Mackie Men and the Empire

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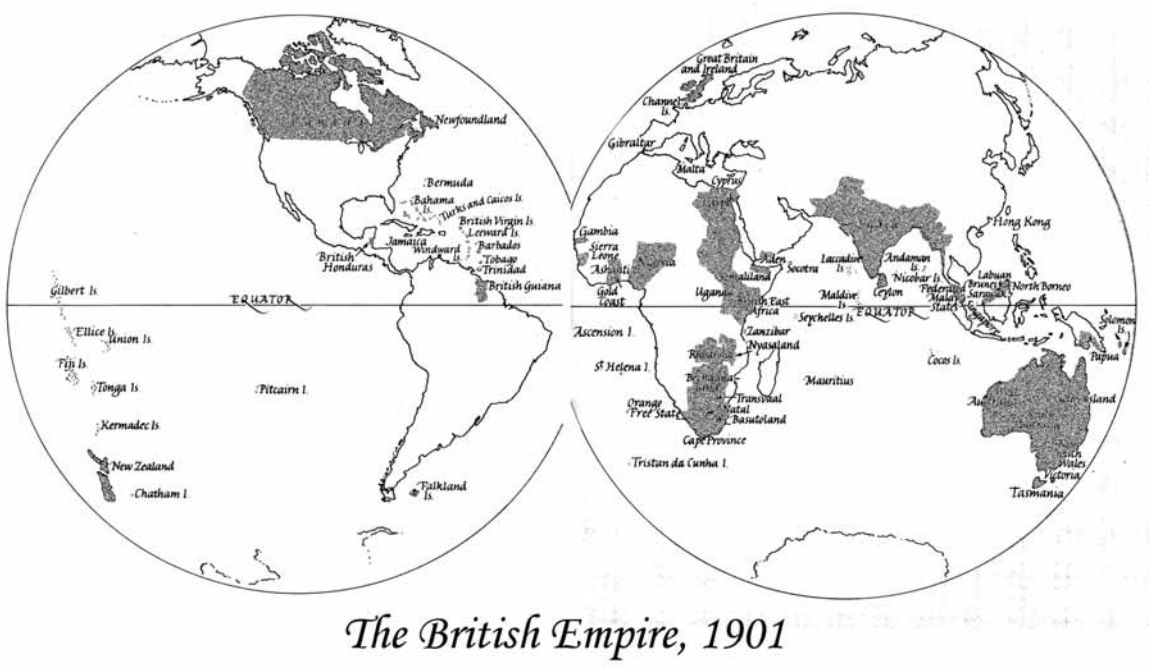


The British Empire, 1901

On January 22, 1901, Queen Victoria died in the 64th year of her long reign, during which the British Empire had grown to encompass a quarter of the earth's surface and a quarter of its people. Augustine Mackie, a student at Cambridge University, was one of 500 Cambridge volunteers who went by special train to Windsor to form a guard of honour for the new King, Edward VII. His mother recorded "at first Augustine felt that the Queen's death touched no chord in his nature, but after doing his duty as above, his feelings underwent a complete change and he was thrilled from head to foot by the sights and sounds that he witnessed."

Thrilled or not, as the Empire expanded, so did the opportunities for enterprising young men to seek their fortunes in the distant parts of the empire. Augustine and his brother Hugh were among these, and so was my father Percival.

This is the story of these three Mackie men as I remember them, and as they figure in various family chronicles. It is also about their wives and their sister Chris and about a number of other Mackie men who emigrated. I suppose, in a minor way, it is alsoabout me as a boy, because I was evacuated to Canada during World War 2. I will start with some notes on our family background.

The Family at Filton

To bring the dead to life
Is no great magic.
Few are wholly dead:
Blow on a dead man's embers
And a live flame will spark.
Robert Graves

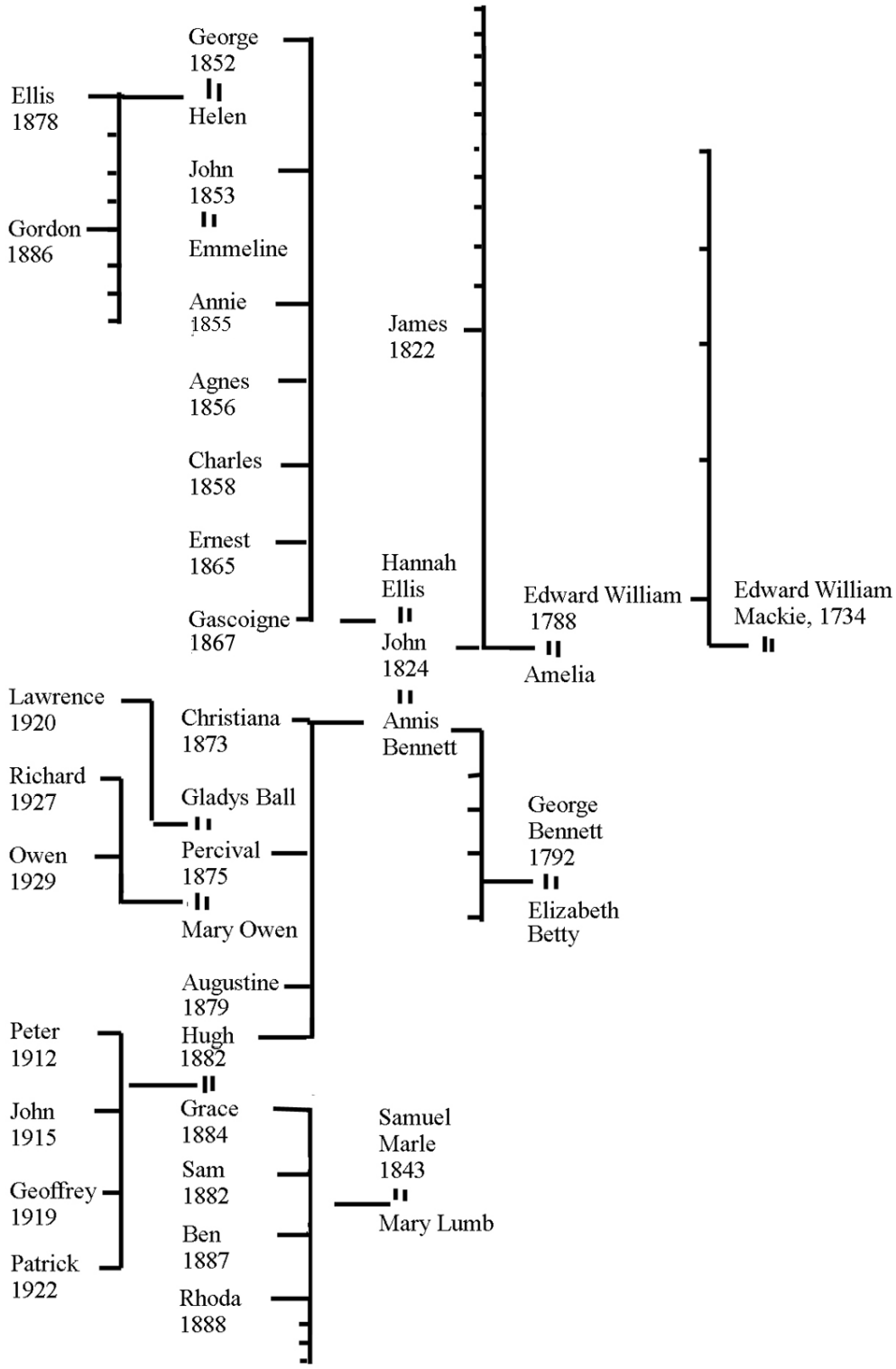
My Aunt Chris and her three brothers were children of John Mackie's marriage to Annis Bennett, daughter of a well-to-do Gloucestershire farmer. The Bennett line goes back to Annis's great-great-great-grandfather William (b.1651) who was married in Stone near Berkeley, Glos. in 1687. Born at Norton's Farm, Henbury in January 1841, Annis was the fourth of the five daughters of George and Elizabeth Bennett who survived to become adults. She received a basic education appropriate for a young woman of her class and time, including going to a boarding school in Bristol when she was 9. George Bennett died of apoplexy in 1851, when only 59. He had been partially paralyzed from earlier strokes for some time, and the farm had been run by a bailiff. In 1852 Elizabeth and the girls left Norton's Farm and moved to Stone. Annis's sisters all married farmers,


Annis Bennett as teenager


Annis, 1871

including the youngest, Emily, who married RobertWetmore, who took over Norton's Farm in 1871. "Norton" was a middle name in that branch of thefamily. Several descendants of George and Elizabeth Bennett still live in the area. Gillian and I visited Henbury in 2005. The town is virtually part of Bristol now (see map at end), but Norton's farm is still there on the outskirts and is still a functional farm, but without any of the original buildings as far as we could see.

Annis was 29 when she met John Mackie in a corridor of the Bristol Royal Infirmary where he was Chaplain, on an occasion when she went there to pay her annual subscription. They became engaged in December 1870, but the engagement had to be called off because her mother didn't want to be left alone - the other girls had all married and left home, or in Emily's case, were about to do so. The problem was resolved the following year and the wedding took place on Sept 26, 1871 with John's daughters Annie and Agnes as bridesmaids along with two of Annis's nieces.



At the age of 30 Annis, judging by her photos was pleasant looking, though not beautiful. She was devoted and devout, a model wife for a clergyman. In her family

village, Stone, she had been a Sunday school teacher. Better still, she had the handsome sum of £700 held in trust for her own use, under the terms of George Bennett's estate. Chris Mackie, my aunt, used to say that Mackie men, whatever their shortcomings, were lucky in their wives. She was probably thinking of her own mother Annis Bennett and of Grace Marle, Rhoda Barnett, Gladys Ball and Mary Owen among others.

John Mackie in 1871 was a widower of 45 who already had 7 surviving children from his first marriage, and in marrying Annis, he got not only a wife but a devoted mother for his children. Five years later he became Rector at Fylton (later spelled Filton) in Gloucestershire, close to Bristol. According to Joseph Millard Mackie, son of John's younger brother Mark, Annis bought the living for John, presumably out of the money her father had left in trust for her. John remained atFilton until his death in 1902, when the living was handed on by Annis, who still held the advowson (the right to appoint a clergyman to a parish) to her stepson John. John was Rector there until his death in 1915.

Filton parish church

After her husband's death, Annis moved to Compton Greenfields, a few miles north of Bristol, living there with Chris. The boys had all flown the nest by the time their father died. In 1916, when her house was requisitioned by the Government along with surrounding land for construction of a munitions factory, Annis moved with Chris to a cottage in Thornbury, where Chris continued to live after Annis died in 1927. Annis's grandmother Ann Bennett came from a Thornbury family so this was a link with the past. I remember the cottage well from visits both before and after World War 2.

The cottage at Compton Greenfields

Annis Mackie was clearly an intelligent, capable woman, who dedicated her life not only to her husband and children but also to John's children by his first marriage. She carefully makes no distinction in her writings between them and her own four. She was evidently the centre of an extended family network encompassing all 11 children and their families, as well as many relatives on the Bennett side. She kept in touch with them all as well as she could and chronicled their doings and those of their numerous offspring until a few years before her death at the age of 86. Sheexpected them to keep in touch, commending those who were good correspondents and noting the absence of letters from those who fell short, such as her stepson Charles and his wife.

Her own four were clearly imbued with a desire to earn her good opinion. She lauded their achievements and grieved over their disappointments. She was devout, not just in the visible ways expected of a clergyman's wife, but out of her own deep, simple conviction. Austin, in his peculiar stilted way, wrote to her in 1922 trying to tell her how beneficial her spiritual values had been to him personally. Hugh, more spontaneous, wrote to her in a birthday letter in 1917 "I only hope that some day my boys will feel half

the reverence, admiration and love for me which I feel and have always felt for you, my dear". It gave her great satisfaction to know that her three sons were not only successful but kept in touch regularly with one another, "keeping alive the old family jokes and reminiscences".

After her husband's death and again after her stepson John's death, it fell to Annis as Patroness of the living to find a suitable successor. On the first occasion (1902) she had chosen her stepson, a devout if rather dull churchman who had been a master at Sedbergh boys' school. Austin refers to him wryly as "the saint of the first family". He evidently discharged his clerical duties to general satisfaction but his unselfishness in financial matters had unfortunate consequences, as it left the living impoverished. After he died (1915) Annis had hoped that Austin would take it on but by then he was committed to theschool in Vernon and declined – she was "neither surprised nor disappointed" by this decision. The aeronautics industry (now BAE Systems) started up in Filton in 1914 and the Vicar immediately found himself landed with new duties in ministering to the personnel there. Possibly overwork hastened his death. John's widow Emmeline took a positive view of it and wanted Austin to reconsider his decision: "I still think the intense interest of the flying field would prove a compensation for giving up the freedom of Canadian life. [dream on, Emmy!]. The whole working of the world will be revolutionized by the new form of transit …..". George's son Ellis, another of the worthy but dull Mackie clerics with a flair for marrying interesting women, was considered for the job, but Annis felt his "extreme views" posed an insurmountable barrier. I take this to mean he was too high church - the Mackies two generations back had been Wesleyan Methodists. Eventually in 1916, after several other names had been considered and some offers turned down, the Presentation lapsed to the Bishop, who also had difficulty finding a suitable incumbent. Finally, an appointment was made but it proved to be highly unpopular by all accounts. Annis accepted the "paltry sum" of £300 for the advowson which was all the diocesan solicitor was prepared to offer.

John, ca.1888

My grandfather John Mackie (b.1826) was the third son of Edward William Mackie (ca.1788-1871). The latter's father, also called Edward William (Edward William 1) was born somewhere around 1734, and was apparently the son of a Scot who came south from Sutherland in the train of the Duke of York. The clan Mackay (Mhic Aoidh) is centred in Strathnaver in Sutherland. The family name would originally have been McKay or Mackay, the spelling changing to Mackie after the move to England, but both Mackay and Mackey still appear in late 18th century records of Edward William's family.

Edward William 1 was outrider or postillion to King George III, according to John's daughter Agnes. In her account, William died accidentally, thrown from his horse while on duty at Ludgate Hill. The King was distressed and did his best to compensate the widow,

including (in another account) offering her sons commissions in the Army or the Navy. She is said to have declined, preferring to receive a lump sum instead.

Whether this is true or not, one of her sons, Edward William 2 is thought to have fought in a heavy cavalry unit, the Royal Regiment of North British Dragoons, later known as the Royal Scots Greys. Dragoon Guard regiments took precedence over all other Cavalry Regiments of Line. At Waterloo, they charged d'Erlon's infantry columns shouting "Scotland For Ever" and captured the Eagle of the French 45th Infantry, hence

The Greys at Waterloo. "Scotland For Ever!"

Edward

their nickname "the Bird Catchers" in the British Army and the regimental badge, an eagle facing left. Napoleon commented "Ah, ces terribles chevaux gris!" Edward William2's uniform buttons bearing the eagle and inscribed "Waterloo" have come down to his descendants in Australia.

Amelia, 1850

Edward married Amelia Cullern in 1813 when he was 25, and they immediately started afamily, at least nine of whom survived into adult life. He founded a saddlery on the High Street in Maidenhead, became a Justice of the Peace and (likehis father-in-law, Thomas Cullern) Mayor of the town. Fashionable court ladies from nearby Windsor Castle patronized the Mackie saddlery, for "no one could make so perfect and easy a saddle as Edward Mackie."

John told his daughter Agnes some amusing stories about their family life in Maidenhead, which she wrote down in her old age. There were eleven children in the Mackie family, and they walked to chapel every Sunday behind their parents, the girls in single file because of their crinolines. The boys would put their hymn books on the girls' bustles. The household was run "with vigour and decision" by the oldest sister, Anne. If anyone failed to agree with her she would say "No bacon for your breakfast today James- just bread and treacle- you dared contradict me!" Edward used to take the boys to the Thamesand push them in. "Now swim" was the order. John remembered convicts walking

through Maidenhead in chains, boys running after them with stones and derisive jeers. One convict was left chained to a large grate at the Kings Arms while his keepers went tohave a drink. When they came back, "he was gone, grate, bars, chains and everything".

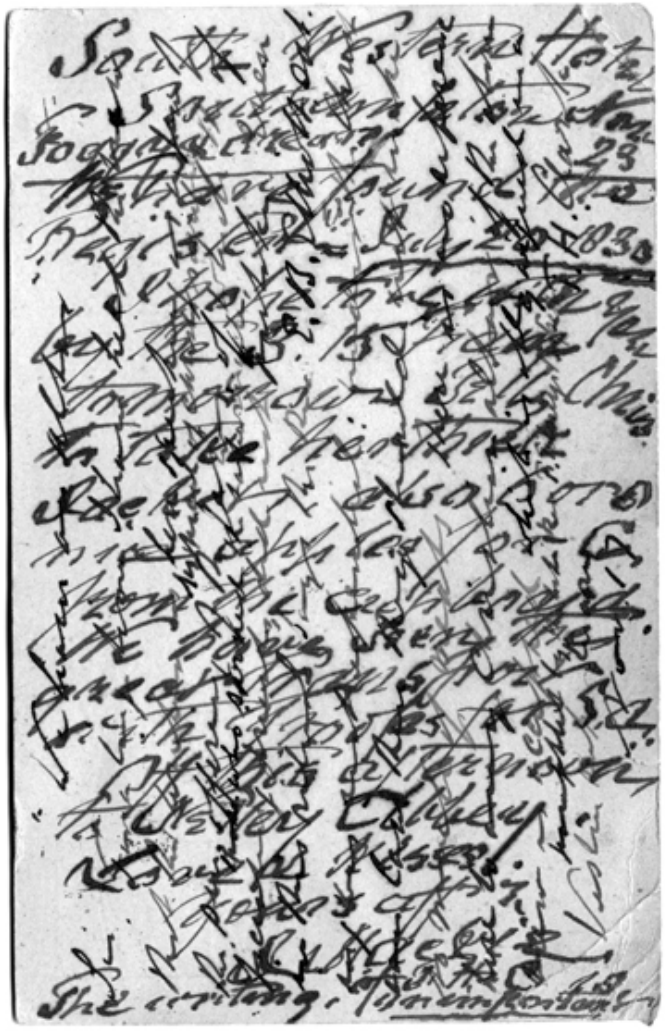
John was destined for the Church and, after his ordination in 1849, was appointed to a curacy in Yorkshire. His first wife, Hannah Maria, was daughter of his Vicar there, Rev William Ellis. The name Ellis crops up again in one of her sons, Charles Ellis, and a grandson, the "Uncle Ellis" whom I knew in Somerset. In1851, John accepted a more responsible curacy in Hinkley, Leicestershire – the Vicar was an invalid - and his first six children were born there. The family continued to expand after John moved to Bristol in 1860, but sadly Hannah Maria died in 1868. A new wife obviously had to be found in short order, and my grandmother Annis Bennett was the happy solution.

According to Agnes, her father "chose wisely and well…each wife was alike, God-fearing, industrious, gentle, refined, forgiving, hospitable, & temperate in all things, self abasing for the good of others, & an example of virtue." Apart however from the evidence of his general good sense (or good luck) where wives were concerned, little has come down to us to say what sort of person my grandfather was, or how he figured in the lives of his children, and it is difficult to avoid the impression that it was Annis who was the chief influence in the children's lives when they were young. If so, this may not have been unusual in late Victorian families, with the father as breadwinner, business manager,leader of morning prayers, and ultimate authority figure, and the mother as the bringer up of the children, responsible for hiring and firing servants and for all other domestic matters.

According to my cousin Paddy, Hugh and Austin weren't close to their father- he was a "distant father" and their relationship with him was formal and reserved. Hugh's love of history however may reflect one of his father's interests. He told me in 1954 that among the items that Paddy had chosen from among Chris's possessions after her death were "the original documents which Father had collected ……most interestingcontemporary reports of such things as the execution of Chas I and Louis XVI, GreatFire, Armada, Waterloo, Trafalgar, death of Cromwell etc – I don't know how they originally came into Father's possession…."

When the sons were older, John did much to launch and guide them in their careers. He went up to Cambridge in October 1898 to see about Austin's arrangements and expenses as he settled into college life. Austin told Chris that his father had made "quite an impression" up there, and she replied with a line from Burns: "What a man 'tis to be sure, what it is to have such a way wi 'en!" Few of the testimonials written on John's behalf when he was Chaplain in the hospital at Bristol and looking for another job do much to bring him to life as a person (" persevering", "self-denying", "methodical andindustrious", sound", "acceptable as a preacher", "zealous and judicious", etc) but some speak more warmly of his "willing and persuasive manner" (Bishop Anderson) and

Canon Mather says “I have never met a patient who did not join in speaking with gratitude of his sympathy...” . In a New Year’s letter to his Fylton parishioners he told them: “I may guide and counsel, but both in spiritual and temporal matters you must work out your own salvation….” - good advice for his sons too. Annis kept masses of papers to do with her husband’s work in the parish of Filton and these eventually came to my mother, as executor of Chris’s estate. Her impression on reading them, she told Hugh, was “of a small, united parish with a Rector who knew his people well and cared for them in sickness, and who got much help from them for church upkeep and churchyard extensions”.(Jan 12 1954).



John wrote in big bold letters, quite different from the handwriting of any of his children – almost more like 18th century writing- and he used a scratchy quill pen. He followed the custom of the day whenwriting postcards home of maximizing the information content by overwriting at right angles, thereby posing a cryptographic challenge to his descendants.

My grandfather had a good sense of humour (which cannot honestly be said ofAnnis). In family prayers at the vicarage one day, he included a prayer “for the safe travel of our departing guest who will be leaving this morning on the 11.15train” – this was news to the guest, who had no choice but to take the hint. Hugh, Austin and Per all had versions of the same sense of humour. Austin had a dry, pithy version of it when speaking, but tended to be pedantic and elaborate when he expressed himself in writing. Per was brief, sardonic and witty. Hugh was always funny and good humoured, and not above telling slightly off-colour jokes. Chris was shrewd, observant and humorous in her characterization of people. These qualities must have served her well in her work as a magistrate.

In his later years after the children had left home John comes across as a fond parent, loved as much as revered by his children, at any rate by his youngest daughter.

Here are some bits out of an undisguisedly affectionate birthday letter Chrissie wrote him in 1898, while she was staying with her half-brother Gascoigne at St Jean de Luz.

Chris and Jane

"My dearest Father, many many happy returns of the day. May you long be spared to your 11 children and 13 grandchildren!!. I have a very nice gift for you in the shape of a goad for Jane [the donkey]. It was made on purpose and is most oriental looking. I'm quite sure it will save no end of broken umbrella ribs, to say nothing of hair, both of man and beast…… I've just read the book of the moment "From Kitchener to Karthoom", just the sort of book you would be interested in, full of energy and brave deeds, and yet one cannot help wondering if the possession of the Sudan is worth all the blood-shed after all… Annie tells me you have forgiven her £25 of her loan: that was very good of you, she was very delighted….fond love to both you and Mother… I am your loving Chris."

John was clearly proud of his children's successes and academic achievements. One of the few documents I have of his is a listing of the various scholarships and monetary benefits awarded to his children during their schooling. He was methodical and kept an account of his own income in the clerical positions he had held. In 1892, he calculated that his average income over the past 41 years was £380. In 1872 he had received a bequest of £140 from his father's estate and this, together with the interest Annis received from her £700 nest egg, must have helped make life for the Mackies at Filton Rectory at least adequately comfortable compared to many clergy families of the day.

The boys' early years in England

Hugh

Hugh de Fylton Mackie was born in 1882, so there was a 30 year spread between him and the oldest of John Mackie's sons, George (b. 1852). George and his siblings who were born in the 1850s must have seemed more like uncles and aunts than brothers and sisters, (not, however, the easy-going Gascoigne, who was only 6 years older than Chris). Chris said of her sisters Annie and Agnes that they "always seemed to be so old and set and governing even as they were in childhood" (letter to Austin, March 28 1953). Three of Hugh's nephews were actually older than him. Similarly, my cousin Ellis was 50 years older than me and I called him Uncle Ellis.

Annis was 41 when Hugh was born, but she had one more pregnancy, when she was 43- a premature male child who did not survive.

Hugh was not particularly scholastically inclined but at 18 he successfully passed the Joint Board of Oxford and Cambridge Exam and the following year was articled to a solicitor. He passed his final exams with 3rd Class Honours, thanks to his "indomitable and ceaseless industry" (Annis), on the way to becoming a fully fledged solicitor. At first he worked as a Managing Clerk but at the age of 27 he became a partner in a law firm at Newport, across the River Severn in Monmouthshire. There is a scrapbook of newspaper clippings in the BC archives describing cases where he appeared either for the defence or prosecution, including one case of murder by stabbing. Even though he did not continue for very long in his career as a lawyer, the experience he gained was evidently useful in later life, and of benefit to his family. He was entrusted with his mother's financial business and also looked after investments for Gordon and George Mackie. His mother reported in 1916: "my income has been much increased by the Canadian investments, thanks to Hugh".

Hugh at 20

Annis records how, in 1906, at Stapleton (now a suburb of Bristol) Hugh, aged 24, bravely but unsuccessfully tried to rescue a 12 year old boy from drowning. He was cared for and put to bed after this incident by Mrs Marle. The Marles were family friends who often came to visit Annis at Compton. In September 1905, when they came over for blackberry picking, Grace Marle would have been 21. Hugh and Grace's brother Sam were close friends judging by some letters Sam wrote him around the turn of the century, starting when Hugh was 17. This frank (about sex) and friendly ("My dear old man") correspondence continued when Sam was in Nigeria in the rubber trade trying to earn money so that he could train as a doctor. Lettersfrom Grace start in 1903. It is funny to read these girlish outpourings from the same hand that corrected my math papers in 1942. Grace had trained as a nurse but unfortunately failed her exam by one mark, so gave it up and became a ladies' companion. Hugh and Grace became engaged in 1909 but had to put off getting married until Hugh could get his financial affairs in order, as he had gone into debt in order to buy into the law practiceat Newport. They were married in 1911 at Filton Church. His brother John Mackie officiated, assisted by Austin, who had been ordained in 1902, and Grace's brother Robert. Before long, there was much excitement in the family when it became known that Grace was going to have a baby. The baby, Peter, was baptized at St Peters, Filton, on St Peters Day, 1912!

Annis gave Hugh and Grace a very practical gift as a wedding present - a hen house and a flock of hens to go with it. Hugh always loved chickens and still kept them while I was at V.P.S. They were beautiful Plymouth Rocs. He knew them all by name. They were very tame, and would crouch on the ground and let themselves be stroked by him.

Hugh and Grace had found themselves a house in Newport and had put a lot of work into fixing it up, but even as far back as 1908, Hugh was thinking of emigrating,

and in 1913 he and Grace decided to go to Canada. Hugh's cousin Frank Mackie had gone to farm in Canada in 1903, as had his nephews Gordon and Augustine (who shortly died of TB) a year later. Gordon was joined in Canada by his sister Vesta and briefly by Gascoigne's son Walter.

Gordon came back to England in June 1913 and fired Hugh with the desire to try his luck in Canada. He spoke of the prospects of starting a school, and of the attractions of fruit growing, and wrote a report recommending Vernon, B.C. as a good site for a school, possibly combined with fruit farming. His angling father George, President of the Flyfishers' Club, also "gave some thought to starting a boys school in B.C." He had taught at Blundell's School, Clifton College and Malvern College, ending up as headmaster of Godolphin School, but at the age of 60, comfortably settled as Vicar in the Cotswold parish of Chedworth, he "decided not to pursue the matter". His grandson Brian Cookson, a doctor in Vancouver, wrote an account of that branch of the family. It seems clear that Gordon's experience of Canada and his thoughtful suggestions were instrumental in persuading Hugh and Austin to go to Vernon. Gordon himself enlisted and fought through World War 1, was taken prisoner but survived the war and subsequently went to Java in the balsa wood trade, where his daughter Anne was born.

Gordon with Anne, in Java, 1927

Hugh and Austin sailed for Canada on Oct 28, 1913, leaving Grace, who was expecting another baby, to come on later once Hugh had established himself in a position where he could support them. The baby, Michael, was born on Dec 28 and died on the 29th (Holy Innocents Day). Annis looked on the baby's death as "a special interpositionof Providence", as it lightened the load of care and anxiety on Grace in her forthcoming trip.

I will not say much about their life beyond this time, as it has already been well documented by others. Suffice it to say that Hugh had a lot of difficulty finding a job at first but just as he was about togive up and go back to England, hewas offered a position in a law firmin Regina. Now that he had an income, he could bring Grace over with Peter. He didn't like working in an office (he was responsible for foreclosures) and would have much preferred to live in the country and be nearer Austin, as they had always intended to stick together, so when in 1915 Austin suggested joining forces he agreed, even though he knew what a risk he was taking in giving up his law job.

Hugh and Grace, with John and Austin, 1922

Grace, with her nursing experience made the ideal domestic manager and school Matron, while Hugh, though never intending to be a teacher, turned out to be an excellent one, as I know from my ownexperience. The school grew rapidly and eventually brought them in a good income, and the Mackie Bros. apple business was also profitable, at any rate in good years. Tragically, little Peter was killed in an accident when he was 6, and two more sons Geoff and John died in World War 2, leaving only the youngest son Paddy, who served in the war as a naval officer, and was later a good friend to me and my family.

My brother Richard and I were sent to Canada in 1940 and I went to school at the Mackie's school. I was Mackie II in term time, Owen in the holidays. I got to know Hugh, Grace and Austin, also Grace's siblings Rhoda and Ben Marle and they for better or worse got to know me. Some of the letters that crossed the Atlantic in those years have survived thanks to my mother's foresight, and make interesting reading, but regrettably I kept none of hers. I went back to England in 1944, finally returning to Canada with my wife and family as immigrants in 1956. I wrote to Hugh in November 1967 telling him that I had been offered a job at the University of Washington and had decided to stay in Canada but not without some misgivings because we would have been considerably better off salary-wise in Seattle. He replied "I'm glad to hear you wish to live in Canada and have not been dazzled by the meretricious glitter of the U.S.A. I am sure I did the right thing in leaving the Old Country when I did and have never regretted it – nor will you." He was right. Despite the shaky arthritic handwriting this was the same old Uncle Hugh I had always known and loved, who was as much a father to me as my real one.

my mother

Austin

Annis records that the doctor who attended Austin's birth on May 26, 1879, spent only 20 minutes in the house, but charged £4! Her strong feelings about what constituted fair remuneration for services probably filtered through to Austin as he grew up because he was always very careful with his money and became an prudent business man. Like Hugh he was sent to St Johns Leatherhead, a school that catered to the sons of clergy. Austin himself was destined for the Church, and he was fortunately able to pursue his studies at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, thanks to a grant from an educational foundation and with financial help from a wealthy patroness. There he distinguished himself in both athletics and in his academic work. He wrote to me in 1951: "Corpus was numerically small in my day and every man had to be a jack-of-all sports: I played on most of the teams- cricket, soccer, grass hockey, tennis, coxed the boat, was in the Athletic Club and even won a pot for being on the winning rugger XV." He got a First Class degree and his parents went to Cambridge for the degree ceremony. Women were not admitted to colleges so Annis had to lodge in town while John had rooms within.

While preparing for ordination Austin worked as a tutor to a scion of the Balfour family at Ridley Hall. He was examined for ordination in December 1902, and came 2nd, going thence to a curacy in N. Walsham, Norfolk.

Several aspects of Austin's character are already apparent at this time. He showsa careful approach to money. He loves dogs- his terrier Dandy accompanies him on visits home and another terrier, Mike, goes all the way to B.C. with him. He has a passion for shooting game birds - at Ridley Hall he shoots grouse with the Balfour family on Scottish moors. He tends to write letters to newspapers, and otherwise to exercise his literary skills. I have a copy of a play he wrote in 1908 entitled The Woman of Shunem. It is well crafted and quite readable. He has handyman skills- he builds his mother a small summer house on the lawn oneAugust, which proves useful as overflow space for guests. He also wins his mother's approval by preaching a good sermon on a visit home; indeed, I remember he gave thoughtful and scholarly sermons at VPS in the forties, though they were wasted on uscallow louts. He is a keen fisherman like several of his brothers. The Rev. George Mackie, of course was outstanding, and his name lives on in the annals ofangling history, but Hugh and Austin felt strongly enough about fishing to rent a cottage at Llangurig in Wales. The cottage turned out to be a great boon as a summer resort for the rest of the family and various guests, whether they fished or not. The cabin at Sugar Lake served thesame purpose later.

Austin at 22

Though fortunate in many ways, Austin was not lucky in love. He proposed to, but was rejected by one Ursula in 1907. However "he bore his rebuff very manfully, and I do not think he was really so much in love as he fancied" (Annis). In 1907 he told his mother that "he would not marry, probably". After going to Canada however, he started wishing he had a wife again. When he was 36, there was some idea of him marrying a young lady he had known during his time in Norfolk, but she was considered to be much too young – only 22. In 1916 he wrote to Rhoda Marle asking her to come out to BC and marry him, and offering to pay her fare, but she refused, as she was half way through her training as a nurse and also because she felt there should be some basis of love in marriage (!). Rhoda did come out to Canada eventually and stayed, but remained single all her life. At the age of 92, she told a newspaper reporter "There are some people who should marry and some who shouldn't. I definitely shouldn't have been married, I like going my own way, morning, noon and night." Annis continued to hope that Austin would find someone suitable. On a visit to England in 1921,

Two "who shouldn't", 1935

Chris's friend Lucy Bennett "was quite smitten with him", but once again, it came to nothing. Perhaps Austin was another "who shouldn't". Anyway, he didn't.

Austin's dogs were always his best companions. As Chris wrote in 1945 "I never knew anyone so devoted to his dog as Austin is. All his paternal and husbandlike instincts are centred on the dog of the period. I wish he could have married and had sons – he's such good stock, it's a pity to let it go unused for the future race of men." Grace once told me she didn't like Austin's dogs sleeping on his bed because of the dirt and hairs. She was after all a nurse, schooled in hygiene. It may also have seemed vaguely improper to one of her puritanical bent. Certainly Austin loved his dogs, and no doubt they helped fulfil a need we all have to love and be loved, but it is also true that Austin got many of the benefits of being a married man by living with Hugh and Grace. The three of them lived in the same house, had their meals together, sat by the fire together in the evenings, ran the school together. At the same time he was perfectly

free to shut himself up in his study without having to bother with children or to go off on shooting trips by himself. (He once wrote an article for Rod & Gun entitled "I prefer to camp alone!") Back in 1913, his mother had noted that "Augustine was led to join Hugh [in going to Canada] from his desire for more of family life and was tired of bachelor life in lodgings". Cynically one might say he ended up having the best of both worlds.

Per

Born on Feb 19 1875, Per was 3-4 weeks premature and still weighed only 4¾ lbs after a month. His life was despaired of more than once in his childhood and it looked as if he was going the same way as his little sister Eleanor (b. Oct 8 1876), who died of whooping cough at 7 months. (Annis movingly records that "village children carried my darling to her grave, close to the church door".) Per was very ill with whooping cough at the same time, along with bronchitis and pleurisy. Before he was a year old, he survived dysentery, a broken arm (his nurse dropped him), and an abscess under his arm (following smallpox vaccination). He nearly died of mumps when he was 6. "The medical men – 3 – gave him up, but at last, as by a miracle, he began to mend." At 19 he had what appeared to be typhoid fever, was treated with port wine and nursed by his sister Agnes who was a trained nurse. Added to these natural illnesses and like many a boy before him, he fell from a tree and broke his collar bone.Clearly my father was a survivor. He even survived

Annis with Per, aged 2

boarding school at Dean Close, Cheltenham.

As a boy Per evinced an early interest in anatomy. When the family dog died he boiled it up in a huge cauldron on the vicarage lawn until the bones all came loose, then he laid them out to dry and reassembled the dog as a skeleton. I heard this from bothAunt Chris and Uncle Austin.

Per entered medical school at the age of 17. His academic brilliance was apparent almost immediately. Annis dutifully and proudly tracked his triumphant progress through medical school, winning prizes in medicine, bacteriology, public health and surgery. As Saunders scholar and silver medallist, he completed his final exams and got his first job in 1898, when he was only 23. As Casualty Officer and House Physician at Bristol General Hospital, his salary was only £50 but “everything was found for him of the best and he will be able to visit us [at Filton] frequently”. He did indeed visit his parents frequently, and read the lesson in his father’s church, though “troubled with a little hesitancy in his speech”. There was no trace of this in later years, and he became a fluentand witty speaker.

Reading the lesson in his father's church is one thing, being religious is another and nothing in Per's writings suggests he had religious convictions, though no doubt he went to church from time to time, like everyone else. One letter, written in October 1926 to his nephew Rupert's wife Kitty makes one wonder if he was a believer at all. " I regretI cannot stand as god-father to any child. I take the view that the position is an onerous and grave one to undertake if it is done as it should be according to the book of wordsand do not regard myself as sufficiently orthodox to accept the position and have indeed refused a number of such requests for a good many years past".

A year later he was Junior Medical Officer at Shrewsbury County Medical Asylum, and the following summer went to a job as Superintendent of the Fever Hospital at Ham Green with a salary of £100 all found and with “every luxury and perquisite”. This must have seemed like pretty good money to his lawyer brother Hugh, who at the same age eight years later, was earning just £75, out of which he had to pay board and lodging.

Per at 26

Having a doctor in the family proved useful to the Mackies. At one time or another he treated, advised or procured medical treatment for Chris, Ernest, John and Gascoigne. I remember being very impressed in about 1937, when we were visiting Granny Ball in Weymouth, overhearing him tell my mother that it looked to him as if Henry Ball (Gladys’s brother) was dying of liver cancer. Of course this might have been obvious to any well qualified medical man, and my father had treated Rajahs and Viceroys, but it is difficult to reconcile one’s image of the parent you see every day with the distinguished figure the world knows.

In January 1903 Annis writes: “News came of Percival’s brilliant successes- he is first on the List of men from Netley who are in for I.M.S. [Indian Medical Service] as well as [Montefiore] Prizeman [in Surgery] and Gold Medallist [in Medicine]”. He also won Fellowship in the Royal College of Surgeons on the first try. In March, loaded up with the costly (£70) outfit needed in his new job, he was taken by his brother Hugh to

Bristol to catch the train to Southampton, where he boarded the S.S. Assaye bound for India.

Leaping forward in time, I was evacuated to Canada when I was 10, and didn't return to England until shortly before my father's death in 1944, so I never got to know him as an adult. Back in Canada twenty years later with our 5 children and a job in Edmonton, I got back in touch with the Vernon Mackies, who were getting on in years by then and living at Lake House, having given up the school. In 1967 it belatedly dawned on me that they weren't going to be around forever, and I wrote to Hugh, who was 85, asking him about my fatherand explaining that I only had fuzzy memories of him. Hugh wrote back "Yes, I suppose your memory of your father must be a very faint one in the nature of things. He was a great hero of mine and in a limited way we did a good deal together and we had more in common than Austin who was inclined to be somewhat aloof. I could tell you many interesting and amusing -and some scandalous- happenings of his student days in Bristol and when we used to go and stay with him at Ham Green Fever Hospital especially,where he was Superintendent and had a bevy of always-ready young nurses on his staff. 'Nuff said!"

Per's professional success, and that of his brothers, in establishing themselves as qualified professionals in their respective fields was an immense source of satisfaction to Annis, a farmer's daughter without advanced schooling or training of any sort. It seems she'married up' when she married John Mackie, but she certainly also brought money, character and brains into the Mackie family.

Finding a wife

We have seen that Austin found a partial solution to the wife problem by having dogs as companions and his sister in law to keep house for him. What he did for sex we do not know. He certainly had favourites among the boys at the school, small winsome ones in my day, who kept him company on bird spotting walks etc, but I doubt very muchif it went beyond this, and I think we boys would have known.

Hugh's wife Grace was a member of the Marle family who were friends of Annis and Chris during the time they lived at Compton Greenfields, and may well have known the Mackies back in the Filton era. Sam Marle and Hugh Mackie were school friends at St Johns, Leatherhead. The Marles weren't rich, indeed Grace's father was "only a curate" (Paddy), but they were socially acceptable, and could trace their ancestry to Huguenot forebears who had fled France in the late 17th Century when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had allowed Protestants religious freedom.

Grace Marle

Marrying a young lady known, liked and approved of by one's mother has much to recommend it. Grace, with her good looks and strong character was clearly terrific wife material and quite a catch for a struggling young lawyer with no money. She was willing to wait till he got his partnership, and later to

go to Canada with him. To crown it all, they were deeply attached to one another and remained so till death did them part.

Per managed without a wife until he was 38. Social constraints in India were much more relaxed than in England by all accounts, and amorous attachments cannot be ruled out. Finding a wife in India was another matter however, as the pool of suitable young single ladies must have been vanishingly small. Once again, as with Hugh, family friends provided the solution. The Ball family lived in Bristol (Clifton). Gladys Ball was a great friend of Chris Mackie. She made several overnight visits to see Annis and Chris at Compton Greenfields in 1909. In April of the following year, Per was back in England on leave, and giving lectures about his work in Uganda on the transmission of trypanosomiasis by tsetse flies, [i]illustrated by cinematography. He had been on a shooting expedition with Major (later Sir Henry) Lawson Tancred and "was very well, looked brown and lean from his long marches in tropical heat, and spare diet". He joined the family at Llangurig in Wales, where Hugh and Austin were leasing a cottage for their fishing trips. Miss Gladys Ball was there at the same time, lodged of course in a separate cottage. "Her society was an added pleasure to all, especially of course to the young folk". In October Chris was staying with Gladys in Bristol, and Per was also in Bristol, so they probably met. If an attachment was forming between Per and Gladys, they certainly kept it dark, or dark enough to escape Annis's acute antennae, though she does say "he wishes to take a wife with him to India, but who is she? and where is she to be found?" One suspects there may have been a blip on her radar screen but the family diary was not the place for such speculations.

Gladys Ball

It would be wholly understandable if a young couple who liked each other and were thinking about marriage decided to keep mum about it for a while, to avoid all the fuss and palaver that would go with a formal engagement, for which they themselves did not feel quite ready. Did Chris know something was brewing? Probably.

However, Per returned wifeless to India in 1911 and started work on the transmission of kala azar. He and his team found out that this disease is transmitted by sand flies, *Phlebotomus*, a notable breakthrough. Life went on. Gladys continued to visit the Mackies at Compton Greenfields. Buses now plied between Gloucestershire villages, making visits to friends easier.

Finally in January 1913, Annis writes "as I was spending a few days with Mrs Ball on Durdham Down, I was very much surprised [and a little miffed?] to hear that Per had written to Gladys, asking her to be his wife! Seeing that these two had had abundant opportunity during the time Percival was at home in 1910-11, to settle the matter, it seemed strange that he should make up his mind to take the important step by letter, after the lapse of 18 months. However, so it was, and we were all pleased that Percival had made so good a choice, as Gladys is a sensible, well-bred, and well-endowed woman,both mentally and physically, and has for years been a great friend of Chris".

Sensible…well-bred….well-endowed…great friend of Chris, certainly this covers all touchstones dear to the maternal heart. The only tiny flaw seems to be that "his wife is not fond of letter-writing".

Gladys went out to India and they were married in Calcutta Cathedral in September 1913. Back in England on leave in 1914,

Per at 43

"war was declared and everything turned upside down" (Annis). Per's leave is cut short- they go back to India, Per is posted to Baluchistan, then to Marseilles, they come back to Bristol on leave, Gladys has a miscarriage, Per goes back to India, Gladys does war work as a dispenser in a chemists shop, Per sent to Mesopotamia, first to Amara, where the British 6th Army Division was being clobbered by the Turks, then to Baghdad, goes on shooting trips up the Tigris, goes to Persia, takes a mobile laboratory to Mosul, twice mentioned in dispatches, finally back to England in 1919, Gladys pregnant again, gives birth to Lawrence (April 11, 1920). Eventful years! Per, now Major, shortly to become Colonel, receives the award of O.B.E., and returns with his family to India. His mother notesthat he has become rather corpulent - nothing new ashe has been fighting a weight problem for at least 15 years.

This seems like the time to introduce my mother, Mary Owen.

Mary, born on July 13, 1887, was the older of two daughters of a Lincolnshire lawyer, William Haddon Owen (b.1854) and his tall, devout, artistically gifted wife Elizabeth (Lizzie). Socially, the Owens probably came in the 'county' bracket, and lived in a gracious Queen Anne house near Grimsby in Lincolnshire. Mary went to boarding school in Bedford and wrote a book *Betty Brooke at School* when she was 23. Betty is Mary to anyone who knew her. She hoped "that it would at least modify the sweeping opinions concerning schoolgirls that I so frequently hear expressed – usually by men." Throughout her life she was strong on women's rights. See for example her article "Women's share in rural reconstruction" (Agricultural Journal of India, XXIV, 7-13, 1929) in which she describes the work of the Mahila Samitis (Women's Institutes) in Bengal, which she was helping to establish. She reviews progress toward improving public health, nutrition, the training of midwives, child welfare, the revival of cottage industries and crafts, and above all the education of country women. In all these areas the Samitis were playing an increasingly important role. The editor wrote to Mary "the article is such a good one that I am not to reduce its length by a single sentence".

Mary Owen, aged 10, and her mother Lizzie, 1897

Shortly before the Great War, the family ran into financial difficulties owing to Haddon Owen's unfortunate speculative business ventures. Largely through the efforts of his son Ernest and with help from relatives, the law firm was saved, but the family had to leave Little Grimsby Hall and in 1914 Ernest told Mary (who was 27) that "every shilling counted" and that she must get some training and "become an earner". Knowing her, I have no doubt she leapt at the chance. During the war she worked in the family law office. The Owens were hit much harder by the war than the Mackies. Altogether, seventeen young men more or less closely related to the family lost their lives. Ernest waskilled and Mary's other brother, Leff, badly wounded. Her sister Ruth married a woundedwar veteran.

Mary was always very close to her first cousin John (Commander John Hely Owen, R.N., 1890-1970) Their fathers had been great friends so they saw a lot of each other while growing up. John's brother Rowland was killed at Ypres early in 1915 but John survived his war service as a submariner in the Royal Navy, retiring from active service in 1934 and becoming a distinguished naval historian. Mary told Gillian in 1970 that "owing to early self consciousness he knew no other girl. So, after proposing to me regularly for years, in vain, I was the cause of his meeting the younger sister, Vera, of myschool friend Gladys Taylor. Before I was due to sail for India, John was on leave and wehad a farewell lunch at one of those places in Soho, very popular at the time. Much to John's annoyance, I broke it to him that I had invited this girl, Vera, to join us. She was working at the Admiralty and came along, and was tactful and left early. Wonder of wonders, she fell for John, and he commented on her very happily."

In December 1920 Mary went to India. I always assumed she met her first husband when he was back in England on leave (and perhaps she did) and that she went out to India as his bride, but apparently she was still single when she went to India. She writes "I was on the point of getting engaged to my first husband, Weston Elwes (one could not help getting engaged in the Nilgiri Hills!). Suddenly there came a cable ----WEDDING APRIL---- JOHN AND VERA !". John and Vera did indeed marry in April. Their twin children Hugh and Veronica were life-long friends of ours.

Mary, 1921

In 1921 Mary married Weston Elwes, who had a tea plantation at Kullakamby in the Allada Valley of the beautiful Nilgiris hills of South India (still a major tea-growing area). Apparently it was a "very romantic" attachment (her words). The magic of India certainly worked its spell on her. The couple also spent time in Assam[1], and Mary, never one to let the grass grow under her feet, studied and got to know the indigenous Tibeto-Burmese tribes people living in the Naga hills district bordering Burma (now Nagaland, an Indian State). The Nagas had been head-hunters before the British put a stop to it in the 1890s. They were animists, who believed that

[1] Addendum, 2010. I got this part wrong. Mary did spend time in Assam and she did study the Naga people but it was during her second marriage, not her first.

beheading released the souls of their enemies. They also carried home the heads of dead comrades so that their souls would bring them good fortune. My mother had souvenirs of Naga masks, weaving, jewelery and headgear (but no heads), and gave illustrated talks about these fiercely independent little people to women's groups in Somerset when we lived there after the war. We still have some pieces of Naga weaving in the family.

It appears that Weston Elwes[1] had business interests or was employed in the teak trade. One day, after a long spell working with elephants in the teak forests, he came home severely depressed and dysfunctional, 'bushed' as we now say. My mother didn't know how to deal with this and tried everything (except perhaps leaving him alone to recover in his own time). She told me she felt she had to get him to snap out of this state and to 'buck him up'. Whether this played a part in what followed is hard to say, but Weston finally snapped completely and shot himself in the head with a shotgun. Maryhad the appalling experience of discovering his body, and of feeling for the rest of her lifethat she contributed to the tragedy by her well meant efforts to get him back on track. Anyway, widowed after 7 months marriage, and having experienced the heights and depths of love and loss, she left India and headed back to England.

Meanwhile in 1921 Per was in Assam, as Director of the Pasteur Institute in Shillong. Annis records that Gladys had had "some disability connected with sight and hearing" in 1920. In 1921 she was "still able to enjoy life". Per bought two mares and they went horseback riding together. This happy state of things did not last, as Gladys became seriously ill in September 1921, and rapidly grew worse. It appears she had Schilder's disease, a rare progressive demyelinating disorder, a variant of multiple sclerosis, whose symptoms may include dementia, aphasia, seizures, muscle weakness, headache, vomiting, and vision and speech impairment. Per finally, in desperation,decided to take her back to England. A sick nurse was engaged for Gladys and they, with Per, Lawrence, and Lawrence's nanny all sailed from Calcutta on Feb 4 1922. It seems that Gladys, paralysed and insensible, and the sick nurse was berthed in a First Class cabin. Per, who was on a lower deck, was only allowed limited access to his wife, as my mother oncetold Gillian.

Mary, 1926

For Mary was on the same ship. It turned out she and Per had already met at Weston's brother's house, she "a rather pathetic figure in black" as Per later recalled. Mary told me years later how she and Per had become friends during the long voyage home. She, recently widowed and he, with a dying wife, had little appetite for the usual fun and games that shipboard passengers go in for, and spent lonely hours on deck at night under the stars as the ship glided through the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. Companions in grief, they got to know each other better and a lasting friendship developed between them.

Gladys died at her father's house in Bristol on May 4th 1922, never having regained consciousness. Per was given compassionate leave and left England in September, leaving Lawrence in Yorkshire with the Tancreds. He went back to India the

[1] Since this was written, much new information has come to light about Mary and Weston, and Weston's 'other life'.

"long way round", visiting Hugh and Austin in Vernon, and was back in Shillong in January 1923. His account of this trip is available here.

Per's letters to Mary between 1923 and 1926, show a steady ripening of the friendship, though for most of that period they were thousands of miles apart (see below: Courtship by snail mail). Mary got a job as secretary to Margaret Wintringham, one of the firstwoman members of parliament in Britain, Liberal member for Louth Divison which kept her pretty busy, but she was an assiduous letter writer and it appears that she took an active part in keeping things going by getting to know the Ball family in Bristol, where Lawrence stayed from time to time. Perhaps she had told Per she would keep a friendlyeye on the little boy. This would be wholly in keeping with her character. We find Annis describing Mary as "a great friend of Mrs Ball".

....nearly caught a tartar

Here then we seem to have another case where family connections played a key role in facilitating the bonding of two people that led eventually to their marriage - and not a minute too soon for Per, who was 51 when he finally married my mother. He was back in England onleave and, if Chris is right, spent much of his time pursuing women. In October 1926, after Per wassafely married and on his way back to India, she wrote to Hugh "I was very glad you wrote as you did re Per: he is very full of generosity but I don't bow down before him and it miffs him. We had some fearsome scraps over women- he very nearly caught a tartar, but I feel he is so safe with Mary - she's just as dear as Grace and not unlike her in character –she will never stand any nonsense of that sort and he knows it and will probably never give her any occasion to. His folly over women must have cost him hundreds this leave and that's why I say he is a lucky man to have at the 11th hour got such a woman as a wife."

Wedding Day, Aug. 24, 1926

Judging by some of his letters, Per eventually became quite stirred up and amorous about Mary, particularly after one of their meetings when, one gathers, they kissed! I am not sure if it was quite the same for her. She told me once she had never really thought about getting married to "this fat little man" (her words) and I rather doubt if she experienced the "very romantic" sensations she had felt with Weston Elwes. Women are not as a rule overawed by male

achievements. She certainly knew Per was a medical big shot but, more to the point, he was a kind and thoughtful man and there were obvious practical advantages for them both and for Lawrence in getting together. She liked and admired Per, and valued his advice and opinions, though she had plenty of her own. They were duly married in the fall of 1926, with Per's brother Charles officiating. Annis wholly approved of the match.

Ten months later Per noted the arrival of their first son, Richard Ernest in his engagement diary. A second, George Owen, was born in October 1929.

Mary was another of these sterling women who hold families together and I think she learned a thing or two from Annis. It was not difficult to love Lawrence - he charmed everyone - but Mary treated him exactly the same as her own children when we were growing up. Proactive by nature, Mary endeared herself to Annis by asking to borrow the family chronicles- she returned them shortly by registered mail, but they must have been as interesting to her as they now are to me. She also got Annis going again as a diarist. "Mary was much fascinated by my efforts at the "Family Records" and chiefly to please her I have taken up my pen, which I relinquished so long ago, to bring my story up to date, and I feel really glad that it has been of use, and given so much pleasure to others". Annis wrote this in 1926, a year before she died.

Literary Efforts

With her friend Bessie Parsons, Chris started a family magazine, the "Regina" in 1887 which later became the "Quartett" and included contributions from Per and Austin and various adult family members, all with lively illustrations by Bessie. Bessie was probably the leading light, acting as co-editor, artist and frequent contributor. Hugh, as a five-year old, did not contribute.

Chris Mackie, editor

Chris Mackie and her brothers were all assiduous letter writers but they also wrote articles for publication in magazines, letters to newspapers, and so on. Possibly their half-brother Gascoigne, a well regarded author and poet, was a role model. Austin's stories and editorial contributions in the VPS chronicle and his magazine articles show a combination of economy with words, a pithy turn of phrase, pedantry and a dry sense of humour altogether characteristic of the man. His play "The Woman of Shunem" however is surprisingly readable and shows a sense of theatre. Hugh wrote vividly, in a freer style. I have drawn on his account of the polio epidemic and his well reasoned defence of private schools, both published by the Okanagan Historical Society. I also have a collection of stories by Chris, beautifully written little pieces mostly about village life, people, animals and nature. Here is one I particularly like.

THE KNEELING SISTER

My father when he was Chaplain of the Bristol Royal Infirmary used to like to hold a quiet little service for the

convalescent patients, able to sit up round the open fire at the end of the ward: it was a quite informal gathering and the various people were rather pleased to be able to join in.

One of the nurses had been very much against this and always tried to break up the group if she could.

This time she barged in with the big coal box, rattling the ashes out of the grate with angry noise of poker on iron. Quite undaunted my father continued the prayer she was disturbing saying: "And now O Lord grant thy blessing on this thy servant,the Sister of the ward now kneeling before Thee in silent prayer, grant her thy grace and strength to carry on thy healing work. Amen." She never interrupted the service again.

Per's scientific papers are as impersonal as any written today, and might have been written by anyone, but his articles for newspapers, particularly those written from Mesopotamia (Iraq) are fascinating descriptive pieces, full of human interest and acute observation. "Up the Tigris to Amara" (Times of India, Feb 4th 1916) and "The Road to Mosul" (Baghdad Times, Feb 7th and 8th, 1919) are especially interesting to us today when that country is again occupied by Western military forces. Per was obviously not interested in literary style or effect for its own sake. His descriptions are straightforward, always detailed and probably highly accurate, often vivid, occasionally verging on the poetic

Among the mass of his more 'objective' writings describing his work and travels, a few of Per's early letters to Mary have survived. No doubt my mother couldn't bear to throw them away, as she did much old correspondence when downsizing in preparation for the moves from Packhorse Farm to the cottage at Bitton, and thence to her flat in Brock Street. Their interest for me lies in what they reveal of the human side of the man she was to marry, a man aware of his failings, not stuffy, not boring, not arrogant, often amusing and insightful, emotional, sex-starved, analytical and introspective. He shows a clear desire and determination to get onto closer terms with this woman he had made friends with on the boat coming back from India in 1922.

Courtship by snail-mail

Here are some extracts from those early letters.

Bombay, July 2, 1923.

Dear Mrs Elwes,

I am pretty lazy these days but I feel that in order to get a letter from you I must write one myself and that stimulus is more than enough to overcome my natural laziness. ……I don't see or even hear much of your brother-in-law Elwes. It was at his house I met you if you remember, a rather pathetic figure in black. I remember feeling so sympathetic as I suppose coming events were casting their shadows for me also. Ipondered and then followed the advice you gave me in your last letter and now a full yearhas gone, happy memories steal in and replace sad ones.

I am very glad to hear you are so happily occupied and find so much to do of public interest and usefulness, next we shall hear that you are sitting for parliament yourself!

……I am now as you see in Bombay and have a life full of interest tho' passed in a poisonous climate which saps ones vitality and turns ones gray matter into mashed potato. It is very difficult to think or devise anything new and it is easier to let the machine keep on running than to try to improve or scrap it. [Then follows an account of the work of the Haffkine Institute of which he was Director, which I reproduced in the introduction to Far Cathay]. *This all sounds very busy but I am inherently lazy and am bored to tears by most of these committees where they talk so much and do so little.*

You ask about my child – he is very well and happy at his new home in Yorkshire with friends of mine, Sir Thos and Lady Lawson-Tancred; they have three little ones of their own and Lawrence comes in where a fourth would naturally come and has the great advantage of being brought up with other young children and in a charming country manor house- he is a lucky youngster……His portrait is before me now, a dear little boy with golden hair, blue eyes and a complexion like apple blossom – he is all the world to me and the centre of my universe. I hate having to be away from him now he is growing up (he is 3¼) but I possess my soul in patience till I can come home and take charge of him.

It is pouring with rain outside and the bungalow roof is dripping in all directions as all Indian bungalows do – do you remember the sound of the rain, the frogs croaking in chorus, mosquitoes buzzing, boots growing mould in the night! Thank your stars you are in England, not in this wretched country.

With every wish for your happiness,
Yours sincerely,
F.P. Mackie

Bombay, 20/10/23

Dear Mrs Elwes,

By the bye, I'm going to start calling you Mary next time as I've known you long enough, and at this distance of time and place it can't cause you any embarrassment. Besides, even if it does, the austerity of the platonic ideal is not harmed by the flavour of romance and you cannot deny that our friendship has a tinge of romance though it was founded on a double tragedy.

I noticed a subtle change in your last letter, though on rereading it I am quite unable to say where or how it was expressed, indeed it was unexpressed but must have been present 'between the lines'…….I'm sorry I'm filling up this letter with inane introspection rather than with solid pieces of 'news' such as properly passes for

correspondence, but I know you are a clever woman…. I'm inclined to think and write like this when I've had two mixed Vermouths quickly before dinner but it is noon on Sunday and I haven't had anything stronger than plain soda today.

I am living here with a very charming man…and his life too lies under the shadow of a matrimonial tragedy of a different nature and therefore more poignant than ours (she having gone to the arms of another man); we have something in common in that we both have a scar to hide.

We are both just now deeply immersed in social pleasures, a set of young married people, some of them pulling together but mostly pulling apart- very lively, some would say fast, and we have dinner parties at each others' houses, dance part of the night together, have moonlight bathing parties, spend weekends at hill station hotels and so on.I'm sure all the women are virtuous but married life in Bombay seems free and easy,most go their own way, make their own friends and let the other fit in or find othercircles.

It is not quite a natural life perhaps but is productive of a lot of amusement, though perhaps a little over stimulating. I am 48 and in me no doubt this represents a rather pathetic attempt to seize the skirts of youth before she slips away for ever.

...seizing the skirts of youth

I seem to be making a lot of confessions but I think it all arises from a sentence in your letter "Perhaps in India it will make no stir, as Europeans are not puritans there and the moral standard not high would you say? Not that it is here, but we pretend it is".

You see what you are responsible for – but perhaps I'm oversensitive these days and go off on a hair trigger…..

When you write again – if you do after this effusion – tell me something about your work and play…..

As a matter of fact I don't know why you haven't married. I never open one of your letters without hastily scanning it through first to see if you are to be. I have a secret sorrow gnawing at my inner life like a thousand rats – I'm getting fatter and fatter and no exercise or dieting keeps it down. Isn't it pathetic.

By the bye, I've almost forgotten what you look like, so if you have a recent photo of yourself, please send me one. I think you are about 5 ft 6 and weigh 9 st 2.

My little son is thriving and so happy and full of mischief – rather sad you didn't have one. Surely Marie Stopes hadn't penetrated to Ooty?

Yours apologetically, F.P.M.

There is quite a lot more in this vein in this eight page letter, interspersed with information on his work developing a plague vaccine etc. I like the deft way he reminds her of the passing of youth and her childless state, obliquely raises the question of contraception, reminds her that their tragic first marriages give them a unique sort of bond, and notes the existence of a dear little motherless boy. The whole letter cries out I'm lonely, I need a woman, Lawrence needs a mother, I want to get to know you better, I sense that you want this too, so let's go for it!

I don't know why it should seem so surprising that Per had this human side, he was a normal man, and normal men haven't changed over the ages, certainly not since 1923- its just that he was a virtual stranger to me when alive, and most of his writings andthe family legend promoted by my mother of him as a 'great man' who should have been knighted, somehow make it hard for me to relate to him as an ordinary mortal, but I think as far as I'm concerned, these letters now lay that problem to rest.

Sharing Resources

The Filton Mackies were neither poor nor wealthy. With John pulling in £478 a year on average during his last 15 years, they could afford to live in reasonable comfort and have domestic help- a maid could be had for £1 a month. Getting the children educated was a major expense but, as John recorded, most of them got some sort of assistance either in the form of reduced fees or scholarships. Dean Close School and St John's, Leatherhead offered special deals where the sons of clergy were concerned.Austin couldn't have gone to Cambridge without a grant of £50 from the Bristol Educational Society, plus £100 from a wealthy benefactress. His father still had to stump up £80.

Family members once launched in careers contributed money to unwed sisters and to their mother after she was widowed. Annis and Chris received sums of money regularly from Hugh, Austin and Per. In 1919, when the three boys were established overseas and doing well, they all contributed monthly sums of £4 to Annis and £1 to Chris. This was not a huge amount, considering that the cost of domestic help had doubled since before the war and a maid now cost Annis the best part of £2 a month. According to Annis Per gave away a quarter of his salary in 1911. However, in Per's line of work, he could augment his I.M.S. salary by attending private patients. He landed a good one in 1912, with a fee of £225 for treating Capt. Clay, husband of John Jacob Astor's daughter - happily Clay made "a most miraculous recovery".

Per's half sisters Agnes and Annie present an interesting contrast. Agnes was something of a maverick with a talent for getting involved with unsuitable men. At the age of 32 we learn from her mother: "Agnes engaged herself to Ed. Lewis the eldest son of the village schoolmaster. The contract was not approved by any member of the family and terminated in the course of 2 yrs or so". Long before then however, "Agnes left home on account of differences with her father in respect of E. Lewis". Agnes then went on to marry a succession of old men (Messrs Kearsey, Hawkins, Watts, Millard, Chambers and Palmer). She had nursing training and could earn money, but money evidently didn't matter greatlyto her- she wanted to look after

Agnes and Annie, 1888

people. Per and Annie both gave her regular income supplements.

Annie on the other hand was a clever and successful business woman. A trained nurse herself, she became one of the original Queen Victoria's Army Military Nursing Sisters and worked in army camps and hospitals for several years. In 1894, she founded a nurses cooperative in Cardiff which eventually had over 50 nurses on the staff, and she ran this until 1938. She was well enough off to be able to help Agnes, Ernest and other less fortunate relatives financially. According to Brian Cookson, "Annie was interested in the suffragette movement, socialism and other avant garde ideas". It would be interesting to know more about her life, and her relationship with Leah Lloyd.

All the sons of the first family were able to support themselves, even Ernest, the "black sheep" and Gascoigne, the literary son, who supplemented his clerical income tutoring the sons of the well-to-do. Many of his poems are thoughtful and beautiful, especially the later ones:

Gascoigne, at 21

Alas! The rearward of my life lies dim
As a great tract of sand washed clean by tide
Of every childish castle, and there gleams
Only the distance traversed…….

His work never made much of a splash and he was not ambitious for advancement in the Church, never making it beyond Curate, but he seems to have managed pretty well and had an interesting life. Chris was close to him in age and spent happy times with him in '96 and '97 when he was working coaching English boys in St Jean de Luz. She wrote to me 50 years later, describing memorable trips in the Basque country, and how she admired the Basques, and hated the way the Spanish treated their animals.

What comes through in all this is a keen awareness of the importance of money in this Victorian clerical family and their solidarity in cases of financial difficulty. Parental expectations were high, and no doubt made explicit to the young people growing up. The successful ones helped the needy, and were rewarded with parental approval. Annis invariably pays glowing tribute to the goodness and generosity of her offspring and her appreciation for their monetary contributions.

Ernest, at 25

Ernest emigrated, but unlike his half brothers he did not "make good" in the colonies and he vexed his parents considerably. On leaving school he worked as a bank clerk but after 12 years of this, one day he just "disappeared" from the bank, and reappeared in South Africa, having laid a false trail to New York. He bummed around S. Africa for four years, borrowing money from his brother Gascoigne who was there on a tutoring job, doing various odd jobs and at one point volunteering for armed service (in the Boer War), then drifted to Perth, started preparing for ordination but gaveit up, and ended up working in the Registrars Office.

Fortune never smiled on Ernest. He fell ill, his wife fell ill, he rushed home at one point but missed his

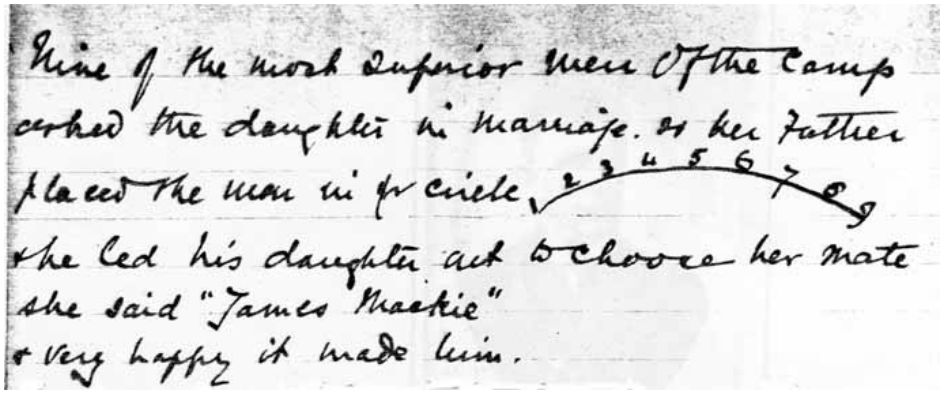
father's funeral by 4 days, had a nervous breakdown (Per arranged medical help from a specialist) and had to borrow money from the family to pay for his passage back to Australia. He died at 45 of a brain abscess and gangrene of the lung. Annis and Annie sent cheques to his widow. We don't know if there was some hanky panky at the bank which made him flee the country. It might have been something more personal, perhaps to do with a girlfriend (he was "thinking of getting engaged" before he took off). My guess is he had just had it as far as the stultifying life of a bank clerk was concerned and was lured by the glamour and romance of life in the colonies, so one day he simply threw it all over and left. We all know the feeling. Annis, who found something good to say about everyone, wrote "poor Ernest was much liked, and his work highly spoken of by his superiors".

Ernest was not the only Mackie who went to Australia. His uncle James (1822-1896) ran away from school at the age of 14, got taken on by the captain of a ship bound for East Africa, "making himself useful and learning all he could" (Agnes). On arriving, he joined a party prospecting for gold up the Zambezi, where, he told his neice, "the sands shone with gold dust". Reconnoitring over quicksands, he and his party had to lie flat and move along *ventre à terre* as if swimming, to avoid being swallowed up.

Later, either in 1837 or 1840, he sailed to Australia, landing at Port Philip, Melbourne, "receiving a somewhat unpromising reception as he had to swim ashore at Williamstown". He then shipped on a trading cutter to Geelong, the trip taking a week, and helped to sink one of the first wells at Chilwell (now a suburb of Geelong). Next he worked as a shepherd at Lake Burrumbeet, near Ballarat and from there went on to various stations on the Hopkins and Glenelg Rivers, eventually moving on to Adelaide, where he took sheep to Mosquito Plains. He came back to England for a brief visit, returning to Adelaide in 1850 on the Gypsy Queen, and walked back to Melbourne, a distance of 450 miles!

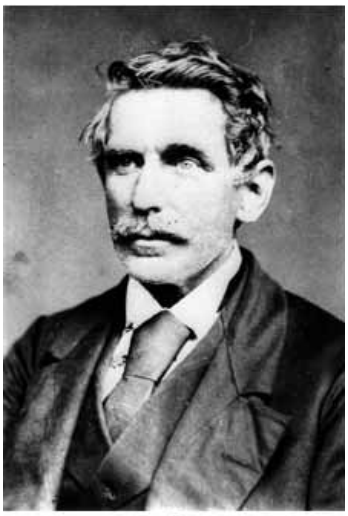
According to Agnes he then joined a lumber camp, where "the boss was a straightforward man and honest with an only daughter. The life was of course open air, day and night. Nine of the most superior men of the camp asked the daughter in marriage,so her father placed the men in a circle and he led his daughter out to choose her mate. She said "James Mackie", and very happy it made him." His bride, Elizabeth, was the daughter of George Kyd, a Scot from Forfar, whose son James later went into business with.

In another version of this story, Elizabeth's father was a bush ranger and James and the other men were prospectors. This sounds more likely, and we know he was digging gold at Fryer's Creek (now Fryerstown) and other gold fields. Elizabeth "went


Nine of the most superior men of the camp
asked the daughter in marriage. so her father
placed the men in a circle, 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
she led his daughter out to choose her mate
she said "James Mackie"
& very happy it made him.

everywhere with her father, hundreds of miles over streams, rivers, jungle and plain. Each of the 7 men asked her father's permission to marry her- so he cast the lot & the lot fell to James Mackie." Agnes, who got all this from her uncle when he was back in England and visited Filton rectory in 1882, says that James "made a modest pile".

In 1857 James ("Jimmy the Rover" as he was known in the family) became a storekeeper in Newstead in partnership with his brother in law, John Kyd, and they rented and then bought 340 acres of land which they farmed. In about 1867, they built a flour mill. Subsequently, the partnership was dissolved, James taking the store and land, and John the mill.



Jimmy the Rover

James and Elizabeth had two sons and after Elizabeth died he married again, to Annie Keeling who was a maid in the Mackie household at Maidenhead. She appears in the family painting of ca. 1850. James, the traveller, is shown standing in the doorway, as if he had just come back from Australia. James and Annie had three children and there is a sizeable clan of his descendants still living in Australia. Adelaide Mackie, daughter of James's youngest son, was a genealogist, and was responsible for establishing contact with our branch of the family. Her cousin Rosalie Jacobs provided us with colour portraits of Edward William and Amelia Mackie (see page 6) and much interesting information on the Australian branch of the family.

Life with the Vernon Mackies in the Forties.

The brothers

Uncle Hugh was 58 when I arrived in Vernon in 1940. Apart from teaching at the school, he looked after the apple business, fed and cared for his Plymouth Rocs all of whom he knew by name, collected their eggs, and got his exercise by cutting wood for the fireplace. In the fall and winter he felled trees down along Coldstream Creek sawed them into lengths with a cross cut saw, and trucked them up to a spot near the house where he split and stacked them in long high rows. He didn't go for long walks on the range like Austin or go hunting. He actively disliked the business of shooting animals, unlike both his brothers. He was a fly fisherman but he didn't seem to mind terribly if he failed to catch any fish. This is not to say he lacked the skills. Once on the way home from Sugar Lake we stopped for lunch by a creek and Uncle Hugh caught 7 trout and threw another back within the space of an hour. (As he had no fishing licence, he could have been fined $150.)

Hugh, 1943

Hugh may not have had Austin's energy, focus and discipline, but he was no slouch and had worked as hard as anyone in establishing VPS. He knew how to relax, and spent a lot of time reading. Like his father, he was interested in history and had the entire set of Gibbon's Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire as bedside reading, and was well informed on a wide variety of subjects. I once wrote to him with some question I thought he might be able to answer, to do with Simon Magus, and he replied: "your talkof my "formidable general knowledge" is what is colloquially known as Bull-shit. The older I get the more I realize how little I know." (Feb 7 1954). He would sit reading in his armchair in the corner of the dining room with the radio on rather loud, tuned to The Voice of the Okanagan. This provided news of the war but he kept it on whether listening or not. Aunt Grace blamed his slight deafness on having the radio on too loud. As the dining room was right next to the kitchen perhaps the radio helped counteract the kitchen din. He could go to sleep while reading in his arm chair with KVOR blaring away. This was his corner, his retreat, which he shared only with his cats, Minou and Widz. (Uncle Austin, as headmaster, had a proper study where he kept his books, did his business accounts and caned miscreants.)

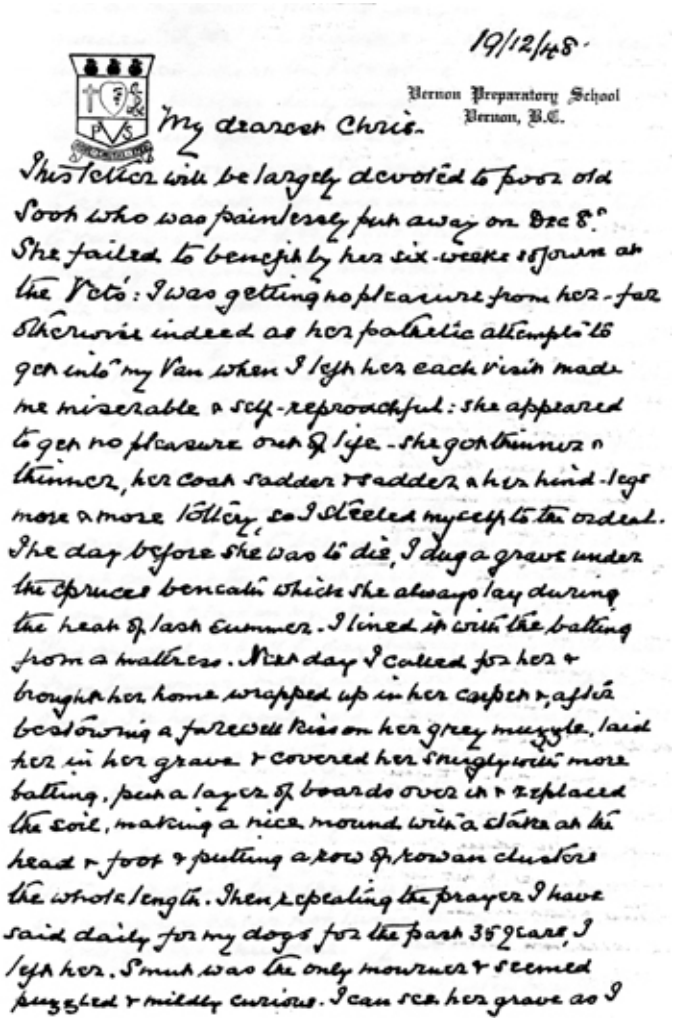
Hugh was a good raconteur and told funny stories. He had a flamboyant streak, which shows in his handwriting. He liked me despite my sly and sneaky ways, and he came to be something of a father to me, or at the very least, an approachable older person. I think everyone who came in contact with Hugh liked and admired him for his human qualities, his openness, friendliness and sense of humour. He rolled his own cigarettes. They tended to come out thick, loose and shaggy and would often go out and have to be relit. The contrast with Austin's rigid little sticks could hardly have been more telling.

Hugh and Austin owned the school and apple business jointly and split everything down the middle but Austin was clearly head honcho in the family as symbolized by the fact that he always sat at the head of the table at family meals. Although this was not apparent to me, it is said that Hugh deferred to Austin in everything. In fact, according to Paddy, Aunt Rhoda once called him a "gutless herring" for not standing up to Austin over some issue. Gutless herring or not, it was Hugh who took the initiative in the brothers' decision to go to Canada, as his mother's diary makes clear. Hugh once told me that the only thing that came close to causing serious discord between him and Austin was Austin's passion for shooting birds and animals. He could be quite sardonic about Austin. Here is a sample from a letter he wrote me in 1954: "Austin has put away his gun for the season (somewhat reluctantly)

and is now busy either writing letters to the papers- a favourite pursuit- or calculating how many miles, yards, feet and inches his snakes would extend if stretched out in a straight line."

(As a matter of interest, Austin's snake records in the BC Archives show that he killed 1.4 miles of snakes between 1930 and 1957. He notes: "enthusiasm & energy waning. The loss of my licence to drive will henceforth seriously curtail my activities.", but this did not happen as soon as he feared - he got 53 snakes in one day in 1960- a lifetime best. Guinness Book of Records editors please take note - most snakes killed by octogenarian clergyman.)

Uncle Austin was a tightly controlled person ('retentive', as we now say). He wanted everything just so. You can see this in his handwriting, each letter so carefully formed and the words arranged with absolute precision in straight lines in regular rows, no wasted space at the margins or foot of the page. You can see it too in the way he rolled his cigarettes - precise little cylinders. He was thrifty and used 'spills' (pieces of folded paper) to light his cigarettes from the fireplace, rather than waste matches. According to Eliza Marle (Uncle Sam's daughter) he paid Uncle Ben and other employees "rock bottom" wages.



19/12/48.

Vernon Preparatory School
Vernon, B.C.

My dearest Chris.

This letter will be largely devoted to poor old Soot who was painlessly put away on Dec 8th. She failed to benefit by her six-weeks sojourn at the Vets: I was getting no pleasure from her - for she grew indeed as her pathetic attempts to get into my Van when I left her each visit made me miserable & self-reproachful: she appeared to get no pleasure out of life - she got thinner & thinner, her coat sadder & sadder & her hind-legs more & more tottery, so I steeled myself to the ordeal. The day before she was to die, I dug a grave under the spruces beneath which she always lay during the heat of last summer. I lined it with the batting from a mattress. Next day I called for her & brought her home wrapped up in her casper & after bestowing a farewell kiss on her grey muzzle, laid her in her grave & covered her snugly with more batting, put a layer of boards over it & replaced the soil, making a nice mound with a stake at the head & foot & putting a row of Rowan clusters the whole length. Then repeating the prayer I have said daily for my dogs for the past 35 years, I left her. Smut was the only mourner & seemed puzzled & mildly curious. I can see her grave as I

discipline, Victorian vicarage values, instilled into him when young. This doesn't mean he had no sense of humour. He could be quite funny in a pedantic, elaborate sort of way. Here is a sample:

"I was a fortnight in hospital, had a spinal anaesthetic, revealing a malignant growth on prostate gland, am swallowing seven pills a day including female hormones!

The doctor adumbrates a prolific burgeoning forth of a pair of swelling breasts but holds out little hope of my spawning a baby Austin" (Letter to me, October 1961. The "baby Austin" of course was a pre-war English motor car). Some nice cadences there.

Uncle Hugh was always more spontaneous and had an irrepressible sense of fun. He once advised me to "take time by the fore~~skin~~lock". Again, when I was 10, and had to be beaten for some misdemeanour, it fell to him to give me "four of the best". I had been told in England that you were meant to say thank you after being chastised, to show that you were a manly little chap who understood the salutary effects of just punishment. So when it was done I said thank you. Hugh put down his cane, bowed with a courtly flourish: "don't mention it…, pleased to be of service…, any time…, you have only to ask…". This somehow defused any hard feelings.

Austin I think prided himself on being just and fair, and no doubt he was. He liked tidy solutions, and pithy apothegms. When a serving of food had to be divided up between two boys at table, he would utter the dictum "One divide and the other choose", a neat and judicious precept at first sight, but also an ugly one when you think about it, as it assumes that both parties are equally motivated by greed. Well, maybe so, but this sounds more like M. Portius Cato speaking in the 1st century, BC than an Anglican clergyman seeking to inculcate the virtues of unselfishness in the 20th AD.

Displays of emotion were not for him, though he was affectionate where Aunt Grace was concerned, calling her "Gracie" and using familiar endearments ("My dear stag"). I believe he was deeply attached to her and Hugh, but 'love' is not a word that springs lightly to the lips when describing him. I did not resent the discipline he meted out as headmaster - this was just part of life. I did not dislike him, nor did I particularly hold him in awe. Later, after I left the school, we exchanged friendly letters until his Parkinson's tremors stopped him from writing.

I have just one memory of Uncle A that still rankles. In the summer of 1943 I adopted a stray dog I called Felix after my human friend Felix Cherniavsky. I told my parents "at night he sleeps by my bed. If I try to read or show signs of wakefulness he whines and licks my face so much that I feign sleep, whereupon he goes a few yards off and lies down. I have to wake up before him if I want to do any reading….he comes down and drinks at the creek when I bathe there….on my afternoon walks he runs along the bank of the creek while I walk up it (ankle deep) looking for birds nests." Aunt Grace liked Felix, and let me give him food from the kitchen. Felix was my best friend and we were as closely bonded as Soot and Uncle A. Uncle A however was either oblivious to this or chose to ignore it. I can see how having a stray dog around the place may have offended his sense of order and, to be fair, as a red blooded male of indeterminate breed,

Felix might have sired mongrel pups on Soot as the unfortunate Snubs had done. Soot's lineage was impeccable. She was a Gordon setter – Labrador retriever cross, bred to be a bird hunter.

One day my uncle got out his van, opened the back doors and tried to get Felix to jump in, intending to take him far enough away so that he could never come back. Felix wouldn't oblige. He was a one-man dog and obeyed only me. I could easily have got him to jump in, and Uncle A knew this. With unbelievably callous indifference to my feelings he ordered me to make Felix get into the van. Cravenly, I went through the motions of calling Felix and telling him to jump in, while at the same time making frantic go-away signals behind Uncle A's back. Felix was smart enough to keep his distance. Aunt Grace saved my bacon, gutless wonder that I was. She saw what was going on, and came over "Oh Austin, how can you be so horrid!" So that was that, and Felix became part of the establishment, but I never quite forgave my uncle or myself for not standing up to him.

Regardless of his personal quirks and foibles Uncles Austin's achievements in two departments of his life mark him out as a exceptional person: first, the school he founded played a significant part in BC History and has been the subject of serious study by professional historians. Secondly, he made important contributions to the natural history of British Columbia. His activates in this sphere merit further comment.

A.C. Mackie, hunter-naturalist

Uncle Austin was famous as a snake hunter but he was also a respected naturalist and conservationist, and at the same time a sportsman who shot game birds for domestic consumption. Richard Somerset Mackie has written an illuminating book on the life and work of another hunter-naturalist, Hamilton Mack Laing (1883-1982), roughly Austin's contemporary (1879-1965), which provides me with a basis for comparing the attitudes of the two men. I have mined Richard's book shamelessly in what follows.

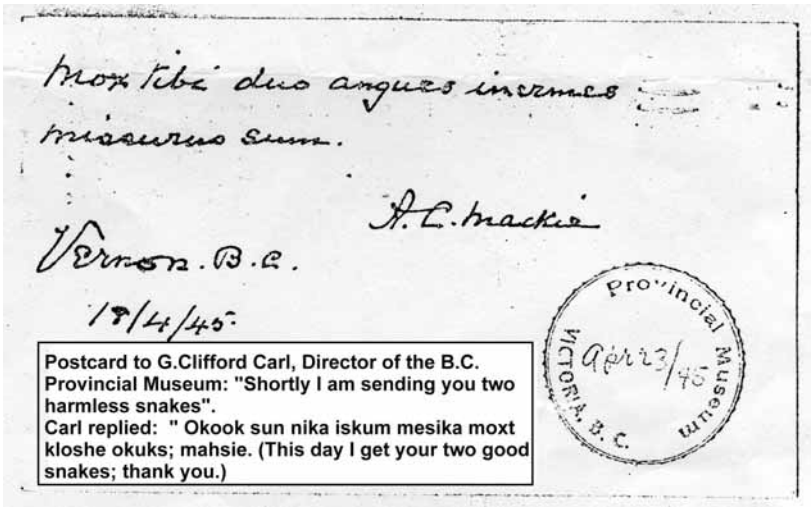
Both men undoubtedly took pleasure in the exercise of their skill as hunters, regardless of any other reasons they may have had for killing animals. This is a deeply ingrained instinct in many people. The business man who 'makes a killing' in the stock market is doing the same thing, and experiences the same thrill in the exercise of his wits, timing and knowledge of his quarry.

In Uncle Austin's case, there would have been no difficulty in justifying shooting game birds, as they were for human consumption. Similarly, hunters' groups like Ducks Unlimited could sanctify their own sporting activities by funding conservationist measures, such as the preservation of wetlands in Alberta, benefiting ducks and hunters alike.

Neither Austin nor Mack were trophy hunters in the sense that they collected specimens for display in their homes. Mack however supplemented his income for many years by collecting specimens for museums. Richard estimates that as many as 10,000 birds, mammals and plants collected by Mack are now in museums, universities and

private collections throughout the world. This work can fairly be described as scientific, as it supplied the basic material for reference collections on which future generations of ecologists and taxonomists have depended. Shooting of rare birds by authorized collectors was provided for under a 1917 treaty with the United States.

Although he did not sell his specimens, Uncle Austin was meticulous in his approach to collecting. He donated 650 carefully prepared bird skins to the BC Provincial Museum. He kept detailed records of each snake he killed noting the precise location of the den and the snake's bodily dimensions including the number of segments in its rattle, the gut contentsand the number of unborn young in the case of gravid females. These records are now in the BC Provincial Archives, but they have been studied by ecologists at UBC, providing valuable information on the population cycles of the small mammals on which the snakes preyed. A herpetologist I know was much more impressed to learn that Augustine C. Mackie was my uncle than by anything I could tell him about my own scientific work! In short, in Austin's case, the sportsman's blood-lust was mated with a righteous vendetta against the evil reptiles that had killed Roland Whittall and characterized by punctilious attention to the furtherance of scientific understanding of snake and bird population biology.



Postcard to G.Clifford Carl, Director of the B.C. Provincial Museum: "Shortly I am sending you two harmless snakes".
Carl replied: " Okook sun nika iskum mesika moxt kloshe okuks; mahsie. (This day I get your two good snakes; thank you.)

Both Mack Laing and Uncle Austin made a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' animals. Interestingly however, rattlesnakes were bad animals in Uncle Austin's view, because they had killed one of his students and bitten both him and his dog, while Mack regarded them as good, because they kept down small mammals that destroyed crops. Mack regarded cats as bad as they competed with him for quail and grouse.

The whole concept of bad animals was formalized under the 1922 BC Game Act with its list of "Noxious Animals" and bounties offered on crows (20¢ per beak), bald eagles, golden eagles, horned owls and other species. Mack Laing scarcely needed to be told that some animals were bad. He had been raised on a farm in Manitoba and from boyhood had learned to distinguish and slay the bad ones. As Richard nicely puts it: "quite simply, life was a battleground upon which certain animals were the opposition, and where survival was at stake. A competitive voice told Mack: "I'd better shoot that hawk, because if I don't, he'll threaten the rare birds which it is my duty both to protect as a conservationist and destroy as a collector".

These beautiful simplicities began to come under fire in the 1930s, when public sentiment and academic opinion started to turn more and more toward the idea that the natural world was a complex system of interrelationships, kept in balance by the rival needs of predators and prey, that you interfered with it at your peril and that "all animals

were of equal worth". An American zoologist wrote to Mack: "anybody that would save his poor little robin from a hawk – you might as well shoot the robin to save the dear little earthworm, or your butcher when he kills a chicken for you to eat".

Uncle Austin too came in for criticism. He has been primarily responsible for a bounty offered by the Fish and Game Association on goshawks and horned owls in the Vernon district in 1933/4. This was held by some to be the reason for a sudden serious increase in vole populations and the consequent damage to fruit and shade trees and garden flowers. My uncle responded with a well argued letter in the Vernon News detailing the diets of various predatory birds and showing that, if left alive, the 55 goshawks and 18 horned owls brought in would have killed 150 game birds a week.

Reading the letter now, one cannot help being struck by the fact that the bounty hunters brought in not just members of the two species identified as vermin, but numerous innocent birds - screech owls, pygmy owls, a gyrfalcon, a roughleg hawk, a prairie falcon, a sharp shinned hawk and a short-eared owl. My uncle calculated however that of the total of 81 birds collected, "77 stand convicted of living on our local game and other birds". While continuing to advocate shooting of goshawks, he relented in the case of horned owls, apparently because 10% of their diet consists of mice.

UncleA with Soot (good) and a porcupine (bad)

In the very same letter he mounts an eloquent defence of the natural control principle pointing out that increases in vole populations are rapidly counteracted by increases in predatory birds. "Man's extremity is Mother Nature's opportunity", and "we may anticipate a big influx of hawks, owls and other mouse eaters". He concludes with a lengthy list of "our feathered allies" and "four-footed friends", partners of Man in the struggleagainst the villainous voles.

This letter strikingly illustrates his profound knowledge of avian natural history and his ability to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' birds while at the same time saluting the principle of the natural regulation of animal populations.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that Uncle Austin, like his half-brother George, Vicar of Chedworth, was one in a long and honourable procession of English parson-naturalists, going back through the numerous Victorian country clergymen who made important contributions to geology, sea shore biology and other branches of natural history, to Gilbert White (1720-1793) of Selborne. In the 20th century, these clerics and other genteel amateurs had to give way to university-trained professionals, but they have left an indelible mark in the annals of their disciplines.

1940

Richard and I were evacuated to Canada in July 1940. The government was encouraging parents to send their children abroad to safe places. There was a real and imminent possibility that the country would be invaded by the Germans, or subjected to heavy bombing, or both, as had already happened in a succession of European countries: Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939, and then in the spring of 1940 Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Norway, and France. Militarily, Britain was ill prepared and things did not look good. There was little of the jingoism seen in 1914. Though it was still the 'phoney war' everyone knew what was coming. Food was rationed, shelters had been dug on the common at Boxmoor and we took part in practice drills with gasmasks and warm clothing. Blackout curtains were made for all the windows at our house in Felden. Sure enough the Luftwaffe's air offensive against Britain began in July and the Blitzkrieg proper began in September. Evacuating the children must have seemed like a good idea and many children were sent abroad to Australia, Canada and the USA. The programme came to an abrupt end when an evacuee ship, the City of Benares, was torpedoed and many children drowned.

Me and Richard, 1938

We embarked at Liverpool aboard the Monarch of Bermuda. Our parents paid for our tickets, at the full adult rate in Richard's case. I don't remember much about the crossing, except that I was miserably sea sick. A kind lady, Mrs Henry, kept an eye on us. We were in a convoy with another liner and a merchant ship, along with a cruiser and the World War I battleship Revenge to protect us. Our ship had two anti-aircraft guns. On arriving in Halifax we were met and conducted to the train. Someone must have arranged all this, but once on the train, we were on our own. Richard, who had just turned 13, had money and instructions. He was pretty clueless, but he got us to our destination, often with help from complete strangers. I was 10 and tagged along. The train journey was long and boring as we crossed the Canadian Shield and endless prairies, but got interesting in the mountains. Extra locomotives were attached to the train. I was far more interested in them, and the unfamiliar makes of cars and trucks we saw at stations along the way, than in the scenery.

Finally we were in Sicamous, to be met by our uncles and driven down to Vernon in the family car (a Chevrolet). I had a cold and was sent to bed with an aspirin, but next day was up and around and soon slotted into family life. I saw a skunk and discovered the swimming pool. The pool was filled with water pumped from Coldstream Creek byan electric pump connected to the house by a two stranded, ungrounded electric cord meant for interior use, and with badly frayed insulation. This trailed down from the housedraped across tree branches and Oregon grape bushes. Later I figured out how to prime and work the pump, and got a bad electric shock. We helped make wine from Morella cherries. There were several trees, laden with beautiful fruit, and we made about 12

gallons of wine. Richard and I were sometimes allowed a glass each at lunch, diluted 50/50 with water.

A couple of weeks after we arrived, we all went up to Sugar Lake. We boys spent a lot of time on the sand bar. Paddy (aged 18) joined enthusiastically in our games. We built elaborate sand castles, with turret rooms for beautiful, long-haired damsels, dungeons, prisons and torture chambers for garter snakes and frogs. We rode down the river on logs. Later, in August, two other evacuee boys joined us at the cabin- Jimmy Stockley and John Eden (nephew of Sir Anthony). John shot a bush rat, and its insides sprayed around in a wonderfully disgusting way. We were caught in a storm on the lake and had to race back with the outboard engine (a Johnson Seahorse) at full throttle. Kit Brayshaw, son of another Coldstream family, came and joined us. He fell ill with appendicitis. I was blamed for this by Aunt Grace, who said it was because he (Kit) had bravely gone in under the cabin to remove a dead skunk, which had been put there by me.I do not believe any of this was true and it shows the level of her medical knowledge.

Another visitor was Francis Lumb, a Vancouver banker and a relative on the Marle side (Grace's mother was a Lumb), and his daughters Joyce and Rosemary. Joyce and I were pals and paddled about on logs. Mr Lumb and Uncle Hugh caught fish for our meals. There were lots more fish in those days, especially suckers (ugly brutes too bony for consumption) that frequented the water weeds in the shallow water just offshore from the cabin. There was an expedition up Sugar Mountain. I went along part of the way but ran out of steam or got bored half way up. Mr Lumb kindly said he would stay and keep me company while Paddy, Richard and Kit Brayshaw went on up to the summit. I wasn't interested in views and would have been quite happy fooling around on the lake.

Richard and Owen, Sugar Lake

In the evening after we boys went to bed, the grownups played bridge by the fire by the light of an Aladdin lamp. We slept on the south side of the veranda, along the wall where the double bed is now. I remember going to sleep with the light from the oil lamps shining up ontothe rafters, the smell of cigarette smokeand the murmur of conversation from the bridge players. On a rainy day our beds were moved into the cabin and Uncle A read us stories out of Blackwood's Magazine.

When we got back to Vernon, we found that all Uncle Hugh's pigeons had escaped from their loft and had to be recaptured with nets. (Paddy, like his father, also loved pigeons and later kept a flock, and made a dovecote for them on the lawn at Lake House.) Uncle Hugh kept bees and we spent an interesting time making honey, uncapping the combs and spinning them in a centrifugal extractor. Cans of honey were loaded onto the ancient flatbed truck (a Model A Ford) and stored for the winter in the underground root cellar. We also made beer, siphoning it into bottles and capping them.

Uncle Austin had a wonderful vegetable garden with magnificent cos lettuces, cantaloupe melons and green peppers, which he weeded meticulously and watered with

water from the orchard irrigation system, hoeing precise little channels in between each row. The family would gather on the lawn and go to work on baskets full of runner beans, cutting them up and storing them in a crock between layers of salt for the winter.

We visited the Layton's at Lake House and played Monopoly with them. Uncle Austin's dog Soot was good company. She slept on Uncle A's bed at night. She was really a one-man dog and would not go for walks with me.

This was all very interesting and quite unlike life in England. I don't remember being lonely or missing my parents. I wrote to them dutifully every week (this was required) and my mother wrote back, and I kept up a correspondence with my pre-school teacher Miss Kingston, also with Elsie Luxton, who had been our cook at Felden, and whom I loved and used to help in the kitchen. Knowing how to cook came in useful at Sugar Lake. I sometimes did breakfast fry-ups for the grown-ups of eggs, tomatoes, green peppers and fried bread.

News came in September that the water level at Sugar Lake was to be raised 5 ft. by a dam. This was cause for considerable concern - well justified as it turned out, for the appearance of the lake was spoiled for 20 years by an ugly fringe of dead trees. My mother kept a good many of my early letters from Vernon and sent them to me some twenty years later, after we had emigrated. Rereading them has helped me remember much of what I am writing now. During term time, the boys' letters home were read and approved by one of the uncles. Once or twice Uncle A added some remarks or corrections of his own, which of course I didn't see until much later. In one case he couldn't resist adding King Edward Lake which I had omitted from a map I had drawn of the Coldstream area. I think the object was more to ensure a reasonable standard of spelling and writing than to censor the contents. However, not knowing this, one tended to err on the side of caution, although I sometimes included cheeky remarks designed to test my uncles' forbearance. For instance the following from Dec 1 1940: "By the time I write to you next I may have had 2 canings. I won't say what for because it may remind the censor". I was never called to task for this. Later I took to writing to my parents in pig Latin. I wonder if they bothered to decode them. Because it was wartime, all letters to Britain were also (in theory) subject to official censorship. Once I got a letter from my mother which had had a portion excised by an official censor. It concerned the whereabouts of my brother Lawrence, who was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

Until term began in mid-September, we boys were part ofthe family. We slept in the family part of the house, and ate our meals with them in the dining room with Uncle Austin at the head of the table. He often gave us general knowledge quizzes, sometimes withrewards if we got the answer right which Richard, needless to say, often did. "Now Richard, can you give me the Latin names of four

Vernon Preparatory School (white buildings). The Mackies lived in the adjoining house.

species of Pacific salmon?" Oatmeal porridge was prepared in the evening and left on the hob of the wood stove for breakfast. Uncle Austin maintained (incorrectly) that cornflakes had no more nutritive value than cardboard. When term started, Richard and I (Owen) ceased to be part of the family, becoming Mackie I and Mackie II. Uncle Austin became Mr Austin, Hugh became Mr Hugh, Grace became Mrs Mackie. We were treated just like the other boys. The only concession was that I was allowed to sleep on a bed on the veranda, where Paddy and Uncle Hugh also slept. Richard however as a senior boy was head of one of the dormitories and slept up there. On Sundays we had to learn the collect like all the other boys, and attend a lengthy service in the school chapel, with sermon from Mr Austin. Like everyone else, we were caned for misdemeanours. At the end of term, we moved back into the Mackie end of the house and became part of the family again.

The school was run on lines of Spartan simplicity, the classrooms and dormitories were plain and unadorned - no bedside lights, no pictures, no pin-ups. We had cold baths and prayers every morning. There was central heating downstairs, but we still needed long underwear and sweaters indoors right through the winter months. We would compete to crouch over the hot air outlets. We were kept busy with lessons, prep, writing home, team sports etc. Most of us were pre-pubertal, so sex wasn't a big issue. The Mackies did what they could to channelize any nascent urges into productive pursuits, though complete success can hardly be expected in this domain. Despite the sexual suppression, the religiosity, the discipline, the hard life, the forced immersions and the canings I think we mostly escaped with unwarped personalities, chiefly because my aunts and uncles were basically decent people.

During the Christmas holidays, Richard and I spent some time with the Bell- Irving family in Vancouver, and we visited the pulp mill at Powell River, travelling there on the Prince Albert and returning on the Princess Mary. Then it was school time again.

There is not much more I need say about life at V.P.S. during term time - it was probably much like life in any other boarding school, and others, notably Jean Barman, have written more detailed accounts of this and similar schools in B.C., in the context of social history. Derek Pethick's witty and insightful article "A preparation for life" also stands out. Richard and I were academically rather ahead of our friends, Richard especially, with his astronomical percentages. After Christmas he was sent off to Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario and I became just plain Mackie. At VPS he and I were nicknamed the glossettes, after the shiny, chocolate coated raisins. On reaching his new school, Richard wrote a letter to Uncle Austin which was read out to us all as amodel to be emulated.

Though term was in full swing in October, Austin wasn't about to miss the fall shooting season for pheasants, partridges, grouse and snipe and was away much of the time. Sackfulls of dead birds would arrive by train and we boys had to help pluck and draw them. The pheasants waiting to be done were hung in the basement until they began to go green in their nether regions. They were easier to pluck after decomposition had

begun, but smelled much worse when opened. Paddy was around and about but did not take part in running the school. With his urge for self-improvement and self-expression, he played the piano a lot of the time, just as he spent hours painting in water colours during the summer at Sugar Lake. On my birthday in October a large cake was made with eleven candles, which I was supposed to carry into the darkened dining room where the whole school were assembled, my radiant face lit by glowing candle light. I was paralysed with shyness and embarrassment and demurred. Finally Mrs Mackie became impatient and carried it in for me. Of course, we tossed pancakes on Shrove Tuesday and had a bonfire on Guy Fawkes Day like proper English kids, listened to Mr Churchill's broadcasts and wore poppies on Armistice Day.

The war news was grim. Italy was now allied with Germany and Japan, forming the Axis powers, shortly to be joined by Romania and Hungary. The Italians invaded British Somaliland and Egypt. Air battles over England gathered intensity. Aunt Grace declared that if the Germans ever dared bomb London, our bombers would fly right back and flatten Berlin. Amazingly she was right. The first air raid on central London on Aug 24 was followed immediately by a British raid on Berlin.

As winter drew on, I was still sleeping out on the veranda. It was getting pretty cold but I was allowed to take a hot water bottle to bed. The bottle had to come into the house in the morning or it would freeze. We boys went for our morning skinny dips in Coldstream Creek even when ice had begun to form round the edges. When the snow came we spent our free time sleighing and making tree forts out of scrap lumber. The school was heated by hot air from a sawdust-burning furnace. The sawdust was shovelled into a big funnel-shaped hopper, and from there it somehow- I still wonder how- fed into the burner without the whole works catching fire. We boys helped with this, but Mr Marle (Uncle Ben) was in charge. He was not 100% efficient and once forgot to order sawdust, so there was no heating.

Ben Marle (1887-1969), Grace's younger brother, was a genial, weather-beaten, snowy haired man who lived in a cottage beside the barn. I looked in his window once and saw that he hadn't made his bed, a thought-provoking experience, as making ones bed with 'hospital corners' was almost a religious rite in Aunt Grace's book. Ben looked quite a lot like his sisters and his brother Dr Sam Marle and talked with the same accent, toned down somewhat with normal Canadian. He joined the family on special occasions, shaved and dressed in a suit, but otherwise he worked for the Mackies as cowman and general help. He looked after the cows and milked them by hand into a bucket, carted manure, did repairs, looked after the orchard and taught the boys P.E. and woodwork. He had settled in New Zealand before the Great War and went with the Anzacs to fight at Gallipoli, where he was wounded. He still walked with a limp when I knew him in the forties.

Aunt Grace once told me "I feel sorry for Ben- he has spent his life working for other people", but I do not believe he was unhappy with his lot. He was probably more part of the local

community in Vernon than his socially more elevated relatives, or at any rate, went around with a different set. He had a wonderful old car, a Maxwell two-seater, which he lovingly maintained. I saw a lot of him during the holidays as I liked to hang around the barn area and workshop. I took the calf for walks with a rope round itsneck. I sometimes operated the Alpha- Laval separator, cranking it for 10 or 15 minutes, quite heavy work, until all the cream was in one container and the milk in another. I made butter. I was interested in machinery and tools, which were Ben'sdomain, but he gave me a pretty free rein in making things in the workshop. When I met him again in the '60s he remembered that I had repaired several fruit-picking ladders and made a perpetual motion machine. By then, Uncle Ben had sold his Maxwell for an enormous price to a collector. Looking at web pages about these cars, it closely resemblesa 1921 model. It cannot have been later than 1925 as the company went out of business then.

1941

In January, Uncle Hugh wrote to Paddy "The great news… is Geoff's engagement- think of it – and he hardly out of knee pants – to a kid even younger than himself, still at UBC in her first year, one Shirley Macdonald…."

Later at Sugar Lake I got to know Shirley, a local girl whose father owned the pharmacy on the ground floor of the Medical and Dental Building in Vernon. She was good looking, funny and vivacious and everyone liked her, although Hugh and Grace had rather hoped and perhaps expected that Geoff would marry Daphne Grieve next door.

Geoff wrote to his Aunt Rhoda "the general reaction to my "bombshell" (unquote) was not particularly encouraging…"

Geoff was a Pilot Officer in the RCAF, and it was still not clear in January if he would be posted overseas, or would stay in Canada and be trained as a flight instructor. He told his aunt "the flying is quite fun now for a change – I'm doing work on Lockheed 10's (just a little smaller than the Trans Canada planes) and the feeling of 1000 H.P. under ones hand is quite thrilling". It turned out that he would train as flight instructor. If this was a relief to his parents – they already had one son, John, in active service as a fighter pilot - their relief was sadly short-lived. Less than a month later came the devastating news that Geoff had died in a flying accident. His plane somehow went out of control, a week before he was due to be posted as Instructor.

Geoff

"Now dear Pad, I want to emphasize what Mummy will doubtless refer to later – namely that it is your bounden duty to her to abandon your plans for joining the air force next summer: if you feel you must join up, well and good, but let it be as a soldier or ambulance man. (Austin, Feb 16).
"We have just passed through the worst week, I think, of our lives" (Hugh, Feb 24)
"We must never think of Geoff as dead- just waiting for us." (Grace, Feb 17)
"The cause of the accident has not yet been established and may never be, but we all feel it was for some reason beyond his or our control." (Geoff's Commanding Officer in Trenton, Feb 16).

The body was shipped back to Vernon by train. Hugh and Grace spent a few quiet moments alone in the church where the coffin lay draped with the Union Jack, and with his officer's hat lying on it. A full military funeral with firing squad, the Last Post and Reveillé, was held at the Coldstream cemetery.

Life at the school went on more or less normally. I was obsessed with playing badminton. Several of us were learning our catechisms prior to being confirmed by the Bishop. Uncle Austin gave us serious talks in the darkened living room on the family side of the house, including what was the nearest we ever got to a (completely baffling) sex lecture. Richard won a scholarship at Trinity College, earning the whole school a half-holiday. Uncle Austin assigned us plots of tilled land in which we could make gardens.

These were judged at the end of term. Darg Bell-Irving and I planted geraniums, snapdragons, petunias and a fern in ours. There was an outbreak of German measles and six of us were placed in isolation and fed special meals. We were required by the doctor to drink four pints of water a day. Aunt Grace took this literally and, not having time to administer water at intervals, she lined us up and tried to make us drink it all at once! I vomited mine right backup. While you can sympathize with the poor woman, you would have thought she would have had more sense.

At the end of March, Uncle Hugh held "The Grand Review of March Past", a quiz on French irregular verbs and grammar. The boys in our class were given humorous names like "Inspector of the Bilge Water", "Keeper of the Ships Cat", "Thirty-first Sea Lord". I was "Good Dog Tray" (from the nursery rhyme). Those who did best got eggs for breakfast next day as rewards. Good Dog Tray didn't get an egg, though next year, as Archbishop of Canterbury, he got two. Hugh's teaching was always spiced with humour, ceremonies and games of this sort, and we responded well and generally enjoyed his classes. Austin's lessons were well organized expositions, delivered at a pace that allowed detailed notes to be kept. In fact it was something like dictation, and we were expected to get it all down and learn it. This worked too, as he followed through with

searching tests. Aunt Grace did her best but I don't think her heart was in it and it strained her patience. "I now take the stupid ones in the 3rd form for prep- Lord ! they are stupid and I believe they are going to spoil my temper- I ought to knock them off their stools as I used to do you in the old piano days- it seemed to have a good effect…. It is only reading in the last hour and I generally feel like falling asleep."(to Paddy, Nov. 1942).

In England the phoney war was long over and the real one was in full swing. We heard on the news that Bristol was being heavily bombed. I was worried about my parents who were both part-time air-raid wardens involved in rescue work. Greece was now the focal point of the ground war. Mussolini's grandiose ambitions led him to invade Greece from Albania. The Greeks fought back fiercely inflicting humiliating defeats on the Italian army, which meant that Germany had to step in, and this led in turn to the British sending forces to Greece in March 1941. Nothing could stop the German advance and Greece surrendered in April. Then came the awful news that John Mackie, flying a Hurricane, had died in action over Larissa. John had visited my family in Felden before the war. Despite the disparity in our ages (14 years) he befriended me and taught me how to use a trapeze, which he slung from a high tree branch behind the rhubarb patch. Later the same year (1937), he joined the RAF, subsequently serving in England, Malta and Egypt and rising to the rank of Flight Lieutenant. He was an ace fighter pilot, with 7 kills to his credit. The British effort to hold Greece and Crete was a failure. Crete fell to the Germans before the end of May.

Paddy, who was attending art school in Toronto, came home to be with his parents. He must have felt a heavy burden of responsibility as the sole remaining bearer of their hopes. Paddy was something of a clown and tended not to be taken seriously, but everyone liked him. In a letter of reference, Uncle Austin described him as "a man of sterling character & peculiar charm". His peculiar and unique charm and boyishness stayed with him all his life. After John's death, my father wrote to Paddy "Mary and I…..think of you as next best thing to a son, and much more than an ordinary nephew, and this is how we thought of dear old John." I have no record of Hugh and Grace's feelings at the time. John was a fine man and universally admired, but Geoff was the darling of the family, certainly for his mother.The highest compliment I ever had from her was when she said I reminded her of Geoff.

That spring, Aunt Rhoda decided to have a shot at reviving St Michaels, a defunct and debt-ridden girls boarding school, under the name Brandon House. I helped her explore the premises, discovering dusty iron beds and old mirrors in cupboards. She

worked like a dog cleaning and furnishing the place but the venture never got off the ground. The buildings ended up as apartments, which Rhoda managed for a while.

I was now sleeping out on the lawn on a kind of hammock, a long seat suspended by chains from a metal frame, and covered with an awning. (these things must have a name). For a while, having forgotten to take out a handkerchief, I took to blowing my nose on the top sheet. I suppose I reasoned that sheets and hankies all ended up in the same wash, so what did it matter, and no one would notice anyway. Aunt Rhoda, who was a sort of deputy matron at the school, noticed and was furious and gave me a severe dressing down. I didn't think it was such a heinous crime, and resented being told off by her, as I didn't regard her as having bossing-around rights like those of Aunt Grace. On reflection I think she probably thought that the patches on the sheet were some loathsome male secretion, but alas, I was still much too young for that. Rhoda was always very definite, and often wrongheaded, in her views, and I was not the only one on the receiving end of her harangues, but she was a good old bird who worked hard and made a decent life for herself as a hairdresser. She died in 1988, in her 100th year.

Aunt Grace

Term ended and I could pick and eat cherries without feeling guilty - during term time it was a punishable offence. (We stole them anyway). My letters home took on a cheeky, skittish, almost flirtatious tone which now seems slightly unreal - I think I was beginning to forget who my parents really were, and was turning them into fantasy figures or pen pals. Did I miss them? Not in any obvious or remembered way, which is not to say …. well, who knows. Aunt Grace made no attempt to be a surrogate mother but she had been a real mother and knew what boys were about and kept a kindly eye on us. Once when I was feeling sad, she took a quick look at me, sized things up and handed me an orange (a big treat in 1941). This was during term time when I was Mackie, but she broke the rules and called me Owen. I registered this gesture with deep gratitude, more even than the orange. For people in families to be close, it is not necessary that they continually hug and kiss and express loving feelings or even talk much about matters close to their hearts. If the feelings are there, they come through regardless. However, the very fact that I remember that incident so vividly may mean something.

…disembarking with the pack train

Summer came, we went up to Sugar Lake and from there to Peters Lake, with 3 riding horses and 3 packhorses, got lots of fish, hiked up Fraser Mountain and saw mountain goats. (My father, reading this, would have remembered his own hunting trip to the goat cliffs in

1922). Mr Fraser had a barge made of logs and powered by a truck engine driving a propeller, and he used this to take us and our gear and the horses across the lake. We went on an expedition to Gates's Bay. George Gates was a trapper who trapped beaver, mink, martens, fishers and weasels up the Shuswap. He used to clear $4000 a year trapping, which he lost at poker in the summer. Another expedition was to "Sailors" the derelict homestead of a German settler who had died up there before the war. His name was probably Seiler (= rope maker). At Sailors, we salvaged pieces of horse harness and wagon wheels. Some of the wooden harness pieces are still at the cabin, hanging on the wall, but the hand cart we made of the wagon wheels is no more.

The water level at Sugar Lake had been raised 10 ft, all the trees round the edge were beginning to die and there was much floating driftwood. Funnily enough the apples trees at the Barclays next door were still bearing apples, though half submerged. Their boat house was floating around in the shallows with just the roof above water. There was talk of further raises, by as much as 100ft! Worst of all, the sand bar was now 4 ft below the surface. There was a storm and drifting logs smashed into one of our boats on the waters edge and destroyed it. Richard and I were now old enough to help with chores like cutting and splitting wood, and I still sometimes fulfilled my role as breakfast cook. Later in July we went up Park Mountain with Mr Fraser and a pack train. I learned to tie the diamond hitch, an elaborate system of knotted ropes which holds the pack on a pack horse. Mr Fraser was "an old man of 77 (thanks, Owen!) who , despite his age is by far the most agile man in the west of BC..." Fraser had built our cabin and the Barclay's house at Sugar Lake, as well as Fraser Lodge. John Barclay told Richard Somerset Mackie that "Fraser was a terrible old rogue" but I was very impressed with the beautiful boats he made and all his woodman's skills.

Owen on the Barclay's boat house

It must have been wearisome for the senior Mackies to be back in the role of parents of a couple of young boys again, when their youngest and only

remaining son was a grown man, but if so they gave no hint of it. I dare say it was not entirely for our benefit that they packed us off to Sugar Lake for long periods in the summer, sometimes supervised by a single adult, such as the hated Miss Brown, she of the yellow teeth. Indeed, they may well have had more than enough of boys and their problems after 25 years of running a boarding school. Richard and I were lively types and may have given them some amusement as well as problems. I got into trouble and had to be caned frequently but never as Owen, only as Mackie. I think we all liked each other, including Uncle Austin who was not really such a stiff, forbidding character as he is sometimes portrayed. Richard endeared himself to Uncle Austin by getting interested in bird-watching and, even better, keeping records of all the birds he had seen. I saw a mushroom suddenly come up out of the ground.

Down at Vernon in the summer we worked in the orchards, picking prune plums and thinning and picking apples. Uncle Ben had a good singing voice and could yodel. He sang bar-room ballads while working in the orchard - "Sally's eyes are brown and her sweet and lovely hair ho hum…" etc., interspersed with many heigh-hos and fiddle-de-dees replacing the bawdy bits. Paddy was enjoying his last summer at home before enlisting for service in the Royal Canadian Navy. When school started again in the fall,he was around still, and organized a paper chase for the whole school (he was the hare). I started collecting recipes, cutting them out from the newspaper and sticking them into a book. I eventually collected 200 recipes, a rich fantasy world. Aunt Grace found my recipe book and looked through it. She picked one out to make for the school, a steamed pudding. I would rather she had picked the one for apple fritters or cheese whoops.

1942

Per and Mary, air-raid wardens, with Timmy, 1941

The war news was still gloomy but it was possible to see glimmers of hope. The air battle over Britain had effectively been won when Göring reluctantly decided that the Luftwaffe's losses could no longer be sustained. With Britain now safe from invasion, and transformed into "the worlds most unsinkable aircraft carrier", the German war machine had nowhere to turn but eastward. Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Wehrmacht swept rapidly across the Ukraine but was halted by the Red Army in December outside the gates of Moscow. In the same month, the Japanese committed the monstrous folly of attacking the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. This brought the USA into the war against both Japan and Germany. Churchill quoted Clough's poem "Westward look! The land is bright!"

The fate of the Axis powers may have been sealed, but they were far from a spent force. On Feb 15 the Japanese were besieging Singapore when I started a letter home and just as I was finishing it the news came through that Singapore had fallen. Bristol was still being bombed,

although the RAF was striking back with 1000 bomber raids on Cologne. My parents soldiered on at 3 Goldney Ave, though they had bought Packhorse Farm in Somerset with a view to retiring there "after the war". Despite British defeats at the hands of General Rommel in North Africa, no one really thought we wouldn't win in the end.

The cash-strapped Bristol Zoo asked for people to 'adopt' animals (i.e. pay for their upkeep). We adopted the binturong. It should have been the Sarus Crane, as this birdwas a legend in our family as a symbol of maternal self-denial. When we threw them food, the mother always let her chicks have it first. My father would tell my mother "Don't be a Sarus Crane".

For us at the school, the war may have seemed far away, but Paddy was in Vancouver undergoing basic training as an ordinary seaman and wearing a blue sailor jacket. Apparently an officer, Montague Bridgman, of the well known Victoria family, heard his English accent and suggested he try for a commission. He did so, and got his commission as 2nd Lieutenant in July and was sent to Halifax in August after a brief visit home. We didn't see much of him thereafter, but he served on corvettes and other Navy warships, and in 1944 took a four month course in navigation, was promoted to Lieutenant and served as navigator on a minesweeper.

Paddy

Choir boys. Mackie and Bell-Irving

I now weighed 90lbs, about average for my age (12), but much too big for the Sunday suit I had brought out with me from Bristol. I joined the choir as Cantoris II and wore a red cassock with a white surplice for the Sunday morning service. We changed in Uncle Austin's bedroom below the chapel, and then formed a double line and mounted the stairs singing a hymn before proceeding to our places on either side of the harmonium, played by Aunt Grace. In March, Bishop Adams, formerly Bishop of Kootenay, but now His Grace the Archbishop of British Columbia, joined the procession resplendent in his vestments and archiepiscopal regalia, to conduct the confirmation service.

At Easter I went to stay with the Laytons "so that Mrs Mackie could be quite free to see as much of Paddy as possible", as Mrs Layton explained to my mother – a nice way of saying "to get Owen out of her hair for a bit". I had a great time, saw school friends who lived in Vancouver, saw lots of movies and helped Alison Layton in her

training as a stenographer by dictating imaginary letters for her to take down in shorthand. Alison's older sister Liz was quite a celebrity. She worked at 10 Downing Stas assistant personal secretary to Mr Churchill. I learned more about sex from playing with Mrs Layton's dog than I ever did from Uncle Austin's fireside chats. Back in Vernon the big news was that Soot had had pups. The father was a dog called Snubs who was killed by a truck "but only after they mated" I hastened to reassure my mother.

As part of his class in Social Studies, Uncle Hugh introduced us to H.G.Wells' Short History of Mankind. I found it fascinating and gave my parents a summary of the contents. I did not mention, but was well aware, that Wells was an atheist, and gave short shrift to religions generally, explaining how their founders' teachings had been subverted by the teachings of their followers. Hugh's approach to Social Studies was to explain the history of a region in some depth, as background to topics of interest currently being reported in the news. "For example, he was talking about Syria, Palestine and Transjordania etc and then went on to how the Germans would want it and then on till it was just about all war talk. In the same period he gives us a separate war talk on the earlier conquests of Hitler in this war and sums up the state of affairs as to what sort of position we are and were in. That period is very interesting." (letter home, May 4). We were given topics to research, for instance the life of Marshall Pétain. Hugh was not optimistic about the duration of the war- he told us it might take another 10 years. Once he got going, Hugh usually closed his eyes, or appeared to, focussing on his train of thought, and speaking *ex tempore*, a style of delivery I didn't meet again until I went to Oxford.

Richard - off in a world of his own as usual

Richard was still at T.C.S and wrote back to Vernon from time to time, but not quite often enough. There were some mutterings. I gleefully told my parents " there is almost what you might call a bit of bad feeling towards that point by his uncles and aunts and when I write this week I will tell him". Letter writing for Richard was an opportunity to exercise his skill with words. He had a horror of the humdrum. He couldn't resist being witty, facetious and clever. I didn't mind but it got on Aunt Grace's nerves. She told Paddy "I must write a line to Richard – he writes such pedantic letters I fear he fancies himself as a wag – but he is heavy!"

Though Richard was much more grown up, I still felt very close to him and we exchanged letters regularly. He used humorous forms of address on the *outside* of the envelope (Dog-Dog Mackie, Woof-Woof Mackie etc) as well as in the letter itself. ("Dear Dogsbody"). Small boys at the school followed me around snickering and calling out Woof-Woof. R's letters, whatever else, were always

affectionate. I didn't mind him being brainy because I knew I was more practical. That summer at Sugar Lake when we were out in the boat, the propeller hit a submerged log and the shearing pin sheared right through leaving the motor racing madly. He tilted the motor up and turned off the gas, but of course the motor went on running using up the gasin its carburettor, getting hotter by the second because the intake for its cooling system was now above the water line. He hadn't a clue what was going on and I had to show him that you could stop the motor by pulling the cable off the spark plug. There was no sibling rivalry: Richard watched birds and read Kierkegaard while I built water wheels and chipmunk traps.

Back at Vernon, there were lawns to mow and hedges to clip, and orchard work as the apple crop came on. Uncle Hugh paid me 25¢ an hour and Richard got 35 cents. This was not such bad pay- 25 cents would have bought me 3 loaves of bread in 1942. In August I went out with Uncle Austin and Col. Scott of the military base in Vernon who passionately wanted to hunt rattlesnake. Col. Scott came in an army jeep, which impressed me greatly with its 6 cylinder engine "the size of a truck's", its four wheeldrive and ability to climb 45º slopes. We went "up hills that would test the endurance of a mountain goat, over fallen trees and down rock slides…" We only caught one rattler, paradoxically after we had stopped looking and were down bathing in Cossins Bay. The snake struck ferociously at Uncle A's stick while Col. Scott took pictures of him with a movie camera.

The military were very much in evidence during the fall term as there was a battle training course on the south range. We boys got as near as we were allowed and watched, mesmerized. The commando-trainees had to crawl under water beneath a log while holding their rifles in the air so as not to get them wet, then swing hand over hand along an archway of 10 side by side logs spaced a yard apart, with explosives going off around them. Then they had to slide down a tunnel bayonet first with another soldier hard on their tracks. The bottom of the tunnel was awash with muddy water but if you stopped or hesitated you got stabbed by the bayonet of the man behind. Small explosives called thunder flashes were thrown into the tunnel by the instructors, spraying the trainees with wet debris.Finally you had to lie on your belly in the creek and crawl up it with bren gun fire (live shells- we could see the bullets splattering the bank opposite) just a few inches above your backside. Some of these poor sods probably met the real thing at Dieppe. There were spent mortar shells and other debris all over theplace which we collected and traded amongstourselves.

In retrospect, we probably shouldn't have been allowed anywhere near the place. The Mackies were surprisingly relaxed about letting us explore the area unsupervised. Bear in mind that their first born, little Peter (above), had died in April 1918 at the age of six when he and an 8 year old friend had gone out for a walk to

get a birds nest for Grace. Hugh described what happened. “They came across an empty hut and found a tin box which, unable to open, the other boy threw against the wall. It contained nitro-glycerine blasting caps which exploded with terrible effect…poor little Peter tried to get home but fell down in a pool of blood….” Aunt Grace wrote “ For 12 precious hours I held my darling in my arms and soothed his fears….all the time I am wondering why God took him – was I unworthy of such a life as his? do you remember how he loved flowers…” The Mackie’s blamed the other boy (who recovered) and his mother, who admitted that her son was “quite beyond her control”. However, any eight-year-old might have done the same, and surely the real fault lay with those who left explosives lying around where anyone could find them and, let’s face it, with the parents who let their children wander at large.

With the approach of winter and early frosts we were put to work harvesting sugar beets and mangel wurzels. Uncle Ben drove us to the fields in the school bus- the same old flatbed truck used for everything else. Sometimes the railings around the back were left off and we had to hang on to the back of the cab as best we could.

Later when the snow came we were up on the roof of the badminton hall perilously shovelling snow off it. The net was taken down on the tennis court and we flooded it to make a skating rink for ice hockey. We learned how to knit and made scarves and toques for our Russian allies, who had finally gone on the offensive and were pushing the Germans back after successfully defending Stalingrad. I enjoyed knitting more than my music lessons, and after bugging my parents relentlessly for four months I was finally allowed to give up the piano. Miss Smith, the piano teacher, was upset and nearly broke down in tears. I felt like a traitor as she was nice. The silly thing was that I was interested in music and might have done well if I had gone on. I often wish I had.

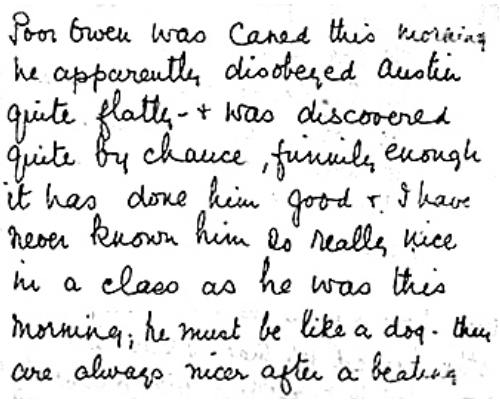
1943

As the year began, it was clear the tide of war had turned in the allies’ favour, with the Germans and Italians in retreat in North Africa, Russia and the Ukraine. Italy surrendered in September and promptly switched sides, declaring war on her former allies. Kiev fell to the Red Army in November. In March, after 41 U-boats were lost in an attack on a single convoy, Admiral Dönitz suspended U-boat operations in the Atlantic, making the ocean safe for evacuee children to be sent home. In October Ilearned that my parents wanted me to go back to England. I wrote a wheedling letterhome larded with patently insincere remarks about longing to see them again but telling them I would rather stay in Canada. Of course, by then the decision had already been taken. Children’s’ feelings would not have been part of the equation in 1943. I wrote to

Richard more honestly "It seems uncomfortably certain that the strings have already been pulled….".

Richard's future too was somewhat up in the air. His time at Trinity College School was coming to an end although he could have stayed on another year until he was 17 and perhaps readier for university. Aunt Grace thought he ought to teach at BrentwoodCollege. She thought he was *made* to be a teacher, as he had done well teaching junior boys at VPS the previous year. Richard himself was thinking of studying English Literature at the University of Toronto, and had won scholarships that would have got him there without any trouble. He told me later that if he had done this he would have become a journalist. His father eventually stepped in, and it was decided that he take a Science Honours course, which would allow him to proceed on in Medicine. Aunt Grace was sceptical about medicine, saying that "he was not cut out to be a doctor", although she supposed he might do well in research work. However, medicine it was to be, and he never regretted it.

At 13, I was now in the 6th form and a "probationer", with responsibilities such as supervising prep, being in charge of a dormitory and reading the lesson in chapel, but with the advantages of staying up later in the evening and not having one's letters censored. I immediately started calling Mr Mackie 'Gus' in my letters home. I never became head boy - that fell to my friend Montgomery, nephew of the British general celebrated for his victories against Rommel's Afrika Corps in the Desert War. Canings were now rare. Boys who were caught breaking rules were assigned to what Uncle Hugh with his flair for the dramatic called the Labour Battalion.


Poor Owen was caned this morning he apparently disobeyed Austin quite flatly - + was discovered quite by chance, funnily enough it has done him good + I have never known him so really nice in a class as he was this morning; he must be like a dog - they are always nicer after a beating

In March however Aunt Grace told Paddy: "poor Owen was caned this morning, he apparently disobeyed Austin quite flatly & was discovered by chance, funnily enough it has done him good & I have never known him so really nice in a class as he was this morning; he must be like a dog – they are always nicer after a beating." In another context she said I was "weak minded" and "a yes man". The 'weak minded' part was probably because I still wet my bed. The 'yes man' part was true in the sense that I was devious,insecure and anxious to be liked so tended not to say what I really thought, but said things I thought people wanted to hear. Aunt Grace saw only what showed on the surface, which gave her a rather black and white, over simple view of life and a godlike propensity for making devastatingly candid judgments about people.

Having got that out of the way, let me turn now to Uncle Austin. The winter was harsh in 1943, with temperatures down to 40 below in January. The chapel was too cold to use and we had morning prayers in the dining room. The snow still hadn't all gone on April 6th, which meant a delay in Uncle A's war against the rattlesnakes but by mid April things were in full swing. I came back from Kelowna where I had been staying with the nice Mrs Oswell (a deputy matron at VPS), to find that Uncle A had shot himself in the wrist when snake hunting. He and his companion, Darrell Rye, a 15 year old former VPS boy, had a good day however and bagged 37 snakes, the largest 3 feet long. On another

outing, Col. Scott joined us again, bringing the Willys jeep, and blasting the snakes with his huge .45 calibre service revolver. That day they got 25. Uncle Austin's method was to pin down and dispatch the snakes with a stick if possible but if they looked like escaping he shot them with his .22 pistol using No 12 shot (tiny pellets). The day he shot himself, he was wearing a tweed jacket which absorbed much of the impact but it still left a nasty bruise and the lead pellets embedded under his skin went with him to the grave.

To understand Austin's career as a snake hunter we have to go back to 1927. In September of that year, there was an outbreak of polio at the school. "In a matter of hours the whole world was turned upside down" wrote Hugh. " Medical authorities insisted that the dormitory system be at once discarded and that there must be no further gatherings of any sort….every outbuilding was pressed into service… no laundry could be sent out and all stores had to be dumped a quarter of a mile away….a mounted policeman patrolled the highway...even the fruit in the orchard was considered unclean and had to be left there… we were not allowed to use the eggs from our poultry….more and more suspicious cases of illness began….at the peak we had 18 boys in bed on the veranda, in the attic, anywhere a bed could be squeezed in".

The remaining boys, who were not 'suspects', were required to leave the school premises. The manager of the Coldstream ranch provided a flat piece of land, ominously close to the cemetery, and the CPR offered the loan of enough tents for the boys and staff. There was another encampment on the football field. Friends and neighbours rallied round. Despite the draconian quarantine precautions, three boys, Howard Hunt, John Routh and Godfrey Isaacs died and another got the disease but recovered. Little Paddy, who turned 5 while all this was going on, was sent to live with his granny (Mary Leah Marle, 1853-1932)who had a cottage over by the cricket pitch.

How does snake-hunting come into the story? The mother of one boy, Roland Whittall, tried to sneak into the camp by the cemetery one night after dark, intending to take Roland home, but she was caught and, once there, was not allowed to leave. Roland was an enterprising eleven-year-old who had already killed and skinned enough snakes to make a present for his mother and the next day he went up on the range by Ravine Lake and caught a small one so that he could show her what a live rattlesnake looked like. The policeman on duty at the camp intercepted him and shot the snake with his revolver before Roland could show it to his mother. Nothing daunted, Roland went back up on the range again and found another snake but this time the snake struck first and bit him on the finger. He ran back to the camp where there was a doctor in attendance. (It was later said that he should not have run as it circulated the venom faster, but that sounds pretty far fetched).

The call went out for serum antivenin, but none could be found in BC. It was available in Seattle however and a motor cycle set out bringing some, heading forMission, BC, via the border crossing at Blaine. The Washington State highway patrol cleared the roads up to the border, and the border authorities were warned to let the speeding machine through without delay. At Mission, Roland's anguished father was waiting to take the package and rush it to Vernon on the train but the motor cycle failedto arrive. The train was held for an hour but still the motor cycle did not come- it had broken down before it even reached Blaine. Roland Whittall died early next morning.

Quoting Hugh again "after young Whittall's death, my brother vowed vengeance upon the whole tribe of rattlesnakes and so started a campaign against them which made his name familiar throughout BC and beyond. ….By the time increasing years (86) prevented such activities he had accounted for well over 4000." More mundanely, Darrell Rye comments: "I think he found that hunting snakes…filled a gap in his sporting year".

Owen and Uncle Austin snaking

I too shot and skinned a rattlesnake in September 1943 and sent the skin home to my mother, (I still have it upstairs at Tryon Rd),along with the pelt of a flying squirrel that Soot had caught. Uncle Austin taught us how to stuff mice and birds and of course we learned plenty about the insides of birds from dealing with the game birds he shot. In November, I told my parents, he came back from Alberta "covered with the blood and glory of 100 pheasants, grouse and partridges" - a nice example of zeugma, Uncle Hugh would have said. The whole school feasted on roast pheasant three times that fall. "There are simply hanging jungles of pheasants and partridges in the basement waiting to be plucked". In November, I got Uncle A to let me buy a book from a mail-order place I saw advertised in a magazine. The book was Two Thousand Five Hundred Jokes For All Occasions. It cost me 45¢, marked down from $2.50. Uncle A and I both read it. He went through it from cover to cover, marking the ones he liked with neat little ticks in the margin. Here's one I liked:

"Who's calling?" was the answer to the telephone
"Watt"
"What is your name please?"
"Watt's my name"
"That's what I asked you. What's your name?"
"That's what I told you. Watt's my name."
Long pause, and then from Watt
"Is this James Brown?"
"No, this is Knott"
"Then please tell me your name"
"Will Knott"
They both hang up.

And here's one Uncle A liked:

A terrible accident occurred in Dundee. Two taxis collided injuring 40 Scotsmen.

1944

Early in the year I left Vernon and went to stay with the Missimers in Erie, Pennsylvania, nice people whom my mother had met on a train when they were visiting England before the war. Their daughter Susan, a nubile sixteen year old, took a fancy to me and often hugged me to her beautiful bosom, but my hormones still hadn't kicked in and I knew not what to do. Actually, I think Susan just wanted to practice what it would be like to have a boyfriend, and I was the only thing around she could practice on. We kept up a correspondence for years, long after we had forgotten what each other looked like.

The idea was that at Erie I would be closer to New York, the designated departure point for returning evacuees. And so it worked out. After I had been there for a couple of months, the call came in March, I said goodbye to the Missimers and their friend Ellen de Witt (another of my pen pals) and took the train to New York, staying a night at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel, where my father had stayed in 1922, and boarded a transport carrier bound for England. Transport carriers were mass-produced by the Kaiser shipyards in San Francisco specifically to be to be anchored off-shore on D-day as floating landing strips. They served usefully in this capacity when the time came, on June6th, but in the open ocean they were unstable and top heavy and rolled horribly. It was a miserable eleven days before we got to Liverpool, arriving in early April.

Meeting my parents again was not much fun for any of us. They met me at the station with Lawrence, on leave from his Navy service as skipper of ML 246. He wrote to them later: "How's Owen bearing up? He looked a bit peaky at the station didn't he, but I don't blame the poor little blighter…" The fact is, I had never wanted to leave Vernon in the first place, and when I met my parents again, any fantasies I may have had about them were rapidly dispelled. These two elderly people with their English accents were strangers to me, as I was to them. I was too young to put a good face on it. I retreated into my shell, said little, divulged nothing, and resisted all friendly advances with frigid politeness. It was years before I could reciprocate when my mother smiled at me. I did not love her any more, in fact I quite unreasonably resented her. Exasperated, she called me "a cold little frog".

Lawrence

I was soon packed away to boarding school. Rather than sending me to Clifton College as a day boy, which might have seemed the obvious thing to do (after all, we lived in Clifton) they decided I was to

go to Blundell's School in Tiverton, apparently for no better reason than that two long dead remote relatives had been teachers there: my father's half-brother George in the 1870s, and Granny Owen's sister Eleanor's husband George Norman, who was housemaster of Petergate in the early '20s. Daddy checked me out physically before I went and noted that my feet were rather long compared to his, "which probably means"he wrote to me "that you will be fairly tall, though not as tall as L, I hope." Blundell's wasn't a bad school, and after a while I lost the American accent I had picked up in Erie and made friends and found things to interest me, but the alienation from my parents continued. My letters home stopped saying 'Dear Mummy and Daddy' and became 'Dear Mother and Father'.

Blundells School. Arrow shows Uncle George's classroom

While I was away at school my parents started packing up for the move to Somerset. Daddy wrote to me "Your mother is feeling rather sad about leaving so many friends in the W.V.S [Women's Volunteer Service] and wardens amongst whom we have spent some very happy, sometimes alarming and dangerous times. She is very popular amongst all classes especially the humbler folk with whom she has so much sympathy and understanding and is able to enter their joys and sorrows as one of them. It is a wonderful gift which I think you boys will share as you grow up. I met one old doctor who had a poor practice and was called upon to meet royalty and he said "It doesn't worry me- I have only one set of manners". It has always stuck in my mind when I have had to deal with coolie or Viceroy – difficult to carry out in practice."

I think my father probably realized how distant I felt from him and my mother at this time, and was trying to help me see my mother in a more positive light, but what he said about her was absolutely true, and I heard others say the same sort of thing over and over again in the coming years, and witnessed it myself.

My parents, now settling in at Packhorse Farm, in the village of Mark, Somerset, came to see me at the school during a mid-term recess. My father stopped at one point and sat down, white faced, on the steps outside the Biology lab. He was having an angina attack. I discovered later that he had been having these attacks since early June and had been on sick leave from his job as Chief Medical Officer at British Overseas Airways since June 13th. His diary for June 7th notes: "Went to see Dr Herapath who said I had angina pectoris. B/p 200/113 – also glycosuria. Rather alarmed. Had some angina on return to Mark". He had driven himself to make the effort to be shown around the school, not wishing to disappoint me, but he shouldn't have done it and the exertion may have contributed to the serious heart attack he suffered a little later, or so my mother hinted. He was put in a nursing home on June 30th and died on July 15th, aged 69. The last word I

had from him was on July 10th, a postcard reminding me that my mother's birthday was on July 13th and that I shouldn't forget to write to her. He probably knew he had not long to live.

I regret particularly that I never got to know Per and he never had the chance to be a father to me. My mother lived for another 30 years and we eventually established a modus vivendi, though there were always undercurrents of resentment in my case and I was probably more than usually difficult to have around as a teenager. I liked the life at Packhorse Farm however and entered enthusiastically into keeping ducks, geese, chickens and pigs, and growing vegetables, and being odd-job repair man about the dilapidated old place. Uncle Ben had taught me well.

Here are some extracts from a letter my father wrote me at school from the Chesterfield Nursing Home, ten days before he died. I now read them as valedictory messages:

"I hope to be back at Mark about the time you come for your holidays and though I shall be a crock I shall be able to enjoy things with M. and you."

"This is only a phase for you; a few years under restraint and then you will have the whole world to choose from and I do not suppose that you will choose to live in England all your life….."

"You must remember that we are just as much interested and absorbed in your life and prospects as we are in R's and L's, and the brilliant R. does not in the least throw you and your future into the shade."

And here are some bits from two letters from Uncle Hugh a bit later in the year:

"I was only a few years older than you when my father died…and I can remember everything…"

"England has lost so many….that those who are left have a heavy responsibility but you have a good brain, and tho' perhaps not as clever as your father was, you can do an awful lot of good."

"[at Sugar Lake] all the cottonwoods are dead now and only need a good storm to come crashing to the water: the water is very high indeed and a sort of beach has been formed in front of the house by washing away of the bank…"

"…the Barclays house still stands with its eaves just above the water…"

"...fishing was no good, esp. as I had left my rod behind!"

"...there is a family of skunx under the house, which all squeak in unison."

"Pad spent almost the whole time up there in building a log sailing ship….it seemed a great success when used as a submarine….."

"I got 17 cords of wood last winter which for an old fellow like me I consider pretty good…. In a few weeks time you can imagine me down there again…"

"…another startling event is Miss Arrowsmith getting married- to a Mr Paulsen. One thing is certain- he has got plenty for his money!" [Miss Arrowmith was the massively overweight science teacher at VPS]

"The Morella cherries are a sight this year- the trees are simply bent to the ground."

"We had 7 or 8 high school boys and girls to do the thinning this year and it took them 3 weeks, for we have the biggest crop on record…"

" …the last of the pheasant shooters has departed – even the Commando camp at the Coldstream Ranch is being torn down, so now we can watch the snow creeping lower and lower down the slopes of the North Range…

"…do try to be kind to the poor devils who teach you. If you only knew how often your younger uncle was on the verge of becoming a homicidal maniac you would have pity on them…"

"Minou (now Prince) is in good shape ditto that old clothes bag Widz; Soot of course fatter than ever. They send you a chorus of meows and barks…"

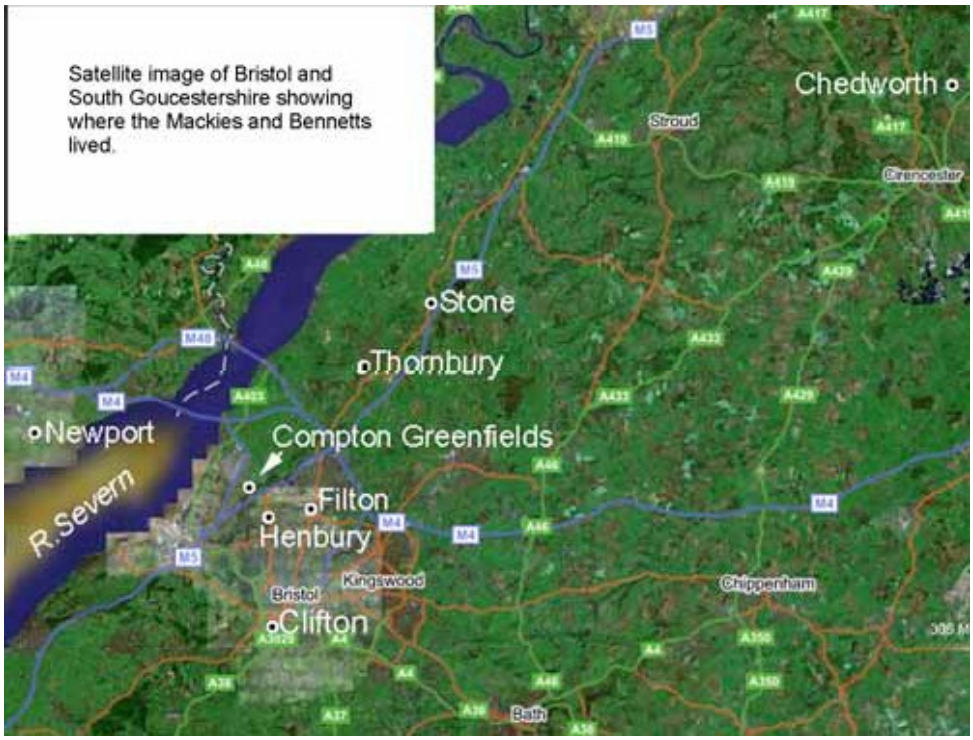
In my emotionally battened-down state, these letters evoked a painful longing for my old life in Vernon, so familiar, so dear, so far away.

Life went on. My new life took hold of me, I found new friends and new interests. I gradually forgave my mother for being who she was. I went into the army, then to Oxford, became a biologist and met Gillian Faulkner. I never forgot my old home in Vernon and when the time came to look for a job, Canada was inevitably my first choice. There was a job in Edmonton and Gill bravely agreed to give it a try.

Pretty good for an old fellow

So here we came, here we raised our children, and here we will end our days. I was not the first, not by a long shot, just the latest Mackie in the procession, following along behind the bushwhacker, the black sheep, the farmers, the army doctor, the lawyer and the clergyman-headmaster who left their native land to seek their fortune in the Queen's dominions overseas - not the first, certainly not the last, surely one of the luckiest.

Notes, sources, acknowledgements



My nephew Peter Mackie has constructed an annotated internet family tree covering all the Mackies and many others (http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/m/a/c/Peter- H-Mackie-Berkshire/index.html). Richard Somerset Mackie has written a historical account of the Mackies up to the Maidenhead era, based in part on memoirs by Agnes and Joseph Millard Mackie but including much new research. The Filton, Compton Greenfields and Thornbury years are covered by Annis in her family chronicle, which was continued after her death for a few years by her daughter Chris. Annis also covers family doings on the Bennett side. Gladys Marshall has researched the Bennetts and their relatives, and has transcribed the diary of Annis's aunt Christiana Betty which goes back to 1824. Rosalie Jacobs, a descendant of James Mackie, is in the process of writing up the history of the Australian branch of the Mackie family along with that of her other forbears. She and Nils Hansen provided copies of portraits of James and his parents (Edward William and Amelia Mackie). Agnes Mackie also wrote accounts of the doings of James Mackie. Brian Cookson, a grandson of George E. Mackie, wrote a history of that branch of the family based chiefly on Annis's chronicles but containing supplementary information.

On my mother's side, Hugh Owen's book "Owen and Perrin Family History" (1981) traces the Owens back to their Irish origins in the eighteenth century. My grandmother Lizzie Owen was a Bartlett, a descendant of the sedentary and unwarlike Angevin King Henry III and his wife Eleanor of Provence. Closer to home, my mother wrote a memoir about her parents, chiefly about her interesting mother.

My account of the Vernon Mackies is based chiefly on my own letters and recollections but I have drawn extensively on notes provided by Richard Somerset Mackie, on letters and scrapbooks ("Trumpets") by my Aunt Chris, and on material in theBC Archives in Victoria and the Vernon Archives. Hugh Mackie wrote an account of his early years in Canada, and Austin did the same in articles in the school magazine and elsewhere. Jean Barman's "Growing up British in British Columbia: boys in private school" (U.B.C. Press, 1984) discusses VPS in the general context of private boarding schools in the Province. Dr Barman has also written several other valuable articles and book chapters covering the school and the philosophy behind it. Derrick Pethick and Dave Brock wrote light-hearted memoirs on the same subject. Lillian Hull worked at the school as a teenager during the polio epidemic of 1927 and wrote a vivid account of it, including the death of Roland Whittall by snake bite. She was Uncle Ben's sweetheart,but ended up marrying George Viel. Added to all this, I have benefited from discussions with Joan Heriot, Darrell Rye, Darg Bell-Irving, Felix Cherniavsky, Jamie Kidston, my brother Richard Ernest Mackie, and sundry others who knew the Vernon Mackies. I have compared notes with Christine Pilgrim, who provides guided tours around Lake House. Eliza Chesshire helped me on several points of Marle family history.

These are just some of the main sources of information. There must be many more I have forgotten. I am grateful to all those who helped me, not least the staff of the BC and Vernon archives, and experts I consulted regarding Edward William Mackie's military service: Lieut.-Col. R.J. Binks of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Mrs G. Brewer, Curator, Department of Uniforms, Badges and Medals at the National Army Museum, UK, and Martin Boswell, Curator, Personal Equipment and Flags at the Imperial War Museum, UK.

Gillian, Richard and Rachel Mackie, Patricia Hutchings, Cathy Richardson and Catherine Costigan read the text in whole or part during stages in its preparation and provided helpful comments and encouragement. Richard in particular has helped me enormously at all stages of the writing, in accessing sources and in countless other ways.