

THE BOY FROM THE VILLAGE

A TV series recently aired in the UK entitled 'The Village'. At first it did not raise my interest until I caught a glance of a church during an ad for the show, it looked very familiar. Then, when the centrepiece of the show, Haskins Grocery shop popped up it confirmed that "The Village" was Hayfield, a small village in Derbyshire where I was born and raised. Haskins was in fact Derbyshire's fruit shop owned by a very good friend of mine, I used to go to market with the owner Sam and was in the same class at school as his eldest son Barrie. Photo

Now thoroughly enthralled by the show I watched every episode, however, the main attraction for me was not the story line but the scenery. It was amazing to see many of my old haunts while sitting half a world away in 95f heat in South Australia. It was whilst reminiscing over a glass of wine with my wife Fran and my son Tim (after much prodding) I decided to write the true story of the boy from the village.

Here goes, to start an old local saying –

DERBYSHIRE BORNE, DERBYSHIRE BRED, STRONG IN THE ARM AND WEAK IN THE YEAD!

I was born in 1945 into the Warrington clan, a name that goes back to before the 1600 hundreds in Hayfield. My Grandmothers relatives [the Goddard's] were mainly farmers from the same area. However, my mother's side of the family, [the Flints] hailed from Manchester and had links to Forres in Scotland. I had a relatively stable upbringing, thanks to being lucky enough to have very caring friends and relatives. Prior to my arrival my mother worked "in service" for several years at the Royal Hotel and my father worked at the local Print Works after retiring from the Army.

The village is split by the river Sett, which flows from the Kinder Scout escarpment. Over the years it caused many floods but is now tamed by the reservoir which was built in 1912(photo). There were many tales of large trout being caught by my father and grandfather which is probably why one of my favourite pastimes is fishing. However, it has probably caused me more grief over the years than anything else.

As a young lad I would spend many hours "tickling" trout in "the cradle" which was a fishing hole close to my grandparent's house. They probably thought I would be safe there. Wrong – I can't recall the number of times I fell off the rocks into the cold, fast flowing water but I know I was always getting shouted at by my mother. The worst telling off was after I had just been given a new pair of school shoes. My mother threatened me with permanent grounding if I fell in again. Sure enough, after school I went down to the river and ended up skidding down the moss covered rocks into the water. Absolutely petrified I ran home so that I could dry off before she got back from work. The one thing that I got wrong was the cooking time for brand new black leather shoes. When I took them out of the oven they were all curly. Even worse, they broke in half when I tried to straighten them.

My father also got in trouble because of my fishing expeditions. On one occasion he took me to fish in a lake which supplied water to his works, as we squeezed past a large bush it sprang back and catapulted me into the water. Luckily he caught my arm and swung me back towards the bank, the only trouble was the concrete edging made

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a good job of shredding my knees. The next time he took me out I came back minus my front teeth! Dad thought that driving a dodgem car at the local fairground was less hazardous than fishing - wrong! This all pales into insignificance after I decided to torment him with a balloon. He was sat quietly cleaning his finger nails with his penknife when I started to bounce it off his head. After several warnings he decided to pop the balloon. My mistake was to try and kick it away from him. The next few minutes were pretty hectic with my mother once again having to clean up the mess. I sprayed blood all around the front room. Dad, god-bless-his-cotton-socks caught me and rushed me off to the doctors. I always remember him saying as we hobbled down the road. "Does it hurt? I said no, he said what are you crying for then?" Despite Dads efforts to write me off I made it and left school at fifteen.

Talking of school just reminded me of a couple of amusing incidents. In those days it was the in style for boys to grow a large quiff at the front of the head. One of my class mates grew the largest mop of jet black hair that I have ever seen. It was his pride and joy, until it was ripped out by a spinning wire brush. He lent to close to a rotating polisher in the school metal shop. I did fairly well at school but again was lucky to survive. I used to ride the three miles from Hayfield to New Mills School on my lovely racing bike. I thought it was great to race the school bus and wave at all my mates who were looking out of the back window. As usual being too clever catches up with you. I can still remember bouncing off the bonnet of the car which I hit after taking a bend a bit too fast. It was OK though, as it was my dad's boss's wife who was driving. As you can imagine she was really impressed!

My first job after leaving school was as a junior costing clerk with FERODO Ltd. My main recollection was that it was a bit boring apart from the time I was lucky enough to be delivering documents to someone in the brake lining test facility. Who should be there testing his brakes but the legendary Donald Campbell.

Next job was apprentice electrician, an absolute shocker in more ways than one! As one would expect as the junior member of the team I spent many hour crawling about in dirty wet places, running cables under floors in some of Stockport's older buildings. However, a couple of amusing incidents occurred. I can claim to have knocked out the power at Salford Police Station by shorting out the main fuse box. I spot welded a metal screwdriver to the box. I tried to electrocute myself by showing a mate that you could hold a live wire as long as you were well insulated. (I forgot to keep my elbow away from the water pipe!)

It was at this stage in my life that things really changed – a friend of mine joined the RAF and another, the Army. That made me aware that there was a bigger and more exciting world out there. However, I could not join either of those two services as I had to be different. The Royal Navy sounded good. I joined as an electrical mechanic at HMS Raleigh in the spring of 1961. I can remember it well; as I arrived at the main gate in a coach with several other new recruits I can still hear the trainees shouting "go back you must be mad". However, it wasn't that bad and after basic training I transferred to the Fleet Air Arm. Next stop Lee on Solent in Hampshire, for trade training and then off to Lossiemouth in Scotland to join my first squadron.

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736 Squadron was equipped with leaky old fighter bombers called the Scimitar.



It was very impressive when flying at low level but not good to work on. The squadron had a terrific team of pilots and the squadron took part in the Farnborough Air display. (I did not know it at the time but this is where my life took a turn for the worse). Although the flying display in itself was spectacular it was the practise at most air shows to inject dye to the aircraft exhausts to make coloured vapour trails across the sky. Besides working on the electronics of the aircraft I was detailed off to help mix the red dye before it was loaded into the aircraft. I found out later that this dye was a carcinogen which ended up giving me bladder cancer.

On returning to normal duties I got bored again and volunteered for Sea duties. That's how I ended up on the Ark Royal. This was my first taste of the real Navy (even sleeping in a hammock). We visited some very exotic ports and I even attended the independence celebrations of Zanzibar and witnessed the first ever deck landings of the P1127 (the Harrier jump jet prototype).



The giant tortoises on Prison Island were also very impressive!

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Next it was off to 831 Squadron at RAF Watton. Very different – an electronics counter measure squadron equipped with a variety of aircraft. This is where I got my first taste of flying, in the back seat of a Gannet - they always reminded me of a flying duck! However, I really enjoyed the dog fight with the little civilian plane over the fens of Norfolk. Next it was time for my first promotion, followed by various courses at RNAS Lee on Solent.

This was followed by a tour of duty with the Pilotless Target Aircraft Squadron at Portland.



We spent most of our time on frigates and cruisers that were undergoing sea trials and weapons training. It was our job to provide the targets for the ships missiles and big guns. This where I developed Tinnitus (constant ringing in my ears, which still torments me to this day) Serving with the PTA Unit gave me the chance to do my first exchange with another Navy. I visited South Africa and spent a period onboard the SAS President Kruger. An interesting time - especially when England won the World Cup, I watched the final in Cape Town with a group of Germans.

That year, 1966, I became a “G Man” in other words I reached the magic age of twenty one. This meant that I was entitled to a Tot of rum every day. Junior ratings were restricted to grog (one third rum and two thirds water) Later as a senior rating I was allowed “neaters” this was pure rum. The Tot was usually consumed at lunch time. “Up Spirits”, was a social tradition where much work was done and many favours paid for! Unfortunately the tot was not conducive to good practise in a very technical Navy. Eventually (31 July 1970) the Navy gave in to common sense and the great tradition was scrapped. I can still remember seeing grown men cry in the CPOs Mess at Culdrose. At lunch time the next day it was like walking into a Morgue!!

Whilst on Christmas leave back in Hayfield I had the misfortune to break my right leg. The local pub threw a party and locked the doors because it was a private affair. I arrived late and tried to gain entry over the high back wall but having already consumed a few beers I duly fell off! I’m not sure how I got home but I felt no pain. Until the next morning that is, when my mother came to my room to find out why I

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was still in bed. I explained what had happened and she lifted the bedding to take a look. Then my bones moved together and I got airborne. Later that day my friends rang to see where I was. My mother explained what had happened and said that I could not go down to the pub because I had just had a plaster put on and was not allowed to walk on it yet. Not to be deterred they arrived at the house about an hour later with a wheel barrow.

After Portland it was back to Lossiemouth and 736 Squadron. This time they had graduated to Buccaneer Aircraft, much more sophisticated than the old Scimitar. (photo). Our only claim to fame was bombing the Torry Canyon. An oil tanker that ran aground off the Scilly Isles. Once again I got bored and decided to volunteer for flying duties. My initial training was carried out at Portland in the rickety old Whirwind Mk 7. Luckily I survived and moved on to Commando aircrew training at Culdrose in Cornwall. Thankfully the Wessex Mk5 was a much more reliable aircraft.

My first front line squadron was 845 Sqn based onboard HMS Bulwark (The Rusty B). I flew out to Singapore to join the ship but unfortunately trouble flared in the Middle East and she left without me. As it was Christmas time and the season of goodwill, I managed to hitch a ride on a Royal Fleet Auxiliary and gave chase. The interesting thing for me was the way they celebrated New Years Eve on the RFA. We changed time zones but instead of putting the clocks back an hour at midnight the Captain only put the clock back fifteen minutes at a time, so we had four New Year toasts instead of one!

I was eventually put ashore at an RAF base at a strange place called Salalah. I was assured an aircraft from the ship would be in the next day to pick me up. They also said to ignore the flashing in the hills it was just gunfire from rebels, apparently the Sheik's brother was playing up. I eventually arrived safely on the Rusty B and spent the next eight months flying around the ocean, settling in to my new role as back seat aircrew. When we eventually got back to the UK I took part in several air displays including Farnborough. This time I was part of the flying team. I was also promoted to Petty Officer which was great but I was left devastated when my best friend Roy Keen, was killed in a car crash whilst going to meet his girlfriend at Truro station.

My next overseas deployment on Bulwark was more demanding, lots of exercises and many visits. Including Venice and various places along the Riviera. At Villefranche Princess Grace and Prince Rainier came on board with their family (photo). We even had a TV Documentary crew onboard to film Captain R.N. On a dramatic note; on 17 May 1969 whilst load lifting off Cyprus our aircraft lost power coming in to land with a trailer underslung. We made a crash landing on the flight deck and during the ensuing ground resonance, the undercarriage collapsed. The aircraft rolled onto its port side and the main gear box broke loose. The main rotor blades came off chopping through the cockpit. Tragically a young sailor on deck was killed and another seriously injured. Luckily despite the aircraft being a total wreck the pilot and I were only slightly injured. (photo)

On returning to the UK I joined 846 Sqn, a trials squadron based at Culdrose. It was there that I became a married man. I met the love of my life, Fran while she was serving in the Wrens. We started our married life in a tiny cottage in Porthleven, a small fishing village on the South Coast. We then spent the next few years happily

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living in Cornwall. Unfortunately Fran suffered a miscarriage whilst in Perranuthnoe. However, it wasn't long before Alex appeared. He was born at Bolitho hospital in Penzance. "Don't just stand there, grab a leg" was the midwife's call to me as I stood gawping at Fran, who was in agony.

The next couple of years were spent doing general flying duties with an emphasis on tactics and trialling various pieces of new equipment. One particular event sticks in my mind - we were practising fighter evasion techniques in a low level flying area when we hit a set of High Voltage power lines. The result was half of Cornwall put out of power. The aircraft was not badly damaged but the rotor blades were spot welded and shreds of wire punctured the fuselage in several places. To be on the safe side we made an emergency landing in a field (which just happened to be next to the village pub). At the time the pilot and I were both trying to stop smoking and we had a standing bet on who would give up first. When the curious landlord ran out to see what all the commotion was; he asked "can I do anything, do you want anything?" The immediate response from Jack was "yes mate, can we have two beers and forty fags!!"

Part of our continual training was to practise winching. We carried out dummy rescues on each other on a regular basis. Most of the time things went well and sorties were uneventful. However, the potential for excitement was always there. One of these was my encounter with a Large Shark. The normal procedure was to lower the crewman into the water, then slowly trawl him towards the body. On this occasion everything went well until the last few yards, then the aircraft suddenly changed course and climbed. When I looked up at the winch operator he was pointing to an object some distance away. This turned out to be a huge fin slicing through the water towards me. More worrying was the second fin over twenty feet behind the first, because they both belonged to the same shark! Instead of winching me back up the aircraft moved over the top of the shark and they started to lower me. At that stage I began to feel very sorry for all the fish that I had caught and cooked. After skimming over its gaping mouth I realised it was a relatively harmless basking shark. They are very much like whales and swim around with their huge mouths wide open catching small fish and plankton. When I eventually got back into the aircraft the crewman looked very worried and took cover. On landing he said he never meant to put me on its back but it would have been alright, as basking sharks don't bite. My reply was "No but with a mouth that big it could have given me one hell of a kiss"

The next event was fairly mundane: I was to act as the body for a wet winching exercise so I dutifully jumped into the water about 3 miles off Looe Bar. Luckily as it was very cold and rough so I was wearing a divers dry suit. After several successful pick ups I went in again and watched as the aircraft circled above. This time however, it climbed up high and turned away. The pilot had decided to give an Ops normal radio call to Culdrose tower to let them know we were OK. However, one of the golden rules in search and rescue is that you never take your eye off the body. I knew something was wrong when the aircraft descended but turned away. Each time it turned back I dropped into a trough in the waves and the crew could not see me. I really began to worry when my suit began to leak and the aircraft climbed again. This time they were calling out the duty Search and Rescue Team from Culdrose. As luck would have it they saw me just as they turned back towards the coast. After that no one was allowed in the water without a burning marker marine alongside them.

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Next the whole squadron relocated to RNAS Yeovilton and we took on a more specialised training role, mainly helicopter tactics and weaponry. We spent much time at the ranges at Castlemartin in Wales and took part in various air-shows around the country. I also had two 3 month long tours with the DNR Helicopter Display team. We put on flying displays at many schools and county shows including the Hayfield May Queen Festival, which was held in my home town of Hayfield. It was great to meet many old friends and [especially] my parents. (Photos) Although employed on flying duties as Commando Aircrew I was still classified as a Petty Officer Radio Electrical Mechanic and to gain promotion I had to qualify in that trade. So off I went on a nine months electronics course at RNAS Daedalus at Lee on Solent. During that time I eventually managed to stop smoking.

On completion of my course I joined 848 Squadron and returned to Yeovilton. However, my mother ship was still the "Rusty B". When we embarked this time we deployed for a cruise around the West Indies with a company of Dutch Marines on board. I also spent a few days on my old ship the Ark Royal and RFA Engadine. It was supposed to be a quiet, trip but it was marred by severe storms off the Azores and a disgruntled sailor setting fire to the ship. Apparently his girlfriend sent him a "Dear John" letter so he disconnected the fuel lines on several generators and lit the escaping fuel. Luckily he was caught and the fires extinguished. "The Rusty B" limped back to Portsmouth and I got promoted to CPO.

Next it was time to relax a bit and join a second line squadron. So off I went to 707 Sqn as Chief Aircrewman. It was indeed more relaxing and a time to celebrate. Tim our second son arrived on 29/12/1974. This time Fran new the system and was more relaxed, however, in the UK you should not call nurses Massamboola. I must confess it was my fault, while Fran lay in pain I tried to make light of things and I remarked that her nurse looked like the huge black female wrestler Massamboola. Later when Fran needed assistance she started calling for nurse Massamboola. Needless to say the nurse was not impressed! Tim - it was your fault!!

Whilst on 707 Sqn I met some very interesting people including Prince Charles. He arrived with his security team and set up office just across the corridor from mine. The Red Dragon Flight, as it was known, had a dedicated team to look after his flying training and although he attended daily briefings he tended to keep a fairly low profile. One of the few exchanges I had with him was amusing. All aircrew were given an allowance for refreshments every time we flew. It was just a small amount which bought victuals etc for the coffee boat. I asked him if he wanted his nutty allowance, as we called it, he fell about laughing and said "are you trying to poison me?" I actually felt sorry for him. The press were continually chasing him. On one occasion he was accused of running riot and partying all night. The truth of the matter was that the weather turned nasty and we were unable to fly that night. The squadron took advantage of the bad weather and we all went for a pint at the local pub. Next day the newspaper headlines were "Charlie hits town, drinking and chasing the girls".

After two years teaching it was again time to move on and get some more promotion. I reached a reasonable position as a rating so now it was time for officer selection. After a short educational course at HMS Nelson in Portsmouth it was off to the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, then Greenwich College. After a

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demanding Naval Officers Training course I popped out as a brand new Sub Lieutenant SD (X) (AV). Because of my background I was employed in various aviation roles, from Air Ops to Survival Officer to Aircraft Handling Officer and Flight Deck Officer.

It was whilst in the Ops role that I once again served in my old ship the “Rusty B”. One day whilst carrying out rounds with the Captain he said “Vic you know this ship very well”! My reply was well, after living in her for over six years I should do.

After visiting various European ports we crossed the Pond (Atlantic) and during a longer than usual visit to Mayport I took leave. Fran and the boys joined me for a holiday in Florida and we all had a great time at Disneyland. However, Fran did not enjoy the giant Palm Meadow Bugs that set up home in our caravan! We also managed a very interesting trip to Cape Kennedy, I then rejoined the ship, and after a few exercises the ship moved on to Philadelphia. I visited the Pocono Mountains and whilst I was away, the ship caught fire alongside in the docks. This time the damage was much more extensive and B boiler room was destroyed. The ship limped back to Portsmouth and was the end of my time on the “Rusty B”.

I then went back to my old stomping ground (Culdrose) and another addition to the Warrington clan appeared. Joanna, our daughter was born at Truro Hospital on 14/9/1981. After the next four more years at Culdrose, first at the School of Aircraft Handling then a tour as Survival Officer. My life dramatically changed again. I was dispatched to Royal Fleet Auxiliary Fort Grange to act as the Aviation Officer. It was there that I was diagnosed with transitional cell carcinoma. It means that something nasty is about to happen, but not just yet. It had started with a strange feeling when passing water and I found blood in my urine. Although the immediate problem was fixed with laser treatment it was the start of lots of nasty tests that would go on for years. Later it would develop into full blown cancer.

Bad things normally happen in threes and next it was the Falklands War. I was dispatched to join RFA Reliant and spent the next five months sailing round and round the Falklands. Although hostilities had stopped we were still on high alert and as a result of flying in terrible weather one of our Sea King helicopters had a mid air collision with a Hercules aircraft. Sadly all four of the Sea King crew were killed. The only pleasant memory of that time was the fishing expedition I managed to organise for a small group to the Yarra River on West Falkland. The fishing was superb but we had to keep a good look out for the land mines! (photos)

After a short stint back at Culdrose I joined HMS Illustrious as the Flight Deck Officer. This was a challenging but very rewarding position. One of my more pleasant memories was admiring the Northern Lights of Norway during night flying. However, one of the scariest was hearing a plaintiff cry over the radio. When I ran to investigate I saw the aft lift going down with a Sea King helicopter half on and half off the lift. It was being towed when the lift went down uncommanded. As the edge of the lift began to cut into the belly of the aircraft I had visions of the aircraft with burst fuel tanks dropping into the hangar below. Luckily the tow bar on the tail of the aircraft held firm and the aircraft came to a stop balanced on its tail. (photos) I called Flyco and told him to drop the fire curtains and sound the crash alarm. He managed to divert our four airbourne Harrier Jets to a shore base but the Sea King helicopters had to be refuelled at the front of the deck and relaunched. I can still remember the Captain as

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cool as a cucumber walking up from behind me and saying “What are you going to do about that then Vic” We hooked the large emergency crane onto the front of the aircraft to hold it steady and then slowly raised the lift. Luckily everything held together and we managed to get the aircraft back on the flight deck without the main fuel tanks rupturing.

Later the ship was programmed to go on what was touted as a round the world cruise, aiming to end up in Australia to celebrate the Australian Navy’s 75th anniversary. We duly sailed from Portsmouth with the squadrons embarked but once again my jinx appeared. The ships engine room exploded just as we passed the Isle of Wight. We launched all our aircraft and the engineers did a great job of fighting the fire and saved the ship. We limped back into port and spent the next few months repairing the damage. On the ships notice board the ‘Round the World’ promotional brochure had been altered to read ‘Round the Isle of Wight’. Still, with great effort and determination the ship eventually sailed to Australia and we made it for the anniversary. Photo Calling in at Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Fremantle and a few other places on the way back.

After leaving the Illustrious it was another promotion to Lt /Cdr then off to America for two years. I took up exchange duties with the American Navy at the US Navy Aviation Safety Centre in Norfolk, Virginia). The good thing about this job was the terrific amount of travel involved. I probably saw more of America than most Americans. The other great thing about it was that Fran and Joanna accompanied me and they were able to travel with me on many occasions. Unfortunately, Alex and Tim were still at boarding school in Truro but they were still able to join us during all their main school holidays. Joanna was six at the time and attended Point of View School in Virginia Beach, where we lived.

Fran enjoyed America very much. In fact she refers to her time there as being some of the best in her life. We were lucky enough to have great neighbours and I still communicate with them to this day. One in particular, ‘Perry’ had a wicked sense of humour and was always out to have a laugh. Trouble was that he liked to dish it out but could not take it!! One particular example is when he posted wanted posters of Fran all around the neighbourhood. She was not impressed and we plotted to get him back. Fate handed us a great opportunity when Perry had a swimming pool installed. Shortly after it was filled with water for the first time I got one of my work colleges to ring Perry and claim to be from the local council. To cut a long story short he told Perry that there had been an error in the building approval. The pool was too close to the house and would have to be moved. Perry was devastated, “the mans an idiot” he shouted “how could he possibly move a swimming pool”!! We played along with the deception but that evening whilst he was preparing to take on the Council Officials the next day, he caught Fran and I smiling!!

Although the Americans almost speak English, language could still be a problem at times. One example was when we were leaving our first hotel. As we paid the bill the receptionist asked Fran if she had enjoyed the stay. Innocently Fran said yes, but I didn’t like being knocked up every morning! She meant that she had been woken up each time I received my early morning call. Another example was Joanna being told off at school when she asked for a rubber instead of an eraser! Fran was lucky not to be arrested after giving the finger to a traffic cop. We were returning a friends car and

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she thought I was behind her tooting the horn. However, it was a policeman and he did not like “the bird”.

Some of the places we visited during our time in America included; Hawaii, Pensacola, California, San Francisco, Florida, Washington State, Washington DC, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Dallas, Michigan, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Sault Ste Marie and Pensacola. I also attended the Safe Convention in Las Vegas and had lunch with Chuck Yeager (the first person to break the sound barrier). We also managed another trip to Disneyland, this time with Joanna, she had a ball! Tim also enjoyed our expeditions. On one occasion whilst passing Sault Ste Marie Tim collected small bottles of water from the Great Lakes, so that he could sell it to his mates back at school in the UK! Our home was very nice and ideal for entertaining. The hot tub and pool got plenty of use and the lake just across the road was very handy. We bought a speed boat and it did not take long for the kids to learn how to water ski. We did not know it at the time but this was ideal training for when we eventually moved to Australia. The only worry was the snakes, Water Moccasins were everywhere.

All good things come to an end and we had to return to reality in the UK. My next posting was as Head of Life Support Systems in the MOD Aviation Executive at RNAS Yeovilton. Unfortunately this was a great come down after America, our married quarters were due upgrading and the area we lived in was not the best in the world. Luckily just after returning from America we had a family reunion. I brought my parents down from Derbyshire and Sandra came with her family. Sadly it would be our last one as my mother died on 23 April 1991. It was probably the combination of all the above that finally made our decision to immigrate to Australia that much easier. I handed in my resignation and retired from the Navy after 32 years service.

We arrived in South Australia on 10 March 1993 and moved into a nice little cottage. It was close to the beach and all the facilities at the sea side town of Glenelg, yet only a short tram ride to Adelaide city centre. I took up the role of Marketing Director and invested some money in a company called the Australian Scandinavian Trade Centre, which was a huge mistake! It wasn't long before ASTC went bust and I was out of a job. Luckily due to my time at the US Safety centre I was able to find work as a Safety Consultant with Rust PPK.

Typically, just as things were looking up I was hit by the third whammy! My cancer fully developed and I was rushed into hospital to have my bladder removed, along with my prostate, urethra, some intestine and a few other bits and pieces. After 11 hours of surgery and a couple of weeks at the Flinders Medical Centre I managed to escape (as a much lighter person). While all this was going on Fran was holding the fort but she was very stressed and needed support. Enter Joy, without hesitation Fran's Mam dropped everything and flew over from the UK. She was a great help in our hour of need and a most welcome mother-in-law. One of my fondest memories of Joy was; shortly after getting out of hospital we all went off for a well deserved break. We drove to Wilpena Pound which is in the outback near Arkaroola, in the Flinders Ranges. To say the area is a wilderness is grossly understating it. However, the scenery is stunning and the wildlife amazing. The road has the longest straight in the world and goes past Woomera (the nuclear test site). We eventually stopped at a road house for fuel and the loo, when all of a sudden the silence was broken by a piano. Joy had travelled halfway around the world to a pub in the dessert to find a piano!!

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The locals were over the moon!! Mind you, in places the landscape looks a bit like the moon. On later trips to Wilpena Joanna went on a horse adventure with an aboriginal trekker and Timothy nearly trod on a deadly brown snake.

We had a very relaxing time in Wilpena and on returning to civilisation I had recovered enough to start looking for a job. Whilst browsing job ads I noticed one for a security officer at the British Consulate General's Office in Melbourne. Being ex British military I thought I might stand a chance, so I applied. I was very surprised to receive a call from the office shortly after sending in my CV. Sorry but the position has been filled, was the message but hold on, we have reviewed your history and we are in need of a Trade Promotion Manager in Melbourne, would you be interested? When I recovered from the shock I jumped at the offer and took the first aeroplane to Melbourne. My only problem was my attending an interview so close to my surgery and getting used to having a plastic bag as a toilet. Luckily the bag did not burst and I gave all the right answers.

My colleagues at the Consulate General were all very nice and I found the job rewarding. It called for a good deal of travel which suited me. My varied employment background gave me the required knowledge to work well with both British and Australian business leaders. I could relate to many of their problems. One of my responsibilities was visiting trade shows both in Australia and the UK so I was still able to visit my father in Hayfield until he died on 13/4/1994. During my fifteen months in Melbourne the family were still living in South Australia and I had to commute 800kms. Luckily I had to travel to SA quite often on business and on occasion Fran drove to Melbourne. Which helped, apart from the time she got three speeding fines in a row!!

Because of my previous experience I was made the Lead Officer for Aviation. This gave me the opportunity to visit the Farnborough air show once again. Whilst there, I encouraged British companies to get involved with the Australian equivalent; the Avalon Air show. We held various functions and supported them with our British stand at the show. Two amusing incidents spring to mind. When Jeff Kennett the Victorian Premier visited, I asked him how he was, his reply was "I'm so well it's disgusting!" and when I shook hands with Bronwyn Bishop, a federal senior politician she grimaced and went YUK! I thought she did not like me but I had allowed my hand to get sweaty in the forty degree heat!

South Australia was founded in 1836 when the first Governor landed in Glenelg aboard HMS Buffalo. The British were by far the largest group of immigrants to South Australia, in particular during the 1950s and 60s when the "Ten Pound Poms" came across in droves to work in the developing car industry. In those days there was a fairly large consulate in Adelaide but when the recession began to bite in the 1980s it was closed. I was continually writing reports extolling the virtues of South Australia and the trading opportunities that still existed. I think the High commissioner eventually became fed up with my raving about SA, because in 1995 he called me to say that he had found a pot of gold and asked me if I would like to re-open the office and take on the role of Consul to South Australia. The answer was obviously yes.

We reopened the Consulate in September 1995 and I moved back to Adelaide. The SA Government was very supportive and I immediately started to re-establish old ties

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with Industry and government bodies. All was not plain sailing, however, and the very fact that we were a stand-alone office meant that the public expected us to perform the same duties as larger Posts (with only two staff). As a result we had to be infinitely flexible and deal with enquiries quickly, be they consular or trade.

On the representational front; I started by attending every event/function I was invited to (acting on the then High Commissioners advice). However, after wearing myself to a frazzle and putting on many extra kilos I became much more selective. INFORM 97 and Encounter 2002 were two very large promotional events that took up much of my time. The Royal Adelaide show and Adelaide Festival were other examples of non core work that we got involved with. We also supported the British Council and Visit Britain. Besides trade missions we entertained a Parliamentary Sub Committee, the Lord Mayor of London and other VIP's. Although rewarding, preparation took lot of time and they could be a pain, especially when the so called VIPs sometimes got out of control. One such incident occurred when the speaker of the House of Commons arrived with a group of British MPs on a fact finding tour. Unfortunately the lone Conservative did not get on with the Labour group and I had to break up the ensuing Melee at a meeting with the SA Transport Minister. They then descended on the Grande Hotel at Glenelg where the same unfortunate MP was robbed!

On the consular side we issued Visa/Passport forms and the odd emergency passport. When Debbie, my PA left to have a baby Fran took over the day to day running of the office and looked after the majority of general enquiries. This included maintaining the diary, arranging appointments, dealing with visitors and answering queries. In addition, being the initial point of contact for wayward Brits - from deaths of British Nationals to looking after holidaymakers in strife. Fran also devoted about 50% of her time to commercial work. In addition we were continually bombarded with enquiries from people wanting to put the world to rights. That's why I started the "nutters file" Even though we had security guards we still had aggressive and abusive callers. One group even wanted to bring a cow up the twenty two floors to our office. Another hid in the loo and removed tiles from the next office ceiling trying to gain access to our office. Luckily he was disturbed and did not have chance to use the can of fuel he left behind.

I developed close links with the South Australian Department of Trade and Economic Development, the Australian British Chamber of Commerce and the South Australian Major Events Committee. As South Australia contains the lion's share of the country's defence industry companies there was also a great deal of liaison with the UK Defence Sales Organisation. I occasionally toured the UK to brief British companies on opportunities in South Australia. As a result more now come to Adelaide. Initially it was difficult to get them to look further than the bright lights of Sydney or Melbourne. The UK and SA now have a much healthier trade relationship.

When the High Commissioner opened our new office he was surprised to learn that South Australia was the only State in Australia to have a positive trade Balance with the UK. His reaction was, "Well Vic, now that you have your new office you had better do something about that". Of course, the reason that SA does so well in the UK is due to the great success of South Australian wine. The Brits just love it. I tried my best to redress the situation but it was very difficult. I even opened a British Themed

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pub called the 'Elephant and Wheel borrow' and encouraged people to drink as much British beer as possible.

During one of the HCs visits we held a luncheon for various organisations with British connections. Many of the guests were getting on a bit and when Fran and I entered the room they thought we were the High Commissioner and his Good Lady. All the old folk immediately staggered up clutching their Zimmer frames. We explained who we were and then felt really guilty when they all had to go through it again. At the same function Fran and I became separated and while speaking to an old lady I said that I had lost my wife. She must have thought that Fran had passed away; taking great pity on me saying "You poor boy you must be devastated, please sit down, I will look after you".

Several other amusing incidents that occurred at official functions also spring to mind. At one, Dame Roma Mitchell [the guest of honour] forgot all about it and failed to appear. When I called her she was horrified and said, "keep them entertained, I will pop on a frock and be there in a minute". Good to her word she roared through the door a few minutes later and gave the best speech I had heard in a long time!! Not to be outdone, Fran starred when she fired a roast potato off her plate at the new Governor. Then at a Royal Tattoo being held outdoors in a rainy Glenelg she lost her shoe in the mud. Then, the umbrella she was sheltering under gave way and she was drenched. Trying to brush the water off she ended up ripping her tights. Needless to say we had to make an emergency exit!!

While attending a dinner at the Town Hall Fran took off her brand new evening jacket and draped it over her chair. Later after dancing the night away she found it with the price tag and great big sale sign in full view. It was a requirement at Government House for guests to wear name tags at large functions. During our first official visit (and being a stickler for protocol), Fran chastised a gentleman for not wearing his name tag. "You naughty boy" she said, poking him in the chest, 'you should have a tag on"! Sir Eric - the Governor, never forgot Fran!!

It gets even worse! After another function, Fran and I were leaving to go home and became separated. After wandering the streets for a while, resplendent in her evening dress she thought discretion was the better part of valour and called a cab. The foreign cabbie whisked her back to Glengowrie. Unfortunately Fran did not have anyway of paying. It was a most unglamorous end to a splendid night out, I got home to find Fran hanging upside down in a split silver dress trying to climb over our back fence.

All good things must come to an end and eventually the British Government once again began to cut the world wide foreign budget. As a result the Adelaide Consulate was closed and Fran and I retired!! We celebrated by taking a well deserved holiday, visiting many of our old haunts in the USA and the UK. We also visited Vancouver and caught up with my old school friend Roy Bowden who had immigrated to Canada. We then took off in our Caravan and visited much of SA and QLD before settling in Mundoolun for a while. Next it was Hervey Bay, then the SA bug kicked in again and we moved back to Mount Barker in SA, where we still live! Fran says that's it!!!!