION

My father's skiing exploits were legendary. The two resorts he appears to have frequented most were at Murren, in the Bernese Oberland and Davos, nearer the Austrian border. He started his skiing career fairly early in that exciting epoch by joining the Kandahar Ski Club in 1929. He was then on the committee by 1933. Also he was presented with the Gold Kandahar Badge in 1937, a prestigious medal awarded only to experienced skiers of the period who were strong enough to brave the rigorous slopes of that terrain.

The Kandahar Ski Club was founded in Murren in 1924 by Sir Arnold Lunn who had promoted Slalom and Downhill skiing in the region since 1911 when he named the Kandahar Race after a certain Lord Roberts of Kandahar who had distinguished himself in Afghanistan and later donated a magnificent trophy. Arnold's father, Sir Henry Lunn, who based his own travel agency in London, had been bringing tourism to the Swiss Alps since 1902, later giving birth to the well known Lunn Poly brand. During the First World War in 1916 and working through the Red Cross he managed to house a considerable quantity of British prisoners of war in a number of hotels he ran around Switzerland, including Murren. His company incidentally was aptly named Alpine Sports Ltd.

Historically the Kandahar Race itself originated in the Tyrol region of Austria at St. Anton where Arnold Lunn had collaborated with Hannes Schneider who introduced the Arlberg style to what was to become the home of Alpine Ski Racing. When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938 Schneider, who was believed to be hostile to the regime, was arrested which prompted Lunn to bring the race back to Murren. Schneider did in fact escape to the United States with his family where he founded a new ski school on the same principles as his Austrian heritage had taught him.

There was a strong British tradition of skiers in those days. Resorts like Wengen (where the Downhill Only Club originated), Murren where the Lunn family lived and Davos which had been made popular ever since Arthur Conan Doyle made 'skiing' a very British sport there. Sir Henry Lunn was a good friend of Conan Doyle and as a fellow venturer even suggested, when Sherlock Holmes was beginning to put a strain on his creator that the ominous Reichenbach Falls would be an ideal spot to do away with him!

But it would be at Murren in the early thirties that Captain John Black first met up with a fellow skier by the name of Walter Amstutz¹. He and Arnold Lunn had actually ascended the famous Eiger mountain (on Skis!) in 1924 along with a couple of other enthusiasts. In 1928 Lunn and Amstutz inaugurated a 10 mile race called ‘The Inferno’ which is still contested today. He also accompanied King Albert 1 of Belgium on a number of skiing expeditions before his tragic death in a climbing accident in 1934.



Captain Black at Murren 1939

Since 1930 Amstutz had been promoting St. Moritz as the healthy ski resort it came to be known for, becoming Director of Tourism there for a number of years. He then teamed up with Walter Herdeg, the famous artist and designer who printed some of the most iconic posters and publicity brochures of that art-deco period. Amstutz found the tourists while Herdeg provided the publicity. (Amstutz & Herdeg was established in Zurich as a publishing company in 1938).

So before my father had even met the fellow, Walter Amstutz already had a proven track record on the ski slopes, even sporting the more prestigious Diamond K Badge which was the highest award. He also received the Order of the British Empire for his development of Anglo-Swiss relations. His wife was the English writer Eveline Palmer.

The first ski-lift in Switzerland was built in 1934 at Davos. Until that time it was only the really dedicated and adventurous sportsmen who were to be seen on the slopes expending most of their energy clambering up snow-clad mountains before actually enjoying the downhill journey on skis! In those days skiing was a luxury for the rich with the British typically in the forefront. I knew something of my father’s skiing exploits and had heard that he had a vested interest in a ski-lift project. To quote from *Triumph World* magazine of Aug/Sept 2004 in the *Memories of Coventry* series written by Robin Penrice:

¹ See Appendix page 100-101 “Walter Amstutz (1902-1997) The Last Pioneer”.



From the left: Spencer Wilks, Kate Wilks (née Hillman), Oliver Lucas and John Black 1936.

Postcard "Spen has wrecked his ankle and won't ski for a few days. They have all been doing too much for beginners. All my love darling, John. It's raining hard"



From the left: Eveline Amstutz (née Palmer), John Black, Joan Black and Ski instructor in Murren February 1946 in front of the Jungfrau Hotel.

**John Black - Murren 1939,
note the Kandahar Badge
awarded in 1937.**



“It was also in the 1930’s that Black became interested (along with other investors) in the installation of ski-lifts in the Alps and, as an inveterate skier himself, got very involved with the project. Harry Webster tells a lovely story about how he had to tow Black on skis with a long rope behind a Standard saloon around the snow-covered company golf-course”. It must have all taken place in that interim period before the War, sometime in the late thirties, and surely involved more than just a matter of self-gratification on the ski slopes by some eccentric Englishman who enjoyed his winter sports.

There is, however, one definite reference that historically appears to fit the time frame which relates... “And so the first ski lift in the Bernese Oberland, the Murren Schiltgrat, was constructed in 1937. At that time the masts were built of wood.” The Swiss Tourist Board confirmed the authenticity of this scheme. I then found out that it was opened on 24th December 1937 at a cost of 140,000 Swiss Francs, a great amount in those days, mostly sponsored through the food industry. It was constructed by Ernst Gustav Constam, an Engineer from Zurich. Also the steering committee was largely made up of Murren’s Hoteliers. Although not well documented, it has been recorded in the history books by the families of those who must have known about the project going on at the time.

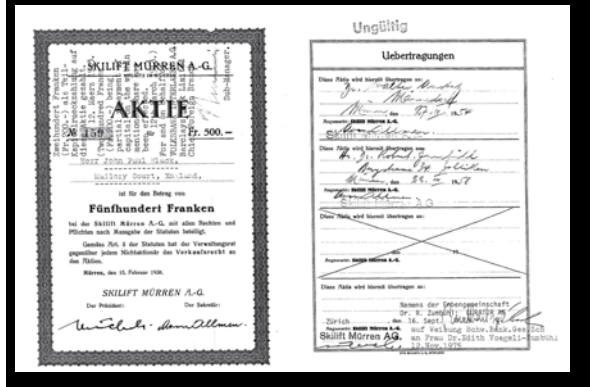
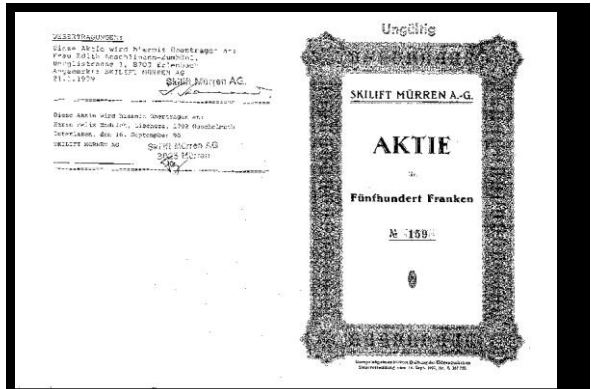
And that might well have been the end of the matter except for the fact that the Schilthornbahn Tourist Office of Interlaken later contacted me, providing



documented evidence of 20 Share Certificates (No. 140-159), of 500 Swiss Francs each, (totalling 10,000 Swiss Francs) which were invested in the Murren Ski-lift Company, established 15th February 1938. These were worth £500 then, which was enough to buy a semi-detached house in the suburbs of London, and were held in the name of a certain Herr John Black of Mallory Court, England. We now had proof of his financial involvement with the project. Also the document showed that he had withdrawn 200 Swiss Francs (£10) out of one of these share certificates (No. 159) on March 12th 1943. Volksbank of Interlaken made this transaction through the

John Black on the Murren Schiltgrat Ski-lift 1939.

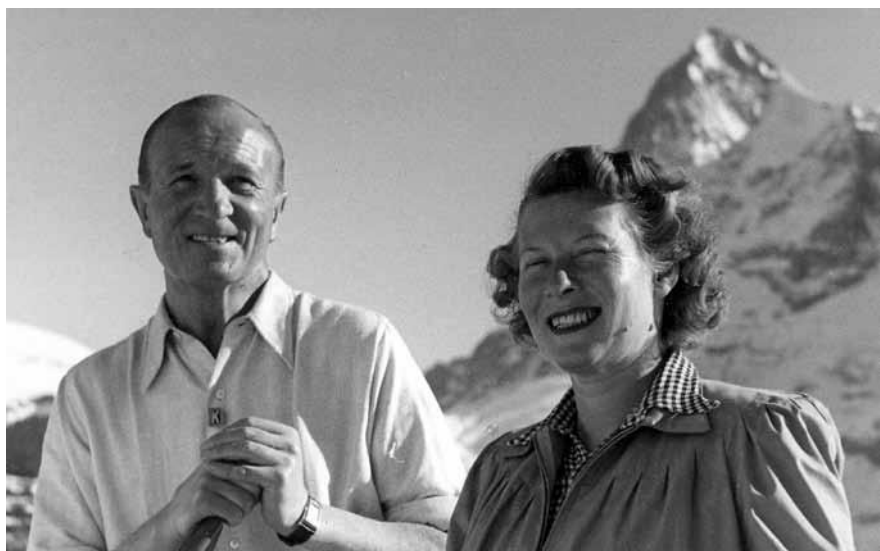
Chief Foreign Branch of Barclays Bank Ltd. This implied that he also had travelled over to Switzerland during the War and was obviously short of a bit of cash on that occasion. Although Walter Amstutz, whose father incidentally ran a hotel in Murren, did not invest in the Schiltgrat himself due to other commitments, he did later play a part. Herr John Black's shares were transferred on Feb. 27th 1954 to Dr. Walter Amstutz of Mannedorf, Zurich, who had by then become representative for Ferguson Tractors in Switzerland through his firm Service Company Ltd. Dreikonigstrasse 21 Zurich.



Herr John Black's share certificates from 1938. The shares were transferred to Dr. Walter Amstutz in 1954

My father, naturally, was instrumental in helping set up that business. There is even a record in the Standard Archives to the effect that Sir John Black returned from Switzerland in March 1954 which was also two months after his 'resignation'. Walter's daughter Yvonne, as a youth, remembered John Black on his many skiing visits to her father's chalet at Murren and also to her parents' house on the Lake of Zurich. She described him as a "tall, elegant, imposing gentleman, somewhat distant", which pretty well sums him up! Having described her own father as a "completely different character, being very communicative and outgoing" she went on to relate that "they seemed to get along very well". Two popular hotels in Murren which were brimming with tourists enjoying their winter sports then were The Palace and The Jungfrau. Many photos in the collection I now have are accompanied by dates and names on the back of them which are useful for identification purposes. Consequently I have often wondered what on earth my father was doing skiing in Switzerland in 1939 when he was on the brink of a divorce and the World was on the brink of war.





John and Joan Black, happier times together, captured in Murren, 1946.





Field Marshal Montgomery and Sir John Black at Murren in 1949 enjoying lunch together.

I suppose it was just typical of someone who seemed to be, somehow, always at the right place at the right time. He was largely a man of the moment who appears also to have had the knack of meeting the right people at the opportune time too. Appropriately, on examining the photos, my father looked more at peace with himself on those slopes than at almost any other place. However on one expedition with Walter Amstutz they encountered a massive avalanche which could well have proved disastrous. They were completely buried in a few feet of snow, both believing that the other had died in the onslaught. My heroic father then clawed his way up to the surface until his fingers bled and was greatly astounded to discover that his skiing companion had survived the ordeal in a similar manner! The only problem now was that he'd only managed to retrieve one of his skis and consequently had to complete the homeward journey accordingly. But that only proved what an adventurous skier he must have been since he made excellent progress on his one remaining ski. If you can survive an ordeal like that you'd probably be equipped to tackle almost anything this world had to offer. And it had plenty to offer!

Little is known of my father's *Après-Ski* activities except the one story I distinctly remember him telling us as children. One night he returned to his hostelry after a session at a local Bar to discover that some trickster had swopped around all the room numbers on the bedroom doors. When he eventually found his own room he was surprised to find a young lady in his bed who was then promptly dispatched back to her own room, if she could have found it, after the initial embarrassment!

We do know that he often travelled over to Switzerland by train because of a later memorandum to his colleague and right-hand man John Warren who had booked him on a sleeper car for one of his trips. It was to the effect that: "In the future I would prefer it if my sleeping quarters were positioned to the side of the Bogey wheel and not directly over it", which had obviously caused him much discomfort!

Photos I have in my possession include a very classic one of Sir John Black at Murren with Field Marshall Montgomery enjoying lunch together, it appears. On my dad's sweater is the Gold Kandahar Medal or the Gold K as it was known. The year was 1949 which explains why they were both looking quite relaxed having survived the rigours of the Second World War in their very separate roles. It should be noted that Montgomery became a regular visitor to Switzerland during the late 40's after he had fostered a young Swiss lad, even paying for his education. He was well known for his compassion on and off the battlefield although his attitude to life was not always as conventional as some would have it. There's even a photo I saw in a book of my father showing Montgomery round a Standard Vanguard in 1947, so presumably they were more than just passing acquaintances on their Continental Holiday. It is known too that both Montgomery and the Queen of Belgium used the Schiltgrat Ski-lift.

Montgomery, to his credit, became the President of the Kandahar Ski Club between the years 1951 and 1959. This Club continues today, preserving much of the British Skiing tradition.



John and Joan with Walter Amstutz' daughter Yvonne, Murren, February 1946.

Chapter 4

MONTE CARLO OR BUST

In 1929 the New Avon Body Co. Ltd. entered into a ten year contract with the Standard Motor Company for Standard to supply rolling chassis for their coach-building facilities. Avon and Standard would enjoy an amicable alliance for some years through Standard's founder Reginald Maudslay who died in 1934. Things then turned around dramatically.

Captain John Black, the new Managing Director of Standard, was soon helping Avon out considerably with financial backing, so felt justified in personally appointing to office Reginald's son, John R. Maudslay, as Chairman of the ailing Avon Company in October 1935.

Celebrating this new partnership the two men, together with their respective wives, travelled down to the Monte Carlo Rally in Maudslay's 20hp Flying Standard Avon Continental Drop Head Coupe, somewhat typifying his extravagant lifestyle, later a bone of contention, and Black's ambitious inclinations.

Black evidently spent most of the week down at the famous Casino, neglecting his wife in the process. But it was Maudslay who ended up disgracing himself back at their hotel room, after having too much to drink one afternoon. This, along with the issue of Maudslay's lavish personal expenses, precipitated the proverbial 'clashing of personalities' so prevalent in those turbulent times among Captains of Industry.

By 1936 Avon was seriously struggling, mostly due to competition by SS Jaguar with their Standard-produced six cylinder engines. In 1937 Avon declared bankruptcy, went into receivership and the Standard Motor Company adopted the role of Creditors.

The Company Secretary and Chief Accountant for Standard at the time was Leslie Dexter (see photo page 18), who would have overseen the original financial negotiations between these two companies. An enigmatic character, Dexter had become a strong associate of Black's during the 1930s period, sharing a strong conviction and endearing humour. Sadly Leslie Dexter died of TB in 1937 aged only 40. Full pay was awarded him throughout his lengthy illness, and there were so many flowers at his funeral in Stoneleigh that Captain Black had to lay on no fewer than three Company Works Buses to carry them all back from the funeral parlour! Dexter's popularity was such that his widow Isobel received countless letters of condolence from all departments of the Standard Motor Company, including their office in Canberra.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of this saga concerns the occasion in 1930 after the Dexters first moved to Kenilworth in Warwickshire. In what has been described as ‘a bit of a romantic gesture,’ John Black actually offered to adopt their four year old daughter Fay. His own daughter Rosalind, an only child of eight at the time, was not only showing signs of solitude, but was also proving to be somewhat of a difficult child, so it was felt that a little ‘company’ would do her good.

Fay, who is now well into her eighties, was to have her own pony, later to be educated in a finishing school in Switzerland and would of course have been brought up in the comfort of that grand country home, Mallory Court. But it was not to be. The Dexters never took Black up on the offer, but without any love lost.

After sending his telegram of condolence following Dexter’s death, John Black went on to employ Isobel Dexter’s nephew Tim Smedley, who’d come over from New Zealand to widen his engineering experience. He was put to work on engineering projects in one of the Shadow Factories during the war, working on Bristol Mercury Aircraft Cylinders.

One colourful character who first appeared on the scene in 1927 was Louis Blanchard. Standard wanted to inspect a Mathis car to compare with their Standard 9, so he brought one over from Strasbourg where he worked as an engineer for Mathis after his time as a racing mechanic with Bugatti. He soon became employed as Chief Tester in the Service Department at Standard, eventually being hired as Black’s personal chauffeur.

Back at Mallory Court, Captain Black’s gaming instincts would continue. The main Standard dealer in Coventry in those days was a fellow named Sammy Newsome, who once related to his son Paul about the occasion when he was invited to dinner one evening. At the end of the meal, Black enquired if he might be interested in a game of cards. After receiving the affirmative reply hoped for, Capt. Black rang for his Butler Tom Thorne, expressing the need for cards. Thorne duly returned a few minutes later bearing a tray laden with currency of various denominations, together with a pack of cards. The game would then begin.

Perhaps Black’s compulsion for gambling and risk-taking spilled over into his personal financial investment dealings while with the Standard Motor Company. Archive documents bear reference to regular share transactions going on, including many instances of buying and selling in the names of both my parents.

When he was famously questioned by the Inland Revenue about his £4,000 entertainment allowance, submitted in 1949, Black simply explained by letter that his wife Lady Black was finding it too much of a strain to continue offering hospitality at Mallory Court for the many guests who expected to be entertained.

The reality was that the whole Standard entourage would customarily enjoy the local hotels, pubs and restaurants on Company expenses. Yet, rather than becoming wealthy in his own right, Sir John Black successfully built up the Company into a highly efficient working machine, formulated through both Standard and Triumph, during his twenty year management,

Yes he was a great opportunist, a real showman and notorious for his gamesmanship, but his contribution to the export field, together with his strategic planning and decision making, definitely helped to put Britain on the global map in the manufacturing world. Never one to do things by halves, with John Black it was either Monte Carlo or Bust!



John Maudslay & wife at Torquay Rally 1936 with Flying Twenty drophead coupe A young John Black in Wales with SS Jaguar Sports Car 1936



Rosalind Black 1938 Standard 'Flying Eight' outside Canley Factory on holiday Captain John Black (middle) in this early photo



Leslie Dexter (1897-1937)
(See also photo on page 18)



Rosalind on right at Temple House
1936. Her love of horses endured



John Black publicity photo 1936



Joan living behind the veil '40's style

“Rather tall, trig, almost ‘Guardee’, blondish with scarcely a grey hair, he does not look his 52. A certain sternness is redeemed however, by the recurrent twinkle. The general effect is one of rugged, repressed energy. There is something of Monty’s effect of taut steel wires about him. His speech is slow, easy, cultivated, reassuring; but the lips are apt to remain grim. A formidable man.” Extract from: **Sir John Black by Cecil Chisholm 1948.**



Captain Black seated in the rear (nearside) being chauffeur-driven in his special bodied 1938 3½ litre SS Jaguar Drop-head Coupé. “Coventry Gauge and Tool Co. Ltd” in the background.

William Lyons and John Black association

Ever since 1929 when Captain Black first joined Standards a strong association had been forged with William Lyons, largely based it should be noted, on abject rivalry. Beginning with ‘Swallow Coach-building’ and as founder of the iconic SS brand (widely thought to stand for ‘Swallow Sidecars’) Lyons was fortunate in giving Standards the contract to supply their powerful six-cylinder engines, complete rolling chassis and running gear for his magnificent low-slung sporting motor. By 1935 the SS Jaguar with its newly designed chassis would be selling extremely well. 1937 brought forth the more powerful four-door 3.5 litre models while Standard continued to manufacture top quality engines throughout the thirties and up till 1948 when they were still supplying parts for some of the Jaguar range. The big mistake on Black’s part was to sell all their machining capability for those six-cylinder engines to Lyons, a decision he would soon learn to regret.

After the War, together with his new found status and having personally sealed the acquisition of Triumph, Sir John Black was now in a position to fire a double volley across Jaguar’s bows in the form of the Triumph Roadster and the Renown. But it was the long awaited TR2 which would complete the ‘Hat trick’ and place Black firmly on that highly competitive stage of Industrial Post-War Britain. He would never fully enjoy the fruitage of his ambitions though, by retiring from the race, but his contribution to the historic Export Policy would leave a legacy of lasting value to the Triumph Insignia.

Chapter 5

THE FORTIES

By 1940 back at Mallory Court Laura Griffith had gone but Rose Mouldes was now included along with the ubiquitous Thomas Thorne the Butler and Mary his wife living in their own cottage on the Estate. Thorne it appeared would always be there, rather Jeeves-like, to support The Captain in his times of need. (It is reported that he may have been in fact his Army Batman during the First World War, but no proof was forthcoming). Being a great traditionalist Thorne even had a squeak engineered into his shoes to alert people of his impending arrival! He was technically employed by the Standard Motor Company and although serving his master in several different capacities he finished up working in the Company Executive Dining Room.

The world stage, however, was not so stable. In Britain, before the War, efforts had been made to consolidate resources for the manufacture of aircraft. Captain Black had already approached the Government with a view to cooperating with plans for a mass production policy enabling more effective use of the facilities at hand. Thus was born the concept of the Shadow Factories¹ which basically amalgamated many of the Motor Companies of the day under one umbrella. Having enthusiastically backed this Government Scheme my father gained contracts to build and operate two of these factories, simply known as Aero 1 and Aero 2. One covered over 6 acres, the other 7 acres. A total of 4,323 people worked in the first factory and 6,064 in the second, employing no less than 2,000 extra workers for these assembly lines on this gargantuan Aviation Project. They came to be known as "Fletch North" and "Fletch South".

The general idea was that, if you could manufacture the various components in different locations, it would minimize the possibility of total loss if one area was to be targeted by the dreaded Luftwaffe. This mass production technique proved so successful that a similar principle was later used after the war in those same Shadow Factories for the purpose of running great numbers of popular selling vehicles, especially the Standard Vanguard, off the assembly lines. The Ferguson tractor led the cavalcade from the Banner Lane factory.

In 1940 many places in England were bombed including of course the complete devastation of Coventry. By the end of October that year, after London, the south east of England and a number of cities had been bombarded mercilessly

¹ A comprehensive list of what was produced in the Shadow Factories can be found in the Appendix pages 104-105, "Shadow Factory Production"

the Battle of Britain culminated resulting in 915 aircraft lost to the R.A.F. and some 1,733 to the Luftwaffe. 1,066 De Havilland Mosquito aircraft had been manufactured by Standards in Coventry during the conflict and then assembled at the Ansty airfield (5 bombs fell there on June 25th 1940). Then there were the 20,000 Bristol Hercules aircraft engines, 750 complete Oxford Trainers, 10,000 service vans, 54,500 Claudel Hobson carburettors, 2,800 Beaverette armoured cars, 5,000 fire pumps, 417,000 cylinders for Pegasus and Mercury engines, 63,000 constant speed propeller units, 3,000 Beaufighter fuselages, 250,000 bomb release mechanisms plus many other vital components.

For his contribution to the project of these Shadow Factories as Chairman of the Joint Aero Engine Committee my father received his Knighthood in July 1943. Technically he was now described as a Knight Bachelor, an accolade normally reserved for Captains of Industry. Despite now being a Knight I always felt that the title 'Captain' really suited him best for the following reasons: He was in his own right an Army Captain and then of course a Captain of Industry but he was also, along with his great love of the sea, very much the Captain of his own Ship, as it were, despite the many Mutinies he had to suffer! And we could mention too that he was in an ironic way Captain of my mother's heart!

A newspaper turned up recently having been found under somebody's floorboards, evidently used for blocking out a draught. It is a copy of the Sunday Dispatch of Nov. 12th 1944. One item caught my eye, and somehow captures the mood of those Wartime days, entitled "Gun Girls will get new Jobs." "Arrangements are being made to transfer a number of the Gun Girls- members of the A.T.S. at mixed Ack-Ack batteries-to more sedentary jobs. With the lull in the battle against the flying bombs, and the decrease in enemy air raids over this country, many of the gun sites at which the girls work as plotters and on prediction machines are becoming redundant. On the other hand, there is demand for A.T.S. at Record and Pay Offices as clerks, and at other units as drivers. There are 18 girls needed to operate the complicated fire control mechanisms at every gun site and seven more are needed for each predictor. The closing down of gun sites in parts of the country where there have been no raids for a long time will therefore release hundreds of girls for other duties. No sites will be scrapped however, without full consideration of the military risks involved. In many instances girls transferred will be financially better off as they will receive tradesmen's rates of pay in their new jobs." We often manage to forget exactly what our parents and grandparents had to go through.

After the War all that was left of the Triumph Motor Company, after the bombing, was in fact the Name which my father cleverly yet significantly adopted. He bought Triumph for £75,000! A new post-War image had now been created. The Standard Works had also received a certain amount of damage despite the existence of the Company Barrage Balloon, designed to deter any unwanted aircraft. (Black lived a good part of the War in a flat at Canley).



The Gates of Buckingham Palace July 1943 on the occasion of John Black's Knighthood. Charles Band, the original Chairman of Standards, is on the left with Joan in middle.



A proud moment together. John and Joan at Buckingham Palace soon after their wedding.



Joan in WAAF Flight Officer uniform on the occasion of John Black's Knighthood.



Sir John Black to right of the sign, Test Pilot fourth from right with scarf. Production never stopped at Canley being outside the city. December 1945 (c) BMIHT 1,066th Mosquito.

A building firm by the name of Garlicks Ltd. of Coventry who had also built the Shadow Factories repaired all this War damage, incurring a hefty bill noted in the archives (£616 1s 10d: Air raid damage to the Paint Shop which had been hit on 26th Sept 1940) Funnily enough at Mallory my father would often comment to my mother when looking out of the window in the morning: “Garlick’s back!” implying the regular building work done there too.

In 1945 Sir John Black applied to the College of Arms for permission to ‘Bear Arms’ which basically meant he could have his own Family Crest. Having been granted Arms, he set about having the design drawn up with a personal theme to suit his new status. The result was intriguing yet traditional. A heraldic helmet graced the top of this crest with a ‘Black Bird’ perched above it. The lower centre motif was of a car steering wheel, which was appropriate of course. Then above this symbol an open book revealed an inscription declaring when translated that “Britain is an Island Eight Hundred Miles Long”. These were the opening words of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle perhaps offering a traditional English theme. On the other hand this may well have been a stab at convention, something for which Black was well known. He deplored any form of pretentiousness, which could be construed as a kind of contradiction when you consider the lavish lifestyle he enjoyed! Nevertheless he despised the Nouveau riche with their ‘Folie de Grandeur’. Consequently he is reputed, on at least one occasion, to have made a point of ordering an extremely prestigious bottle of wine at an expensive restaurant only to deliberately mispronounce its name. A case in point was the name Nuits St. Georges which he pronounced “Newts Saints Georg-ees” in an affected English accent! He hated falsehood or snobbery in any form, possibly going back to the Army.

With his First World War experiences behind him Sir John Black continued to sympathize with those who were directly affected by the events of the Second World War. This was why he always guaranteed the position held by personnel who had served in the Armed Forces and who had then returned to England. In short, he kept their job for them after the War. His support of the British Legion included that of their Scottish Pipe Band which he sponsored generously. Also the Bungalow in Wales proved to be an ideal convalescent home for wounded servicemen before and during that conflict. Certainly a tranquil setting such as that would have greatly contributed to their recovery. It is known that among them Douglas Bader, who was not the most agreeable person to get on with, spent part of his recuperative period up at Pensarn (A stile was even converted into a gate for him). The airport too, strategically located nearby, would have proved invaluable in those times when speed would have been of the essence.

Meanwhile back in Coventry the Standard Vanguard was becoming the most popular motor running off the conveyor belts for the home market as well as abroad. Interestingly a very similar 2 litre, 4 cylinder engine was adapted for use in the Ferguson Tractor which proved to be so lucrative in that Post-War period. (It was also put to good use in the Triumph Renown and Roadster, TR2, TR3 and TR3a, TR4 and TR4a, Swallow Doretti, and the Morgan Plus Four and also the Peerless and later Warwick car). Triumph had become a subsidiary of the Standard Motor Company utilizing their existing engines and components to great effect. The name would also challenge the other British manufacturers of the day.

The vast aero engine factory in Banner Lane now became home to the production on a grand scale of the TE 20 Tractor. That 'Little Grey Fergie' effectively revolutionized farming on a global scale. Around 60,000 cars and 70,000 tractors were being produced annually during their heyday down in Coventry. A total of no less than 517,651 'Fergies' were manufactured and sold worldwide between 1946 and 1956.

Harry Ferguson¹ had devised a top-link sensing system which would enable the plough to remain at the same level over extremely rough ground. His famous converging three-point linkage would provide stability. The problem with earlier tractors had been their tendency to tip over due to the weight of the plough overbalancing. Trailers could be conveniently hooked up or dropped by way of a pick-up hitch without the driver having to leave his seat. The dozens of implements too were attached to the tractor by way of this special lynch-pin and could be elevated easily when turning round for the next furrow. Manoeuvrability was increased by the independent brake system on its two large wheels allowing for tighter turning, although not his own design. Ferguson later utilized a Four-wheel-drive concept, endearingly known as the 'Ferguson Formula' that was eventually used on racing cars and the Jensen FF.



'A Tale of Two Industrial Giants'- Harry Ferguson and John Black on their 'Little Grey Fergie' the TE 20 in 1946. (c) BMIHT. Ferguson died on Oct 25th 1960 at his home Abbotswood aged 76.



Harry Ferguson's famous publicity stunt at Claridges in 1948 with his TE 20 tractor. He was awarded more than £6million in an out of court settlement on Patent infringements by Ford!

My father had some lovely reminiscences to tell us about Harry Ferguson, an equally controversial character of the day, with whom he'd gone into partnership in a big way. Harry was an Ulsterman and a great personality too. He used to arrive from Ireland normally with a whole Boat load of women as his regular entourage. When anyone would visit him at his home in the Cotswolds he would make a great display of welcoming them in typical Irish style. By the time they had been ushered in by one of his attendants Harry would have rushed upstairs and then, making an entrance in a sweeping gesture, would greet his guest with a "Top of the morning to you!" as he gracefully glided down the staircase. Abbotswood, his manor house near Stow-on-the-Wold stood in 2,000 acres.

In 1948 Ferguson staged a publicity stunt at Claridges Hotel in London. After being 'challenged' concerning his tractor's abilities to manoeuvre anywhere Harry drove his prized machine out of the ballroom and down the Hotel steps which had been conveniently covered with dust sheets for this stunt! The precaution had also been taken of draining the oil from the engine to protect the ballroom floor. It was later revealed, when the Fergie was totally stripped down, that no damage whatsoever had resulted! It appears that Oliver Lucas², extremely well known in the motoring world as part of the Lucas Battery dynasty, was instrumental in getting Ferguson and Black together which is borne out by a signed Claridges' menu to that effect. It became evident too that it was Lucas' tractor which was used at Claridges. He went skiing regularly with my father at Murren, returning home once with a broken leg! (Oliver Lucas died in 1948). They must surely have been intriguing times to be living in!

Down in Warwickshire Sir John Black did live in some style, at home of course, but also in his sumptuous office quarters at work with beautifully polished furniture and modern equipment; yet he never neglected the conditions or facilities in the factories. Hence if anything was broken, he'd have it replaced and usually upgraded. A case in point I heard about was concerning the wash hand basins which received constant damage and deterioration through regular use by large numbers of factory workers. They were progressively improved in quality to such an extent that eventually expensive brass taps and ceramic basins became the order of the day. His bonus wage scheme too was innovative in that productivity was rewarded with increased pay by offering an incentive to those who chose to work harder. And it really worked with over 12,000 personnel to be counted on the payroll at its peak! Apprentices were particularly well looked after. His regular visits to the shop floor were eagerly anticipated by his workforce with whom he had such a good rapport, many of whom he was on first name terms with. He sorted out pension problems, sick leave and family concerns with a number of individuals while enjoying the customary cup of tea with them. One amusing tale about one such visit on a winter's day was related

²*A brief history of Oliver Lucas can be found in the appendix pages 109-110.*

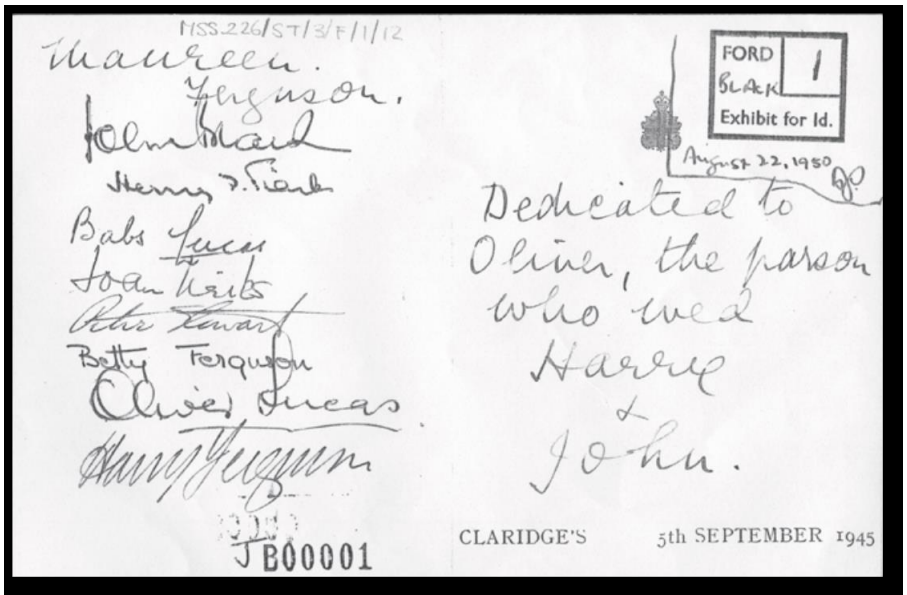
to me a while ago. My father asked one of his employees to open a small kiln used for testing purposes, which in itself was nothing unusual. When the fellow in question expressed reluctance to do so, insisting that: “the contents inside would spoil”, he then commanded him to obey. On opening the door, it was revealed, sitting neatly on a tray, were three pork pies being warmed up for the forthcoming lunch break! Whether he had ‘inside’ knowledge is not certain but I’m sure he would have seen the funny side of it. Yes he loved the everyday working people, feeling more comfortable with them than almost anybody, but he could not abide contemporaries who had aspirations of grandeur in some form, perhaps because he felt challenged by their ambition. Two work colleagues he particularly got on well with were Mike Whitfield, the General Manager and Jack Croft, the Press Officer, both of whom spent many happy times up in Wales with him. I understand, too, that they later owned or rented their own cottages in the same area.

The Standard Motor Company also boasted a number of Clubs and Societies for their taskforce. These included: Football, Rugby, Hockey, Cricket, Boxing, Swimming, Tennis, Table Tennis, Golf, Badminton and an Arts and Crafts Society. The Band, Orchestra and Dramatic Society completed their extensive range of social activities. It is apparent too that a Holiday Camp was likewise in progress. The Social Club was inaugurated in 1932 by the Duke of Gloucester and is the only building left standing.

It could be noted at this juncture that at some stage during his first marriage Captain Black joined the Freemasons, probably due to the large number of contacts he had gained, both business and social. Whether it was a bit of an



Celebrating the success of the first 10,000 Ferguson Tractors, with Sir John Black wearing his famous ‘Trilby’ hat. This publicity shot was taken in 1947. (c) BMIHT.



Ferguson had his own private suite at Claridges which he used when doing business in London. Above is the signed Claridge's menu paying tribute to Oliver Lucas bringing John Black and Harry Ferguson together. But their working relationship wasn't without its problems.

Old Boy's Club in those days or had more serious connotations for him is not certain yet very little can be ascertained of his association with that most secret of organizations. It came to light recently that Captain Black joined the Drapers Club in Coventry during the twenties where he entertained the Rootes Brothers for lunch sometime before 1929 when they took over the Hillman Motor Company. The intriguing thing is that all the members of that Club were Freemasons who belonged to St. Michael's Masonic Lodge. In fact the only reason I knew that he was a Freemason was because of two large Brandy glasses that sat on a glass shelf in my mother's lounge in Switzerland. Engraved on the outside of these bulbous vessels were Masonic symbols in the form of a triangular shape on one with a curved pattern on the other looking slightly hieroglyphic (Both were engraved with the monogram REB above the date 1833 and Lodge number 4, within shields below crows among flowers and masonic devices with star-cut foot). All that my mother knew was that they "belonged to Daddy" but had no knowledge of their significance to his life. They were sold at auction by Christies of Geneva along with some of her furniture and artefacts soon after her demise. In fact, as far as she was concerned, his business life, which must have afforded some discretion, was kept quite separate from his family life, although the two must have overlapped on occasions. She knew almost nothing about motor cars but, as his wife, still managed to enjoy many of the social functions that accompanied his high profile status as a Company Director.

Chapter 6

WEDDING BELLS

Earlier, the same year of his knighthood at Buckingham Palace, in 1943 he married my mother Joan Pears Linton.

A telegram on her wedding day, although I never quite ascertained who from, simply had one word on it: "DON'T". Their marriage certificate dated June 25th 1943 describes him as being 48 years of age and a Captain H.M. Army (retired) while she was credited with 31 years and being a Flight Officer W.A.A.F. He always admired her smart appearance when in uniform. Her address then was given as Dolphin Square, London S.W.1. which has a sort of ring about it. (Disappointingly my dad's father, who I never met, had now been demoted to Civil Servant on the certificate). The two witnesses at this controversial wedding were Cecil Millbourn, a close family friend and business associate and, surprisingly, James Henry Linton, my mother's father, who so much disapproved of their marriage plans.

Yet my parents did have some romance in their early days together, sometimes playing cards in bed in the morning, Canasta being their favourite or just having long chats about anything. She told me once that they had a variety of nick-names for each other, mainly of a furry animal nature, I seem to recall. Their honeymoon was taken at the Bungalow in Wales where they were to spend some of their happiest times with each other. A few lovely photos taken of them also on a skiing holiday in Switzerland showed how happy they could be together. But things started to deteriorate rapidly, however, after the birth of their three sons in sharp succession, Hugo John in 1945, Steuart Paul in 1947 and Charles Nicholas in 1949. She somehow felt burdened if not trapped by these pregnancies.

Down at Mallory Court things continued as normal. There were no records kept during the War but by 1945, now accompanied by my mother Alicia Joan Black, the only other occupants living on the Estate then were the Dyer couple, still living in the Gardeners Cottage plus Charles Maycock and his wife Phoebe living in The Cottage.

Hugo, of course, had been born in 1945 with the one event to mark the occasion being a plane that happened to crash in a field right by the hospital soon after mother had given birth to him. This may have contributed to his being afflicted with a stammer from early childhood.



A look of serious intent at this Wartime wedding. John Black with a young Mike Whitfield as Best Man. 25 June 1943.



Bishop Linton, (unknown), Cecil Millbourn, John and Joan, Mrs Millbourn, Charles Band (original Standard Chairman) Tom Linton, (Joan's brother) Alicia Linton (Joan's mother seated right). (Unknown seated left), Mallory Court 1943. Wedding Day.



**John and Joan's Wedding Day. Mallory Court.
25th June 1943**



Flight Officer Joan Black often admired in her uniform.

Although times had obviously changed, photos of that period show a distinctly well ordered country residence with formal gardens, stone ponds and graceful lawns together with tennis court and swimming pool introduced by my father as well as the squash court he had built. Though the original stable-block has now been demolished, the perimeter wall survives, encompassing a courtyard-style terrace. Framed plans for a proposed Water Garden dated 1947 still hang on a wall in the Garden Room at Mallory Court. The subsequent waterfall, small bridge and pond remain there today as a testimony to its successful design. An intriguing detail, of tempting speculation, is that when my mother first visited the house before being married she noticed that all the upstairs rooms had internal locks on the doors. By 1943 when married and living there, all those locks had been removed!

Two stories I particularly remember on our nostalgic journey were related to me by my mother on a number of occasions. The first involved a swimming party. All the guests had assembled themselves around the pool and were happily drinking and chatting away but nobody showing any sign of actually changing into their swimming things. My father had a wonderful Summerhouse built near the pool for such purposes. Suddenly, from the direction of the house, there was seen a fine figure, clothed in smart suit and tie, running towards the pool eventually diving in with great bravado. Amongst the hilarity that followed, everybody accordingly got themselves changed and the swimming party began. It was John Warren¹, the proverbial right-hand man who had done the gallant deed. While helping him out of the pool my father was heard to have said to him “Well done, old boy, why don’t you go and change into one of my suits?” to which John Warren replied “That was one of your suits, Sir John!” It is worth mentioning, at this juncture, a disturbing story my mother told me once about an experience at the swimming pool. Evidently a large family of frogs had taken up residence in the filtration system so that, when the machine was turned on at the beginning of the season, literally dozens of dead frogs appeared floating on the water. Gruesome stuff!



**John Warren, Export Sales Director
and John Black’s right-hand man**

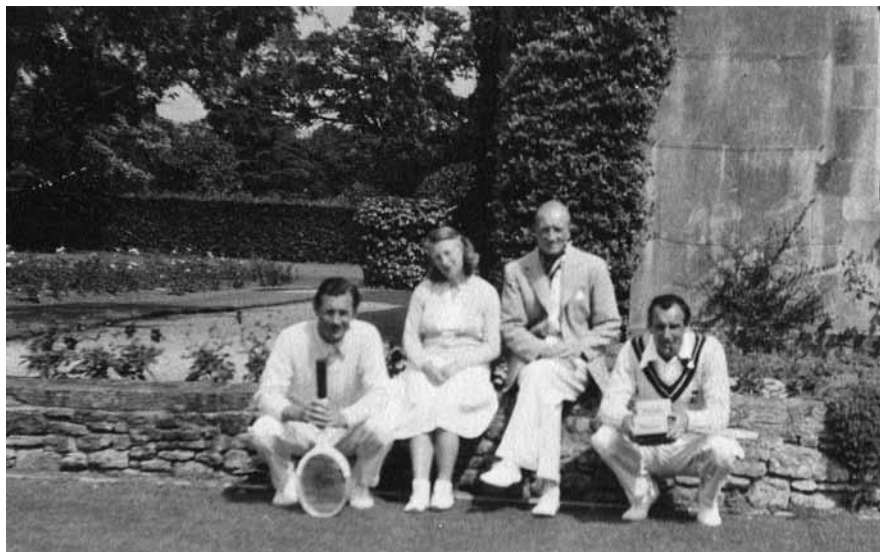
¹A letter written by John Black to John Warren can be found in the Appendix page 109



“Anyone for tennis?” John Black and Fred Perry, who always wore long trousers for tennis. Perry also drove a Triumph Mayflower.



The signatures in the Summerhouse, Fred Perry, Oliver Lucas and Cowan Dobson included.



From left: Dan Maskell, Joan, John and Fred Perry at Mallory Court.

The other occasion concerns a shooting party which was taking place somewhere in the locality near some woods. One of the participants was none other than James Robertson Justice, the well known actor. During the proceedings, when shots were being fired in all directions, Sir John Black came running up to this 'larger-than-life' character in a state of extreme dismay. He subsequently informed him, in no uncertain terms, that he had just narrowly missed his wife Joan, who was gathered with the other women to the side of the woods, with one of his stray shots! "No need to worry, old Chap", came the reply "My wife's just over there, why don't you have a pot shot at her?"

Many social occasions and tennis parties continued to be held at Mallory during the Forties era. Somehow my parents got to meet Fred Perry and Dan Maskell, of Wimbledon fame and so, coupled with their own love of the sport, these became regular visitors to this humble court in Warwickshire.

Some time ago, a fellow I knew called Bill Piggot mentioned that during a commemorative visit to Mallory Court with the TR Register, he was shown a fascinating array of signatures in the summerhouse, by the night porter at the time. He even provided me with a photocopy of some of them, amazingly dating back to the very time when my parents lived there. They were artistically signed on one of the interior walls of this building made of the old-fashioned white asbestos so commonly used in those days.

The summerhouse, in question, which I then visited with a keen genealogist colleague of mine, is tucked away in a corner of this ten acre estate, has two main rooms and a brick fireplace. Other smaller rooms bear resemblance to perhaps a kitchen and toilet. It was obviously used for social occasions with its close proximity to the swimming pool which is still there in all its splendour.

Judging by the diversity of signatures, which are about a hundred in number, it would have seen the likes of some quite eminent characters of the day, including close friends of my parents. A few of the names recognized include:

Fred and Lorraine Perry (of Wimbledon Fame), Eric and Doris Claridge (He ran Coventry Motor Packing, a company that specialized in making all the timber crates for cars and tractors sent out from Standard for overseas assembly, while she was an attractive, vivacious woman who loved her Tennis and Swimming), Cowan Dobson (an artist who painted Society portraits as well as those of both my parents), Cecil Millbourn (the close family friend and business associate), Billy Rootes (whose company took over Hillmans in 1929), Oliver and Babs Lucas (grandson of Joseph Lucas of battery fame), John Warren (Export Sales Director), Jack Croft (Press Officer), Alick Dick (who ran Standard Triumph after my father) and H. Royce (but not Sir Frederick Henry Royce who had died in 1933). Then there is Dr. Elford (the Company Doctor), Joan Mitchell (one of my father's secretaries), Jock Turnbull (the Service Manager), Harold Weale (Main Board Director), B.J. Swaine (employed at Standards), S. Leonard Elwood (the Company Architect) and not forgetting Clifford (the other Butler), plus both of my grandparents who had probably relented by that time! Last but not least: John and Joan Black. Many other illustrious names cannot be identified.

My father of course was renowned for his lavish entertaining, having almost invented the concept of the Expense Account which resulted in Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having to change the Law eventually to protect the ailing government from Companies like his evading tax to the extreme! A letter from the tax office dated 27th July 1950 and querying how an 'entertaining allowance' amounting to £4,352.13s.4d was arrived at covering the year 1949 adequately sums up the situation!

A memorandum from his private secretary, Joan Smart expresses to Mr. Aspland, the Company Secretary that: "Sir John wishes the attached account to be paid by the Company. It refers to a case of Champagne sent by him to Mr. Robert Asquith of William Asquith Ltd, Halifax." (They were a manufacturing company described earlier as 'The Hub of the Shadow Factories').

The Standard Motor Company's turnover in 1946 was £9,385,919 which included £3,614,679 as completion of wartime contracts (Ministry of Supply).

Everything was to be put on Company Expenses from food, drink and clothes to holidays and even houses for some of his workforce. The following residences were purchased in 1949 by the Company: Wolston Priory and Farm (£18,000), 434, Tile Hill Lane (£2,000), Culmore, Stoneleigh Road (£9,000), 11, Manor Road, Kenilworth (£3,600), 92, Hartington Crescent (£3,000) and The Old Farm House, Hill Wooton (£16,500). He usually bought six suits at a time if he liked the look of one, only to reconsider his choice when they lost their original lustre in the daylight. A number of employees, accordingly, were kept in suits for years to come along with Sir John Black's younger brother Bob who apparently used to



John Black in a Standard Vanguard up in Wales with Jack Croft (Standard's Press Officer and longtime friend). (c) BMIHT.

turn up regularly pleading poverty and usually leaving with a new wardrobe. An invoice came to light recently from the Warwick Archives dated 5/11/46 itemizing the following clothes: 1 Morning Coat, 2 Dress Suits, 2 Black Jacket Vest and Trousers from Barley & Weathergill Ltd. (£93-6-6).

Before the War he did personally own two SS Jaguars, reputedly named after Swallow Sidecars, the identity of which had to be rapidly changed after the War, for obvious reasons. Those pre-war Jaguars all had Standard engines in them.

Records at the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust reveal that Captain Black owned an early 1936 SS Jaguar 2.5 litre saloon (Chassis No. 10123). In 1938 two SS Jaguar drop-head Coupes were supplied to the Standard Motor Company (Chassis No. 36020 in April and 36120 in August). Both these cars were black in colour. In 1939 a special-bodied SS Jaguar fitted with a razor edge-style Limousine body designed by Mulliners was presented to his wife Daisy (Reg. ERW 470, Chassis No.30948). So successful was this that he had an identical one made for himself! He later commissioned Mulliners to redesign the body of his Drop-head Bentley, a car he was especially fond of. There is an invoice dated 8th July 1952 from Mulliners Ltd. of Birmingham, High Class Motor Bodies: "To supply one Special Drop Head Body, fitted to Bentley Chassis No. B 342 NZ- £515.0- 0", It added: "No payment to be made with a nominal invoice only."The Standard Motor Company also provided the following cars for Sir John: Triumph Saloon (FWK 630), Triumph Roadster (FDU 818), 8hp. Saloon (FRW689), Shooting Brake (FHP 225), 8 hp. Saloon (FRW 33), 8hp. Drop-Head Coupe (FHP 930). (The last three cars he personally bought off them). One, of course, has to mention his customary six cars with personalized number plates (J.P.B. 1-6).



Mallory Court, 1949.



Oak panelled Dining Room with John Black's paintings of various hunting scenes.



The Reception Room. Royal Worcester set on the left is still in the family.



The Swimming Pool remains the same today.



Recessed partition door to the Lounge.

A document dated 17th March 1954 lists the following cars made as a gift or loaned to Sir John Black:

- Mayflower, ODU 399, Black/Lt Grey, TT.33976. DL, 1952.
- Vanguard Estate, SMC 3, Jade Green, V. 150001. SC O, 1952.
- Vanguard Saloon, JPB 3, Black/Grey, V.202006. DL, 1953.

He also had the use of:

- Land guard Standard Utility, MRW 456, Jade

Green, X502, 1952 (He bought this on 26th May 1954- £75).

- Mayflower, YMM 645, Grey, TT.26922. DL, 1952
- The Company's two light aircraft could carry up to eight passengers each - one blue, the other silver. In 1952 Air Enterprises who were the Company supplying Cessna aircraft for Standards recorded these two planes: Percival Prince, (Reg. Letters G-AMPR) and Consul, (Reg. Letters G-AIKT).

The Bungalow in Wales was likewise Company Owned so had to be duly returned in 1955 after his dramatic debacle, despite them having transferred the Freehold to him in August of that year! His rather egocentric lifestyle was accentuated too by his having all his ivory boxes, cigarette cases and hairbrushes engraved with his initials, something of a fashion accessory back then anyway.

A photo at the Heritage Motor Museum Archives I saw recently shows two lovely pen-knives, akin to Swiss Mountain Knives, autographed with his signature. There's a gold propelling pencil with Mallory Court inscribed on it. A cabin chest used on his sea voyages and bearing his name is still in existence. Remarkably, when he, Mike Whitfield and others went to South America in 1951 on the Queen Elizabeth while they were engaging in business with Brazil, there is a record of literally everything they consumed on the voyage, presumably for tax purposes. Even his Butler Tom Thorne was on board enjoying his very own private cabin!

The Jungle Bug, a Jeep that J.B. had designed for being dropped by parachute in wartime along with capacity for four soldiers, also conveniently bore his initials, although hardly any were made. (Coincidentally my mother Joan Pears Black shared his initials upon marriage, if forgetting her first name Alicia!)



Portraits of Sir John and Lady Black by Cowan Dobson.

A strange thing occurred a while ago when I received a letter through the Triumph World magazine from a fellow who informed me that he had in his possession a fascinating document pertaining to the Granting of Arms for Sir John Black, dated 1945. Indeed it was the Family Crest Scroll which had been passed on to my family in 1965 when my Father had died. This extraordinary occurrence had only taken place because my two brothers had once stayed in a farmhouse somewhere in North Wales with a couple who had given them a room for a few weeks in the late sixties.

Somehow they had inadvertently left the document there when vacating the premises and there it sat for more than forty years, only to be discovered when the woman had died and her son was sorting out her belongings!

After having made a generous donation to the offspring of these custodians, for looking after it all that time, it was then displayed in a glass case over in my Brother Hugo's home in France where he used to live! Technically speaking, as next of kin and firstborn son, he would have been permitted to fly a flag on a mast bearing the Crest or even have it painted on the door of his car, neither of which he was very likely to do! Tragically Hugo died in Bristol on Tuesday March 19th 2013 of a massive stroke aged nearly 68 years.

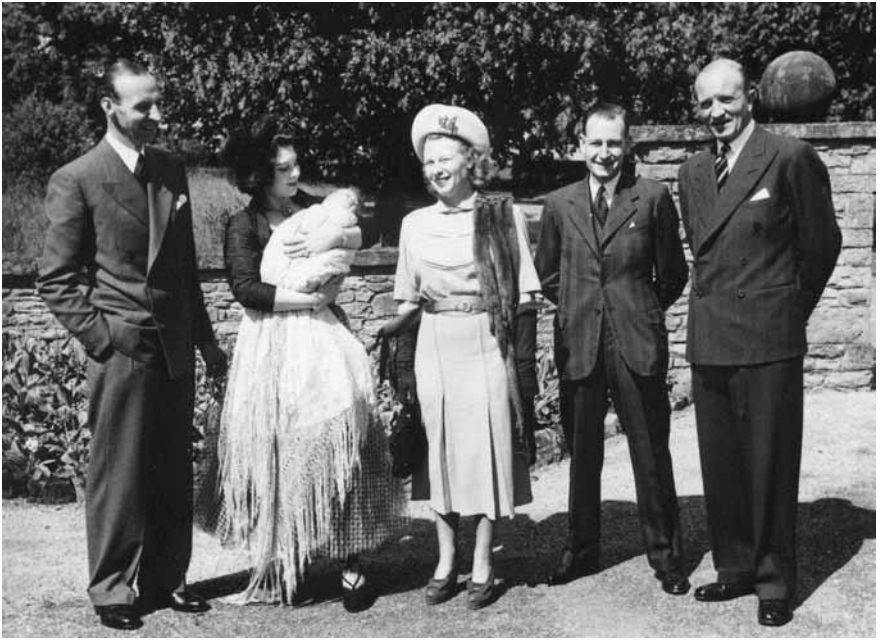
Some years ago my mother did have three gold rings engraved with our Family Crest which she presented to the three of us as a keepsake in memory of Daddy, but I have to admit that, after one or two mishaps, only one ring actually survived and that was on Hugo's finger! It is a most phenomenal thing that when someone dies they almost become more real. It's as if their whole life now becomes encapsulated in that one final Act. I definitely felt this about both my parents but it took quite a long time for it to sink in!

A 1940's moment, with Joan Black and Jack Croft at Mallory.



Chapter 7

SMALL BEGINNINGS



From left: John Warren, Didi Wagner (with Nicky), Joan Black, Jack Linton and John Black, 1949.

An extraordinary experience was related to me by my mother about the time my parents were on holiday sometime prior to when she was expecting me, as they say. They had booked a flight on a plane somewhere in the Bahamas combined with a business trip but at the last minute decided to cancel the ticket and travel by boat instead, a mode of transport my father preferred. (Archive material confirms that in February 1948 Sir John and Lady Black, along with Jack Croft, Mr. Edmonds and Mrs. Underhill travelled on the Queen Elizabeth to the U.S.A. and the Bahamas. A refund was made on the flying bookings from Nassau to New York which they did not use, returning by boat instead). When they arrived at their destination they learnt that the plane they originally were booked on had crashed, with no survivors!

Ironically it would be many years later when she confided in me, her third son, that she had been so miserable at the onset of her third pregnancy that she had done all in her power to have it terminated. This included jumping off tables, drinking gin, having injections of some description and finally taking extremely hot baths! "I was miserable at the time" was all she normally said

when narrating this account of things, followed by the observation “But look at you now!” Of course this ‘Abortive Attempt’ didn’t actually work despite suffering most of my life with migraine-type headaches and abominably poor eyesight! What had led to such desperate measures may never be fully understood but my father’s unpredictable behaviour, often fuelled by alcohol consumption, couldn’t have helped much and basically contributed to making her life the misery that it had become.

On the actual occasion of my Caesarean birth, being six weeks premature and weighing in at a meagre 5lbs. my poor father, no doubt in a state of shock, went up to Wales and got ceremonially drunk (in celebration or remorse?). Not only that but the Doctor who was due to deliver me had been out riding on his horse at the critical moment and had to be impressed into service. This was all too much for my distraught mother who accordingly went off on holiday, leaving me behind in an incubator where I spent the first two weeks of my life, apparently making funny little mouse-like noises. Do you blame me?

My personal story really begins in 1949 when I was immortalized on a 16mm. colour film taken at Mallory Court on the occasion of my Christening. I’m being cradled by a charming-looking Belgian woman called Didi Wagner who appears to be acting as a sort of go-between, with my mother and father to each side of her. My mother always said that she was really there to help smooth business relations between Belgium and England. Well it must have worked because her husband Louis Wagner, also featured in the film and Managing Director of Imperia Standard at Nessonvaux in the Ardennes, successfully built a good number of Standard Vanguards in Belgium in that post-war period. In fact during that time associated companies were set up in South Africa (run by Cecil Millbourn), India, Australia and Canada while Markets were soon found in Denmark, Sweden, New Zealand and Switzerland.

John Warren who was the Export Sales Director at Standards mostly operated the camera resulting in his wife Sonia making regular appearances along with a few of our family members like my Uncle Jack Linton and my grandparents.

My dad does try and tickle my cheek rather timidly at some point during the proceedings but you can almost sense the tension between my parents in this short film. The garden and house at Mallory on the other hand look splendidly grand, adding a pleasing background to the whole occasion. The scene then shifts to the Falcon Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon where the family entourage enjoy a meal together in the restaurant. Then it was off to the Lygon Arms in the Cotswold village of Broadway, ending up at the Bear at Woodstock. It was turning into something of a Pub Crawl. The outside shots though are magnificent, the whole street lined with those old-fashioned humpbacked cars from that bye-gone age. People definitely looked different back then and certainly fitter!



John & Joan Black with John Warren (right), Louis and Didi Wagner with baby Nicky (middle) Stuart (front left), Hugo (front right) 1949.

I had my film transferred a while ago onto video with some background music added; a piece by Erik Satie entitled *Gymnopedie No.3* (orchestrated by Debussy). Although this musical addition was not my choice, it fits remarkably well and certainly adds a sombre mood to this otherwise tranquil setting which, in a way, is fitting since my parents' marriage then was undergoing obvious signs of deterioration.

Any possible trauma that this, or my dramatic entry into this world, might have caused me at the time did not last long as I look positively "Triumphant" in the film! Ominously, the first intelligible words I was known to have uttered were "Not Wanted!" mostly aimed, I might add, in the direction of the numerous toys that were continually offered me. Some compensation!

We left Mallory when I was only one year old and moved south to a fairly grand house in Sussex which my father bought on impulse by telephone for £25,000 in the middle of a luncheon rendezvous with my Mother, without even consulting her! But that was 1950 and another world away from here. After selling Mallory Court my father also took on a large rented house in the village of Bubbenhall called Longfield, a stone's throw from the local Pub, to be nearer to Coventry, and it was here that often Thorne would preside in an extraordinary ritual. Being somewhat of a health fanatic the legendary 'double baths' were put to good use when Thorne would have the job of filling one with hot water and the other with cold. He would then gracefully retire allowing my father to dash from one bath to the other and back again!

Later my mother would recall that at Mallory Court they would often have long chats while lying in their respective semi-sunk baths! One other story about Thorne concerned the occasion when a parrot had escaped from its cage and had been seen perched high up in a tree in the garden. By the time Thorne had been alerted to this drama, now armed with a ladder and braving the night air, a strong gale had ensued and the parrot was in no mood for relinquishing its grip on the branch it was hanging on to for its dear life. With my dad shouting orders at Thorne and my mother being in total dismay over the possible loss of her pet, I understand that the outcome was eventually left in the hands of the local Fire Brigade who managed to rescue the unfortunate beast! It would be at Bubbenhall later in January 1954 when Tom Thorne was to make his legendary but ominous announcement: “The Board of Directors of the Standard Motor Company to see you, Sir”.

Interestingly Mallory Court was sold on October 12th 1950 to none other than Harry Ferguson Ltd. of Farncombe House, Broadway, Worcestershire for the princely sum of £29,422 13s.1d. The house itself sold for £23,000 while the remainder was for a farm there which I didn't really know existed!



Hugo Black by the water garden at Mallory Court in 1948.

CHAPTER 8

WARNINGLID AND THE FIFTIES



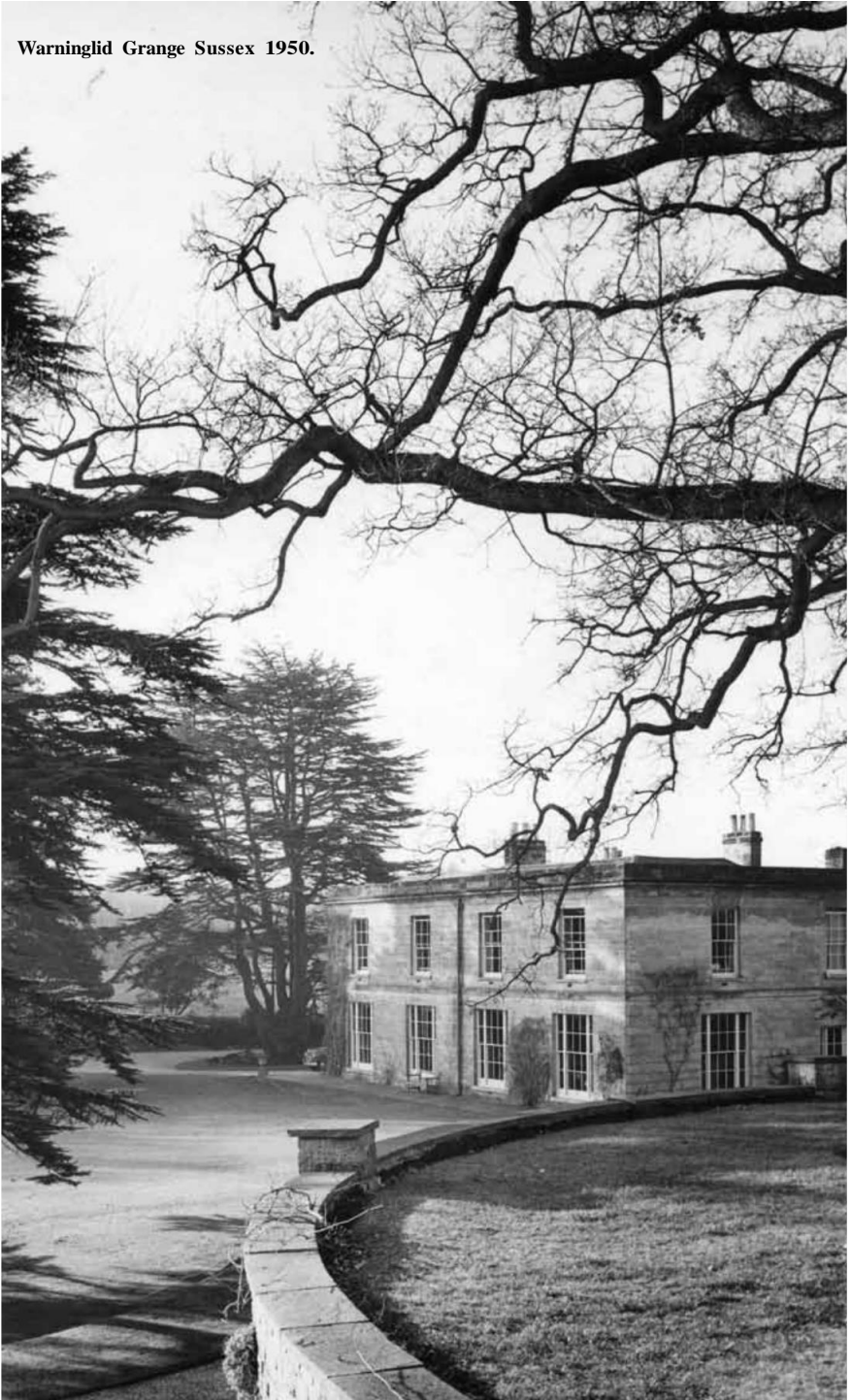
A photograph of the whole family which was the last to be taken at Mallory, 1950.

While I was growing up during the Fifties at Warninglid Grange, between Horsham and Haywards Heath in Sussex, my father had an almost Mythical status. This was partly because of his age, being fifty-four years old when I was born and seventeen years older than my mother, but it was mostly due to the fact that I hardly ever saw him!

My earliest memory of him involved being ushered into the Pine Room one evening by a nanny, along with my two brothers Hugo and Stuart. Dressed in our pyjamas and dressing gowns, we had been groomed to perfection with hair and teeth brushed. It would be a brief encounter, a mere formality really. “Goodnight Mummy, goodnight Daddy”. And that was it, my first memory of my dad! We were then promptly whisked away to bed. There are one or two family photos of us all together when I was extremely young but no memories to accompany them.

I do recall, at an early age, eagerly waiting for Daddy on one of the red-carpeted landings on the stairs, to return from Canada. We knew that he was going to bring us back a present, although we didn’t know exactly what.

Warninglid Grange Sussex 1950.



We were so excited when he finally arrived, as promised, to give us each a lovely blue and white jacket bought in Canada especially for us, which fitted just right of course.

There was a goodly number of staff at Warninglid, who lived either on the premises or in one of the cottages on this fifty-two acre estate, which included a Market Garden and Farm. An invoice to Mr. Holbrook of the Standard Motor Company from British Road Services dated 20th March 1952 states: "To deliver 1 Sow to Sir John Black, Warninglid, Sussex from Whitnash"- £22-7s.

There was also an enormously large lawn with two gigantic Cedar trees on it, one with a thick and inviting rope to swing on tied around the sturdy girth of a lower branch. We had a cook, a maid, a butler, a chauffeur and a gardener. We did in fact retain two butlers with us from Mallory, Tom Thorne who was always addressed by his surname and Clifford Hemmings who was always known by his first name. It was Clifford who spent his whole day cleaning and polishing the Silver which was kept in an enormous 'walk-in' safe lined with green baize and with shelves to match. It had a very deep and solid-looking door secured by one of those gargantuan locks, no doubt with a combination number known only to a certain few. The routine was that Clifford would put the whole display of Silver out in the morning after cleaning it and then arrange it all over the house, only to return it all again to the safe at night. I do remember once discovering a fox's paw with a silver band attached, engraved with the name Marian Black which remained a mystery to me. It was years later when I came to realize that Marian was the middle name of my father's mother. So the hunting tradition in the Black household had early beginnings.

There's a lovely story about the time when it had been revealed that only one butler was now necessary. Clifford and Thorne did all they could to outdo each other, vying for their respective jobs, but in the most gentlemanly manner of course. One evening my mother rang the bell for attention to request an aspirin to ease her headache. Clifford duly arrived bearing an aspirin on a small plate together with a glass of water on a silver tray. Later the same evening Mother decided that she needed another aspirin so a similar scenario ensued. This time, however, it was Thorne who appeared with the statutory aspirin, water and tray with but one difference—the aspirin had been cut into two halves! Eventually it was Thorne himself, the long-standing and loyal attendant, who went and we were left to the delightful Clifford. Thorne remained on the Company payroll continuing his career in the Executive Dining Room at Coventry.

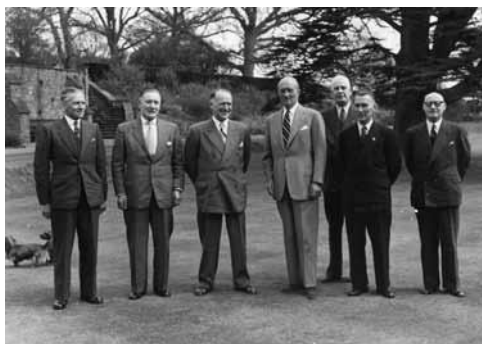
Warninglid Grange had, at some point during its long history, been a Hunting Stables in quite a grand style. Outside the stone porch which graced the front door was a large mounting block with steps up it, complete with carriage lamp. The stable-block itself, which in turn surrounded a courtyard featuring a circular stone drinking trough in the middle, had been converted into garages and so now housed Daddy's six cars: TR2, Triumph Roadster, Bentley, Humber Hawk, Triumph Mayflower and Standard Vanguard.

The only one I really remember was the Humber Hawk, a Shooting Brake and a real monster of a car which must have weighed a ton. We did, of course have a Triumph Mayflower, first launched in 1949 and which, although promoted in the American market by capitalizing on the identity of the original Pilgrim Fathers' Ship, was actually named by my mother after the flower!

In fact my next memory would be of one of his sports cars, the TR2 when we were all trussed up in jumpers and scarves, crammed in the back, with Daddy driving us at high speed along some dual carriageway. It was either terrifying or exhilarating, depending on how brave we all felt at the time.

When my father had his famous accident he informed us by phone that his arm, which had been broken in three places, "felt like spaghetti". I was really quite disappointed when I saw him coming home through the front door at Warninglid after returning from hospital. His arm looked nothing at all like spaghetti, by any stretch of my youthful imagination!

The actual crash happened on November 3rd. 1953 in Banner Lane, Coventry when he was testing the Swallow Doretti Prototype (Plate No. 623 E), which had a TR2 engine, along with Ken Richardson¹ at the wheel. A Works van, which was not meant to be there in the first place, came out of a turning unexpectedly and instinctively Ken swerved the car to avoid killing them both in a headlong collision. The speed they were going leading up to this event was in the region of 60mph I understand, hitting the van, after braking, at somewhere above 40 mph. The van driver, Albert Cross, had to be treated for shock after his vehicle spun round with the impact while Ken himself sustained serious injuries to his forehead resulting in having 47 stitches and nearly losing an eye.



John Black at Warninglid Grange with British Legion members, and being presented with a cup in 1951.



¹ More information on Ken Richardson and Raymond Mays BRM project in Bourne, Appendix P.110-12.



Sir John Black and the Triumph Mayflower, his pride and joy. (c) BMIHT.



The Triumph Mayflower production line. Around 35,000 were manufactured. (c) BMIHT.



TRAGEDY - the Swallow Doretti Prototype (623E)

Sir John created quite a stir amongst the on looking Directors by getting in on the right-hand side, until they realised it was left-hand drive! He took a major part of the impact as seen in this photo. (c) BMIHT.

Factory was demolished in the carnage. The unfortunate owner Mr. A. Cotton of 19, Franklin Road, Nuneaton then put in a claim for a new one stating that he couldn't get to work without it! £16 was thus duly awarded by the Standard Motor Company which he gratefully acknowledged on 16th Nov.

1953. Meanwhile the Birmingham Regional Hospital received just £1. 17s.

6d. for the treatment of three persons, namely Sir John Black, Bubbenhall, Ken Richardson of 4 Gibbet Hill Road (driver of the car), and Albert Cross, 69, Graven Road (driver of the van). The insurance brokers W.R. Ponting Ltd. reported Sir John Black's injuries as: Fractured Right Arm, Lacerations, Bruises and Shock (The anaesthetist's bill was £21). On 1st December 1953 a memo stated he was in the South of France for a short period of recuperation. A press release of 5th January 1954 simply related: "Sir John Black of Longfield, Bubbenhall, has resigned as Chairman and Managing Director of the Standard Motor Company as a result of injuries sustained in his accident of the previous November." That was the official verdict. On 23rd March 1954 he received £1,500 as final settlement of his personal injury claim. Insurance paid out for the Swallow Doretti itself was £850. (The car was named after 'Doretti' Deen).

Interestingly Dorothy Deen who made the names of Swallow Doretti and Triumph extremely popular and fashionable on the West Coast of America remembered a trip to England in 1953 when Richardson offered her a test ride in the new TR2. Driving at about 100mph along narrow roads which absolutely petrified her, "she had visions of a farmer pulling out in front of them!"

Ken Richardson, who started off with B.R.M. as a development engineer, had gone on to join my father at Standards eventually taking a TR2 prototype up to 124mph on the Jabbeke Highway in Belgium on May 20th 1953, an astounding achievement. He was effectively an excellent racing driver.

Arthur Luson, the personal assistant, who actually saw the van lift off the ground, and Frank Golding, the chauffeur, pulled my father from the wreckage believing that he was dead. Ironically a local newspaper brought to him in hospital the next morning carried the following ominous headline: "Sir John Black dies in Car Crash!"

A detail that came to light recently is that a bicycle which had been left near No.2 Gate, Banner Lane

Many years ago I had lunch in a village pub near Rutland Water with Ken, his wife, their son Paul and a fellow named Robin Penrice with whom I later enjoyed a great rapport for a couple of years before he sadly died. Unbeknown to me, on moving to Stamford in Lincolnshire some thirty years ago, the actual home of the B.R.M. Motor Company was literally down the road at Bourne, where the Richardson family also lived. In fact Ken Richardson used to test drive all the B.R.M. cars at an old airfield near the village of Folkingham where my dad would regularly meet up with him. Small world!

What I also didn't realize was that Standards supplied some of the chassis for B.R.M. plus many redundant V-8 engines. In fact in his book entitled *Split Seconds*, published in July 1951 Raymond Mays, the founder of B.R.M. wrote: "The test-house, containing some of the finest and most modern equipment of its kind in the world, was designed and installed by technicians of the Standard Motor Company, a firm to which, thanks to the generosity and farsightedness of its chief, Sir John Black, the whole B.R.M. project owes a great debt, not only for test equipment but also for the very costly and accurate machining of engine castings, and for financial help". (A total of £15,000 was presented). An even more local tale involves Stamford itself and a man I met once named Len Stocker who used to run All Saints Garage in the town. As a Standard dealer he had been waiting ardently over a considerable period of time for an essential spare part needed by one of his customers. After numerous phone calls expressing his frustration in pursuit of this cherished part he was on the



Sir John Black at the Welcome Hotel, Stratford-Upon-Avon after the accident. His arm was fractured in three places and he also suffered some superficial head wounds.

(c) BMIHT.



Sir John Black waving goodbye at Southampton on the Queen Elizabeth, 1951 to Brazil.

point of giving up when he received a call from the Boss himself, my dad. “Is that Stocker?” boomed the voice on the other end of the phone in a typically military fashion. “Mr. Stocker, to you!” replied Len defiantly. What resulted after that is impossible to put into print, as fury then turned into rage in those few brief moments while they both shouted down the mouthpiece and slammed their respective phones down simultaneously! I don’t believe Len ever got his spare part!

“Managing Director and Chairman of the Standard and Triumph Motor Companies” is as much a mouthful today as it was back then, which basically serves to exemplify the ‘Figurehead’ my dear old father had now come to represent to us and not a real person at all.

It all seemed to happen at once in 1954, my parents’ separation and his dramatic exit from the Company. His insecurity must have contributed to the unorthodox practice of making new employees in the Management Team sign their own letter of resignation before commencing their term of employment with the Company. In the end it was exactly this ‘off with his head’ policy that led to his demise. Walking into a boardroom meeting one day, my father was overheard to have commented about the excessive numbers of Directors. Requesting these letters of resignation this then prompted an emergency meeting by the Board of Directors, fearing for their jobs, and possibly their lives! He had also signed a twelve year deal with Massey Ferguson for future tractor production without informing the Board of Directors of his decision.

The rest is history, Sir John Black was made to sign his own letter of resignation and off he went. With a wife and three sons to face he did what he only knew best, and that involved drink up in Wales! It was only after discreet negotiations by my mother that they secured a financial settlement for him of £30,000, his Bentley, and the use of the Company owned Bungalow for a limited period, until alternative accommodation had been found.

After consideration, the Company also decided to give him a £5,000 annual payout for life. The original letter from the Standard Motor Company to all the Stockholders dated Jan. 7th 1954 states:

Dear Sir/Madam,

It will be recalled that Sir John Black was involved in a most unfortunate motor car accident last November, in which he sustained considerable personal injuries. On the 5th January last, after consultation with his Medical Adviser, his wife and close friends, he decided to relinquish his Offices of Chairman and Managing Director and his Membership of the Board of Directors of the Company.

The Directors realize that this announcement will have been received by Stockholders with considerable regret. It is widely appreciated that the Company has developed to its present size mainly through Sir John's foresight and energy. The large scale Car and Tractor development, with which he has been so closely associated, has shown enterprise and initiative of the highest order, and the Country as a whole owes a debt of gratitude to Sir John for his contribution in the post-war years, particularly in the Export field, in which the Company has played such a strong part.

Certain Pension arrangements have already been made for Sir John, which will normally only become fully operative in some years hence, and the Directors consider that these arrangements are at present inadequate. They feel that Stockholders will wish to make some special gesture to Sir John and, accordingly, it is proposed to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company on the ... January 1954, for the purpose of authorising the Company to pay him a lump sum of Twenty-five Thousand Pounds and an Annuity of Five Thousand Pounds for life.

The Directors hope that it will be possible for you to attend in person at the Meeting. In case, however, you may not be able to be present, you are requested to sign the enclosed Form of Proxy and return it so as to arrive not later than 12 'o' clock on the ... January 1954.

The Notice convening the Extraordinary General Meeting is enclosed.

By order of the Board,

K. ASPLAND, (Secretary).



Mosquito Shop at Ansty Airfield where 1,066 Aircraft were produced. All photos (c) BMIHT.



Baginton Airport, Joan and Nicky, 1953.



Sir John Black home from overseas tour, 1953



Air Vice Marshall Wackett Australian Airforce.



Baginton Airport, John and Joan, 1953.



There was always a 'Sense of Occasion' in work and on the social scene.



There is reference to that epoch, dated 11th February 1954, which informs us that: “The Standard Motor Company propose to sell Flat 2- 35/37 Grosvenor Square W.1. which is the London flat that Sir John and Lady Black had use of since Sir John retired”. It was then sold for £2,600 on 25th March 1954.

It is true to say that he was of a “complex nature” and “impossible to live with”, as my dear mother used to say, and that was enough for us to understand. She described their relationship as “Heaven and Hell, usually in the same day”. He would become jealous of any attention given her, and that apparently included the dogs! At one point in their ten year marriage she pleaded with him: “We can’t go on living like this”, to which he replied: “What do you mean? I’ve never been so happy in all my life!” Well you just can’t argue with that and funnily enough that was part of the problem because he refused to argue! Instead, making matters worse, he would just ignore her, not talking for days at a time. In fact, I remember, he had a wonderful way of just saying “Finish!” when he’d had enough, accompanied by a magnificent gesture which involved both arms flying in opposite directions in a kind of double karate chop. The solution—he retreated up to Wales and got ceremonially drunk, something that had become quite a tradition. They were now separated. It is interesting to note what Peter Black, a late cousin of mine, who was a journalist for the Daily Mail with his own column, had to say about his uncle: “He was nothing like the rest of the family”, he maintained, “who were basically lazy, if not bone idle!”. He added that his uncle John, by comparison, “was really dynamic, highly motivated and extremely energetic”.

With all this emotional turmoil going on, my mother nearly gave up completely but it was her long-time friend and tennis coach Dan Maskell who came to her rescue, giving her the moral support she needed at this critical time in her life. Funnily enough I have always enjoyed the game of tennis, being brought up with it, in a way, so it was quite a pleasant surprise to learn that Dan Maskell used to give us coaching lessons on the lawn down at Warninglid. Incidentally the sound of a tennis ball being hit with a racket is one of the most

evocative sounds I could think of, the other is that of a horse trotting down the road! Mother’s old racket, although now out of shape from age and damp is still in my possession along with my father’s dark blue velvet Smoking Jacket complete with those brass buttons. Relics from the past!



Sir John Black with Dan Maskell, tennis coach and family friend. (c) BMIHT.

Chapter 9

WELSH WALES



'The Love of the Sea' - John Black up in his beloved Wales.

During the early part of our family history we would have some pretty good holidays abroad. These would include skiing in Switzerland and Austria and travelling to some lovely places like Positano on the Amalfi Coast in Italy, Sardinia, Corfu and the occasional trip to France. But it was obviously Wales that we loved and we never became tired of going to see Daddy. We could always find time for that. He was such great company!

As a child¹ I remember the wonderful excursions we had in our holidays up at the Bungalow. Daddy would take us up the estuary in his wooden motor boat to the small stone boathouse, still used today by the local Yacht Club. I will never forget the pungent smell of petrol, tar and sea water that accompanied these excursions. Once there we would unload our picnic stuff and set up the

¹ More childhood memories can be found in the Appendix pages 113-125.



One of John Black's lobster catches (note metal pole with hook).

chairs and table for an afternoon of sheer delight. Often a passing fishing boat would be hailed, followed by an unsuspecting lobster finding itself thrown at our feet by the concrete jetty with its claws bound, promptly to be thrown into a pot of boiling water that had been duly heated up earlier on a fire. Quite gruesome when you think about it but we children never really questioned the ethical nature of those proceedings but simply relished the whole delicious experience! I imagine a drink or two exchanged hands the next time my dad and those fishermen would meet at the Victoria Inn at Llanbedr. I even learnt to swim in those shallow waters along the estuary near the boathouse, underwater at first! Daddy enjoyed his fishing but got extremely frustrated when things didn't go well in that direction. His love of the sea extended into lobster fishing of a most unorthodox nature. He used a metal pole with a hook on the end so that when the lobsters were to be seen lying on the bottom of the estuary he could just hook them out one by one into the net!

I suppose it wasn't that much of a surprise to learn, a while ago, that on one occasion, when a particular group of Mullet refused to be caught, he was seen in a frenzy standing on the railway bridge shooting into the water below at them with one of his shot guns! He then devised a more humane way of catching his fish through utilising a heavy circular ring of galvanized steel, three feet in diameter, incorporating a net in the middle, which he lowered by rope into the Estuary from that bridge! But I also have photos of some of his finer catches like Salmon, Trout and Sea Bass. He'd always have a go!

Another story, true to form, was about Captain Black arriving, often at short notice, in a chauffeur-driven car from Coventry. Presumably he would alight on the other side of the estuary and then be Ferried across by his waiting lackeys.



John Black with a catch of large Salmon.



Bob Griffiths and helper welcoming John Black and Mike Whitfield after a fishing trip.

The Welcoming Committee would include Bob Griffiths, who was his ‘Gentleman’s Gentleman’ and one other member of the Ship’s Company. My father always liked people to be well turned out, as it were, which included, in this case, white jackets and smart black trousers. On a previous occasion he had commented that he would prefer his arrival to be treated with more formality and general respect. I think he would have liked to have been ‘Piped Aboard’, if he’d had his own way! Consequently on this particular visit Bob and his companion greeted their Boss with all the dignity and good manners they could muster by opening the limousine’s door for him with the utmost cordiality while wishing that he’d had a suitably comfortable journey. “What do you think I am, a bloomin’ invalid or something?” came the reply, or words to that effect.

On our trip up there a few years ago, when we stayed ‘On Board’ for a week, we discovered that most of the original Bungalow was still intact. This included the Lined-Oak panelling, the 30’s-style bathroom, the original cooker and kitchen cupboards plus all the Art-Deco lighting fixtures, sets of drawers and cupboards. Extraordinary! My father used to have a wonderful clock on his mantelpiece which was in the design of a ship bobbing up and down on a deep blue sea. The remarkable thing, that fascinated me as a child, was that the sky behind this scene used to change from blue to a lovely rose sunset colour in the evening, which was enchanting for me. Late in 1943 Squadron Leader Sutton, the Commanding Officer at Llanbedr Airfield was living at the Bungalow with his family. His daughter’s nanny noted that the nautical theme extended to the carpets and cushions which were all blue with white anchor motifs.

¹ An excerpt of Bob Griffiths memoirs can be found in the Appendix pages 126-127.



John Black in Wales 1941.



John Black with Jack Croft (airfield behind).



John Black on his honeymoon at the bungalow in 1943.



John Black with Mike Whitfield 1944



John and Joan July 1946 'Mervyna'



Captain Black July 1946 'Mervyna'



**Hugo, Steuart and Nicky at Bungalow 1954
Royal Welsh Yacht Club**

We also met Edwyn² on our nostalgic visit who still remembers, when he was just fourteen in 1947, being paid to ferry passengers across the estuary who would be staying as guests with Sir John. Some of these would be armed with tennis rackets as part of their luggage. My dad had later built a tennis court on the ample-sized plot, certainly used in the summer when the floods had subsided. Here the likes of Fred Perry and Dan Maskell would grace that court for weekend tennis parties extraordinaire, awarding Edwyn this time with 2s.6p for their ferry ride! A terrifying story was related to me by Edwyn concerning the time when Captain Black, Jack Croft and Mike Whitfield had returned, extremely paralytic, from a drinking session at the Victoria Inn. He had managed to ferry them across the stretch of water over to the Bungalow fairly successfully but when they were nearly there Jack Croft fell in which need

not have proved too dangerous. Mike Whitfield grabbed hold of the long boat hook, often used for mooring and kept in the bottom of the boat, but instead of assisting his friend, he pushed him under each time he surfaced, which greatly upset the young Edwyn Lewis, not to mention poor old Jack Croft!

After this initiation, Edwyn was invited to work down at the Standard Factory as an apprentice under my father's jurisdiction, gaining useful experience, while later helping him with his boats and yachts again back at Pensarn.

I only have one childhood memory of seeing the water right up to the Deck and that must have been when I was about three or four. And it really was like being on board ship, standing on the deck and looking into the water just below, which was almost tidal. I did hear that boats were often tethered to the Bungalow in its earlier days and that someone had borrowed one for a prank once! Later on a playroom was added underneath for us three, when the flood barrier had been put in place and there was no more need to fear the tide.

As children we would often go over to Mochras Island and play in the sand-dunes. The other great occupation at that time was collecting Cowrie shells which were special and quite rare nowadays. I can remember seeing a film of us in those sand dunes, sliding down and then climbing up again, a practice that is now strongly discouraged due to environmental concerns.

² A heartwarming letter written to Nick Black in July 2009 by Edwyn can be found in the Appendix pages 127-128



Bob Griffiths minding John Black's boat.

Daddy took us over once to meet a man who lived in a beachside 'tin hut' on Mochras. They seemed to know each other extremely well and he made us very welcome. One thing is certain, my father absolutely loved that part of the Welsh Coast and enjoyed many years living and sailing there. We learned too that Captain Black had a number of different yachts over his time in Wales. One was named after the island, Mochras while another was called Mervyna. The sea trials undertaken at Lowestoft for Mochras proved disastrous when one man died in an accident after one of the props had been damaged. Consequently my father had nothing more to do with that boat, promptly selling it. Ironically the fellow who finally bought Mochras down in Poole, having been attracted by the name, brought it back up to Pensarn after he had bought the Bungalow himself earlier. My father, of course, took this as a great personal insult. One of his boats was deliberately sunk after a Tax enquiry! In July 1948 Mallory-y-Mor was valued at £8,500. The fixtures and fittings, including a 20ft boat fitted with a V8 Ford engine and a 12ft boat with an Anzani Outboard Motor, were valued at £5,525. According to the records, John Black sold Mallory-Y-Mor to the Standard Motor Company for the total of £14,025. Amusingly on 8th August 1955 he then bought it back from them for £500! This gamesmanship finally ended with him selling it back to them for £2,500! The next entry states that: "On 26th August there was a fire at Mallory-Y-Mor. The material for the repairs was supplied by the Standard Motor Company: value £19-7-6. The building repairs were done by Bob Griffiths (the caretaker/butler), who charged £5-0-0."



The original bungalow Mallory-Y-Mor



Cabin



Saloon

A spark from a train on the nearby railway line had caused the fire which is why we always had Fire Buckets filled with sand placed on the Deck.

There's quite a light-hearted tale concerning dear old Bob Griffiths, employed by my father originally as Butler and Valet, and whom we came to love almost as an uncle. He had an endearing way of just saying: "Hello Boys!" in that lovely Welsh accent when we used to first arrive. We immediately then knew that all was safe again. He certainly had the ability to look after his guests at the Bungalow but unfortunately he didn't really have much experience in cooking. Consequently he relied heavily on his wife's instructions! (During our visits up there in the 50's Bob used to delight us children with

a wonderful dish he called Moelfre, pronounced Malvra and named after a nearby mountain, which basically consisted of a pile of mashed potato with sausages strategically placed upright around the dish and a liberal amount of tomato sauce on top!) Once when Daddy had consumed a bountiful quantity of liquid libation, he was served a particularly strong curry, a culinary error no doubt, which not only shook him to the core

but gave him the distinct impression that he was literally On Fire. He had just managed to sound the alarm, shouting "Fire, Fire!" in time for Bob to come rushing to his rescue brandishing a soda siphon. Without hesitation, and with all due consideration, coupled with his obvious sense of urgency, Griffiths gave him the dowsing down of his life in full throttle. But alas poor old Bob could never dampen his Boss's thirst for alcohol.

On one occasion, up at Dolbebin Farm which he later inhabited after vacating the Bungalow, Bob tried some shock tactics with Sir John. He threw away every single bottle he could find, leaving the farmhouse completely dry. After numerous complaints and protestations he followed this strategy up by going

out and buying an immense quantity of bottles in all shapes and sizes, filling every available shelf with the stuff. No, that didn't work either, so I think it was at that point he gave up trying to change his Boss's drinking habits! In actual fact the drinking followed a pattern, usually six months on and six months off. His preferred fluid intake was Whisky and that was usually up to a bottle a day. The funny thing was that he'd apparently go for ages without even wanting a drink and then suddenly a sherry trifle or something like that would just trigger the whole thing off again. He also, evidently, never had a hangover.

The only way he dealt with his night before experience was to drink literally pints of water in the belief that it would sober him up again. My mother would relate to us how he would actually smell of alcohol, that it came out in his sweat through the pores of his skin! It's enough to put anyone off!

Technically he had been diagnosed as being a 'Dipsomaniac', one who is psychologically dependent on alcohol yet others would label him 'Manic-Depressive'. In his working environment, down in Coventry, the whole Entourage of Managers and Directors would regularly enjoy Captain Black's hospitality, often going En Masse to a 'Company Do' or Dinner Party somewhere, but when he went on the wagon no-one was allowed to drink and it became like the Prohibition days all over again.

One of the records we discovered at the Warwick University Archives stated that on 4th August 1954: "The British Transport Commission grant permission for Sir John and Lady Black to walk across the railway bridge over the river next to the Bungalow (Mallory-y-Mor). This replaces the original permission dated 16th March 1949". Was this, symbolically at least, a last attempt at trying to 'bridge' the gap in their relationship? But alas, too late!

After my parents finally separated in 1954 we used to time our visits up to Dolbebin Farm in Wales between these bouts, although we didn't always get it right. My brother Hugo recalls, when visiting once on his own in his early teens, having to climb out of the window one night to seek refuge at the Farmer's House next door after experiencing the ranting and raving of his drunken father. Brother Steuart would occasionally be woken up in the early hours to be instructed in the art of Omelette making, something he remained good at thereafter. But Daddy never attempted to wake me up with my ability of being able to sleep through anything. In fact my mother used to call me a "Perpetual Dormouse"!

My father had a different name for me, however, and that was "You Clumsy little Owl", which I usually took as a term of endearment! With my National Health spectacles I must have looked a bit owl-like and I certainly was clumsy in the extreme. Normally the three of us would go up to Dolbebin Farm during the school holidays and have a whale of a time with daddy, listening to his stories at night and rampaging around the Farm which included half a



Hugo Stuart and Nicky on Mochras Island 1953.

mountain full of wild goats, the tempestuous River Artro, which I occasionally fell in, and a whole host of disused Manganese Mines. We would pick through the dark rock pulling out small cubes of this Fool's Gold and then put them in match boxes to impress our friends at school later on.

The Farmhouse itself, situated a couple of miles outside Llanbedr, was nearly 400 years old and greatly in need of renovation when first purchased. I do remember going there as a small child while it was under reconstruction. The timbers had been taken out between the two floors so that we could see straight up through the building to the rafters. There were many folk, it appeared, working on it with great industriousness.

When he had taken up residence in this humble abode he had his old hunting horns and long riding whip hung on the old-fashioned oak lintel above the Inglenook fireplace, relics of a distant past. Occasionally he'd show off his prowess by cracking the whip and blowing the horns, much to our delight as the sound reverberated around the mountain. At other times he'd grab hold of the whip when one of us, usually Stuart, had annoyed him but it was only ever used as a deterrent! One time he really did lose his cool was when we'd all had a dispute about something or other. We knew that shortly we would be hearing his famous expression "Finish"! bringing a dramatic end to this confrontation but his timing was not good. He had stormed out of the lounge through the narrow corridor on his way to the study at that poignant moment, resulting in him chopping opposite sides of the walls simultaneously with his



'The Legacy of Time', Hugo Steuart and Nick on Mochras Island 1966.

hands while evoking a painful scream almost a second after shouting that explosive expletive!

The whole farmhouse had been entirely whitewashed from top to bottom covering the old and uneven stones beneath. Together with the darkened beams above, this gave the building its character. A large painting, which I have to this day, done by his cousin George Cochram, of a coastal scene in a yellow dawn, he had hung on one wall. Downstairs there was the Sitting room, small Kitchen plus Bathroom and Study with one other Spare Room. He had two Bedrooms upstairs combining a walk-in wardrobe in his room for the enormous quantity of suits, trousers, shirts and ties that he still possessed from former times.

An image of the family crest he had engraved and cemented into the porch above the front door with the original date of the building 1580. The total area of the Farm was about 350 acres approached by an old stone bridge over the Artro, a beautifully scenic fishing river with cascading waterfalls flowing over large granite boulders. A fair bit of fishing took place on this southern boundary of his property and neither would shooting go amiss as gradually the neighbouring farmers would join in with Sir John's congenial spirit. His own personal shot guns had his initials, of course, engraved on them but they wouldn't even save the day. Sadly he gave them away one night in a generous state of intoxication while convening with a local farmer. No good would come of his attempts to retrieve them the next day as his word was obviously his bond!



Steuart, Nicky and Hugo on way up to Wales 1954 in Triumph Mayflower

But he was genuinely generous by nature, even presenting two of his sons with a white five pound note on their rescuing a wild mountain goat off that treacherous mountain one day, after accepting their challenge. With good initiative they had engaged the services of Morris the farmer, along with a couple of his trusty sheep dogs to round up that poor unsuspecting old goat that then found itself being dragged down the mountain by two very excited looking children. We let it go after receiving our prize and it hopped off back up the mountain in the direction from whence it came! And it was to Morris Evans that he bequeathed his farm upon death in appreciation for his loyalty.

When we, as children, would visit our estranged parent in those Welsh hills, he would proudly present us to his many friends and neighbours. I clearly remember my brother Steuart and I singing together to the accompaniment of a piano in a little house just over the road from the farm. We sang that well known refrain that goes: "I love to go a wandering along the mountain track; I love to go a wandering with a knapsack on my back". Daddy used to go to the Victoria Inn in Llanbedr though to hear some real singing. He took us along with him once and it was memorable. Everyone just sat near the Bar drinking and talking until, with an unseen prompt, about twenty men got up

and walked into a back room. When the singing started it was extremely moving, even though we didn't understand a word. The Welsh language, somehow, lends itself to unaccompanied vocal harmony and even though "Men of Harlech" is probably the only song I am likely to remember, the actual experience of hearing them sing I'll never forget.

Daddy did have a few female guests at times I seem to recall. One lovely lady, who must have had some nursing experience, impressed us all when she made hospital corners while making our beds. For some reason the three of us were sleeping in Daddy's room that time and the feeling of security as she finally tucked us in was so comforting .

Once he invited a couple of elderly looking ladies to his farmhouse who just sat on the sofa without saying very much at all, sipping their tea. One of them had a particularly beaky nose. Finally I couldn't resist it any longer, being very young at the time, and proclaimed in a loud voice, directly aimed at this unsuspecting guest: "You look like a Witch!"

At times we would serve as Barmen at various parties, clearing away the empty glasses for the guests. One lovely place with a large picture window overlooking Harlech Bay I will never forget. The room emptied rapidly when dinner was announced leaving us three to do our work. Many of the glasses still had considerable quantities of drink left in them and I believe, between us all, we polished the lot off! The view was breathtaking! But in more innocent moments we excelled ourselves on the social scene.

The Bomfords were particular friends of our family when we all got together. A children's party was held once in a farmyard which may have been theirs. We had our fill of pop, crisps and chocolate cake and Hugo, Steuart and I were now engaged in close conversation with Mary, the Bomford Girl.

Eventually one of us plucked up the courage to ask "Which one of us do you really like?" The reply was: "The one with the Chocolate Front!" I looked down at my tea shirt with an immense feeling of pride on seeing the chocolate smudged all over it. But then I noticed that my two brothers both had chocolate on their fronts too. It was good while it lasted! We went on to become great friends with them, even enjoying pitch battles with the Bomford Boys, culminating in a shoot-out on our farm with all the air rifles available.



Steuart Paul Black (1947-1987)



Picnic at the Stone Boathouse with the Bomford boys. Still used by Pensarn Yacht Club.



***Mochras*, the ill-fated boat which had been specially commissioned by Sir John Black.**

At one moment in this onslaught, having divided into two gangs hiding behind boulders, Steuart decided to surrender. He tied a white handkerchief to a stick and waved it optimistically in the air as he came out of hiding. Someone took a shot for fun, evidently aiming over his head but, without judging the distance right, it fell short of its intended trajectory and hit poor Steuart straight in the forehead. He was on the ground again. Tragically Steuart committed suicide when he was forty years old. "After two failed marriages and a long battle with drink and drugs", would have probably been the official verdict. Yet all his life he just craved the affection and love that only a 'Real' family could have given him. Hugo and I fared slightly better and that was partly due to the fact that we learned to come to terms with and accept our failures, something that Steuart could never do. He had certainly inherited some of the Drive that his father had, but sadly some of the Drink too!

Daddy drove the three of us out to a remote spot once to show us some dramatic scenery. The only trouble was that it involved driving along a narrow track with a precipitous drop on the left hand side. Being winter time he soon realized that it would be safer to return up the rather muddy terrain rather than continuing any further. That was the only time we ever felt in any kind of danger while in his company. He attempted to reverse but because he couldn't turn his head round properly, due to the fall he had as a child from a tree when he broke his neck, he found the task almost impossible. We ended up having to guide him as he very slowly inched the car back on to firmer ground. The only other recollection I have of him driving with us is of a time when we had all gone into Llanbedr to buy some Fish and Chips. I remember saying in a slightly timid fashion at some point "We're not used to going this fast!" Without saying a word he just dropped the speed down to about 10 mph until we were forced to admit that we were "Not used to going this slowly either!"

I think it was also the first time I came to the realization that fish and chips do indeed taste so much better in newspaper, especially since it absorbs a lot of the greasy fat particularly found in Welsh chips which are often cooked in lard!

When daddy cooked us a meal back at the farmhouse he'd just sit back and watch us eat about half our food and then discreetly enquire "Any good?" But he could never compete with Bob's Lobsouse which was, I believe, a kind of Welsh lamb stew. The house itself had a slightly acrid smell which basically constituted a mixture of damp and alcohol. Daddy smoked fairly averagely but retained the ability of ejecting phlegm with great artistry. This event was usually accompanied by the reassuring words: "Got'im, ears an' all", much to the delight of his young audience! He was known to have smoked a pipe on occasions too. The only other smell that I find so evocative of Welsh Wales is that of the numerous sheep droppings that seem to cover every hillside.

Lastly my childhood memories are catalogued with three gruesome tales that never seem to have left my Psyche. The first involves a young lad paddling in the sea who supposedly chopped his foot off with a spade thinking it was a jelly fish. The second concerns a poor misfortunate girl of only six years who tragically was blown over the outer wall of Harlech Castle in a sudden gale before anyone had realized she had climbed up onto it. And lastly we were told that in the river by the bridge at Dolbebin Farm, a pig had once fallen in and had cut its own throat with its trotters in a desperate attempt to swim.

While on the subject of such horrifying experiences I might as well add the other stories that pervaded my childhood imagination. In the days when large houses were endowed with walk-in freezers, the door could be easily locked from the outside but not, at such times, opened from the inside. Hence a poor fellow, tragically, was found frozen to death one morning. Another accident involved someone dying in their bath when failing to turn the hot water off after a seizure of some kind. The final catastrophe was experienced by a lady who answered the phone whilst doing the ironing. Painfully she had picked up the iron instead of the phone after hearing it ring!



"It's over there!" John & Joan on the High Seas sailing with friends on the *Mervyna* July 1946.

Chapter 10

The Finale

We survived those days fairly unscathed and most of us lived to tell the tale. Daddy had converted a former cowshed into a Bar and general party-room, complete with gramophone player and dartboard while incorporating the mirrors, optics and solid wood counter peculiar to the English style of pub. Bob would now serve as barman with the customary greeting “The usual Sir?” whenever the Captain would saunter over in the evening. I can still remember the bottles of Stout and Bass stacked in regimental lines on the back shelves along with fruit juices. We helped ourselves to a bottle of Ginger Ale once and poured it over an ants nest just to see what would happen!

A lovely experience, I recall, was when my father decided to have a heart-to-heart chat with me along the lines of “What do you want to be when you grow up?” (I never worked that one out!). He took me over to the Bar and we sat in the deep stone window seat discussing various options, the details of which I’ve forgotten now. But I felt so happy about this conversation that I suggested on the way back to the house that we should continue the discussion another time. I also remember the morning when he sat reading his newspaper quietly in the lounge with me as his sole companion in the chair nearby. We stayed there for about an hour without speaking a word. I was happily dreaming in my own little world while he, it later transpired, was wondering how long it would take before I actually said something!

One of Daddy’s favourite songs of that day was Mr. Wonderful by Peggy Lee. A fond recollection of his was of one of his female guests singing along to this tune while dancing with him during one of his many evenings in the Bar. On our visit up to the Farm a few years ago we were excited to find the Bar still surviving after all those years. Apart from the dust and basic lack of light in the building, it hadn’t changed much and just lying there on the counter was a discarded tennis press just waiting for someone to come and reclaim it after returning from their game!

He took us up once to meet an elderly couple living in an old homestead in the mountain, which may have been part of his land. The simplicity of their mountain life was enviable. They were almost self-sufficient living largely off their own produce. We enjoyed tea and home-made bread and jam with them, the unsalted butter was delicious. It made a deep impression on my young heart to meet such a contented couple. Years later I walked up that mountain in search of their old stone dwelling.



Sir John Black's granite gravestone in Llanbedr and a close-up showing his coat of arms.

Sadly with them long gone, it was completely derelict, the roof caved in, hardly a wall standing. It was almost unrecognizable. The legacy of Time had played its part.

Those last visits to Dolbebin I will cherish. Bob had left of his own accord eventually, and now my father coped on his own with his particular style of living and his unique way of expressing himself. He loved his salads, and his mixing the dressing was an art in itself. I would love to watch him doing so with the salt, pepper, oil and vinegar in exact proportions. The smell too was exceptionally pleasing. On his small table he would keep a radio, a deck of cards and his head lotion which he would massage into his scalp daily. The normal routine for listening to the news would be that he would switch it off, normally, after about thirty seconds with a resounding cry of "Rubbish!" He loved his game of patience, placing the cards one by one in their rows with military precision. When he did play cards with us we were strictly ordered to remain silent. In the case of Pontoon or 'Vingt et Un', as it was known, we would click our fingers if we wanted to twist or place a counter on the table if we wanted to buy a card. He once noticed the three of us sitting there in our shorts opposite him on the sofa and thoughtfully said "I can tell you're mine, you've got my Knees!" He phoned my mother up once while we were staying with him and simply said: "Joan, they're marvellous". Yes he always made good company with the stories of his life and the people he knew. I just wish I could have recollected more or written it down earlier.



From the left- Stuart, Joan, Hugo and Nick attending Memorial Service Coventry Jan 1966, The Final Tragedy.

About six months before he died, my parents were talking of reconciliation. He had even packed his bags ready to travel over to Switzerland by plane, but changed his mind at the last minute. "It would be too damaging to our separate worlds", is what he told her.

Ironically she too had ended up on a mountain with a river at the bottom of her property. Their separate worlds were, in fact, rather similar.

My father continued to live at Dolbebin Farm until his death in 1965 of a stroke at the age of 70 years. Before he died he requested that his Ashes were to be scattered over the mountain above the Farm. It was felt, however, that local superstition would dictate otherwise and so an appropriate plot was secured in the nearby graveyard at Llanbedr. My brother Hugo, who was studying Interior Design at Guildford Art School at that time, put his creative knowledge to good use by designing a suitable Headstone in the form of a Pyramid, a good six feet tall. Incorporated in the Black Welsh Granite Stone was carved the Family Crest the name "Sir John Black" and the dates "1895-1965". This proved to be a simple yet effective way of expressing a tribute to a great man who had touched the heart of all his family, and many others too, in leading such a conflicting yet extremely full life.

*"Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, who cannot bring salvation.
His spirit goes out, he returns to the ground; On that very day his thoughts perish".*

Psalms 146:3, 4

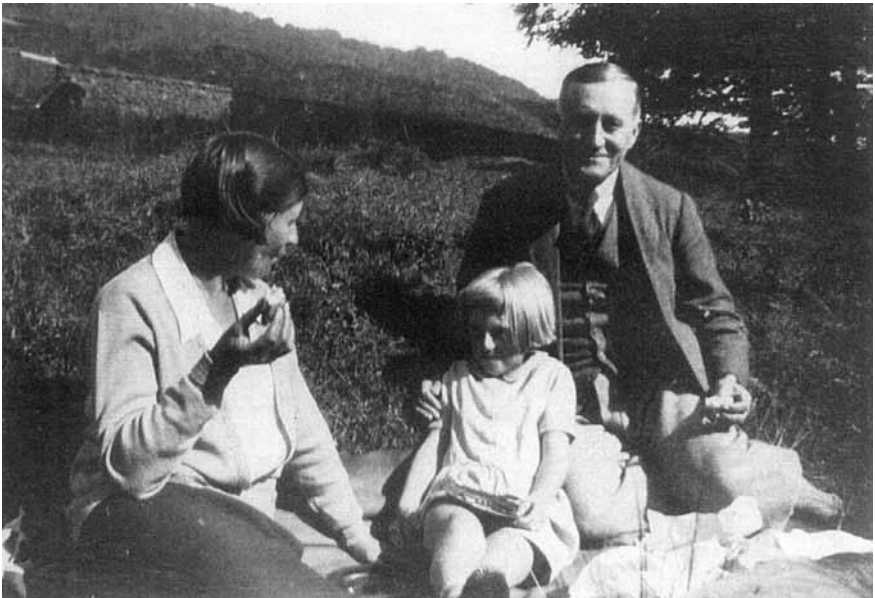
Appendix

THE QUEST FOR ROSALIND

Through surviving members of the Hillman family, including Rosalind's own two children who I stumbled across almost by accident through searching the Electoral Roll, after a revealing phone call, I finally managed to piece together the fascinating life story that was my half-sister's.

After spending her early childhood in a couple of small villages around Coventry, she lived for a time at Temple House on the Arbury Estate near Nuneaton before moving to Mallory Court in 1936 aged fourteen. By the time she was seventeen she had blossomed into a beautiful young girl with some professionally taken photographs of her then to prove it. Her love of horses too would give her life the continuity that would always be maintained. They even named the Standard Motor Company's Fire Engine after her-'The Rosalind' which must have added to the general excitement in those early years.

Her parents' relationship had by then faltered, somewhat typified by the fact that her father, Captain Black, used to lock himself in the library, on occasions, with his revolver for shooting practice on the oak panelling.



Picnic with Rosalind in 1928 with relatives, probably John Black's brother Bob and wife.



Camping holiday 1936. Captain Black with his daughter Rosalind in his SS Jaguar Sports car.

This charade, however, was contrasted by him also investing in a specially designed sliding door which was recessed in the oak-panelled dining room, thus serving as a convenient room-divider for when more privacy was required. By 1939 their divorce was imminent, leaving Daisy to elope with the chauffeur Louis Blanchard following a glamorous tour of Europe they had enjoyed in true 30's style. It later transpired that Captain Black actually sponsored the whole trip!

By the end of the War Rosalind had joined the Police Force at Rugby where she historically became the first Woman Patrol Car Driver in England. It was in that capacity that she met William Barnett who had been working in the Aircraft Industry during the War under Sir Frank Whittle, even gaining recognition from Winston Churchill who used to come down and meet up with him for lunch. It was BTH Rugby that employed him at the time of his meeting with Rosalind. They eventually married in Rugby in 1952.

William and Rosalind then moved down to Devon where he became a Garage Proprietor at Tedburn St. Mary near Exeter while she had become mother to her two children Jimmy and Dawn. Being concerned over the increasing traffic on the main road and the safety of their children, they decided to move again. This time it would surely fulfil their wildest dreams. In May 1953, and with financial help from her mother, they bought an eleven-bedroom residence called Bag Park Manor near Widecombe on Dartmoor, standing in no less than 1,050 acres of land. Here they trained race horses while later, during the early 60's turned it into a Country Club. By that time her mother Daisy, who was back on her own again, had moved to a lovely house at Churston Ferrers near Paignton with a splendid view of the sea overlooking Torbay, finally ending

her days in the Seaway Nursing Home reaching the illustrious age of 91. Her more formal name Margaret Verena Blankaert revealed Louis Blanchard's Belgian origins which didn't endear him to Rosalind by any means as she was convinced that all Belgians ate horses!

By 1965 turbulent times had taken their toll on Rosalind and her husband William. Debts had been incurred, she had contracted TB and was admitted to the Hawkmoor Clinic, life had become difficult. William and Rosalind parted company, leaving her to take a job at the Old Inn at Widecombe where she would come to terms with her new and more solitary existence.

Her daughter Dawn left home in 1970 to work back in Coventry for Ann Moore, the famous equestrian. Rosalind sold the Manor House in 1973 to move to a bungalow in the quiet village of Manaton not far from the beautifully scenic Becky Falls. Here tranquillity returned to her life once more. Her son Jimmy, who later bought the bungalow off her, would soon be married and by 1975, when she was living at her mother's house, Pensilva, he was in the process of welcoming his own first child into the world.

By examining the inquest report and circumstantial evidence, a picture has emerged of her final hours.

Rosalind was on her own that day, Thursday April 10th 1975, apart from her dog Gary who accompanied her for this last journey. No-one really knows exactly what happened, Gary was a cross-collie and a rather boisterous one at that, so whether he played a part in overturning her on the staircase, perhaps after being let out for a walk, will never be known. It is understood that she tripped on the loose landing carpet while moving furniture, precipitating the fall. She was sorting out her mother's belongings after Daisy's period of convalescence in Torbay and was in the process of preparing an inventory for the auction that was due to be held. Her daughter Dawn had phoned around 9pm at which time she was in fine form.

Meanwhile her former Nanny, Laura Griffith, who used to live with them for some time, was expecting Rosalind for the weekend at her flat in Paignton. But when she had not arrived by Friday afternoon, and no reply was forthcoming, Miss Griffith then phoned the neighbour, Mrs. Macmillan, who subsequently found Rosalind collapsed and semi-conscious on the floor in her bedroom. She also saw that the back door had been left open, confirming that Rosalind had tried to call for help after her fall.

The property was surrounded by a large garden and so her cries were not heard. Despite severe pain, she had then managed to crawl upstairs, where the telephone was located, as her mother used to spend most of the time up there during her last ten years at Pensilva. Rosalind apparently even heard the phone ringing when Laura Griffith called but couldn't reach it. The real tragedy, though, is that, not only had she been lying there paralyzed from the waist down with her spine dislocated but, worse still, she wasn't even

discovered by the neighbour until at least 15 hours later. The ambulance was called and her children were informed of the accident.

She was taken to Torbay Hospital where Jimmy and Dawn later visited her.

Rosalind finally died a month later on May 8th as much from shock as anything else. Her death certificate describes the cause of death as: "Acute Bacteraemic Shock following Contusion of Cervical Cord due to fall downstairs at home". One other word accompanied the document: "Accidental".

She was asleep and safe now and nothing could touch her again.

I had found Rosalind.



THOMAS SYDNEY DICK - OBITUARY

"COVENTRY EVENING TELEGRAPH" Tuesday, November 7, 1967

"CHAIRMAN OF COVENTRY FIRM DIES AT AGE OF 86"

"The chairman of the Auto Machinery Co. Ltd., Coventry, Mr. Thomas Sydney Dick, has died at the age of 86. The firm was established in 1886 by his father-in-law, Mr. William Hillman. Mr. Dick, a Londoner, came to Coventry in about 1910 and joined the Aldermoor Lane Company, where the first Hillman car was made.

Following its success, the Hillman Company was founded, and Mr. Dick, who had married Miss Dorothy Hillman, was transferred there as a joint manager. After the First World War service in the Royal Marines and after the Tank Regiment, in which he rose to the rank of Major, he returned to the Auto Machinery Co. as manager. He was Managing Director for some 30 years, and on relinquishing the position to Mr. D. Leedham, became Chairman.

During the Second World War, Mr. Dick was Colonel-in-Charge of the Home Guard in Coventry. Mr. and Mrs. Dick, who survives him, lived at Street Ashton Lodge, Stretton-under-Fosse, near Rugby. Their only son was killed in action in the Second World War. Mr. Dick was an uncle of Mr. Alick Dick, managing director of Royston Industries Ltd., and former head of Standard-Triumph International Ltd."

Walter Amstutz (1902-1997) The Last Pioneer

In 1924 he completed two descents that even today are considered challenging: On May 18th he descended together with Arnold Lunn, Willy Richardet and Fritz Amacher from the Northern Eigerjoch across the wild Eiger glacier, and on June 11th he mastered the even more dangerous Guggi-route in the northern flank of the Jungfrau (virgin) mountain together with Pierre von Schumacher. Three weeks later he managed together with Richardet and Hermann Salvisberg the first ascent of the northern wall of the Blümlisalp – a classic ice-wall. He achieved the same at the northern wall of the Cima di Rosso in the Bergell, which he mastered together with the Italian Count Aldo Bonacossa for the first time in 1930. The route across the northern part of the Great Fiescherhorn, which was opened in 1926, is named after him.

On Corsica he managed the first ascent of the north ridge on the Punta Minuta (2556m), together with Walter Risch (known as the first person to climb the Badile-Nordkante). He took part in expeditions to Greenland, Kenya and Peru. He undertook many climbs with the Belgian King Albert I. and other crowned or uncrowned Heads of State.

In 1924 he founded the Swiss Academy Skiing Club (SAS) together with Richardet. 69 years later he founded the King Albert memorial Foundation, which every two years awards the Golden King Albert Mountain Award for particular achievements in connection with the mountains of the world.

In 1925, together with Lunn, he organised the first Anglo-Swiss Race in Mürren, the oldest ski race in the world, in which teams compete. In 1930 he launched the speed skiing, the so-called 'Kilometre Lance'.

He won numerous ski races, amongst them the downhill race from the Allmendhubel to Mürren in 1923, the first Anglo-Swiss Race in 1925, the



Walter Amstutz. Photo courtesy of his daughter Yvonne Gozon.



Walter Amstutz. Photo courtesy Cleeves Palmer of the Kandahar Ski Club.

Mount Gurnigel Championship in 1927. In 1929 he invented the Amstutz Spring (the forerunner of the diagonal ski binding), the Amstutz stick and the Amstutz Ski.

From 1929 until 1938 he was director of the Spa in St. Moritz and in 1937 had the four different versions of the sun logo for St. Moritz, which he invented, patented/registered as picture brand with the Swiss authorities for Intellectual Property - this was a worldwide Premiere for a holiday destination.

He was publisher (first with Amstutz & Herdeg publishers, then with the De Clivo Press) and published e.g. Leslie Stephen's classic 'The playground of Europe'. He published 'Who's Who in Graphic Arts', once the bible of graphic art worldwide. He came up with the idea of the 'Golden Books of the Engadin', Switzerland, the upper Italian Lakes which all turned out to be a great success. His collection of Japanese art was a delight for experts.

He was the founder, and for decades editor, of the Schneehase (Blue Hare), the SAS Yearbook. During the Second World War he included a photo of a woman putting on make-up in his magazine; at the same time a competing magazine of the Swiss Ski Club published articles aimed against female skiers wearing make-up.

With his Hasselblad he created ski photos which even today stun with their dynamic and aesthetics. There is not enough space here to list all of his honorary memberships and all his orders of merit. Just this: in 1984 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire by the Queen, in recognition of his support/promotion of Anglo-Swiss relations. He met his wife Evelyn Palmer, an English writer, during a ski race in Mürren in 1924.

At the age of 65 he climbed for the last time across the northern wall to the Badile. In 1983 he crossed the Lohhörner again, the climbing peaks/pinnacles of his youth. A year later he descended from the Schilthorn nonstop the 1300 metres high down to his village of Mürren, and even at the age of 89 you could meet him on skis on his home mountain.

Walter Amstutz, born December 5th 1902, the son of the hotelier in Mürren, died August 6th 1997.

Translated from German by Annette Chauvaux

Memories of Coventry by Robin Penrice
Triumph World Oct/Nov 2002
The Manservant and the Mosquito

Remember the world of sixty years ago? When everything involved taste, manners, respect, discipline and an understanding of one's place in the pecking order of society?

Sir John's office at Canley was around 30 feet square and decked out with rosewood panelling, the most beautifully decorated ceiling and

expensive pictures and antique bracket lamps adorning the walls. There was a thick carpet, a large desk, a sumptuous leather office chair for Sir John with a similar pair of very comfortable chairs for those visitors lucky enough to be bidden to sit down. His secretary Joan Smart had a similar office but, as befitted her more junior station, its size and ancillaries were not so impressive. All typical of what was accorded to an important Captain of industry in those days. (I believe that a similar edifice at Banner Lane was used complete with a large open fireplace!) Tea and coffee were served to a timetable of military precision by the legendary Tom Thorne, Sir John's butler.

Thorne, as he far preferred to be called, can best be described as the perfect Jeeves. Tiny, and always immaculately dressed in morning coat, waistcoat and tails, Tom had his shoes hand-made by the famous Lobb & Company, with a squeak engineered into them, so that you could hear him coming! Totally loyal to Sir John, he attended him for many years without complaint and never, ever said a bad word about the great man. If anybody, but anybody said anything disagreeable about Black, Thorne set about making life virtually impossible for that person.

Early one morning in the 1960's, following a hectic night with selected muttering rotters (Guild of Motoring Writers journalists) at the Bear in Berkswell, on entering the so-called Kremlin between Fletch North and South in a rather dishevelled state, I was accosted by Tom with the words: "We can't take those trousers into the meeting can we Mr. Robin?" I was led into Tom's pantry and standing there, trouserless, was Sales Director Lyndon Mills who had also been at the Bear. "Morning Robin"! he greeted me cheerfully. "Morning Sir"! I replied, and we conversed for a few minutes as our respective pantaloons were pressed to perfection.

It was Thorne who told me the following story when I was sitting in his butler's pantry one day. Thorne was kept on by the Company after Black was ousted and I always went to see him when in Coventry; not only because I had known him all my life, but because he was such a smashing man.

The Standard Motor Company built 1,066 de Havilland Mosquito aeroplanes during the Second World War (amongst myriad parallel items) for the eventually successful prosecution of the conflict. Known as the 'Wooden Wonder', it was a remarkable aircraft as it could fly so high and fast that, until the latter stages of the War, nothing the enemy had could touch it. The name of Standard's chief test pilot escapes me, but apparently he was extremely charming as well as being a nutter of some order. He was responsible for test flying every Mosquito from what was then the Company airfield at Ansty, around ten miles from the factory, where final assembly of the air frames took place.

It appears that, at some stage, the gentleman flyer had a not inconsequential row with Sir John Black; no strange thing that. The result of said disagreement was the insistence by Black that he wished to see every Mosquito manufactured

by the Company in flight.

Consider the demand for a moment. Bill Wanley, Chief Inspector at Ansty, could hardly ring Sir John ten miles away saying: "Mosquito number 956 is finished. Sir John would you care to come and see Squadron Leader X put it through its paces? Take off is at 13:00 hours". Neither would it be practicable for Black to move his offices to Ansty in order to witness each test flight. So a compromise (probably with a big grin on the face of pilot X) was reached, to the effect that every Mosquito was to be flown over the Managing Director's office on the corner of the Canley site, where at least it would be heard and possibly seen.

Black had coffee in the morning, served at his desk at 10 a.m. and tea in the afternoons at 3 p.m.; the faithful Thorne placing the drinks before his master precisely on time. Both beverages were served in specially commissioned, gold ringed bone china tea or coffee cups and saucers inscribed with the initials JPB (all of Black's cutlery and china being so decorated). Sir John's office was a place of complete peace and quiet, the great man insisting that this allowed contemplative decision making; something one can understand when he spent the majority of the war amidst the cacophony of the factories, normally sleeping in a flat in Ivy Cottage. The workforce loved Black for his dedication. Compared to today's silent passenger jets, multi-cylinder piston engines as used in wartime aircraft are incredibly noisy, throbbing and beating away, the decibels amplified if there are more than one, especially at low altitude. The magical Rolls-Royce supercharged Merlin V12 is one of the worst, but such an evocative sound that I unashamedly admit to having tears in my eyes if ever I am lucky enough to hear one fly over. The Mosquito had two such mechanical masterpieces, each churning out in excess of 1,700hp when extended.

Whilst ensuring that every Mosquito flew over Canley as instructed, pilot X learnt of the times that Sir John took his tea and coffee. Timing his take-off to coincide with the daily ritual, X carried out the normal checks, arriving over Meriden on schedule. Dropping down to rooftop height, he set his course for Canley and when 350 knots was registered on the airspeed indicator (at the Coventry side of Banner Lane) put the throttle of both Merlins 'through the gate' (an emergency power boost used for a maximum of five minutes). Attacking from the rear (well from the direction of the Sports and Social Club), the Mosquito exploded over the factory, spot on time. The blast of noise and vibration was such that cups, saucers, glasses and other utensils vibrated off the shelves in Tom's pantry. Sir John's cup, wherever it was, emptied of its own accord, plaster flakes fell from the ceiling, a dust storm was created, phones jumped off their cradles, wall lamps shook and pictures came down. Joan Smart and the other secretaries dived under their desks in panic, but the factory workers loved it! Tom said the bombardment lasted for about a week before Sir John decided to call a truce!

SHADOW FACTORY PRODUCTION

AIRSPEED Oxford PRODUCTION 1940 TO 1943

300 Oxford Is, Contract No. B.55347/39 delivered between February 1941 to February 1942. V3865 to V3914, V3933 to V3957, V3972 to V3996, V4016 to V4065, V4079 to V4103, V4124 to V4173, V4192 to V4241, V4259 to V4283.

250 Oxford Is, Contract No. B55347/39 delivered between January 1942 to September 1942 DF220 to DF264, DF276 to DF314, DF327 to 367, DF390 to DF433, DF445 to DF489. DF501 to DF536.

50 Oxford Is, Contract No. B55347/39 delivered between September 1942 to November 1943 LB401 to LB429, LB442 to LB462.

150 Oxford Is, Contract No. Acft/2230 delivered between November 1942 to July 1943. MP275 to MP314, MP338 to MP376, MP391 to MP430, MP444 to MP468, MP470 to MP474. MP486 (renumbered from MP469 which compromised a Mosquito serial). 240 Oxford Is CANCELLED, Contract No. 55347/39. EL847 to EL896, EL908 to EL943, EL955 to EL995, EM113 to EM151, EM167 to EM200, EM214 to EM253. Total Oxford I production was 750.

Standard-built Oxford Survivors [Only eight aircraft survive out of 8,586 built] MP425 Complete restored aircraft at the RAF Museum, Hendon since 1994. MP455 Belgium Military Museum in Brussels since 1960.

DE HAVILLAND MOSQUITO VI PRODUCTION 1943 TO 1945

500 Mosquito VIs delivered between June 1943 and December 1943 by Standard Motors, Coventry. HP848 to HP888, HP904 to HP942, HP967 to HP989, HR113 to HR162, HR175 to HR220, HR236 to HR262, HR279 to HR312, HR331 to HR375, HR387 to HR415, HR432 to HR465, HR485 to HR527, HR539 to HR580, HR603 to HR649.

300 Mosquito VIs delivered between December 1944 and May 1945 by Standard Motors, Coventry. RF580 to RF625, RF639 to RF681, RF695 to RF736, RF749 to RF793, RF818 to RF859, RF873 to RF915, RF928 to RF966.

266 de Havilland Mosquito VIs delivered between May and December 1945 by Standard Motors, Luton. TE587 to TE628, TE640 to TE669, TE683 to TE725, TE738 to TE780, TE793 to TE830, TE848 to TE889, TE905 to TE932. TE933 to TE944, TE959 to TE999, TF114 to TF150 & TF163 to TF206 all CNX.

Total Mosquito FB VI production was 1066.

Standard-built Mosquito Survivors

HR339 Substantial remains including wing and undercarriage held by Ferrymead Aeronautical Society, Christchurch, New Zealand. Wings and undercarriage used in rebuild of TE758/NZ2328 (another Standard built aircraft). HR621 Static restored with Camden Museum of Aviation, Camden (later Narellan), NSW. RF597 Hulk, parts used to restore TE863 (Standard built).

RNZAF Museum, Wigram AB, New Zealand. TE758 Restoration project with HR339. Ferrymead Aeronautical Society, Christchurch, New Zealand.

ALL OTHER MILITARY RELATED PRODUCTION DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Bristol Beaufighter, 3,000 fuselages produced out of a total production of 5,928 aircraft. **Bristol Mercury VIII engine 730hp** at 2,650rpm on take-off, 830hp at 2,750rpm maximum continuous power. 20,000 units built used in the Bristol Blenheim, Miles Martinet, Miles Master, Supermarine Sea Otter and Westland Lysander. **Bristol Mercury & Pegasus cylinders** 417,000. **Constant Speed Propellers** 63,000. **Bomb Release mechanisms** 250,000. **Service Vans including Truck 5cwt 4x2 Light Utility or Tillie**, 10,000 Claudel Hobson carburettor 54,500 **Beaverette armoured car** 2,800, **Fire Pump** 5,000

THE HARRY FERGUSON AND JOHN BLACK PARTNERSHIP

Ferguson, being a good ten years older than Black, was an equally forceful personality with a clear idea of what he expected from his business associates. When you consider too that he had already made a substantial fortune through his manufacturing agreement with the Ford Motor Company of America, which had been put in place since 1939, it also explains how Harry Ferguson was able to afford his own private suite at Claridges used regularly when he was in London doing business!

The “Papers of the Standard Motor Company” are now all kept at the Modern Research Centre at Warwick University Archives in Coventry. One file of particular interest entitled ‘Disagreement between Sir John Black and Harry Ferguson’ compiled by Sir John’s secretary Joan Smart reveals that Black and Ferguson’s business partnership was built on a fairly shaky foundation. (MSS 226/ST/3/F/3/1-10)

On examination of these documents it becomes apparent that the original tractor designs sent by Ferguson for the Continental Z-120 engine were not practical for production at the Banner Lane works back in Coventry which is borne out by a letter of 17th May 1946 explaining why the plans had to be re-designed by Standard’s own engineers. Also Sir John’s main contention was that he had gone into business with Ferguson as a partner and resented being treated like a contractor as referred to in a letter dated 21st May 1946. Following are the two letters mentioned- the introduction to the first letter was written by John Black.

“Is Mr. Ferguson satisfied with my share of the partnership? He apparently believes that I am completely satisfied; he has in fact said that we confer on all matters, whereas our lack of conference has led up to the present crisis.

The actual disagreement last Wednesday came about as follows. I was concerned with the position of the design of the Controls and Hood detail, and asked Mr. Grinham when I could expect them to be finalised as they were very much overdue. We went together to the Experimental Department, and there found Mr. Ferguson surrounded with what I referred to as a "bunch of amateurs". We then withdrew. Following this Mr. Ferguson came over to me, and I referred to the matter of finalising these



Publicity photo of Harry Ferguson and John Black on the TE20.
(c) BMIHT.

details. I said that if they would tell us what was wanted, our own Engineering Department could complete the design in a week. Mr. Ferguson then said that we did not understand anything of the function of the tractor, and were quite incapable of carrying out the design of these details. This was too much for us as we had designed the major units to which I refer later, and as Mr. Ferguson now claims full rights and credit for these major units.

I was misled in the first place as to the tractor that we were to make, which I believed originally to be the Ford-Ferguson. The modified version had several completely new features, e.g. Engine, Gearbox and Rear Axle. I was distinctly told that the whole tractor has passed exhaustive tests in the United States. When the revised sample type arrived, which had been built by Harry Ferguson Inc., it was found that extensive re-design had to be undertaken, including re-styling, of which Mr. Ferguson disapproved although it had been executed by his own Company. In connection with this I quote my Technical Directors report to me. I have all the supporting documents and drawings if required."

REPORT OF WORK ON FERGUSON TRACTOR BY STANDARD MOTOR COMPANY LTD - ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT.

"I attach herewith a detailed report of the work undertaken by the Standard Motor Co. Ltd., to place the Tractor design on an Engineering and production basis. This work has been much more extensive than we anticipated, and I would state without exaggeration, that 75% of the engineering which we understood had been completed and proved in the U.S.A. has been undertaken by us, before any production work could proceed.

In the early days during October/November 1945 our Planning and Jig and Tool Departments were seriously held up because of lack of information, and if it had not been for the intensive work put in by the Engineering Department, we should have had no Tractors available this year.

I have been closely in touch with the Ferguson Staff since they have been with us, and I have seen no indication that any one member is capable of compiling or checking the stresses and loads applied to the Tractor, and since there has

been so much re-designing during the past few months, this work has had to be undertaken by our Staff. This has been accepted by Ferguson without query. With regard to design, we had to take over the design of the new Gearbox, Rear Axle, Hood & Grille, in fact all the main units have been put into proper shape by our own Designing Staff.

Those details which have been left with Ferguson have caused us endless delay, because of the queer method they adopt of making wooden mock-ups, which are discussed, altered, and discussed again. In fact finality never seems to be reached unless we step in and do something to assist them.

I do feel that we have been responsible for not only putting the Tractor into production, but for putting the design onto a proper basis, so that it can be understood by our Planning, Jig&Tool, and Production people generally.”

That report was accredited to Ted Grinham, the Chief Engineer and Technical Director at the Standard Works. The result was that Harry Ferguson Ltd. agreed to pay £450,000, a goodly sum in those days, to the Standard Motor Company to cover their costs as mentioned. The money was to be raised through the sale of the first 25,000 tractors. The following letter was penned by Sir John Black himself who surely had good reason to air his grievances on the subject.

“REPORT ON ASSISTANCE GIVEN BY THE STANDARD MOTOR COMPANY LTD.

IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF HARRY FERGUSON LTD.”

Ever since the commencement of the partnership, we have done everything that we possibly could to give assistance to Harry Ferguson Limited, either on our own initiative, or as a result of their requests.

Help has always been given on the basis of a partnership, and we should obviously have taken a very different attitude if there had ever been any suggestion that we were merely contractors.

I give below a list of some of the ways in which assistance has been given;-

- 1. Office accommodation, including the loan of furniture, draughting equipment, stationery, type-writers, etc.*
- 2. Canteen facilities and catering arrangements for all the Ferguson Staff.*
- 3. Transport. On numerous occasions we have arranged transport of goods from London to Coventry.*
- 4. Service arrangements. We give Harry Ferguson Limited Staff the same discounts as our own Staff.*
- 5. We have carried out many minor alterations to the Fletchamstead Works, such as the erection of partitions, electrical wiring, etc.*
- 6. We have given Harry Ferguson Limited the benefit of our Cashiers Department, by making up and paying their salaries.*
- 7. We have given Harry Ferguson Limited the use of our Labour Office, by dealing with the many aspects of labour control on their behalf.*

On May 22nd 1946 a private and confidential report was made of a meeting between Ferguson and Black with Oliver Lucas presiding. *“Lack of sufficiently frequent and frank consultation”* between the two parties *“seemed to be the major cause of difficulty”*, it began. And then: *“Considerable argument took place concerning the patent position. The validity and usefulness of the various patents still in force were agreed to be two distinct and separate issues, although each important in its own field.”* It concluded that the meeting ended on a very happy note. Such was the world of 1946 at the beginning of production of half a million tractors which were exported round the globe. Ironically, the controversy of their partnership still resonates down to this day. A true Ulsterman, Harry Ferguson certainly had the ability to retain his proverbial gift of the gab. Rather ominously, a letter from Ferguson to Black dated Dec.13th 1945 makes reference to their fabled partnership.

He wrote ... *“These things will keep recurring until the romance of our partnership has been told again and again...”* He concluded his letter with the words: *“Yours cordially”*. Sadly, though, the conflict didn't end in 1946. In March 1949 the Daily Express published an article relating that Standards would be economising by putting: *“4,000 workers on 3-day week”* and quoting Harry Ferguson as saying: *“The Company is cutting back output because of trade restrictions imposed by the Argentine, France and other countries which at the moment I cannot name”*.

After informing the Daily Express by letter that: *“In no circumstances will I ever again speak to any of your representatives unless you give the same publicity to the withdrawal of the statements attributed to me that you have given to your announcement today”*, he then wrote the following letter to the Directors of the Standard Motor Company, dated March 7th 1949.

DAILY EXPRESS REPORT

“Gentlemen, Your Managing Director, Sir John Black telephoned me this morning with regard to the above and once more used language to me which I regret I cannot overlook this time. I regret to say that he used this language even after I had explained to him the facts of the situation, as per attached copy letter. I cannot say just where the blame lies in this matter. Anything concerning us has now become front page news and, obviously, official statements should be issued to all the press before they get unofficial news. This is the second time the same thing has happened. You will doubtless have seen that some other papers reported this 3-day week without any reference to me”.

Yours faithfully, Harry Ferguson, Governing Director

.....and the rest is history!

**LETTER TO JOHN WARREN WHEN HE WAS MADE ASSISTANT TO
TED MARTIN, THE SALES DIRECTOR IN 1948**

My Dear John,

The bomb I have been longing to release has now in fact been released. The rest is up to you.

You will have many problems to face, and you are bound to experience anxious moments. There will be many occasions when you will wish to seek guidance. Come to me any time you like, with any of your problems, and I will give you the benefit of any experience that I may have accumulated in the past years in the Industry.

Good luck to you. I have confidence that you will make the grade.

Yours ever, John Black

OLIVER LUCAS COMING

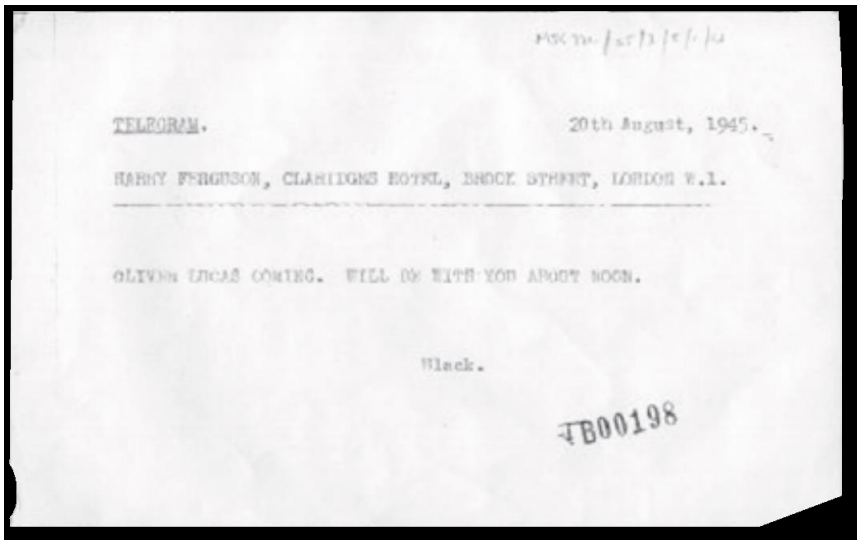
“In 1897 a public company, Joseph Lucas Ltd was formed with a nominal share capital of £225,000 to take over the Lucas business. Supply by the company to the motor industry of non electrical goods began about 1902 and was followed a few years later by the Company’s entry into the electrical field with the manufacture of car batteries and dynamos and lighting sets for sale to car owners.

Expansion in the manufacture of electrical equipment followed the Company’s acquisition in 1914, for the sum of £9,000, of the share capital and business of Thomson-Bennett Ltd which made magnetos. From this early takeover of the Thomson-Bennett magneto business stemmed the paramount interest of Lucas in the supply of electrical equipment for the motor industry.

During the 1914-18 War the company was engaged principally in the manufacture of shells, fuses and electrical equipment for aircraft and military vehicles. In this period it also began the manufacture of starter motors which had by then been developed in America.

From 1923 Mr. P.F.B. Bennett (later Lord Bennett of Edgbaston), one of the former partners in the Thomson-Bennett business and Mr. Oliver Lucas, a grandson of the founder of the Lucas business, were until Mr. Lucas’ death in 1948 Joint Managing Directors of the company: they established close personal relations with the principal vehicle manufacturers and themselves became leading personalities in the motor industry. (Lord Bennett died in 1957)”.

The first time I came across Oliver Lucas’ name was on the wall of the summerhouse at Mallory Court, along with the other hundred signatures. It wasn’t difficult to make the connection with the Lucas battery company and I do remember my father mentioning someone called Lucas.



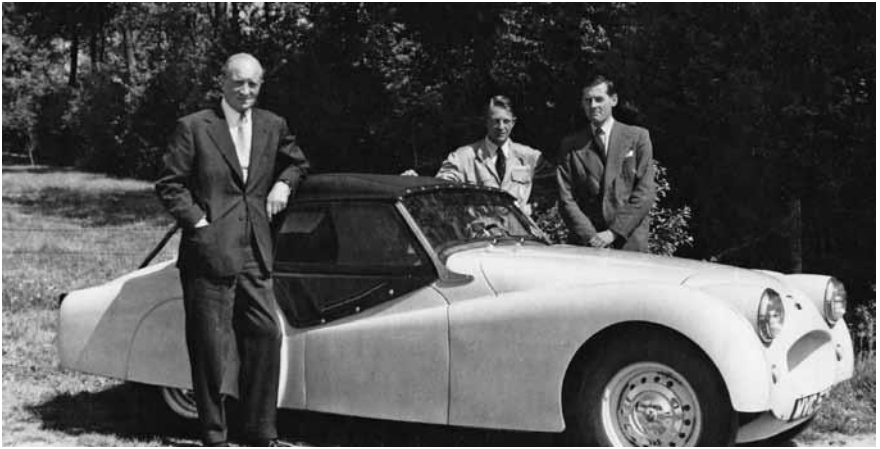
Next a visit to the Warwick Archives, where Standard's papers are held, revealed a telegram sent from John Black to Harry Ferguson at Claridges Hotel, Brook Street, London W.1. dated 20th August 1945. It simply stated: **"OLIVER LUCAS COMING. WILL BE WITH YOU ABOUT NOON".**

Then a signed Claridge's menu, dated 5th September 1945, was discovered in the same file. Apart from John Black, Harry Ferguson and Oliver Lucas' signatures it also had written on it: 'Dedicated to Oliver, the parson who wed Harry and John'. This implied to me that Oliver was the middleman between Black and Ferguson and generally was responsible for getting them together in business.

It also became evident from further correspondence between them that in fact it was Lucas' tractor that was used for the publicity stunt at Claridges involving the Little Grey Fergie being driven down the Hotel steps. Further to that event Ferguson wrote to Oliver offering advice on how to cultivate his farm in the most productive way. It appears that the three of them were quite a team.

KEN RICHARDSON AND THE TR2 PROJECT.

Ken Richardson had been chief mechanic and test driver to the ERA (English Racing Automobiles) racing team instigated by Raymond Mays of Bourne, Lincolnshire in 1934. After the War, the team changed their name to BRM (British Racing Motors) with production of the new BRMV16 grand prix car.



Sir John Black, Ken Richardson and Alick Dick at Jabbeke with the TR2 on May 20th 1953.

Ken remained chief mechanic and test driver to the team and was heavily involved with the development of the car. He is officially listed on the BRM staff list as a Development Engineer at BRM.

He met John Black when demonstrating the V16 at the Folkingham test circuit near Bourne to various people who had sponsored the BRM project. The Standard Motor Company had a large involvement with BRM at the time providing engine blocks and cylinder heads machined in the experimental department over in Coventry while also building their Test House. In fact Captain Black had known Raymond Mays since his career at the Hillman Company back in the twenties when he helped Raymond with the supply of racing parts for the Hillman that he was racing then.

As a consequence of his interest in the V16 project John Black spoke in depth to Richardson about its performance etc. (it was a very powerful 200 m.p.h. Grand Prix car) and obviously became aware that Ken had considerable experience with the driving and development of fast cars.

On one occasion John Black had been invited back for lunch at Raymond Mays' house Eastgate in Bourne which was adjacent to the BRM workshops. Ken had just been testing the V16 and was now in the workshop cleaning his goggles and wiping his face after this dramatic session when Raymond and John came in to chat. Ken had apparently disappeared off the circuit twice in the V16 after "a double dose of complete steering failure"! With a smile on his face but with an understanding of the dangers involved in testing a new 200 m.p.h. Grand Prix car, Black said "Why don't you get a proper job Ken!"

A couple of years after that poignant moment Ken Richardson found himself being invited to join the Standard Motor Company to develop their new sports car which was announced at the 1952 Earls Court Motor Show (this was the original TR Prototype with the rounded tail). After the Press Day back at the

factory in Coventry Ken was given the job of test driving Triumph's new pride and joy. His verdict was that it was not only extremely dangerous due to its weak chassis but basically a death-trap, being totally unstable when cornering. With immense courage Richardson explained his worst fears to his new



Boss yet his concerns were received not only with shock but with respect and appreciation too. The car was thus redesigned with a new chassis and the opportunity to improve the rear end body styling was also taken by the styling department.

Hence the TR2 was born. Ken's development of the TR2 and his subsequent management of the competition department TR2s and 3s became world beaters in their class in international rallies and races.

Ken Richardson died in 1997 after a long and successful career with motor racing.

**RAYMOND MAYS AND THE V-16 PROJECT OF
BOURNE, LINCOLNSHIRE**

The Bourne Heritage Museum at Baldocks Mill in South Street has a permanent exhibition dedicated to the ERA and BRM projects that were both promoted by Raymond Mays of Eastgate House in Bourne. One reference among the displays shows the strong involvement that Standards had with them:

“The delays in the manufacture of components were a continuing frustration. Though a Machine Shop had been established at the Maltings, the Bourne organization was still very dependent on outside contractors to produce components. With the aid of the Standard Motor Company an Engine Test House was built in the grounds of Eastgate House. It still can be seen and was at one time part of the Delaine Bus garage, currently an Auction room.

Rolls Royce was just one of some 124 Companies that had agreed to assist. They undertook to design and build the centrifugal supercharger the V16 engine would need”. (Oliver Lucas, incidentally, was the first to offer sponsorship after the War).

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AT WARNINGLID GRANGE AND AFTERWARDS (1950-1965)

“This is my attempt at trying to recapture a childhood I never quite had with a father I never quite knew”.

Living in the Nursery wing of that great square Georgian house was quite an experience in itself. We had grey carpets, bars at the windows and a nifty rope-driven lift we all now know as a Dumb Waiter to bring our food up from the large kitchen below. I have just one recollection of being in a pram when my nanny in charge met up with another on the way to the little village of Warninglid and became engrossed in conversation. I totally ignored the other baby, concentrating on my small farmyard that was stowed away in my pram and convincing myself that I didn't really need friends. Perhaps it was more a question of “look at what I've got”, but I can distinctly remember it. I next recall sitting in my High Chair at the table and throwing bits of bread at my brothers which filled me with such glee! The Coronation in 1952 makes up my next reminiscence and then watching a Black and White T.V. while realizing that I'd just wet my pants again!

I'm sure we weren't the only children to put a Teddy Bear on top of the door to fall on the next person coming in. The only trouble was that it was our Nanny with our breakfast. “I thought it was a child!” she screamed. We ended up eating scrambled egg off the floor! I do recollect seeing Ration Cards in a drawer near the kitchen once, a reminder of harder times. A series of nannies and governesses came and went over the years, none of whose names I can think of.

One nanny, who had presumably been looking after naughty children for years, used to read to me from a rather Victorian looking book of German origin about a character called Struwwelpeter who along with other scoundrels in the story, got up to some pretty awful things, including taking the wings off flies. There was also in the stories the Scissor Man who would come and chop off the fingers of any Little Sucker thumb. I think the idea was to prevent any wayward behaviour through fear of retribution. One vivid picture was of a fellow with grossly bedraggled hair and horribly long finger nails but I don't believe any of it particularly frightened me, just a gentle bemusing. The best thing was that this nanny often sat me on a bench in the middle of the glorious wood opposite our property for these readings-marvellous!

It is extraordinary what you can remember when you put your mind to it. At around the age of four I can distinctly recall the great sense of purpose and achievement I felt while driving a sporty-looking pedal car around our gravel driveway. I had been requested to collect any amount of groundsel for the budgies which was a food they enjoyed immensely. I stopped at intervals and gathered handfuls of this abundant plant, putting it all in the boot of my vehicle before returning to base. If I had been asked to weed the drive it wouldn't have been nearly so much fun!

Steuart was branded a criminal at the age of eight after stealing some chocolates from Mother's room. He never lived it down. Once he and I decided that we were going to escape from home and packed a bag accordingly for the occasion. When the time was ripe we stealthily walked out of the large front door and crunched our way down the drive for about a minute before we discovered that we had left the front door open. Yes, we both chickened out of this runaway plot and dashed back home again.

Hugo had a far more successful attempt at escaping. He got right down the drive and nearly all the way up the long hill towards the village of Warninglid before he was caught. The chauffeur had been sent out to rescue him so when Hugo saw the car in close pursuit he decided to dive over the hedge by the side of the road and hide. Sadly he landed in a large bed of stinging nettles resulting in an extremely disgruntled Hugo being escorted back home again! The last memory of this patchwork childhood of mine is of an early summer's day when, for some reason, we were having lunch in a room adjacent to the flower room. It was salad we were endeavouring to eat along with an odd piece of meat called 'tongue' which none of us took a liking to. By the time our nanny had left the room for a brief interval, my tongue had ended up in a flower pot while the other two were buried in the hay of the rabbit cage conveniently located nearby.

The rest of our house, naturally, had red carpets on the enormous stairs, and grand furniture positioned strategically around large wood-panelled rooms festooned with real Persian carpets. The proverbial Grandfather clock stood in the hallway below the stairs and ticked away melodically. In the drawing-room was a Grand Piano that Mother would play, if she could find the music, but it always brought joy to our untrained ears. My father, generally, wouldn't let her lift a finger, expecting her to play the part of Lady Black and just organize the servants when necessary. One maid once locked herself in our bathroom and refused to come out.

After my parents' separation Mother went on to run her own flower business, The Flower Farm, which became well known in that part of Sussex during the latter half of the fifties. The Flower Room at Warninglid Grange was now brimming at the seams with steel buckets stocked full of all manner of colourful creations ready to be transported up to London in one of her fleet

of six vans professionally painted in floral designs long before 'Flower Power' ever came into being!

Her London shop at No.8, Motcomb St. Belgravia would be full of fresh flowers and produce straight from the country. She also became involved with flower arranging on a grand scale for some of the better known hotels in London like the De Vere and the Kensington Gardens.

Belgrave Mews South provided a useful Pied a Terre for her too for when she was working up there. We used to visit her lovely Mews house occasionally. Very cosy with a fabulous bathroom employing two mirrors, one at each end so that when you sat in the bath the reflection of a harbour scene would be reflected ad infinitum. On the wall at the top of the stairs was a colourful painting of an Italian bay with boats and a palm tree entitled Rapallo, which I still have. Downstairs the small lounge would come to life when her gramophone played one of her 78 records of which she had a fantastic collection. The two particular melodies that enchanted me most as a child were 'La Ronde' and 'Limelight'. I sat on 'The Boys in the Back Room' by Marlene Dietrich and broke it. The first 45 rpm Record we bought was Tom Boy by Perry Como which we only played once on the 78 player!

Back at Warninglid I was beginning to develop migraine headaches. These would knock me for six during a period that normally lasted three days when I would have to go to bed, drained of all energy and turning extremely pale. I remember once running in from the kitchen garden where I had been picking asparagus for the Flower Shop. "Mummy", I announced, "I've got an eye ache". Daddy had left and now life had changed. I thought it was all her fault but I accepted it. Nannies and governesses gave way to other beings, Holiday Tutors. My favourite was a man named Martin Beale who was a sculptor who changed his name later to Martin Edwards. He was a burly fellow with thick black hair and beard but he had a gentleness that was rare in such a large figure. One holiday he arrived in the kitchen downstairs completely unexpected. This was such a great surprise for me that I instinctively ran and jumped into his arms. He asked once if I'd like to go and stay with him in his basement flat in London, after permission had been given. I was really excited as he was probably the closest thing I had to a dad at that time. The day came when we went to London and he took me to see a giant sculptured mural he'd constructed on a street wall somewhere. He showed me my room in his humble abode and that night, before I went to sleep, he brought me a mug of hot milk. No-one had ever treated me with such concern or care before or even shown me much affection either for that matter. That one gesture meant more to me than anything and when, the next day, the chauffeur came to take me home it was all I could do to hold back the tears. I loved that man.

At the age of seven I was presented with my first pair of glasses which became a prominent part of my persona for years to come. Concern had been raised after I had fallen down the stairs at my Kindergarten in Horsham.

I had been upgraded eventually to a room next to my mother's in the part of the house that graced those opulent red carpets.

One day I came dashing out of my room to throw my arms around an unsuspecting maid proclaiming "Mummy!" in a desperate attempt at finding affection. "Poor child!" was the only response I received and once again I was reminded of my total lack of emotional stability plus the disadvantage of poor eyesight!

Actually I did, at times, find solace in the talcum- powdered fragrance of my mother's bedroom, enjoying those early languorous mornings curled up beside her in peaceful rapture. She once thought I might have ended up being an Architect as I was always asking profound questions such as: "What holds the ceiling up?" In fact, as a youngster, my favourite expression was "Let's make plans!" I always found more enjoyment out of planning an event than actually experiencing it!

At home I would often go to the kitchen in the morning when the Baker was coming. A loaf of bread then was three pence three farthings and they always used to give me the farthing change with the little Wren on it. I had quite a collection. Later on Stuart approached me suggesting that he'd like to start a collection himself. In a moment of extreme generosity I gave him 50 farthings, half of my savings. He went straight up to the Village Shop and bought some sweets with them. Hugo was never so brazen. If he ever needed any financial security he'd just get dressed up in his Scout's uniform and go and do 'Bob a Job Week', whatever the time of year it happened to be!

It was, indeed, a dangerous time for us three boys now that we no longer had our Father-figure. Stuart had already gashed his head open on a stone bird bath when he was very young and later on he fell down a stack of bales in a barn where we played. By the time I'd found Mummy all that was visible was his one foot which she grabbed hold of, pulling him out gasping for air. As we got older the games became more dangerous. We all had bicycles and one encounter remains etched on my memory. Stuart, the gardener's son John and I decided to have a race up the long drive which had the most glorious Rhododendron bushes on either side. The race must have reached its peak somewhere near the entrance to the road. Stuart had a way of always going too far and goading people on to the limit. It was highly competitive. He and I managed to stop but John, who had won the race, couldn't stop and went straight into the road. All I can remember was seeing his bicycle wheel flying straight up in the air.

I never saw him after the car hit him. He went to hospital, obviously, and lived to tell the tale but we never played with John again.



A picnic in the woods with Nick Jarman our holiday tutor. Nicky and Steuart.

Some holiday tutors were not always so well received. In fact one such person by the name of Mr. Davies set a precedent. We didn't like him from the start so we quickly devised a plan to get rid of him which basically involved a bike ride. He readily agreed and the four of us rode off in the direction of Lower Beeding, a delightful village. After a mile or so, we three boys dashed off down a side road after allowing Mr. Davies to get ahead of us. By the time he finally had found his way back to Warninglid he was ready to hand his notice in to Mother, who had just arrived from London to meet him! Other Tutors received similar treatment. 'The Davies Run' became ever popular and generally took on sinister implications every time we suggested to a potential Tutor: "Would you like to go for a bicycle ride?" But Patrick Proctor stayed and he really was an artist. In fact he became the highest paid artist in England at one time after my mother had introduced him to the Redfern Gallery. Apart from lifting Steuart up by his head from the breakfast table, during one of his antagonistic displays, he was mostly quite popular.

I must confess that we once shot at some of his paintings in his studio above the garages with one of those bow and arrows with the rubber suckers on the end. It was discouraging to realize, when he did become famous, that a portrait he had done of Steuart sitting in an orange- coloured wickerwork chair had been mislaid after first being used to block up the back stairs!

The extensive garden swept up a long slope from the main lawn with stone walls, steps and borders, leading up eventually to a large pond at the top of the hill near the farm. A green metal rowing boat gave us the means for glorious escape when we needed it. This was definitely a place of adventure for us all. The whole perimeter was covered in trees of some description giving it a mysterious feeling. One part was particularly deep and dark and filled me with a sense of danger whenever I rowed the boat near it, yet the



Hugo Linton, RAF. 1940's



Jack Linton, Medical Officer. 1940's

challenge was exhilarating. I could always dream on that lake! In the sky, whenever I saw a silver or blue aeroplane go by, I always imagined it was one of Daddy's. Evidently he kept his planes in a hangar at Baginton Airport south of Coventry. I discovered some photos at the Motor Heritage Museum Archives of my parents there, including one of me. Yes I remember flying once in one of his planes, probably up to Wales and believed that we'd travelled to some miniature world where people, houses and cars were all on a much smaller scale. I hadn't yet learnt about perspective. I was, however, beginning to learn about danger! I was often left out of things on the basis that I was too young, which actually was quite a protection. My brothers, who had spent most of their formative years fighting each other, eventually acquired airguns and Hugo's had telescopic sights. I retreated into my dream-world!

One day when Stuart had been particularly aggravating he had hidden up in one of the tall Cedar trees for protection, to avoid Hugo's rage. I watched helplessly as Hugo took aim with his air rifle and shoot Stuart, as he would a bird.

True to form I then saw him fall from his perch, bouncing all the way down the tree on its branches, before landing on the lawn below looking quite still. I went running in to tell Mummy who was prepared to believe that Stuart was now dead! Hugo's gun was accordingly hidden in the Grandfather clock which I happened to notice on one of my reconnaissance patrols the next day. In fact it gave me a great sense of importance to announce that I knew where it was. Hugo prized open the door of this antique clock with his sheath knife,



Harry and Kaethe Linton on Wedding day 1959. Tom Linton, Royal Artillery 1940's

splintering the wood in the process. He was promptly sent to Grandmother's who lived at 109, Copse Hill, Wimbledon which was the statutory punishment for such offences. Actually we all loved going to see Granny and regarded it as a real treat! Grandfather knew lots of tricks to keep us entertained too. (He was a member of the Magic Circle, despite his ecclesiastical connections, and renowned for his children's Magic Shows!)

We did though have some Male influences in our lives. For instance Mother had originally four brothers. Uncle Hugo had been killed in the War after the ship he was on had been blown up. We never knew anything about him apart from the fact that he was a keen yachtsman and had been at some stage "becalmed in the Azores", which always sounded rather grand. Mother was convinced that because he was such a good swimmer he may have survived the War by living on an Island somewhere. But he never turned up! Uncle Jack became a heart surgeon and was nick-named 'The Butcher of Nottingham', which is where he practised, if that's the right word for it. He was a jovial character with a dry sense of humour greatly impressing me once at his parents' (my grandparents') house in Wimbledon by sticking an inch long pin into the back of his lower leg, ostensibly to keep his socks up, without hurting himself or even drawing blood. He'd done his training at St. Thomas' Hospital where I suppose you could learn all kinds of useful tricks like that! Uncle Harry had joined the Colonial Service and had married a lovely Swiss-German woman called Kaethe from Grenchen who could yodel. In fact when they came to stay at Warninglid, after returning from her home in Switzerland, she

suggested, early one morning, that if we climbed up the Cedar tree opposite her husband's window where he was sleeping then he would wake up thinking he was still in Switzerland when he heard her yodelling. It was a good plan so I think it must have worked, as far as I can recall, but I will never forget her lovely singing.

Lastly Uncle Tom lived in Spain which he loved. We had a room near the Nursery Wing, always called Uncle Tom's Room. It had some of his pictures of Spanish fishing boats on the walls. He was an intriguing character and I remember sitting on the back stairs once watching him arriving to stay in his room. I think he was a quiet sort of chap but he went on, after exporting furniture from Spain to England for a few years, to run two of his own schools in Madrid together with his dear wife Betty who had good experience of life. The sad thing, in a way, was that he disapproved vehemently of the way his sister was bringing up her children and eventually cut himself off from the whole family, to live the remainder of his days in Spain in glorious isolation yet happy with his independence. Mother often said that, as the youngest, he had been generally patronized by the others as a child, and no doubt by her when he had grown up!

The other great thing about our formative years down there in that beautiful part of the countryside was the Wood opposite. The entrance beckoned us with an enormous pair of cast iron gates that must have stood a good ten feet high hung on two stone pillars. It really was an enchanting wood. There was a road that led through it to the big house where the Haywoods lived but the rest was carpeted with dead pine needles fallen over the years from mighty Pines that shaded even the sunniest of days.

The terrain wasn't flat either but dispersed with hills and valleys and all manner of secret places to discover. In the summer holidays we would hire a couple of ponies and keep them in the field near our home. Then when the time was ripe we would pack up a picnic and ride off into the Wood with one of our Guardians for an afternoon of adventure and fun. We would usually end up about two miles into the middle of this Paradise on the edge of a wonderful lake, this time surrounded by bamboo trees. There we would have our picnic in peace while the ponies were tied up by a tree in true 'Cowboy' style. It is truly one of my best childhood memories ever.

One Guardian who took charge of us in those days was Pam Hammond who was a very keen horsewoman. In fact she regularly rode at Point-to-Points on her horse Gentleman George often taking us along with her for the fun. To be honest I found these equestrian events rather boring but didn't like to admit to it as we had great respect for Pam and all she did. She too would take us for treks through the woods and probably saw me fall off my horse which was a fairly regular occurrence.

My days for courting danger were not over, coming to a head towards the

end of our time at Warninglid when Steuart and I were climbing the big Cedar tree. I used to love climbing trees; in fact it was my favourite pastime. This particular occasion it had been raining and the branches were pretty damp. Being two years older and much wiser, Steuart often gave me advice and this time it was “Grand pappy says, don’t climb any higher”. Being in a rebellious frame of mind I decided that I’d just climb a little more. I was about five feet above him when the branch I was standing on broke but I don’t remember any more. Apparently I grabbed hold of him, sliding down to his legs while he was hanging on for his dear life, his hands gripped round the branch nearest to him. We swung there for a few seconds before he soon realized that either both of us were going to fall or just one of us. He intuitively made his decision and kicked me off, watching me descend after seeing, in those brief moments, my glasses fall off and follow me down. I bounced off the large thick branch about eight feet from the bottom having travelled a good twenty feet in all. I was eleven at the time and Steuart was thirteen. I lay unconscious while my poor mother came out to discover my glasses neatly folded by my head where they had landed. I had concussion and remained unconscious for six hours, waking up then to be sick everywhere. When I gained my senses once more I declared, completely out of character, that I wanted to go back to school which was due to start directly. The first thing we did when I had made a full recovery was to climb back up that tree and knock a nail in the very place I fell from. Steuart said that if I didn’t do that I would lose my nerve. He was right, I never did! We all went to different Prep schools, Hugo to Manor House, Steuart to Belmont, both local and I to Mowden in Hove. Later it was Milton Abbey, Harrow and Cranleigh, respectively. I suppose it explains a little why the holidays were such an intense experience for us all, as we didn’t see much of each other for the rest of the year. That may not have been such a bad idea after all and, possibly, may even have been the intention!

One last event which shook us to the marrow was nothing less than an act of vandalism. We must have been exceptionally bored that summer because, armed with air rifles, we marched up to the tennis court and after giving up on finding anything suitable to shoot at decided that the best target would probably be the actual tennis hut used for changing and keeping deck chairs in. After making a few cursory forays around it, the last remaining frontier then faced us as we shot through all the windows. Broken glass lay everywhere inside and out and by the time we came to our senses from this ‘Pack Attack’ we had convinced ourselves, and later the Police, that we had chased a boy in a red jumper down the farm lane after seeing him running from the scene of the crime. The awful thing was that the Police did eventually find such an individual with a red jumper, living not far from us down the road and he was severely reprimanded.

A couple of days before leaving Warninglid for good we discovered by

chance that it was quite easy to climb up onto the roof of our enormous house and walk along the deep and wide lead-lined gutter and then scramble over the entire roof structure on the roof gulleys. It's a good job we didn't stay any longer as all manner of accidents were just waiting to happen.

It is worth noting that there were a number of burglaries in that region of Sussex during the 1950's period. I know of at least three attempts on Warninglid Grange. When we were very young my parents were having a Fancy Dress Party in the large Oak Room one night in wintertime. One of our nannies, who was incidentally dressed as a Witch, went up to my father, apparently as white as a sheet, to inform him that there was a long ladder leaning on the outside wall and reaching up to their bedroom. The story goes that he phoned for the Police who arrived promptly to catch the thief red handed as he came down the ladder precipitously. What had happened in the meantime was that the Nanny had bravely gone up to the bedroom to check if there was anyone there. When she had crept rather stealthily into the room the Burglar, caught unawares, got the total shock of his life on seeing this bizarre-looking woman staring back at him in abject terror! He then almost dived out of that window. The second account involves a burglar who had done his work but then had forgotten how to get out of a rear courtyard where all the drainpipes and gutters seem to have been, outside the back of the kitchen. Now trapped, he couldn't find the door so was helplessly grovelling about in the dark, making enough noise in the process. The Police were called and he was duly detained. The third occasion was a matter of someone stealing an expensive box of cigars which, for some reason, he decided to hide in a hedge in the field opposite. He was seen and the Police alerted who then posted a lookout near the hedge until, after quite some time, the man returned to receive his questioning down at the Station.

One burglar, who was far more successful, ended up in court having had a good run for many years while living off the proceeds accumulated from a number of large houses in the area, including ours. What the judge couldn't understand was why he hadn't previously found employment as an architect, after having studied the architectural plans that this man had drawn, with such precision, of every notable house of any importance in the locality. Many years later my mother would receive visits from the Police enquiring whether she recognized any of the artefacts in the photographs they would show her, after another burglar had been apprehended in the Sussex area.

Our adventure though was not over as we then moved to Beresford Manor, Plumpton Green where we now had a full-sized Tree-House and a Turret-Room, comprising a spiral staircase leading up to an octagonal glass-domed observatory. More woods, bicycle rides and trips in an Austin A40 to the Downs with one of our companions.

Our most favourite Holiday Tutor was a fellow named Nick Jarman and we



The three boys with Uncle Harry, Joan and Nick Jarman at a Goldmine in Kenya, 1960.

took to him immediately after that first strong handshake we experienced at Victoria Station. We went on to enjoy excursions and holidays with him for years to come and he remained a loyal friend to my mother for decades after that. We all went to East Africa together in 1960 to visit Uncle Harry who was then a District Commissioner in Mwanza, Tanganyika and right near Lake Victoria. We saw Treetops, Serengeti, the Rift Valley and visited many Game reserves even going down a Gold Mine one day. "I saw 60 lions today" was an entry in the diary I was keeping for this adventure. Nick provided a stability to our lives that was sadly lacking at the time and our overall respect for him was quite natural. He also had the most fabulous hand writing which I persistently tried to emulate. He went on to become a Barrister.

Before the Flower Business had subsided, which was largely run for Tax reasons, Mother purchased a salubrious property at 31, Chester Square, London S.W.1. This time, by renting out the top and basement floors, the running costs of the remaining four floors, our living quarters, were basically taken care of. She'd now sold her Mews house but could enjoy London Life to the full at that most exciting time in the very early sixties. She used to do her shopping in Elizabeth Street where I also remember with great joy being taken to an enchanting restaurant called 'La Bicyclette'. There was a splendid assortment of old-fashioned bicycle wheels, all painted black, hanging from the walls and ceiling, an absolute delight for any twelve year old boy.



Nicky and Stuart, with Joan's Daschunds Maxie and Alex.

We were also Members of the Aero and Lansdowne Clubs where we could go for a swim or play squash. On the balcony table overlooking the pool they used to serve these really lovely salads which I would always relish on such occasions. But then it was back to school and the rigors of that clandestine existence which I had grown accustomed to.

My mother eventually sold her house at Chester Square to John Osborne, the playwright before moving to Switzerland after one last move to a country cottage-style house in the small village of Ellens Green not far from Cranleigh where I went to school. The move to Switzerland was mostly sponsored by the need to pay less tax as Capital Gains Tax at the time was 19s 6d.in the Pound whereas in Switzerland it was only 6d. She once said that the reason for moving was to find 'peace of mind' but then having found it she was bored with it! But it was an intriguing tale, her discovering that hillside plot.

She'd met an Italian architect by the name of DeMarchi who had enjoyed childhood picnics in a quiet location above Montreux. In fact the area had originally been used as a vineyard, still bearing evidence in the form of terraces carved into the hillside leading down to a tempestuous river. The story goes that my mother took this architect out to dinner during which he related his dream of building a house at this favourite site of his, looking out over Lake Geneva with snow-capped mountains in the distance known as the Dents du Midi. By the end of dinner he had designed the plans of her house on

the paper tablecloth with which they left the restaurant. About two years later it was completed despite a few problems with subsidence. Villa La Follyette had been born!

Still the early part of the sixties the construction was of a modern style incorporating the main bedroom and bathroom on the same level as the approaching drive with wrought iron balcony overlooking the panoramic view of the valley with its breathtaking distant views. In the near distance was a traditional Swiss Chateau completing this picturesque scene. Outside stone steps led down to the front door and porch which brought you into a most sumptuous sitting room through a hallway. This was also approached down a glorious staircase from the upstairs hall.

With kitchen and sun-room plus one other bedroom at the back of the house and accompanying small bathroom the ground floor was then complete. But below all that and down some steep stairs was a Cellar comprising a further good-sized bedroom, shower room plus a store room and area for housing the central heating system which blew hot air through vents in the walls to all the rooms. So the house effectively followed the contours of the previous vineyard terraces progressing down the hillside. Mother was now residing in State and enjoying her new found freedom in the Swiss mountains. It wasn't long before she acquired two Bouvier Bernoise mountain dogs, Romulus and Remus, which were black and white versions of the famous Saint Bernard. Her ability to entertain became well known among the English out there especially with lovely summer lunch parties on the terrace under an enormous walnut tree. Also the swimming-pool that she'd had constructed brought great acclaim from many who enjoyed the walk across the white bridge to it or perhaps the actual experience of the water itself which was always a success with us young ones in those days. At one point she even bought herself a 185 horsepower speed boat that she moored down at the harbour in Montreux under the auspices of a certain Monsieur Morizo, another Italian! So what with nipping across to France on the other side of the lake or arranging for us to water-ski past the Chateau du Chillon she had a pretty full life during our holidays out there.

She also purchased a chalet up in the mountains near Villars where we could ski to our hearts content, often dropping off for a Gluwein on the way down to warm our courage for the homeward journey. 'Chalet le Renne' at Chesieres was later sold to one of the Wilkinson Sword family.

They were indeed exciting times back then but it all came to a halt somehow one day in December 1965. We were all together for the Christmas holidays, which in fact was a very rare occurrence for us. Opening the post on Christmas Day at Villa La Follyette we found a telegram announcing that Daddy had died the night before of a stroke in the hospital he was in at Cheadle in Cheshire. We found out later that they were having a party at the time and

a nurse went upstairs to check if all was well with the residents and found my father quite dead. We were devastated and spent the rest of the holiday making arrangements to attend his funeral and then the Memorial Service at Coventry Cathedral which, incidentally, was packed full of his loyal workforce together with many of his fellow Directors, over a thousand people in total. Appropriately, the Scottish Pipe Band he had so regularly supported played on that sombre occasion in January 1966.

Excerpt from Bob Griffiths Memoirs

A large contingent of British troops was evacuated from France via Dunkirk by means of an assortment of boats, an event which will go down as one of the highlights of British history. We, in Talybont, were not at this time really aware of the war but we had to play host to a contingent of Dunkirk survivors, lads who had been through hell and in need of rest.

This, they had in our village and everybody did all they could to make their stay as enjoyable as possible, bearing in mind that we had to put up with food rationing etc. We had five of these boys staying at Henborth and, whilst waiting to be kitted out again for re-drafting to another unit, they spent their time walking the hills and doing odd jobs such as building an air raid shelter for us; fortunately it was never needed.



Bob Griffiths

Hitler, believing that Britain was beaten, began his preparations for an invasion of our Country and heavy air raids on our cities followed almost nightly. One of the places to suffer most in 1940 was Coventry and the city centre was completely flattened in a single raid.

As it happened I had to visit my new employer, Captain Black, of the Standard Motor Company on the day following the raid but despite my trip of some 140 miles I was not allowed into town and had to turn tail and go home! Hundreds of people were killed in this one raid. I had lost my job at Kilminsters of Harlech but was fortunate enough to obtain employment looking after Captain Black's bungalow and boats at Pensarn. Having taken this job, thinking I would be caring for the property only, I was surprised when I was told that part of my duties would involve looking after the boss himself - a 'Gentleman's gentleman'.

This entailed all jobs from cleaning to cooking (a chore that I'd never attempted before) but with expert advice from my good wife everything went well on the rare occasions that the Captain managed to visit his country home. Despite low

pay, this was a job I liked.

During the early summer of 1940 the British Government, fearing an invasion, formed a civilian army called the Local Defence Volunteers (L.D.V.), later to be renamed the Home Guard and like many of my neighbours and friends I joined their ranks. We had no firearms and in learning military drill and tactics we used broom-sticks and suchlike in place of rifles. We had plenty of fun when we turned out on parade with our broom in our hands. Later on we were to become more organized and were given uniforms and old fashioned 303 rifles. Fortunately we were never called upon to react, the invasion never came, Hitler having made the biggest mistake of his life by deciding to go the opposite way and invade Russia. Towards the end of 1955, Sir John Black finally severed his connection with the Standard Motor Company and in doing so it meant that he had to vacate the Bungalow at Pensarn and find another house.

For me it meant being taken off the firm's payroll, losing some of my perks (bonus etc.) and becoming the old man's direct employee. He finally agreed to purchase Dolbebin Farm in Llanbedr and moved in during early 1956, hiring a manager to look after the farm with me tending to his needs.

LETTER TO NICK BLACK FROM EDWYN

Dear Nick and family,

Glad to be of any help regarding your father's biography. I was always very close to him as for some reason he had taken a liking to me. On his arrival here to the Boat House from Coventry I used to help convey the luggage over, by boat if enough tide or by hand and foot otherwise. I remember him having the tennis court built at the Boat House and due to no roadway to area he had everything delivered by rail on a Sunday so we had no trains here on Sundays then. A goods train would park near the Boat House with a mini-rail delivery of items to the court area.

Then I remember Fred Perry and Dan Maskell being invited here to stay with your dad and also had a hard court for them to play on. I ferried them both from the harbour to the Boat House and they gave me 2/6 which was a lot of money then. I could not get home fast enough to tell mother what they had given me. When I was 15 your dad eventually persuaded my mother to let me go with him to Coventry for a short time as he was having a boat built at Lowestoft which he was going to bring to Pensarn and he wanted me to look after it for him. The engines for the boat were going to be Vanguard engines adapted for the boat so he wanted me at Coventry to get the gen on the engines. I was taken to Banner Lane experimental department where the engines were being prepared. Your dad at times would come and see how I was getting on at the department and he



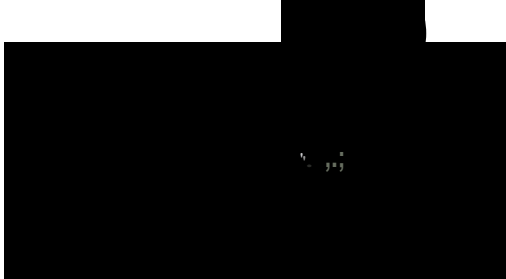
Edwyn the Ferryman in 1947 aged 14.

always had a smile and a word of comfort for me as everything was very strange to me there – it was a different world to Pensarn. After he had left me everybody in the section would come over and ask: “What did he want, Taff?”, as after all he was the Managing Director of Standard Motor Co. Eventually when the boat Mochras was near completion Bob Edwards and myself were taken to Lowestoft to see it and if we had any suggestions to see the “man in charge”.

I was not at the launching and trials of Mochras as I was too young. Anyway things did not go according to plan and I believe Mochras was for sale shortly afterwards. Your dad got me to stay at the Standard Motor Company as an apprentice for 6 years. Mochras- a 42 ft motor/sailer eventually found its way to Pensarn when a Mr. Cope, a motorcycle agent from Dudley, had bought the Boat House and, looking for a boat, found one for sale at Poole called Mochras and the name attracted him to the boat so that’s how eventually Mochras arrived at Pensarn.

Your dad at the time was living at Dolbebin Farm, Llanbedr and was not well at all. On several occasions I went to try and see him but was told by staff that he did not want to see anyone. I am very proud to have been a friend of your dad and mother too. It was a sad time when he left the Boat House. Hope that enclosed photos will be some help in your dad’s biography. Take care and all the very best,

Yours sincerely, Edwyn



The Templar Collaboration

During research on Capt. Black a number of questions occurred:-

1. What on earth was he doing skiing in Switzerland in 1939 just before the outbreak of the War?
2. Why did he involve himself in the construction of a ski-lift with little recognition for his efforts?
3. Was the Standard Shadow Factory producing more than Aero engine parts during the War?
4. Did the signatures in the summerhouse at Mallory Court have any real significance?
5. What was his role as a Freemason, about which very little is actually known?
6. Was the Boathouse in Wales, built in 1938, more than a convalescent home during the War?
7. Why did he wait 4 years after divorcing Daisy Hillman before marrying my mother in 1943?
8. Was it a coincidence that the granite headstone on his grave was in the form of a Pyramid?
9. Did living at Temple House, earlier bequeathed to the Knights Templar, influence his ideals?
10. Did his family crest conceal any cryptic clues regarding certain allegiances?

Please note: This is a work of complete fiction although based on real elements in John Black's fascinating life story.

THE TEMPLAR COLLABORATION

Early in his career in the motor industry Captain John Black was living near Nuneaton at Temple House, a building used in olden times by The Knights Templar. They were a 12th. Century religio-military order whose original interest was guarding the roads and protecting pilgrims journeying to the Holy Places in Jerusalem. Although the Order was officially dissolved in 1312, some believe that descendants of this Brotherhood continued to hold clandestine meetings, thus preserving their traditions. And that was not the end of the matter. By spreading their influence through Masonic Chapters enormous funds were raised over the years to support various causes felt important enough to lay their life down for. Many of these individuals were working in the Industrial field.

Little did Black realize in those early days that his relationship with that ancient organization would become more prominent as time progressed. Coming from a fairly humble background Black found himself catapulted into a world of opportunity upon marrying Daisy Hillman, one of six daughters belonging to William Hillman, the motor magnate. Having survived the 1st. World War where he gained the rank of Captain while serving in the Tank Corps, Black now threw himself into his great love of sport, Hunting, Shooting and Fishing being the order of the day! This new found social circle brought him into contact with people who would later prove invaluable in furthering his ambitions.

The scene was set, the timing perfect. Captain Black had arrived at what could only be described as a most poignant moment in history when Britain was about to emerge, once again, as an industrial nation ready to challenge the World. Having learnt the value of loyalty from his military background Black retained his Army Batman, Tom Thorne, as Butler in his new home at Mallory Court, a country mansion on the outskirts of Leamington Spa. It would be at Mallory that all the main dramas of his life would unfold and it was Thorne who would be there to support him in his times of need. From Hillman's John Black went on to join the Standard Motor Company, soon to become Managing Director, while later amalgamating with the Triumph insignia. Production lines were now in progress and nothing could stop the mechanical momentum that was taking place. One thing was certain-Black could deliver, and deliver he did!

He was soon to meet the love of his life, Joan Linton, a Bishop's daughter, at a dance near Nuneaton. The early 30's were an enchanting time for some. It was in many ways a romantic era, despite the well-known Depression.

Although seventeen years his junior, Joan had all the courage and optimism that Black, still married at the time, was looking for! Her parents, however, disagreed vehemently from the start about this relationship. The thought of their daughter, already having caused much concern, going on to marry a divorced man was out of the question. They belonged to the more respectable side of

Society while residing at Handsworth Rectory, a quiet Birmingham suburb then.

Meanwhile back at Mallory Court his personal life was not so successful. His marriage to Daisy was floundering, she leaving him eventually for the chauffeur. Their daughter Rosalind, 17 at the time of their inevitable divorce in 1939 died in a tragic accident some years later. None of these domestic crises however, deterred Captain Black from displaying his sporting prowess.

Photos from the time show him bowling on the lawn at Mallory, riding to the Warwickshire Hunt and skiing in Switzerland. His business acumen too was blossoming with many overseas contracts pouring in.

For Europe during the mid-thirties though things were looking bleak. Germany was beginning to consolidate its Empire, while Hitler began drawing up plans for the Master Race-his Aryan Ideal. It was a chance meeting on one of his skiing holidays in Murren, Switzerland that must have changed everything for John Black. He'd made friends with a fellow skier by the name of Henrik Gerhard who ran his own textile business in Vienna employing many Jewish people. An Austrian of mixed lineage himself, Henrik also had a large number of relatives still living in Austria of Jewish ancestry together with numerous business associates of similar origins. He realized too that very soon their lives would be under threat from the New Regime that was evidently now sweeping Europe. He'd already formulated plans to extricate this entourage from their homeland over to Switzerland, which of course was neutral, but he lacked the necessary funds or the influence to make such ideas a reality.

He cautiously confided his concerns to his new friend John Black and found in him a sympathetic ally. Black not only had loyal contacts back in Britain but he also now had influential associates with access to large funds for such a Cause, if they could be persuaded to agree. Many of these comrades had, like Captain Black, survived the Great War and were eager to get their own back on what they considered, at the time, to be the makings of an extremely brutal dictatorship.

Black and Gerhard devised a scheme whereby the Immigrants could be hidden away in mountain cabins high up in the forest regions above the skiing resort of Davos, one of Black's favourite locations for Winter Sports during that period and suitably near the Austrian border. These log cabins would have to be large enough to house complete families in this secluded area among the snow-covered pine trees. But how were these visitors to be transported up the mountain quickly and efficiently enough without alerting suspicion? It was then the idea of the ski lift materialized. How simple! Under the guise of bolstering tourism in the region they could construct a ski lift and in so doing have a ready-made conveyor system for their Austrian voyagers. But they had to move fast.

Captain Black went ahead with the concept on returning to England. He convened meetings with leading figures of the day in his wooden summerhouse

at Mallory Court, suitably tucked away in a corner of the estate. To ensure loyalty and utmost secrecy with these trusted colleagues Black encouraged them to put their life on the line in an interesting fashion. After each individual had sworn allegiance to this Scheme he had them sign their names on one of the interior walls in the summerhouse! This ensured their commitment to the cause. Many of these eminent associates were themselves Freemasons, with Black having signed up soon after the start of his first marriage.

To remain anonymous as a group they decided that it would be expedient to masquerade as a Chapter of the Knights Templar, considered by many to be a pseudo-Masonic order. By preserving anonymity in this way they were also ensuring their survival in case one member was questioned by some authority or other. Many of the financial contributions were donated on a tax-deductible basis and were thus classed as Charitable Gifts. It was unanimously agreed that the most suitable currency, with international status, would be that of Gold. Not only was it safer but also it could cross borders without the need for negotiating exchange rates.

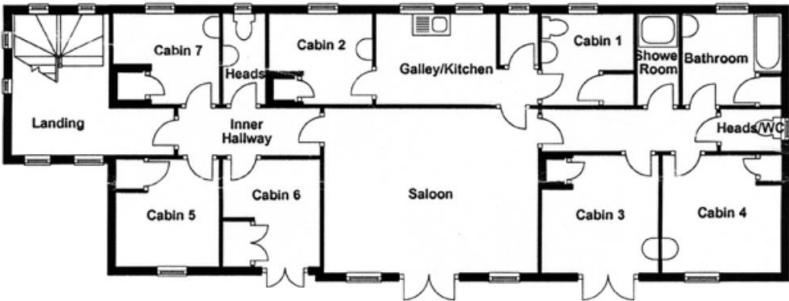
A large quantity of gold ingots was then deposited in a Swiss bank in readiness for payment to move in many directions. The network, having expanded significantly, necessitated the cooperation of some of the best business and technical brains of the day. Meanwhile the mechanisms for the ski lift were being produced down at the newly built Shadow Factory in Coventry, ostensibly as a Foreign Machinery Assignment.

However, an urgent need soon arose for a more remote headquarters for planning operations as the number of individuals involved was now growing. The stakes were getting higher! Designs had already been drawn up for the mountain cabins to be made of local pine out in Davos. They would have 4 bunkrooms for the younger members of the families, 2 double rooms, a bathroom, kitchen and a large enough saloon for all to meet in. By the end of 1938 all 10 cabins had been constructed and ready for being accommodated. Passports had to be doctored, identity papers prepared. There also had to be safe houses for later occupation after the initial arrival of these Austrian repatriates.

A Transit Manager was thus required. Preferably it had to be someone of impeccable discretion, acute trustworthiness and organizational ability but who also knew Switzerland well enough to be able to find suitable homes for providing the necessary hospitality. A certain charm with linguistic skills would also not go amiss! A tall order, perhaps, yet such a person was eventually found. Helga Meyer, herself a woman of obvious Jewish extraction, despite the blonde hair she wore swept back in almost Aryan style, fitted the bill exactly. Having worked for Swissair, nearly since its inception, she had plenty of 'know-how' in personnel matters. Well known on the social scene too, she was loved by all. More than that Helga was well prepared to risk life or limb for the sake of her fellow compatriots of similar ancestry. She also conveniently

knew many useful contacts in the Hotel Business, with many buildings lying empty during this turbulent period in European history.

Back in Britain Captain Black had found an ideal location for his new H.Q. He'd had many an adventurous holiday up in North Wales fishing and sailing and it was here, on one such occasion, that he discovered an appropriate plot of land, about an acre, right by an estuary and a stone's throw from the nearby railway line. This would prove suitable for the transport of any shipments of cargo, human or otherwise. The local military airport too would provide in time a vital link for the 'Welsh Operation', as it came to be known. Mallory-Y-Mor, also known as the Boathouse, was prefabricated down in the Coventry factory, transported by train and constructed on site at Pensarn near Harlech. Standing on cast iron stilts, it was basically a wooden structure resembling a ship with main deck surrounding it, useful for general surveillance, while an upper deck atop the rectangular flat roof provided a superb lookout area for approaching boats or craft that would soon be tethered to their Boathouse moorings, often at night. The internal design was entirely based on the architectural plans for the log cabins up in those Swiss mountains. With a potential 12 berths and large saloon Captain Black could now entertain his guests in some style. Excellent food and wine would serve his visitors well during those crucial and highly secret meetings, while a steady stream of intriguing characters continued to arrive at their Boathouse destination, mostly at weekends. A discreet Welshman presided over the catering and domestic arrangements at the time providing a sense of decorum and calm that was essential to their survival.



Architectural plan for the Boathouse.

Meanwhile in Davos things were progressing well. It had not been difficult to secure suitable premises in the town to facilitate a reception centre for all the new adventurers soon to arrive in this ski-resort. A former hardware store was now transformed into a travel agency. Alpina Sports was the new shop in town! To discourage unwanted trade, prices were advertised just a little out of reach for the average holidaymaker. While obviously specializing in mountain

retreats, the agency also boasted a good stock of ski equipment and fashionable winter sportswear that would serve to equip and disguise their customers in a highly efficient manner. It was decided that identification would be implemented through the use of a sign on the agency door and on all Company stationery. It was a tall green triangular shape that to most would probably mean an Alpine Tree, or possibly a mountain peak but, for those who understood the symbolism, it was in fact a Pyramid, a Masonic symbol that served to consolidate the whole subterfuge. Ironically Davos hosted the Nazi Party H.Q. too.

So all was set in Switzerland, the Austrian side of the organization, however, would prove to be more problematical. Henrik's extensive family needed to be transferred primarily from Vienna where most of them lived over to the Vorarlberg region in the west of Austria. This presented no real challenge as the railway network was operating as usual.

The meeting place had already been agreed upon after a thorough search in the vicinity of Feldkirch not too far from the Swiss frontier. The contact in question, a truck mechanic simply known as Gus, was well known for his hospitality and hence would avoid suspicion when receiving strangers to his house. The rest of the journey over the border, though, needed a lot more planning. Fortunately Gus had a long-standing friend and business associate by the name of Franz Rainer who owned a large old mountain Lodge right up in the high regions above Feldkirch. This was so close to the Swiss frontier that once there, if one could avoid detection, it would be no trouble at all to just hop over at a convenient spot between those imposing Border Control Points.

The Lodge itself was largely built of locally quarried stone yet retained the traditional wooden chalet-style roof and authentic balcony known in that region. Outside, a goodly stack of logs gave the place a rustic feel. Franz' parents and grandparents before had farmed up in those mountains for many years. Two large barns, ravaged by time and now in a rather dilapidated state, stood back from the Lodge protected by a collection of sturdy conifer trees. Still stocked with hay and fodder gathered for the purpose of feeding animals long gone, these massive wooden shelters bore witness to more secure and happier times when Franz would join his Alpine family for the long summer holidays. Wild flowers carpeted the majestic mountainside while copper cow bells tinkled whimsically in the pastured meadows below. Yes, he had spent many a happy time up there with his grandparents who lived in quite primitive fashion while later his parents themselves had made necessary improvements to reach modern standards of the day. Living conditions were altered by installing new kitchen and bathroom facilities, then renovating the already spacious sitting room that had reflected the days when farm animals shared their living quarters! This saloon became the centre of many a family gathering for years to come. Sadly all of Franz' family were now dead but he kept the old Lodge going, mostly through holiday lets during the summer months which proved extremely remunerative.

**Captain Black in Murren 1939 with the
Director of Tourism, Gotfried Michel.**



He never really thought of it as his own home but rather a case of just looking after it until the time came when the memories of his family would fade into the mists of his sentimental consciousness.

But there was now a pressing need that had recently presented itself. This would provide the ideal location for transferring a whole entourage of people, in stages, from one country, where they were living in despair, to another neutral land where they could find hope, at last. It was now winter and the snow lay in deep drifts covering the whole landscape in its all-encompassing blanket while distant peaks glistened in the sun.

There was only one direct route to that mountain connecting up with the farm and Lodge. This, in turn, eventually joined the border road that crossed at right angles when finally reaching the top. And that is where the danger lay, critically because the German army was utilising that very same road for transporting machinery and troops on a regular basis in the direction of nearby Lichtenstein. Nonetheless Franz felt strongly enough about the current situation in his homeland and so did Gus, when it came to it. The injustice of this oppressive system had robbed his countrymen of their freedom. He also understood the inevitable outcome if people like him just sat back and did nothing to save those unfortunates. The implications were horrendous and he knew the risk he was taking, but this might be the only opportunity for hundreds of fellow Austrians who, despite cultural differences, had as much right to survive the brutality of the new Regime in Europe as he did. Yes it was a necessary gamble, perhaps more of a calculated risk –the only real alternative would be certain death at the hands of the Gestapo.

Arrangements were put in motion; Gus prepared his home in Feldkirch, Franz Rainer accommodated his Lodge in the mountains. It was decided that essential equipment in the form of skis, boots and clothes could be stored in one of the barns. If the exodus up there was negotiated in the dark then the race across the border into Switzerland would take place at first light the next morning, minimizing time while avoiding the conspicuous nature of the whole operation.

It was also arranged that a Swiss family who farmed nearby would provide food for the weary travellers en route to their neighbouring country. In fact the Austrian and Swiss farmers in those borderlands had worked together for so many years that their agricultural way of life had become totally assimilated. Home cured meats and cheeses were legendary in that region, not to mention the breads and wine that accompanied those delightful meals in that exhilarating mountain air. They also had strong bonds of loyalty to each other, sponsored in part, by the restrictions imposed on them when wishing to visit their relations on either side of the divide.

So the stage was set in Davos and in Feldkirch. All they needed now was for the ball to start rolling. Alpina Sports had recently acquired a Ski-bus capable

of carrying a good number of passengers with ample storage for luggage plus suitable roof-rack space for skis. The sides of this bus were soon to be painted with a most colourful piece of artwork advertising Alpina Sports holidays while also, significantly, displaying the Pyramid symbol in bold green. Telephone links were set up between Gus's house and Franz' Lodge while the Travel agency in Davos acted as Head office. The winter of 1939 was particularly cold.

Groups of up to twelve started to arrive two weeks after the initial plans had been implemented. They stayed at Gus's place until the go-ahead was given, progressing up to the mountain hideaway by truck at night. Those evenings spent up at Franz' Lodge were vital too as they galvanized the group into a cohesive team. Strengthened by food, drink and camaraderie they then had the courage to embark on this dramatically dangerous and adventurous escapade.

The ski-run downhill on the other side was not in itself too hard even for inexperienced skiers. It was basically a kind of mountain pass that had been used for many years by local farmers to move their animals onto higher or lower ground.

In actuality by traversing through the conifers after leaving Franz' hideaway the track curled round to the left and then dropped down a fairly steep incline which levelled out to a gentle slope for a mile or so before finally reaching its destination. Excitement ran high too when they soon began to realize how easy it all appeared to keep this conveyer system going.

Gus was now offering skiing lessons on the nursery slope behind his house and generally entering into the spirit of things. He'd originally been attracted by the material rewards offered in the form of gold but he now was taking a more personal interest in the proceedings.

Even before they left Vienna it was known that baggage had to be kept to a minimum but nevertheless learning to ski with even an average loaded rucksack on one's back would prove difficult enough for anybody. However the collective feeling of exhilaration, when the whole team of twelve Alpine trekkers were working their way down that Swiss mountain together on their way to freedom, could never be exaggerated.

The 'Exodus Operation' in Switzerland was a resounding success, no one suspecting a thing. The mountain cabins were looked upon by local tourists as normal holiday chalets with people staying at most a week or two at any one time. Of course the ski lift itself proved more popular than ever with enthusiasts flocking to the slopes in great numbers, in turn providing an excellent cover. Everyone was happy, the tourist industry was flourishing, the chalets were all full and Davos became the prime ski resort in the region for years to come.

It is to be noted too that all the Austrian immigrants would have needed some knowledge of skiing to have been able to brave the journey over the Swiss frontier. Equipment for them in the form of skis, poles, boots and also

weatherproof clothes would have added to the already generous expenses. Black, of course, could have claimed a royalty off the Swiss Tourist Board on behalf of the manufacturing process at the Standard Shadow Factory but he declined to do so, avoiding obvious and unwanted publicity.

It was also crucial that he delayed his marriage to Joan Linton until after the Austrian Affair had blown over completely. Any breach in security or compromising comment would have cost him more than his reputation as a leading industrialist at a crucial time in the history of the British Motor Industry. With large financial resources now in hand a highly efficient organization was about to challenge the very fabric of the Nazi regime whose intention was to prevent the Jewish population from escaping their borders.

At the Swiss end of the chain, as soon as news got through that the next party of skiers were on their way the ski-bus was dispatched promptly and would be seen travelling in a northerly direction from Davos via Klosters on to the Swiss-Austrian border, more than a two hour journey, ready to meet them. The bus, easily identified for those who mattered, would then wait on the road below for the skiers to arrive. Soon that contingent would be on their way to their new home after first checking in at Alpina travel. Then it was up to the ski lift and away to their mountain cabin for a well-earned holiday in the snowy panorama of that delightful part of Switzerland.

Perhaps it had all gone too well. The organization was composed of much talented individuals, many of whom were veterans of previous encounters with similar military authorities. Around two hundred persons had now crossed the border from the Austrian side. However their mode of transport was just not suitable for the remaining elderly contingent that awaited transportation over to Switzerland. Some of these thirty or so frail folk could hardly walk let alone ski. So what could be done to alleviate this problem?

Gus and Franz met up in Feldkirch to discuss this daunting predicament early one afternoon in February 1940. To leave them behind would be tantamount to sealing their certain fate which was out of the question. Reports continued to pour in revealing the brutality of those inhuman Concentration Camps overflowing with emaciated inmates facing possible extermination. Walking further into Town, while desperately debating the plight of these elderly immigrants in their charge, Gus soon became aware of an imposing group of horsemen from the Tyrol region who had recently arrived in the area with their fine display of working horses together with their ornately painted wagons artistically coloured in deep crimson and gold. The spontaneous outburst that followed was enough to knock Franz to the ground. The full understanding of the significance of this chance meeting had suddenly come to both of them in those brief startling moments. If they could only persuade these Tyrolean horsemen to assist them in conveying a goodly group of elderly folk across the border then their problems were over and their job will have been finished.



Captain Black with Alan D'Egville of Secret Intelligence Service high in the Alps 1939.

Two exhausting hours later, after sufficient food and drink had been consumed at a local Tavern, Gus and Franz emerged with a look of total relief on their faces. It had been agreed, after intense negotiations, that the Troupe would be ready to leave in a week's time according to the itinerary that had been proposed. They had often thought of putting on their Show in Switzerland during the spring season and if they arrived a little earlier than planned it would give them time to get used to their new surroundings. They also realized that it would be a lot safer for them once over the frontier and in a neutral country. The deal was made when they had reached the end of the meal and were drinking good strong coffee in the bustle of that antiquated Tavern near the centre of the Old Town. Also a considerable quantity of gold had been exchanged. The sun had blazed in their eyes when encountering daylight once more, while the reality dawned on them that they were about to embark on a final epic adventure.

A week later the horses made their way up the mountain pulling their load of travellers seated in the wagons. Dusk was falling, all was still, the first twinkling stars becoming discernable in that cool evening atmosphere. The breath on those work animals was still visible but disappeared gradually in the fading light. They trudged on in the dark, finally reaching their haven and finding comfort once again in the large hay-strewn barns awaiting them. The human contingent too soon collected together in the Lodge welcomed by their Swiss hosts who had prepared a delightful supper for them all. Eating and drinking to their hearts content with Bread, Cheese, Meat and Wine, it wasn't long before an accordion appeared and the singing started, tears stirring in many eyes.

Outside it had been snowing which in turn dulled any sound, so nobody heard the approaching Military Vehicle that broke the silence of that dark, still night.

Two uniformed men alighted, having first been drawn by the lights and then made inquisitive by the singing inside. The hammering on the door brought everyone to their senses, awakening in them a certain intuitive fear. All went quiet as Franz opened that door as gently as he could in an effort to avoid suspicion. The Gestapo officers walked in, looked round and came to their own conclusions.

Not much was said however except the customary questions and presentation of the usual papers. After wishing a good night to everyone in that typical Teutonic way the two uniformed men left as quickly as they had arrived.

Inside the Lodge everyone had to think fast. They just couldn't take any more risks; instead they must prepare right away to leave in case of that military presence returning. But first they telephoned their contact in Davos to inform them that the Gestapo were on to them. Had they been watched all the time without realizing it or was this merely a chance encounter? They didn't know and worse still they had now involved a whole group of Austrian countrymen into their charade. What a catastrophe! Furthermore outside it was now snowing heavily and so they decided to leave the animals and just pack up their belongings in readiness of leaving early in the morning. There was literally nothing more to do apart from taking the necessary sleep so they could build up their strength for the ordeal that awaited them the next day. Their Swiss neighbours just slipped away into the darkness.

Remarkably in Davos, when the phone call had been connected, Captain Black and his compatriot Henrik Gerhard had just arrived somewhat prematurely to celebrate the success of their coordinated venture. A window of opportunity had occurred when Black discovered, quite by chance, that a reconnaissance plane was leaving for France late one night. He managed to acquire a place on that aircraft and parachuted his way down to a quiet location somewhere outside Davos after gaining a travel extension on the intended journey. Henrik had met him at the designated 'drop off point' ferrying him back to the headquarters in Davos promptly.

In some ways the timing of their arrival could not have been better. On hearing the news they both decided that it was entirely their responsibility to help extricate the last remnants of that mixed consortium of individuals out of the danger zone before it was too late.

Attempts made to telephone back to Austria had been in vain, leading them to assume the worst, that indeed the Gestapo had uncovered the whole plot. The only thing now was to find a way over to the Austrian/Swiss border where their friends were and make sure that nothing would stop them from completing their journey. By studying a local map of that whole mountainous region they soon came to the realization that if they could be dropped off somewhere high up in Lichtenstein they could ski down across the snow fields and hopefully intercept the complete 'travelling cavalcade', which is really how it must have appeared.

They had no time to lose as it would be almost light in four hours time. Black and Gerhard loaded their skis and travel bags into the ski-bus. It was 2 o'clock in the morning, the excitement was unbearable. More than two hours later they had passed through the Lichtenstein Border and had alighted on the edge of a remote mountain village, which they had located on the map, lying almost parallel to the proposed route of their brave comrades.

Although extremely early in the morning the village had the distinct sense of being totally deserted. There was not a single sound of any description there, just an eerie silence that filled the void. John and Henrik strode through the main street with purpose in their steps as nothing was going to deter them from their mission. They knew exactly what they needed to do and the precise direction they were heading. Glancing into the small squat houses they noticed miniature human masks in every window vaguely lit up by the moonlight and stars that were now twinkling in the canopy above. Human hair completed these distorted faces betraying the superstitious nature of the local inhabitants.

Yet nothing and no-one could frighten our nocturnal travellers on this night. They were past all that. Not even the graveyard they passed crammed full of conspicuously small graves. Maybe many children had died in a plague unless, as they had heard about in other parts, where burial land was difficult to acquire and the dead were buried with their knees up to their chest to save room!

Pressing on they found the track that would finally lead them on their way. It was more than adrenalin that now fuelled their bodies. It was extreme urgency. They had to get to their friends before the Gestapo did. Putting on their skis they pushed themselves headlong into those crisp white snow tracks, fluorescent in the crystal moon.

Two hours later, just before six o'clock on that chilly morning, they had arrived at their vantage point across the valley from where the entourage should emerge if they had managed to escape the clutches of that dreaded Superpower. Franz' Lodge would be above them to the right about a mile away up the mountain pass. Black felt for his revolver knowing he could use it if necessary. Gerhard likewise found comfort in the knowledge that his pistol was at the ready and loaded in its holster on his belt. All they could do now was to wait and see if any vestiges of life became evident, as the day would surely dawn on that Swiss mountainside.

The rose-pink sky in those mountains was indeed a spectacle to behold for anyone who might have been awake in those early hours. Notwithstanding the spectacular nature of that majestic view nobody would have particularly noticed the lone aeroplane gracing the primitive sky on that crisp morning in late February flying straight out of the early sun. There were in fact two spectators to this episode, still wearing the uniforms they had worn the night before. Sitting in their Truck, one with his army gloves gripping the steering wheel, they watched with keen interest the small plane coming towards them



Captain Black with Alan D'Egville of Secret Intelligence Service at Murren 1939

gently dropping above a group of tall conifer trees which were now shedding some of their snow load after bending slightly with the vibration of that low flying craft.

The tubular metal object that then fell from the plane hit its target with precision while breaking that mesmerising drone with a violent explosion sending deafening shock waves throughout the mountain scenery.

Franz Rainer's Lodge had exploded in a torrent of fire, smashing wood and debris in all directions. In a matter of seconds it was all over, the faint sound of the plane disappearing once again in the direction of Austria, then followed by the noise of an aggressive sounding engine, that of the 'Kubelwagen', returning triumphant to base.

The bomb had actually triggered a considerable avalanche high above the valley where Captain Black and Henrik Gerhard had patiently waited. A deep sinking feeling gripped both men as they struggled with their fears and anger. This had not been a game. They had taken on a more powerful force than they had wanted to admit to.

The pass on the other side of the valley was clearly visible in the morning sun. They both felt that the only thing they could do now, under the circumstances, was to traverse over to it making their way slowly down in the hope of rejoining the ski-bus along with the back-up vehicles which, it was arranged, would meet them later on, if all had gone to plan. How could they then explain to their fellow conspirators that a bomb had destroyed more than fifty innocent folk in one gigantic disastrous conflagration?

However they hadn't actually seen the explosion, only heard it, yet that was enough to make them realize the tragic significance of that last hour.

They were just preparing to move off down the valley when Henrik thought he could hear some kind of disturbance in the snow above them to the right. At first it was barely audible but gradually the unmistakable sound of animals became evident. Could it be some sort of migration?

Anticipation gave way to sheer joy as they both simultaneously realized that what they could now see coming down the pass in a great contingent was those Tyrolean Horsemen frantically driving their wagons fully stocked with their elderly passengers trussed up in heavy coats and shouting encouragement to each other and to the horses. What an astounding relief! How on earth could they have done it?

Waving and shouting now Black and Gerhard battled across the valley with great gusto to be finally reunited with that extraordinary horde of itinerant horsemen and their crew somewhere on that pass on the way down the mountainside in the direction of the main Swiss road. What rejoicing and surprise was felt by all on that momentous occasion.

Evidently the night before none of them could sleep through worry but, spurred on by the courage of their newfound Tyrolean friends, they finally came to the decision that they had to leave there and then. They also realized, when the phone line had been cut, that they were on their own with no-one else to help them. By the time dawn had broken the horses were hitched up, wagons loaded and they were all ready to go on their way.

They heard the explosion of course, accepting how close they had been to death and then, urging each other on with the precipitous journey ahead, they made considerable progress while avoiding the avalanche and finally making that auspicious meeting with their two benefactors.

It was all over, the saga had concluded on a dramatic yet happy note. The convoy met up with them on the road and some extremely weary travellers were thus ferried off to their new home in Davos. As for the Horsemen- they dispersed into the vicinity around Klosters to await an opportunity to display their prowess once more in a local community sometime in the spring.

Black and Gerhard now joined Gus and Franz for some extensive conversations over mulled wine and cheese fondues during the week that followed. A few sorties up the ski lift gave them the opportunity to communicate with their foreign guests for the last time before they too would be departing for some new rendezvous.

Finally Captain Black, disguised as a Frenchman complete with beret and new identity, returned to England via the English Channel after notifying all concerned that operations had now officially concluded and would be disbanded without delay. Alpina Sports was sold and everything dispersed as orderly as it had been originated.

The Templar Chapter convened for one last time at Mallory in the Summerhouse in 1941. The War had not only precipitated the need for those clandestine

meetings but it also had provided the smokescreen behind which they could hide. Could life ever get back to normal after those astonishing events? It could never be spoken of again in private or in public. Besides who would possibly believe a tale like that—pure fiction!!

In 1943, when he received his Knighthood for services rendered during the War, his chivalrous spirit would take him beyond the realm of Knights Templar into that of Knights Bachelor. Along with that title also came the privilege of bearing Arms in the form of a Family Crest, which he duly had designed to suit his newfound status.

He finally married Joan that same year after a dramatic courtship lasting many years. He even took her back to Switzerland and to those same mountain slopes, which had played such a part in that earlier conspiracy. Photos of the time betray the obvious relief on his face.

But sadly their marriage would only last 10 years with three sons to bear his name. The strain of those early War years had taken its toll. Ironically, Joan herself ended up living on a mountainside villa in Switzerland that looked out over distant snow-capped peaks! The only clue she might have had of his connections with Masonry was in a pair of extremely large Brandy glasses of his, which she somehow had in her possession after their separation. These had been engraved with an assortment of Masonic symbols, manifesting proof of

his former association, but that was all, and so she never really gave the subject any more thought. Sir John Black's final years were spent up in his beloved Wales where he had moved to Dolbebin Farm outside Llanbedr not far from the Boathouse. This quiet and secluded life now suited him more than ever, far away from the rigors of the industrial world that had taken up so much of his time in

Coventry. His last days were spent in pursuit of the outdoor activities he had grown to love. Fishing in the River Artro and shooting on his Farm brought him great pleasure. But it was his allegiance to a more noble cause that took him to

his grave, satisfied that he had done what was necessary at a time that was needed. A simple gravestone represented the life of a man who had done his bit

for posterity. Incorporated in the black welsh granite was carved the family crest he had commissioned earlier. A heraldic figure in the form of a Knight's helmet peered out from the top of the crest, bearing evidence of his Templar connections. But one thing too that was revealed in the shape of that dramatic

grey obelisk which now served as testimony to a man who had lived such a full and tumultuous life. It was a pyramid standing a good six feet tall! And that Pyramid, as we all know, is a Masonic symbol. So in a passing shot, that

was either wittingly or unwittingly executed, Captain Black did leave a legacy to something that had fostered in him a certain loyalty, had lent a real sense of continuity to his life and had, above all, more importantly, helped to save the lives of countless unfortunate victims of that harsh and brutal regime which had decimated the populations in Europe before and during the Second World War.

SABOTAGE, ESPIONAGE & SUBTERFUGE

Motor Racing in Europe during the 1930's had become extremely popular, attracting many adventurous drivers onto the circuits. Mercedes-Benz and Auto-Union were the most successful competitors at the time, largely due to the generous backing and sponsorship by the German Government. The British tradition however was consolidated by 'English Racing Automobiles' on 16th June 1935 when Raymond Mays of Bourne, Lincolnshire won the prestigious Eifelrennen Race (1,500cc category) at the Nurburgring in Germany. From his book "Split Seconds" first published in 1951 Raymond Mays makes reference to that historic moment: "The scene at the start was most impressive. Storm troopers of the S.S. were lining the course by the start, bands were playing and the enormous crowd of 400,000 had to be seen to be believed."

After winning he wrote: "In front of me I could see the welcome chequered flag. Crowds surged round the car. Press cameras seemed to be clicking everywhere and all the E.R.A. personnel were frenzied with delight at our victory. I was almost hoisted from my car by German storm troopers and escorted to a special Grandstand. There our National Anthem was played and a high-ranking Nazi official placed a laurel wreath around my neck."

When Hitler came to power it was felt among British Government circles that, if there was any talk of future confrontation, 'Diplomacy' would certainly win the day. Although the general public had little knowledge of Military developments in Germany, some were becoming increasingly aware of such activities. Especially travelling businessmen, Embassy Staff and those involved with the Motor Racing World, were among those informed individuals. It soon became clear by 1935 that indeed Germany was in the process of manufacturing large numbers of fighter aircraft in their factories.

Mays went on that year to race in France and Switzerland but his arrival in Freiburg, Germany for the National Hill-climb, to be run on September 1st, would set the scene for a rather more dramatic display of provocation on the very night before the event. While his convivial spirit had brought him into contact socially with a variety of people of differing allegiances, suspicions of espionage were evidently abundant during those turbulent times.

Quoting from his memoirs: (The BRM Story-Page 121)

"That night, feeling none too good, I retired to bed early, but at midnight I had a startled awakening when the telephone in my room tinkled lustily.

A voice said: "You are Raymond Mays?" to which I replied, "Yes, and what on earth do you mean by waking me up at this time of night?" The voice continued.

"You are now in Germany, not England, and certain of your conversations during the last few days have been overheard. You are advised to leave Germany straight away." I said "I don't know who you are or what you are talking about."

And the reply came, "I am speaking from Gestapo H.Q. at Coblenz and you had better take notice of what I say".

I banged the receiver down but, believe me, I felt very uneasy.” He came third in the race!

It is understood that through certain contacts on the Continent during this period, Captain John Black, of the Standard Motor Company, was one of the first to realize the ‘predicament’ and accordingly approached the Government on the subject of Air Defence. It seemed logical that aircraft should be built where the workforce was and thus the Midlands would provide a suitable environment for such Factory construction among the Motor Industries which had already proved their capability in mass production techniques. Black had actually known Raymond Mays since the early twenties when he had supplied parts for his Racing Hillman (Quicksilver) and was no doubt still ‘in touch’. For a short period Mays had even raced for Mercedes.

1936 saw the first ‘Shadow Factory’ built in Coventry under the auspices of the Standard Motor Company which became the benchmark for future projects. Their second factory was soon constructed to accommodate a combined area of 13 acres for both, employing a total of over 10,000 workers eventually. Austin, Daimler, Ford, Morris, Rolls Royce, the Rootes Group and Rover all provided facilities and thus a highly efficient production line was born. As Chairman of the Joint Aero Engine Committee Captain Black was now in a prime position to oversee progress, something that would later earn him his Knighthood.

By 1939 Raymond Mays was involved in a new company called ‘Automobile Developments Ltd.’ with the aim of producing a Grand Prix car to take on the German manufacturers. The project was stopped when War broke out. Intriguingly after the War, Raymond Mays who had progressed by then to BRM, was invited to report on two Pre-War Grand Prix Mercedes cars.

The Germans had stored them over the border somewhere in Switzerland and the British Government wanted to examine them to check on all the engine designs but it turned out to be too expensive an operation in the end.

When Mays finally found them in a garage he soon discovered that one of these vehicles was completely riddled with bullets. Sabotage! In actual fact Harry Mundy, the well-known engine designer at ERA and BRM had worked for the Government during the War and was involved with the then new 100-octane fuel and related work. After the War he was also sent over to Germany to weigh up German engineering. Somehow he managed to acquire the drawings for the Formula 1 Mercedes gearbox. Subsequently the V16 BRM gearbox/final drive unit was almost an exact copy of the Mercedes unit.

It appears that for a good number of years in that post-war period German Industry was being run by the British and Americans. The reason for this was because their factories were in such a desperate state after the bombing campaigns that they had to be rebuilt, mostly by using American Aid.

There was also a professional Body called “The British Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee” (BIOS) whose task was to prepare reports on various German

branches of Industry. Over 2000 of these enquiries were compiled. One of the reports was entitled: “An Investigation into the Development of German Grand Prix Racing Cars between 1932 and 1939”. The aim of this mission, headed by a British Intelligence Officer named Cameron Earl, was to discover how the two German Companies of Mercedes-Benz and Auto-Union had been so completely dominant in Grand Prix racing in the 1930’s. It was published by “His Majesty’s Stationery Office” and was soon sold out.

Evidently a certain amount of ‘Subterfuge’ was apparent in those days.



Bristol Mercury Cylinders being inspected by Tim Smedley (See page 37) with Ernest Bevin who was Minister of Labour under Churchill’s War Cabinet and John Black.



First Shadow Factory on Standard’s Golf Course 1936
JPB & Co with members of the Garlick family Builders

RESTORATION

In October 2010 Leon Garoyan, a classic car enthusiast from Davis, California, discovered a 1952 Mark VI Bentley in a town north of San Jose. After it had originally been shipped over to the States in the sixties, the car (Chassis B342 NZ) somehow remained in 'dry storage' for over thirty years from 1975 onwards. It was now in need of a total "ground up" restoration. Although completely dismantled, all the separate parts were still in existence and intact. Despite massive deterioration this historic Bentley was then completely restored to its original splendour after nearly four years of painstaking and dedicated work by a whole team of enthusiasts. Right from the chassis upwards, the entire Bentley was completely rebuilt. One of the motivating factors in this project was that the car was originally owned by Sir John Black of the Standard Motor Company. In fact it had been individually designed and then fitted with a Special Drop Head body by 'Mulliners' of Bordesley Green Road, Birmingham in July 1952. With its interesting history and provenance, Leon who is an energetic veteran of 90 with over 45 years of Classic Car collecting and restoration experience, realized that this 'renovation' would probably be his last project. From the beginning of finding B342 NZ, Leon has been guided by Robert Gross, a Rolls Royce factory trained craftsman, for 26 years located at Hayward, California, who operates a Rolls Royce, Bentley and Alvis repair and restoration shop. Gross is now a co-owner of the car. (The Bentley has won a number of awards since completion in 2014). Also when it became evident that the wings and side panels of the Bentley closely matched the later TR3 designs and the exterior door handles originated with Daimler it soon became clear that this vehicle was indeed some kind of 'sports hybrid'. The possibility was then suggested that perhaps this Bentley was built as a prototype for future production of a new Sports model to add to the extensive range of family saloons, under the banner of Triumph Motors. **(In the nostalgic world of motoring history, of course, anything is possible).**

MORGAN MOTOR COMPANY CONNECTIONS

Sir John Black was a personal friend of the founder Harry Morgan. They first met in 1910 when John Black, working for chartered patent agents Stanley Popplewell & Co., drew up the patent for the first Morgan three-wheeler. This friendship led to a close business relationship when Morgan used engines from the Standard Motor Company. The first of these was a 1267 c.c. overhead valve version of the Standard 10, built especially for Morgan and used in the four-wheeler 4/4 from 1938 to 1950. Morgan then used the Standard Vanguard 2-litre engine in the Morgan Plus 4 from 1950 onwards. This engine was subsequently developed into the popular TR engine used in both the Triumph TR sports cars and the Morgan Plus 4 until 1968.

