

A load of incidents, happenings and events in my life together with other things I may remember.

Christopher de Chazal

When is a book not a book?
When it is notes about my life.

(Initial footnotes do not embellish the text, they constitute homework!)

CHAPTER ONE

“The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story and writes another”
J. M. Barrie

It must have been a warm August night in Burwash Sussex. Primrose Cottage to be precise is where I assume that I was conceived. Christopher Cyril de Chazal was born on 7th April 1939: it was a Good Friday.

Burwash is the village in which is located “Batemans” the home of Rudyard Kipling who wrote the poem “If”. Friday’s child is loving and giving, I do not feel that this belongs to me.



My father Louis Cyril de Chazal had lived at 22 Clarendon Rd London W11, Possibly when I came home from Hammersmith Hospital, where I was born I was taken to 6 Gregory Place W8 where presumably my parents set up their first home.

My mother, Edith Mary Charlotta Anderson had been brought up at 28 Saint Gabriel’s Road London NW2. Charlotta is there because 12th May, her birthday, is Charlotta’s Saint Day in Sweden

Let us start with the profession and “good standing”. My mother was the eldest of three, Mary, Ted and Joy. She was academic, loved social life and decided in the 1920’s to study architecture at the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) in Bloomsbury Square. There she studied with an extraordinary set of students

many of whom became very well known, amongst others:

Jellicoe, Geoffrey Alan (1900-1996) who designed the sky garden on House of Frazer rooftop in Guildford

Maxwell Fry and his wife Jane Drew

Sheila Haywood (try Google)

Peggy (married John Ivimy who wrote a book on Stonehenge)¹

I do not know where my parents met but my father was a charming man with no money. I think he needed someone with a profession and of “good standing”.

They agreed to marry.

Wedding day pictures 30th Jan 1937 The New Church (Swedenbourg) Kensington

¹ The Sphinx & The Megaliths, Turnstone Books ISBN 85500 022 8



Joy and Ted in the background

There were not many female students of architecture at the time. Obviously my mother did well as she obtained a scholarship to study landscape architecture in Boston USA. She much enjoyed that period of her life.

I think it was at this time that she met her name-sake Mary Anderson, they remained friends for life and met up again in the 1980's when she went to the States with A. Joy

My grandfather, Gustav, my mother's father, was a Swede. He met my grandmother in London. She was working as a milliner, I know not where. He was a Master Tailor and may have lived at 32 Gloucester Crescent, Regents Park. They started married life in Acton London, possibly at 57 Maldon Road, because I have found a post card addressed there to "Mrs Anderson" which says "How's your honeymoon, Mary anon". They moved to 28, St Gabriel's Road Cricklewood a few years later.



Peter Gustav Anderson

My grandfather set up P. G. Anderson in Savile Row (see Google) and later took on a partner, called Shepherd, hence Anderson and Shepherd Ltd was set up. They specialised in bespoke tailoring for Indian Maharajas and did very well financially.



My mother was the eldest of three. She was always known as “May” born 12th May.1911, then there was Edward Gustav Valdemar, “Ted” or “Teddy” born 24th October 1912 and Enid Joyce “Joy” born 10th October 1912.

Presumably my mother’s story will develop throughout these notes so I should tell you something about Uncle Ted and Auntie Joy.

Uncle Ted:

I must ask Ann and Karen to write something for me to add to

At 28 they had a Minerva car, more importantly they had a chauffeur called “Wells”. The garage at the bottom of the garden, which gave out onto Lydford Road, had a pit. It was a double garage which my mother used when a student for a very small white car. This car was quite distinctive and was well known down the Edgware Road. To such an extent, that the policemen on duty at Marble Arch got to know the car and often waved it through.



Wells the Chauffeur



Possibly the Minerva

While we are on the subject of cars I remember my Grandmother Edith saying that she remembered the first car going through Wallingford. It was a much talked of occasion.² Granny Eddie, she was always known as Eddie, was quite tall and an imposing lady when I knew her. She was the eldest of about 11 children. They lived in Saint Johns Road Wallingford. Space was at a premium and she was sent at an early age to live with her Grandparents just down the road. Her father, Charles George Crook was a fellmonger and wool-stapler

The picture is of “Granny Timms” (my great-great grandmother who cared for Granny)

A “fell” is I think another word for a sheep’s pelt. In fact he bought all sorts of skins, mainly from butchers, and prepared them and sold them on to tanners, a smelly and unpleasant business. He would take his horse and cart to Reading one week and Oxford the next and hence cover a large area.

I knew or met some of Granny Eddie’s brothers and sisters.

Granny’s maiden name was “Crook”



² Is this feasible? Could she have been talking about her Grandmother with whom she lived?---use you knowledge to find out!

Chapter 1 second part



Charles George Crook, fellmonger and wool-stapler of St John's Road, in a Chenard et Walcker tour 1902. With him is his daughter, Ada. The photograph is taken in the yard of St John's Farm. St John's Road; the farm was managed by Mr Arthur Holmes. Mr Crook's Fellmonger's Works were in St John's Road opposite what is now Trenchard Close. The car was sold in 1931 for the princely sum of £2. (

This picture is from a magazine about Wallingford sent to me by Marjorie

Uncle Ernie: (Granny's brother) When I knew him he was about 18 stone. He had a great store of stories and a good sense of humour. He was married to Auntie Alice, she went mad. Nowadays one would say she had Alzheimer's Disease. Uncle Ernie did what he could for her until it became impossible. They had a son called John whom we will try to sort out later. Uncle Ernie was a staunch member of the Masonic movement.

Uncle Ernie and Uncle Walter (The two brothers) went to war. I think U. Ernie was below the age, but then many were. I believe my great-grandfather to have been a difficult character to live with (remember he had 11 children) and his sons were pleased to have an aim in life away from home. For them it would have been an adventure of which they had no concept at the time.

I know little about Uncle Walter but will ask his daughter Marjory to give me some notes in the same vein as these.

Uncle Ernie was a sniper. This is easily said but what does it mean in the context of the First World War? I think that I can imagine it but with the present day mentality and concept of war and peace it would be difficult.

Uncle Ernie would have done some training with probably The Berkshire Regiment. The idea of a Regiment is a group of men from a similar environment or background trained for battle. They would be a close knit group led by their social peers despite their incompetence. There would be a fierce pride in the name of The Regiment.

U. Ernie was quite happy to talk of his experiences, I saw him only about twice a year. The regular occurrence would be at Granny's birthday on 16th January. We had some good times then.

He told us of the first time he was in the front line, left out front in a shell hole all night watching out for any German patrol. He went with a pal, it was deathly quiet for a while when they heard a "cra,cra,cra". He was terrified but his pal more so. They heard it again and his pal ran back to his Sargent to report it---he was told not to be a fool---it was a frog! The troops had little faith in the officers and he had stories of officers being shot in the back by their own men. This could never be proved and it probably took place. Ernie told me he was at one time at the far eastern end of the line.

Uncle Ernie came back from the war with one arm the other one having been shot and amputated. On his return his father was unwilling or unable to help him. He had a minimum pension and an allowance of 2/6 (two shillings and six pence) a year to buy a new vest which would wear out quickly due to the straps used in holding his false arm. Uncle Ernie was a gambler and went to sporting occasions. One day he was going to a football match and got fed up with his arm, took it off and threw it over the nearest hedge, never to use a false arm again. I wonder if the person finding it had a shock? The lack of an arm never stopped him doing anything, including looking after Auntie Alice.

In the late 1920's there was an economic depression, jobs were not available and life was hard. I think it was just after the war in 1918 when U. Ernie found himself with little or no money, no job and not really welcome at home. With thousands of others in the same situation, he got together with his brother Walter and decided to go off to Argentina. In Argentina and Uruguay there were many cattle and they would go out there and purchase skins for the tanning trade.

How this worked out I am not sure but we have photos of the two boys on horseback riding over the pampas. He said the bush telegraph was very effective and once when he fell in a stream the whole of Argentina knew of it and had a good laugh at his expense.

He told me that he got right down to Tierra Del Fuego where the local Indians were expert sheep breeders. At a round-up they could sort them all out by having four strings tied to each limb controlling the opening and shutting of four doors. By this means they could sort rams and ewes from the lambs of different ages.

Walter and Ernie made good friends down there. One family asked them to take their son of about 11 years back to London with them. He was coming to England for his education. On arrival in Liverpool they had to take the train to London. The boy was terrified of the steel monster and when it blew its whistle and belched steam he threw a fit. They heard later that he could not cope with life in England.

Uncle Ernie later drove a taxi out of Croydon Airport, he did well with his one arm, he played up the sympathy card and managed to get good tips. Having been a sniper he got a gun licence and went shooting squirrels. The Government were giving 6d a tail. I think they did this to firstly rid the area of what was considered a disease spreading pest, they also ate the hedgerow nuts which was a good source of local food but also to help the income of some of the population. I never heard of a squirrel being eaten.

One Christmas I remember he gave me 6d and told me that if I kept it always I would never be broke. Makes sense that!

Another of his stories was the occasion he was returning from the races by train and got involved with card-sharps, he played a canny game never revealing how much money he had in his pocket, he came away with more than when he started but he had cashed quite a large cheque. On Monday morning he was at the doors of the bank to cancel that cheque, so made a profit. Those card-sharps did not trouble him again.

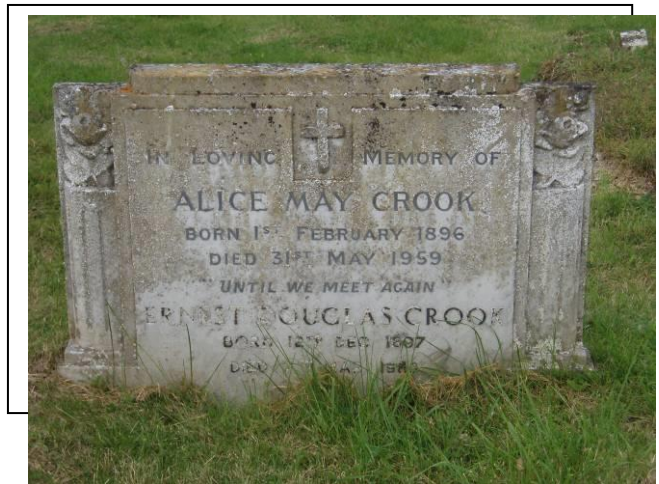
I don't know when he started up his own business as a fellmonger. It was in the east end of London and his son John helped. John hated it; he could not stand the smell, maggots and filth. He did however make money by selling maggots to fishermen.

When Uncle Ernie was self employed in Southern England he collected skins from butchers driving hundreds of miles with his one arm. One day it was particularly foggy and

many cars were following him. He knew the road and at one spot turned off---the fog being so bad the cars continued to follow him, he stopped for sandwiches and the cars found themselves in a cemetery!

Being in the East End he went home very late one night after parking the van. The police picked him up and started asking questions. He told them that he was the biggest “crook” they would ever catch. They took him to the Station but realised it was a mistake when they found out that he was 20 stones and he was a genuine “Crook”!

Uncle Ernie is buried in Wallingford Cemetery.³



Various graves in Wallingford Cemetery

³ Go there and find it? There are also lots more Crooks to look for the graves are scattered around.



Graves of Edith & Gustav, Ted & Kathleen, Ada & Dorothy
Harold Huntley (Joyce's husband), Joy, Majorie & Simon, Thelma,
Joyce.

John, Uncle Ernie's son, emigrated to Canada and became a salesman for a photographic company, he was good at it and got rewarded for being "best salesman" winning trips to Acapulco and elsewhere. He also was a larger-than-life character, wearing loud Canadian clothes and talking-the-talk. Perhaps that is what made him the salesman he was.

Uncle Walter: Poor Uncle Walter was not given another name.⁴ I think he stayed in South America when Uncle Ernie returned. I think this because he ended up in Fray Bentos in Uruguay which is famous for its corned beef⁵ which was cheap and nutritious.⁶

In Fray Bentos he met and married Auntie Mary, could that be why he stayed? Why she was there I know not. They had two children born in Fray Bentos, Marjory and Dorothy of whom more later.

I remember meeting Uncle Walter only once although I think I saw him several times. The occasion I remember is when he was in hospital. He had a nice gentle disposition and a kind smile. I think he was quite ill because I saw that he had headphones and he could listen to the radio all day long. He told me that he did not listen and had little interest. I visited him with my Grandmother. I cannot remember when he died but Auntie Mary was a widow for many years.

Auntie Mary lived in an upstairs flat in Hendon. I think she lived off her pension which in those days was a derisory sum. She must have found it difficult. She was a wonderful person, very sensible, even tempered, placid perhaps but by no means boring. She would come to 28 to play bridge with my mother, my grandmother and I and sometimes Thelma. I remember her coming quite often to dine with us or just for a game. I think she had a

⁴ Have you worked out his initials?

⁵ Try making corned beef hash—it needs a good bit of spice. The tin is a special shape why?

⁶ When was food first put into tins?

proper television before we did and I remember seeing wrestling on it one Saturday afternoon when we came to fetch her for an evening.

I have mentioned Marjory and Dorothy: I knew Dorothy much better, I am not sure why.

Dorothy and Marjory, daughters of U. Walter and A. Mary: (my mother's first cousins)

They are both noted for their good looks but their voice is distinctive. Is it because they spoke Spanish when very young? They speak well, the Queens English, grammatically correct---that is to be expected ---but there is more to it than that;a quality that cannot be put into words. Laid-back, easy, fluent are words that spring to mind but do not do them justice. I am not the only one to admire their apparent approach to life, an indefinable quality.



Marjory

Dorothy is the intellectual one. She was a physicist and when I was about 14 she was working in Birmingham at the Dunlop works⁷ doing her physics. There she met Bill, a big gentle man with a dark moustache as far as I remember. They were unable to have children and decided to adopt. Maxine was their first child; they were then living in Lingfield Sussex. The adoption procedure took an age, I think they specified a child from intelligent parents. Maxine was a fair haired lovely child and I was asked to be Godfather. It was a privilege and delight. She was christened in Lingfield. About two years later they adopted Thomas a delightful boy, the adoption papers came through and only some weeks after that Bill had a massive heart attack and died leaving Dorothy with two young children. Maxine loved her father and missed him. Dorothy then moved to Bristol and started work in a school there. She had a natural ability to understand children and they, I think, adored her. I have no doubt that she was an excellent teacher and much valued.

She continued to work part time at the school---she was in charge of the photocopier—a boring job? Not for Dorothy, she made it interesting, a focus of activity; she loved it and the contact with all the staff and students.

Eventually she retired and then suffered from emphysema; she had been a heavy smoker for many years. She died in 2007. It was a loss to all her friends and neighbours. We went to her funeral, with Anne and Smudge, in Bristol. The church at the crematorium was full and they were standing at the back, the eulogy had us in stitches: a real testimony of Dorothy's influence on those around her. Dorothy would avoid physical exercise at all costs but had to take her turn with the Guides---they went camping in the Welsh Hills. Apparently she as usual made the very best of it and was the life and soul of the camp fire activities.

Dorothy and Bill came to Granny's birthday parties at 28. I do not remember seeing them much otherwise.

I remember being given a tin of caviar when working at Leyland Motors and taking it down to Dorothy in Lingfield where we scoffed it all on the back step of their bungalow.

I remember going to London zoo with Maxine and Thomas when they were about 6 and 4.⁸Thelma was with us at that time.

⁷ What was Dunlop Ltd famous for? What is a "Green Flash" which they manufactured?

⁸ There is a photo somewhere, can you find it?

I remember visiting Dorothy in Bristol when returning from a holiday in Somerset. We had been to Cheddar Gorge and Lyme Regis camping with the boys. We had lunch in central Bristol.

I specially remember Dorothy Maxine and Thomas spending a Christmas with us in Preston. The oil crisis was upon us. It must have been about 1975 when Toby was three. We had a great time but there was definitely a feeling of insecurity in The World and one wondered what the future would hold for us all. It is difficult looking back to realise what one felt with very high inflation, Russians making threatening noises, the Chinese were out of the picture but Mao was getting past his prime. It was unsettling. It was great for Thelma and me to have a familiar Christmas with family around. I remember that we de-froze the turkey by leaving it outside for a week in its box. We cooked it very slowly overnight. The Christmas pudding was made with a recipe including Guinness. It turned out deliciously moist. We really enjoyed that Christmas.

Marjory's world I know little of before she was married to Dick Knowles of whom we will hear much more of later. Marjory was surely the elder of the two daughters. They led different lives. Dick was from an ecclesiastical family, they eventually had a son, Simon.

Dick was again a large man in every sense. He had a cheerful, optimistic outlook. He had been an apprentice with Leyland Motors and did well as a salesman with them. He eventually left them and was self employed selling all things. He obtained large contracts and I think did well financially. At one stage he was dealing with secret stuff for The Government and had a special safe installed at home.

Dick had a share in a 'plane. It had a wooden propeller and The Ministry made them change it for a metal one. The plane passed all its tests and so Dick took Marjory and Simon for a trip. The prop fell off and Dick did a forced landing in a field, it did not go according to plan and they hit a hedge. The plane ended nose down, tail up---a narrow escape for the family.

They had a couple of dogs which held a special place in the home.

Dick continued doing deals but life was taken at a relatively fast pace as far as I know, and he was overweight. He died and Marjory continued to live in the area of Cirencester.

Simon worked for a while with music but subsequently found remunerative work stressful. I saw nothing of him really but some five years ago when we took A Joy to Wallingford to see her parent's grave Marjory and Simon came too. Simon's was charming, solicitous and an all round nice guy. I understand he is a very good customer of his local library and with one thing or another leads a full life.

I have no doubt that you, Dear Reader, are bored with all this and it is high time we got on with my life which these notes are supposed to be about.

As this is on computer and no preliminary planning has been done how will it develop?

I have not mentioned Thornley, Uncle Jack and most importantly Aunts Ada and Dorothy.

Let us freshen things up a bit and have a new chapter.