

The Whitehouse Chronicle.

Early Days.

Revised to include additional information, November, 1986.

The Whitehouse story now commences with the record of a marriage at St. Martin's, Tipton, on 9th October, 1763, between Thomas Whitehouse and Elizabeth Callow. This was followed by the baptism at the same church of their son, James, on 4th August, 1764.

Thomas was probably a farm worker in what was then a rural area. By 1771, the couple had moved to Dudley, where, at St. Thomas's on 17th March that year, their daughter, Mary, was baptised.

There may have been other children, but only James and Mary concern us. By 1786, James, then aged 22, had moved to St. Martin's parish in Birmingham, and formed an attachment with Mary Lewis, who was three years his senior.

The slender evidence suggests James, who was at least literate, in a community where over two thirds of the adults were unable to write their names, had moved to Birmingham on his own to learn a trade.

This was a time of rapid industrial expansion. The opening of the Wednesbury - Birmingham canal in 1769 quickly reduced the price of coal in the town from 90p to 20p per ton. This, combined with the invention of the rotary steam engine, by James Watt, and built by Matthew Boulton's famous Soho Works, brought cheap power to the town's workshops, which no longer depended on the scattered Tame, Rea and Hockley Brook water mills for their rolling, stamping and grinding operations. The gunsmiths, blacksmiths, button and buckle makers and many other trades, expanded rapidly.

James married Mary Lewis on 11th November, 1787, at St. Martin's, after banns. James signed his name well, but Mary and the two witnesses, William and Mary Robinson, only marked a cross. Both James and Mary are describes as 'of this parish'.

The next record of the couple is more revealing. On the 10th May, 1789, they presented their two children, Thomas, aged 1 year 8 months, and Mary, aged 5 weeks, for baptism at Aston Parish Church. The parents are described as 'of Witton'. Thomas, named after his grandfather, was obviously born out of wedlock, and suggests that young James's indiscretion may have been influenced by his living away from parental guidance.

The move to Witton, where James and Mary probably spent all their 28 years of marriage, raises several queries.

What were the skills which James had learned in Birmingham which he was able to use in Witton, then an undeveloped rural area?

Witton, a small Domesday manor, in 1730 comprised 22 small farms and 3 cottages. As late as 1841, the population was only 157. Witton Hall, a small country house, built around 1740, was, in 1790, occupied by the Birch family, who were the principal landowners in the area. A plan dated 1802 shows the Hall, a number of scattered dwellings and three water mills on the River Tame.

An examination of the documents concerning the enclosure of common land at Witton in 1802 failed to show James as a land owner or tenant farmer of either Thomas or George Birch. We can only speculate that he may have been estate carpenter, blacksmith, wheelwright or miller, etc. Perhaps a rent roll will be unearthed sometime to provide the answer.

The Whitehouse name had existed in the parish of Aston, and particularly in the hamlet of Witton for many years as the following church record shows:-

16 April, 1602. Edward Whytehouse married Mary Elliat.
 30 December, 1697. John Witus married Mary Jones.
 27 August,, 1713. John Whitehouse of Witton was buried.
 16 June, 1717. Richard Whitehouse married Ruth Whitehouse, both of Witton. Richard and Ruth had three sons, Joseph; John and Richard, baptised at Aston between 1719 and 1723.
 On 14th November, 1732, Samuel Whitehouse of Witton was buried and eight days later, is recorded the funeral of Ruth, which suggests Samuel was her father or father-in-law, living under the same roof and both fell victims to the same infection.

In 1738, Richard senior was re-married to Mary Holland.

I am unable to trace a single record of a Whitehouse of Witton during the next fifty-one years, when James and Mary appear. I suggest James' father, Thomas, was the son of one of Richard and Ruth's three sons, who had migrated to the Tipton area, and his sone, James, soon after his marriage, took over some activity at Witton from one of his elderly relatives, whose death has not been identified.

Following the double baptism in 1789, James and Mary next appear for the burial of an infant daughter, Catherine, aged 11 months, on May 22nd, 1791, for whom there is no baptismal record.

No further record for the couple appears in the Aston parish until 19th April, 1801, when a daughter, Jane, was baptised. She only survived for 17 months, when her death was stated to be due to 'fitts'.

I will comment on this ten year gap later in the Whitehouse story.

James and Mary went on to produce a son, James, in 1804, Henry in 1808 and finally, on 9th August, 1810, Edwin was born and baptised at Aston on 9th September.

Accepting Mary's age atated in 1841 and again in 1846 at the time of her death, she was exactly fifty at the time of Edwin's birth, which makes the event something of a minor miracle, from which all of us owe our existence.

We will now move back ten years to the following entry in the Aston baptisms concerning James' sister, Mary.
 28th February, 1800, William, age 1 month 3 days, a bastard son of William Tyre and Mary Whitehouse.

Mary had obviously moved from Dudley to Witton to obtain some support and understanding from her older brother and sister-in-law, who themselves had transgressed some fourteen years earlier. Later records indicate a continuing close association of Mary and son William with James and his family at Witton.

A major family turning point arrived with the death of James, who was buried at Aston Church on 27th October, 1816, aged 53. This event led to the family joining in the mass migration from the rural parishes to the newly developed industrialised inner suburbs of Birmingham.

Some understanding of the problems which confronted our ancestors can be gleaned from the local history of the period.

From 1795 to 1820, there was a period of food shortages and high grain prices. Serious rioting, often involving the yeomanry to restore order, occurred in 1810, 1812, 1816, and, worst of all, in 1817, when the post-war depression was at its maximum.

A further complication was the imbalance of wages. In 1815, agricultural wages averaged not more than 12/- (60p) with up to 20% of families in areas like Witton receiving poor relief. In contrast, the workers in the rapidly expanding industrial areas were earning 25 to 30 shillings weekly.

The country people had food but little money and the town dwellers were in the reverse position.

Birmingham had been famous for its gunsmiths from the late 1600's and during the Napoleonic Wars, the Birmingham workers produced two thirds of the firearms used by the Army and Navy in those conflicts.

Returning to the fortunes of the Whitehouse family, by 1816, we can assume James and Mary's two elder children, Thomas and Mary, had gone out into the world. I have no further record of them. The widow Mary would be left with James, 12, Henry, 8 and Edwin, 6. Her sister-in-law's son, William, then sixteen, would be the first to seek a living in industry. I have a suspicion that his uncle James had some carpentry skills. If so, his nephew William would obviously pick up some of his skills and these he would use to become a gun-stocker, providing the wooden butts for the muskets of the period. By 1824, he was living in Legge Street, married and his son Stephen was baptised at St. Philip's on 23rd September that year. A second son, Jesse, was born in 1824.

A directory of 1829 lists William as a self-employed gun-stocker at 25 court, Moland Street. Both streets are still identifiable on the northern side of Lower Corporation Street.

The first evidence of the widow Mary's movements is given by the burial of her son, Henry, at Aston on 1st February, 1828, also from Moland Street.

The next milestone is the marriage of Edwin to Maria Ann Rooker on 8th November, 1829, at St. Philip's, now the Cathedral Church. They were both nineteen years of age and described as 'of this parish'. Both signed their names quite legibly, Maria's being the more polished. The witnesses were Edwin's cousin, William, and Harriet Rooker.

Maria's father, James, was born in 1785, the son of Thomas and Mary Rooker. Directories of 1810 and 1830 list James Rooker as a gun engraver. Young Edwin, probably assisting his cousin in fetching and carrying the firearms, would make the acquaintance of the engraver's daughter.

Edwin and Maria produced a daughter, Harriet, in 1831 and a son, James, the following year. The second Edwin was born in 1834 and a daughter, Mary Ann, in 1835, who only survived for 13 months. Another son, Henry, arrived in 1837.

I am unable to trace the baptismal records for any of Edwin's and Maria's children, and we must assume their relationship with the church was fairly lukewarm.

1838 proved an eventful year. In early January, spinster Mary, who had been living with her son, William, died, aged 67, and was buried at St. Martin's on 7th January. Following his mother's death, William and family moved to Harding Street, which ran between Newtown Row and Summer Lane in an area now completely redeveloped. Then, their second son, Jesse, died and was buried at Aston on July 1st.

Harding Street, being a little further from the town centre, was probably a new development and the housing must have offered some advantages for the widow Mary and her growing retinue, who had, by March, 1841, moved in next door to her nephew, William, and his family.

This month saw the first really detailed National Census, and we get from this a complete picture of the two households as follows:-

Harding Street in the parish of St. George's.

Mary Whitehouse.	Age 80	Independent.
John "	" 45	Roller.
James "	" 35	Toy Maker.
Edwin "	" 30	Toy Maker.
Maria Ann "	" 30	
Joseph "	" 15	Brassfounder.
Harriet "	" 10	
James "	" 9	
Edwin "	" 7	
Henry "	" 4	
Emma "	" 1 month.	

Mary is shown as a matriarchal figure, the undisputed head of the household, and her self-description as independent rules out any suggestion of the elderly parent being cared for by her children.

John, I suggest, was a son born to James and Mary in 1794, for whom no baptismal record has been found.

James married a widow, Fanny Rhodes, at St. George's on 17th April, 1837, Edwin's wife, Maria, being one of the witnesses, but Fanny is missing from the household in March, 1841.

Joseph's parentage is uncertain, but he was probably the son of John, who was widowed by 1841. His trade as brassfounder is closely allied to John's rolling, rather than his two uncles, who were toy makers. This typical Birmingham trade was the manufacture of buttons, buckles, spurs, snuffers, nut crackers, fish slices and hosts of other small metal objects, usually in brass or steel. On a street plan of the period, the next parallel street to Harding Street is names Brass Street, where the four Whitehouses probably plied their trade. The five adults and six children would leave little space in a house of that date for any back kitchen outwork and the domestic conditions must have been dreadful.

The five younger children were, of course, those of Edwin and Maria.

For the house next door, the census entry is as follows:-

Harding Street in the Parish of St. George's.

William Whitehouse	Age 45	Gun Stocker.
Mary	" 45	
Stephen	" 15	
Matilda	" 14	
Charles	" 11	
Martha	" 9	

Although William was only 41, he quotes his age as 45, the same as his wife, Mary. Was this a little deceit he had practiced since their courting days, when a four year age difference may have made him feel inferior? He was probably only 21 when they married.

His son, Stephen's, age is also wrongly stated. He was baptised at St. Philip's on 23rd September, 1822, and died aged 20 in September of the year following the census.

A directory of 1845 lists William Whitehouse as a gun stocker at 54, Harding Street, which indicates that he was self-employed and working at home.

By the next census in 1851, William's world had fallen apart. His wife, Mary, had apparently died and the three remaining children moved on. He is shown as a lonely figure lodging with the Garrington family back in Moland Street, at no. 62. He still describes himself as a Gun Stocker and still manipulates his age, which is stated as 49, two years younger than the actual. After this entry, he disappears from the records.

Returning to our direct ancestors in Harding Street, by 1846, the widow Mary and presumably some of the family had also moved back to Moland Street, as this is the address given for Mary's funeral on 22nd November, 1846, when she had reached the ripe old age of 86. Edwin's brothers, John and James, his nephew, Joseph and daughter, Harriet, are all lost to the records after 1841, but the 1851 census shows Edwin and family living at 192, Lower Camden Street (Brookfields) in the parish of All Saints as follows:-

Edwin Whitehouse	Age 40	Silversmith.	Born Witton, Warks.
Maria Ann	" 40	Wife	" B'ham. "
Edwin	" 17	Gold Chain Maker.	Aston "
Henry	" 14	Whitesmith.	" B'ham. "
Emma	" 9	Scholar.	" " "

Edwin is now working in silver. Slater's Directory of 1852-3 lists him as a brooch maker, self-employed at his home address. I wonder if the numerous Victorian silver brooches which Kathleen Whitehouse inherited via her father, Frank, from Kingsbury, were of Edwin's make.

Edwin junior was apprenticed to John Goode, Gold Chain Maker of 2 & 3, Regent Place. Henry's trade of whitesmith was what is known as tinsmith or sheet metal worker.

In the Autumn of 1855, Edwin junior, now twenty one, began to have thoughts of starting up in business on his own. My father described Edwin snr. as a capable craftsman with an all too common in those days weakness for drink. Family quarrels developed and Edwin jnr. is reputed to have come to blows with his father on some occasions.

This background probably prompted him to take up residence at 52, Key Hill, where legend says he made a little money by keeping pigs.

From Edwin junior's first day book, we learn that he started business at Key Hill on 25th May, 1856 and sold his first goods on June 6th, 9 ounces of gold chains of various patterns for £18.13.0 to Mr. Dudley, who paid cash. His sales to the end of June totalled only £52.11.6, of which only £8.17.9 was for fashioning, the remainder being 9ct gold at 34 shillings per ounce. No sales at all are recorded for the whole of the month of July. Over this period, the level of trading was obviously too low to sustain him and his savings must have disappeared.

On the last page of Edwin's daybook, the following entry appears:- July 29th Borrowed money from Mr. Thomas Shaylor - £9.0.0. At this time, Edwin was courting Hannah Shaylor, Thomas's eldest daughter.

Sales of £27.13.6 are recorded for August, and September 4th shows a sale of £16.16.6 to a Mr. William Davies of 55, Wardour Street, London, then a particularly messy entry on September 6th for goods despatched and a cash received from London on September 14th complete Edwin's book entries, apart from an entry for a further £9 borrowed from Thomas Shaylor on September 24th and a repayment of £5 on the 29th.

An examination of Edwin senior's death certificate reveals the addition family problems which beset the young Edwin in these early days of his business career.

His father, the self-employed silver brooch maker of 1853, is described as a journeyman button maker in 1856. He had failed to earn a living on his own and had to return to employment in his old trade. In late August, 1856, he had contracted pneumonia, and died on September 9th, aged only 46, which indicates a man in poor health, possibly due to his lifestyle. His wife, Maria, registered his death on the 11th and he was buried at Aston on 14th.

The family must have had considerable financial problems throughout August and September, as indicated by the Shaylor loans. Young Edwin, now aged 22, and his brother, Henry, aged 19, became responsible for their mother and sister Emma, aged 14. By early October, they had probably all joined Edwin at 52, Key Hill.

Returning to the evidence of Edwin's daybook, on October 4th, a different copper plate handwriting appears, with a stocktaking statement showing gold in hand 35 ozs. This individual now takes over the routine of book keeping, allowing Edwin to concentrate on workbench activities, and a marked improvement in production and sales commences. Sales for the three months to the year end totalled £609 with a fashioning content averaging £9.10.0 per week. An awkward corner had been turned.

In January, 1857, lapped chain patterns are being sold, which indicates Edwin's elder brother, James, had started to work for him. My father spoke of Uncle Jim, the lapper. The turnover for the year 1857 rose to £3,000 with a fashioning content averaging £14 per week. Based on the level of the payroll shown in a wages book of 1864, when £19.18.10 was shared between 40 names, the 1857 workforce may have reached 20 full or part-timers, with girl linkers earning only five or six shillings weekly.

The evidence for Edwin's affair with Hannah Shaylor was found in the old Kingsbury photo album, where her photo is described as 'Grandfather Whitehouse's first love'. She was the same age as Edwin and appears to be wearing a ring on the engagement finger. Hannah was the eldest of five daughters of Thomas Shaylor, a baker and flour merchant of 159, Ickniel Street. Both Lower Camden Street and Key Hill are side turnings from Ickniel Street, so Edwin would probably have walked the street daily, to and from work at John Goode's in Regent Place, and later his own workshop in Key Hill. The romance must have faded during the next two years and Hannah was replaced in Edwin's affections by the teenage Ellen Wigley, who was seven years her junior. She was the elder daughter of Benjamin Wigley, a self-employed electro-plater, who lived in New Church Street, another side turning from Ickniel Street.

The Wigley story starts with the marriage of Benjamin Wigley to Sarah Millington on 20th March at St. Philip's, followed by the baptism of their son, Benjamin, on the 11th August, 1817 at the same church. Young Benjamin married Eliza Franlin and a daughter, Ellen, was born on 24th April, 1840, at 20, Swallow Street. Her birth certificate describes her father as a candle maker. Swallow Street was soon to be demolished to make way for the northward extension of Robert Stephenson's London to Birmingham railway from Curzon Street, so by 1851, the family had moved to the edge of the jewellery quarter, where their census entry was as follows:-

31, New Church Street in the parish of All Saints.

Benjamin Wigley.	Age 34	Silver plater.	Born B'ham
Eliza "	" 33	Wife. Milliner.	" "
Ellen "	" 10	Daughter. Scholar.	" "
Sarah "	" 8	" "	" "
Thomas "	" 6	Son "	" "
Charles "	" 1	" "	" "
Mary Pitt	" 13	House Servant.	" "

Presumably, Benjamin saw no future in candles and was enterprising enough to appreciate the better prospects of the newly-invented electro-plating processes made possible by the development of Michael Faraday's dynamo. Elkington's had built a factory in Newhall Street (now the Science Museum) for the production of gold and, particularly, silver plated articles, where, by 1851, over five hundred workers were employed. It is highly probable that Benjamin was one of these, anxious to learn the mysteries of a newly developing trade before going it alone. He may have rubbed shoulders with another budding entrepreneur in young Joseph Lucas, who was apprenticed to Elkington's around 1851 and later started his own business, which has now become the huge Lucas Industries concern.

Edwin Whitehouse's daybook mentions chains for gilding or electroing, and Ellen Wigley probably assisted her father either booking work in and out or helping with its collection and delivery so the two would meet much as my parents became acquainted some forty years later.

Edwin and Ellen married on 12th October, 1859, at All Saints Church, witnessed by Benjamin Wigley, Emma Whitehouse and Robert Hastings. I wonder if Robert Hastings was Edwin's clerical assistant or the '& Co' of Whitehouse & Co.

Six weeks later, on 27th November, at Aston Parish Church, Edwin's younger

brother, Henry, married Emma Shaylor, Hannah's younger sister, an event which did create a permanent link between the two families after all.

In the 1861 census, Hannah is still unmarried and described as a dress maker, living with her parents, a brother and two younger sisters. Earlier that year saw Edwin and Ellen's first child christened Hannah, which would indicate a continuing friendly relationship and some justification for the retention of the album photo long after Edwin's death.

The 1861 census entry for 52, Key Hill is as follows:-

Edwin Whitehouse.	Age	27	Gold Chain Mfr.	Born	B'ham.
Ellen	"	"	20	Wife	" "
Maria Ann	"	"	50	Mother	" "
Emma	"	"	19	Sister	" "
Hannah	"	"	2 months.	Daughter.	" "

Edwin's business is now providing for the remnants of the family. His sister, Emma, was later to marry a Mr. Jackson and went to live in the London area. His mother was to remain with them until her death in 1885.

Two of the firm's wages books survive, the earlier one covering the period October, 1864 to April, 1871 and the other from July, 1886 to October, 1889. They give a clear picture of the rigid control Edwin must have maintained over his workpeople and their earnings.

In 1864, a total payroll of £20.00 was divided between about 40 names, and individual wages ranged from two or three shillings to just over £2. Piecework or closely monitored hourly payment meant that no employee had a stable wage. Edwin undoubtedly fixed all the piecework rates and calculated the earnings. During the six and a half years covered by the earlier book, I found only two weeks where the calculated earnings were not entered by Edwin. One of these occasions, in February, 1871, was probably the week when the family moved from Vyse Street to White House Farm at Kingsbury.

By 1889, the payroll had expanded to about 56 names, who shared nearly £70.00. The apparent increase in individuals' earnings is due to the practice of chain preparers employing their own linkers. Cashmore, for example, who made silver alberts, collects nearly £7.00, out of which he probably had to pay ten girl linkers, so the total employees probably amounted to eighty or ninety. Individual workers like James Fisher and John Rodenight show no visible increase in earnings over the twenty three year period, which was perfectly normal in a non-inflationary world.

Edwin was now employing a traveller, Mr. Godby, earning £3.00, and two clerks, Miss Franks and Miss Vale, with wages of sixteen and fourteen shillings respectively.

The wages books also show how Edwin provided employment for some of his relatives. His elder brother, James, the lapidary, always headed the wages list, but gives the impression of a somewhat unreliable worker. He sometimes achieved the highest earnings, once reaching £2.13.10. and occasionally falling as low as two shillings and fourpence. On a number of occasions, he is absent for the week, including a whole year from August, 1886 to August, 1887. He collected his last payment of 14/8 on 4th August, 1888.

For the next six weeks, his name appears on the list, showing his return was a possibility, but after that he is lost to the records.

His family set-up, as shown in the 1861 census, seems equally erratic. His wife, Catherine, was six years his senior and produced a son, Charles, when James was only eighteen. Charles also appears on the payroll when aged fifteen, and is still employed in June, 1871 as a guard preparer earning up to £2. His sister, Kate, also appears as a sixteen year old, earning about 9/6 weekly.

Edwin's younger brother, Henry, also poses something of an enigma. Henry was a whitesmith in 1851. He married Emma Shaylor in 1859 and by 1861, describes himself as an iron plate worker.

Now Edwin himself does not appear on the payroll until June, 1864, when he draws £2, and, simultaneously, a Mrs. Whitehouse is paid two shillings. The same two entries are then repeated for the next twenty weeks, and then both cease. I suspect the Mrs. Whitehouse was Henry's wife, Emma, who, with Henry, was in some financial difficulty and she was doing some minor chore for Edwin while he was supporting Henry and family with the £2.

On 2nd February, 1867, Henry Whitehouse appears on the payroll earning four shillings, rising to fifteen shillings the following week, a wage which remains constant for the next twelve months. Simultaneously with Henry's arrival, Edwin re-appears on the payroll again, drawing £2 per week. This seems to indicate Henry again probably unemployed and Edwin has found him a job, possibly toolmaking, portering or warehouseman, on a probationary wage, with Edwin, as before, supporting his family. In February of the following year, Henry's wage is increased to £1.8.0, and Edwin's drawing of two pounds ceases. Presumably, Henry's debts have been paid off and his higher wage is considered adequate. Unlike his brother James, Henry shows up as a reliable employee with no absenteeism. He is still employed in April, 1871, but is lost from the records before 1886.

By the end of 1867, the premises at 52, Key Hill must have become too cramped with Edwin, Ellen, five children and mother Maria in the domestic quarters and about 50 employees in the workshop. Very little remains on the site today, but in Edwin's time, it backed onto Key Hill Cemetery and had the Cemetery Tavern next door⁴.

The week ending 4th January, 1868 shows only six names, and this, I am sure, was the week during which the family and the business moved en bloc to 58, Vyse Street, later to be re-numbered 52. Three of those who missed a week's work had subs of fifteen shillings each, which were repaid in small amounts extending well into February.

The premises at 58, Vyse Street were previously occupied by Josiah Brittain, a stamper of gold and silver articles, and Edwin was delighted to find plenty of metal fragments embedded in and beneath the floorboards, which were lifted and burned, the whole exercise yielding a hundred or so pounds profit over the new flooring.

Number 58 consisted of a large double fronted dwelling house with a garden and various workshops, one three stories high, which had a gateway entrance to Hylton Street and was always known as the coach house. Edwin probably invested in some form of horse drawn vehicle and this, combined with a back garden, must have given him ambitious ideas of becoming a country gentleman as well as a gold chain maker.

He was typical of the hard-headed, self-made employer of his time. He was well known and regarded with a little apprehension in the trade. In the early days of the telephone, he overheard a customer refer to him as 'That cantankerous old B', a title he thereafter always used of himself when making calls to that number. He regarded the recently introduced Income Tax as legalised robbery and predicted universal ruin when the rate was raised to six 'old' pence in the pound. He would delay payment to the unfortunate Inland Revenue man, who called to collect the tax, by various subterfuges, one being to answer his request 'to see Mr. Whitehouse' by saying 'I will go and fetch him'. He would then find John Rodenight, one of his oldest employees, who was barely literate, to impersonate him and offer some garbled excuse for not being able to pay that day. John was quite a character. Born in Hampton Lucy, he came to Birmingham and joined the police force, but quickly became disillusioned and accepted Edwin's offer to be taught the trade of chain preparing. He remained a loyal servant until his death in the early 1900's.

Many years later, I worked with several of the older employees, Sam Eagles, Kate Goucher, Charlie Hiron and Tom Rodenight, who spoke of the old guv'nor as strict but fair. Kate, in particular, appreciated his help, when as a young girl she was directed by a foreman polisher, Bob Thomas, to work on a treadle polishing spindle which was far too large for her. There must have been great relief among all the polishers when the gas engine was installed some years later. Kate finally retired in 1947 after service spanning over fifty years.

Edwin's attitude to his family was simply that his word was law. When, in 1892, his eldest son, also Edwin (Ted), was to be married, a formal partnership agreement was drawn up to change the title of the firm to E. Whitehouse & Son, a document which underlines his philosophy very clearly.

Edwin the younger was to serve his father "as Manager, clerk, traveller or in such other capacity in his said business as the said Edwin Whitehouse may from time to time direct, and will at all times obey the commands of the said Edwin Whitehouse and faithfully perform the duties from time to time imposed upon him in relation thereto. From the date hereof, the said business shall be carried on under the style of Edwin Whitehouse and Son, but notwithstanding shall as heretofore belong exclusively to the said Edwin Whitehouse."

Provided young Ted conformed to the terms of the agreement, he was to be paid a salary of four pounds weekly and an annual bonus of fifty pounds, paid on December 25th, a level of earnings which would still have been very acceptable forty years later.

The Kingsbury Whitehouses.

The eight years of marriage spent at 52, Key Hill must have been eventful in family terms. Hannah, Ellen and Marie were born, then Edwin (Ted), the son and heir arrived, to be followed by a fourth daughter, Florence. At some period, Edwin's sister, Emma, became Mrs. Jackson and went to live in the London area. No children arrived during the three years at 58, Vyse Street, but the growing family, plus Edwin's mother, must have tested the modest domestic accommodation to bursting point.

The Census of March, 1871, shows the family shortly after their move to White House Farm on the outskirts of Kingsbury Village:

Edwin Whitehouse		Age	37		Farmer
Ellen	"	"	30	Wife	
Hannah	"	"	10	Dau.	Scholar
Ellen	"	"	9	Dau.	"
Marian	"	"	7	Dau.	"
Edwin	"	"	5	Son	
Florence	"	"	3	Dau.	
Fanny Smith		"	17		Servant
Philip Spencer		"	15		"

The farm which Edwin rented was described as 104 acres, employing four men and a boy.

The move must have improved the matrimonial atmosphere and the family began to increase again. On the 25th August, 1872, my father, Albert, was born. He made an unpromising start; under five pounds at birth, unable to digest the prescribed cod liver oil which was deemed to be his salvation. In desperation, he was regularly anointed with it and managed to survive. His brother, Arthur, who followed, was not so fortunate and died aged two years three months. After another lull, Ethel was born in 1878, followed by Frank, 1880 and Horace, 1881.

The choice of Kingsbury for the farming experiment was obviously assisted by the very good train service then available from New Street. The station was about three quarters of a mile distant from the farm and I believe someone drove Edwin there and back in an open four wheeler.

Security at night in The Vyse Street premises now became a problem and John Rodenight took up residence in one of the vacated bedrooms. He devised ingenious burglar alarms, which I believe gave him more of a fright than anyone else.

Edwin also, it is alleged, sometimes spent nights there, whether by pressure of business or inability to face the journey home, we don't know.

The fascination of farming did not diminish, and about 1880, the opportunity arose of renting Kingsbury Hall Farm. This could not be resisted and the family left White House Farm for the Hall. Other small farms at Kingsbury, Hurley and Cliff, were purchased and other land rented, amounting to a total of some 900 acres to be managed.

Edwin was enthusiastic, but often impatient and dogmatic. His letters to my father, who managed the farm at one period, show these qualities very clearly. It is generally believed that his enthusiastic amateur approach to farming made it unprofitable and a drain on the successful business in Vyse Street.

About this time, Edwin became a Freemason, but he found the code of behaviour and the rigid formalities too irksome to continue for long. His various items of regalia became museum items at Vyse Street.

Kingsbury Hall and farm provided just the right setting for a large family to grow up and gain all that knowledge of the outdoors which, at that time, was considered essential for the country dweller.

The family was completed by the birth in 1883 of Harold John, who, unfortunately, was either spastic or mentally retarded, and lived out his short life very much in the background, away from the general family activities.

Many are the legends of life at Kingsbury Hall. Indoor cricket and football games in the 60 foot long Great Hall or Courtroom when the weather was bad. The lightning flash which wrecked the tall drawing room chimney stack while the family, with the Vicar and his wife, were having tea. Young Albert, on returning from school, received a graphic description from his mother and sisters of a huge fireball which travelled round the room above the heads of the tea party, providentially kept aloft by the metal rods from which the pictures were hung. He was also shown the hole in the chimney breast where several bricks were dislodged.

Edwin, travelling home on the train that evening, read in the Birmingham Mail that the Hall had been damaged and there were some casualties. He was relieved to find only a shocked household and a heavy layer of soot.

We had for many years at Ardendale a reminder of this incident in the form of an unusual wisp of dark cloud on an oil painting of a river scene. Albert had the picture re-framed, but forbade the cleaning off of the smoke deposit.

In summertime, Edwin arranged outings of his workpeople to Kingsbury, when cricket matches between the village club (for whom Ted played after leaving school) and 22 of Vyse Street were played. Despite their numerical superiority, the Vyse Street team invariably lost as only Sam Eagles and one or two of the others had any knowledge of the game. Edwin provided a barrel of beer to help the proceedings, and then derived much amusement from the steady stream of disconsolate batsmen.

The boys learned all about shooting and fishing in the Tame, making great use of Ted's home-made boat.

An owl once mistook my father, who was sitting motionless on the river bank at dusk, for a post, and perched momentarily on his hat.

We had at Ardendale for many years an ancient single barrel, muzzle loading shotgun, the ramrod of which, with careless loading, often became jammed in the barrel. When this happened, the drill at Kingsbury was to remove the barrel from the stock, open the kitchen window and put the barrel in the fire with the muzzle accurately positioned, while another member of the family waited outside the window to observe the trajectory of the ramrod when the charge went off.

My father always recalled the wake which the Irish labourers held to mark the death by drowning in a water-filled ditch of one of their drunken comrades. His corpse was propped up in a corner and supplied with drink like everyone else amid the general festivities.

On another occasion, Albert and his brothers came across a local character who depended on his horse to find his way home from the village inn. The horse had decided to graze, and the owner was fast asleep in the cart. The lads carefully unharnessed the horse and reversed him in the shafts, so that the owner, on waking, would have to meet his disapproving gaze.

On November 10th, 1885, Edwin's mother, Ann Maria, died in her sleep following a heavy meal of roast goose, of which she was very fond. She had lived with Edwin and Ellen for the whole 26 years of their marriage, and must have become something of an institution in the household. The only anecdote my father ever mentioned was of a very ancient dancing doll, which she used to amuse the children, but never let them touch.

Edwin's ideas on education seem to have been reasonably sound. I believe the elder girls went to one of the Birmingham Schools. Ted spent some time boarding at Reading. Frank and Horace were sent to Solihull and Ethel to Hyalls Ladies College at Wellington, Salop.

Albert seemed to be the odd man out and more backward than his brothers and sisters. At fourteen, he was sent to a small private school, Connellan College, at Malvern, where, judging by his letters and memories, academics came a poor second to cricket, football and sorties on the hills.

In his first summer at Malvern, he was able to take part in Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations, which included fireworks and a beacon on the highest point of the hills.

After two years at Malvern, he appears, on May 18th, 1888, in the Edwin Whitehouse wages book, earning 5/- per week; by the end of June, this was increased to 7/-. Sometime in 1890, it was decided that he would be better occupied on the farm. He used to say on account of his health.

During his brief period at Vyse Street, where he worked in the warehouse and attended to callers, he was noticed with interest by Florence Bedford, when she was collecting items for her father.

By 1891, then aged 19, he was acting as farm manager for his father, and Edwin took Ethel, Frank and Horace for holidays in the Isle of Man that year and the two years following. His letters home to Albert are almost entirely reminders of what he wanted done on the farm. I often wonder if Ted had similar letters concerning the management of Vyse Street.

By this time, the three elder girls were married, Nancy to William Wilday and Nellie to his brother, Louis. The Wildays had farmed at Dunton for several generations and Louis and Nellie eventually took over the family farm. William was a representative for an oil and colour firm. Jessie Breeden, the only surviving child of Nancy and William, now in her eighties (1977) can recall the family Christmas gathering at Kingsbury Hall and the difficulty she had as a small child to sit on her grandfather's knee, owing to his rotund figure.

Marie married William Fulford-Brown, a jewellers' wholesaler, very short in build, which prompted Edwin's unwanted advice when they took a stroll in the fields, "Don't lose him in the mowing grass".

Ted and Florrie both married into the large Pepper family, Ted to Ada and Florrie to Arthur, who was a silversmith in business on his own. His other brothers were Herbert Pepper & Rudland - Accountants; Frederick Pepper & Co. - Estate Agents and Pepper Tangye & Winterton - Solicitors.

Florrie had worked for some time in the warehouse at Vyse Street, earning 10? weekly until Christmas, 1887, when she left. The date of her marriage is uncertain. She was courting Arthur in summer of 1887 and was married before Ted's wedding in 1892. She and Arthur lived at Netherstowe House in Lichfield until she died about 1916.

Sometime before June, 1890, Florrie must have offended her father so deeply that he drew up a will which excluded her completely. He may have had some objection to Arthur or the Pepper family, and this may have diminished when Ted married Ada Pepper, for in 1893, he had a revised will prepared which reinstated Florrie to equality with her sisters. Edwin died on 11th January, leaving the revised will unsigned and thus not legal.

The executors were his son, Edwin, and sons-in-law, William Wilday and Will. Fulford-Brown. The difficult situation was made worse by the serious illness of Will. Fulford-Brown, who died of cancer just a month later, leaving Marie with four children under eight years of age and very meagre resources. The legal will excluded Florrie, but gave an immediate legacy to each of the other girls, the unsigned will included Florrie, but delayed the £1,000 legacies until after the death of their mother. Apparently, common sense prevailed and all the girls had their £1,000 legacies immediately.

This enabled Marie to move to London, where she rented a boarding house in Earls Court and was able to provide for her remaining three children. Her two sons, Norman and Cedric, saw service in the 1914-18 war and returned to the Midlands, where they set up first as manufacturing jewellers and later as manufacturers of electric light fittings, until the death of Norman about 1967.

Enid, the only surviving daughter, married George Byatt, a tea planter, and lived in Ceylon for many years. Marie in her later years returned to Birmingham and often stayed with us at Ardendale, when she would recall her experiences during two long holidays in Ceylon in the twenties.

Following Edwin's death, all the farm stock and equipment, some 78 acres of freehold land with 2 farmhouses, 3 cottages and a wheelwright's shop, were sold, Kingsbury Hall was vacated and the family moved to The Mount, a house adjoining the church. Albert immediately joined Ted in the business and Frank came in later, after leaving school.

E. Whitehouse & Son prospered during the widowhood of Ellen, as indicated by the two probate valuations; £12,069.19.11 in 1894, from which £5,000 went to the girls, the balance had grown to £15,914.5.8 by December, 1899, when Horace apparently decided he was not going to join the firm.

The Mount, which was, as usual, rented, had a large and productive garden with a long river frontage, which allowed plenty of scope for outdoor activities. Ellen and daughter Ethel attended church regularly, and must have been distracted by the strange reverberations which occasionally floated down from the belfry when one of the Whitehouse boys managed to hit the minute hand of the clock with an accurate .22 rifle shot from The Mount garden. The clock face today bears evidence of the shots which missed the target.

Albert's return to E. Whitehouse & Son provided opportunities to further his acquaintance with Florence Bedford, which blossomed into courting outings to Birchfields and Kingsbury. The family horse drawn four wheeler was often used and the wooden camera tripod which my father used to support a large wooden plate camera sometimes served as a prod for the horse.

At some time, Albert and Florrie took up cycling as an alternative means of transport. Albert also cycled extensively in Warwickshire and Worcestershire with brother Ted, who was looking for a better house. He eventually moved to Bayscroft, a large house in fiery Hill at Barnt Green. Meanwhile, Albert was more impressed by the Knowle district.

Jessie Breeden recalls her widowed grandmother often driving alone in the four wheeler from Kingsbury to Water Orton to visit them, and Jessie and her sister amusing themselves with the conveyance in the yard while the horse was recuperating in the stable.

Frank completed his schooling at Solihull and joined his two brothers in the firm. While at school, he had made friends with Tom Tuckley, and fallen in love with his young sister, Mary.

Albert and Florence were married on 30th April, 1900 at Handsworth Parish Church. Florence's father, Henry Bedford, had died two years earlier and the family grief was still sufficient to demand a quiet wedding with no photographs. Florence was given away by her uncle, George, Henry's elder brother. George Bedford had for some years been the landlord of "The Gun Barrels" at Bournbrook, and the wedding reception was held there. Sadly, less than two months later, George Bedford died.

The honeymoon comprised a week in London followed by a week in Shanklin, I.O.W.. The couple, with Florrie's pug dog, Bogey (a courting gift from Albert), set up home at The Chestnuts, Dorridge Road, Dorridge, which was rented. Their neighbours were Major and Mrs. Ludlow.

The Major, a well-known estate agent, later built the house on Lovelace Hill and failed in his attempt to encourage the development of Widney Manor before the first World War.

Albert's mother, Ellen, visited The Chestnuts just once before her death on 5th November, 1900.

The household at The Mount, reduced to Ethel, Frank and Horace, carried on somewhat unsteadily. Ethel was fond of A. V. Owen, a Kingsbury boy who had got a degree in history and obtained a post at Monkton Coombe School.

This affair was strongly opposed by all the boys, especially Frank and Horace, for whom she kept the home going. Frank wanted to marry Mary Tuckley, but her parents thought she was too young. He supplemented his earnings by the sale of cut blooms from The Mount garden, which he took into Birmingham on the train.

Horace seemed unable to decide what he wanted to do and lived on his legacy until, tempted by adventure, he volunteered for the Army and served for a period in South Africa, returning at the end of the war to a minor hero's welcome at 52, Vyse Street, with the workshop fully decorated.

About this time, Ethel defied the opposition and went off to Bath to marry A. V. Owen and thus commence the longest marriage partnership in the family - 58 years.

Horace also moved off to the West Country, leaving Frank alone at The Mount. He soon acquired a house at Nether Whitacre and took one of the maids from The Mount as housekeeper until he married May Tuckley in May, 1903.

The Mount was thus vacated, and so ended the 32 years' connection with Kingsbury, leaving only the seven graves in the churchyard to bear witness.

Set Fair.

Albert and Florence were able to start their married life at The Chestnuts under near ideal conditions. E. Whitehouse & Son, with a workforce of over one hundred, was prospering because of the almost universal use of the pocket watch and chain. Social status was indicated either by size or quality, from 18ct to humble silver, and the watch would be synchronised frequently with "Railway Time". The price of silver at 2/- per ounce was at an all time low and vast quantities of silver Alberts were produced and sold. The work was labour intensive, piecework paid and a minimum profit of 5d per ounce was obtained on the weight of all silver sold.

The ladies wore a similar but smaller watch suspended on either a long guard chain or fancy Alberts in gold or silver, and necklets in a huge variety of gold chain were also popular.

In addition, there was a background of national prosperity. The British Empire was at its height and the country was moving from the rather stilted Victorian era into the more expansive Edwardian period. The only faint cloud on the horizon was the war with South Africa, which had very little effect on the national economy as no massive armaments programme was required. The regular army was supported by plenty of cavalier part-timers with sporting instincts who volunteered in search of adventure.

The Chestnuts was a large, ivy-covered semi-detached house in Dorridge Road, near its junction with Granville Road. It had mains drainage but no other services, hence all domestic water was pumped from a well, oil lamps and candles provided lighting and the coal-fired kitchen range, shining with black lead, did all the cooking.

Domestic help was plentiful and Mary Handie was the resident maid-of-all-work, on the going rate of £12 per annum, all found. Mr. Keall was engaged as full-time gardener/handyman.

The young Mrs. Albert Whitehouse always admitted that she found the transition from the quiet, genteel life of Birchfields to the more formal world of a prosperous outer suburb very difficult. Etiquette was all-important. Ladies were expected to leave visiting cards with friends and neighbours which announced the days and times when they would be "at home". She was never very happy with these purely social affairs and was very grateful for the help and guidance of Mrs. Ludlow, her next-door neighbour, who was much more experienced. The Ludlows later moved to their new house, Lovelace Hill at Widney Manor.

Albert was a quite different character and made friends easily. Many of these were travelling companions on his daily train journeys from Dorridge to Snow Hill and back. He played a few games of cricket with the newly-formed club on a field on the north side of Forest Road, and became a shareholder later when they moved to and purchased the existing ground in Station Road.

Table tennis was a new craze and Albert and his friends soon wore out the dining room carpet and several pairs of slippers. 21

His main recreation, apart from gardening, was shooting. The season commenced with partridge in September, pheasant was available in October and everything continued till Easter on practically every Saturday and, very occasionally, mid-week. He would team up with four or five of his friends to rent a shoot for the season, often travelling as far as Walton Hall, near Wellesbourne, Snitterfield or Tenbury Wells. He was an excellent shot and was often invited as a guest with other syndicates.

The first year of marriage brought two major events; Albert's mother, Ellen, died on November 5th, and, on 25th February, 1901, with the aid of the recently-qualified Dr. John Hollick and Nurse Thompson, Albert Edward Bedford arrived. My mother described him as a difficult baby (she probably lacked experience), but I am sure she enjoyed the additional chores and responsibility of a family, which was her natural role.

I know of no important events in the next seventeen months, which ended, on 27th July, 1902, with the arrival of Raymond Henry, assisted by the same medical team. With the increased domestic responsibilities it was decided to engage a nursemaid.

Albert and Florence had cycled quite a lot in their courting days and also for the first few months at Dorridge. Albert purchased a two wheel trailer fitted with a cane chair in which he sat either Edward or Raymond, who was then towed behind his bicycle with considerable effort. Rail travel was always used when any appreciable distance was to be covered. Fares were cheap and the extensive network with good services seven days a week, and horse-drawn cabs available at most stations, made most destinations easily accessible, even with small children. Albert was a country lover and he liked to explore the lanes also. With this in mind, he purchased what was always known as "the trap", an open governess cart with rubber tyred wooden wheels, capable of seating six at a pinch. Passengers had to adjust their positions to avoid undue down pressure or the reverse on the horse. I am uncertain if the horse was owned or hired, but as The Chestnuts lacked stabling, both horse and trap were kept at William Pitt's livery stables adjoining the Forrest Hotel.

Annual holidays meant train travel to Yarmouth, Bournemouth, Llandudno and Ilfracombe, for a three weeks' stay in apartments, usually in August and accompanied by a nursemaid and one or more of Albert's or Florrie's sisters. Albert was keen on sea fishing and got on well with the fishermen at Cromer, which was the holiday venue for several years. There were also short breaks spent at Jim Jackson's farm, the "Gate House", near Tenbury Wells, where Albert fished in the lettuce which ran through the farm, while Edward, Raymond and mother enjoyed the animals, the hop fields and the farm activities under the guidance of Mrs. Jackson.

In 1906, Edward and Raymond commenced school with Miss Withers, 22 who operated in a large house in the lower end of Manor Road, near its junction with Grange Road, where she had about twenty children with a fairly wide age range.

With E. Whitehouse & Son flourishing, brother Ted living in fine style at Barnt Green and Frank settled and starting his family at Nether Whitacre, Albert and Florence began to have thoughts of a house of their own in place of The Chestnuts, which they were renting from Mr. Smallwood of Stratford-upon-Avon, who queried every minor change they wished to make.

A site on the north side of Blue Lake Road was first considered for building, (the site is still undeveloped - 1981), then Albert heard that Dr. Foster's brother, John, wished to sell his house, Ardendale, in Grove Road. The house was no better than The Chestnuts, but it was detached, had extensive stabling and outbuildings and nearly an acre of garden and paddock adjoining. Gas was laid on but there was only well water and no main drainage. John White of Osborne, Pemberton & White was consulted and produced plans to extend the house and include five large bedrooms, three reception, two pantries and a large garden room beneath the dining room. The whole extension to cost £700 - £750. The plans were accepted and the house purchased from John Foster for £1,400.00 in September, 1907. At that time, William Briley, the builder, was completing a large house, Barnfield, in Grove Road for William Grew, one of Albert's shooting colleagues. The style and quality of his work was excellent and Briley was given the Ardendale contract. Work was started almost immediately.

The correspondence between my parents' architect and builders underline the considerable attention to detail by all concerned. Ardendale was to be a dream house and Florence in particular was insistent on the exact details of the fittings she wanted, the balustrades of the stairs and the stone steps to the garden, the arch entrance to the lounge and the leaded lights to the vestibule doors, fireplace surrounds and the many built-in cupboards and shelves to mention a few. Albert had the dining room and lounge ceilings copied from those of his bedroom and the drawing room at The Mount. Another debatable fitment was a large Rufford porcelain bath, which necessitated the strengthening of the bathroom floor with two R.S.V.'s. The sheer solidity of the bath always caused a rapid cooling of the bath water, to everyone's dismay.

The work proceeded rapidly and on April 1st, 1908, Chamberlain, King & Jones delivered carpets, underfelts, linoleum, curtains and fittings for the whole house at a cost of £150.16.1. With some minor building work incomplete, the family moved in; the removal charge, again Chamberlain, King & Jones, amounting to £7.10.0.

With adequate stabling now available, my father bought Bob, a grey pony, and engaged Harry Douglas as coachman/gardener. Bob was a good looking but rather temperamental horse, who could soon detect who was in charge. He respected Harry Douglas's authority but became quite unpredictable with anyone else. The convenience of having transport immediately available for my father to and from the station, Edward and Raymond for school and Mother for shopping was a great advantage.

23

The large garden with coal-fired greenhouse and now the horse required more labour and Daniel Lindon was engaged to assist the ageing Keall with the improvements. The lawn was enlarged by levelling the paddock separating the original lawn from Benjamin Lymer's house next door. A back drive, surfaced with ashes, for cess-pit emptying and the delivery of garden materials was added, with a thirty yard golden yew hedge for screening. The garden pool was given a rockery surround, fruit and ornamental trees were planted and various rustic arches and trellises were built. My father also extended the garden by renting a small paddock from Miss Jane Parkes, who lived in the cottage adjoining. This was used as a bonfire site and general storage area with beds for vegetable marrows and seakale, with horseradish growing in the long grass.

John and Alice Parkes had a small farm based on the cottage until shortly before John's death in 1885, when most of his land was sold to Benjamin Lymer for his nursery on the east side of Ardendale, and also two fields on the opposite side of the road. They retained the long narrow field on the other side of our garden, which gave access to the road and included the field path to the Warwick Road.

At this time, Jane Parkes was a housemaid with the Colmore's, who lived at The Warren in Avenue Road. Her two sisters were married and her only brother, Owen, was a railwayman at Dorridge Station. Jane later gave up her job to look after her ageing mother and Owen became the only breadwinner. Then, in 1895, when aged 38, he was killed in a shunting accident. Jane often pointed out his initials, scratched on one of the small window panes and a fine, straight-stemmed oak tree growing by the cottage gate where he planted an acorn as a child.

To eke out a living, Jane decided to start a grocery shop in the front room in addition to the few hens and chickens she raised in a thatched hovel in the garden. Brown, Hopwood & Gilbert, the wholesale grocers, delivered every fortnight and the loud jingling of the harness as the two horses trotted down the field was the signal to my parents that fresh butter, bacon, cheese and other commodities were available at the bottom of the garden. On a winter evening, in response to the door knocker, Jane, armed with a paraffin lamp from the sitting room, would unbar the door for the customers to squeeze into the tiny front room. The dim light, the combined smell of paraffin, cheese and soap and Jane cutting, patting and weighing the various commodities produced a truly Dickensian atmosphere.

Jane's mother, Alice, died in 1900, aged 81, leaving Jane to live alone for the rest of her life. She had girlhood memories of her mother walking regularly to and from Birmingham market with produce from the family smallholding and also contended that Grove Road was so named because of a one-time larch grove, the last tree of which I can remember as a massive specimen overhanging the Knowle Wood Road/Grove Road junction.

In 1909, my mother became pregnant again. She and my father hoped to emulate brother Ted and Ada, who had produced Marjorie in 1907, following two sons. This was not to be, and the old firm of Hollick and Thompson saw me safely delivered on 2nd May, 1910, a few days before the death of Edward VII.

The family holiday was, as usual, in August, at Cromer. Exactly how I, as a three month old, travelled on the train without Mothercare equipment is unknown. The only perambulator was a large, wooden, black and yellow contraption with thin, wire-spoked wheels, which I dismantled years later to make various go carts and a lawn leaf sweeper, with the hood acting as an excellent leaf catcher.

24

August 1911 saw the family at a new holiday venue - Teignmouth - with Aunt Ettie Bedford in the party.

In September of that year, Edward and Raymond started at Warwick School in the Junior House with Mr. W. V. P. Heater as housemaster, Raymond at that time being the youngest boy in the school. Each morning, Harry Douglas, with Bob and the trap, delivered them in time to catch the 8.37 at Dorridge station. The trip was then repeated with my father to catch the 8.55 for Snow Hill. Their return journeys were met in the same way, Harry Douglas finally bedding down the horse at about 7pm, to complete a pretty long day. This routine, with a half day on Saturdays, was repeated for the next five years, varied only by school and family holidays and shooting Saturdays.

The Ardendale stabling included a harness room with special brackets for two sets of carriage harness and riding saddle. A glass case over the fireplace housed stirrups and a single rosette awarded for the smartest turnout on some occasion before my time. There was also a large carriage umbrella with wooden ribs, which was never used for its intended purpose, but was often tried out as a parachute or garden shelter.

Hay, straw and corn was supplied by Harry Fawdry from Solihull and thrown up through the loft doorway. Up here was a manual chaff-cutter, an oat roller and a huge mouse and rat-proof corn bin with built-in fruit storage racks. The coach house had room for the trap and a large carpenter's bench, where the boot and knife cleaning was done. The outside staff were responsible also for the pumping of water into the 340 gallon storage tanks in the roof space each morning and evening, filling coal hods and sifting cinders from the hearth ash for re-use. The well water was very hard so there were also rainwater storage tanks above the back door and an underground cistern with pump to supply water for the household washing. The wash house, with coal-fired copper and large, wooden-rollered mangle, was in a line of outbuildings flanking the yard, and Monday mornings brought clouds of billowing steam and a steady thump, thump of the beechwood dolly in a large oak washtub made from a paraffin cask bought from Tippins, the Dorridge ironmonger. Harry Douglas was responsible for fixing the clothes line between two beech trees by the pool, where it was considered to be out of sight.

The domestic staff now consisted of Mary and Maud Hollis: the sisters lived in, and Maud, the younger one, was part-time nursemaid for me. One of my earliest recollections is of her pushing me at speed in my pushchair around the garden pathways in imitation of the train taking Edward and Raymond to Warwick, with stopping places, presumably to regain her breath. The maids' morning dress of blue and white was changed to black with frilled and starched white apron, collar and cuffs for afternoons and evenings. The laundering of these and other items like collars, pillow cases and sheets, were collected and delivered by the Leamington Steam Laundry, all items being marked 6A.

Motor cars were beginning to appear. William Grew at Barnfield now owned a car and employed a Mr. Smith as chauffeur/groom/coachman. The unreliability of the car was neutralised by the retention of a horse drawn four wheeler. The car was often used for the shooting journeys to Snitterfield, where William and my father had their shoot. The resident gamekeeper was a Mr. Carter, who had a long, grey beard. On one outing when sport had been poor, one wag in the party suggested, as a last resort, that the dogs should be put into Carter's beard in the hope of flushing something out. Another member of the syndicate was David Lythall, an eighty year old widower from Leamington, who was stone deaf. He upset his colleagues by getting married very quietly during the close season. As they missed giving him a wedding present, they insisted on giving him a pram when the family began to arrive. To their general amazement, the promise had to be honoured and the pair produced two sons.

In August, 1912, the family holiday was again at Teignmouth with Aunts Gertie and Maud with Alex and Dyllis. I am told that I was generally horrid to Dyllis, who was eager to act as mother. The following year we went to Fowey, taking Mrs. Douglas, who had been unwell, as a general assistant.

We were now in a period of maximum prosperity, E. Whitehouse & Son had over 100 employees, wages were virtually unchanged since Victorian times and the trading outlook set fair. The workshop areas at 52, Vyse Street had become inadequate and extensions to virtually double the floor area were put in hand. Old shopping, nicknamed "The Castle", was demolished and a new wing with a large, well-lit workshop and separate gilding shop on the top floor and, beneath, a machine shop for rolling and wire drawing was soon taking shape. Ted's second son, Cedric, had now joined the firm and he and his elder brother, Donovan, (an articled accountant), duly laid inscribed bricks.

On the domestic front, servants were still plentiful at £12 per annum, with uniform and accommodation, and a gardener/groom would expect about £2 weekly.

Albert and particularly Florence were always interested in having a nice home and Ardendale was gradually filled with items usually purchased from auctions at local houses. They bought wisely and a very strict discipline was always maintained to avoid damage or excessive wear and tear of any household item. This may have been irksome to servants and children, but the policy was amply justified when less affluent times arrived.

In the garden a similar high standard was maintained. Harry Douglas had Bert Wood as part-time assistant, who, on mowing days, would pull the old Greens machine while Harry, with head tilted, would ensure the straightness of the cuts. Weedkiller or tarmac were unknown, so the gravel drive and garden pathways were all hand-weeded and regularly rolled. Each Autumn, the ivy which covered the old part of the house was stripped of its leaves and trimmed, which meant hand-plucking into hessian sacks from a ladder, the object being to discourage hibernating insects and birds.

For indoor entertainment, we had a wind-up gramophone with horn and quantities of records, some of pre-1900 make. There was always a heavy background of needle scratch, which we thought could be lessened by a duster stuffed down the horn.

The piano, which mother played, could also be operated by an Angelus piano player, which had foot pedals which forced air through wide rolls of perforated paper to produce a sort of organ effect with piano accompaniment. Volume depended on pedal pressure, which was always pushed to the limit of ones strength. My father also purchased a cinematograph projector for 35mm films which could be hired or bought. This was hand operated and had a lamp fuelled by methylated spirit which was pressurised to a large upright mantle. The enormous fire risk of this was never appreciated until, many years later when we were disposing of some old, damaged films, they exploded, literally, into a ball of fire when tossed onto a bonfire. The films were usually projected in the garden room, which had a tiled floor, but I can remember some occasions when the dining room was used, with pipes and cigarettes alight, an open fire and, sometimes, the take-up reel would fail to rotate and a pile of loose film would accumulate on the carpet. All went well, and extra films were usually hired for Christmas and winter visitors. This was also a period of good German mechanical toys. Edward and Raymond had two 2½' gauge steam-driven railway engines with coaches. These were also fired by methylated spirit and often caused minor fires in the garden room when derailed. There were also hot air engines and a fire engine capable of pumping water.

Female fashions were very elaborate at this time, long dresses sweeping the ground, blouses with tall, stiffened collars, fancy belts, fur muffs for winter and, inevitably, button boots (which I also wore). Hats were tremendous, often with masses of ornamental flowers and shiny fruit. Purchases were never made in haste and involved interminable visits to Mancus, Ashmore's, Jevons & Mellors and Libertys in Birmingham or Madame Louise, who had a very superior gown shop in Dorridge.

Bleriot's Channel flight in 1909 made the aeroplane appear a practical development and various so-called "Flying Men" were competing with one another to achieve the greatest distance, height or speed. As a four-year old, I can clearly remember standing in the footpath field next to Barnfield in Grove Road, which was then the best local viewpoint, in the hope of seeing either Hux or Hamel, two aviators who were competing, I believe, on a London to Manchester flight. Everyone had brought field glasses or binoculars, and Mr. Ward, the manager of the Knowle & Dorridge Gas Company, impressed me by arriving on his bicycle armed with a large telescope. After a long wait, we did see a tiny speck moving on the horizon, but never knew who it was. Very soon after, in May, 1914, Hamel was killed in a crash into the Channel. This and several other fatalities convinced my father that aeroplanes would never become a success.

This stable and affluent world started to crumble on August 4th, 1914. I have no recollection of how the news broke on that day and was also unaware of the birth of my future wife in Acocks Green on the same historic day.

The War Years.

August 4th, 1914, was a Bank Holiday, and all the family were at home when a friend of my father's called to tell us that a war had started.

Our holiday bookings had been made some time previously and the war, widely forecast to be over before Christmas, did not upset the arrangements and later in the month, we left by train for Falmouth. I have a few recollections of this holiday, being puzzled by the stop blocks at the end of Falmouth station, which was a terminus. Trains, to me, always went through stations and on to the next. We were met by Mr. Walsh, the Stationmaster, who had recently been transferred from Dorridge, where he had spent many years, and knew my father as a regular traveller. It was he who had arranged our lodgings with Mrs. Wills in a large house near the Falmouth Hotel in the Cliff Road. We had boat trips to Truro, St Mawes, Flushing and The Lizard, where serpentine lighthouses were bought for Edward and Raymond. I had a sailing boat which I christened 'Lilla' after Mrs. Wills' daughter. Castle Beach was rocky, with good pools for small boats, but the bathing for my father, Edward and Raymond was not too good.

Events in Flanders during the autumn and spring finally destroyed the national complacency regarding the war, and steadily increasing shortages of a wide range of commodities began to interfere with the normal smooth running of our household.

A further problem arose about this time. The old part of Ardendale was poorly built and the foundations were inadequate for the heavy clay sub-soil. The summer of 1914 was a long, hot and dry one, and severe settlement cracks developed, those in the blue bedroom, nearest the large cedar tree were particularly bad and terrified me so much that I would not enter the room alone for fear of its instant collapse.

Builders came and did some underpinning. An improved damp course was put in and two large R.S.J.'s were placed under the floors of the lounge and the drawing room to give additional support. An inspection door giving access to the space under the lounge was added and this large crawl-in area was used to store planks, barrels, the switchback railway and numerous other miscellaneous items. It was always an interesting place to crawl around with a lighted candle in the hope of finding a long forgotten treasure.

In 1915, when the additional workshop at Vyse Street had barely been completed, a fire started in a heated sawdust pan which had been left on and destroyed the main part of the original workshop. As the firm was a sub-contractor, rolling brass for Bulpit's, who were busy making shell cases and other war material, re-building was authorised and turned to good account. The two storey workshop was increased in width and height and new melting muffles were built in the yard for use during the rebuilding. The firm had always done its own melting and alloying of gold and silver, the fine gold being obtained from the bank in the form of newly-minted sovereigns. This was now to cease owing to the withdrawal of gold coinage in favour of bank notes, and henceforth, grain gold was obtained from the refiners.

The war was producing abnormal trading conditions. Some employees were attracted by the very high wages paid to munitions workers, but the output of the remainder sold with increasing profit margins to the high wage earners, who often, in the poorer areas, had few outlets for their sudden affluence.

One of Henry Riley's piano salesman's story of finding one of their expensive instruments in a small back kitchen, where it had been whitewashed to match the walls, was very typical.

By 1916, the shortage of service manpower due to the appalling losses on the Western Front and at Gallipoli had become acute.

Volunteers were no longer appearing in quantity and conscription was introduced, first for single men and extended to include married men later on in the year, with an ultimate age range from 18 to 45. My father, who was then 44, and his brother, Frank, 36, were part-time special constables with Birmingham 'C' Division. In Frank's case, this was insufficient reason for deferment and he was drafted into the Royal Artillery, which was then horse drawn. His wife, Mary, was left with four young children, and this situation, combined with the stresses of active service in Flanders, made him ever-envious of the relative good fortune of his two elder brothers. Ted's sons, Donovan and Cedric, served in the Royal Naval Air Service, where life seemed much easier and leave more frequent.

Rail services had to be curtailed and the 8.37 to Warwick was withdrawn. This meant Edward and Raymond catching the 7.45 a.m. and the consequent early start put an end to the traditional early morning coffee in bed, accompanied by the letters and the Birmingham Post, which also came through the post without fail each morning.

At Warwick, both boys were showing some athletic promise and won several trophies on sports days. My father was an enthusiastic spectator and presented a silver challenge cup for hurdling, which is still in existence.

In the absence of a suitable nursery school, Mother engaged Miss Muriel Williams to give me lessons at home. She was an ex-pupil of Miss Whithers, who cycled to the various houses of her pupils to give an hour or so of teaching the three 'R's'. Among her pupils were young Horace Everitt and his sister at Knowle Hall. Miss Williams was most correct and efficient and I made very good progress.

My father allowed Harry Douglas time off to do agricultural work in order to defer his call-up, but finally he had to go. His age and knowledge of horses kept him away from active service. Bert Wood, who had a low medical grade, remained to carry on alone. He had several tense moments with Bob and the trap; on one occasion backing into the deep ditch at the top of Grove Road, fortunately with no one else in the trap. The increasing difficulty of getting feed for a horse not engaged on essential work and the probability of Bert Wood's call-up prompted the decision to put Bob out to graze on Cotterills farm at Rotten Row Farm, where we had always had our milk.

The garden, aided by an ample supply of horse manure, was always productive, but my father attempted to increase the yield by renting part of Jane Parkes' garden. This was not too successful, owing to the huge yew tree which shaded most of the area, and the difficulty of keeping out Jane's fowl, who wandered everywhere, and also the local rabbits.

Medical standards were gradually lowered and Bert Wood received his call-up papers. His replacement from an almost impossible labour market was an elderly man named Conway, who was well below the standard of his predecessors and finally got himself sacked by oversleeping his lunch hour in the hay loft.

On the domestic scene, the Hollis sisters had long since gone, so had Florence Kirby, and Polly West had arrived. She was a well-meaning, simple character who lived with us for nearly ten years. Her leisure was confined to each Wednesday afternoon and alternate Sundays, when she would cycle to her Mother's cottage at Packwood. There were always groans when it was realised that it was 'Old Poll's' day off and assistance would be required at meal times, which would then be taken in the kitchen.

Between 1914 and 1917, we had no seaside holidays and outings became fewer as the war situation worsened. My memories of long summer holidays were essentially home based. Bowls and cricket on the lawn (no hard ball on Sundays), tree climbing, bird nesting, and an activity known as the Ardendale Tent Army, which involved a lot of crawling along ditches with airguns and other weapons, with Edward in command, always hoping to find a suitable enemy. We spent many hours trespassing from the field path into Mellors' or Cotterill's fields, where there was a tiny stream.

My father had permission to pick watercress from a section of the stream in Cotterill's fields and this was stretched to walking the hedgerows for hazel nuts, blackberries and crab apples, always keeping a look out for mushrooms. 29

Ben Lymer's fields were always carefully avoided; he was a tempestuous character who was prone to loud altercations with all and sundry, particularly trespassers. His nursery was very much run down and he lived with two women helpers, one of whom had been his clerk in a money lending business he ran in Sparkbrook. The other, a tough, outdoor type, used to drive his donkey cart while old Ben sat with his legs dangling over the back. Raymond had a long-standing feud with the donkey, whose name was Napoleon, dating from an occasion when he was bending to admire the old man's caged birds and Napoleon sneaked up and bit his backside.

The garden pool was always a source of interest, with generations of model boats, stickleback fishing, frogs, newts and a host of insects to watch. Then Edward decided to make a boat. He cut out the side of a large barrel, found it was unstable, so outriggers were fitted.

Other modifications and ballast were added, but every voyage was somewhat of a gamble and good entertainment for those on shore. Even swimming was attempted, but the apres bathe condition of bather and pool was dreadful and greatly amused our Coleshill cousins, who arrived soon after one session.

1917 was a dreadful year. January and February brought snow and hard frost, coal was in short supply and we had a major freeze up. I remember helping mother to break and remove thick ice from the storage tanks in the roof space and endeavouring to unfreeze the connecting pipes with kettles of hot water from a bedroom fireplace. She was afraid of a kitchen boiler explosion due to lack of circulation and this seemed a possibility as all the taps were frozen solid in the scullery, china pantry and toilet. The crisis ultimately passed, leaving us with several burst pipes.

Outside, thick ice on the garden pool and also on a pool long since disappeared in Cotterill's fields, provided first slides and then skating for Edward and Raymond. I was eventually fitted up with Aunt Maud's old wooden skates fitted to a pair of Raymond's cast-off cricket boots, several sizes too large, but adequate to introduce me to a pastime that has intrigued me all my life.

On March 5th, Uncle Ted's only daughter, Marjorie, died in great pain with appendicitis which had been diagnosed too late for a successful operation. She had been idolised by her father and her death was a devastating blow from which he never really recovered.

The newspapers were unable to conceal the critical state of the war.

Allied shipping losses were enormous, the "invincible" Russia had collapsed, France and Italy were just hanging on. We only learned years later that the devastating Passchendaele offensive losses were essential to divert German attention from the near-mutinous French forces.

Shortage of food was a major problem, sugar and sweets became almost unobtainable until rationed in October. Meat and butter were very scarce, wheat flour was adulterated with potato and various substitutes like saccharine and margarine became common.

We must have fared better than most families. My father's shooting provided pheasants, partridges, rabbits and hares, which formed a large slice of our winter meat, and his contacts through business and police duties also helped to obtain other scarce items. He used to buy whole or half pigs from Francis Brown or his friend, Mr. Ibbotson, which would be delivered by a butcher and dismembered on the garden room table, the bacon, hams, etc., were cured in the cellar adjoining and then hung up in the scullery before cutting for use. Nothing was wasted, but with no refrigeration there was always a glut of roast pork, sausages, pork pies, brawn and other bits and pieces following each pig delivery. My father was now doing more work in the vegetable garden than ever and Edward, who was keen on chemistry, decided to ease the sugar shortage by making beet sugar from his own cultivation of beetroot. Unfortunately, he grew red instead of the white sugar beet and the only result of hours of processing in the garden room was a quantity of thin, sweet liquid.

Edward's Sunday morning chemical experiments in the garden room often drew criticism from his father, who would pass through from the garden to his beer barrel in the cellar for his mid-morning drink. "That damned stink is going all up the back stairs!" was a common complaint when the miniature laboratory of Philip Harris equipment was in action. Chemistry was beyond me and I spent more time watching Raymond, who was a painstaking model maker, usually in wood. I was always annoyed when he sometimes abandoned a project, owing to some unforeseen difficulty, and one incident exasperated me completely. He had laboriously constructed a Wilbur Wright - type of model aeroplane in wood and fabric, which he took out to test fly on the lawn. The subsequent crash landings seemed reasonable enough to me but fell so far short of his expected standards that the model was ceremonially placed on the floor and then jumped upon. My dismay was absolute, I would have loved that aeroplane. Sporting cartridges were becoming very scarce and expensive. My father bought several small hand tools which he attached to the kitchen table to re-load dozens of his empty cases, particularly all the brass ones, which were used over and over again. I was his assistant and used to measure out powder and shot, push in wads and roll over the tops. We never had an accident and rarely produced a 'dud'. One of my rewards was to sprinkle grains of gunpowder on the hot top of the kitchen range to produce a train of miniature explosions.

My father was not much of a handyman, the cleaning and oiling of his sporting guns was a religion, the household clocks would receive similar treatment and he would maintain the various gas lights and bells and fit washers to taps. Any intricate repairs, to the gramophone of similar equipment, meant the removal of a faulty part, which would then be carefully repaired by someone as Vyse Street.

With no horse and trap available, it was ^{ΔΕΥΔΕΔ} to buy three wartime finished New Hudson bicycles for Father, Edward and Raymond. The original parental machines had been dismantled to provide ball bearings, wheels and other parts for various purposes. Edward strengthened the carrier of his bicycle with wood strips in order to take my weight and I enjoyed many bumpy rides with an old green cushion as the only protection. One night later that year, we had a Zeppelin raid. I woke to find everyone out of bed and Polly West terrified, then heard several thumps of bombs, which, we heard later, were dropped at Meriden. Before that, bombs had been dropped near Bradshaw's school at Packwood and the Stratford Road at Four Ashes, followed by a flare which lit up the countryside.

We went to see the craters in a field by the Stratford Road, which were partially filled with water, and the field strewn with clods of earth and stones. The small cottage on the corner of Four Ashes Road had lost its windows. Polly West was able to report that two other bombs had narrowly missed Bradshaw's School, which was quite near her mother's cottage in Old Warwick Road.

Passing aeroplanes were very much a novelty. For many months each Sunday afternoon a Maurice Farman biplane with openwork tail and pushing propeller would drone slowly overhead and everyone came outside to watch. A similar machine landed in a field adjoining what is now Longdon Road and Newton Road, then open farmland. Edward, with me on the carrier, and Raymond set out to find the aeroplane. I remember the very steep and stony hill leading down from Lodge Road, which was very narrow and completely overhung with trees, and finally the field on the right, where the local constable was mounting guard over the aeroplane. It was a flimsy wood and fabric structure with tensioned wires between the two wings and some of the wooden struts in line with the engine exhaust were wrapped round with asbestos string to prevent burning. Some months earlier, we had seen our first aeroplane at close quarters in a field adjoining Watery Lane. It was a small, single seater biplane, made of wood and fabric, with a Gnome engine. The engine and propeller rotated as a single unit which produced a strong gyroscopic effect and made these machines very difficult to manoeuvre. We never heard how these aeroplanes got away in such limited space, but I do remember seeing an aeroplane land, and later take off from the field between Lansdowne Farm and the Warwick Road a year or so later.

After a lapse of three years, it was decided to resume family holidays, and, in late August, 1917, we travelled by train to Criccieth. We arrived on a dark, wet evening and had some difficulty in finding our apartments, which were in a block of four severe looking houses in the middle of the Esplanade, nicknamed "The Barracks". Two of the four houses were empty, the reason being, we heard, the frequent flooding of the basement area during winter storms, when heavy seas broke over the Esplanade. The weather was poor, but the novelty of beaches, canoes and mountains made it enjoyable for all. My father, Edward and Raymond enjoyed the bathing, but I was not impressed and limited myself to paddling. Apart from the railway, there was no transport, so we had to walk in order to see the district. My father, who invariably wore his shooting breeches and boots when on holiday, never used a map and depended on directions from our landlady or one of the shopkeepers, from whom we purchased our food. We spent hours trying to find cromlechs or similar landmarks, but worst of all was the walk to Borth-y-Gest. Aunt Ada had been to Criccieth with her son, Harry, earlier that year and she told mother of this nice walk. We set off one afternoon, not realising that it was a trek of nine miles there and back with several climbs and a stretch of difficult sand dunes at Morfa By chan. We finally made it and got back to Criccieth in the dusk with everyone tired out. Father could not conceive how Ada had been able to walk that distance in an afternoon. When he questioned her later, she calmly replied that she had been told it was a very nice walk just beyond Black Rock.

We had constant reminders of the war in the Atlantic by the debris washed ashore from the torpedoed ships. Several large bales of raw cotton came in one stormy day, to add to duckboards, planks and pieces of panelling already lying on the beaches. A group of German prisoners of war were working on a drainage scheme near Black Rock to improve the adjacent farmland.

Back at home, a large hessian sack of flour occupied a permanent position in the corner of the kitchen. I have no idea how it was obtained, but the home-baked bread was far superior to the distinctly grey loaves supplied by Statham's, and despite the mice attacking it from the rear, it eventually outlasted the war. Drinking chocolate was still obtainable and this, when heated with a proportion of nut butter and poured into a small meat tin, produced an acceptable block of chocolate. For Christmas, mother, with spoons and tart trays for moulds, made peppermint creams. About this time, Miss Williams had difficulty in fitting in her sessions at Ardendale and suggested I should join the small school she had started at her parents' house, Beaconsfield in Temple Road, with five pupils. Myself, the new boy, academically a little ahead of the others, but quite unused to being with children of my own age, found it all rather unsettling. The daily sessions must have been fairly short as the sequence of prayers, reading, writing, exercises, arithmetic, drawing and handwork was completed without any break or play time. I must have seemed a bit odd to the other children and I hated the end of school, when out in Temple Road I would have books to carry for homework and everyone else seemed to have both hands free. My round sailor hat with H.M.S. Lion emblazoned on the band, would be flung from one to the other, occasionally onto a hedge top before Francis Pilley and his sister, Kathleen, would race off down Knowle Wood Road.

My father had not used his cameras after the Falmouth holiday, so Edward somehow obtained film for one of his ancient box cameras. This was a bulky, wooden framed affair, at least a five inch cube, with a spring operated shutter which left no one in doubt that an exposure had been made. Edward did his own developing and fixing of daylight prints, using the garden room or cellar as a dark room with an ancient lantern consisting of a candle behind a sheet of dark red glass. I cannot remember the camera being used away from home, but it did produce some passable results. Raymond became interested and was later given a Brownie camera or more up-to-date design. He also did his own developing and printing with the same primitive equipment, graduating later to gaslight paper. This involved the printing frame, loaded in the darkroom and then concealed under his jacket before a rapid withdrawal for a few seconds exposure to an inverted gas mantle, then back under his jacket and back to the

darkroom. Having a more portable camera, Raymond assumed the role of family photographer for our Criccieth holidays and the very occasional outings, such as a day in Oxford, where he took some very good photos of the colleges.

Overnight visitors at Ardendale during the war years were rare, but two regulars must be mentioned.

Charles Avery was the buyer for Williamsons, London wholesalers who were customers of E. Whitehouse & Son. He was a typical unchanging Edwardian figure; straight black hair carefully greased and parted with a flourish at the front, waxed moustache with long spikes, gold mounted rimless spectacles, tall white collar and black suit. He would arrive with my father and after our evening meal, he would tell us of his experiences and problems in wartime London, particularly air raids, Zeppelins at night and later aeroplanes in daylight. On one occasion, he returned home with a large vegetable marrow from our garden, later he sent us a photograph of the marrow fitted with matchbox gondolas and illuminated by a torch to give an excellent representation of a night raiding Zeppelin caught by searchlight. On a later visit, he bought our old Angelus piano player and somehow got it to London by carrier.

John Anderson, our Scottish agent, was a dry humoured, elderly Scotsman who had once been mistaken for Asquith, the then Prime Minister, at a Glasgow hotel. His six monthly visits extended over many years and I understand he always greeted the ageing bookkeeper at Vyse Street with the query "Are ye noo married yet, Miss Moore?" She must have dreaded the inevitable question with all the Whitehouses listening for her reply. I found his broad Scottish accent difficult to understand but appreciated his stories of the dickensian conditions of his boyhood in Glasgow. Following Conway's dismissal, Reggie Mander was the next gardener.

He was an energetic seventeen year old, waiting for army call-up, and demonstrated how the large Ardendale lawn could be mown single handed. Harry Douglas was able to get some extended leave to assist on Cotterill's farm with haymaking and harvesting and during these spells would steal a day or so to work in the garden. On one or two occasions, Edward and Raymond collected Bob and persuaded Harry Douglas to harness him up and take us for a drive. There was now growing concern that Edward would be called up soon after his seventeenth birthday in February, 1918. He was already a member of the school O.T.C., which gave him some months of exemption, and a further extension was obtained by his electing to become a naval cadet. Fortunately, these deferments outlasted the war.

Early in 1918, the whole country was hit by a very severe influenza epidemic. All the household except mother had attacks of varying intensity, but father, although unwell, continued travelling to and from Vyse Street because his brother, Ted, was also ill, and finally contracted pneumonia. He was critically ill for several days before Dr. John Hollick and two nurses finally got him through to convalescence.

In August, 1918, we went on holiday again to Criccieth, where, on arrival, we found our two large trunks were not in the guards van. After some hours of anxiety, all was well when they were delivered to our apartments in Mona Terrace by the Railway horse and cart.

Across the road from our sitting room window was the chapel where Margaret Lloyd George and her daughter, Megan, attended morning service each Sunday. Our programme had to be arranged in order to see them walk down from Bryn Awelon, their house overlooking Criccieth, to the chapel. My father, always a staunch conservative, accepted Lloyd George as a good wartime leader, but disliked his free trade and socialistic policies. He took every opportunity of advocating tariff reform in any political discussion and had many heated debates with Aunt Maud, who was a Lloyd George admirer. Had we known of the goings on at No. 10, Downing Street while Mrs Lloyd George was in Criccieth, my father's verbal abuse of the Prime Minister would have been unanswerable.

During this holiday, we met Mr. Agard, a friend of my father's, who was an asthma sufferer. He frequently resorted to a weird nasal spray to ease his attacks, which we thought very amusing and Edward was able to give some very lifelike impersonations of him.

Through Mr. Agard we met a Mr. Smith and his wife. He was a retired railway engineer and a keen fisherman who arranged several fishing excursions to the River Dwyfor. He would often don an old suit, and, armed with a large shrimp net, wade waist deep around the rocks at low tide after crabs, lobsters or shrimps, then walk back dripping wet with his catch, to his house, Haulfryn, opposite the castle entrance.

We also met Mr. W. H. Cartwright, a one time woodwork master at Warwick School, who was on holiday with his enormous wife, Blanche, and his son, Basil. This was the start of many meetings over the next twelve years.

Another Criccieth personality was Marie Corelli, the popular novelist, who had a house in the Portmadoc Road as a summer alternative to her house in Stratford-upon-Avon.

I also remember the bearded Mr. Lloyd Evans, a governor of Warwick School, whose Model T Ford was often parked on the Esplanade, while he would stroll down to the beach to get a close up view of the bathing belles.

The newspapers, which were our only source of information, could only give censored accounts of the tremendous German offensives in the Spring of 1918. Their efforts to defeat outright the French and British armies before the American forces could be employed in strength so very nearly succeeded. The overriding comfort we had was that a new and very powerful ally was coming to our assistance and we must now win in the end.

I cannot recall any increasing excitement or optimism as November approached and the Armistice was a complete surprise to me. We were at school in Miss Williams' dining room as usual on the 11th, when her young sister, who was normally very shy, opened the door and called out excitedly "It's signed!" I recollect some firing of maroons earlier, but this was so similar to the daily gun testing that it aroused no comment. Muriel Williams explained that the war was over and later, I walked home wondering how long it would be before I could expect one of those lovely mechanical toys, (made in Germany), which Edward and Raymond enjoyed years ago.

I was the last to arrive home. Edward and Raymond had earlier retrieved the large, ancient, tattered Union Jack from the underroom, put up the big ladder which gave access to the roof, and then straddled along the ridge tiles to put the pole into two brackets built into the front gable end. I had not seen the flag before and it looked very fine as I came through the gate. My father had purchased a large silver salver in celebration, and also several badges showing the flags of the allies in enamel. A bottle of champagne was opened but I cannot recall how long the festivities lasted.

A. Brief summary of the Whitehouse story still ³⁴
to be written

Aged 85 I am now the sole survivor of the 39 grandchildren of Edwin and Ellen of Kingsbury

I was a very happy household at Arden Dale in the 20's in spite of the financial problems of E. Whitehouse & Son due to changing fashions and the prolonged industrial depression.

Uncle Ted died in 1919 Edward joined the firm in the same year, and Uncle Frank took early retirement in 1923 never having recovered from his experiences in the Royal Artillery (Then horse drawn) in Flanders.

My father Albert then became the sole proprietor Raymond was assisted to a stockbroker in 1921 and the same year I went to Warwick School where a modest academic standard was overshadowed by my ability as a cricketer.

By 1925 financial problems had reduced us to a part-time gardener no domestic help and no annual holidays. Jane Parker died in 1921 and my father had bought her cottage, garden, and field, increasing our area to nearly two acres. The five of us worked as a team and managed to keep the large house and garden in good order.

I left school in 1938, and much against my father's wishes joined E. Whitehouse & Son as a working goldsmith, a decision which proved very fortunate during the war years.

My father died in 1938 a month before I married Barbara Baylis, a Knowle girl.

Our daughter Janet was born in 1940 and soon after I was able to transfer from the family firm to the Lucas Organisation which was busy on war work.

We had a second daughter Catherine in 1943. meanwhile my mother lived at Ardenhall alone until her death in 1953 with a secure job and increasing seniority later that year we moved to our present house, still in the Knowle area and less than 2 miles from Ardenhall.

Both Barbara and I have been keen gardeners all our lives and in the last 42 years our efforts in the $\frac{3}{4}$ acre surrounding this house have given us immense satisfaction.

Sadly she died on 31st May this year after nearly 57 years of happy marriage so I must now battle on alone.

My daughters are both married and each have a son and daughter, the sons aged 22 and 16 and the girls both 18, we are a united family and they give me all the help they can consent with their other commitments, but life will never be the same for me.

In 1960 my brother Edward's failing health prompted the closure of E. Whitehouse & Son after a trading life of 106 years.

Raymond died in 1955 and Edward in 1982

Wilfred G. B. Whitehouse

14-7-95.