

Compiled and edited by Debbie Rainer

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This book relies on the memories of its contributors so may
contain inaccuracies. Apologies for any errors
introduced by the editor

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Introduction

This book was compiled by Debbie Rainer during the last few months of 1999, as a new millennium gift to her two sons Joe and Thomas.

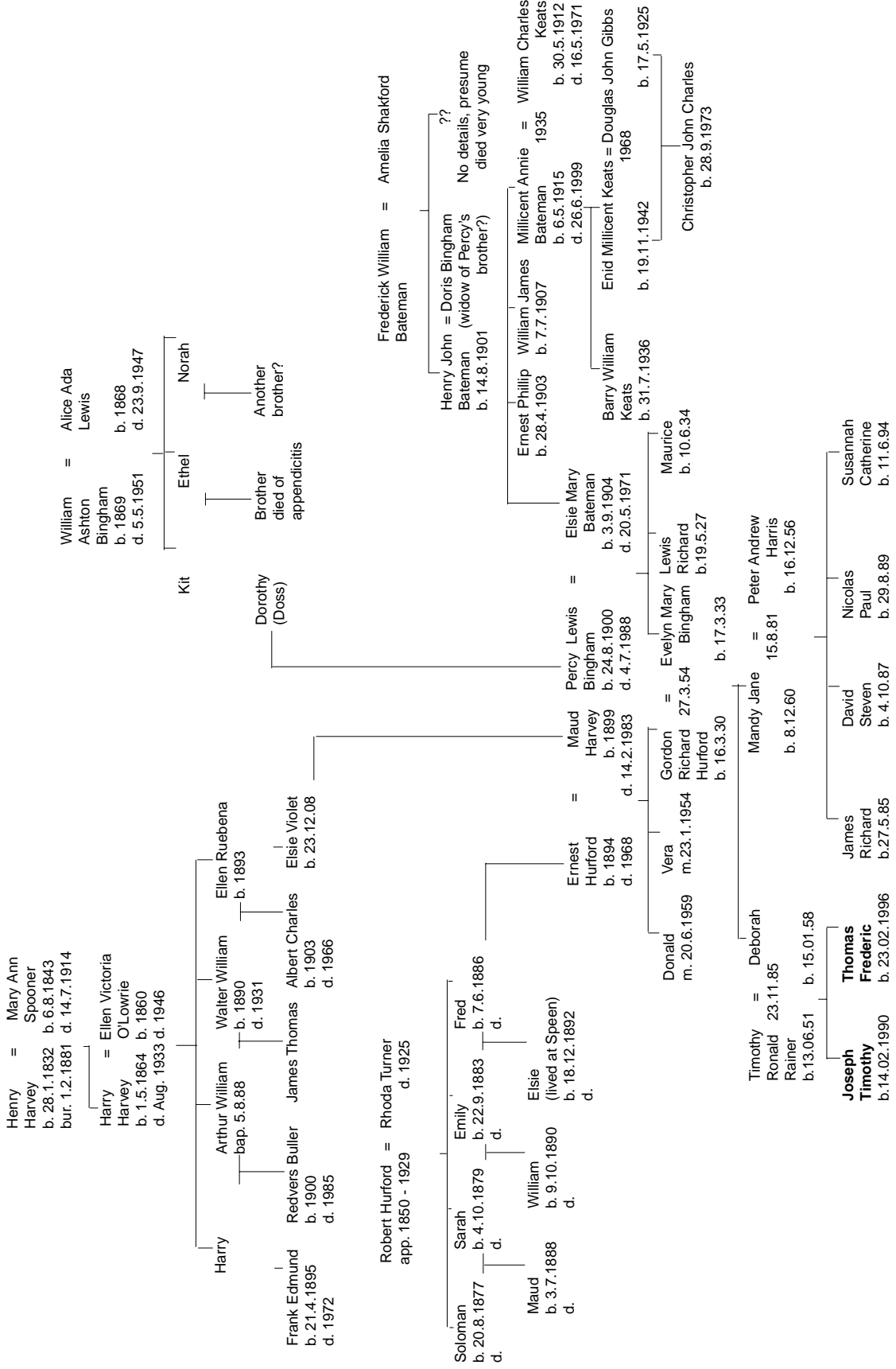
It represents the 'living memories' of their direct ascendants on both the maternal and paternal sides, including direct transcripts of stories kindly submitted by many members of their family. It also incorporates anecdotes selected from an interview with the oldest living member on their maternal side, their great, great aunt Elsie who was born in 1908, as well as a selection of extracts from their mother's extensive collection of diaries and letters.

Hopefully this book is something the boys will treasure in the years to come, as it represents a fascinating snapshot of family life during the century before the millennium and gives them some idea of their own unique family history.



*Joe and Thomas
Autumn 1997*

Maternal Family Tree for Joseph & Thomas Rainer



Birth and infancy

Evidence points towards Dorothy Alice Best being the family's first born during the 20th century, with a birth date of 28th July 1900. Certainly, her great grandson Thomas Frederic Rainer was the last born, entering this world on 23rd February 1996. The manner of their respective births, plus the tremendous social and historical changes taking place between them, make fascinating reading. Childbirth in Dorothy's time was a risky business, likely to take place at home, with large families the norm. Thomas's arrival was an altogether safer event, but none the less miraculous ...

Thomas Frederic Rainer, b. 23.2.96

The year started unexpectedly when Thomas tried to put in an early appearance, just after I'd enjoyed an Italian lunch paid for by a supplier. Sitting watching Coronation Street as a bloated, well fed lump, I realised my waves of indigestion were coming 10 minutes apart and might just be contractions! As I was only 33 weeks at the time, this meant I ended up in Wexham's Ante Natal Ward for 4 days, was wheeled down to the Delivery Suite on two separate occasions, had various injections in my posterior, was shown round the Special Care Unit, and generally had all the family running round like headless chickens trying to cope with Joe (and Tim) in my absence! Despite the fact that I was still having contractions, I got sent home in the end (I think the midwives got bored) and spent the next 6 weeks unable to work, worried about driving anywhere and generally fed up and worn out, as the contractions continued on and off all through this time. This meant that I did strange things like the ironing at 3 am and crawling round on my hands and knees, as this gave some relief. The other thing I quite got into was throwing heavy missiles at Tim

whenever he asked "are you still getting twinges?"

Eventually Thomas went full term, arriving with a bang (almost literally – my waters exploded like a water balloon at 3 am and he appeared one and a half hours later, after a relatively painless labour). This time Wexham couldn't get rid of me quick enough, despite my ambulance arrival ... In the end, Thomas arrived 5 am and I was home by 6 pm that same day, thrilled with our new baby boy and very, very relieved that everything had gone OK in the end.

Debbie Rainer, letter, Christmas 1996

Did you know ...

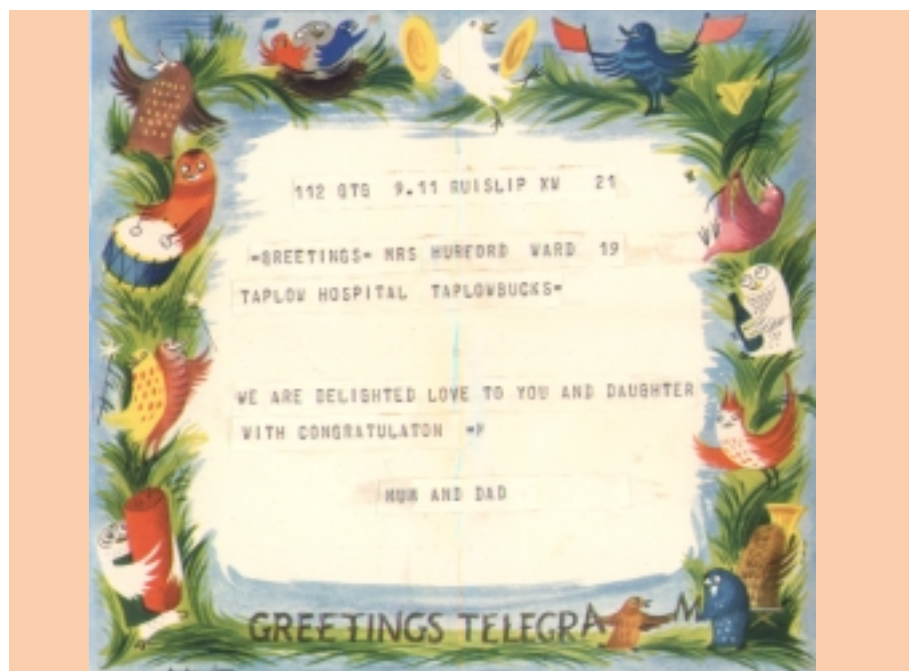
Esther Rainer was married twice and gave birth to 21 children between the age of 18 and 49, 13 of whom reached adulthood.

Our oldest family heirloom (**Bingham**) is the Christening gown which Maurice, myself, a friend's daughter, one of Barry's girls and Debbie used.

Eve Hurford

Ernest Hurford was born in 1894 near Honiton, Devon.

Maud Harvey was born in 1899 at Tiptree, Essex. Many Harvey's still live in the area.



Telegram greeting birth of Deborah Hurford

Pushed about

My earliest recollection (at about the age of five) was when my brother and his best mate Stanley Hyde dressed me up and put me in an old pram and wheeled me round for penny for the guy. They took me to one particular house in Long Grove and left me in the middle of a long gravel drive. A large bulldog chased them off but I can't remember the outcome.

Maurice Bingham

A description of my brother Thomas

As my brother he's a bit of a pickle, specially when he makes scrambled eggs on the kitchen floor. He's usually a funny and cheeky boy, as most brothers are when they're at the troublesome three. He is a very lively boy doing a lot of things behind your back. As a boy who likes running around, he loves to go in the garden. When he gets outside he's like a greyhound. He loves going to shops and supermarkets and anywhere outside, but all through this he's great to have around. The jokes he does and the times he plays with us are really fun.

Joe Rainer, 13.3.99

Handful

I went to live with my maternal grandparents when I was 18 months old. My sister Brenda was expected and I was such a handful – I kept running away!

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)

Gordon Richard Hurford, b. 16.3.30

Gordon was born in flat above Watson & Rolfe Garden Shop, Beaconsfield. After 6 months the family moved to a council house in Beaconsfield.

Joseph Timothy Rainer, b. 14.2.90

At 36 weeks I developed high blood pressure and needed to rest at home for a couple of days. I had to cancel some work projects I had planned for the next day, and found myself in a strange sense of anticipation which had me shaving my legs and organising 3 days' meals for Tim. At 2 am things started to happen and the hospital told me to go in straight away, so I woke Tim who proceeded to take a bath – NCT classes had warned us to prepare for long labours, so leisurely departures were the order of the day.

The only concession Tim made to 'panic' was to mess about on the drive to Wexham Park, saying that my condition entitled him to speed and jump traffic lights! I have a strange but vivid memory of that journey – an overwhelming sense of excitement mixed with apprehension.

... this part was the worst, as part of me was reluctant to push in case it made things more painful – everything was becoming unreal and the ceiling tiles in the delivery room are stamped indelibly on my brain!

I can remember the midwife saying "he has dark hair" when the head started to appear, with Tim asking whether it was a boy – much too early to say! The baby was screaming from the moment he emerged ... All this just 2 hours 50 minutes from when my waters started to go at home!

Joseph Timothy weighed 5lb 11oz and seemed a respectable size, until I compared him with the other babies in my immediate ward and realised just how small he was.

Debbie Rainer, diary.

My first meeting with my sister, Susie Harris

I remember walking down the silent corridors of Wycombe Hospital on my way to meet my new baby sister for the very first time with mixed feelings inside of me. I felt excited yet anxious as my dad, my other brothers and I walked into mum's ward. As soon as I saw Susie (my sister) the anxiousness faded and I started to contemplate over what to say or do next, I was speechless, so were my brothers for that matter! She was tiny with even smaller hands that clasped onto your small finger as you placed it in her hand. My brothers and I started to argue over who got to hold her first, Nicky won! When it was my turn I became increasingly worried as I held her because I didn't want to drop her (obviously I didn't) but with every time I held her I became more confident.

My sister is now much older and still a bundle of joy! Although she is slightly annoying now I still get along with her well. I look back on how much she has grown and feel happy as I remember the day I met my sister, Susie Harris.

James Harris 25/10/99



Mandy and Debbie, 10.10.62

Childhood

The most vivid anecdotes received were of childhood, these memories were often the happiest ...

Off the rails

I can vividly recall an incident when I was about ten years old; I had been given the task to fetch bread from the bakers, upon my return my mother told me that I would have to go to the green-grocer just opposite the baker. Infuriated with bad 'organisation' I refused to go and darted off to go and play with my friends. My mother chased after me to the front door screaming at me to do as told, but with youth in my favour, I sprang easily beyond her grasp and made my way tauntingly down the 13 stone steps that led from our house door to the garden gate onto the street. Unperturbed by my mother's pleading, I made my way to the gate when my father suddenly pulled up to the kerb on his bicycle. "Grab him, Curly!" cried my mother with a hint of victory in her voice (now the little runt will get his just desserts ...).

Like a wide eyed rabbit faced with extinction, I reacted with my feet and sped off along Alma Road; I heard the crash of my father's bicycle falling to the ground as he, unsure of the reason, rose to the challenge and took chase ... For a brief moment I believed I would out run him, but what I had in initial acceleration he had in higher speed and it was after we rounded the corner into Trinity Road and past the Catholic church that spreads itself so gracefully on that corner plot, that I became aware of the thump of his heavy step getting increasingly louder at an alarm-

ing rate; he was overtaking me fast. So fast, in fact, that when he thundered past, his left hand grabbed me by the scruff of my neck and I was lifted from the ground like a floppy rag doll, but, the never dying, memory of that moment was the musical 'ping, pong, pong' sound that emanated from the black wrought iron fencing that graced the church's perimeter, as my head was brushed along it from the sheer impulse of my father's overwhelming speed.

Needless to say, I was punished with a whacking of the slipper across the backside. One time for disobeying my mother and a second for running away from my father. Not that I ever held the feeling that I was ever punished unfairly or brutally by my father.

I remember, too, by way of admiration of his wisdom how



Curly Evans

my father would present a group of us children with a 'Mars' bar confection with the instruction to cut it up and share it. The one proviso was that whoever cut it had the last choice and the first choice would go to the person on the left of the 'cutter'. What a delightfully frustrating conundrum this turned out to be; for no one wanted to be the cutter and each wanted the one to their right to do the cutting. Inevitably the task of cutting was undertaken by whoever could resist no longer the tantalising lure of the sticky sweet, and invariably it was done with the precision of a brain surgeon.

Chris Evans

Countryside childhood

I had two dogs when growing up – a black mongrel called Rupert, who left his mark around the suburbs of Beaconsfield, and a second dog called Titch who got run over in Bottom Lane.

One of our favourite games was playing with bows and arrows where we had great fun hiding in hedges and shooting the arrows through slow moving bicycles coming up Bottom Lane. I also remember pinching golf balls on an out of sight green at Beaconsfield Golf Course and the usual birds egg collecting and apple scrumping.

I had a pet pig called Towser which I won at the local Seer Green fete. I believe he cost us 6d. Dad built him a sty out of old railway sleepers. Obtaining food

for him was very difficult. We scrounged old bread and potato peelings, etc as we were only allowed one bag of meal a month for him. But in the end he tasted very good for breakfast (ah!).

Maurice Bingham

We would go over the woods and fields to play all day, mum would give us sandwiches and a drink of some sort and would have no fear of any harm coming to us. Incidentally, back doors were very rarely locked as burglary was unheard of.

Cousin Enid spent a lot of time with us at Seer Green and came on holidays with us. We used to drape the apple trees on the front lawn with any old thing mum gave us to make a tent and would then sleep out there.

One other thing stands out in my memory, at Christmas time we would go to the woods to collect holly and ivy. One year we were in the wood on the edge of Beaconsfield Golf Club, private property. Lilian was with us and I had just climbed to the top of a holly tree when Enid and Lilian said someone was coming. They ran like rockets and left me up there, needless to say I was not amused and had no time to pick any holly.

We used to climb the hay ricks and slide down them again, making a right mess of them.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

An interesting day

Last week was half term. My cousin Sheila, my sister Mandy and myself went down to my nanny Bingham's (at Great Kimble) to stay the week. This account is about the day I enjoyed most – Wednesday. On the Wednesday we went to Aylesbury. We woke up at about

7.30 am and went into nanny's and grandad's bedroom for a cup of tea. Nanny, grandad and Mandy got up at about 8.00 but Sheila and I stayed in bed listening to the transistor.

We left the house at about ten o'clock and reached Aylesbury at about ten past. Grandad parked the car and we set off to the underground market. The underground market was just like an ordinary market besides being below ground level. After having looked around we went on up to the market which was above the underground market in the square. We looked around for a while till Mandy, Sheila and myself decided to look round Boots. Then nanny and grandad joined us and we went on to the butchers and bakers. While nanny was in the butchers Sheila and I went and looked round Woolworths. Sheila and I went on to Smiths where I bought a book. Then we went on with nanny and grandad to the car and then we came back to the house.

Debbie Hurford, school book, 4.11.68

Winter of '63

I remember that we had to get coal for the fire to warm the house up 'cos it was that cold. So my dad and I went out with the sledge and went to Bond's coalyard with a sack and pulled the coal through the fence, filled the sack up and put it on the sledge to drag it home.

Everywhere was covered with snow, Wood Lane was about three feet deep with compacted snow. We were that desperate that we even went to the sewage farm and took coke off the filter beds ...

Tim Rainer

Sledging

On Sunday 29th December mummy, daddy, Mandy and I went to Beaconsfield golf links meaning to go sledging. We found a steep hill with lots of bumps and ditches. It was snowing all the time, stinging our arms and legs.

Daddy went down with mummy but they didn't get very far because they shot straight into the woods half way down. Then Mandy and I went but we wanted to shoot off the bottom of the hill where there was a big dip but we stopped just before it.

After a while daddy went back to the car. Mummy, Mandy and I meant to go down together. Mummy and I were on and mummy, thinking Mandy was on, shot off and Mandy sat down on the snow with a puzzled look on her face. Mandy and I at one time went together and shot over the dip rising about 2 ft off the ground and landed up in the hedge. We all enjoyed the afternoon although it was snowing.

Debbie Hurford, school book, 8.1.69



Evelyn, Lewis, Maurice Bingham May '44

Visit to the 'Big House', Cliveden Stud

Mrs Freedman asked us to go down to their house at Christmas. We went in via the back door! The kitchen was like something out of Upstairs Downstairs and in total contrast to the hallway which was modern marble and very slippery. We went through to the conservatory – Mr Freedman was there with his ever faithful Trudi (the great dane). Joe was keen to show Mr Freedman his homemade snooker set and they decided to play a game. I remember there being a very large, elegant glass coffee table and Mr Freedman suggesting that they should use this to play on, much to Mrs Freedman's horror. I think in the end, Mrs Freedman won and Joe sat on Mr Freedman's lap and demonstrated the game as best he could. The visit didn't last for long but it was nevertheless enjoyable and Joe was as always very well behaved. If I remember correctly, Joe received a small Christmas gift.

Sonia Falvey, childminder and godmother to Joe Rainer, Christmas 1992

Best Grandparents

Henry Best was a very lively man, kind and good natured, who liked a little whisky in a very small bar called The Rat Trap - this was a door on the left as you came out of the Great Western Station, Windsor. We had a phonograph with the big speaker and little dog, and when he came home after his little drink he'd dance me all round the room. A keen gardener, he used to pay me a penny to go and get horse manure in a bucket (fresh!) from the street. My grandparents originally lived at 84 Springfield Road, Windsor, and in approximately 1932

moved into new house at 1 Buckland Crescent with daughter Gladys and me. My grandmother Edith Best was an orphan brought up by the Sisters of Mercy in Hatch Lane. They used to visit her at Buckland Crescent.

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans), who lived with her maternal grandparents from the age of 18 months until 14 years old.



Gran Best with Dorothy, 1932

Christmas

I have very happy memories of Christmas. We would make a tree from branches of fir tied together, decorations would be made from sweet wrappers, paper lanterns and anything else we could lay our hands on. Stockings would contain a penny, nut, apple, tangerine, sugar mouse and, if we were lucky, some chocolate.

Having no TV we played games, bashed balloons, went to Sunday School and listened to the radio. Mum always made her own puddings and they would boil in the old copper all day, filling the house with condensation as did washing day. No washing machines or driers in our time, we did not have a fridge either.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

When I was a child we had no toys. I remember one Christmas that the local post office had a display of toys in the window and I desperately wanted a doll I

saw. Although I dropped hints to mum and dad, it was no good as dad was out of work and I never got my doll. Mum used to cut buttons off clothes and store them in a drawer in the kitchen table, I used to love playing with them. I also used to get hold of a shoe box, add wheels made from the lids of cocoa tins and a piece of string, then put the cat in it and pull it around!

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

A day in half term

... First of all we played 'Lost in Space' but we soon got bored of it so Anita suggested acting ... We did two more plays and decided to play something else. We danced to pop records. After this we played Consequences which is a pen and paper game. then we did votes for the next game which was Doctor Who. First of all I was a monster, then Polly. We tidied up at 10 past 5 and went home for tea. Nanny had prepared a delicious tea of egg sandwiches, jam tart, a blancmange and many other things.

Debbie Hurford, school book 21.2.69



William Bingham, Percy, Norah, Dos

Joe and I had a brilliant outing. We caught the train to London and made our way to the Docklands Light Railway. It was really good fun and as there is no driver we were able to 'drive' the train as we were fortunate to get a seat right at the front. I can certainly see the attractions of living in Docklands as we travelled through Canary Wharf and had magnificent views all round.

We got off at the end of the line, walked under the Thames to Greenwich and ate a picnic lunch on the pier before wandering round Greenwich village and visiting the Cutty Sark. It was really great, not least because we had such a good time being just the two of us (apologies to Tim and Thomas), having a giggle and skipping round like idiots. Sometimes I feel I lose touch a bit with the children, what with the daily hassles of work and life in general, so it was really good to 'get back to basics' and simply have fun as a mum with her little boy.

*Debbie Rainer, 'letter to a friend',
February 1997*

Elsie Bingham

I think I took after my Mum, as she had a great sense of fun. We would cycle through the wood as a short cut from the station. If she was heading for a tree or hole a bit too fast, she would deliberately roll off her bike to avoid it. I used to think it was very funny.

Like me, Mum also liked collecting old things. One year we went to a house sale in Beaconsfield and she bought a box of vases, one of which is the brown flowered vase in my cabinet.



Gary, Andy, Tim, Mick with father Ron Rainer, Windsor

When we were children it sat on her sideboard and I thought it was ugly and I think my brothers did as well because plasticine was jammed in the neck of it, which I was able to remove when the vase became mine.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

Christmas 1993

Mandy has an empty bedroom at the moment, so Joe and her three boys made this their base and were able to make as much noise as they liked. As her youngest had a miniature workbench from Father Christmas, it did frequently sound as if the builders were back and the ceiling in danger of coming down, but they all had a ball.

The bit Joe liked best was when they had the lights off in the bedroom after dusk, and used their torches for 'moonlight rendezvous to Tracey Island' and other such adventures. I joined in at this point, and it was great fun, although I was relegated to Thunderbird 3 when I really wanted to play with Thunderbird 2. It's not fair! When I then tried to introduce a bit of culture by suggesting that they all sit

round whilst I read a story, I was even more upset to see all four boys make a quick exit and play in another room!

Tim and I were consoled by our own lack of a big extension when we returned the hospitality a few days later - our cupboard under the stairs proved a source of great fascination and all four boys played inside it, with the door shut, for over an hour! Bliss!! Promise you won't report us to social services ...

Letter to a friend, Debbie Rainer

Big family

My mother started having children at 18 years old and continued until she was 49 years. She married Albert Horton and had 8 children reach maturity. Then her husband died of sugar diabetes and a couple of years later she married his best friend, Harry Rainer (my dad) and went onto have 5 more children. Overall it is thought mum bore 21 children, although presumably many died at birth or soon after. We all get on very well and as the older ones got married it made more room for others.

Ron Rainer

At Home

Between them the family have lived in humble (and less humble) cottages, comfortable town houses, 'over the shop' and close to royalty ...

Gatcombe Park

Princess Ann's home at Gatcombe was once owned by a Col. Ricardo, and dad's dad was a chauffeur/gardener there and as children we stayed for holidays in the lodge house where grandma and grandad lived. Grandma always wore a long black dress and she kept a goat which would stand on a table to be milked.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

26 Alma Road, Windsor

My mother was not domesticated in spite of having eight children - so she didn't do washing, it was sent to the laundry.

When I went there to live at age 14 years in 1943, I washed my own clothes by hand. There were no washing machines then, I put them through a mangle, hand turned, and used a flat iron heated on a gas stove. There was no central heating, only coal fires where the heat all went up the chimney.

The house had such big rooms with very high ceilings. I could never get warm. It was previously a doctor's house and in the kitchen was a row of the old fashioned bells with a numbered dolls eye above each one. In each room next to the marble fireplace was a bell rope - so when you pulled it, the corresponding dolls eye in the kitchen would blink. I found that very unnerving!

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)

Stroud Cottage, Bottom Lane, Seer Green, Bucks

When I was old enough to travel on the bus / train on my own, I spent every weekend and school holidays at Stroud Cottage with Auntie Elsie and Uncle Perce (Bingham). They were such happy times and certainly the best of my childhood. First of all there was 'Rupert', a large black Labrador type dog who was just wonderful and such a character - then there was 'Boots', aptly named - he was black with brown feet. I tried to teach him tricks but that didn't work very well. He followed Uncle to work one day and did not come back - I am not sure whether he got run over by a car or a train.

I can remember Uncle grew begonias in profusion, tomatoes and runner beans. He spent all his time in the garden and was always whistling - I can hear him now. There were chickens in an enclosed run outside - Auntie put 'spectacles' on them so that they could not bite each other - they did look strange. I loved to mix their food and collect the eggs.



Stroud Cottage

Then there was 'Towser' the pig at the very top of the garden. Maurice used to sit in with him and rub him with a very stiff brush - he used to sink slowly to the floor in pleasure (the pig that is!). We all broke our hearts when he was taken away for slaughter - he was like the family pet.

Maurice had his bed etc in the outside shed which he called 'The Casbah' - this name was over the door - but I was too young to know whether he kept a harem in there.

When I left on Sunday afternoons, Auntie Elsie would ride her bike with me to the bus stop and wait until the bus came, then she would ride back home.

They then sold the cottage and moved to the shop in Ickenham. Again I spent weekends and school holidays there working in the shop until such time as they retired, sold the shop and moved to Kimble.

Enid Gibbs (Keats / Bateman)

Tiptree, Essex

The family were left a little cottage at Tiptree, Essex, by Henry's parents Henry and Mary Ann (nee Spooner) and moved there early this century. Elsie Harvey was born at the cottage. The cottage had quite a lot of land and the family were largely self sufficient. They grew wall flowers which were allowed to go to seed - the seed was collected by the children and sold to nurseries. In another field they grew nasturtiums - the seed from these was sent to London and made into pickle. In those days there were no state benefits, the only money you might get if you were desperate was from Parish Relief.

As told by Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

4 Inkerman Road, Eton Wick, Berks

Ron Rainer dreamt up many a scam to earn a bob or too. His long suffering wife Dorothy felt he'd gone a bit too far when she found herself having to use a set of pliers to turn on the water at the kitchen sink, due to Ron removing and selling all the brass taps in the house (not to mention all the brass door knobs).

5 Totteridge Common, High Wycombe, Bucks

Granny Bateman came from a small village near Thame called Gibraltar. I don't know definitely what her maiden name was but somehow 'Stratford' comes to mind. Grandad always called me 'Jane' for some reason.

As a young child I used to spend some nights with Granny and Grandad Bateman. They lived in a two up / two down flint cottage known as 5 Totteridge Common. There was no running water or mains electricity. The water came out of the well in the garden, the 'loo' was a wooden shed down the path with a wooden seat with a hole cut in it (smoothed around the edges - of course!). The bucket was underneath, the contents of which had to be buried in the garden - occasionally - the 'loo' paper was newspaper torn into handy squares and threaded onto a piece of string hanging on a nail!

Paraffin lamps were used as lights and were very attractive, they certainly made the room look cosy. The wireless was run on an 'accumulator'. Gran had two of these, when they ran out I had to walk to the Post Office at the top of Totteridge Hill to get it recharged. She could not

be without 'Mrs Dale's Diary' or 'The Archers'.

Gran cooked on the old black range heated by the fire but the fruit cakes were much better than they are today. The iron was also heated by standing it right up to the bars of the open fire but you had to have an oven glove to hold it whilst you ironed the clothes. Usually she had two on the go so that the ironing was continuous!

In the winter when I slept there there was no hot water bottle so she used to put a brick in the oven and then wrap it in a small blanket. The bed did not have an under blanket, so when it was cold she used to put newspaper under the top sheet - I was never really convinced the paper kept me warm.

Enid Gibbs (Keats / Bateman)

Home from Home

Sonia Falvey, childminder to Joe Rainer 1991 - 1993 whilst mum and dad were at work, lived at Cliveden Stud where husband Nick was second man. They enjoyed a tied cottage, with Joe first of all spending much of his time at North Lodge (just down the road from Cliveden House), then moving with them to a cottage within the Stud itself, close to the main quadrangle of stables.

Visitors to the Stud included such racing luminaries as Sheik Mohammed, with the resident four footed attraction being Reference Point, who won the Derby in 1987. On his death in 1998 the owner of the stud, Louis Freedman, had his obituary published in the Racing Post.

Great Kimble

I have very strong memories of going to stay with nanny and grandad Bingham when they lived in the bungalow at Kimble. They had a tea making machine in their bedroom which they used to display - cups and saucers too, no mugs for them!

Debbie and I would pop into their bedroom each morning to learn the alphabet and hear stories. We would also go over the fields behind the back garden and 'help' the farmer with the bailing, although I'm not sure we were much help!

Cheese and lettuce sandwiches for tea with us all sitting at the table by the window which looked over those same fields. I also have a strong memory of eating a boiled egg with bread soldiers for breakfast, sitting on a stool with a yellow seat in the kitchen - I still have one of those stools. Funny how food plays such a large part in my mind, I don't get any better!

Also when I think about nanny and grandad at Kimble, I think of Cowslips on the bank of the railway, hundreds of them. Not many around now. I had a very happy childhood indeed - I was extremely lucky.

Mandy Harris (Hurford)



Dorothy Evans shopping with Aunt Glad

School days

The happiest days of your life, or so they say. Certainly, there seems to be some truth in the old adage although things have changed dramatically over the course of the century. At the beginning, compulsory education was relatively new and concentrated on the 'three r's'. Towards the new millennium, league tables, homework and academic success run the risk of taking over childhood and perhaps destroying something precious ...

Jam on it

The village of Tiptree was (and still is) the home of Wilkins jam, with the founder starting off with a circular fireplace, a bubbling pot and fruit he grew himself. As the business grew, the village school became a vital part of its work force - when the fruit was ripe, Mr Wilkins ordered the school to close and the children were employed picking fruit. On these days the children had to be up at 5 am, mum would pack plenty of sandwiches and tea, and they would set off to see the 'ganger' who would tell them where to go and start picking fruit. The factory opened at 9 am and the fruit needed to be picked and weighed by then. This early morning stint earned the children double rate at 3 farthings a pound. Between 9 am and 4 pm they continued to pick the fruit, but at normal rate. All fruit had to be made into jam before the factory closed at 6.30 pm as no picked fruit was allowed to be left in the factory overnight - that was why it tasted so good. One of my aunts was a foreman in the factory.

When I was 5 years old and new at Tiptree village school, I won a needlework prize out of the whole school. From then on mum wanted me to be a dressmaker and milliner, particularly as my sewing of button holes on camisoles we made and sold at school was so good. I cannot remember ready made clothes being available until I was about 17 years old - before then, you bought lengths of cloth from the Cooperative Store and made your own. I remember mum even sewed dad's shirts. Due to my sewing ability, mum got me a place at Continuation School to train as a dressmaker. Before taking up my place, a friend of mine - Emily - suggested I went along with her when she was interviewed for a place in service. When the ladies were interviewing, one took on Emily and asked me if I would like to go too - I said "yes!"

When I got home and told mum, she was most upset, not least because I had sneaked off with Emily without doing the washing up I'd been told to do. When dad got home, I fetched his slippers and papers and he said "what do you want?" When I told him, he consoled mum by saying "let her go ... she'll be back before Continuation School begins and she can still take up her place"

He was wrong!

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

Did you know ...

Gordon Hurford went to school at Beaconsfield Old Town, next to the church. Starting at age 5, he "cried all the way to the front door. In those days there were very few cars about so we walked to school, about a mile from home".

Henry Best went to school on the acre (Bachelors Acre, Windsor) - blue and yellow uniform - and had to pay two pence a week.

Joe Rainer attended Hitcham Vale Montessori School, Parliament Lane, between 1993 and 1995 ... conveniently close to Cliveden, the Tudor style cottage housed Lord Astor's mistress in earlier days.

Cyril and Bert Best both went to Eton College Choristers School, although I believe Uncle Cyril was expelled. He was always a 'bit of a lad'. Uncle Bert was just the opposite. They sang in the Eton choir and were educated there.

Daphne Beavis (Evans)

All of **Esther Rainer's** surviving children went to Clewer Hill school, Windsor. Sad to say six have since passed away.

Elsie Rainer

Seer Green Village School

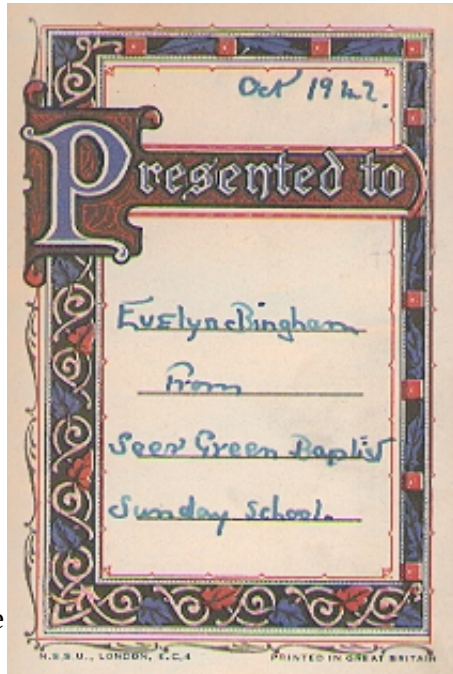
My earliest memories of school are of sitting in a half circle on small wooden chairs round a big black fireplace. Our morning milk was placed on the top in winter to warm and I hated it. This class was held in the old village hall, Seer Green, which was burned down in 1970.

Other memories of school are of Empire Day, which is no longer held. Admiral James, one of the school managers, visited the school. He always gave every pupil an ice cream and did that every year up until the 1960s. It was also our Sports Day, and not being very sporty, the ice cream was the best bit.

I used to go to the Band of Hope service once a week which was held in the Baptist Chapel, where I and many others took

the pledge never to drink. In my case, it did not do much good.

School play ground games were hoops, tops, leap frog, marbles, skipping and hop scotch. In good weather we would walk there and back four times a day, approx 6 miles in all, but in winter we were allowed to take a packed lunch and given more of the dreaded warmed milk.



the farm, collect an empty trailer and ride back for the next lot. It was great fun but we would be covered in scratches from the stooking and gathering.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

Starting out

Joe started 'big school' at the end of February and took to it like a duck to water. He was the only one starting, which worried me as I felt he would feel isolated, but his new 'maturity' meant he didn't bat an eyelid. On his first day, we went into his classroom to meet his teacher (who is also the Head), and he was shown his peg - he immediately registered a complaint, as his name had been written as Joseph instead of Joe. Mrs Lovett, put in her place, scuttled off and made him a new name badge ...

February 1995

Summer holidays were spent helping the farmers to stook and then collect up the harvest. When the trailers were full, we would sit on the top and ride back to

Thomas started full time nursery after Christmas (8.30 am to 3.45 pm, Monday to Friday), going to Stepping Stones Day Nursery which is next to our local Sainsburys on the Bath Road. He is the youngest in his group, which is for 3 to 5 year olds, and is now a fully fledged member of the 'Bumble Bees'.

January 1999

Letters to Canada, Debbie Rainer

Padded pants

One winter day at Slough Tech the heating had failed. Years 1, 2 and 3 were sent home; years 4 and above were expected to stay as we were 'big enough' to cope. My rebellious class of all boys in year 4 were none too happy about this and the majority shot off home. The next day, a Friday, they were each given the cane in turn. I'd decided to take another day absent without leave and, hearing about their punishment, spent all weekend dreading the consequences I would face from my double misdemeanour. So Monday morning saw me in school, books stuffed down my pants, full of trepidation. No one mentioned a word ...

Tim Rainer

200 years on ...

Dropmore County First School, the little thatched school at Littleworth Common, Bucks, which Joe Rainer attended between 1995 and 1998, celebrated its bicentenary whilst he was there.

Parents, staff and children designed and made a beautiful patchwork quilt as a gift to the school. Joe's patch depicts a fox, and has his name carefully concealed behind a little silk 'door'. As far as we're aware, his is the only pupil's name incorporated.

All the rage at playtime

School dinners were a shilling a day, a third pint of milk a day was sixpence for the week. We had phases of games in recreation times, it would be five stones for a few weeks, then it would be marbles or skipping - one mad craze was a drop of milk in a bottle that you'd shake all the time to solidify it!

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)

War

The early part of the century was fraught with war and, like most families, our ancestors played their part. Fortunately their losses were few, but for some the horrors had a long lasting effect.

Cyril Gordon Evans, 'Curly'

My father was badly shell shocked in the First World War whilst serving, I believe, with The Royal Berkshire Regiment. His platoon came under enemy bombardment and their trench defences were caved in. He was buried within for three days and was the sole survivor of 22. His hair turned grey almost overnight and he was unable to speak. He was in a convalescent home when my mother met him. It took some 5 years or so for speech to return and he was always known to us children as having a sometimes formidable stammer. Doctors advised him to throw himself into some activity to get over the horror of war.

So he took up sport - cross country running, hurdling, tennis and his great loves cricket and football. He founded the Clarence Tennis Club and Windsor Victoria Cricket Club. Eton College wanted him as a sports coach but, because of his speech impediment he declined. Although his stammer wasn't always apparent, no doubt the Eton boys would have ridiculed him.

There was a family joke - my brother-in-law Wally, Daphne's husband, was working with him and Dad started to "s s s s". Wally, trying to be helpful, said "Spanner? Screwdriver?" "No", said my Dad "Sod it!".

Dorothy Hill (Rainer/Evans)

Because of his terrible ordeal in the trenches we were never allowed to eat spaghetti in front of him as it reminded him of the never ending infestation of worms that plagued their existence in those horrific conditions. The only time he spoke of those times were to say how terrible it was to see the soldiers suffering from mustard gas attacks being led back behind the lines; they would pass by for two or three days continuously. Mostly blinded, they would hold onto the belt of their comrade in front, forming a continuous single file. Occasionally the line would be broken and someone would spring from the trenches to join the line again.

I remember one occasion whilst watching the widely acclaimed documentary series of the BBC 'The World at War' there were scenes much as described, and I noticed some tears on his cheek.

Chris Evans

Second World War

At the age of 8+, I sang in the church choir and helped to ring the bells in church. When war came 3.9.39 the bell ringing stopped about June '40, only to be used for a warning of German invasion. During the war years an air raid shelter was dug in the garden which used to flood during heavy rain - just as well that being 25 miles from London we had very few air attacks in the area. With Dad being in the Home Guard we had a service issue rifle at home during the war, so we felt safer

than houses without. The war years were good fun for us kids, watching the air dog fights during the Battle of Britain 1940/41 and, towards the end of the war, the doodle bombs diving all over the place.

Gordon Hurford.

Named after Redvers

Henry Harvey Senior was a Sergeant Major at Colchester at the time of the Boer War. The family lived in barracks and Henry was responsible for drilling the troops. When the war started, his wife was expecting her 6th child and Henry was granted compassionate leave by his commanding officer Col. Redvers Buller. When the baby was born it was felt that Henry was better placed to continue at Colchester, preparing soldiers for battle, and he did not go to war. As a consequence the baby was named Redvers Buller (b. approx 1900).

As told by Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

Memories of a child

I remember the war years. The rationing - 2 ounces butter, 4 ounces meat, 2 ounces sugar, 2 ounces sweets a week - although I was lucky because I got my grandad's and aunt's sweet ration, and we got extra meat because grandad worked at the butchers. The wireless was electric, although they were battery very often, and was our entertainment. I remember the serials, The Count of Monte Christo, Dick Barton, etc and, of course the 9 o'clock news.

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)

Relatively Unscathed

I was 6 years old when the Second World War broke out on 3rd September 1939, my Mum's birthday. As dad worked for Great Western Railway he was exempt from National Service. However, he was a member of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and served for over 30 years. War did not affect us much, well not that I remember, as we lived in the country. But I well remember walking back from Seer Green Station with mum, Lewis and Maurice, when a German plane flew very low out of the fog, so low that you could see the pilot. We all hid in a holly bush but the pilot must have clearly seen us in the road and could have taken a pot shot at us.

I also remember the night of the Blitz on London. We were in mum and dad's bedroom and towards London the sky was bright red. I imagine we then went in the cupboard under the stairs as this was considered one of the safest places. We use to call it 'The Old Coal Hole'. A British Lancaster plane crashed over the woods, out near the Amersham Road, the crew of 8 all died. Lewis went over to see it and came home with a piece of perspex which was what all the windows were made of. He carved it and made mum a ring, amongst other things.

Air raid practice at school was to dive under your desk and cover yourself with whatever our parents had given us, as a protection against flying glass. We all thought it was great fun.

Eve Hurford (Bingham)

Under Orders

There are a number of family anecdotes concerning my father Curly. I particularly remember him telling us children so many years ago about an incident that occurred when he was in the army. This would have been at the beginning of the century for he was to go on and serve as a Staff Sergeant, I believe, in the First World War.

He was amongst a group of soldiers undergoing training in the art of unarmed combat. The instructor, apparently, was a cocky fellow and took great delight in showing off his ability to launch various 'volunteers' into orbit as he demonstrated various techniques. Coming to the point where he wished to show how to handle prisoners, he 'volunteered' my father from the ranks, handed him a rifle with a bayonet attached and told

him to regard the instructor as his prisoner of war and escort him to a point the other side of the drill hall. It was clear that the instructor had in mind to disarm my father, but he had not taken into account my father's pragmatic, no nonsense attitude ...

Giving clear instructions to his 'prisoner' as to what he should do, they set off. At the first sign of a wrong move my father stabbed the 'prisoner' in the thigh, causing him to cry out loud and crash to the floor with blood spurting from an appreciable but not life threatening wound. Undoubtedly shocked, the instructor asked why he had done that?

"Because you did not do what you were told" was the simple reply. There were indications that my father would be court marshalled but nothing came of it.

Chris Evans

Did you know ...

Edith Ida McKenzie (nee Evans) had an only son **Alfred Henry**, who was posted missing during the Second World War. We knew him as Bill, I believe. He was a handsome guy, all RAF type, and I understand a memorial at Egham has his name on the Roll of Remembrance.

Brenda Lickley (Evans)

Ernest Hurford served in the 1914-1918 war as a Lewis Gunner at Salonica, a port in N E Greece, where there was heavy fighting.

Gordon Hurford / John Wells

Henry and Edith Best were of German origin, the spelling of their surname was changed in the First World War from Bieste to Best. They had to register as Aliens every week at the police station during the 1914 war. Henry was the youngest of eight children.

When the 1914 war broke out, dad sold the cottage in **Tiptree** and went to London to take up work in a munitions factory. The whole family moved with him into quite a big house at West Ham. Rationing was worst in the first world war, as the country had not organised a system of fair share. Mum would hear on the grapevine of a ship coming in and would get up at some unearthly hour to get what she could.

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

During the Second World War, **Curly** was employed on war work which consisted of repair and conversion of transport vehicles, plus doing his stint fire watching on the Slough Trading Estate.

Brenda Lickley (Evans)

Courtship and marriage

Typical of most families, our ancestors had their fair share of good marriages and bad, one with a particularly tragic end which is reported later in this book. Many of the earlier marriages resulted in large numbers of children, a few of the later ones have ended in divorce - as did a royal one which started so positively ...

The Prince and Princess of Wales, 29 July 1981

The night before ...

... went up to Hyde Park to see the fireworks and to celebrate. Although it was a tremendous rush and hassle to get there, the effort really was worthwhile as there was the most fantastic atmosphere up town. Thousands upon thousands of people were packed into the park, laughing, cheering, joking with the coppers, fantastic. It was a beautifully warm evening and after the fireworks and prolonged clearing of the park, the crowds thronged the streets and the party just went on and on. We heard, then saw, a lone piper up one street; in another we were entertained with a noisy boisterous sing song by a gang of youths on the back of a truck, all of whom tumbled off the back like a pack of collapsing cards once the vehicle moved away. Trafalgar Square had to be experienced to be believed ...

Diary extract, Debbie Hurford

How I met George

... so I spent a few days with mum and dad before catching the train to Beaconsfield. When I got off the train, the first person I met was George who was Monica the cook's cousin - both were on the platform to greet me (George had a bandaged hand due to poisoning from a burr at the nursery where he worked).

At Wood End we had one little record which we repeatedly played on a little wind up gramophone, all dancing round the table. Monica remarked on how often George turned up to join us. The lady of the house allowed us to take leftover food to George's mum and dad, and George would often walk me down the lane after I had delivered it. One day he asked me to go with him to the pictures at Beaconsfield to see the first talking picture 'Tiptoe through the tulips' with Charles Fallow and Janet Gayner. The film kept breaking down, but we had a good laugh! After that, George took me to the pictures every Wednesday evening. Mrs Reynolds, the lady of Wood End, offered me a job but I couldn't make up my mind and told her I would need to work 4 weeks notice at the school, after doing 2 weeks spring cleaning on my return. George said he'd like me to come back and that made up my mind. Six weeks later I returned to Wood End and George and I courted for 4 years.

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

On the skids ...

Tim and I certainly had a memorable start to the New Year! We decided to do a pub crawl round his old home village of Eton Wick, starting with the Football Club and followed by The Grapes, Three Horseshoes and Greyhound. The latter is my least favourite, with its bright

lighting and plastic flower arrangements, but by the time we got there I was too far gone to care! When we finally stumbled out Tim had the bright idea of walking the three miles back to Chalvey (where he shared a flat).

As you can no doubt well imagine, in my high heels and non too warm clothing, I was not over impressed with the idea. In an effort to appease me, Tim suggested we climb the grass embankment to the Windsor relief road, thereby reducing our journey by half. We must have been drunk to think it possible, however we soldiered forth, got half way up, slipped and rolled all the way back down to end up in a muddy heap against the fence at the bottom, nearly wetting ourselves laughing. So we ended up trudging the full distance in the rain, with me apparently swearing like a trooper, only to find that Phil (Tim's flatmate) had passed us in his car on the way home ...

Debbie Hurford, diary

Deborah Hurford - Timothy Ronald Rainer 23rd November 1985 Penn Holy Trinity

As we pulled up at Penn Holy Trinity just before 2 pm, I was shocked to see the Best Man, Gary, leaping over tomb stones and rushing towards us. My first thought was that Tim had

changed his mind and that Gaz was coming to break the news. It turned out he was trying to get the Rainer side of the family out of the Crown Pub in time for the service, a point proven when they all spilled out and nipped in various side gates whilst Dad and I were having our photos taken. Once in the belfry I blew my nose (I was frozen!) and took up position behind the vicar and choir ready for the off, trying to remember to march in step with Dad (which he'd kept on about at the rehearsal). Needless to say, as the Trumpet Voluntary began we soon fell out of step and proceeded at an undignified shuffle up the aisle. Tim greeted me with a nervous smile and a compliment, Karen wobbled left and right behind us and the service begun.

After signing the register we emerged from the church into the cold but dry afternoon, to be greeted by the Eton Cavaliers complete with cricket bats held high forming a ceremonial arch.

Diary extract, Debbie Raine r

Norah Bingham married Bob in May 1941 but sadly he died Prisoner of War in December 1942, never seeing his baby daughter Rosemarie. When the war ended, his commanding officer Harry, who survived the same prison, visited all the bereaved. Harry and Norah fell in love and were married in April 1949.

Mandy Jane Hurford - Peter Andrew Harris 15th August 1981, Hazlemere Holy Trinity

I'm sat in my room surrounded by a mass of wedding remnants - bridesmaid dress on wardrobe door, posy on bookcase, Lynne and Dawn's clothes scattered around. What a fabulous wedding it was! The sun shone down all day long, everything went absolutely perfectly. Mandy and Pete were so happy, so obviously in love. The service was beautiful and they looked radiant. I trod on Mandy's veil and got a bit flustered when I took her bouquet ...

... the bride and the bridesmaids did a special performance of the Can Can (twice, by popular demand!) ...

(The day after) ... My tears came when the three of us got in the car to go out for lunch and I saw the confetti strewn over the floor. After that the tears were seldom out of my eyes. Grandad understood, he gave me a lovely cuddle behind the runner beans in Enid's garden. I said I was sniffing because I'd got a cold but I knew that he knew I'd got nothing of the sort.

Debbie Hurford



Elsie Bateman marries Percy Bingham, Totteridge

*Top row, left to right ... Uncle Fowler (Ethel's husband), Kit, not sure, Percy, Elsie, Amelia Bateman, not sure, Frederick Bateman, not sure
Next row ... Ethel, Ada Lewis Bingham, Norah, Norman Metcalfe (Ethel/Fowler's son), Mill, Doss, Win? (Bateman)*

At work and play

Note how early in the century family members followed traditional trades, many of which have now died out. In later years managerial and office work tends to take over, although the building trade is still followed by many family members.

Curly, 1892 - 1974

My father was a master builder and always worked for himself. I can't ever remember him not working, he only ever had Sundays off. He always said people worked to live but he lived to work. His father (my grandfather) was a saddler who apparently died from cancer of the tongue, through putting metal in the mouth whilst working. So 'Curly' was the bread winner at an early age.

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)

In his obituary reference is made to the fact that he was active into his eighties as a painter decorator, indeed, such was the esteem he was held by his customers that they would come to the house virtually pleading with him to do some work for them.

I remember one job painting the front of a large house up near Windsor Hospital. I was given the task of painting the guttering, which required the use of a triple extension ladder: a formidable device that would develop so much spring as one came to the middle it would almost catapult one off the ladder completely (I think my father would have been about 75 and I, 22 years old).

The house had two gables as part of its front and the gutter of one of these proved very difficult to paint because one could not position the ladder properly.

Consequently I came to my father somewhat resigned to the fact that the end of the gutter in question could not be reached and therefore, not painted. My father, on hearing my news, looked at me with unabashed incredulity ... "you'll have to lean out a bit, Ducky" (his affectionate form of address to any of his offspring). I told him that I had leaned out but could not reach any further (it's pretty hairy just being at the top, let alone any acrobatics ...).

He looked up, he looked back at me, took the paint kettle and brush from my clammy mit, limped with the aid of his heavy walking stick to the base of the ladder, hung the walking stick on one of the rungs and then climbed steadily to the top where, rather like a fairy on a Christmas tree, he balanced himself on his good leg (he had undergone a - revolutionary at the time - hip replacement operation some years earlier that had eased his pain greatly but not completely) and swung his other leg out to balance his torso as he painted the offending piece of gutter.

Returning to the base of the ladder and recovering his walking stick he thrust the paint kettle and brush contemptuously into my hands and returned to his task without another word. For me a lesson of; not what I say, but what I do!

Chris Evans

Ernest Hurford, gardener. Mandy Harris, secretary/negotiator. Enid Gibbs, manager US military banking. Tim Rainer, bricklayer. Cyril Evans, master builder. Percy Bingham, railway worker; grocery shop owner. Henry Best, bookkeeper. Chris Evans, free spirit. Gordon Hurford, branch manager, grocery distribution. Maud Harvey, factory worker; in service. Lewis Bingham, management Wiggins Teape, Andy Rainer, telecomms engineer. George Evans, harness maker. Elsie Harvey, in service. Maurice Bingham, builder. Harry Rainer, GPO linesman. Debbie Rainer, production manager. Eve Hurford, office worker. William Bingham, chauffeur/gardener. Mick Rainer, site maintenance. Ron Rainer, civil engineer. Henry Best, postmaster. Bert Hammond, tailor. George James Evans, master saddler. Spooner family, mostly gardeners. Gary Rainer, salesman. Ernest Hurford, gardener. Mandy Harris, secretary/negotiator. Enid Gibbs, manager US military banking. Henry Harvey, butcher. Tim Rainer, bricklayer. Cyril Evans, master builder. Percy Bingham, railway worker; grocery shop owner. Henry Best, bookkeeper. Chris Evans, free spirit. Gordon Hurford, branch manager, grocery distribution. Maud Harvey, factory worker; in service. Lewis Bingham, management Wiggins Teape, Andy Rainer, telecomms engineer. George Evans, harness maker. Elsie Harvey, in service. Maurice Bingham, builder. Harry Rainer, GPO linesman. Debbie Rainer, production manager. Eve Hurford, office worker. William Bingham, chauffeur/gardener. Mick Rainer, site maintenance. Ron Rainer, civil engineer. Henry Best, postmaster. Bert Hammond, tailor. George James Evans, master saddler. Spooner family, mostly gardeners. Gary Rainer, salesman. Henry Harvey, butcher.

In Service

My friend Emily and I went to a house at Stoke Newton where we lived in. When Emily left, I got another service job at a school for the children of titled families at Hadley Woods in London. I can't remember its name, but I expect I will do tomorrow! The school eventually moved out of London and was the one Princes William and Harry attended before Eton College. I had a very good job at the school, rising from third dormitory maid to head pantry maid in 2 years.

When I was working at Wood End I had a half day off on Wednesdays, plus alternate Sundays. Once a month I got an extra day off. We had to be up at 7.30 am every day, with the parlour maid taking early morning tea to the lady and gentleman of the house. He was a solicitor in Wycombe and they had one son, who spent most of his time abroad. My job every morning was to go into the garage and clean the knives and shoes. The shoes then had to be put outside the appropriate bedroom door. I then had my own part of the house to clean, it was quite an easy job as there were only the two of them to three staff (cook, parlour maid and me). Every morning at 10 am the lady would go into the kitchen to tell Monica the cook the daily instructions and menu.

They liked to entertain, and most Saturdays they had 10 for dinner with two of us waiting on table. Providing the dinner and service was impeccable, we were allowed to dash off with our young men to a dance at Winchmore Hill. We went every Saturday night, even if it snowed, meeting up at the Red

Lion for the long walk. I used to earn about 30 pounds a year (six shillings and sixpence a week) and lived in.

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

Henry Best 1859 - 1947

Henry was a bookkeeper and did the most beautiful copper-plate writing. He last worked at the butcher shop, Reeves & Son (which was next the the Adam and Eve pub, Thames Hill, Windsor) until he was 77. He was a stickler for punctuality and told me that one day he was sitting on the platform at Great Western Railway Station (waiting for the shop to open for work at 7.30 am) when a piece of thunderbolt fell at his feet during a storm (a relic that has since perished at Inkerman Road).

Dorothy Hill (Rainer / Evans)



Grandad Best with either Jerry or Clive, Brenda's boy

Gordon Hurford left school in 1944 and worked for an oil company at Knotty Green until 1948 when he was called up to the RAF until 1950. When demobbed he joined 'Kinloch' (grocery distributors at Seer Green) where he stayed for the rest of his working life.

Working memories

Edie Best married Bert Hammond. They lived in Eton in the rooms over that pool by Eton College. The front part was a tailor's shop where they made suits for the Eton boys and Auntie Edie always used to be pressing suits when I saw her there. Her husband worked as a tailor in the shop, or perhaps he was a sales assistant, measuring them up, but the rooms went with the job. It was a big place at the back and they lived there a good many years...

... **Olive Best** married a Warrant Officer in the Guards and he was killed in the First World War. She then married a salesman, Mr Bill Hind (or Hines), a salesman for Morley Socks, and lived at Maidenhead. Her two sons by her first marriage went into the insurance business and I think they emigrated to Australia ...

... **Gladys Mabel Best** brought me up and was a wonderful woman, very hard working. She worked in an orphanage when she was young and eventually married Cecil Cooper and they lived at 19 Wrexham Road, Slough ...

... **Bert Best** worked for Weddell the wholesale meat company at Windsor, and later went to Smithfield. He got anthrax in the leg and had to have it amputated...

... **Cyril Best** also worked at Weddells and later at Smithfield, died of a heart attack quite a few years ago ...

... **Louis Best** worked on the cash desk at Waterloo Station, where his life came to a tragic end ...

Daphne Beavis (Evans)

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COME & VISIT US

Having spent many years working for Great Western Railways, Percy Bingham decided on a change of career, sold Stroud Cottage and set up in business ...

Making ends meet

As a family we used to do anything to help make ends meet. I remember dad had a pig which was slaughtered - we children were allowed the chitterlings but the rest was sold to the Coop.

Dad was foreman at West Ham stadium when it was built (it's pulled down now).

When dad's munitions job ended with the war, we were encouraged by other Londoners to go hop picking. So mum, dad and I set off in a big coach and went to a place in Kent, I think it was (I was about 15 years old). When we got there we found all these wooden huts and had to take a big bag each to fill with straw as a bed. By the time we eventually came home, the straw beds were quite comfortable as the straw had broken down into little bits and pieces no longer stuck in your ear! There were two huts to sleep in and one for a dining room, with rows of tables and benches with newspaper as table cloths (and the occasional flowers if you were lucky!). Outside the dining room was a row of coppers, and you had to pay the copper man to light a fire and cook your dinner.

When all the other hop pickers were sent home, we were asked to stay on and pick the apples and potatoes because of our previous experience at Tiptree. We were there for 3 months altogether and we saved up the money and it saw us through the winter.

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

D H Evans of London

The Evans family were shopowners and D H Evans of London, the Outsize Fitters, was one of several family stores which continued into the 1960s and 1970s. During Victorian times there were three shops owned by the family, at Windsor, Bagshot and Farnborough.

Windsor Ancestry Research.

Brocas Fracas

Ron Rainer is well known for his creative ways of earning a bob or two. Donning a railway worker's cap, he used to confidently work the banks of the Thames at the Brocas, Windsor, collecting mooring fees in exchange for raffle tickets. It was a close shave when he spotted the genuine mooring fee collector working his way towards him from the opposite direction, with just

enough time to spare for Ron to leg it rapidly over the Brocas, making a quick escape down Eton High Street.

Did you know ...

Ernest Hurford worked as a gardener for Watson & Rolfe, Beaconsfield, during the 1920s.

Maud Harvey worked in Wilkins Jam Factory at Tiptree, Essex, before moving to Beaconsfield to work in service at a house at Knotty Green.

Ron Rainer's grandfather had the bricks laid in steps in the Goswells, Windsor, to stop the horses slipping - they had to fetch coal from trains in those days. He had a coal and removal business.

A chatty policeman once walked with Ron Rainer all the way

from Eton to Eton Wick whilst Ron was pushing a wheel barrel full of lead tiles which had 'fallen off the back of a lorry'.

Fortunately the copper didn't lift the tarpaulin cover, although he did put his hand on the handle of the barrel from time to time ...

It goes with the job

We had a long courtship because we couldn't afford anywhere to live. George's uncle was coachman at a house at Penn, and he suggested we share his lodge house which was very comfortable for those times. So we married, but only lived in the lodge for a year before the estate owner decided to sell up and move to Beiritz, taking George's uncle and the horses with him. We then managed to get 'half' a cottage at Barnes Corner, Penn. This comprised 2 rooms with a large shared larder. We had oil lamps and a well, and on wash days George drew up lots of buckets of water and lined them up outside the door. One Sunday we were lying in bed and half the ceiling caved in on us, showering us with plaster and straw. I was black and blue!

In the 1920s the nursery George worked for (owned by Frost and someone) went broke. The Bell House was being built on the road to Gerrards Cross and George got a job as foreman, laying out all the gardens. As he was cycling to and from Penn everyday, his boss recommended to the council that we should have a house as his job was very important and the journey was too tiring.

We then got 28 Maxwell Road, Beaconsfield, where I live to this day.

Elsie Perkins (Harvey)

German Miners

Grandad Best's parents were German and came over at the end of the last century, I believe. I think they probably were miners coming from the Ruhr as Grandad had a wedge shaped piece of stone, very very smooth, dark brown, like marble in the smoothness, but with a sharp edge at the bottom, the thinnest part, which he said killed a relative of his (I can't remember who) as it was a thunderbolt which had penetrated the earth and hit this relative on the head in the mine.

Of course, this could have been a story of his but I don't think so because he thought a lot of that stone and took care of it.

Daphne Beavis (Evans)

-see also Dorothy's thunderbolt story!



Percy Bingham, railway porter

Cricket mad boss

At one point Curly was employed by Noakes Brewery in Windsor as a carpenter, and having a cricket enthusiast as a MD he was given time off to play with pay.

Great Sport

That my father was a great sportsman is legendary; being one of just a few men to have represented the county of Berkshire in hockey, cricket and football. I recall the sports editor telling me after 'Curly's' funeral that at one particular football match he played left back and the power of his kicking was such that he scored a goal from way back in the penalty box of his own side. The sports editor went on to say that Curly's cricketing abilities were world class; the only thing against him was the fact that in his heyday cricket at international levels was only for the middle or upper class society.

I can't help wonder if that attitude had something to do with the time he was a member of the Windsor and Eton Cricket Club based at the Home Park, Windsor. During his membership he undertook the building of a new cricket pavilion at his own expense and labour. Some time later a dispute broke out which I believe to have been quite prejudicial against my father and a couple of other members who were considered 'blue collared workers'. The result was the resignation of this group from the club and their foundation of a new cricket club called The Victoria Cricket Club, later to be better known as The Old Vic. I guess to hammer home his point, my father dismantled the pavilion and re-erected it on the new club's site almost ball throwing distance away in the same Home Park.

It was in the later years of my father's life that I came to know him better and I remember asking him when he was about 81 years old, as he sat in his large comfortable arm chair in front of the TV one afternoon watching his favourite sport, cricket: how did he feel watching a sport that he was once so very good at? He replied with something of a chuckle that he was doing exactly what he wanted to do: sit and watch others doing all the work.

Chris Evans

Royal Employer

It is believed that an ancestor of the Evans family was head coachman to Prince Albert at Windsor Castle, coming over from Germany with a number of other staff. In 1990 Dave Evans asked Windsor Ancestry Research to investigate this family tradition and they submitted a substantial report. The report summary states 'Separate enquiries have, however, shown that there were indeed Evans families working in the stables and saddlery at Windsor Castle, and it is possible that these were relatives of your own family, although not your direct forebears. Prince Albert did bring with him a number of people,

but there is no recollection of a head coachman.'

Hit the bottle

George Evans kept a farm on land which now forms the new road which connects the A30 with the motorway. Besides farming, they took in paying guests. At some time during Curly's early teens his father died of blood poisoning following a thistle lodging in his nose whilst haymaking. The result of this tragedy was that his wife took to the gin bottle and the family moved with the furniture to Slough and rented accommodation ...

Brenda Lickley (Evans)

See also Dorothy's Curly story

Illness and life's last great adventure ...

A tragic end

Louis Best married Evie, who was very houseproud (he had to take his shoes off before he went into the house). He used to give her his paypacket and she would give him so much money to spend. She nagged him to death and in the end he committed suicide. He worked in the cash desk at Waterloo Station and one morning he took Jeyes Fluid while in the cash desk and died an agonising death.

They lived in Springfield Road (Gran and Grandad lived at 84 most of their lives) and they blamed Evie for his death and there was a big row and we were told not to speak to her or her two children, Donald and Connie, so we had to pass them by in the street.

He was a very kind, gentle man although big built. Often when Dorothy got out of the house at 88 Springfield Road, when she was about 3, he would go running up the road after her to bring her back and although she was so little, she could out-run him.

Daphne Evans

Minchinhampton

I have memories as a very young child of making an annual pilgrimage at Easter to Minchinhampton, to place flowers on the graves of my great grandparents. I can remember grandad treating us to lunch in a dim and dark pub, and having to be on our very best behaviour.

Debbie Rainer (Hurford)

Did you know ...

Redvers Harvey had an infant son who died from a combination of measles and an accident tipping him out of his pram. He is buried with his father and grandfather at West Ham cemetery.

The village butcher, **Henry Harvey**, came to an untimely end in 1862 following an accident involving his horse and cart and a snowy night ...

Ron Rainer once managed to convince a nurse that it was the old lady in the next bed who was due for an enema, not him ..

Percy Bingham, 1900 - 1988

Grandad died last month. I'd been down Porlock with mum, Dad, Mandy and family and we had a wonderful week with perfect sunshine. When we came home we learnt Grandad had had a stroke and was in a coma. He passed peacefully away 10 days later ...

He was always so cheerful ... even when his mind had begun to go he could still have a joke and a laugh - referring to himself as 'no spring chicken' and asking me if my teeth are my own. When I was a child he was always there with my 'nomic' and had the time and patience to sit and read 'Chalkie the blackboard boy' and 'Harold Hare'.

Debbie Rainer, diary extract 21.8.88

'Curly' Evans - the sporting great dies

So reads the headline on the obituary published in the local press, a copy of which is held by Dorothy Rainer, Chris Evans and Debbie Rainer. It includes the following tribute to his sporting prowess ... 'As a footballer he was a brilliant halfback, whose sliding tackle I have never seen equalled. Every senior footballer in Berks and Bucks knew and feared the Curly slide.'

A lasting legacy

Because of his strong character and simple truths or ideals Curly could appear to be quite formidable. Upon reflection the formidable aspect is only that his was an incredible act to follow. Whether one believes in life after death is a debatable subject, however, I find a great deal of will to do everything I do as well as I can, simply because I know he would approve. It is particularly helpful at times when one has a setback and feels tempted to just patch it up, but then I wonder what my father would have done ...

Chris Evans

