

Notes on the Cordon Family

A Family Memoir

by

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Website Edition

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About this memoir

Notes on the Cordon Family was written by Dr Robert (Bob) Edwards AO FAHA and completed on 25 October 2010 as part of a series of memoirs recording the history of his family and its South Australian origins. Drawing upon family recollections, historical research, personal memories and contemporary records, the memoir traces the lives of the Cordon family from their migration to South Australia through to the experiences that shaped the author's own childhood.

This Website Edition has been prepared for publication on the Robert Edwards website. The text has been lightly copy-edited to improve readability by correcting typographical errors, standardising spelling, punctuation and formatting, and removing drafting notes not intended for publication. Every effort has been made to preserve the author's voice, style and historical interpretation. The memoir is published as both a family history and a record of South Australian life across several generations.

Notes on the Cordon Family

25 October 2010

In common with members of the other branches of the family, the Cordons were attracted to South Australia in a quest for new freedoms and opportunities that were out of reach in Britain. One of the main incentives was to own property and develop agricultural pursuits in a land free from old world constraints. The Province had been established under the principles of systematic colonisation enunciated by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. As outlined previously, one of the basic provisions was to dispose of all lands by sale at a reasonable set price and use the funds mainly to assist families to emigrate and establish themselves as free settlers in distant South Australia. Freedom from state religion was another popular incentive to head for South Australia. Young people of both sexes were also given passage without charge as an incentive to become part of the Wakefield experiment.

My grandfather Frank Cordon (1882) was the eldest in a family of seven children: Sidney (1883), Norman James (1885), Hilda May (1888), Nellie (1888), Cora Irene Wedding (1889) and Walter (1890). He was born at Nailsworth but spent his childhood at Erskine, 32km east of Orroroo on Goyder's Line defining the boundary between regions of reasonable and marginal rainfall in the foothills of the Flinders Ranges in the north of South Australia.

His father William James Cordon was born on 7 June 1852 and became a surveyor and worked on the great overland telegraph line constructed from Port Augusta to Darwin under the supervision of Sir Charles Todd. It was an ambitious undertaking for its time and linked Australia with Europe to the advantage of both. William also surveyed the countryside around the present rural town of Orroroo, 280km north of Adelaide. Family correspondence tells us he was highly regarded for his work and presented with a gold watch in recognition of his special endeavours.

The survey work at Orroroo led William to abandon his profession and take up farming at Erskine. His younger brother Francis George who was born on 22nd May 1858 and married Margaret Ann

Rowe on 24 May 1882 also established himself as a farmer, butcher and publican in the same district. They had eight children.

William's father Samuel was the first of the Cordon family to set foot in South Australia. He was born in England on 16th November 1821 and later emigrated. Samuel married Mrs Sarah Matilda George nee Walker on 5th May 1852. She was the daughter of James and Mary Ann Green and born on 26th August 1819 in Shirburn, England. They had five children. The eldest was William James (1852-1934) who later settled at Erskine, Mary Anne Poyzer (1856-1924), Francis George (1858-1919), Walter Samuel (1862-1923) and Emily Matilda Drechsler (1863-1900). It was a second marriage for both partners. Samuel had a daughter by his first marriage and Sarah a son.

On arrival in Adelaide, the young couple loaded all their worldly possessions on a bullock dray and set out for Two Wells, 40km to the north of the city. Here they established 'Grange Farm' and built a substantial homestead with stones gathered on the property. They soon settled down to a life of farming and became an integral part of the local community. They were active members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Samuel was elected a councillor representing Prospect, Two Wells and Port Gawler when local government was established. The district council of Yatala was constituted in 1853.

The town had grown up near the site of two water-holes used over the millennia by local Aboriginals. It became a watering place for early bullockies and shepherds and was later deepened as the demand grew, fuelled by the transport of ore and goods following the discovery of copper in the region. This is but one example of the competition between the Aboriginal inhabitants and the new arrivals for limited water resources in a drought prone country.

Samuel Cordon died on 6th October 1899. His son Walter Samuel took over 'Grange Farm' and ran the property until his death on 11th March 1923 when control passed to his son Clement Ralph Cordon until he sold the farm and retired.

Frank Cordon was the exception in his family as at the age of 14 he turned his back on the land and set out to make a career of his own. The young Frank ventured forth to Adelaide where he

entered an apprenticeship as a carpenter and worked his way up to become a well-respected builder who designed and constructed fashionable bungalows, many with distinctive three room frontages of roughly hewn freestone. His main business was located in the Prospect and Nailsworth districts where the many homes he built remain an attractive feature of the local architecture.

The practical component of his final examination was to construct a work that demonstrated his skills. Grandfather made a magnificent ornamented wardrobe, using an unusual pale but beautifully grained timber. It is a very impressive piece of furniture with a range of compartments and spacious drawers. The largest of these extends along most of the base. We greatly admired it as young kids, especially as it had two secret drawers for valuables. These contained bundles of important looking documents tied with red tape. Best of all, there was a small treasure trove of gold sovereigns and some jewellery. One of the special treats when visiting grandparents' home at 63 Barker Road in Prospect was to watch while Grandmother revealed the secrets of the 'grand wardrobe'. It remains a treasured family possession to this day.

Grandfather often mentioned how proud he was to have worked early in his career on the magnificent and much admired grand staircase in the South Australian Hotel on North Terrace when the building was reconstructed at the turn of the nineteenth century, including the addition of three storeys and a veranda. This lovely colonial style hotel was built in 1879 and became an important feature of the Terrace until it was torn down in 1971 to make way for a rather stylish modern hotel.

Grandfather established his home in Prospect where he became well known. He was a Warden at the local parish church, St Cuthbert's on Prospect Road. The existing building was constructed in 1883, replacing the original colonial structure. For some years he was Superintendent of Works. He became a Foundation Member of the Prospect Bowling Club and President in 1918-19. Grandfather was also prominent in the Freemasons, having been admitted a member of the Albert Lodge on 22nd March 1900 and initiated into the Prospect Lodge on 18th December 1912. He was an active member and served in every office, eventually being installed as Worshipful Master in August 1921 at the age of 39. His medallions of office are still preserved in the family.

Frank Cordon was born on 1st March 1882; his wife to be, Lily Nottle on 27th November 1876. They were married on 6th August 1902 by Charles E Williams (the resident Minister at Melrose) in the Methodist Church at Booleroo Centre in the Southern Flinders Ranges. At the time, Grandfather was living at Ovingham, an inner north-western suburb of Adelaide, located at the Prospect end of Torrens Road. Grandmother's home was at White Cliffs. The best man was a relation named on the marriage certificate simply as "Nottle – farmer of White Cliffs". A friend "A Dunstan of Booleroo Centre" was the bridesmaid. A young successful city tradesman married his girl from the bush.

Two years later on 2nd June 1903, Grandmother gave birth to a son. The young couple named their first child Glenroy Keith (Cordon). My mother was born on 6th November 1905 and it was agreed she be named Eileen Mavis. However on the spur of the moment when Grandfather was at the Registry Office to formally record his daughter's birth, he added his favourite name Margaret after his mother Margaret Skerris nee Farr. Grandmother was very unhappy at the time as indeed was my mother later. As a consequence, she broke with family tradition by giving my sister and me only single names.

At the time my grandparents were living at Nailsworth and decided to take their two young children back to the family home in the country to be baptised. They travelled the 208km to Jamestown in the mid-north where the family were farming in the Jamestown – Booleroo Centre – Caltowie Region. Baby Keith and his sister Eileen were baptised at a family ceremony in St James' Church, Jamestown on 10th October 1906. More than likely they had a picnic in the nearby Bundaleer Forest as this was a favoured visiting spot for the family. Interestingly, it was the world's first plantation forest, having been established in 1876.

As a young child I often spent holidays with my grandparents at their lovely home in Barker Road, Prospect. Grandfather had used all his skills and experience to build a large comfortable bungalow for his permanent residence. Grandmother was delighted when they settled into their new home as in the early years of their marriage they were constantly on the move, purchasing a house, totally renovating it and then putting it on the market. Grandfather's skill as a tradesman ensured a profit, and in time he was able to establish his own business as a designer/builder. Barker Road was the fulfilment of a long standing promise to his wife.

During holidays with my grandparents, we often attended services at St Cuthbert's, their parish church. It was a source of wonder at first and later amusement how Grandfather could sing holding the hymn book upside down. He had a very kind and endearing personality. Many of the elaborately carved furnishings and memorial panels in the Church were designed, constructed and installed by Grandfather. I remember going with him to take the measurements for a new memorial panel. The Minister was a little frustrated as Grandfather always took on far more than he could manage, a characteristic which I most surely have inherited. In this instance, the work was long overdue and many deadlines had been broken. The family donating the memorial had become impatient at the delay. Nevertheless they were prepared to wait for his services as Grandfather's work was so splendid.

Mother and Father were married in St Cuthbert's on 8th September 1927 and it was in this church that my sister Barbara and I were baptised on 13th July 1930. At the time my father signed the register as 'Manager of Zante Grove' his father's property at Marion. It was a society wedding held at the height of the prosperous years of the roaring 20's. The daily paper recorded the event in detail:

It was a happy marriage as the boom times of the 1920's continued unabated. The young newlyweds moved into a comfortable brick bungalow on the recently sub-divided 'Oaklands Estate'. The house had been designed and built by Grandfather as a wedding gift to the young couple. It still stands at 28 Oaklands Road, Marion. The old 'Zante Grove' homestead was located on the northern side of the road nestled away in the midst of vineyards flanked by almond trees planted to shelter the vines. These lined the Oaklands Road boundary fence while a double row of trees immediately opposite the house extended at right angles and ran up to the sheds that formed part of the homestead complex.

The good times of the 1920's were soon to come to an end when the whole world would sink into a deep, costly depression in 1930. It took its toll on both family and friends.

By 1940 Grandfather Cordon had retired as a builder probably as a consequence of the depression. He returned to his original profession as a carpenter and cabinet maker. At the outset of the war he was 'commandeered' by the Commonwealth Government along with his workshop in

Davies Terrace, Nailsworth to make a contribution to the war effort. He was given a monthly production quote of free-light propellers for portable generators used by units of the armed forces. Once the set number had been delivered he could return to his normal work. As a consequence he was always far behind and often frustrated by the constant demands on his time. He would sometimes sneak off to his workshop at weekends in a valiant attempt to catch up. Alas, he was often taken to task by my grandmother who disapproved strongly of working on Sundays.

The propellers came in several sizes. Shaping the larger ones from massive logs of the best Canadian timbers was very demanding for a man approaching his 60's. It required enormous skill and patience. During the initial shaping of the largest blades he had to engage an assistant as the timber was far too heavy for one person to handle. It fascinated me to watch the transformation as a massive piece of timber was gradually fashioned into a beautifully balanced propeller. Grandfather would first roughly shape the blades with a fixed circular power saw and then use hand tools – planes, chisels, spoke-shaves and sandpaper – to work the timber into shape. In the heat of summer I well remember him working away fashioning a propeller with sweat pouring from his brow.

During the final stages he would remove a few shavings from one end of the blade and then counter this by removing a few shavings from the appropriate section on the other end. It was a task requiring great care and precision, qualities with which Grandfather was well endowed. He was a gentle, patient man in contrast to Grandmother who had a much more robust personality developed during her rugged upbringing in the country. She would sometimes reminisce about her childhood when she had to help each year with the harvest and hand winnowing the wheat. As one of twelve children, they were very demanding times for her. I remember them both as kind, generous and much loved by their extended family and many friends.

Whenever the opportunity arose, especially during school holidays, I would visit my grandparents at Barker Road. It was a delight to stay with them in their very comfortable home. I would work alongside Grandfather in his workshop. Every day was full of interest and always good fun. In addition there were regular trips to the recently opened local picture theatre. This was early days for the movies which were becoming increasingly popular and enjoying a period of rapid expansion.

Grandmother was one of those individuals who had 'green fingers'. Every visit to the family home began with a tour of the garden to see which plants had taken root, those in flower and always some new additions. Then there were beautiful exotic ferns in her large shade house sending out their strange new fronds. At the bottom of the garden were a number of fruit trees. We were allowed to enjoy the fruit as it ripened. I remember consuming delicious nectarines, peaches and apricots on cold frosty mornings. We would also spend hours talking to the cockies she kept in cages as a reminder of her childhood in the country. My grandfather had built several aviaries with his usual care and patience. It was a dream world from which I derived enormous pleasure.

My grandmother had inherited a little money from her father when he died in 1933. Whenever the annual bank interest was paid she would take the tram to the city and indulge herself by purchasing a piece of lovely china, a musical jug, a porcelain dog or horse or some object of beauty that gave her pleasure. She was always loyal to the Royal Family and took great pride in two impressive coronation cups and other souvenirs of great royal events. There was a large central sitting room in the Barker Road home. This had a mantelpiece extending around the full length of the four walls. It was adorned with lovely china objects and curios.

The room was forbidden territory for us kids unless we were under escort and strict surveillance. On Christmas Day and Easter Sunday it was a treat to be allowed to enter the sitting room and sink deeply into one of the lovely soft lounge chairs and be shown our favourites and the remarkable additions made since the last ritual visit. There were two musical jugs that always had to be played several times to our complete delight. Her pleasure was derived from all things beautiful and in giving pleasure to others. This manifested itself in many ways. Among her treasured possessions were a number of pieces of beautiful Irish Belleek porcelain. Eventually this little collection came to me. Over the years I added many lovely pieces and eventually donated it to the Geelong Regional Gallery where it has been on exhibition and sometimes tours to other venues. It is good to know an interest begun by Grandmother will continue to be enjoyed on into the future as she would have wished.

During school holidays I toiled day after day alongside my very patient grandfather in his workshop at Nailsworth fashioning the off-cuts from the free-light propellers into an endless array of objects. They were happy times as we enjoyed being together. Looking back it is sad that I have been unable to establish quite the same close relationship with my own grandchildren due to moves

interstate to Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and then back to Sydney as well as constant travel into remote regions of Australia and later, overseas to visit museums to negotiate the loan of wonderful collections of art and antiquities to tour to capital cities in every state.

If I chanced to be at Barker Road when Grandfather went to Port Adelaide to select the very best Canadian timbers for his propellers, I would be taken along. He was one of the first to be advised when the timber ships berthed so that he could have first choice as the sawn logs had to be straight, even grained and well-seasoned to produce precision blades. Grandfather had a very experienced eye in these matters.

On the way back to his workshop in his Dort Tourer car we would always call at a particular delicatessen on Prospect Road owned by two of Grandmother's younger sisters Myrtle (Mrs W Sizer) and Ivy (Mrs H Woolfood). A bag of hot 'London' buns and ice blocks was usually the order of the day. We would devour these with great relish before starting work again.

Grandfather's acquisition of a Dort Tourer reflects the prosperity of his business in the early 1920's as few of these expensive vehicles were imported into Australia. They were built in the United States from 1915 until 1924 by the Dort Motor Car Company of Flint, Michigan. The Dort Company used powerful Lycoming engines in their cars. I well remember its impressive large engine with a polished alloy rocket cover running along the top; it was vastly superior to most of the cars of the period. The company went on to become a global operating division of Textron's Avco Corporation specialising mainly in Aero engines. Today it is a world leader in this field.

Josiah Dallas Dort was the founder of the company. He had a background in the construction of wagons, carts and carriages and together with a partner, William Crapo Durant, founded the Flint Road Cart Company in 1884. By 1900 they were making 50,000 vehicles annually. Josiah Dort became a Director and Vice-President of Chevrolet in 1912. However the following year he stepped down and by 1915 had cut ties with his partner. Dort continued manufacturing cars until 1924, when mounting prices of development and distribution made it impossible to compete in the automotive markets of the 1920's. Josiah Dallas Dort's death in 1925 sealed the fate of Dort Motors.

The reputation of the Dort as a high powered and reliable vehicle led Samuel White of the Reedbeds to use three of these cars for his 1922 outback expedition as an ornithologist and collector of botanical specimens. The trip was planned also to assess a route for a projected north/south railway. The party comprising Samuel White, two companions and two experienced mechanics set out from Adelaide on 9th May and travelled across country to Darwin via Alice Springs. They returned through Camooweal, Cloncurry, Bourke, the Darling River and Mt Gambier. In its day it was an adventurous 10 week journey of 8,800km.

Dort cars were also converted by the South Australian Railways to run on rails and act as track inspection vehicles. It was an unusual sight to see a car speeding along the railway lines. I have always regretted the sale of the old Dort as it was such a symbol of fun and good times. On Grandfather's death it was left to this son (my Uncle Keith) who auctioned it at the house sale. It brought 20 pounds.

Grandma Cordon's harsh upbringing in the bush engendered a great love of the natural environment. She talked often of her early days on the farm and described how her father and mother had to struggle through good times and bad to make a success of their own lives while also providing opportunities for their twelve children.

Her father was our Nottle forbear, William Henry Nottle, who was born in the village of Probus, Cornwall in 1845, the same year as high grade deposits of copper were found on the Burra Creek in the mid-north of the newly established Province of South Australia. Five years later, a mine and smelter were in operation with a work-force of 5,000. The Burra mine and an earlier timely discovery at Kapunda (1842) were producing inconceivable wealth which strengthened the local economy struggling to recover from a ruinous financial crisis in 1841, which had resulted in bankruptcy for many colonists, including Abraham Hopkins Davis, my great-great-grandfather on the Edwards side of the family. Cornish miners flocked to Kapunda and the Burra where there was an urgent need for experienced labour to exploit the riches.

Migration was a common practice of many Cornish people in the nineteenth century, with one-third of the population departing to work in mines discovered in many different parts of the world. This

exodus was due to a number of causes, high among them being poverty, famine and the depression and upheaval resulting from the industrial revolution.

Cornish miners and their families tended to travel together, live in close proximity to each other, work together and frequently send money home to assist their families. The majority were Methodists and Wesleyans attracted to South Australia where religious freedom was one of the attractions of the Wakefield system of colonisation.

The copper bonanza received further stimulus when new deposits were found on the west coast of upper Yorke Peninsula at Wallaroo in 1859 and Moonta in 1861. In addition to the large populations at Burra and Kapunda there were now some 8,000 people, largely of Cornish origin, in the three towns of Moonta, Wallaroo and Kadina. At this time, the total population of Adelaide was only 18,000. The mid north of South Australia prospered from the boom in copper production and the consequential rapid increase in the population. The agricultural and pastoral industries were also steadily moving northwards as additional land was opened up for settlement in response to the growing need for food.

By 1865, the demands of the copper districts for workers focused the recruiting activities of emigration agents in South-West England, and Plymouth replaced London as the principal port of departure for South Australian emigration ships. Assisted migration to South Australia reached a peak and it was in that year that William Nottle set forth for Adelaide at the age of 19. We will never know the precise motivation for his decision to join the exodus from Cornwall. However, he was probably attracted by the daily newspaper accounts and lively discussions about the opportunities offering for a better life in the copper rich regions of the new British Province of South Australia.

No doubt William Henry Nottle would have taken advantage of the assisted passage scheme and set out in the ship 'Peeress', arriving at Port Adelaide on 9th July 1865 after a passage of 90 days. He celebrated his 20th birthday during his epic voyage to the other side of the world.

On the day after leaving the ship, the young William secured a position at 12/- a week as a labourer on a farm at the Burra, 156km north of Adelaide. He commented many years later "... I

thought I was well paid at that. A month later my wages were increased to 15/- which was the ruling payment. There was nothing extra for harvesting time.” And so began a very productive and successful career on the land and a tradition continued by his descendants to the present day.

The young Cornishman had made a wise choice as industrial relations on the mines were troublesome, and by 1870, copper production was dwindling leading to the closure of the Burra mine in 1877. By contrast, the agricultural and pastoral industries continued to expand and prosper. Impetus was given to closer settlement in 1869 after the passing of the Strangways Act, officially known as the Waste Lands Amendments Act, when large pastoral properties were cut up for farming blocks.

In 1870, after five years working as a farm hand and shearer, the enterprising young Cornishman purchased his own land at Kooringa in the Hundred of Hallett. The township itself had been created by the South Australian Mining Association in 1846 to house its large work force. It was the first town of its kind to be established by a company in Australia.

In the ‘Burra district’ on 24th April of the following year, 1871, William Henry Nottle, the son of John Nottle (Cornwall), married Mary Anne Hawke, the 18-year-old daughter of John Hawke, a farmer of Mount Bryan. (He was later appointed to the District Council of Mount Bryan when it was proclaimed on 18th March 1875.) Mary had arrived in South Australia with her family from Cornwall in 1866.

William Henry and Mary Anne were to enjoy a long and fruitful life together farming the land and running sheep. Their twelve children consisted of six boys and six girls – William Henry, Mary Ann, Lily (my grandmother who was born on 27th November 1876 at Yarowie), John, George, Beecher, Edwin, Percy, Oliver, Myrtle, Ivy and Ernest.

It was in 1871 that the young newlyweds moved to the Hundred of Appila on the boundary of the Hundred of Booleroo in the Southern Flinders Ranges. The Appila land had been previously part of Wirrabara Station and was proclaimed in 1871 and opened up for selection in 1872. Within a very

short time the first selectors mainly from the Mid North and the Barossa Valley had pegged out their properties. In the haste to take up their land, many lived in either tents, dugouts or bark huts.

The adjoining Hundred of Booleroo was officially proclaimed in 1875. However no town site in this Hundred was surveyed by the Colonial Government until 1878. The Hundred's name was derived from a local Aboriginal word.

Grandmother told me many stories of her experiences as a very young child when the family lived in semi-virgin country and grazed their sheep on the road-side until they had sufficient means to acquire their own land. She recalled how initially her parents lived in a canvas shelter near a running stream. As the family grew she had to assist her mother as well as help on the farm especially at harvest time. It was a very hard life in the erratic weather conditions of the Southern Flinders Ranges.

In 1886 William Nottle purchased Section 21 from W Symonds. He lived on the property until 1894 when he went for a short time to Lincoln Gap Station near Port Augusta possibly on the advice of his father-in-law. He purchased Lincoln Gap Station perhaps as a speculative venture in partnership with Mr Nicholas Fuller and Mr Samuel Challenger on a third share basis. The property was sold to the Hutt family in 1895.

Over 50 years ago the Nottle family solicitor who was based in Adelaide and visited his country clients regularly recounted stories told to him by my great-grandfather about his early years in the bush and experiences with Aboriginals still largely living a traditional life.

William Nottle returned to Booleroo Centre in 1900 and purchased Sections 66, 67E and 86 (Loyden Villa) from William Kelly. He lived there with his family until his fourth son, Beecher, returned from the 1914-1918 war and took over the farm. He and Mary Anne retired initially to Mile End and then in 1928 to 17 Percy Street in Prospect, quite close to their daughter Lily and her husband Frank Cordon.

William Henry Nottle was very active in the district where he lived for so many years. He was a Superintendent of the Appila North Baptist Church and a foundation member of the Booleroo Centre Agricultural Bureau formed on 20th June 1900. He was the first farmer in the District to use a seed drill to sow his wheat crop. He left legacies in his will to Booleroo Centre Hospital, the Methodist Church and the Institute.

In 1931, William and Mary Anne celebrated their diamond wedding in Adelaide at the ages of eighty-six and seventy-six respectively. Miraculously all of their twelve children and their spouses were present on this grand occasion. When asked at the time the secret of their long life and happy marriage, the couple simply responded "hard work".

Great-grandfather Nottle and his wife Mary Anne were hard working and very successful pioneers of the Mid North of South Australia. He died on 5th January 1933 aged 87. Great-grandmother passed away two years later on 19th December 1934 aged 79. I have vague memories of meeting her as a very young child. They are buried in the North Road Anglican Cemetery quite close to the Cordon grave. I remember Grandmother placing flowers from her own garden regularly on her parent's grave right up until the time she had to enter permanent care in her 80s.

In accordance with Cornish custom, the Nottle family stayed close together. The sons were farmers in Booleroo Centre, Pekina and Murraytown Districts until their retirement. The twelve children all lived to a great age: the eldest daughter until she was ninety-three.

I have pleasant memories of spending holidays in my teens on the Percy Nottle Farm at Wirrabara on the Rocky River in the District of Mount Remarkable some 235km north of Adelaide. Later Cath and I spent our honeymoon on the property.

Grandmother Cordon's great love of nature as well as beautiful objects extended into a number of special interests. Her main passion was collecting sea shells. This meant regular trips to the beach, especially after storms when perfect specimens were sometimes washed up on the shore. The Outer Harbour was very popular as delicate Frilled Cockles were a particular prize.

These expeditions were one of the treats of my childhood. When a southerly was forecast, Grandmother would spend days preparing extravagant lunches in anticipation of an expedition to the beach. There were meat pies, apple pies, apricot pies, buns and lots of cakes. More than we could possibly consume, although I remember we did try very hard to devour every morsel. And there was always lemonade and lollies. In those days, diet and calories were unknown to us. Indeed I was fifty before I came to the realisation that such matters needed serious attention.

My very lovable grandfather always tried to avoid these expeditions. He was usually in the midst of some urgent task when Grandmother set her sights on an excursion to the beach or a trip up into the Adelaide Hills in the spring to search for wild flowers and mushrooms. She would become very impatient while we kids were simply overjoyed and ran riot at the prospect of a day of pleasure and delight.

Grandfather's delaying tactic was to clean the spark plugs of his great Dort tourer car. This could take an hour and seriously delay our departure. My grandmother never did realise it was quite unnecessary and simply a ruse.

Frequent trips to the Outer Harbour made this particular hunting ground a familiar one. The mangrove swamps were normally out-of-bounds except for the fringes where a few shell fish lived. I remember one such expedition which could have had a tragic outcome. There had been one of those vicious southerly storms that sometimes wreaked havoc on the sea front in spring. The boisterous weather had blown a number of boats up on to the beaches and seriously eroded the shoreline. This was the signal for Grandmother to rush to the Outer Harbour and search the beach for nature's elusive treasures. On this particular occasion, a shell collecting expedition was mounted with my grandmother and grandfather, my sister Barbara and cousin Neta Cordon. Having combed the sea shore for several hours, I decided to venture along the edge of the vast mangrove swamps at the outlet to the Port River.

It was not long before I could not resist the temptation to go deeper and deeper into the forest of mangroves growing in sticky black mud and strewn with rotting timbers and intersected by a myriad of small streams. Soon the sun disappeared totally as I went further and further into this strange and unfamiliar world spurred on by curiosity and ever hopeful of finding some exotic treasure

which would elicit praise from my grandmother. The time went quickly as I explored among the strange trees with their maze of sharp spikes coming up in lines from their root systems to reach the air when the sea covered the shallow tidal flats.

After several hours, I decided to abandon the quest. Guilt and a degree of trepidation had overcome curiosity and it was time to go back and re-join the picnic party. Of course I was hopelessly lost in the dense mangroves. At this moment I noticed the tide had changed and the sea was beginning to flow in. This added a sense of urgency to my escape from this mysterious and rather frightening environment. But which way to go? There were moments of fear, terror and even panic as I had to wade across many small streams which were becoming swollen with the incoming tide.

It was entirely good luck rather than either good judgement or common sense that I eventually emerged from the thick mangroves. I was somewhat shaken by the experience but warmly welcomed by my companions who had become anxious and begun to search for me. At that moment I recall life had never felt better and I resolved not to be so adventurous again. Of course in later life when in Arnhem Land and Central Australia, I had even more frightening experiences.

Some years later following the declaration of the Second World War, Catalina Flying Boats were based at the Outer Harbour. This became an added attraction during our visits. I remember creeping up to the barbed wire barriers to watch with great fascination as these very distinctive aircrafts came and went on their endless missions to locate enemy raiders in the Southern Ocean.

A wild South Easterly was awaited by Grandmother with great anticipation. The enthusiasm was infectious and I too waited for the storms as they meant happy excursions to the beach associated with many acts of generosity and kindness. There was a sense of excitement and challenge to find the most intact natural treasures washed up from the deep endless seas coupled with picnic delights and the freedom of the open air.

When storms occurred near weekends or public holidays, my mother and father would join the expeditions as these were by no means linked only with visits to the Outer Harbour during school

holidays at Barker Road. Our hunting grounds extended along the entire eastern shore of St Vincent Gulf and on to Aldinga, Yankalilla, Cape Jervis and following the coast to Victor Harbour, Port Elliot and the cockle beds in the vast sandy beaches on either side of the Murray mouth and Coorong that extended as far as the eye could see. There were mountainous sand dunes lining the coast where whale bones were to be found, adding a sense of excitement to our adventures.

We would walk up and down the sea shore for miles in an endless quest for the victims of the storms. Often the seas were still boisterous with cold winds blowing in from the south. As soon as we found something of interest be it a paper nautilus shell, a little cowrie, fragile pink cockle, a sea urchin or frail little sea horse that perished in the storm we would run excitedly to Grandmother and listen to her explanation of our finds. She was always kind and encouraging and be full of praise for our efforts.

I well recall later violent storms along the coast. The original Glenelg Jetty with its wonderful public baths, aquarium, Police post and three-storey kiosk and tea rooms was always an attraction when we were youngsters. It was a popular past-time to walk out along the jetty and talk to the fishermen and then enjoy an ice cream from the kiosk before returning home.

Glenelg was our nearest shopping centre in those days, indeed Dr Donald Steele also had his surgery there and made home visits to Marion when the need arose.

There was a violent storm in 1943 which completely wrecked the jetty kiosk. We made a special trip to see the damage and then drove right along the coastline. The most memorable storm occurred in April 1948. It was rated as a freak hurricane and totally destroyed the jetty which had been a feature of Glenelg since 1859. The Royal Australian Naval Frigate 'Barcoo' went aground off North Glenelg while charting Harbour entrances along with many smaller boats.

During wartime the German Commerce Raider 'Penguin' laid mines in South Australian waters in 1940 including Gulf St Vincent. Occasionally one would be washed up on the beach during a storm, reminding everyone that war was coming even closer to Australia. I remember my father taking us to see one of these sinister looking objects lying on the shore awaiting demolition.

These were the early days of motoring when it was fashionable to set Sundays aside for excursions or visits to friends and relations. Motor vehicles were less reliable in those days and the roads themselves were often rough and unsealed. It was common to puncture tyres which meant removing a wheel on the side of the road, taking out the tube, mending the leak and then putting it all back together and inflating the tyre again with a hand pump. This was a tedious procedure as wheel nuts were usually very tight and difficult to remove. In addition, tyres would often adhere tightly to the rims, making removal time consuming. Engines were less efficient and suffered wear making them prone to burning oil as well as over-heating, especially when driving up steep hills during the summer months. This resulted in long delays as the traffic would become heavily congested. Other problems were created by faulty petrol pumps, spark plugs, distributors and other essential parts. When going on country excursions for the day, it was always necessary to carry water, oil, tubes, spark plugs and other spare parts together with a good tool kit. Fortunately my father had grown up in the era when the combustion engine was replacing the horse and he became a very skilled mechanic. While we searched the beaches, he would check the car ready for the return trip.

On rare occasions the irresistible urge to collect seashells took Grandmother even further afield to Cairns, Townsville and as far as exotic Thursday Island on a never ending quest for beautiful shells. We were always excited to arrive at Barker Road following one of her trips and hear about adventures in distant places.

Grandfather had made Grandmother two beautiful large glass show cases in which to display her ever growing collection of shells. They had pride of place at Barker Road and were a source of interest to all comers. Whenever we made a visit we were shown the latest finds which had been cleaned and added to the collection. Sometimes parcels of exchange specimens would have arrived and we were allowed to watch while they were unpacked carefully and placed in the cabinets. To us young kids they were wondrous items of exotic form and beautiful colours gathered on sea shores far and wide.

Opening the cases to examine some special treasures was a treat to be relished. We insisted without fail on having a large cowrie shell placed to our ear to hear the roar of the sea or simply experience the aroma of the shells. These were ritual experiences to be anticipated with childish

wonder. It was not long before I was following in Grandmother's footsteps and had begun my own collection.

Grandmother always promised one case of shells to my cousin Neta and the other one to me as Barbara and cousin Peter Cordon had little interest in them. I am certain grandma recognised my enthusiasm and quite imperceptibly placed some of the most attractive shells in the case destined for me. The collection is still held in the family. Neta Cordon sold her shells through Theodore Bruce when she left South Australia to settle with her husband in Tasmania.

Grandmother was indeed an avid shell collector and also an enthusiastic member of the Field Naturalist Section of the Royal Society of South Australia where she gained a deeper knowledge of the subject from expert conchologists.

The origins of the Society can be traced back to the very beginning of the State. The original body was The Natural History Society of South Australia formed on Thursday 13th December 1838 with the objective of "... the cultivation of the Science of Natural History in all the branches and more especially, of the Natural History of South Australia". The meeting was initiated and chaired by none other than Abraham Hopkins Davis whose daughter Emily married Thomas Stanford whose daughter Kate married my great-grandfather Friend Henry Edwards. The Council was comprised of a number of eminent pioneer settlers who played key roles in the development of the State under the Wakefield system of colonisation. AH Davis was appointed the founding President.

The formation of the Field Naturalists' Section was raised initially at the Royal Society's Annual General Meeting on 14th August 1883. The first afternoon excursion followed quickly on 24th November of the same year. These field trips became the core of its activities. Many years later Grandmother became a regular member and joined the Saturday afternoon excursions. She would often take me along giving further stimulus to my love of museums and collecting.

Wild flower shows were one of several important initiatives taken by the Field Naturalists. The initial show was staged in the Banqueting Room at the Adelaide Town Hall on 25th October 1888.

By 1920 they had become a regular and highly successful feature of the Society's program. In addition they were profitable events generating a little money to assist in its work.

Grandmother Cordon became deeply involved in these gala shows and played a leadership role for some years. I recall visiting her at work on the displays in successive years prior to the war and being spellbound by the sheer beauty of the arrangements that filled the Town hall. Wild flowers were brought from far and wide to enhance the shows including the premier wild flower state of Western Australia so well known for the vastness and beauty of its springtime extravaganza of exotic wild native blooms that in some regions carpeted the ground as far as the eye could see.

I recall on one of my early visits, grandma took me for morning tea at her favourite restaurant in Grenfell Street. I was allowed to order any drink I fancied. I chose a 'spider' my favourite delight. It arrived and I quickly topped up the part filled glass with lemonade little realising what would be the outcome. The whole drink fizzed and bubbled and then expanded before my eyes, overflowing on to the crisp white table cloth making the most dreadful mess. I was so very embarrassed and learnt a lesson about fizzy drinks.

The Field Naturalists Section also took a particular interest in the study of Australian shells. A shell collectors' club was formed on 22nd June 1925 with twenty founding members including such well known identities as Sir Joseph Virco, F Trigg, FK Godfrey, W Broadbent, WJ Kimber, Dr Torr (a close friend of FH Edwards Snr) and later BC Cotton and P Plunket. Grandmother became an active member and gained a deep appreciation of conchology through her association with specialists in this field.

My diary records one of several visits by the Field Naturalists to Barker Road to view grandma's shell collection and also her beautiful garden:

Saturday 6 March 1943

"Went to Grandma's for the day. She had the Field Naturalists there.

There was such a crowd of people and all were very enthusiastic."

I remember this occasion as if it were yesterday. Several months later I recorded a further meeting of the Field Naturalists.

Wednesday 16 May 1943

“Went to school on the train with ‘Hainsey’. In the night we went to the Field Naturalists. Pictures on the Great Barrier Reef.”

If there were no storms in Spring, the picnic hampers would be loaded into the Dort and we would head for the Adelaide Hills in a quest for orchids and other wild flowers. We were taught to admire and enjoy the forests and the host of flowers that came forth with the warmer weather. These childhood experiences deeply embedded in me a love of the natural environment and the need for its protection. The hampers would be filled with our favourite treats. We were always impatient to stop on the roadside for a picnic lunch. In season we collected baskets of fresh mushrooms which Grandmother relished until she was poisoned by eating some toad stools. She became terribly ill and lost some of her fondness for mushrooms.

I recall in the mid-1930's as we drove along the Gorge Road into the Adelaide Hills, the columns of smoke rising up from the squatter's huts which were still dotted along the River Torrens as it wended its way down to the Adelaide Plains. The depression was still biting hard for many people including my extended family.

‘Heading for the hills’ was something my father late instilled in me during the darkest days of the Second World War when Japanese air attacks became a possibility following the bombing of Darwin on 27th April 1942. One of our trucks, a T-model Ford, was to be loaded with food and personal possessions and I was to drive the family up into the hills for safety while my father went firefighting. It was a serious proposal at the time, but now seems a rather pointless and desperate plan.

The prospect of starting High School was a whole new and exciting experience although it came with its own set of challenges. There had been regular discussions about whether or not I should go on to a secondary school. First the depression had taken its toll leaving serious psychological scars and serious economic difficulties. Indeed, my parents were so traumatised by the experience they lived the remainder of their lives in constant fear of another financial collapse. Then came difficulties imposed by the war which created manpower and other shortages with adverse impacts on the viability of 'Zante Grove', then managed by my father. His preference was for me to follow in his footsteps and complete my primary school education and then assist in looking after the property as he had done for his father. On the other hand, my mother's view was for me to continue my education and embark on a new career rather than be drawn into the complexities of the family business. She predicted that with five aunts to be considered, the property would eventually have to be sold and the proceeds shared among Grandfather's six children.

My future schooling became a topic of conversation among close family and friends. I well recall Miss Olive Quick sitting me down in her lovely sitting room in her historic family home and urging me to stay at school and become a doctor rather than be caught up in earning a living from the land with its seasonal fluctuations. Miss Quick was the well-educated daughter of Arthur Quick of 'Brookside' who had employed my grandfather for many years when he was starting out. I remember him well as a grand old man riding his horse around the property. Miss Quick was a family friend and a staunch supporter of our parish church St Mary's-on-the-Sturt.

Of course, as a country boy 12 years of age, I was simply accepting the reality of my situation and enjoying life on the land at Marion while dreaming how wonderful it would be to work in a museum.

The compromise was one year at a technical high school where I would learn some skills of use in the orchard while also opening up the possibility of furthering my education. Thebarton Boys Technical School was chosen. It was the brain-child of Dr Charles Fenner who had been brought to South Australia from Victoria to be Superintendent of Technical Education. He later became a well-known Director of Education with a keen interest in local history. Thebarton was unique as it was not seen as a school for the less academic primary leavers but as an institution to put technical studies on a par with academic education.

Among my subjects were blacksmithing, fitting and turning, wood work, sheet metal work and a host of art subjects. I have never regretted the decision to send me to Thebby Tech. It was a good school and the practical training I received has stood me in good stead throughout my life.

Ultimately, I did achieve my ambition to work in a museum when 23 years later in 1965 I succeeded Norman B Tindale as Curator of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum. This was the first of very few positions ever to become vacant in this field in South Australia. In the meantime, off I went to Thebarton Boys Technical School. It was quite an intrepid journey as I had to walk from home to Ascot Park Railway Station where I caught a steam train to Mile End. I usually stood outside at the end of a carriage. This 'thrill' often led me to be smothered in cinders. At Mile End I boarded a very modern stylish Henley Beach tram for several sections and then walked the rest of the way.

When I started at Thebby Tech I kept a very brief and very scatty diary to record the momentous changes taking place in my life. These notes and a series of compositions written as part of English lessons give some interesting insights into what ended up to be three happy and rewarding years while Australia was at war.

Tuesday 2nd February 1943 was my first day at Thebarton Boys Technical School. I recorded it in my diary as follows:

"Today I started at Thebarton Tech. I like it but we didn't do much work."

As my diary goes on to record, prior to launching into secondary school, my sister and I had spent some busy and enjoyable days in the Christmas holidays with my grandparents at Barker Road:

Tuesday 12th January 1943

"Went for milk then to grandma's then to dentist (in the city) then back to gran's. Went to Kodaks."

Wednesday 13th January 1943

"Went to grandpa's shop and started to make a ladder. Went to the pictures in the evening."

Thursday 14th January 1943

"Went to grandpa's shop and nearly finished my ladder."

Saturday 16th January 1943

"Went to shop. Then to the 'Ozone' (nearby picture theatre on the Main North Road) and in the evening I went to Colonel Light Gardens." (Picture theatre built and jointly owned by Grandfather with Clarence Hinton.)

Monday 18th January 1943

"Started to make a table and went to have my hair cut."

Wednesday 20th January 1943

"Went to shop and made a table. In the afternoon I went to the pictures."

Thursday 21st January 1943

"Went to the shop and did more to my table. In the evening I went to the 'Picadilly' for the first time." (The very latest picture theatre built in 1940 in O'Connell Street North Adelaide in the prevailing Art Deco style.)

Friday 22nd January 1943

"Went on with my table at the shop."

Saturday 23rd January 1943

“After finishing my table I went to the Ozone. In the evening mum and dad took us home.”

An interesting encounter while at Thebby Tech was a brief association with Keith Michell who became a world acclaimed Shakespearean actor. At the time he was a popular student teacher, deeply involved in acting with the Adelaide Repertory Theatre. He was very supportive and asked me to assist by reading parts in the plays he was rehearsing. We spent many relaxed hours together in the privacy of the school library. I also had the opportunity to see him perform.

The experience of travelling by train and tram to High School at Thebarton gave me the opportunity and confidence to find my own way to the City and beyond. By 1942 I was allowed to venture out on my own, taking the train from Ascot Park Station to the City. When visiting my grandparents, it was simply a matter of catching the Enfield tram in King William Street and remembering to alight at Barker Road.

It was during these excursions to the City that I first entered the fascinating world of antiques, curios and rare books. The Old Curiosity Shop situated at the lower end of Rundle Street had attracted my attention on one of my visits to Grandfather Edwards in his office at the East End Market where he was in charge. The shop was run by a very kindly old lady who always welcomed an interested young customer. So dense was the array of stock that it was difficult to navigate through the wonderland of pictures, furniture, ethnographic objects, ornaments, brick-a-brack and an endless array of other interesting and desirable items. Aboriginal artefacts from Central Australia adorned the walls and there were several shelves laden with old books. When browsing among the books, I came upon the two-volume journal of Capt Charles Sturt in which he records his expedition in 1829-1830 to solve the problem of the destination of the Western flowing rivers of New South Wales.

I was spellbound by this extraordinary and very courageous feat of exploration and returned regularly to read the two volumes. Amazingly I saved my pocket money for several years and finally was able to purchase the set for 10 guineas. At the time it was the most ambitious acquisition of my life. The journals remain the most treasured books in my library. The purchase of the Sturt Journals led to a terrible life-time addiction to acquiring Australian.

Sturt stood out as such a fine example of determination and courage that some years later I was integral to the compulsory acquisition by the local council of 'The Grange' Capt Sturt's residence in South Australia from 1840 to 1853 and its restoration and development as a Charles Sturt Memorial Museum. The house was built by Sturt in the early colonial style and is significant as being the first in the Grange area known as the Reedbeds where my Edwards forebears had settled.

Among the antique dealers and booksellers with whom I became acquainted were George Holman and his brother Frank. They stand out as being very special. Although in his 90's, George became a close friend and mentor and it is to him I owe my early appreciation of fine art and Australian. I have to acknowledge these early influences as they helped shape and enrich my life.

When he was born at Cowadilla in 1874, George Everard Holman became the second of twelve children of John Rowe Holman and Mary Ann Holman. He spent his boyhood on the family farm in the Balaklava District in the Lower North of South Australia. It was here that his interest in nature and music became apparent. He was said to have been a sensitive boy and in retrospect it is not surprising that in 1892 he chose to become apprenticed to an Adelaide Fine Art dealer, Adolphe Emile Marval of Pirie Street so that he could work amongst the things that most interested him. I was in Marval's shop that he discovered his greatest interest – people.

Following Marval's death in the late 1920's, George Holman opened his own shop at 104 Pirie Street in 1928 where he served the public until it closed 75 years later on Friday 3rd March 1967.

As my diary notes on Saturdays, while on holidays with my grandparents I would sometimes accompany Grandfather to the matinee sessions at the Colonel Light Gardens Picture Theatre where he often acted as Manager. He had built the theatre and owned it in partnership with a man named Clarence Hinton.

Colonel Light Gardens was South Australia's first large scale housing project, inspired by a town planning and housing movement that occurred worldwide before and during World War One. The area originally formed the historic 298-acre (120 hectare) Mortlock Park Estate, known as 'Grange

Farm'. It was purchased in June 1915 by the Vaughan Labour Government from the Estate of William Tennant Mortlock. During the First World it became the site of the Mitcham Army Camp where soldiers were trained prior to being posted overseas. The army retained the land until January 1920.

The area was transformed into a model garden suburb with many hundreds of low-cost homes. The majority of these were built in the 1920's under the government's mass housing project known as the Thousand Homes Scheme. The objective was to provide opportunities for families to move out of crowded, inner suburbs with often sub-standard accommodation into more spacious homes set on their own block of land in metropolitan Adelaide. The SA Housing Trust was created after World War Two to carry on this laudable tradition.

The entire suburb of Colonel Light Gardens was designated a State Heritage Area. It is an excellent example of twentieth century planning based on the garden city concept and is considered to be the most complete and representative garden suburb to have survived in Australia.

There is little doubt that Frank Cordon, the successful 38-year-old builder in Prospect viewed this unique development as a business opportunity and constructed and operated a picture theatre to service the new and expanding suburb. It may well be that he was also involved in construction of some of the homes.

When Grandfather and I embarked on our Saturday afternoon excursions we could catch the Colonel Light Gardens tram which ran from Enfield directly along the main North Road through North Adelaide and the City and straight along Goodwood Road to Colonel Light Gardens. This avoided the need to change trams en route. For a youngster in his early teens, these excursions were special treats as they arose only when Grandfather was managing the theatre. There were privileged visits to the projection room and of course a seat upstairs in the Dress Circle along with cool drinks and lollies. This made me feel very special. The matinees were planned for kids. There were exciting weekly serials with either a western or a thriller as the main feature. They always finished with some poor soul about to drop into a pit of alligators or tied to a railway line with a train

making a rapid approach. "Come again next week and see what happens" – was the catch cry! Of course, when war broke out, there was a spate of war films which we enjoyed with great relish.

Grandfather's office at the Colonel Light Gardens Picture Theatre was a youngster's paradise. The walls were covered with glossy posters straight from the magic of Hollywood. Advertising material arrived weekly with information on the latest films and the stars who were on centre stage. I would return home proudly carrying a selection of colourful posters, magazines and pamphlets. I remember taking a close interest in the latest starlets particularly when they were 'scantily clad' in a substantial two-piece bathing costume.

Colonel Light Gardens was not far from our home on Oaklands Road at Marion and my first memories of moving pictures were in the 1930's when as a special treat on Saturday nights we would have complimentary tickets to Grandfather's theatre. Of course, no film would commence until we had all stood to attention for the National Anthem. It was considered shameful to stay seated and it was rare that anyone flaunted the custom. The theatre was always full as it was the most popular and latest form of entertainment at that time. Although the distance home was quite short, my sister and I usually fell asleep and had to be carried in and put to bed.

On several occasions as a special treat we were taken to a vaudeville show in the City with dancers, acrobats, comedians, ventriloquists and the memorable scantily clad beauties standing immobile on the stage.

When a stunning movie was being shown at the new Roxy Theatre built in 1937 on the Anzac Highway at Everard Park a group of us (boys and girls) would ride our bikes many miles to the theatre, often 'donkeying' one of our companions, sometimes a girl! The upstairs dress circle was the most desirable place to sit as it was possible to place an arm around a girlfriend without anyone being behind to notice such exciting but outrageous behaviour. The price of the seats was 9 pence – downstairs was 6 pence. It was always disappointing when we could not manage to earn one shilling for our Saturday afternoon treat.

On occasions usually Friday evenings my father, mother and sister Barbara would venture down to Glenelg, our nearest shopping centre. Here there was a choice of no less than three picture theatres – The Strand, The Seaview and another in the chain of glamorous Art Deco style Ozone Picture Theatres which opened on 6th November 1937. Mum would change the library books, do some late-night shopping and then we would all enjoy a picture show and an ice cream. Occasionally, as a special treat, my sister and I would be taken to Loon Park on the waterfront.

Many of my early contacts with Aboriginals were made on visits to Goolwa near the mouth of the River Murray. Despite never ending adventures at home, I was envious of some of my friends who went caravanning every year during the long summer holidays. However, it was always difficult for my father to leave the orchard during the fruit picking season. On one occasion in 1938 he hired a beautiful modern Furness caravan and we set off in great excitement for Goolwa for a family Christmas holiday. Were we joined our close family friends 'Uncle' Jim and 'Auntie' Marjorie Duncan and their son Graham. They had their own caravan parked close to us and we shared the pleasure of having a few weeks in a relaxed and very different environment.

There were regular fishing expeditions, long walks in the endless sand-hills along the South Coast. We tried our hand at rowing, watched steam driven paddle steamers pulling barges and went for trips to the barrages that held back the sea water as well as to the Murray mouth itself. However, it was the Aboriginal camps along the water's edge that intrigued me most of all as these people were still living and following a semblance of their old way of life. They fished regularly, cooked their meals on open fires and made baskets, nets, boomerangs, clubs and other wooden artefacts for sale. They were especially adept at making colourful feather flowers. They were very friendly to us kids and we were soon taught how to throw boomerangs. This went well until one of the weapons hit the windscreen of our car when I was demonstrating my newly found skill in boomerang throwing to my father. This was a source of great amusement but from then on, we had to confine this activity to the open sand-hills. After many hours of instruction and many days of practice, we became successful at having them return to our feet. Occasionally we were able to catch them.

My father and 'Uncle' Jim spent most of their time at work on their respective properties and would join us whenever they could and always took us fishing in a dingy.

My world was shattered when Grandfather Cordon, who I loved so dearly and admired so much, fell ill with stomach cancer. He had been my friend, companion and co-conspirator for as long as I could remember, and it was inconceivable that he could be seriously ill. I could not remember him ever having had a day of sickness.

Visits to Barker Road which had been such a delight became frightening and confusing as my grandfather lay dying. I would often hear him crying and saying how he did not wish to die. We lived in hope of a cure, but the agony simply went on and on as he wasted away. His heart was strong, and the cancer simply had to run its slow but fateful course.

My mother took the brunt of the tragedy which had befallen our family. At first, she made the journey from Marion to Prospect each week but eventually stayed at Barker Road to help ease the strain on my grandmother. Of course, this was very disruptive to family life.

No sooner had Grandfather taken ill than his partner sold his shares in the Colonel Light Gardens Picture Theatre to Ozone which was then an emerging take-over 'giant' in the cinema industry. Apparently, the sale by his partner enabled the new owners to take control of the Company and also its cash reserves. I remember this was very upsetting as it forced Grandfather who had built the theatre to sell his shares at a time when he could ill afford to lose the income the theatre generated.

While the family tragedy was unfolding, his only son, my wayward Uncle Keith Cordon had been chosen by Charles P Mountford to be camp manager for the 1947 expedition he was leading to remote Arnhem Land in North Australia for the National Geographic Society of America. This created great excitement as Mr Mountford was already a legendary figure through his many years of effort to focus public attention on Aboriginal Australia. His expeditions to remote regions were universally known through films, books, articles and lectures. This new venture was to be the largest and most comprehensive study ever to be undertaken in this region. As a consequence, the appointment of CP Mountford attracted the envy of a number of anthropologists.

I viewed my first Mountford film in 1943 entitled *Brown Men and Blue Mountains*. It was shot in Aranda Country in Central Australia and showed the vast desert environment and its ancient people then living mainly a traditional way of life. I remember it featured an impressive aboriginal elder making a sand drawing. It was a stimulating experience to see this first colour film for the Central Deserts and the Aboriginal people who had lived in that arid environment for many thousands of years.

I first met Charles P Mountford at my grandparent's home with my Uncle Keith. However, it was my grandmother who nurtured my sympathetic curiosity about the first Australians when she took me to meetings and excursions of the local Field Naturalists Society. Of course, in later years it was CP Mountford who further aroused my interest and started me on a career path. Our first meeting kept alive the dream of working at a museum.

When my uncle resigned as camp manager and arrived home from the north, I knew the end must be near for Grandfather. It was enthralling to hear at first hand details of the expedition to remote northern lands, but these feelings were muted by Grandfather's steady decline. Inevitably I had to grow up whether I liked it or not, but I can truly say life was never quite the same after my grandfather died on 26th August 1948. He was only 66 years of age.

It was my first close encounter with the death of a close relative. The happiness of an intimate family life with my grandparents on both sides was challenged. Previously I had lost my great grandparents from the Cordon, Edwards, Nottle and Heading families but these were less intimate relationships. Of course, ultimately, I had to face up to loss of my other grandparents, great uncles and aunts, uncles and aunts, father and mother and many friends.

The beautifully polished coffin was placed in 'state' in the panelled dining room at Barker Road. Grandfather had lots and lots of friends who came to pay their last respects. Then there were flowers, a vast array of beautiful flowers. I had never seen so many before or since. I remember feeling very distraught and it was with the greatest difficulty that I ventured into the dining room where the coffin rested surrounded by his friends.

After an agonising delay, the coffin was finally carried slowly out through the lovely front garden. It was a solemn occasion. My mother, father, sister and I drove in the mile-long cortege of cars. It went slowly along the Main North Road on its sad journey to the North Road Anglican Cemetery where the family graves of the Cordon and Nottle families are located. I knew them well as I went often with my grandmother to tend the graves and place flowers on them from her garden. She was a stickler for looking after the family graves: a tradition I follow as a mark of respect to her.

There was a very moving service in the small, overflowing chapel which seemed to go on for an eternity. I held back my tears until the coffin was taken out to the open grave. It was all beyond comprehension. Frank Cordon was laid to rest in his family grave and left behind a distraught family and a host of friends and relatives. It was 1948 and I was 18 years of age and firmly settled into the routine of life on 'Zante Grove'. It was all part of growing up. Of course, now I know that each generation has to make way for the next. Later Cath's mother was also laid to rest in the Main North Road Cemetery. Some years on, her father was buried in their family grave.

My grandmother never recovered. She lived on for many, many years, reaching the age of 83, but nothing was ever the same. She moved into one of the small cottages built as a source of income by Grandfather in Davies Terrace next to his workshop. She would often say how lonely life had become as one by one her many friends had all passed away. On 14th December 1949, the lovely family home at 63 Barker Road, which held so many fond memories was sold at auction and the house changed hands. Most of the beautiful ornaments Grandmother had brought together during her lifetime were sold for very little and disappeared forever. The house survives today and is well maintained, although the garden of my youth is no more. I remember at the time wanting desperately to buy the house to preserve the delights of a happy childhood. Of course, this was another impossible dream, so it all had to be left behind. I still make the occasional pilgrimage to Barker Road, Davies Terrace and the North Road Cemetery to relive the memories of my youth.

It was distressing to see Grandfather's assets frittered away, firstly by my Uncle Keith, who in his younger days had been financed by Grandfather in a number of business ventures. Sadly, they failed and resulted in financial ruin. At the time of his death there were heavy probate duties to be paid which made inroads into the Estate. The main beneficiaries were my mother and uncle with one small cottage in Davies Terrace going to each of the three surviving grandchildren; my sister Barbara, my cousin Neta Cordon and me. Somehow it seemed wrong that such a productive life

was cut short through illness. His main tangible, grand and lasting legacy are the wonderful homes he created.

I remember my disappointment when Grandfather's workshop and everything it contained including his collection of beautifully kept hand tools went to my uncle who hastily sold them for very little return. And so, the accumulation of a lifetime was regrettably but inevitably dispersed, leaving only memories that fade with time.

Uncle Keith and Auntie Vera had lived in the cottage in Davies Terrace which I inherited. My auntie was always very generous to us, but I thought it somewhat strange that before entering her house we always had to remove our shoes. Once inside, we were confronted with two of the fluffiest cats I had ever seen. To me, this was a serious contradiction as despite the special care the cats received, I recall thinking that even with shoes I would create far less mess. This is probably the reason I developed such a terrible allergy to cats.

My cousin Peter Cordon took after his father and had difficulty in settling into a career. I remember the fuss on one occasion when grandma had to pay off his debts to keep him from being prosecuted. My mother was aghast. Be this as it may, we had a happy childhood relationship. My mother and father would sometimes visit my uncle and aunt on a Saturday evening to enjoy a game of penny poker or to play bridge. They were happy times. We kids would embark on all sorts of mischief. I well recall Peter teaching me how to build my first crystal wireless set. Tragically he was killed later in a motor bike accident. Neta married a young German named Siegfried Wosnitza. They lived in Darwin for a time and had one little daughter. I met them in 1965 on my first expedition to North Australia and went sailing on Darwin Harbour in their catamaran. Ultimately, they purchased a farm in Tasmania. Much to my regret, we have lost contact due to a busy life.

Uncle Keith became Manager of the Vacuum Oil Company at Parafield Aerodrome when it was developing in the 1930's. The company held regular film nights in their city theatrette and we were always invited and enjoyed the shows. Uncle's position at Parafield provided another source of childhood delight as we occasionally visited him particularly when there were air races or special aircraft passing through Adelaide. Parafield was first used as an 'all over' aerodrome in 1927. It was not until 1936 with the formation of Australian National Airways that regular flights began.

Those were days of Tiger Moths and a host of small smart looking aircraft. Then there were occasions when quite ugly Junkers 88s made of finely corrugated aluminium called at Parafield and created great interest. These early experiences were to give me a lasting addiction to aviation.

My fascination with the emergence of aviation began around 1936 and continued throughout my lifetime. I followed the development of aircraft with great interest from the days of the Tiger Moth and other light aircraft through to the Concorde, Airbus A380, Stealth Bomber and today's ever-growing line up of extraordinary aircraft.

My trips to airports began when Uncle Keith Cordon was appointed Manager of the Vacuum Oil Company at the Parafield Airport, 18km north of Adelaide. The company began operating in Australia in 1895 and introduced the well-known Plume brand of petrol in 1916. The Flying Red Horse was introduced in 1939 and became an international brand. Its first Aviation Manager in Australia was appointed in 1928. It was early days for an industry that revolutionised travel.

The Vacuum Oil Company held special documentary film nights in a city theatrette in Shell House on North Terrace. Uncle Keith always invited us to attend and I remember being fascinated by the early documentaries on exploration for oil in Papua New Guinea and other far off lands. Film shows were a novelty at this time and were a delight to a youngster. We visited Uncle Keith from time to time at Parafield. He would ring to alert us of aircrafts passing through Adelaide or when special flying days were staged. It was exciting to watch Uncle Keith re-fuelling planes from the large Vacuum Oil tanker. Those were the early days for flying and most of the aircraft were Tiger Moths and other light aircraft. I was fascinated to see a Junkers 88 made of finely corrugated aluminium flying through Parafield.

These early experiences led to an addiction to Air Shows, special displays and the arrival of new types of aircraft. I well recall seeing my first jet. Its flight had been well publicised in advance and was due while I was visiting Grandma Cordon at her Davies Terrace home at Nailsworth. I climbed onto the roof of her garage to gain a good view. I waited in anticipation, and then suddenly the jet flashed, passed overhead, followed by a mighty roar. It was an exciting moment. The jet age had arrived.

The first flight to land at Parafield was flown by H.C. 'Horrie' Miller on 1st October 1927. The airport was officially opened in August of 1929. It was not until July 1936 with the formation of Australia National Airways that regular flights began to Perth, Melbourne and Sydney as well as to country centres. The aircraft used by A.N.A. included the Havilland Dragon Rapide followed by the Lockheed Electra, Messerschmidt Taifun and the Douglas DC2 and later DC3. About a year after this flight, Butler crashed his plane at Minlaton and although he survived, he died two years later on 30th July 1924 at the age of 34. He was buried in the North Road Anglican Cemetery where his impressive monument was always a point of interest when Grandmother Cordon took me on her regular visits to the family graves to lay flowers from her garden. She visited regularly to ensure the graves were well kept.

I have secured lengthy extended leases for most of the graves.

I was fond of Uncle Keith and was to see him on many occasions in later years as he took up residence at Katherine in the Northern Territory. It was a sad ending to a rather non-productive life of a well educated and very likeable individual. I stayed with Uncle Keith when en route into Arnhem Land on my early expeditions. He was very kind and hospitable and had a network of friends and acquaintances which were very helpful in my work.

One of my main interests at Parafield was a small hangar containing the remains of several crashed aeroplanes. If luck was running my way, Uncle Keith would give me a few pieces of a plane to take home. This filled me with utter joy. At the time, there was nothing more desirable than part of a crashed aeroplane! After school at the age of about nine I would walk several miles from Ascot Park to the Furness Caravan Factory on the South Road at Edwardstown, where off-cuts could be collected free of charge from the scrap heap. I would drag them several miles home much to my parents' frustration as it created such a mess. Gradually the skeleton of a large plane took shape. I never lacked for either imagination or enthusiasm when engaged on one of my ever-changing enterprises. Of course, it was a totally fruitless exercise. Everyone must have thought I was quite mad.

As war approached, I became strongly attracted to the Air Force. I wanted desperately to be a fighter pilot and fly Spitfires. Every book on the subject was sought out and devoured with relish. I went to every movie that featured war and aeroplanes. I was horribly disappointed when the war came to an end. On reflection, it was fortunate I did not become involved in the horrors of war.

Nevertheless, I still retain an enthusiasm for Spitfires and vintage aircraft. These interests led me to create and Chair a planning committee to establish a National Air and Space Museum at Point Cook in Victoria. But more later about that failed initiative.