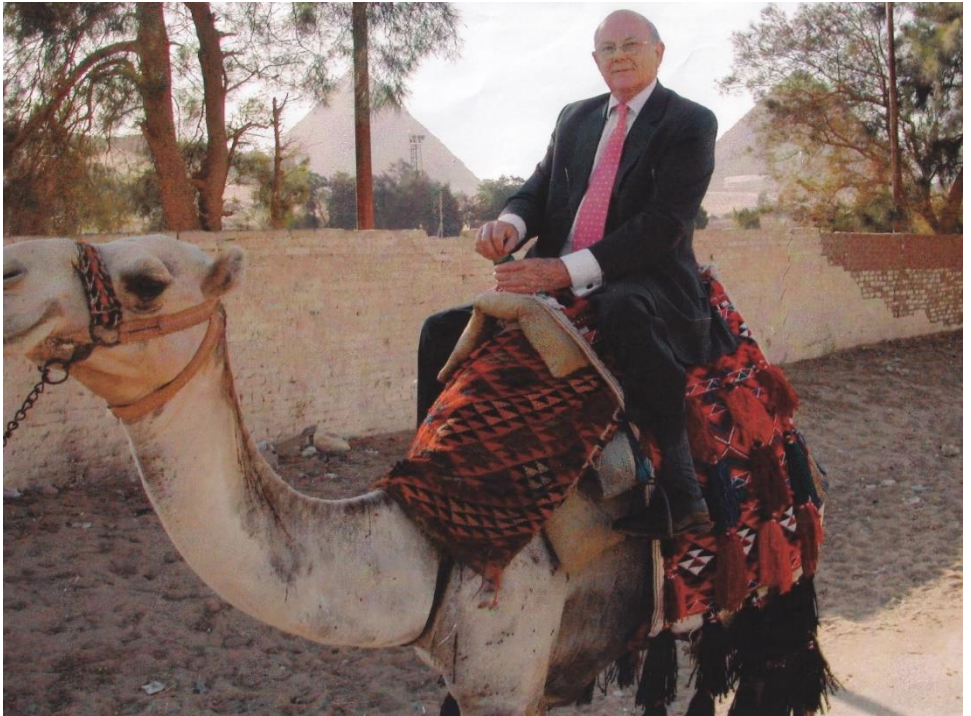


# The Reminiscing's of John Neil Ashworth



Neil in Egypt 1985

## Reminiscing: The life of John Neil Ashworth

Hello there, I am John Neil Ashworth, known as Neil. I have lived in Amersham Old Town for twenty years, and this Reminiscing Book contains a catalogue of my experiences and memories over the past eighty years.

The book's content is not an ancestral document, but just a series of thoughts and observations of my life and times so far. So, come with me and let's begin by exploring my first eighteen years.

### **Neil, Aged 10 in 1947**



## The beginning: My life up to the age of eighteen

I was born in Oldham in 1937; a true Lancastrian, a supporter of the red rose. My caring parents were named Dorothy and John Whittaker Ashworth, and I was their only child.

From the very start of my life to the moment I left school at eighteen, I was greatly influenced and moulded by a few close family members. These marvellous people were my mother and father, my Grandma Mary Alice Ashworth, her sister Ann Underwood (nee Whittaker), as well as my father's two sisters, Betty Byrne and Emmie Massey (known as Mick). I remember these people and their impact on my life very fondly.

My father John Whittaker was a very dear man. He was a genuine person; good fun, very entertaining and extremely artistic. Everyone who knew him thought of him as an all-round 'good egg'. He was born in 1906, left school at fourteen, and joined Merchant Navy at the age of sixteen. He sailed from

Manchester to the north east coast of America and Canada. Unfortunately, after only two years in the Navy he was sent home – he had contracted pneumonia, and eventually died of tuberculosis when I was only ten years old. I have such sad memories of him during his long illness at home, and in Loggerhead Sanitorium, Telford; but I do have other memories of our brief time together, as well as traits that I think I inherited from him. In 1940/41 during World War 2, the German Luftwaffe targeted the docks near Manchester, and I remember being cradled in my father's arms as we watched the fires burning in the night sky over the centre of Manchester. I have always had a love of model-making, which I believe I inherited from him. During his six years at the sanatorium, he lovingly built me a large model of a railway goods shed made solely of hundreds of matchsticks, which was a real treasure to me.



John Whittaker Ashworth, Neil's Father in  
1945

My mother was a wonderful woman, and equally important to me. She began her working life in a cotton mill and progressed to be a dress shop manager and eventually the owner of her own grocery shop. My mother was a very loving, elegant, immaculate and incredibly calm individual. I also remember how tall she was; five foot nine and a half inches!

Next in my family roll call is the person who had the most impact on me in my early years, and the person who without doubt moulded me into the person I am today - my Grandma Mary Alice.



Neil with Grandma Mary Alice in Trafalgar Square 1948



**Grandma  
Mary Alice  
in 1965**

Due to  
losing my  
father so  
early, and  
the  
aspiration of  
a certain  
Herr Hitler, I  
spent many  
of my

formative years living with my Grandma. She was the matriarch of the family and a very strict Victorian disciplinarian. If I misbehaved, she would deliver a few sharp smacks on the backs of my legs with her twace - a small whip, I soon learnt not to misbehave!



Despite this strictness, I adored my Grandmother and had a great respect for her. I was especially grateful for her generosity towards me. She would often give me half a crown to spend, on the condition that I always returned with some change - a shrewd lesson in money management! Grandma was a successful business woman in her own right; she owned grocery shops in Lancashire and Cheshire, as well as homes in Suffolk.

### **Evacuation to Suffolk: 1943**

In 1943, at the age of six, my family decided to evacuate me to the safety of Suffolk to avoid the danger of the continuing German bombing campaign, it was time to move. I went to live in Primrose Cottage, Groton, with my Great Aunt Ann. Ann was unmarried at the time, though we knew she was having a secret relationship with the owner of the cottage, a farmer named Alec Underwood. Aunt Ann went on to marry Alec, when his wife died.

At the time, I had no way of knowing that I would spend the next ten years of my life growing up in the idyllic surroundings of the Suffolk countryside. During those twelve years I also lived with Grandma Mary Alice, Grandad John Richard, Aunt Betty and her two sons, Adrian and Barry, at Tudor cottage in the village of Brent Eleigh. Tudor Cottage was owned by my Grandma Mary Alice. My Grandad John Richard was also quite a character and a successful businessman. He worked as a commercial traveller for the Birds Custard Company. In my memories of him he is always extremely smartly dressed and ready for work. He wore an immaculate three-piece suit, a gold fob watch, and had shiny shoes with spats, ready to make a good impression.

My childhood from 1943 to the end of the war, 1945 was that of a child caught up in a great adventure in Constable Country. While living at Primrose Cottage with Great Aunt Ann, I had a free reign to explore with my new pals. Primrose cottage was part of Alec

Underwood's farm, which had 1500 chickens 12 pigs, 5 working horses and a pony for the trap. All farm machinery had to be pulled by horses, as at this time petrol was rationed and directed only to the war effort, this impacted the use of private cars in the area, and when I look back, gave one feeling of living in Suffolk, before the invention of the petrol engine. The one exception was the once a week market bus to Sudbury. If my pals and I wanted to go anywhere, we would walk or use our very heavy bicycles that had no gears, we all thought that this life was idyllic, we had plenty of fresh food and exciting adventures. As were most people at the time, we were trim and extremely fit. As we grew up, we began to understand the reason for USAAF, United States Army and Air Force, presence in Suffolk.

The American military arrived in Suffolk during 1942 with initially 50,000 personnel, in time this number would increase in East Anglia to an astonishing level of 350,000, all involved in World War 2. The USAAF were responsible

for daytime bombing raids in Nazi held Europe. They brought with them a huge number and a large selection of bomber planes, B17 Flying Fortress, B24 Liberators P47 Thunderbolts, P51 Mustangs and P58 Lightnings. This movement of American service people into Suffolk, and the rest of East Anglia, history would call The Friendly Invasion. Relationships spread between the local girls and the American service men, and when the war ended in 1945, 40,000 English brides from the region accompanied their husbands back to the USA.

We pals soon got used to the American military moving around the local lanes, and if a vehicle was stationary, we would ask them, “got any gum chum” and they would always oblige. Alec Underwood invited a few of the American airmen to attend a Rook Shoot, on his farm, expecting them to arrive with shotguns, but instead they turned up with their service issue machine guns. They spent hours enjoying shooting the rooks with what they called, their Tommy Guns.

On a serious note we would watch the USAAF planes returning from their bombing raids in Europe, some badly damaged by anti-aircraft flak. The crew would jettison from the plane any heavy piece of movable equipment, such as machine guns, seats and even the wireless, to lighten the planes load for emergency landings. On a really gruesome note my friends and I, were searching the crashed wreck of a US AAF P57 Mustang, when I was delighted to find a pilot's glove, only to become terribly shocked when I saw the pilot's hand still in the glove.

In 1944 when I was seven years old, the USAAF arranged a Christmas party at their Great Walding Air Base, for hundreds of local school children, what a feast they had flown in for us from the USA. Foodstuffs that, because of rationing, we had not eaten for years, and items that most of us had never eaten before. There were bananas and oranges, this was the first time that I had eaten an orange or a banana. There were American favourites, such as, Hershey

chocolate bars, doughnuts, peanuts, popcorn and the fizzy drink Coca Cola, a feast that I will remember forever.

After the feast back to reality, it was about this time that I heard for the first time, a German V1 Flying Bomb going overhead, the bomb, known as a doodlebug, had a Ram Jet engine, it was pilotless and made a haunting sound, vroom-vroom-vroom. When the sound stopped, after a count of three, the rocket would crash to the ground, leaving a huge crater, and if on target, killing innocent civilians. On one occasion a V1 crashed only one and a half miles from where I lived, smashing all the windows in my pal's house.

The war in Europe ended in 1945, and I moved from Primrose Cottage to Grandma's Tudor Cottage, in Brent Eleigh, and went on to complete my secondary education, at Sudbury Grammar School, leaving in 1953, with a bag full of eight O Level qualifications. Grandma was so pleased with my results, that she bought me a brand-new Raleigh Sports cycle at a cost of thirty-five pounds, at

today's value a thousand pounds. I moved from Suffolk in 1953 to Sandbach in Cheshire and finished my education at Crewe County grammar school. I sensationally flunked all my A level examinations, the fact that this was a mixed school, boys and girls, was the reason for this, according to the masters.

## Time to explore: Hello world!

In 1955, at the age of eighteen, I joined the army. As excited as I was to begin this new phase of my life, I had no idea at the time that the army would open up the whole world to me in the coming years.

I was very proud to join Her Majesty's Royal Signals Regiment as an ordinary signalman. I reported for duty at the Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire. As a young man with little experience of the outside world, I did not realise how the military institution and the incredible individuals within the ranks, would shape my character and influence my life forever.

Somehow, I managed to impress the War Office Selection Board, and was selected to attend an officers training course at Eaton Hall Cheshire for four months. The course was typical of British military indoctrination at this time of a dwindling Empire. I was to pass out as a leader of men, an officer and a gentleman.



I was commissioned in 1956, the year of the Egyptian Suez crisis. I was allocated my own platoon, a personal batman and the title of Platoon Commander, Second Lieutenant of the South Lancashire Regiment, The Prince



Neil Ashworth 1956, Eaton Hall, Officer  
Cadet School, Chester

of Wales Volunteers. I can remember feeling as proud as a peacock, especially when I was strutting around in my Regimental uniform, No 1. Dress Blues. It was at this time that I purchased my first car - a black Wolsey Wasp – for just £60.

### First Stop: Germany 1956

The first stop in my army adventure was Berlin in 1956. The tensions in Berlin were definitely apparent. At this time the city was divided into four zones that were controlled by the four major powers; Great Britain, USA, France and The Soviet Union. The tension existed between the three Allied Forces and Stalin's Soviet Union. World War 2 had ended eleven years prior to my duty and The Soviet Union was still seen as a threat to continued peace. Due to the Soviet threat and the possibility of a speedy exit from Berlin, the British forces were allocated only old armaments that would be of no use to Stalin's Army should he decide to invade West Germany. For recognition purposes,

British forces travelled throughout Germany in colour coded trains - red, green, blue and brown. These colours referred to different zones within the British Sector. When travelling through the Soviet Zone, we had to pull down the carriage blinds, on instruction from the Soviet Army. The situation in the city was tense and extremely dangerous.

Berlin was of course a city divided. There was East and West, with the East under Soviet control. East Germany was The German Democratic Republic, and West Germany was The Federal Republic of Germany. The city had been razed to the ground during the bombing raids and was now being slowly rebuilt - but at this time only in the west. I observed the stark differences in rebuilding programmes at night from the top of the mighty Funkturm Broadcasting Tower. To the west many new illuminated buildings were apparent and there was a sense of a city being renewed. To the east, all that could be viewed was one street with lights, known coldly as Stalin Alley. The German people in

the west were extremely grateful for the assistance the Allies were giving to the rebuilding of their divided city.

There is one episode of my life in Berlin that I will never forget. Under my command, my platoon was responsible for guarding the prisoners at the most notorious prison in the world at that time: Spandau. The Four Power Authorities, as already mentioned, were responsible for guarding the three remaining Nazi war criminals who had each been found guilty at the post war Nuremburg Trials: Rudolf Hess (Hitler's deputy), Bladur Von Schirach (head of the Hitler Youth) and Albert Speer (Minister of Armaments). I had no occasion to speak to the prisoners, but I did observe these three notorious men from only a short distance away. One thing I clearly remember is how Von Schirach and Speer ignored Rudolf Hess completely, believing him to have been a traitor to the Nazis. Hess had collaborated with the British government after he flew to Scotland in 1941 and attempted to negotiate peace with the United

Kingdom. The building is now no longer there, but I will always remember witnessing those three notorious men.

## Heading East: My years in Hong Kong

My Berlin tour ended late in 1957 and my regiment was posted to a place that couldn't be more different: Hong Kong.

The liner HMT Nevasa sailed from Liverpool to Hong Kong and took twenty-six days. I can remember vividly the stops we made as we journeyed around the world, with the route taking us through the Mediterranean Sea, down the Suez Canal across the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and finally via the South China Sea to Hong Kong. It was a long journey, but a wonderful one for me. I was treated like a king whilst making the voyage, as I was a commissioned officer in Her Majesty's military which entitled me to a first-class passage. It was absolute bliss, and the trip of a lifetime.

On board, the eight hundred passengers took part in organised activities, both military and social. On the military side we took part in numerous exercise drills, physical training and shooting practice. For rifling firing practice, balloons would be released from the deck and float away from the ship, and our task would be to shoot them down.

For our leisure time, the ship's crew organised games for everybody on board, including the two hundred unaccompanied service wives who were travelling to join their husbands in various ports along the way. Some gentlemen on board found time spent with the service wives to be most pleasurable indeed. There were social activities such as horse race gambling and dancing. I felt incredibly proud to be part of this band of brothers, who were committed and serious professionals, but who also could be caring and humorous.

All the stops along the way were only for a few hours and were for either for refuelling or to allow military personnel and

unaccompanied wives to disembark. The first stop was the rock of Gibraltar, where I encountered the famous Gibraltar Apes, and saw the massive military defences that had been built to protect the Straights of Gibraltar during World War 2.

After Gibraltar we sailed across the Mediterranean and down the Suez Canal. It was now December 1957, just one year since the 1956 Suez Crisis which had ended with the humiliating withdrawal of the British military from Egypt. The canal was heavily defended by the Egyptian forces who trained their 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns at our ship for most of our passage. On board we were instructed by Brigadier Kitchen not to take any action that might antagonise the Egyptian Gunners. Luckily, we passed through without incident, and so I can remember this as another tense and only somewhat dangerous situation in my military adventures!

Aden was our next stop along the way. The port was a refuelling stop for coal and was

extremely dirty. This was my first interface with people from the Middle East, and whilst on shore, it became apparent to me that little had changed in this country for many years, and that the people here still very much observed their tribal traditions and lifestyle.

Onwards through the Red Sea with breathtaking views, and such intense heat. In the galley the Goanese kitchen staff were working in a temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit. At this stage of the journey, I have a wonderful recollection of standing on the ship's deck and looking up at the moon, which appeared to be twice its normal size. I remember thinking that the sky looked like velvet - it felt as though I could reach up and touch it.

Next across the Indian Ocean into Asia and on to Ceylon, today named Sri Lanka, and the capital Colombo. I was immediately impressed with Colombo and the island of Ceylon. It was cultured, exotic, vibrant and extremely interesting, with every street buzzing with people and prosperity. The



shops sold sensational pieces of encrusted jewellery, with gorgeous emeralds and pearls. I often reflect that given the chance I could have lived and developed a career in this wonderful Asian city. Onwards to Singapore and that long awaited gin sling at the Raffles Hotel – delicious!

As we left Singapore, again after only a few hours, I was able to take in the view across the harbour, which was full of cargo, passenger, and tramp ships, along with hundreds of traditional junk boats - it appeared to me that there was not enough space for one more junk.

We sailed across the South China Sea on the last leg of our voyage to Hong Kong. A few days out from Hong Kong our ship was battered by the tail end of a typhoon. The luxury of the trip was replaced by a fair amount of sickness and discomfort; I remember that the Nepalese Ghurkha contingent were particularly badly affected.

But finally, after all that time, and the many sights and sounds of our stops along the

way, we made it to Hong Kong. My first impression of Hong Kong has stayed with me always. The harbour and the many buildings on the shore side were alive with all types of boats, and thousands of people sailing and milling around. I saw the famous Star Ferry, making its way to Kowloon. The whole of Hong Kong appeared to be a giant manufacturing super factory, involved in shipping exotic, general and practical goods of all types to the whole world.

In 1958 Hong Kong was of course a colony, administrated by Her Majesty's Government. The stationed British military brief was to support the civil powers within Hong Kong, and to hold back Moa Se Tung, the Chinese leader, should he decide to command his millions of Marxist soldiers to march into Hong Kong, take the British Colony and incorporate the territory within his republic. In retrospect, this protectionist brief was "mission impossible". Just as in Berlin where we tried to protect against the Soviets, this

situation was extremely tense and dangerous.

The platoon's duty was to police the observation post at Lo Wu, the border overlooking a huge vista of paddy fields into China. I remember how curious and surprising it seemed to me that occasionally you would see red London double decker buses drive past in Victoria, part of the colony.

After a year my fascinating time in Hong Kong came to end, and my men and I headed back to good old Blighty. On reflection, my time spent in Hong Kong had felt like an incredibly entertaining and enlightening holiday.

### **Back home: Give us a job!**

I achieved the rank of full Lieutenant in 1958, but on my return from Hong Kong, I was not offered a long-term regular commission due to problems with my eyesight. This was a real blow - I had so much enjoyed my three-year commission, but nothing could be done, it

was time for me to leave Her Majesty's service. I remember thinking that at the time that it would be impossible to replicate the sense of camaraderie and fellowship that I had been fortunate enough to experience while serving in the army, and I definitely I had no idea what direction to take in “civvy street”.

I'm not sure where the inspiration came from – perhaps all my travelling – but I got the idea that I should manage a tea plantation. I set my sights high! I applied to Brooke Bond tea merchants who explained to me at my interview that they had no such position, but they did offer me a job as a van salesman at £15 pounds a week. I gracefully declined the offer and carried on my search.

At my next interview with ICT, International Computers and Tabulators, I hit the jackpot. This company was UK equivalent of IBM and already had big plans in place for the future. I believe my success at the interview was down to my communication skills – and perhaps also the fact that the personnel

director was Colonel Sterling, a military man with whom I was able to strike up a good rapport. The salary was £9 pounds a week, and I was happy.

I spent my first year at a training college called Moor Hall in Cookham, Berkshire. The course was residential, meaning that the whole amount of my salary was available for to me to spend on the good life. I felt so confident that I splashed out £450 on a MG.TD open top sports car, which was very popular with the ladies! Life was very good, and when the training course came to an end, I was sent to work in the ICT London branch, which was then followed by spells at two other branches. By now I was a Systems Analyst, supporting the sales force by completing programs that matched the needs of the of their major accounts. During my assignments, I was provided with a free company flat. After two years my time at ICT came to an end. I felt ready to move, having gained a great knowledge of the commercial world.

In 1962, I joined James Wilkes Printers in Bilston, Staffordshire. The position was in sales and bought with it my very first company car. After that came what I always think of as my big break. In 1965 I joined Rank Xerox as a Systems Adviser. I am pleased to say that I progressed well within the organisation, through to the senior role of Branch Sales Manager of the government branch. Our major customer was HMSO, which at the time accounted for 45% of Rank Xerox's total UK turn over.

The next position, in 1971 was the big one, and the most exciting job I had in my long career. My role was as UK Marketing Services Manager, with a development budget of £30 million. The responsibilities were far reaching; marketing, public relations, consumer, trade advertising, sponsorship exhibitions, and corporate hospitality. Organising the many corporate hospitality events, was an important part of the role, and was great fun. We planned events across a varied section of the entertainment industry,

both sport and personality led. The Wimbledon VIP corporate events were always particularly entertaining. In 1982 I was fortunate enough to see the incredibly lengthy Men's Final between Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe on centre court – it was a nail-biting game, ending with a big win for Connors. At this time, I also met several members of the Royal family including the Queen, through RX sponsorship of polo, at Smiths Lawn in Windsor Great Park. I remember those days at Smiths Lawn fondly and found all of the Royals to be very pleasant. Major “Ronnie” Ferguson, Sarah Ferguson's, later the Duchess of York father, and I had a close friendship. One occasion I remember, involving Prince Charles, when after a match, we walked into the pavilion and everybody was seated, the Prince whispered to me, “ Neil don't you think it would be a good idea ask everybody to stand up when I enter the room“.

The other event I remember fondly was an hilarious jaunt to the South of France with

three hundred important trade customers! We flew to Nice on Freddie Lakers DC10, the first one in service, then travelled by road on to Monte Carlo. Private Eye Magazine featured this jaunt at the time and headlined it "RX take three hundred assorted drunks and freeloaders to have fun in Monte Carlo". The department was RX's network to all our trade clients and consumers in the UK - it really was a bloody wonderful job. In 1982 there was a restructure across the board and so it was time for me to move on again. I left with many happy memories and a very good redundancy package.

During the years 1982 to 1984 I worked for the Keith Prowse organisation, in the area of corporate entertainment, my position was Marketing Director. In the two-year period I was involved with a number of exciting corporate events and met many famous sports and musical personalities. Golf tournaments featured heavily at this time and I was involved in the initial development of the Bells Scottish Open, and the Wentworth golf



tournament that has today become the BMW PGA Championship. In organising these events, I met and was in contact with many great golfing superstars of the time, Nick Faldo, Tom Watson Seve Ballesteros and Justin Rose to mention just a few. On the musical front I was involved in the very last UK tour of the rock band Queen and was thrilled to meet Freddie Mercury, Brian May and other members of the legendary group on numerous occasions.

Next on my career ladder was, the British computer leasing company, Atlantic Computers, as Marketing Director and stayed for seven years. In the years 1991 to 2000, I was involved in several company ventures involving satellite communication services, in what had been the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries. During this nine-year period, I travelled extensively throughout Central Asia, living and working in Moscow, Russia and Budapest, Hungary. Through international pressure the communist empire,

that had been the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries, imploded in 1989, after the fall of the symbolic and factual Berlin Wall that separated East and West Germany. The fall of the communist regime behind what was symbolically known as the Iron Curtain, separating western democracy from the communist East, opened up business opportunities for the companies that I worked for at this time. The two companies were Manni corporation-Qatar and De Te Sat Deutsche Telekom-Germany, had the innovation to take full advantage of the opportunities that arrived, they were the first companies to introduce satellite systems to the Russian Federation and other Eastern European countries. Our point of difference was the size and portability of the satellite dishes, being only twice the size of the Sky TV communication dishes, that one can see on many households today. This innovation enabled us to quickly establish a network of teleport satellite communications, to support many different organisations, for example

government, commercial, banking and many others throughout the region.

As I lived and travelled across the region, I was able to have a number of social experiences, I was a keen golfer and on a number of occasions, invited to play golf in Russia, Hungary and memorably at the Tashkent Golf and Country Club in Uzbekistan. Dining out could also be a pleasure, although I did encounter, through politeness, having to sample the tastes of sheep's testicles and fish eyes on more than one occasion. Whilst socialising with colleagues in Kiev, a dangerous situation arose, on a company river boat outing with a number of Ukrainian colleagues, including Leonid Khmelovski. We were on the River Dnieper, and I had been allocated the task of tying the boat to the pontoon, as we tried to moor along the shoreline. As I jumped ashore I had no idea that the rope was not attached to the boat, I fell, fully clothed in my business suit, deep into the River, as I surfaced, I realised that the boat was heading straight for

me and that I was about to be crushed and would possibly have drowned, fortunately for me all was not lost as Leonid had seen me fall into the river and jumped in to rescue me, what a close call, but for him my reminiscing probably would never have been recorded.

Having joined the military as a young man of only eighteen, I retired from business commerce at the age of seventy-five, a career spanning fifty-seven years. Today I realise how fortunate I have been to have had such a long enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding career. From growing up in those cottages in Suffolk, I went on to visit 147 countries across the globe, and to meet and learn from so many dynamic people along the way.

The Final Chapter: All books come to an end



Hilary and Neil's Wedding at St Leonards Church, Chesham Bois, 1962 with Mary Alice Ashworth (extreme left) and Dorothy Ashworth (second from right)

Every book has an ending, and I have decided to end this book with warm thoughts of my beloved wife Hilary, known to me as Percy, and our two great sons John and Jeremy. For my next project I can issue

Volume Two of my reminisces and start the book with stories of my two wonderful daughters-in-law, and my four sensational grandchildren! See Family Roll Call.

I met Hilary in 1960 at a party in Bayswater on Queensborough Terrace. She stood out from the crowd immediately; she had a beautiful, glowing presence, and a wonderful smile. From our very first meeting we knew there was something very special between us. When I asked her if she would like a lift home, she accepted without hesitation and off we sped together in my MGTD sports car. This was the first of our many journeys together throughout our marriage. Hilary and I spent many happy hours together and became engaged in 1961. I was smitten, and I remember her saying that she had decided I was a poor, disorganised soul that she could

help! Our first holiday adventure together was in 1961 shortly after we were engaged. We went to stay with Mrs. Ferguson, who was Hilary's sisters' mother in law, the widow of Captain F Ferguson who lost his life when his ship The Princess Victoria (the Strathra to Larne Ferry, Northern Ireland) sank in March 1953. We journeyed to Glasgow on the Thames Clyde Express, a magnificent steam train and had an idyllic and romantic holiday walking, cycling and swimming in the beautiful countryside and coast of Western Scotland.

We married in St Leonards Church Chesham Bois in March 1962, I remember our wedding eve with amusement and embarrassment, we were to honeymoon in Salcombe arriving by train, travelling on the Paddington to Penzance sleeper, but yours truly forgot to reserve a sleeper, leading to us staying up all night talking to the railwaymen on the train. We eventually arrived at our destination, with the vicar's words to Hilary echoing in my ears, "don't expect too much too soon"

Nothing could prepare Hilary and I for how much our lives would change when our two wonderful boys, John (born 1964), and Jeremy (born 1966), came into our lives.



Jeremy  
and  
John,  
1966



I remember when I first saw my two sons; they were both purple, pink and very wrinkled after being delivered by caesarean section. Hilary took to motherhood like a fish to water; her maternal instincts were wonderful, and she became the moral compass for our family. We shared many great holidays and adventures together with our sons. We enjoyed holidaying in the UK, as well as one trip together to France.



**Hilary in 1977**



**Neil in 1983**

Hilary was an incredible woman, and I miss her every day. She has definitely left a big hole in my life since we lost her. She was warm and welcoming, with a real knack of making and retaining long term friendships for both of us and she was respected by everyone she met. One friendship started in 1944, during World War 2, when she and Ann Dale were evacuated to America, they

remained friends until Hilary passed away in 2018.

Hilary was very creative; she excelled as an artist, musician and gardener. I am reminded of her always, when I look at her many paintings in the house and walk through the beautiful garden that she created for us in our home in Amersham High Street. Thank you, Percy.

## Family Roll Call

Many of these family Members are mentioned in this book.

- Mother.....Dorothy Ashworth
- Father.....John Whittaker Ashworth
- Grandmother.....Mary Alice Ashworth
- Grandfather.....John Richard Ashworth
- Great Aunt.....Ann Underwood
- Great Uncle.....Alec Underwood
- Aunt Emmie “Mick” Massey
- Uncle.....Lawrence Massey
- Cousin .....Helen Massey
- Cousin.....Dinah Massey
- Aunt..... Betty Byrne
- Uncle .....Harry Byrne
- Cousin.....Barry Byrne
- Cousin..... Adrian Byrne
- Wife.....Hilary Ashworth
- Son.....John Richard Ashworth
- Daughter In Law.....Sue Ashworth

- Granddaughter.....Rebecca Ashworth
- Granddaughter.....Claire Ashworth
- Son..... Jeremy Ashworth
- Daughter In Law.....Emma Ashworth
- Grandson.....Francis Ashworth
- Grandson.....Douglas Ashworth