Born in 1926, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, GBE grew up in a Liberal family in North Wales. Wartime service in the RAF led to study of Law at Cambridge and he was called to the Bar at Middle Temple in 1952. His long and distinguished legal career encompassed a diverse practice as barrister and silk before becoming a High Court judge in 1978. He was married to Lady Sarah Waterhouse and had three children. He died shortly after completing this memoir in 2011 at the age of 85.

CHILD OF ANOTHER CENTURY

Recollections of a High Court Judge

RONALD WATERHOUSE

THE RADCLIFFE PRESS
LONDON • NEW YORK

For Sarah, Thomas, Sophie and Laura,
the most important of all

Published in 2013 by The Ratcliffe Press
An imprint of I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

Copyright © 2013 the Estate of Ronald Waterhouse

The right of Ronald Waterhouse to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by the Estate of Ronald Waterhouse in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978 1 78076 499 3

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Typeset by JCS Publishing Services Ltd, www.jcs-publishing.co.uk
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations vii
Preface ix

1 Roots 1
2 Background 8
3 Beginnings 14
4 County Schoolboy 19
5 Bird without Wings 31
6 Cambridge Proper 45
7 Apprentice Barrister 59
8 The Welsh Bar in the 1950s 70
9 Barrister's Devil 84
10 Spreading my Wings 99
11 Settling Down 110
12 Some Notable Trials in the 1960s 124
13 In the Front Row 140
14 The Perils of Libel Litigation 151
15 Forays to Singapore 166
16 Some Public Diversions 182
17 Farewell to the Bar 191
18 Judicial Springtime 203
19 Presiding Judge for Wales and Cheshire 218
20 Soldiering on in the Family Division 233
21 Queen's Bench Judge 245
22 Family Events and More Extra-judicial Activity 261
23 Middle Temple Treasurer 268

24 Winding up to the North Wales Tribunal 276
25 Winding Down 287

Index 299

ILLUSTRATIONS

1 Portrait of the author, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, in evening dress, wearing the insignia of the honour of Knight Grand Cross of the British Empire (GBE)
2 The author in the garden of the Middle Temple in the year that he was Treasurer, 1995
3 The author in his robe as GBE at the service of dedication to the Order
4 Cambridge Union Society, Michaelmas term, 1950, when the author was president
5 Robin Day and Norman St John Stevas at the Oxford and Cambridge Union Boat Race
6 The author on his graduation day, 1951
7 Portrait of Sir William Mars-Jones wearing the clothes of a Queen's Counsel
8 Sarah Ingram, engagement picture, 1960
9 Wedding of the author and Sarah Ingram at the Temple Church, London on 16 July 1960
10 The author dressed as a Queen's Counsel on the day he took silk, 1969
11 At the baptism of Alexander Day, June 1974
12 The author as QC leading Leon Brittan in a libel case at Sheffield, 1976
13 The author at the House of Lords on the day he was sworn in as a High Court judge by the Lord Chancellor, 9 January 1978
14 The author with daughter Laura and Orlando in Regent's Park, early 1980s

15 The author as president of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod
16 The author at a holiday house in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, Provence, relaxing after a very busy summer, 1995
17 The author with his wife Sarah at Buckingham Palace to receive his GBE from the Prince of Wales, 17 April 2002
18 The author with Sarah at the Middle Temple Hall for a dinner in honour of Gavin Arthur, November 2002
19 Laura Waterhouse's wedding in May 2003
20 The countryside near the author's home in Herefordshire
21 The author in his garden in Herefordshire with daughter Sophie and their beloved Labrador, Benjy
22 Thomas Waterhouse in New York in the 1980s
23 The author's grandsons: David, James and Mark
24 Sophie Waterhouse in an olive grove in Rhodes, 1993
25 Sophie in Lindos, 1993
26 The author and Sarah in Herefordshire, early 2000s
27 Breakfast in Herefordshire in 2009 with the author, Laura and Andrew Shakeshaft
28 The author at one of his favourite restaurants in Venasque, in Provence, in October 2007

PREFACE

Unless one is an important person or a celebrity, there is no really acceptable excuse now for writing one's autobiography, still less for publishing it, and I fall far short of either requirement. Like most children, however, I failed to ask my parents a host of questions about their pasts and have lived on to regret the omission deeply. I began writing these memoirs, therefore, mainly for my wife and children and for anyone else in my family who cares to read them. It was convenient also to do so because I had accumulated throughout my life vast mounds of paper associated with my activities and there was a pressing need to reduce them drastically, a process that involved reliving my life rather self-indulgently anyway.

The result has emerged over many months and it has slowly dawned upon me that most of the institutions and patterns of existence that dominated my life have disappeared with the century that shaped me. I was reared in Nonconformist North Wales, attended a Welsh county (later grammar) school and went on to a male-dominated and largely segregated university. I chose the Bar as a profession when Assizes and Quarter Sessions still convened to administer justice in the shires and large cities, and they continued to do so for another 20 years. I joined the Wales and Chester Circuit, which only existed as such for just over 50 years, during almost the whole of which period I was a member, albeit in an honorary capacity latterly. Then, as a High Court judge, I sat all over England and Wales under the aegis of real Lord Chancellors, who were effective independent heads of the judiciary before the ill-thought-out changes under Tony Blair and before judicial work became bedevilled by artificial human rights issues and political (or at least quasi-political) decisions. It may, therefore, be of some historical interest to record a lawyer's life in the second half of the twentieth century in some detail.

One other aspect of my life is worth mentioning, namely, my extraordinary good fortune in knowing and becoming friends with truly outstanding individuals in every phase of my life. It began at school with my French teacher Sarah Grace Cooke, the Miss Moffat of Emlyn Williams' *The Corn is Green*. At Cambridge, there was the star of my generation, Percy Cradock, who became our ambassador to China and then adviser to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. It is invidious to name only a few of the many, but, when I was a Bar student there was Robin Day, who became a lifelong friend, and my exceptional mentor and pupil master Bill Mars-Jones, who never forgot his roots in Llansannan. There were other great figures in the University of Wales: Edmund Davies, Cledwyn Hughes, Elwyn Jones and Gareth Williams, as well as my friend from schooldays, Professor J. Gwynn Williams of Bangor, who became president of the National Library of Wales. Above all, perhaps, the brave and modest Tasker Watkins VC on the one hand and the charming polymath Solly Zuckerman OM on the other. They have enriched my life and I would like to play a part in keeping memories of them alive.

The reader will not find much bitterness or character assassination in these pages, even though most of my contemporaries are now dead. I regret to say that I am now as grumpy as most old men about the twenty-first-century scene, but life has been exceptionally kind to me and I am deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed to that, most especially my dear wife and children, to whom this book is dedicated.

1

ROOTS

I was born in a large redbrick house overlooking the river Dee estuary to Liverpool and beyond on 8 May 1926, in the middle of the General Strike. That date in the year was to assume much greater significance 19 years later when it became VE Day, but on my birthday *The Times* newspaper (price two pence) was limited to a mere four pages because of the strike, and its main report was of a speech by Sir John Simon to the House of Commons denouncing the strike as illegal. As for the view, which extended to Blackpool Tower on the brightest days, it suffused the first 18 years of my life and probably induced in me, at least temporarily, a rather exaggerated idea of my place in the world.

The house, called Highfield, was a mile or so east of the town of Holywell in Flintshire, on the main highway from Chester into North Wales. Holywell then, like Flintshire, was a rather uneasy amalgam of English and Welsh, urban and rural. It was said to be in decline in my time because earlier, by the end of the seventeenth century, it had been the largest town in north-east Wales. Much of its importance was attributable to St Winifred's Well, a Roman Catholic shrine and focus of pilgrimage, and Basingwerk Abbey, dating from the twelfth century, which was responsible for the well and various mills, malt-houses, markets and fairs under royal charter. From those beginnings, large-scale development followed in the eighteenth century in the course of the Industrial Revolution, making use of the considerable volume of water draining from limestone hills above and to the south of Holywell. Thus, by the end of that century, copperworking factories and cotton mills were firmly established in the Greenfield valley, immediately below Holywell, as well as lead mines in the higher surrounding area. The later decline was evidenced by census figures of 13,342 in 1851, compared with 9,809 in 1911.

My own family presence in Holywell dated from 1874, the year in which my paternal grandfather, Thomas Holmes Waterhouse, a Yorkshireman, was appointed secretary of the Welsh Flannel Manufacturing Company, which was formed that year by Urias Bromley, who had the necessary technical knowledge, and William Brown, of the well-known department store Browns of Chester (now owned by Debenhams). The new company with Bromley as manager operated two mills, the Crescent (or Lower) Mill, a former cotton mill, and the Upper Mill spinning and weaving flannel, which were operations that had been carried on there by earlier owners for about a quarter of a century and provided about 200 jobs, some of the workers being housed opposite the factory in a terrace called 'the barracks'. The six-storey Upper Mill was destroyed by fire in 1883 but it was replaced the following year by a three-storey mill; the factory survived another fire in 1898, which necessitated further rebuilding.

My grandfather was only 26 years old when he became secretary of this company. He had been born in Bradford on 22 May 1848, one of seven children of another Thomas, born 40 years earlier, who became a bookseller and estate agent in Bradford after a period as a schoolmaster in Eccleshill, the suburb of Bradford in which he was born. Grandfather Thomas was brought up in Northgate, Bradford, near the Lord Nelson Inn, and was apprenticed as a wool stapler for four or five years before being employed (I know not in what role) in Chester for another five years. He remained secretary of the flannel manufacturing company at Holywell for 25 years until he succeeded Urias Bromley as manager, only three years before his untimely death from pneumonia on 23 February 1902, at the age of 53. His wife, my paternal grandmother, had already died in 1895; she was Eliza Sarah Sanders, who had been born in Totnes in Devon in 1846 and married my grandfather in March 1876, quite soon after his move to Holywell. Her death also was attributed to pneumonia, said to have been contributed to by rheumatic fever that she had contracted as a child when she fell into the river Dart.

The result of these early deaths was that my father, also named Thomas but always called Tom, the second of eight children of my grandparents, found himself responsible for six younger siblings, aged between 13 and 22, when he himself was just a month short of his twenty-fourth birthday. He had to shoulder this responsibility because his eldest brother, Sidney, then 25 years old, was already married to a Totnes cousin and committed to training for the Congregational ministry at Lancashire Independent College in Whalley Range, Manchester, having graduated from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. He was ordained in October 1903 and

remained in that ministry, latterly at Hemel Hempstead and then Rayleigh in Essex, until his retirement about 50 years later.

Faced with this daunting prospect, my father's first major decision was to bicycle the 17 miles to Chester to see the controlling shareholder of the flannel manufacturing company, Harry Brown, a son of the company's founder. My father's bold request was to be appointed manager forthwith in succession to his father, and it required extraordinary faith on Mr Brown's part to accede to this. My father had joined the company's staff after attending Oswestry High School for Boys (founded in 1407) as a weekly boarder with his brother Harold but his general experience was obviously very limited. Nevertheless, after taking a weekend to consider the matter, Mr Brown agreed to my father's request, with the result that my father remained with the company, latterly as chairman and managing director, for another 55 years until the company was sold.

Despite the difficulties facing them, my father's brothers and sisters were dispersed quite successfully. Harold, the third eldest, went to Bradford to join his uncle David, who had taken over the estate agency started by my great-grandfather in 1844 and which was continued by David under the name of David Waterhouse and Nephews at Britannia House, Bradford. Harold prospered there: he was a prominent Rotarian and Freemason and became Deputy Lord Mayor during the Second World War but he died, aged 67, on 10 July 1947.

My father's youngest sister, Minnie, born on 16 March 1886, went to Bradford with Harold. She was said to have been very artistic and vivacious and shortly before the First World War she married William (Billy) Ogden, the eldest son of the founder of Ogdens of Harrogate, jewellers and diamond merchants, who opened their first shop in that attractive Yorkshire spa in 1893 and a branch in Duke Street, St James's in London, at the end of that war. In 1925 Billy left the company to set up his own business in London, and later his charming and philanthropic son, my cousin Richard, established the highly successful jewellery business at 28 Burlington Arcade that bears his own name and continues to thrive. Richard died on 14 October 2005, leaving his eldest son Robert to run the business. Sadly, Minnie's marriage to Billy was unhappy, despite the birth of Richard and two attractive sisters, Lorna and Jean: Billy was said to be fond of rich living and fast cars and Minnie died tragically at my parents' home in 1922, aged only 36.

My father's other brothers and sisters, with the exception of Beatrice Maud (Bea), all survived into their eighties. Bea, who had a good contralto voice, as does her daughter Barbara, married a Wesleyan Methodist minister, Christopher Dawson, who became a missionary in India for several years.

They returned to the UK at the end of the First World War and lived for seven years in Holywell, where two sons, Robert and Peter, were born and Christopher, who had left the ministry, was employed as secretary of the Welsh Textile Manufacturers' Association. He then resumed his ministry, serving successively in the East Midlands, Portsmouth, Dorset and finally Portsmouth again. Bea died on 7 December 1948, shortly before her sixty-fourth birthday, and Christopher, who was a few months younger than her, survived her by only 15 months.

Ethel was the only sibling of my father to remain single. She was born on 17 November 1881 and eventually became a pastry cook, working as such for Kettles in Finchley Road, Hampstead. She lived in a flat in Mapesbury Road, Brondesbury, where I stayed with her for a time during my Royal Air Force (RAF) service, before she retired to Holywell to live with her brother Horace. The proprietor of Kettles may now be remembered only as the father of Professor Arnold Kettle, a lifelong communist, who was a member of the party's executive committee. Arnold was otherwise a distinguished literary critic and the first professor of literature at the Open University: my aunt greatly admired him despite (rather than because of) his political views.

My youngest paternal uncle was Edgar, who was orphaned at the age of only 13 years and went to live with his cousins in Totnes, later training as an electrical engineer at Bradford Technical College, apparently at the expense of his eldest brother, Sidney. He became a great friend of Billy Ogden and volunteered with him for army service on the day when the First World War began, being commissioned later in the Royal Army Service Corps and serving in Egypt. He was employed by GEC at Witton from 1936 and lived latterly at Sutton Coldfield with his unmarried daughter Joyce, after the death of his wife late in the Second World War; he himself died on 2 February 1973, aged 83.

Thus it was that my father and his brother Horace, who was born in 1884, were left to carry the Waterhouse flag in Holywell, and they remained prominent in town and county affairs for the next 60 years. Horace was young enough to be educated at the new Holywell County School, which opened in 1895, and he married a local girl, Gladys Hughes, who unhappily succumbed to dementia at quite an early age, possibly as the result of an accidental fall from a first-floor window when cleaning it. Horace's main business career was as manager of the Gwalia Shirt (Manufacturing) Company Limited in the Greenfield valley, but he was also a partner with my father in T. and H. Waterhouse, wool merchants, a firm that bought wool directly from farmers – one of only three such firms permitted to do

so in North Wales under the wool rationing scheme that operated during the Second World War. Major other interests in Horace's life were the English Congregational (Tabernacle) Church in Holywell and the Urban District Council. He was a deacon and secretary of that church, as well as superintendent of its Sunday school, for over 50 years: he served on the council for a similar period, for which service he received the MBE in 1958. In the end he outlived my father by nearly three years, dying on 22 April 1964 and bringing to an end the residence of Waterhouses in Holywell after 90 years.

I have included rather a lengthy account of my father's generation of the family because it gives an accurate picture of our modest social background and explains how a large and young alien family in North Wales coped when orphaned early in the twentieth century. My father himself remained a bachelor until 1915, living with Horace at Blodwen Villas, which became the latter's first matrimonial home, and being looked after by an admirable spinster, Mary Griffiths, always known to us children as Auntie Griff, who remained a family friend throughout her life. Tom led a very busy life. He was a good sportsman, played hockey for North Wales in 1899 and was selected as a reserve for Wales against Ireland. He played golf quite competently, using enviable wooden clubs with exotic names such as mashie niblick, and he had a handicap of 14 when captain of the local golf club. In the woollen mill he saw through major modernisation before the First World War and, like his own father, was very active as a deacon of the Tabernacle Church and as a member of the Holywell Urban District Council. A postcard printed in 1910 shows my father in May of that year reading, as chairman of the council, the proclamation of the succession of King George V, following a formal procession in which the flannel mills band took part.

My father's bachelordom ended at the late age of 37 when he married my mother, Doris Helena Gough, on 4 September 1915 at Olton Parish Church, Solihull. They had met two years earlier when Billy and Minnie Ogden had taken Tom on a cruise to the Canary Islands, on which William and Ellen Gough, my maternal grandparents, had taken their daughter. It was an unlikely match because Tom was over twice her age when they met but it proved to be very successful, lasting 46 years: Doris was an exemplary wife and mother who lived on for 32 years after my father's death, dying at the age of 97 in London on 17 December 1993.

The Goughs were based in Birmingham because William Gough had become joint managing director of the largest department store there, known then as Newbury's Limited of Old Square, later Lewis's, and subsequently the site of Birmingham County Court. He was employed by

Newbury's for 36 years from 1886 and became a director in 1903. He had been born on 24 September 1864 at Bishop's Castle in Shropshire, the son of a builder, Thomas Gough, who built the church there, and Mary Ann, née Cole, formerly of Abergavenny. He left school at 16 and worked first for ironwork manufacturers in Birmingham for five years before visiting Australia in 1885 and working for short periods in Brisbane and Sydney. He married my grandmother, Ellen (Nell) Sylvester, on 8 July 1890, and my mother was brought up in a large comfortable house known as Ivy Lodge in St Bernard's Road, Olton. She had an elder brother Harold, born on 16 October 1891, and a younger sister Lorna, born on a 9 June 1902, who was a talented pianist but who died all too young of acute pulmonary tuberculosis on 10 September 1921, just a couple of months after her father retired. William was a very cultivated man who ran a book club for himself and his friends and whose own library included complete editions of most of the major novelists of his era. Ill-health brought about his retirement and he died in the same year as Lorna, shortly after her.

My mother's brother Harold was a familiar and popular member of our family, whom we saw at least annually during our summer holidays with my maternal grandmother, who lived as a widow at 9 Elgin Road, Sutton in Surrey, with her older spinster sister, Mary, quite close to Harold and his wife and son. Harold joined the Royal Horse Artillery as a member of the Territorial Army as early as 1908 and he was commissioned in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in December 1914. He was awarded the Military Cross as a lieutenant on 6 September 1916 for his courage in leading patrols behind the enemy lines on the Western Front (the award had been established only eight months earlier, on 28 December 1915). Most of his working life after the war was spent with British Celanese at their head office in Hanover Square and I did not envy his daily commute between his nearest underground station at Morden and Oxford Circus. He and his wife May (Dixon) provided a very warm and comfortable haven for me at Sutton during numerous weekends while I was serving in the RAF. Like his father, Harold's main diversion was in books and he used *The Times* Book Club in Wigmore Street to supplement his own extensive library. His wife belonged to a large family; one brother, Bert, was a housemaster and mathematics teacher at Dulwich College as well as being an Anglican priest; another brother, Jack, was for many years headmaster of King's College School, Wimbledon.

The Goughs were quite a talented family. William's brother Tom was a noted headmaster of Retford Grammar School and his daughters were accomplished musicians. Muriel, whose obituary in *The Times* was written

by the respected writer on music Professor E.J. Dent, was a leading figure in the Old Vic opera company in the 1920s. Before the First World War she was a member of the Court Opera at Weimar, where she sang light soprano parts in all the standard operas. At the Old Vic she was a leader in the Mozart revival, appearing as Susanna, the Queen of the Night and Zerlina among many roles, and Professor Dent described her as 'the most trusted adviser' of theatrical producer Lilian Baylis on operatic affairs. She retired soon after the opening of Sadler's Wells in 1921 but remained a governor of the theatre for many years. Her sister Helen, with whom she lived in London, was a violinist who played with the Queen's Hall Orchestra.

The transition from Birmingham to Holywell in wartime must have been quite a shock for my mother but she never mentioned this to her children, as far as I am aware. She was barely out of school, having been educated conventionally and well at the Anglican Convent in Olton, and her background was essentially conservative, quite sophisticated and metropolitan. Nevertheless, she seems to have settled down quickly to a very different way of life in the newly built house (Highfield) that was to be her home for nearly 50 years.

I should interpose here that my father was already 36 years old when war was declared in 1914 and thus beyond the normal call-up age for military service. More importantly, he was in a reserved occupation as the manager of a factory that produced army uniforms throughout the war. He did, however, enrol as a volunteer under the 'Derby scheme' initiated by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith in May 1915 with Lord Edward Derby as Director-General of Recruitment. This scheme encouraged men to register voluntarily on the basis that, once they had done so, they would be called up for service only when necessary. In the event, the scheme was short lived because of the scale of losses on the Western Front, and Lloyd George introduced military conscription to replace it in January 1916.

My father and mother started a family with the birth of my brother Stuart on 30 April 1918. There followed, in almost arithmetic progression, Thomas in September 1920, Neil on 19 March 1923, myself on 8 May 1926 and, at last, a daughter Sylvia (now known mostly as Sally) on 5 August 1928. Sadly, Thomas died on 15 February 1923 of an internal complaint that would now be regarded as remediable and my mother had the very great misfortune of losing a son, her father and her sister, all within the space of 18 months.

2

BACKGROUND

Although the tentacles of my extended family were eventually spread quite far and wide, as I have shown, Holywell itself was quite a snug and compact little town as I remember it; it did not change very much between the wars. Major industrial activity in the Greenfield valley had long subsided by then but Flintshire, particularly Deeside, had played host to important new industries. The first of these was the major steelworks of John Summers and Sons at Hawarden Bridge, which employed up to 30,000 and grew from 1896 onwards. More critically from my father's point of view, Courtaulds Limited established four factories manufacturing artificial textiles at Flint and Greenfield, employing 10,000 people at their peak; a large aircraft factory followed at Broughton, near Hawarden. The latter remains an important employer in the county, part of the Airbus enterprise, but production at Courtaulds declined from 1950, and the last of its Flintshire factories closed in 1989. 'Heavy end' iron and steel-making operations at Hawarden Bridge ended in March 1980 with the loss of 6,500 jobs, and manufacturing activity generally there has been very greatly reduced. In my childhood, however, these industries were thriving and the impact of the industrial depression elsewhere was muted.

Insensitive and unimaginative planning decisions since the Second World War have destroyed the character of the centre of Holywell, which I regard now as an ugly mess, which may be irremediable despite some recent improvements. When I was young, though, it had the atmosphere of a large village. The shopkeepers were tradesmen of long standing, typified by James Ayer, a tall and handsome draper, who would stand outside his shop, smoking slowly one of his daily ration of seven cigars. He lived not far away in the town with his diminutive Scots wife in a substantial house with a

grass tennis court, the scene of many excellent summer parties in the garden. Multiple retail shops had begun to appear elsewhere in England, and to a much lesser extent in Wales, but they had certainly not reached Holywell; nightmares about the threat of supermarkets did not afflict our prosperous butchers, grocers, greengrocers and chemists for another generation.

As in many other parts of Wales, there was no very visible or influential squirearchy. We did have the amiable fourth Baron Mostyn of Mostyn Hall, whose son and heir, Roger, won the Military Cross in the Second World War and whose family owned large parts of Llandudno. Lord Mostyn's main interest, however, was in sheepdog trials and he did not otherwise seek to play a role in local life. From a historical point of view, the Pennant family of Downing Hall, Whitford, were of greater interest. Their ancestor, Thomas Pennant, was an admired historian whose account of his tour in Scotland and his voyage to the Hebrides in 1772 can still be purchased, now in paperback, and who was a correspondent of the naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne. Pennant himself has been described as one of the most eminent naturalists of the eighteenth century and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1767. The Pennant descendants no longer occupied Downing Hall in my time and were known as the Pennants of Bodfari, but Arthur, the oldest living in Flintshire, was a magistrate and lived in St Asaph. His much-loved brother David, who was a major in the Royal Signals during the Second World War, became (in effect) the leader of the practising Bar in Cardiff and then a distinguished County Court (later Circuit) judge in Mid-Wales and eventually Bournemouth. He maintained a link with his native county by serving as a deputy chairman of Flintshire Quarter Sessions.

Holywell had some modest claims to literary fame in England rather than Wales. Its most notorious resident in my father's time was Frederick Rolfe, the self-styled Baron Corvo, about whom A.J.A. Symons wrote so felicitously in *The Quest for Corvo* and whose novel *Hadrian the Seventh* was to become a highly successful play when adapted by Peter Luke. Chapter 7 of Symons' book gives an account of Rolfe's stays in Holywell in 1895 and 1898. After a brief visit to the nearby Franciscan monastery at Pantasaph – to which Francis Thompson had retreated earlier for three years when fighting his drug addiction and where he is said to have written *The Hound of Heaven* – Rolfe was engaged (at his own suggestion) by the Reverend Father Sidney de Vere Beauclerk, SJ, the priest in charge of St Winifred's Well, to paint a set of banners for the well in return for free lodgings and the use of a schoolroom as a studio. Rolfe called himself Father Austin during this stay and alleged that Father Beauclerk had agreed to pay him for each banner. He became increasingly vituperative and pursued his vendetta against the

priest in the columns of a local paper, the *Holywell Record*, of which he became editor. But it was to no avail: the journal died and Rolfe ended in the local workhouse before departing for Oxford after the unfortunate Father Beauclerk had been posted by his church elsewhere. In a later short story based on his experiences at Holywell, Rolfe referred to it very unkindly as 'Sewer's End'.

A less close, but more or less contemporaneous, literary connection was with David Jones, the Welsh writer and artist, born in London in 1895, who was made a Companion of Honour in 1974 and who was the author of *In Parenthesis* and *Anathemata*. His father James was born in Holywell in 1860 and apprenticed there as a printer to another local newspaper, the *Flintshire Observer*. After a period in Liverpool, James moved to London to work for the Christian Herald Publishing Company, of which he eventually became production manager.

These peripheral connections were transcended in my time by a much closer and more celebrated local hero, Emlyn Williams, who became the most famous alumnus of my school, Holywell County School (from 1945, Holywell Grammar School). Emlyn was always very loyal to his roots and I had the great good fortune to be taught French by his mentor, Sarah Grace Cooke, whom Emlyn took as the model for the heroine (Miss Moffat) of his great play and film *The Corn is Green*. In the play this role was taken by Dame Sybil Thorndike, who spent some time studying Miss Cooke beforehand; in the film the role was played by Bette Davis.

Emlyn Williams was born in 1905 at Rhewl Mostyn, a village just above Mostyn in the Dee estuary, and soon moved with his parents about a mile to the White Lion Inn, Glanrafon, which his father took over as licensee, after having spent many years, from the age of 12, as a sailor stoker. Emlyn's lyrical and moving account of his own childhood and schooldays is the first section of his autobiographical volume, *George*, and conjures up for me powerful nostalgic memories of my own rather different childhood and the countryside around Holywell, with which I became very familiar. He attended the county school, where he excelled, from 1916 to 1923 and walked five miles to school and five miles back daily for the first 18 months until his school report was so good that his father bought a second-hand bicycle for him. Ultimately, with great encouragement from Miss Cooke, Emlyn's work was crowned with an open scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford, in July 1923.

Those who wish to know more about this exceptional man must seek out *George* and its sequel, *Emlyn*, for his beguiling account of his life to the age of 30. I must record that his aura enveloped us still throughout my youth,

and his success, particularly as a playwright, was celebrated with great pride throughout Holywell and district.

By the time that I was born, my father's interests and activities had broadened well beyond Holywell. He had become a county councillor and had given up the urban district council, on which my uncle Horace had, in effect, replaced him. My father was also becoming an increasingly prominent member of the Liberal Party, which remained the largest party on the county council, against the national trend, for about 40 years. Tom had been taken as a young man by his own father to Hawarden Castle to hear William Gladstone address a large crowd and remained a staunch Liberal throughout his life. Despite being brought up in North Wales, however, he was not an uncritical fan of David Lloyd George and had many disagreements with him over the years. My father tended to prefer the cast of mind of Herbert Asquith and was strongly opposed to Lloyd George's decision to fight the 1918 general election as a national government; the election became known as the 'coupon' election because candidates supporting the government were endorsed with a piece of paper verifying their status.

Opposition to Lloyd George for forsaking the Liberal Party in this way was quite strong in Wales, and the opponents were dubbed 'Wee Frees', after dissident members of the Free Church of Scotland who refused to accept union with the United Presbyterian Church. My father was a leader of this opposition in North Wales; in Mid-Wales the charismatic Professor Thomas Levi, head of the law department at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, was prominent; in South Wales there was the barrister Rhys Hopkin Morris (later a KC and a knight), who secured the Cardiganshire parliamentary seat in December 1923 in a surprise victory over Lloyd George's candidate, the recently elected member Ernest Evans. The latter had won the seat at a famous by-election in February 1921 and later became the member for the University of Wales until being appointed as the North Wales County Court judge in 1942. Hopkin Morris held Cardiganshire for nine years until he went on to achieve many other distinctions, returning to Parliament for Carmarthen West in 1945.

Lloyd George sought reconciliation with the Wee Frees after leaving 10 Downing Street, and this was given formal effect at a great meeting in Llandrindod Wells on 14 June 1924, at which the only discordant note was struck by Hopkin Morris. My father proposed the second resolution, to adopt as policy a joint manifesto agreed by Lloyd George and Asquith, which was carried unanimously. In the succeeding years an uneasy truce was maintained between Lloyd George and Asquith and their respective supporters. My father served in the late 1920s on a Liberal Party committee

chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse, which was intended to secure fair selection of parliamentary candidates between the rivals. However, Lloyd George always had the advantage of controlling what was called 'the Lloyd George fund', allegedly collected earlier by Liberal Party whips in anticipation of future needs and about which controversy continues to this day.

These activities were a distraction for my father in a difficult period for the declining woollen industry. Wartime prosperity had been succeeded by much harder times. The Holywell factory was now Holywell Textile Mills Limited and Tom had advanced to managing director from 1909, becoming chairman in 1930. He was also president of the Welsh Textile Manufacturers' Association, embracing about 35 smaller mills dotted about the principality, from 1920. The market for goods manufactured from natural fibres was shrinking. Tom was not willing to tie the factory to the whims of a major retailer, but seeking sales elsewhere for the blankets and heavy tweeds that were then being produced was hard and anxious work.

These financial worries must have haunted my father throughout the 1920s and 1930s and he paid himself a modest salary after comparative affluence during the war years, but he was a strong man with considerable self-belief and he did not allow his anxieties to impinge upon his children. We were aware of the difficulties of the woollen trade in the inter-war years but we believed that they would be overcome, so our recollections of childhood are of largely uninterrupted and secure happiness.

One other important aspect of our upbringing must be mentioned because it was central to our way of life: total abstinence from alcohol. The family explanation, probably true, is that my great-grandfather Thomas had joined Bradford Temperance Society in 1835. He was a staunch Methodist, like his father, and the immediate spur to his teetotalism is said to have been the death of his older brother David (born on 2 June 1798), who fell off a horse into the Bradford canal and drowned on 25 January 1832 when allegedly drunk. In any event, it was a time when drunkenness was a great social evil in the north of England following the Industrial Revolution, and that itself may have been sufficient to prompt my great-grandfather's decision.

The result was that my father and his brothers and sisters all observed the family rule and we had at home from the mid-1930s a large framed certificate attesting to our century of total abstinence. My mother did not have any similar background but she willingly adopted teetotalism, and both my parents remained faithful to it. My own generation has regrettably broken the chain but we were fortunate to have that inheritance, and my parents' descendants have so far avoided any outbreak of alcoholism. A consequence

of the abstinence for my father and mother was that their social life was more restricted than it would otherwise have been but they never seemed to be oppressed by this and it did not seem to mar their enjoyment of life. Nor did we as children feel that we were being brought up in an unduly strait-laced fashion. To counteract any accusation of narrow mindedness, my father decided at the age of 40 to take up smoking both cigarettes and a pipe as well as the occasional cigar. That was long before the dire medical warnings of later years and he encouraged his sons to smoke from the age of 18 years as a calming pastime.

3

BEGINNINGS

I was largely shielded from the outside world until 1933 because my parents arranged for me to have tuition at home from the daughter of a retired Nonconformist minister. She was a comfortably shaped matter-of-fact spinster called Wyn Brynford Jones, who proved to be a kindly and efficient governess. The result was that when I joined the local primary school, Holywell Council School, in September 1930 I was able to keep up with my peers. I am rather ashamed to say that I still have all my council school reports and that for Christmas 1933 shows that I was second in a class of 21 'scholars'. I remember that the boy who surpassed me then and several times later was from a very deprived home, and I often wonder what happened to him in later life. I am sure that he would have progressed to the county school and beyond if he had had more favourable home circumstances.

My recollections of that period, apart from my family and teachers, are very vague and do not begin to have real clarity until 1935. One public event did impinge upon me, however, and that was the mining disaster at Gresford Colliery near Wrexham on 22 September 1934 in which 266 men lost their lives. At that time, 1,850 of the 2,200 employees at the colliery worked underground and the impact of the event in North Wales cannot be overstated. Hartley Shawcross first came to prominence as a barrister when he appeared for the mine owners at the subsequent inquest. The politician and barrister Stafford Cripps represented the families of the deceased and the mineworkers without charging a fee.

The year 1935 was exciting for me, a kind of dawn, for several reasons. At home it was notable for the arrival of electricity: before then we had existed on gaslights. I remember also my first visit to the local cinema at Holywell, the Prince of Wales, to see a film called *Jungle Hell*, which (my parents

hoped) would not include any contaminating material. Even more excitingly, my father took me to a test match for the first time during our annual August holiday with my maternal grandmother in Sutton. It was at the Oval cricket ground and the visitors were a great South African team under H.F. Wade, with A.D. Nourse and Bruce Mitchell in the side. The England captain was the highly respected R.E.S. (Bob) Wyatt, whose nephew Woodrow was to become a neighbour and friend 35 years later; England lost the series.

The final test match the following year was even more exciting. England, under Gubby Allen, declared at 471 for 8 wickets, with help from Wally Hammond and Maurice Leyland, and I saw All India, captained by the Maharajah of Vizianagaram, bowled out for 222 by Voce, Allen, Verity and Sims. Equally thrilling for me was to be taken to the White City Stadium on 15 August 1936 to see the contest between the USA and the British Empire immediately after the Berlin Olympic Games. Jesse Owens ran in the 4 x 100 yards relay and the USA dominated the match, but the vast crowd rose as one when, at last, A.G.K. Brown breasted the tape in front at the end of the last lap of the mile relay. I do not know what happened to him in later life but his brother Alan Kilner Brown, an able but lesser athlete, became a High Court judge and lived into his nineties.

My father owned four acres of land surrounding Highfield, and much later this was extended to 30 acres by the purchase of Pistyll Hall next door. Our own land was let from time to time for grazing and, more importantly, there was a dairy farm opposite the drive leading to our house. I became a friend of one of the farmer's sons, who was roughly my own age, and it was particularly exciting to be allowed into the shippons (not then parlours) at milking time. Numerous milkmaids tried to teach me how to milk the herd without getting kicked but I never achieved any real success at it and was glad when the arrival of electricity eventually led to the introduction of milking machines at the farm.

Memories of one part of the farming calendar, haymaking, will remain with me always and it is sad that technical progress has robbed modern children (and their elders) of its joys. Each stage in the process had its particular pleasures, culminating in the collective effort of loading the hay with pitchforks onto lorries drawn by splendidly strong shire horses. The sun always seemed to be shining on warm summer evenings, and the sandwiches we ate and the dandelion and burdock we drank never tasted as good elsewhere.

One feature of my childhood must seem quite bizarre to the vast majority of modern children. Sunday observance was taken seriously in our household and no Sunday papers were taken. My father was the senior deacon of the

Tabernacle Church and we attended morning service on Sundays and Sunday school almost invariably. We would also attend the evening service quite often, especially if there was an eloquent visiting preacher, such as the Reverend Gordon Lang of Chepstow, who would stay with us on his annual visits and continued to do so after he returned to the House of Commons as Labour MP for Stalybridge and Hyde in 1945. His sermons were always stimulating and refreshing, in contrast to our usual more pedestrian fare, and he was adept at teasing my sister. At Sunday school we were under the watchful eye of Uncle Horace, who was the superintendent, and we had to undergo annual scripture examinations under the auspices of the county Sunday school union.

Sabbath observance was only part of what was expected of us. My sister and I particularly were expected to perform: singing solo, reciting and acting in short religious plays were all skills rightly or wrongly attributed to us and I have ever since been ashamed of my rather brazen readiness to perform in public. A sideline involved competing in the annual Band of Hope eisteddfod in the main public hall (the Assembly Hall) at Holywell. The modern English reader will find this event very mysterious, but eisteddfodau are common throughout Wales as competitions in poetry, recitation and music especially; the Band of Hope was a junior branch of the temperance movement, supported by all the Nonconformist churches but evidenced in Holywell and district only by its annual eisteddfod. The poems to be recited all had a temperance theme and were often of a cringe-making kind. However, a much freer rein was allowed to singers and my greatest triumph as a boy soprano was singing Schubert's *Heidenroslein* in English after prolonged and very good coaching by my mother.

One other aspect of my rather unusual early childhood needs to be mentioned and that is, inevitably, politics. My awareness grew in pace with the rise of Nazi Germany while Britain was ruled by a coalition government under Ramsey Macdonald and then Stanley Baldwin. My father was no supporter of the Peace Pledge Union and the talk at our family table was of the abject and successive failures of the League of Nations and the British government to take any effective action about the reoccupation of the Rhineland, the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy, the Spanish Civil War, the invasion of Austria by Germany and so on. As for the coalition itself, my father was strongly opposed to the action of those Liberals who agreed in 1931 to take part in it.

It tends to be forgotten that one of the most important Liberal waverers in the early stages was Herbert Samuel; I have a copy of a letter to my father dated 23 January 1933 from David Lloyd George, which reads as follows:

My dear Waterhouse,

The 'Guardian' and 'Post' gave the North Wales Federation proceedings an extraordinarily good show on Saturday. However, I have no doubt at all that the action for which you were largely responsible is already having a very great effect. I have heard just now – confidentially – that the idea of a manifesto which emanated from Ramsey Muir has already been abandoned. It is very likely that Samuel cld. not agree to Ramsey Muir's draft. But I am also told that Samuel will attend the mtg. of the Executive on Friday next to expound his views as to the attitude which ought to be adopted, or rather persisted in, by official Liberalism. This makes the Friday mtg. an occasion of first importance. I do hope you really will be able to attend. I fear you are the only one who will put up a fight for Radicalism with the doughty help of your Welsh colleague Edmunds.

If the NLF [National Liberal Federation] are committed by some resolution taken at the Friday mtg. to the Samuelite attitude, Liberalism, in my opinion, is finally doomed Perhaps you will let me know immediately after the mtg. on Friday what has happened, and if you and Edmunds care to come down here, with anyone else you like to bring along with you on Friday or Saturday, I shall be delighted to put you up.

Ever sincerely,
D. Lloyd George

I do not have any record of what happened at the meeting on 27 January 1933 but, in the end, Viscount Samuel, as he later became, rejected further flirtation with the coalition and remained within the fold of true Liberals.

In 1937 it became my turn to move on to Holywell County School, from which Stuart had departed for the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1936 and where Neil had taken his place three years before me. My father was not opposed to private education, from which he himself had benefited, and I believe that he would have sent his sons to Shrewsbury if he had been able to afford to do so. With the inter-war state of the woollen industry that was out of the question. Another factor was that he had been chairman of Flintshire education committee from 1925 to 1934 and felt under a duty to uphold the merits of the county's schools. However, he did send my sister at the age of 13 to Howell's School, Denbigh, a Drapers' Company school.

In the event I have never seriously regretted being educated in the state system, as it is then was. On the down side, I missed sound training in the Classics. Greek was not taught at all and, although I enjoyed Latin to the School Certificate stage, it was not taught in an inspiring way, and much of its literature remains a closed book to me. The other minus factor was

the absence of first-class playing fields: in particular, there were very few good cricket pitches in North Wales as a whole and almost none in state schools, partly because of the terrain. How fortunate our son Thomas was in this respect when he attended Uppingham School! The compensations far outweighed these considerations, as will become apparent in the next chapter. Above all, state education enabled me to live at home until the age of 18 and to benefit from the daily company, stimulation and encouragement of my parents, for which I will always be grateful.

4

COUNTY SCHOOLBOY

I spent seven happy and rewarding years at Holywell County School from 1937 to 1944, despite the rigours of wartime from 1939. It was one of five similar schools in the small county of Flint established under the Welsh Intermediate Education Act 1889, enacted the year after the Local Government Act 1888, under which county councils succeeded county Quarter Sessions as the main administrators of the counties. The new councils took over effective responsibility for schools when the Balfour Act of 1902 came into force. In my time, each of the Flintshire county schools had 500 to 600 pupils, so that up to about 3,000 out of a potential school population of the relevant age bracket, estimated to be 19,000, had the benefit of a 'grammar school' education. Those who did not surmount the hurdle of the 11-plus examination usually had the opportunity to go to one of five central schools, as they were called, in which the curriculum was less academic and was intended to lead to further technical education or to a job at the age of 15 or over. Otherwise, pupils were likely to remain at their council school until leaving for employment at 14 or over, although there were two senior schools on Deeside catering for some of them.

For the first 60 years or so of the twentieth century this county school structure, which was similar throughout Wales, was a highly successful feature of Welsh education and produced a very high percentage of its leaders in all walks of life. There was, of course, a comparatively small number of Welsh children who went to the very few public schools in Wales and some, particularly from affluent families in South Wales, to English public schools. But, in the main, the teachers, preachers, scientists, politicians, businessmen and administrators in Wales for most of the twentieth century were county school educated and they served the principality well.

Although I was a member of the Labour Party for many years from 1952 onwards, I remain convinced that the destruction of this core framework of Welsh education through the replacement of the county grammar schools, as they had become known under the Butler Education Act 1945, by comprehensive schools was an arrogant and unforgivable act of vandalism for which we will continue to pay a heavy price. It was, of course, propagated by many trades unionists and other members of the Labour Party who considered that they had been unfairly robbed of opportunities because of failing the 11-plus examination. I accept fully that the system needed radical reform to provide wider flexibility, encouragement and opportunities from the age of 11 years, but it was grievously wrong to destroy the part of the structure that provided children from the poorest backgrounds with a realistic chance of rising to the top. Labour ministers who had no personal knowledge of the state system and had benefited from elitist education themselves should have approached educational reorganisation with much greater humility and taken the trouble to assess dispassionately the great contribution made by the county grammar schools in the course of over half a century instead of embracing the populist idea of 'comprehensive' education uncritically.

What is particularly sad is that the impact of the change is especially noticeable in Wales for reasons that are implicit in what I have already said. More recent educational and social studies continue to confirm that access to the very best higher education (and with it the top career opportunities) is now more difficult for children who are financially poor. Comprehensive schools do not, in general, provide them with the essential ladder to overcome their initial disadvantage, whereas county grammar schools did do so for very many of them. There must be an educational elite if the United Kingdom is to survive in the modern competitive world, and the challenge is to provide access to membership of that elite for as wide a cross-section of the population as possible.

The quality of teaching at Holywell County School varied quite widely but the general standard was reasonably good and the turnover of staff was remarkably low, despite wartime demands on manpower (and, to a lesser extent, womanpower). Of the 19 members of the staff in 1939, including the domestic science teacher and the visiting violin teacher, 14 were still listed in 1945, two of them being on active service, and another having left only to marry a continuing staff member.

The headmaster throughout my time and from the early 1920s was Rhys T. Davies, as he always signed himself. Born in Llanfyllin in the lovely county of Montgomery, he was a history graduate of the University of Wales

and an idealist with great reverence for scholarship. He was also a strong supporter of the Welsh Wesleyan Methodist Church, in which he was a lay preacher. He dressed always in a flannel shirt with a stiff white collar, and we thought that he was very absent-minded and incapable of disciplining a substantial school population, but he was remembered and greatly liked by the vast majority of pupils who passed through the school during his reign. Moreover, he was given firm, outstanding support by the deputy head teacher, Sarah Grace Cooke, who had done so much to encourage and help Emlyn Williams. Above all, Rhys Davies managed to convey to all of us his genuine love of learning, even though he was probably not very widely read himself, and many of us were glad in later years to have spent time under his influence.

Miss Cooke, as we knew her, was a very different personality who commanded the respect and admiration of everyone and was a doughty champion of the school staff. She was a forceful, straight-talking Yorkshirewoman who eventually retired in the Michaelmas term 1943 on reaching the age of 60. The last years of her life were spent in Leeds with her lifelong companion, Miss Swallow, and she died there on 1 May 1964. Although a strong character, she was an exceptionally generous woman and, unlike many teachers, a voracious reader who aimed to read (or at least peruse) five books every week. To mark her retirement a special school ceremony was held, at which I as head boy had to speak; there was great excitement because Emlyn Williams himself attended it and spoke later at an evening ceremony.

My memories of the county school are mainly of the later wartime years but I do remember two special holiday events in 1938 and 1939 when I attended summer camps of what was called the Welsh Schoolboys' Camp. King George VI, as Duke of York, had taken an initiative in the 1920s to organise summer camps at Southwold for young people to give them an opportunity to mix with each other and to see the countryside. This idea was copied in Wales to the extent that county school boys were invited to meet in Mid-Wales and camp together for a fortnight under the leadership of T.I. Ellis, the headmaster of Rhyl County School, who was the son of the well-known former Welsh Liberal MP, sometimes described as 'the forerunner' of David Lloyd George. The first camp that I attended, in August 1938, was on the banks of the river Wye at Llanfaredd, a short distance south-east of Builth Wells; the following year it was held on the cliffs at Morfa Bychan, Llanfarian, immediately south of the beach at Aberystwyth. The camps were very well attended, particularly by boys from South Wales, and it was very refreshing for me to meet them because they were much more outgoing and hedonistic than their North Wales contemporaries. The

most memorable teacher who attended was Phil Burton (the legendary uncle and father-substitute of Richard Burton, the actor), one of whose many talents was telling ghost stories by lamplight to a spellbound audience of schoolboys.

There was very good news for our immediate family early in that summer of 1939, despite the gathering war clouds. Stuart had had a successful time at the London School of Economics, playing a full part in its life, despite having to commute a substantial distance daily from my grandmother's house in Sutton, where he stayed throughout his years at the university. He played cricket for LSE and was very active in Liberal politics, making a lifelong friend of Arthur Seldon, who later founded the Institute of Economic Affairs with Lord Harris of High Cross, which was to provide key ideas and support for Margaret Thatcher. Stuart also managed to work hard at the same time under Professor Sir Arnold Plant, graduating with first-class honours in the bachelor of commerce degree in June 1939 and winning a Cassel Scholarship, which he was able to take up after the war when he spent nine months in the USA studying American marketing methods. Partly as a reward for these achievements and partly because war was so obviously imminent by then, my father took Stuart on holiday in August 1939 to Dinard and St Malo, which was a poignant experience for both of them.

The outbreak of war deprived me of my own first chance of a visit to France in 1940. One of Miss Cooke's many kindnesses was to organise exchanges with French students. Stuart had stayed earlier in Arras with the family of a French boy, who had spent some weeks with us in turn, and in 1939 we played host to another boy, also of Arras, a remarkably sophisticated young man who was slightly older than me. I remember that he routed me at tennis and was generally rather bored so that he stayed with us for a shorter time than had been arranged; it seems that he then went on to Blackpool, which was even less congenial and whence he had to be rescued by Miss Cooke. Needless to say, my projected visit to Arras in 1940 never materialised and, sadly, we do not know whether either of the French families we had had contact with survived the Nazi occupation.

In North Wales our military allegiance was to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who had their headquarters in Wrexham, and the outbreak of war saw the local members of the Territorial Army parading reassuringly through the streets of Holywell, but any misconceived complacency was shattered by the time that we greeted the survivors on their return from the Dunkirk beaches less than nine months later. Stuart was called up in February 1940, after helping my father at the textile mill for a few months while waiting

for his papers, and he was enlisted in the Royal Army Service Corps, undergoing his initial training near Bournemouth. He was commissioned in due course and ended up as a very young lieutenant-colonel on the staff of Field Marshal Montgomery at 21 Army Group in north-west Europe. My brother Neil had decided to train as a civil engineer and had left school, after a rather indifferent performance in the School Certificate examination, to become articled to the county surveyor at Mold. He enjoyed the work and remained there until he decided to follow his friend Eric Brook to Liverpool University in the autumn of 1942 to read civil engineering. Neil was called up to serve in the army in November 1943; he was later commissioned in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and served in East Africa.

The 'phoney war' gave way to much grimmer reality and one of the stray pictures that sticks in my mind is of lying in the sunshine on the grass at school after the fall of France, looking at the blue sky and wondering what our fate would be. As it turned out, we were to remain in comparative safety, despite Flintshire's industrial base. Our greatest excitement and alarm occurred later when Liverpool was attacked persistently by German bombers. From Highfield we had a grandstand view across the Dee estuary to Heswall and thence to Liverpool, where the Anglican cathedral, still under construction, was the clearest of landmarks; the whole city seemed to be ablaze during air raids. The only danger to us was from returning aircraft, which occasionally dropped any unused bombs, incendiary and otherwise (and even land mines), on the countryside.

My small response to these events was to serve as an air raid messenger, the most junior position in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) service, from January 1940 to July 1942. This involved attending from time to time at the town hall in the middle of the night and keeping company there with Lilian Kerfoot-Roberts, the delightful and amusing spinster daughter of Holywell's senior solicitor, who was, in effect, at the controls of the organisation. I had already begun to smoke cigarettes illicitly, in spite of my father's attempts to sabotage this activity, and Lilian, herself a dedicated smoker, proved to be a tolerant companion. All in all, therefore, I was not displeased when I was called out on duty, and this was long before warnings about lung cancer and heart disease became a daily ritual. I was very sad indeed years later to learn that Lilian had suffered the cruel fate of dying in a fire that she had started accidentally at home with a cigarette.

My service in the ARP ended because on 12 February 1942 I joined our school branch or flight of the Air Training Corps (ATC) with the ambition of becoming a pilot. Various science and mathematics teachers became our officers and it is remarkable how well organised the corps as a whole

became in a very short time. I enjoyed its wide range of activities, including competitive athletics on a North Wales scale. Having lived now through an era when competitive sport has been frowned upon by the politically correct and acres of playing fields have been lost to commercial development, I am amazed at the generous support my contemporaries and I were given in a whole range of sporting and other activities by members of the school staff, who gave up hours of their leisure time during evenings and on Saturdays to do so without any financial reward.

The ATC certainly whetted my appetite for flying and provided early instruction in such subjects as navigation, meteorology, principles of flight and engines, as well as aircraft recognition. This stood me in good stead when a wing commander visited the school in March 1943 to interview potential trainee aircrew. The result was that I was accepted for a short university course under RAF auspices at St John's College, Cambridge, beginning in the autumn after I left school, and I remained in the ATC until that course began in October 1944.

Although wartime brought with it many restrictions, I am surprised, on looking back at programmes that I have kept, at the number and variety of entertainments that a small town such as Holywell enjoyed in those years. There was a very determined attempt to ensure that 'culture' was brought to the people, and celebrity concerts, as they were called, were particularly popular. Perhaps most surprising of all, the Old Vic company visited Holywell twice in the course of tours of North Wales. In February 1941 they brought *Macbeth* with Lewis Casson and his wife Sybil Thorndike in the leading roles and Abraham Sofaer as Macduff. The Cassons' daughter, Ann, had a small part in the production and stayed with us. The following year, again for two nights in February, they performed Gilbert Murray's English version of *Medea* with the same principals and Paul Scofield as the messenger. Ann Casson very kindly returned in April 1943 to play Mary Magdalene in an ambitious Passion Festival at Flint, in which I was cast in the lowly role of Annas, a high priest.

The hero of the celebrity concerts, when he had leave from the Welsh Guards, was David Lloyd, our most distinguished local tenor. One of seven children of a coalminer, he had been a carpenter at Ffynnongroew on the river Dee but quickly made a name for himself as an amateur soloist, with the result that my father was asked to take him to Hawarden Castle to sing to Sir Walford Davies, who stayed there on a visit in the early 1930s. Sir Walford was impressed and arranged for David to enter the Guildhall School of Music, where he won a major scholarship to add to an award from the Flintshire education committee. David won several prestigious prizes