

GROWING UP ON “SPRINGFIELD” FARM AT ILLAWARRA, TASMANIA

By Chris Eastoe, Tucson, Arizona, 2020

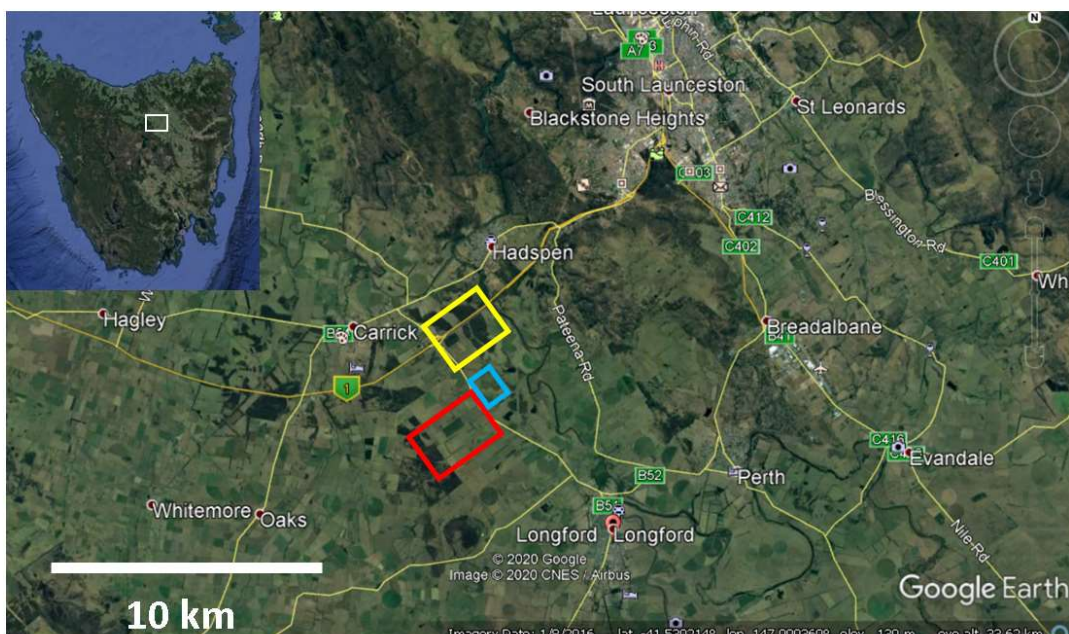


*In loving memory of Raymond
Jack and Billie Margaret Eastoe,
and presented to mark the 100th
anniversary of the birth of Jack Eastoe
on September 10th, 1920.*

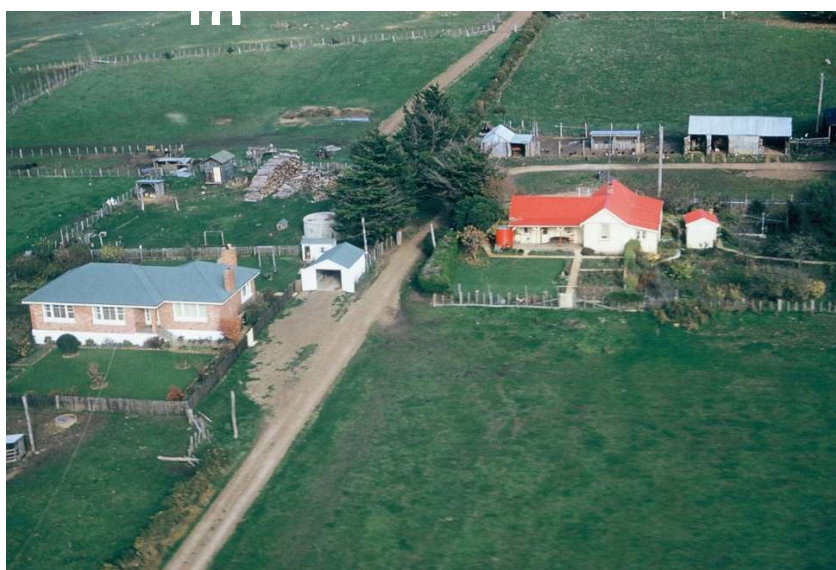


Introduction

Between the villages of Longford and Carrick, in central northern Tasmania, lies the farming district known as Illawarra. George Eastoe and his descendants lived there for about 90 years, mainly on a farm called “Springfield”. In the Google Earth image, “Springfield” and “Sunnyside” (the next property to the north) are within the red rectangle. Mt. Attraction and Christ Church Illawarra lie within the blue rectangle, and the Entally Bush Run is within the yellow rectangle. By the time the 200 acres of “Springfield” passed into the care of George’s grandson Jack Eastoe, the property was marginally economic as a farm standing alone, even with improvements to agricultural practice after World War II. Jack extended the area he could farm by leasing he 200 acres of “Sunnyside”, which was a glebe farm belonging to Christ Church Illawarra. For much of the time, he was also able to lease Mt. Attraction and the Entally Bush Run. When the latter two properties ceased to be available, it became difficult to make an adequate living from “Springfield” and Sunnyside”.



On the following pages are some photos of “Springfield” and “Sunnyside”, along with a set of photos of the shearing. For most of Jack’s tenure at the farm, sheep were the main activity. Initially, he raised breeding ewes, selling the offspring for meat. Their wool was of relatively low quality, but needed to be shorn off annually. Shearing would take about one week in September. After the mid-1960s, he switched to wethers for the production of higher-quality wool, and doubled the number of animals, so that shearing took two weeks.



Top: View of Springfield from Illawarra Rd., taken a few years after we sold the farm in 1968, but before the new owners demolished the old farmhouse.

Middle: About 1960, Jack Eastoe took a light aircraft flight over the farm.

Bottom: The house built in 1951 by Jack Eastoe for his new family, photo taken about 1961.





Photos of shearing

Top: John Curry, our wool classer, standing in front of the alcoves in which wool of different quality was placed prior to being pressed into bales.

Middle: The two shearers at work

Bottom: Looking across the classing table to the shearing stands. If I remember correctly, the shearer looking towards the camera was Eric Claxton.



Taking the wool to Launceston for auction. Billie Eastoe is standing next to our old truck, and Judith Eastoe is in the passenger seat.



Two views of "Sunnyside" from the spring-fed pond. Left: Judith Eastoe standing on the far side of the pond, about 1966. Right: Christopher and Judith Eastoe fishing for tadpoles, about 1958.



The final act, October 1968: auctioning the livestock before selling "Springfield".

What follows is a set of vignettes including many of my memories of life on the farm. I was sixteen when the farm was sold. By then, it was clear in my mind, and my parents' minds, that the farm held no future for me or for Judith. So we moved on from a place that had been the center of the world for Judith and me, and in retrospect, a paradise in which to spend childhood.

Dramatis personae

Arthur Charles Eastoe (1889-1969), known to his grandchildren as Granda, lived with his second wife Winifred Alice Eastoe in the older farmhouse. He had grown up in the Illawarra district, where his father George had been a farmer before him, possibly living at Forest Lodge farm most of his life. As a young man, Arthur became a shearer, and at the time of World War I was working the shearing sheds of outback Australia. No doubt this occupation was considered just as critical to the war effort, through providing the material for military uniforms, as would have been serving in the army.

It's said that as a young man, Granda went one day to visit old Eliza Smith, who lived along Illawarra Road in the direction of Carrick. She wasn't known for keeping a neat, tidy or sanitary house; in fact, her pig would often be found resting under the kitchen table, where she would tickle it with her big toe. Granda was offered a taste of her mead. Nobody was sure whether the mead was a particularly strong drop, or whether it was just as unsanitary as the house, but the story relates that it took Granda much of the rest of the day to make his way home.

Granda married Kathleen Nevin, and together they raised six children, five daughters and a son. They kept the farm running through the Great Depression, when the only product they could sell at a profit was prepared geese at Christmas. Aunt Joan has related that story elsewhere. Kathleen died of liver cancer just before Christmas, 1947.

By the time we knew Granda, he was progressively retiring from the farm, and our father Jack was assuming the main responsibility. Granda seemed reclusive to us. He was gradually going deaf and seemed very content to sit by the fireplace smoking his pipe and reading the newspaper. Auntie Win used to warn us that she suspected he was not as deaf as he pretended. When television appeared in Tasmania in 1959, Granda decided to be modern and bought a TV set. The first station was in Hobart, broadcasting from the top of Mt. Wellington, 150 km south of the farm. In order to receive the signal, he put up an antenna at least 10 m high in the garden. Judith and I could go and watch the children's programmes between 5 and 6 p.m.

Christmas Day was usually the big family social event of the year at Granda's. As many of the family as could come would arrive in the afternoon. By about 1960, the tribe of grandchildren had increased to 19. The boys would sometimes play football in the paddock in front of Granda's house. There would be an afternoon feast served in the lounge room, and it would include abundant fresh raspberries.

Granda and Auntie Win moved with us when we sold the farm in 1968. Dad managed to locate a new, smaller farm with a second house for them at Rosevears. Granda died of a heart attack not long after the move, in February 1969. At his funeral, five of my male cousins and I bore his coffin.

Winifred Alice Eastoe (1898-1976), née Von Bibra, married Granda after Kathleen died. She was the sister of Le Von Bibra, who eventually married Granda's daughter Nancy – a complicated piece of family interrelatedness! A letter in which Kathleen expressed her approval for the match prior to her death, still exists. Winifred was known as Auntie Win to the family. I once located, but can no longer find, a genealogical web-site (in Portuguese, as I remember) that listed her as German nobility: Baronesa von Bibra. Why the title should have passed to her (if indeed this was correct), when there was a continuous male line of Von Bibras in Tasmania, was unexplained.

Auntie Win was good to Judith and me, but she would take no nonsense! She could get annoyed with us for misbehaving. She ran a traditional, old-fashioned farmhouse, with a wood-burning kitchen stove, a copper for laundry, a hook for a kettle over the living-room fireplace, and an old china ewer and basin set in the lounge room. Judith and I would sleep on camp stretchers in that room when our parents needed to be out late for an evening - a rare treat for them - to go to a performance in Launceston.

Auntie Win had a major health crisis early in the 1960s. She developed a brain tumor and was referred to a Melbourne surgeon. She was away for a considerable time for what was, in those days, highly risky surgery. She survived, but greatly impaired. One side of her face had fallen, balance was difficult, and her gait had become lop-sided. The surgery had led to the effects of a stroke.

I have a particularly emotional memory of her at Granda's funeral in Launceston. The family was arriving at Finney's chapel in Launceston; everyone was preoccupied and Auntie Win was struggling, unhappily, to make her way inside alone. I was able to take her arm and walk with her. I think of that now as a final gift of Granda's - a lesson in compassion - with Auntie Win on hand to reinforce it.

The effects of her surgery notwithstanding, Auntie Win lived on as a strong presence until 1976. She remained living at Rosevears for some time after Dad's health forced him to relinquish farming altogether in 1972. I went to visit there occasionally, and she told me in no uncertain terms how she disapproved of what had happened to our sheepdog Rowdy after we sold the Rosevears farm. Dad, on moving to the city, had had no choice but to leave his dog for the new owner, who neglected him badly; the dog died within a few months. On another occasion, I went to ask if I could borrow some old-fashioned women's underwear for a party game. She lent me some, but wouldn't let me go without having me admit that I was borrowing them because my friends would think they were funny. I was studying in France when Auntie Win died and could not attend her funeral.

Elsie Blyth Armstrong (1892-1984), née Eastoe. Aunt Elsie was the only one of Granda's sisters that we ever knew well. Aunt Elsie was widowed, and lived in Longford, just a few miles away. She could therefore easily come and look after the house and dog while Granda and Auntie Win were away, or look after Granda while Auntie Win was having her surgery. She was a cheerful and lovable great aunt whose visits we enjoyed very much.

Raymond Jack Eastoe (1920-1983). Our father was born on September 10th, 1920. His school years encompassed the Great Depression. He had as good an education as could be found for a farm boy in northern Tasmania in those days. The final phase was at the Technical College in Launceston. He would ride his bike to the railway station in Longford and take the train to Launceston. With his adulthood came the outbreak of war, and the threat of invasion from Japan. His war experience was to be of a more direct variety than his father's. He was an experienced horseman, and on enlisting, offered his services to the cavalry. The Australian Army had retained a cavalry division until the beginning of the war. Facing a mechanized enemy in the jungles of Indonesia, the Army soon changed the specialization of the cavalry from horses to tanks. Dad became a sergeant, leading a platoon of Australian soldiers in the vicinity of Tarakan on the east coast of Borneo. He said little of what he saw and did there. What I have heard from others is that he had a name for ensuring the wellbeing of the men under his care before seeing to his own. He once commented on his opinion of the Dutch colonists in the area, and their poor treatment of the Indonesians. He would tell the story of being hit in the elbow by a rotating tank-turret and injured severely enough to be evacuated to Australia. He missed the flight that was originally to have taken him home, a flight that didn't ever arrive in Australia, presumably having

crashed in the mountains of New Guinea. Dad maintained contact with his servicemen friends all his life. They were scattered in various parts of Australia, and I didn't ever come to know them, except for Bill Fry who lived in the village of Perth, about 10 km from the farm. "Uncle" Bill was one of my godfathers, and Dad would take me to see him at least once a year. There was a Returned Servicemen's League Clubhouse, equipped with a bar, in Longford. Opportunities to stop there for a beer must have been infrequent because of the amount of work Dad had to do on the farm. Once, when I was about 4, when he had taken me into Longford on an errand to Col Allen's motor repair shop (Col repaired our farm vehicles and machinery), he decided he just had to go to the RSL Club. He ordered his beer and asked the barman to find a drink for me. I was most impressed with the fizzy raspberry drink that appeared; I had never seen anything like it before.

On returning from the war, Dad had ideas about working for the Tasmanian Government Railway Workshops in Launceston. His father would hear of no such thing, however, so Dad settled down somewhat reluctantly into the life of a farmer. He said it took him some time to learn to like it, after seeing the possibility of living in other places during the war. He had particularly liked the Atherton Tablelands, high-elevation land of eternal spring in the tropics of north Queensland. He bought a motorbike to give himself the mobility he would need to have a social life. In 1946, while riding to Longford, he was thrown off, on the Tannery Straight if I remember correctly, and fractured a vertebra in his neck. He survived. In those days, the treatment included six months in a plaster cast, and no heavy work. The farm went back into what must have been its war mode, with his sisters carrying out many responsibilities. Dad substituted for them in the house. This turn of events had two notable consequences, much later, for my life. First, he and Mum would never countenance the idea of my owning a motorbike. Second, the old gender roles didn't apply in our household. Males in our family were considered perfectly capable of participating in the kitchen.

By the late 1940s, he was thinking of marriage. One weekend, he accompanied Bevan Carins who was driving a bus on charter for the Launceston Walking Club. The bus trip took them to Cradle Mountain, when he became aware of an attractive young lady by the name of Billie Mills. She allowed him to help carry her pack. They were engaged two months later, and married in Launceston on March 31st, 1951. Dad now needed to consider accommodating a wife and family on the farm. During 1951, he had a new farmhouse constructed to the south of the old wooden house. He engaged builders by the name of Bob and Dick – names we would hear mentioned often when we were very young children – and worked with them to construct a 1950s-style brick-veneer house.

Dad began the long process of purchasing the farm from his father, and began to modernize the operation, with up-to-date science-based advice from the Department of Agriculture. He ran the farm well. The pastures were more productive and supported more livestock than before. That's how a small farm remained competitive in those days.

He was always working hard to keep the farm viable. For a few years it was possible to employ a helper, but declining economics eventually made that impossible. I would help with jobs I had been trained to do. Elsewhere, I've described how Dad taught me to drive at a tender age. He showed me fence maintenance and weed control, and I could move the sheep between paddocks. I was also allowed to work at some of the non-specialized tasks in the shearing shed – I could get about 300 pounds of wool into a bale in the press, but Dad could cram more in! I was allowed to watch as he killed sheep for our consumption, and eventually took on the responsibility for preparing poultry, fish and occasionally

rabbits for the kitchen. He never asked me to kill a sheep myself, or to milk the cow. As I progressed through school, and was showing some aptitude for studies, he made it clear that my main task in early life was to get myself educated and get off the farm. Still, I loved the farm, and enjoyed working with Dad whenever he asked me. Occasionally, I still visit the farm in my dreams.

From time to time, Dad would have business in Launceston or Longford, and would take me with him. So I came to know Col Allen's garage in Longford, and Webster and Woolgrowers' agricultural supply premises in Launceston. The trips to town started at a young age. I still remember one in particular, when I was 4, I think. We were walking along Brisbane St. between Kingsway and Charles St. when we both must have become distracted independently. He strode on while I slowed down to look at something interesting in a shop window, and next thing I knew, Dad was gone. As luck would have it, Tom Bertram who owned "Montreal", the farm next to ours, was also walking along Brisbane St. at that hour. He recognized me, saw that I was alone, and picked me up. My very worried father soon retraced his steps and was relieved to see me with Tom.

Dad was always inventive and creative, and his home-welded play equipment was a wonder to behold. Our back garden was equipped with a hand-pushed two-seater merry-go-round, two kinds of swing and a see-saw. He turned a wooden tractor-crate into a playhouse. He built a guinea-pig house and an aviary for budgerigars. One Christmas, he surprised us with two very professional billy-carts, painted red, black and yellow, and bearing our names. Later, when the playhouse had begun to turn into a display-space for our shell and mineral collections, and when I had grown too tall for the playhouse, he added a room to the side of his workshop, also self-built, to be our museum. He made a glass-fronted case with a UV tube for fluorescent minerals.

Perhaps the best creative thing he ever did for us as a family was to buy an old farm house near Cressy (a farming village south of Longford) and have it moved to Hawley Beach. It was placed on to new foundations on a bush block on Sankey Street as a beach "shack" for us. We loved our time at Hawley. In those days it took two hours to drive there. We would have driving games on the way. How many cars will we pass between here and Deloraine? What color will the next car be? We would spend two weeks there during school holidays in January, which was swimming season, and shorter periods at other times like Easter. Dad couldn't guarantee being there for all of the January stay, because that's when the wheat and barley were likely to be ready for harvesting.

The local Freemason's Lodge (Lake Lodge) was important to Dad. He was a member for many years, attending regularly on Tuesday nights. Eventually, he served a term as Master of the Lodge.

Dad had begun to smoke tobacco during the War and he was unable to give it up until the 1980s, when his health became so bad that his doctor told him he must stop smoking before it stopped him. He had never really liked smoking as a habit, so he made up his mind that his son was not going to follow his example. Most of his time on the farm he had rolled his own cigarettes. The pouches of Capstan tobacco, the small packets of cigarette papers and the boxes of Redheads matches were familiar objects to me as I grew up. Of course, I was curious about everything Dad was doing, and the smoking was no exception. His solution to the potential problem was very effective. One day, when I was five, he rolled me a rough cigarette using some newspaper and a very small amount of tobacco, lit it, and showed me how to draw smoke through it. I coughed and spluttered, and have never wanted a cigarette since.

I bore a considerable resemblance to Dad; at least that's the way his friends saw it. I was quite surprised the day I found an old photo of him as a boy with a cricket bat. At first, I couldn't think of when that photo had been taken of me! From time to time, a stranger would surprise me by just knowing who I was. That's how I met Dick Hume, of Bob and Dick the builders, in a small parts-supply shop on Wellington St. in Launceston. Years later (it must have been 1989), on a visit from America, I took Judith, her husband Mike and my American friend Mick Meader for a walk on Mt. Field, to see the wildflowers on New Year's Day. A group of older people was passing us the other way, and one of them said: "We know who you are." They turned out to be the remaining active contingent of the old Launceston Walking Club group in which Mum and Dad had met.

We think that some of the science-based agricultural advice proved extremely deleterious to Dad in the long term. He used the newly-available pesticides and herbicides to boost yields. Mum has observed that all the local farmers of my father's generation seemed to be dying in their 60s. Dad's eventual health problems may have resulted from a compounding of his war injuries, exposure to chemicals, and overwork on the smaller farm at Rosevears where he tried market gardening for a year or so. He was to die of complications arising from debilitating rheumatoid arthritis at the age of 63.

His death came in November 1983, eighteen months after I had taken up a university job in Arizona. Fortunately, the Christmas before, my parents and Helen had come to visit me at Christmas. It was a great struggle for him to make sure he would be mobile enough to profit from the trip, but he trained for months, and was able to negotiate the hilly streets of San Francisco as part of the trip. When I put the family of a Greyhound bus to California at the end of their stay in Tucson, I had no idea that it would be the last time I would see Dad.

I would phone Mum and Dad every two weeks. In my first year in Tucson, they were not always clear about which way the time difference worked, which led to an amusing situation. A faculty colleague, Spence Titley, had a daughter Jennifer who had learned belly-dancing and was performing at a Middle Eastern restaurant. The Titleys invited me to join them there one evening. As I was about to set out, at 7 p.m., the phone rang and it was Mum. I told her that she was lucky to catch me, because I was about to go out to see a belly-dancer. An uneasy silence ensued. Mum had thought it was 7 a.m. in Tucson, no fit hour to be doing such a thing (if indeed any hour were appropriate). This took place before they came to visit. I decided to take them to Jennifer's restaurant one evening when she would be performing and arranged with her to give Dad special attentions. Jennifer very thoughtfully draped two or three veils over Dad's shoulder as she went through her act.

The rest of Dad's story is the story of both of my parents, because Dad and Mum were a team, one of the better marriages I've known as far as cooperation and common purpose was concerned. So Mum should be introduced next. She should have been allowed to tell the story herself, but I couldn't convince her to write much down.

Billie Margaret Eastoe (1928-2019), née Mills, was born on May 27th, 1928. She was still of school age during World War II, a time of rationing of foodstuffs and of great anxiety over a possible Japanese invasion. The family lived at 67 Normanstone Road in a house her parents had built. It was on the edge of town in those days, so she and her sister Judy were able to roam far and wide through the neighboring bushland: over the top of the Sandhill, and west towards the Mt. Pleasant property. Mt. Pleasant had a pond or wetland, from which the girls managed to extract an eel on at least one occasion. They worked out how to skin it and took it home for dinner. The bush was full of wildflowers

each spring. Such things were closely observed by my mother, who in later years would delight in showing orchids and other wildflowers to her own children.

She and Judy attended the Methodist Ladies' College, riding there on the city trams most of the time. Occasionally, however, when she would be walking down to Wellington Street to catch the tram, she would encounter Alfie Burnett on his horse. Alfie had a farm just east of Traveller's Rest on the Bass Highway, and he would take her some of the way on his horse. When the war with Japan ended in 1945, she had finished school and was already working in Launceston. That must have been quite a day of celebration after the news arrived. She was on hand when a truckload of revelers passed by. She leapt up to join them and was photographed by an *Examiner* reporter. The photo, published in the next morning's paper, resurfaced in the *Examiner* in recent years with a query about who the people in the picture might have been. She was able to help with the identification.

Billie had been a leader in the Girl Guides during her childhood. This led her naturally into the Launceston Walking Club as a social outlet. One weekend, on a trip to Cradle Mountain, she met a man who wasn't a member of the Club. This was Jack Eastoe, and he had come along not as a Club member, but only because Bevan Carins, his sister's boyfriend, was the bus-driver for the outing, and had prevailed on him to do so. Jack went walking with the group, and as they traversed the face of Cradle Mountain, he offered to help carry Billie's pack. Two months later, Jack and Billie were engaged. They married on March 31st, 1951. For a honeymoon, they went driving around Tasmania. One story that survives from the honeymoon is of the time they jumped a fence in southern Tasmania to pick some mushrooms. At "Springfield," we never denied anyone the chance to pick mushrooms in the paddocks along Illawarra Road, and we didn't expect them to ask first. Such does not seem to have been the custom around Cygnet, however, where they were chased off by a voice yelling "Thems moy mushrooms!"

Mum's marriage led her to move from town life in Launceston to rural life in a very quiet farming district. Both she and Dad aided in the construction of a modern brick house to the south of the existing farmhouses. It had three bedrooms, a kitchen with an electric stove and a refrigerator, a dining/living room and a lounge room reserved for visitors. They even thought about where a television set might one day be placed. Helping with the building must have eased the transition from town life to the farm, which she says presented no real problems for her. One difficulty arose over the house, however. Auntie Win thought that it looked rather attractive, and proposed that she and Arthur move into it, so that Dad and Mum could have the older house. I can imagine the response, after they had been deeply involved in the construction. The house, furnished with beautiful wedding gifts that Mum was to treasure until the day she died, was her pride and joy. When she had to leave it for an older farm house at Rosevears in 1968, she was upset to the point of crying. She had to make do with that house for three years. Finally, Dad's progressing arthritis forced the family to move into Launceston, to 30 Veronica Crescent in Norwood. The Norwood house was an acceptable substitute for the house at "Springfield", and she lived happily there for 48 years.

As a farmer's wife, Mum assumed equal partnership in the farming operation. She had studied accountancy at school and had worked in business in Launceston. She was therefore well-placed to assume much of the book-keeping of the farm business. Dad was unequivocal about her partnership in the farm; the name of the business was "R.J. and B.M. Eastoe." She was not usually involved in the heavier farm work, but managed the house, the garden and much of the farmyard. Her role at shearing

time was to keep the shearing crew fed: morning and afternoon tea (carried to the shearing shed by us children, when we became old enough) and lunch around the farmhouse dining table.

A mother's influence on farm children is strong during the first few years, before they can go to school, and before they are strong enough to help with farm work. I can remember watching intently as our mother fed the chooks and gathered eggs, used her knitting machine and her electric Singer sewing machine, and wrote. In the case of cursive writing, I must have tried imitating. As a teenager, I was interested in cooking, particularly scones and biscuits. Such things leave subconscious memories. In my case, the memories would seep out later as my cursive writing style developed features convergent with Mum's writing. Much later in life, cooking would become a specialty – a real gift to a gay son, not that she was planning for such an outcome when teaching me. Later still, when I bought a Singer sewing machine myself, I was surprised to find that the machine, although more modern in style, worked in the same way as the 1950s machine, and that I already had a strong familiarity with the process.

Judith Anne Travica (1954 – 1993), née Eastoe, was born on February 10th, 1954, by which time I was 18 months old. I have vague memories of being left in Dad's care for several days as a very small child, and I still wonder whether Judith's birth was the occasion. Another memory from about the same time concerns Judith being bathed in a metal tub placed on the hearth by the living-room fireplace. At later ages, we progressed to joint bathing in large tub in the bathroom. Domestic water was scarce in those early years. Bath-time was indeed lots of fun, complete with rubber duckies, and it took a lot of effort on Mum's part to enforce gender separation when that became more appropriate. Of course, Judith and I had no idea at the time why this was necessary.

Judith's great love in life was animals – over the years she developed attachments to all manner of beasts – particularly horses – but also dogs, cats, guinea pigs, budgerigars, sheep, cows, pigs, wallabies and others that passed our way on the farm. I must admit to loving the animals myself, but not with a passion that could quite match Judith's. At the University, she kept a canary at Christ College, and even brought a surplus lab-rat home one evening after biology class for a little love before its inevitable demise. The canary had been raised to be a bird of some character, as I learned while taking care of it for several days while Judith was away. It would make a racket in the bottom of its cage, and then look in my direction to see how I was reacting. Later in her fourth year at University, when she was studying for a Diploma in Education, she kept a cat in a house she was renting with a friend, Diane Harvey. The terms of her Commonwealth Government scholarship included a two-month teaching internship in the Northern Territory. After her departure, the cat would accept no care from Diane. A friend recognized the cat wandering the streets of Hobart at least a mile from home and returned it to Diane. Diane insisted that I take it, something I was not able to do for too long in my student apartment. So I drove the cat to our parents' place in Launceston. The cat was clearly relieved to be in the care of a relative of Judith's, because it lay on a shelf behind me and purred happily for the whole two-hour drive.

Dad had been a very competent horseman in his youth. His last draught horse must have died of old age in the early 1950s; its skeleton was still lying on the Mt. Attraction pasture in the early 1960s when I began noticing such things. When Judith developed a passion for ponies, he decided to teach us to ride. Before investing in an animal and equipment, in order to make sure that that was what Judith really wanted, he borrowed Kelly, a Shetland pony, and its saddle from our neighbor Peter Strickland. The experiment worked well for Judith. I must have been 12 or 13 at the time; to me, cantering on Kelly felt like galloping a pig. Obtaining a suitable horse of our own proved difficult. We bought the first, a shiny

black gelding that we named Timmy, from a farm at Lebrina. Timmy turned out to have some character issues. He must have had a bad time with snakes at Lebrina, because he would go into a panic at the sight of a black hose. He would try walking under the low branches of a tree when I was riding him. (I discovered how to counter that move very effectively by simply breaking off a stick; I didn't have to use it on him, but he understood very clearly the possibility.) Our second try, a piebald that we named Paddy, was a real success, and he and Judith were great friends for years.

Helen Margaret Martini (1968.....). Helen's story is not part of the story of our years at Illawarra, except for the fact that she was conceived there around the end of September, 1967. It is no secret that she was a surprise, and a very crucial one, because her imminent arrival precipitated the sale of the farm. Mum and Dad made the announcement while the family of four was eating around the kitchen table one evening late in 1967. I was stunned enough to be very silent, while Judith burst into tears. The conversation (and it was a conversation, because Judith and I were old enough to be asked for our opinions) moved into how we might adjust to an extra child in a house that was built for a family of four. Clearly, in Mum and Dad's eyes, I would be living with them only for a few more years – could I manage in a detached bedroom built in the back garden? The economics of the farm proved to be the deciding factor. Dad decided that he was tired of struggling against the dwindling returns on most of our products. He and Mum settled on selling the property, and using the money to buy a smaller place at Rosevears. The new farm had a house that would accommodate three children, and another house to which Granda and Auntie Win could move. By mid-1968, the transactions were finalized, and the move was made. Before leaving the farm at Illawarra, we had a family discussion about suitable names, and we had agreed upon Helen Margaret for a girl, and Martin Charles for a boy. Helen was born on June 30th, 1968 and was brought home to the house in Rosevears.

Dennis Eastoe was Dad's second (?) cousin, and his paid helper at "Springfield" for a few years in the 1950s. He was from Junction Farm and would have been Alfred Eastoe's grandson. One of his duties was milking the dairy cow first thing in the morning. If I was up and about early enough (this was at the age of 4, at the most), I used to like watching Dennis do the milking. He did not like having me there as a spectator. After a few mornings, he decided to get me to leave by telling me that Smoke the sheepdog had had a litter of puppies, and that I should go and see. The fact that Smoke was a male dog was not a relevant consideration to me at that age. Of course, I was disappointed on arriving at Smoke's kennel, and I later complained to Dad. "Did Dennis tell you *that*?" he asked, clearly amused. Perhaps with a little prompting from Dad, I understood the hint, and let Dennis do the milking in peace from then on.



A birthday party in the dining room, probably Judith's (summer clothes). From left: Christopher, Judith, Billie, Jack.



Judith and Christopher Eastoe with the billy-carts Jack Eastoe made for Christmas, about 1959.



Judith Eastoe practicing jumping on her horse Paddy.



Granda and Auntie Win with their recently-purchased Holden sedan, on Granda's 70th birthday, May 1959. Granda is holding Tiny, the Australian terrier. The dog in the background may be Scamp.



The wool-bale brand used by my parents.



A gathering of Granda's tribe in the front garden of his house, probably for his 70th birthday in May, 1959. Almost everyone was present, except the Carins family. Back row: Kerry Dawkins, Jack Eastoe, Viv Roper, Robert von Bibra, Arthur Eastoe (Granda) holding Tiny the terrier, Winifred Eastoe (Auntie Win), Allan Atkinson senior, Hazel Rockliffe, Oliver Rainbow, Allan Rosier senior, Jan Darke, Cyril Darke.

Second row: Janice von Bibra, Billie Eastoe, Myra Atkinson (Auntie Tot).

Third row: Nancy Roper (née Eastoe), Gwen Rosier (née Eastoe), Ruth Brewer, Hartley Rockliffe, Kay von Bibra, Julie Darke, Sue Darke, Dorothy Brewer (née Eastoe), Marie Rainbow, Joan (née Eastoe).

Front row: Peter Rosier, Christopher Eastoe, Keith Darke, Jenny Rosier, Judith Eastoe, Trevor Brewer, Kevin Brewer, Alan Rosier junior.



Top left: Jack Eastoe in army uniform, World War II.

Top Right: A truck-load of Launcestonians spontaneously celebrating the end of World War II. Billie Mills is in the center (Photo from *The Examiner*).

Left: An Eastoe family photo, 1946. Back row, from left: Gwen, Dorothy, Jack, Kathleen junior, Joan, Nancy. Front row: Arthur (Granda), Kathleen senior,

Social life

Illawarra, like most farming districts in Tasmania, was undergoing a decline in population that may have begun before World War II. By the 1960s, the evidence was a set of old, unneeded wooden houses that were gradually crumbling away. Most have now completely disappeared, including Granda's house and the older wooden house just to the north, the house and barns on "Sunnyside", and the old farmhouse house on the farm just west of "Springfield". The houses were unneeded because mechanization had curtailed the need for agricultural labour. Families were smaller. By the 1960s, the population of the district may have declined to an eighth of what it once was.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the more serviceable of the old houses were still occupied by people who couldn't find a place in the towns for one reason or another. One such house was on "Valleyfield," just over our southern hawthorn-hedge boundary, and it was for a time occupied by a family. We knew the children, who attended Longford Primary School with us. One weekend, Judith and I decided to pay them a visit. We reported this later to Mum and Dad, who immediately discouraged us from ever going there again. Looking back, I suspect that the father of that family had had a problem with the law and consequently found it difficult to find a place to live in a town. "Sunnyside" was occupied by Vince and Mary Beard. In their case, Dad felt some responsibility; he must have offered the accommodation free of charge as long as the Beards managed on their own. Vince Beard managed by hunting rabbits and selling the skins, and occasionally selling the meat. His rabbits were on our menu from time to time. From Dad's comments, it appeared that Vince was an alcoholic. Mary Beard's health declined during the 1960s and she was forced to go into assisted care in a State facility in New Norfolk, leaving her husband alone and lonely for his remaining years. Another ne'er-do-well for whom Dad felt some responsibility was Ernest Preddy, who lived in a tiny cabin on the Entally bush run. Ernest trusted Dad, but few others. One day, Dad was driving with Judith and me along Illawarra Road, past the entrance to the bush run. We all saw someone lying on the lane leading to the cabin. Dad wouldn't let us out of the vehicle while he went to cover the body with a cloak. Ernest had died of a heart attack while walking home from the road, returning from an evening's outing. It seems to me, in retrospect, that these neighbours represented a last showing of anomie resulting from the transportation of convicts.

Growing up, I did not feel part of a neighbourly community in general at Illawarra. Family friends and relatives lived further afield. There were few other children in the district. I may have been taken to the Newton property, "Valleyfield", when very young, but I remember nothing; later, I met Frank Newton once while I was out walking, but I cannot recall ever meeting his wife Aggie. This is remarkable because they lived less than a mile from us, and Aggie was my great aunt, Granda's sister. The wealthier farmers of the district were remote, socially. In my teenage years, when I was old enough to accompany my parents to a social gathering, I can remember only one occasion on a neighbouring farm – an evening bonfire and barbeque at Tom Dawson's place, "Montreal".

Organized social life at "Springfield" included informal family visits. My mother's family would visit frequently from Launceston, usually for lunch. Judith and I eagerly anticipated those grandparental visits. I have a very early memory of one. I was sitting in an infant's chair, the kind with the tray that folds down, imprisoning the child. The adults were sitting around the dinner table, and my chair was on the floor nearby. I must have been feeling neglected, so I decided to throw some ice cream on to the carpet. That had the desired effect! Granda's descendants would visit in the afternoon on Christmas

Day some years and would gather at the Mill Dam in Longford on Boxing Day if they didn't come for Christmas.

A more formal level of entertaining extended to friends and relatives who would come for Sunday afternoon tea: tea, scones, biscuits and cake served with conversation in the lounge room. The most formal level of entertaining was less frequent, on weekend evenings in the lounge room. These were finger-food parties rather than formal dinners, and alcohol was served.

Should someone turn up at the house with little or no warning, tea and scones were a ready way of entertaining, usually in the kitchen. By the time I was twelve, Mum was teaching me how to help with such emergencies.

The drink cupboard in the kitchen was usually stocked with just four beverages: Boags beer, sherry, port and Scotch whisky. From the age of about thirteen, we children were allowed small tastes of alcoholic drinks, though not in front of guests. In this way, our parents hoped to teach us that we should not regard drink as a forbidden fruit to be obtained by any means. That worked, and neither Judith nor I ever raided the supply on our own.

The best gatherings of all were the shearing-shed parties. The shed provided the requisite space, but with a rather sheepy smell that nobody seemed to mind (but such parties could not be held too soon after shearing in September) and there was room outside for a bonfire. We didn't have many such gatherings, because they required considerable work, first to clean the shed and second to transport the record-player and some kitchen equipment from the house. A favorite activity was a kind of musical-chairs game in which a bag containing "interesting" pieces of clothing was passed around. Whoever had the bag when the music stopped had to withdraw an item from the bag without looking, and put it on (see the photo below, and also the section on Auntie Win in *Dramatis Personae*).

Children's birthday parties were another special social occasion. Because they were on the farm, ours were novelties for the town guests invited from Longford (or, later, Launceston – see the section about *Hay*). Judith's parties were in February, so could be celebrated with games on the lawn. Mine were in August, so had to be celebrated inside. Brightly coloured fizzy cordial (Americans: read soda), a birthday cake and imaginative biscuits or cakelets were usually on the menu. Mum's specialty was frog cakes: very small cupcakes iced in green, split and filled with a little whipped cream (the mouth) and equipped with two small silver sugar balls as eyes. At about this time, the Peter's factory began producing a line of ice-cream cakes. These were very suitable for February parties, but not so much for August; nonetheless I wanted one too! Eventually, Mum realized that she could do a better job than the factory of decorating the kind of ice-cream cake with a doll set in ice cream decorated like a frilly dress. She became so proficient that a year seldom passed without a request from a daughter or granddaughter. She must have made her last one at the age of 89.



The clothing game at a shearing shed party, 1961 or 1962. From left: ?, ?, Billie Eastoe, Christopher Eastoe, ?, Judy Mills, ?, Jill Ledingham, John Ledingham.



Left: Judith's birthday party, February 1960 or 1961. Clockwise, starting at left: Nigel Carins, ?, Christopher Eastoe, Judith Eastoe, ?, ?, Allen Atkinson, ?, ?, ?, Andrea Carins.

Right, Christopher's ice-cream birthday cake, about 1960.

Water

The Springfield farm received about 26" (660 mm) of rain annually. Rain could fall at any time of the year, but tended to be scarcest in January, February and March, the months when the grass all over eastern Tasmania would turn brown. A supply of potable water adequate to last through the drier part of the year was a high priority. The only reliable source was roof-water, initially collected from the houses only. Granda's old farmhouse had only small tanks, clearly designed for a time prior to the appearance of washing machines and flushing toilets. Our newer farmhouse, built in 1951, had two somewhat larger galvanized iron tanks for roof water, a washing machine and a flushing toilet. Auntie Win, Granda's second wife, resisted buying a washing machine for some years. Her copper (a large copper tub heated from beneath for washing clothes) had worked for years, and could continue to do the job – until she saw for herself how much less work the washing machine made for our mother in the new farmhouse. A washing machine was soon on Auntie Win's shopping list. So the domestic water needs of the farm grew. The water supply fell so low once or twice in summer that bathing had to be rationed. Dad decided to improve the situation by using more of the available roof area on the Dutch barns and the shearing shed, and storing the water in two new, large concrete tanks at ground level. From these tanks, the water could be pumped into the elevated tanks near the houses.

Our domestic rainwater tasted good, and no doubt provided far more than our requirements of trace zinc, given that much was collected from unpainted galvanized-iron roofing sheets. On the other hand, it did not come close to providing the fluoride necessary for growing strong teeth. The prevalence of tooth decay in children born in the 1950s may have been a general epidemic, but Judith and I seemed unusually susceptible. Trips to the dentist, who had a policy of encouraging children to brush their teeth by not using anaesthetic when drilling cavities, were frequent and not eagerly anticipated. Later, when I was able to use the services of the company dentist in the mining town of Rosebery, I found out what a poor job our Launceston dentist had done on my molars. Those old teeth have gradually crumbled over the years, to be replaced by a set of crowns.

Groundwater was available on the farm. We had a well just in front of the houses, but it produced undrinkable water that was hard and contained dissolved iron. Sheep and swine will swill it, cabbages and carrots become copious on it, but humans are happier not to consume it if they have any choice. The bowl of the flushing toilet supplied with such water soon turned orange, as did the foundations of the house where they were sprinkled occasionally from the garden hose. Our town-raised mother must have disliked the discoloured toilet greatly, particularly when we had visitors. Once the improved roof-water supply became available, there was enough roof-water for all of our indoor plumbing needs, including flushing the toilet.

We couldn't ever assume that there would be enough water for city-style ablutions, however. Both farmhouses had washbasins and bathtubs rather than showers, and there simply wasn't enough water for baths in the tubs more than 2 or 3 times a week. By later high school years, I learned not to discuss this with my city friends.

The farm was crossed by an ephemeral stream known to us as "the ditch". It drained farmland several miles upstream of our land, so was capable of impressive floods that would cover some of the lower paddocks by the farm gate. A dam could have provided plenty of water for non-domestic uses, but at the expense of multiple acres of pasture. Dad didn't ever build one, because he valued the grass acreage more than the extra water. Instead, for stock water, we relied on ponds that collected surface

water or the seepage from some small springs. The best springs were at the fence-line of “Springfield” and “Sunnyside”. Several of the ponds were enlarged by Dad when he increased our number of livestock. The spring-fed ponds were reliable throughout the year, and if one of them was closed off from stock use in the summer, it became a swimming hole, complete with mud for mud-fights, for Judith and me. Towards the end of our tenure on the farm, a well-driller offered to put in a new bore near the ditch, between the house and Illawarra Road. This, located on one of the lowest places on our land, produced flowing water from a sandy layer confined by the lake-bed clay that underlay most of the farm.

The other critical aspect of water issues on a farm is how to deal with waste water. Granda’s house had no flushing toilet at the time he raised his family. The old, ivy-covered outhouse over a pit was still there, complete with a supply of newspaper, when I was young. Granda, in his retirement, enjoyed spending time in it with the most recent copy of *The Examiner*. However, by those days, polite society required a flushing toilet connected to a septic tank. Granda’s was installed as a modification inside his house, and was furnished with a poster: *Our aim is to keep this place clean. Your aim will help. Ladies please remain seated during the entire operation. Gentlemen stand close by; it may be shorter than you think.* Ours was outside the back door, reached by walking across our back porch – something to consider seriously on a frosty winter night. The septic tanks had no leach fields, and simply drained into green, grassy strips in the paddocks beyond the garden fences. We children soon learned to avoid the black, smelly sludge in the drains. I fell into Granda’s drain once, and was quickly sent for an unscheduled bath by my mother. Such drains almost inevitably lead to nitrate pollution of groundwater. The other product of septic tanks is gas, which vented through pipes fitted with grills to exclude small animals. The gas vent served also as a portal for mosquitoes. During the warmer time of the year, when we began to notice mosquitoes, we would place one of our mother’s old stockings over the vent. Somehow, enough mosquitoes would still manage to get in and would breed vigorously. Towards the end of one summer, I removed the stocking, and it contained a football-sized mass of dead mosquitoes.

The cycle of life has now returned me to a place resembling the origin. James and I have become proprietors of a well that produces bad water just like the groundwater at Springfield, and of a tank that collects roof water, just enough for the time we spend at our country place in Cascabel, Arizona. As a result of later-life career developments, both of us find ourselves studying groundwater. I researched the reasons for bad groundwater chemistry. The iron-rich water arises when groundwater occurs in sedimentary rock containing buried organic matter and rust-colored iron minerals. The organic matter strips out oxygen dissolved in infiltrating rainwater, creating conditions in which certain bacteria can thrive. Together, the iron and the organics provide the necessary nutrients for bacteria that reduce the iron into a soluble form, in the process also producing dissolved bicarbonate that pairs with calcium from the rock. The result is a hard, bad-tasting brew that turns orange when the iron turns back into insoluble, rust-like oxides when the water is exposed to oxygen in the atmosphere.

Living off the Land

When I made my appearance on the farm in 1952, barely 20 years had elapsed since the dark days of the Great Depression, and the privations of World War II were a vivid memory for my parents. How did Granda feed a family with six children when he couldn't sell anything except dressed geese at Christmas? (That's a story my Aunt Joan has told elsewhere.) Despite the accelerating prosperity of the 1950s, the farm I began to roam still bore much evidence of the difficult times. I didn't understand such considerations at the time, of course; that's just the way things were.

Each farm house – Granda's and the new one that my father helped to build in 1951– was surrounded by an extensive garden. Both gardens included social areas, which were lawns fringed with flower beds in English style, and each had an orchard and a vegetable garden. Our vegetable garden was a marvel of productivity. The heavy, clay-rich soil weathered from ancient lake sediments that had filled the fault-bounded valley millions of years before proved to be an ideal medium for growing root vegetables, which thrived through the moist springs and not-too warm summers of northern Tasmania. Some irrigation was necessary to see our crops through the summer.

What root vegetables we had! The carrots, parsnips, turnips, swedes and beetroots reliably grew to a magnificent size. A single carrot or a single parsnip could have constituted a meal for the family in the best years, unlike the paltry things that eke out an existence here in southern Arizona. The big ones were every bit as good to eat as smaller ones. Most years we had an abundance left in the ground by the end of autumn. These would be arranged together in a pit in the soil, in which condition they would remain edible all through the relatively mild winter. In addition, we always grew peas, broad beans, French beans, silver beet, sweet corn, tomatoes, onions, Jerusalem artichokes, rhubarb, lettuce, cabbages, cauliflowers, cucumbers, marrows and pumpkins. What about other crops? Eggplant, okra, kale, capsicums and chiles might have grown well for us, but weren't on the menu of most Tasmanian cooks in the 1950s and 1960s. I didn't know how they tasted until much later in life. The well-provided Tasmanian cook would also have home-grown parsley, horseradish, garlic, chives and mint, but basil, rosemary and oregano were not to appear until the influence of Italian immigrants began to be felt.

My parents once remarked that we were eating baked dinners in which the only items we hadn't grown ourselves were the salt, the flour in the gravy, and often the potatoes. We could have produced the potatoes and flour ourselves. Potatoes take a lot of space, however, and potato farmers in northwestern Tasmania lemons and provided excellent spuds by the hessian sack. Milling small amounts of high-quality flour from our own wheat would just have been a chore.

The orchard was less reliable. We had good success with Gravenstein apples, sour quinces, greengages and cherry plums. The nectarine, peach and apricot trees produced most years, but never abundantly. Citrus fruit was out of the question. All of those would produce abundantly in other parts of Tasmania; my grandparents in Launceston which is a few hundred feet lower would grow crops of delicious white-fleshed peaches. Berries grew well on the farm. Picking the raspberries was a task our mother never had to mention twice. Our currant and gooseberry bushes produced plenty of fruit for jam.

The Gravenstein apple tree produced an early crop in late February. During the rest of the apple season, we would enjoy a succession of varieties as they ripened: Cox's orange pippin, Jonathans, Cleopatras, Sturmers and finally Granny Smiths. We obtained these by barter. One of Dad's war friends, Bill Hesketh, ran an orchard at Deviot in the Tamar Valley north of Launceston. A couple of times in the

autumn, Dad would load the trailer with hay for Mr. Hesketh's livestock, and the family would set off on the 40 mile drive to Deviot, returning with some cases of apples. In those days, Granny Smith apples had much waxier skin than the ones available now, and they would keep well right through the winter.

The crops that couldn't be preserved in the root-pit found its way into preserving jars. Australian preserving equipment (Australians don't speak of "canning") consisted of tall glass jars with metal caps and thick rubber bands to seal, made by the Fowlers Vacola company. My mother would preserve tomatoes, French beans, peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines, raspberries and gooseberries for winter. The jars looked very handsome on the kitchen shelves. In addition, she made jam from raspberries, gooseberries, apricots, plums and blackberries, tomato sauce (a spicy version of catsup) and green tomato pickle. I return from my visits to Tasmania with a ration of raspberry jam every so often, but I still really miss home-made red currant jelly and black currant jam. I still make the tomato sauce and pickle. The recipe for the former was my great grandmother Balstrup's.

Our land produced an abundance of good mutton. We did not consider it necessary to call the meat "lamb," because we harvested it from animals about 18 months old. Dad killed and dressed the sheep himself, allowing me to watch from the tender age of 5 or so. He would apportion the meat among our family, his father and stepmother, and my mother's parents. Watching the killing and dressing was how I learned basic anatomy – what livers, kidneys, intestines, lungs and stomachs were, and where to expect to find them. Mutton roasts with an abundance of baked vegetables from the garden, were common winter fare. In summer, the fare was often cold, sliced mutton with home-made tomato sauce, accompanied by mashed potato and a salad of shredded lettuce with sliced radish, tomato and cucumber (as available in the garden), topped with a piece of the local cheddar-style cheese or Kraft cheese. Salad dressing was made from cream from our own dairy, vinegar, mustard and a little sugar. We would use most of the rest of the sheep, including the shanks, liver and kidneys, but not other offal. Fat from the roasts was kept in the dripping bowl for use in frying.

There was a vital thing we needed to know about killing sheep on the farm – how to dispose of the offal, which was regarded as a highly dangerous material. Should a sheepdog consume sheep offal containing cysts of the hydatid parasite, it would develop hydatid worms, whose eggs would be distributed in dog faeces. The life cycle of the hydatid parasite was completed when a sheep ingested an egg on a blade of grass or in inhaled dust, and developed cysts where the egg eventually lodged. For the sheep with a life span of 8 years at most this was not a serious problem. Humans were just as suitable as hosts for the parasite, however, and after about 20 years, infected individuals would die from loss of lung, heart, liver or brain function. In the 1950s and 1960s, the parasite was a gruesome public health problem, leading the State Department of Agriculture to conduct a campaign to change the habits of farmers. Sheep offal was to be disposed of in a pit, and never to be fed to dogs. The dogs were to be tested regularly for the worms. Primary school children, especially in rural communities, were treated to visits from agricultural officers who showed nauseating slides of human livers and hearts largely consumed by cysts. Lastly, we children on the farm were taught that we should never eat after touching the dogs unless we had washed our hands. I still retain the automatic "unclean" response to dogs.

Some caution was also necessary in consuming the milk from our succession of dairy cows. The disease brucellosis would appear from time to time somewhere in Tasmania. In order to avoid the danger of transmission to humans, we boiled (scalded) the milk before using it. The scalding process caused a layer of partially-cooked cream to rise to the top of the boiler. Mum would skim this off and keep it in

the fridge for use with desserts, or if there was enough, for making butter. There was an old butter churn that Aunty Win would turn by hand, but my mother preferred to use her new-fangled Mixmaster. The bright yellow home-made butter would not keep as long as the commercial product because it contained no chemical preservatives. Much of the time, it was profitable to sell cream separated from the milk in the dairy. It would go into a small metal can, and surplus milk into a larger can, to be picked up at the farm gate for sale in Longford.

Briar roses, gorse and hawthorn had been introduced on the farm as hedgerow plants. Gorse and hawthorn produced nothing we regarded as edible, but in difficult times the hawthorn could have provided edible fruit (larger, fleshy, cooked haws are still sold as sweet treats on the streets of Nanjing). Briars were a different matter. Diets short on vitamin C must have been a problem during the depression and World War II, so our mother was in the habit of harvesting the rosehips in order to make a nutritious, but unpalatable (to me) syrup for us children. As diet rapidly improved during the 1950s, such supplementation became less and less necessary. We were lucky enough not to have blackberry plants growing on the farm, but if we wanted a feast of blackberries, we could find plenty along the South Esk River in autumn.

We would eat almost none of the foods that the land had once provided for the aborigines. English cuisine and habits ruled, and wallaby, though abundant, was considered inferior food that might get one through a time of abject poverty. One exception may have been our mushrooms. ANZAC Day (April 25th) was mushroom time. Our sheep pastures produced a variety of mushrooms, toadstools and puffballs. It isn't entirely clear to me which of these fungi are native to Tasmania. The field mushrooms look like their counterparts elsewhere in the world. Their spores could have been brought with seed from England or dispersed naturally on the wind. The mushrooms thrive best on cleared land, just as many invasive plant species would. Essential childhood training for farm life included the recognition of the good ones. There seemed to us to be two kinds of smaller edible field mushrooms, one with a white top, another brown, both having pink gills that became brown with time. These grew up to 6 inches in diameter. We would pick mushrooms with both pink and brown gills, avoiding those with many small holes made by mites. In the best years, we could fill large cartons over the 2-3 week season. We would pick around or behind the farm house, leaving the 200-yard strip along the road for people from the towns; it was generally agreed that mushrooms along the roads were fair game, and nobody ever thought it necessary to ask permission before climbing the fence and picking there. We ate our mushrooms fried in butter, a treatment giving them a strong taste that I was not especially fond of as a child – though if I happen to be in Tasmania in mushroom season now, I relish the opportunity to have fried mushrooms on toast. Another species, the horse mushroom, grew to dinner-plate diameter, and could be found under the pine trees near the shearing shed. Horse mushrooms are edible, but the flavour is very strong, and eating too many over a few days may lead to strange and interesting feelings, according to my sisters. Puffballs were said to be edible when fresh, but we would never eat them. As for the thousands of species of fungi in the forests, especially in the rain forests, we knew nothing about their food value, with one exception: a giant truffle known as blackfellow's bread, because it was said to have been on the menu for the Tasmanian aborigines. Occasionally we would find one of these dug up in nearby eucalyptus forest, but we didn't ever eat one.



Christopher and Judith Eastoe picking mushrooms after school (for Christopher), about 1959.



Fedora and Scott Mills (Billie's parents) showing off what was probably the best mushroom harvest we ever had, about 1961.

Hay

Some of our paddocks were used for crops: wheat, barley, oats, dry peas, and sometimes grass seed. Another area was set aside for a small Aberdeen Angus cattle stud. The remaining land could support 1000 ewes and their lambs that were raised mainly for meat, or, in later years, 2000 wethers raised strictly for wool. Autumn and winter were times of low fodder availability, and to see the flock through these seasons, we needed to cut and bale hay when grass was plentiful. Dad favored ryegrass hay (dried grass stored as bales in a barn) over silage (wet, fermented grass stored in a covered pit) because of greater ease of handling. Some years, he would also make oat hay, a product that was far less pleasant to handle than the rye-grass hay because it was very scratchy and exuded choking dust.

Dad would relate a minor agricultural miracle that had occurred in our farming district a short time before I appeared on the scene. Prior to the 1950s, our land would grow only stunted grass a few inches high. The key to growing taller grass turned out to be remedying a deficiency in trace molybdenum. Molybdate added to superphosphate fertilizer enabled us to grow ryegrass 18 inches high by early December, which was hay-baling time. In this case, better living indeed came through chemistry.

The hay-making process involved mowing the grass, raking it to “fluff up” the rows of mowed grass for faster drying, making the bales, leaving them on the ground to dry further, and finally gathering them up on the old red farm truck for storage in the barns. The mower, the rake and the baler were all drawn by a tractor, and they were dangerous implements that we small children were told to stay far away from while they were in use. The Allis-Chalmers baler was a particularly fearsome, noisy machine. In addition to picking up and compressing the grass, it trimmed the bales into shape with a large stainless-steel blade, and then tied them with two strands of twine before ejecting them through a chute at the back. The bales were the old-style small, rectangular ones, about 4 feet x 2 feet x 2 feet, weighing 70 to 100 pounds. Our annual production was a few thousand bales.

Ideally, the entire two-week process of haymaking would take place without any rainfall, a condition seldom realized even in our rain-shadowed area of northern Tasmania. Careful drying of the hay was crucial in order to avoid the growth of mold and the fermentation of the stacked bales. There was usually a little heating in a new stack of hay, but strong fermentation could produce sufficient heat to ignite the hay and destroy the barn. My father would check the temperature in the barn carefully for a week or two after stacking. Almost always his judgement of dryness proved good, but I vaguely remember that he had to remove some overheating hay one summer.

We had two large “Dutch” barns, which were metal roofs supported atop wooden poles, with no walls on three sides. In years of great abundance, we could store any extra hay in other, older buildings. It can’t have been easy to tell just how much would be required for our own purposes. There were years when farmers in other parts of the island ran out of fodder, particularly in the southeast where rain seemed less reliable. One year I helped Dad load a trailer with hay he thought we would not need. We drove it to the Longford railway station and transferred it into a railway wagon headed south.

The barn in the farmyard was a favourite place for my sister Judith and me to play, starting during the summer school holidays in January. Up under the rafters, once the hay had cooled off, there was room to move the bales around to some extent. We began by arranging the bales in one corner so as to create a room that we thought of as a fort. Over the years, as we grew stronger in body and bolder in imagination, we increased the scope of our engineering to include forts at the center and all four

corners, with connecting tunnels. Some of the tunnels included short vertical shafts. We didn't worry much about getting stuck in the tunnels, because we were strong enough to push the bales aside if necessary. Our building project was usually well advanced by early February, just in time for Judith's birthday, but by the time my birthday came around in August, much of the hay would have been eaten, and our forts and tunnels would have been destroyed. Therefore, it was the young ladies invited from Launceston for Judith's birthday party who were taken on a tour of our forts and tunnels. Launceston was the nearest city, about 13 miles away, where we both attended secondary school. I can remember only one such birthday tour of the hay-barn, perhaps because crawling through scratchy hay-bale tunnels was not particularly good for city-girl party dresses!

During the autumn and winter, distributing the hay to the sheep and cattle was the second job of the day, undertaken after breakfast. (Dad did the first job, milking the dairy cow, before breakfast). We used a 1950s Land Rover pulling a trailer, with Granda driving, and Dad on the trailer throwing out flakes of hay. On school days, there was no time for us children to participate, but on Saturday and Sunday we would enthusiastically join Dad on the trailer. By the time I was eight years old, Dad had decided I should learn to drive the Land Rover. He had actually tried getting me to operate our tractor – just a simple movement in reverse by the garden fence – when I was five, but I was about as strong as a child of that age should be, and that wasn't strong enough to depress the brake pedal rapidly. After replacing a panel of the garden fence, Dad decided to wait a few more years before further driving lessons. At eight, I could dependably reach and operate the pedals of the Land Rover. Driving it slowly in the middle of our flatter paddocks would be a fairly low-risk proposition. So, my driving lessons began in earnest: steering and braking, using the clutch and the gears, driving through muddy, narrow gateways, and finally backing with a trailer. I was quite proficient at backing the trailer in by the age of eleven, but have seldom practiced since I left the farm. I relished those weekend morning drives with the hay. Dad taught me some other farming skills – some of the non-specialist tasks in the shearing shed, killing and preparing poultry and rabbits, weed control, and even an introduction to building fences. Concurrently, however, it was becoming clear that I was most unlikely ever to become a farmer myself, and therefore the lessons never became intensive. Why that happened is another story.

About March, 1964, Judith and I discovered the delights of spending part of Saturday morning in a sunny corner of the hay-barn listening to the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) Hit Parade on the recently-acquired family transistor radio. I already knew in a general way that a group called the Beatles had become famous in the previous year, but being on the farm at weekends I experienced little peer-pressure concerning musical taste. Quite suddenly, my interest took wings, and all the wonderful songs from faraway places invaded my consciousness in a way that made the world beyond the farm and Tasmania a little more present. I was particularly impressed with the Beatles (of course), Cilla Black, Dusty Springfield, the Beach Boys, Roy Orbison, Herman's Hermits, the Animals, the Supremes..... the list could stretch on and on. Our weekly allowances didn't ever extend to buying more than a few records of our own at a price of ten shillings for a 45 rpm "single", but the radio did just fine for us. The sudden obsession with popular music spread back to the house, where my parents tolerated our wanting to listen at weekends. This must have been difficult for them; I have never tired of the best of those old songs, but the efforts of some of the less talented artists now seem annoying to me, just as they must have been for Mum and Dad.

By the time I was fifteen, during our last year at "Springfield", the hay-barn had become a place where I could retreat for solitary reflection. So it was that my last memories of the hay-barn involve the

feelings I was having about certain school friends, feelings that were not leading me in an orthodox social direction. Nothing more than reflection ever happened there in the barn. Later, my thoughts and feelings would pass through anxiety, denial and other negative territory, but for that moment at least, I had a safe place with happy associations for my reflections. Perhaps that helped to make a difference in the years that followed.



Feeding the sheep with hay in the back paddock of "Springfield", about 1960. Dad and his sheepdog Smoke are on the trailer, and Granda would have been driving.



Using our Allis-Chalmers baler in one of the front paddocks at "Springfield", about 1960. Dad is driving the tractor, and Granda is behind the baler.

Rabbits and gorse

Van Diemen's Land (the early European name for Tasmania) was perceived by homesick nineteenth-century British colonists as a stark and hostile landscape that could be improved upon; that is, encouraged to resemble the welcoming farmland of England. Few of the homesick ones could have imagined that, 100 and more years later, there would arise generations of Tasmanians who would treasure native Tasmanian beauty and be horrified at the unanticipated disasters that followed from the misguided attempts at improvement. The problem wasn't strictly a matter of the imposition of British agriculture, because most Tasmanians still appreciate the pockets of English-like landscape. The real problem was certain invasive plants and animals that accompanied British agriculture.

Hundreds of plant and animal species were imported for farms and gardens. Other introductions were accidental, for example the weeds that invariably accompany exotic crop seed. Yet others reflected capricious yearnings for home; nobody can really have needed blackbirds to bake in a pie in order to survive in the new land. Occasionally, and quite unpredictably, a species introduced in this way would find that it needed little or no human help to thrive. Thus, willows colonized eastern Tasmanian rivers early on. Blackberries began to thrive, initially around farmland, but by the end of the 20th century they were invading western Tasmanian rainforest, beginning at roadsides. Until the 1990s, Argentine pampas grass was used as a spectacular ornamental plant. All of the plants are thought to have been propagated as clones originating from a single individual. Then someone seems to have brought in an individual of the opposite gender, and the species began to seed and spread uncontrollably. The problem was recognized in time, and all pampas grass plants, which were large, visible, and still within reach of eradication, were removed. Even our jovial kookaburras, laughing symbols of the Australian bush, weren't Tasmanian residents until transplanted by British colonists. They prey upon venomous snakes, so have been received with greater sympathy. Intentional and unintentional introductions continue to this day, despite heroic quarantine attempts by the Australian Government, and recent immigrants include European wasps and bumblebees.

By the 1950s, our farm in northern Tasmania was inhabited by the blackbirds, along with European sparrows, starlings, goldfinches and greenfinches. It was infested with gorse and scotch thistle, and plagued with rabbits plus a few hares. Cape weed, a yellow daisy from South Africa, was making vigorous appearances. Feral cats, blackberries and broom, so abundant in other parts of Tasmania, seemed to find our local environment unwelcoming. The rabbits and gorse posed particular problems for a farming operation dependent upon pasture. Rabbits nibble grass down to a short carpet that sheep can't graze, and gorse can spread into prickly thickets covering many acres, on which little else grows. The gorse (which we called "goss" in our own farm dialect) is a leguminous plant with pods that release seeds explosively, casting them several feet from the mother plant. It is flammable and can be removed by burning the bushes and then ploughing the next generation of seedlings. My father sent me out to burn isolated clumps of gorse in paddocks where I wouldn't get into trouble, but he didn't ever try to remove the gorse hedge along the farm lane. This and the hawthorn hedge along our southern boundary had probably been planted by his grandfather in the 19th century. Both hedges thrived. The hawthorns were content to remain in their hedgerow, but the gorse had sinister colonial ambitions.

Rabbits were very much more mobile, and required coordinated, island-wide programs for eradication. In the 1950s, the mosquito-borne viral disease *Myxomatosis* was released, and it succeeded in reducing

the rabbit population to a fraction of what it had been. Infected animals died a miserable death, but the ones that didn't die generated a new and resistant population. We would still see a few "myxo" rabbits on the farm in the 1960s. By that stage, poisoning had become the favoured control method. Farmers would plough a furrow, and on the first night, spread slices of carrot in it. On the second night, the carrot slices would be laced with the poison known as 1080. The furrow would be filled to cover remaining bait early the following morning, and the dozens of carcasses around it would be gathered and burned. Nonetheless, the rabbits remained and repopulated farms from wild land where poisoning could not be carried out.

The rabbits are somewhat useful animals, and that's probably why they were brought to Australia in the first place. Rabbit meat is still regarded as poverty food – probably an attitude that arose during the Great Depression – but it is very good when cooked properly. My mother would make a delicious rabbit stew in her pressure cooker when any were available. Dad would stretch and dry rabbit skins on special wire forms, and every year or so, a dealer would visit the farm to purchase however many we had on hand. Nonetheless, rabbits were generally unloved beasts, and almost nobody had any sympathy for them. Our sheepdogs enjoyed chasing them, and my sister Judith and I would take the dogs out hunting occasionally, over the objections of Dad, who regarded such activities as a distraction for working dogs. Sometimes, Judith would bring a young rabbit home. It was strictly forbidden by the Department of Agriculture to keep any wild rabbits as pets. One of Judith's rabbits took up residence in the farmyard beneath the wood-heap. It happened to emerge during the visit of the rabbit inspector, who said to Dad "I didn't see that rabbit."

A third eradication project involved the release of calicivirus, which causes yet another unpleasant and fatal disease. An initial release in the 1990s was more effective on mainland Australia than in Tasmania. These days, there is vigorous opposition to such biological control measures from some quarters of Australian society. There might well be apprehension, because nobody can predict all of the consequences of releasing an exotic microbe, any more than people foresaw the results of introducing the rabbits 200 years ago. As in the past, the disease is effective for a while, but some rabbits remain.



The farmyard, about 1961. Judith has returned from a rabbit hunt.

Animals

The farmyard of a small mixed farm in northern Tasmania was a rich environment for children. We had all of the usual farm animals at one time or another – sheep, cows, pigs, one Judas goat, chooks (chickens, for non-Australian readers), ducks, geese, dogs, cats. In addition, a guinea-pig, a black swan, two wallabies and some budgerigars appeared as pets at various times. The farm animals and activities had largely evicted the wild marsupial and monotreme fauna. Occasionally a possum would raid the winter apple supply in the laundry/storage room that opened on to the back porch, but the house was a long way from decent possum habitat; they needed the gum trees that had long since been cut down around the farmyard. What bushland remained was used for seasonal grazing of sheep, and any wallabies that might have called such places home had long since disappeared. It was still possible to find possums, bandicoots and echidnas there.

The local snakes were one native faunal element we were very much aware of. Snakes are what New Zealanders, like my uncle Brian, fear when they come to Australia. New Zealand has no native land reptiles, save the curious, harmless, three-eyed tuatara. Tasmania soon became known far and wide for its snakes after the first English colonies were set up in the early 1800s. They were numerous, and soon revealed themselves as mortally venomous. Lady Jane Franklin, in the 1850s, thought she might reduce their numbers by paying a bounty, of 1 shilling apiece on their heads. Many shillings were disbursed, but to no lasting effect. She should have known better, because she and her husband the Governor, Sir John Franklin, had trekked the wildest parts of the island. She didn't have even a remote chance of wiping the snakes out by removing them only from the settled areas.

There was a patch of rough ground just north of the farmyard, good snake habitat apparently, because our father warned us that we might encounter large tiger snakes there, as long as six feet. Tasmanian tiger snakes and their copperhead cousins are very poisonous snakes indeed, and they move fast. A small one, a foot long, could kill a child. Every so often, population pressure in the snake habitat would induce one to try the rodent-rich farmyard or even the farmhouse gardens as home. This was not tolerated by my father, who would kill any such venturesome snakes on sight. His attitude was understandable, given the risk that an inexperienced child would face from them. Our parents must have spent some effort in educating me and my sister about snakes at a very tender age. In my teens and well beyond, caution about snakes had evolved into phobia. I remember having bad dreams in which tiger snakes would chase me up the farm lane. The caution probably served me well early on (and it continues to serve me at the cabin my husband James and I now own in a place called Cascabel in Arizona – “cascabel” refers to the poisonous rattlesnake in local Spanish, and the place is so named for good reason). Once, when my mother had sent me to pick flowers in the garden, I spied a small black snake about a foot from my hand in the nasturtium patch. At a later age, I was sent to crack apricot stones and collect the kernels to put in her apricot jam. Each time I hammered a stone on the concrete slab, I heard a slithery stirring in the mint-patch, a few feet from where I was working. I left to get Dad, giving the snake a chance to hide in the adjacent brick tank-stand. Levelling the mint therefore yielded no snake, and so I returned, disbelieved by Dad, to my task, just at the moment when the snake decided to escape from the tank-stand. Dad leapt the garden fence, stick in hand, and slew the serpent.

Our favorite farm animals were the sheepdogs. We had warm friendships with some of the other farmyard animals – particularly one of the milking cows, and pigs when we had them, but none so warm as with the dogs. Others taught respect. My grandfather's black swan was a fearsome creature to me at

the age of four. The other species of poultry would relate to us at feeding time, but not much otherwise. The reality of farm life is that many of the animals serve as food, and a farmer's son in his teens is expected to become proficient at killing and preparing chickens, geese and rabbits, though Dad never asked me to slaughter a sheep. How things changed once I went off to the university! By the time I was 29, attending a ritual sacrifice of five goats for Eid ul Azha in Islamabad, I was most uneasy with witnessing halal slaughter.

The sheepdogs were beautiful, intelligent animals, the doggiest of dogs, and were irresistible to young children who wanted to make animal friends. This was a problem for my father, because the sheepdogs were working animals. My sister and I wanted to treat them as pets, and worse yet, take them out rabbit hunting. Nothing Dad said would discourage us from befriending his sheepdogs. He even tried getting a terrier as a pet for us, hoping that we would be distracted from the sheepdogs. That experiment was a complete failure. The terrier was (to us children) an unattractive, unintelligent small beast and we didn't ever bond with it. It didn't have a chance against the larger dogs, and so it soon disappeared. Dad eventually realized he would just have to live with the status quo. Children raised with intelligent animals truly learn to converse with them – and of all the animals in the farmyard, it is the dogs that are the most articulate in return. Perhaps if the pigs had been allowed the freedom that the dogs enjoyed, they might have prevailed – but they are never allowed such privilege.

That's not to say that growing up with a sheepdog was all fun and games. Dad's first sheepdog of his own, after he assumed most of the responsibility for the farm from his father, was Smoke. I think Dad must have named him so because of the bluish-grey fur on his back, in contrast to his light-brown fur elsewhere. He had a kennel not far from the back gate of our farmhouse garden and would be tied up there at night. I thought Smoke was just beautiful, and by the time I was three or four, would want to sit with him by the kennel and pat him. I didn't at that age have good intuition about whether a dog might get tired of the attention. Smoke did, and I got bitten on the hip. So I learned an early lesson about boundaries, which animals have, just as humans do. Nonetheless, Smoke and I became good friends as I grew older and a little wiser.

I never did become really good friends with Mike, my grandfather's old red sheepdog. He was grumpy and old, and just wasn't willing to adapt to young children. The next generation of sheepdogs knew us as children in mid-childhood. Scamp, our grandfather's lean, yellow dog, was with us for many years, and loved to learn tricks like catching a tennis ball. Scamp didn't fully understand the politics of the farmyard, specifically that larger members of the poultry faction, while inferior in intelligence, still merited a degree of respect for their physical prowess. I happened to be in the right place to see Scamp chasing the white gander around the corner of the hay barn. This was a stable enough arrangement while the gander was too flustered to decide on a strategy. The real problem arose when the dog decided to stop. Scamp soon returned around the corner of the barn with the gander, a strong bird worthy of respect from humans, hot in pursuit, flapping his wings.

Dad, after having to put Smoke down in old age, obtained a black and white border collie pup. We children fell into calling the new dog "Puppy," continuing in that habit until the dog was fully grown, notwithstanding Dad's objections. "You can't call a grown dog 'Puppy'," he would tell us, and suggested the name "Laddie." We didn't have very long to get accustomed to the new name. Laddie was a promising dog, one who knew just when to go and get the milking cow to the dairy without being asked. But he was also a wanderer, and eventually disappeared, probably hit by a car on the road.

My childhood exposure to sheepdogs gave them a permanent place in my heart. Years later, I was to meet a man standing with a dog and a backpack at the Tanque Verde Swap Meet in Tucson – just standing there, behaving neither as a vendor, nor as a buyer. He was about my age, on the road, he told me, and was trying to sell his dog. It was a beautiful Australian shepherd (not a breed we had in Australia at that time, by the way, but with all the attractive qualities of a sheepdog). My head prevailed over my heart, thank goodness. I knew full well from my farm days that those dogs are not meant to live in cities. They need to run, and run, and run some more. Even if I had had a fenced back yard, that would have been too small. My heart did have one or two relevant things to say, however. How desperate and sad that man must have been, to need to sell his companion. And how could I ever have walked away with his dog?

Rowdy, the last of our sheepdogs (and named by Dad before we children could get a bid in), had prepared me well for that interaction. He seemed the most intelligent and communicative of all the sheepdogs, perhaps because he was friends with adolescents. He had an evening ritual in front of his kennel, where he would “kill” his dog cubes by throwing them up in the air before eating them. He moved with us to our new, smaller farm at Rosevears, where he would run up and down the steep farm lane that led up from the bank of the Tamar River all day if Dad went to town. He was still there when I moved away to the university. Rowdy deduced what it meant when we put the caravan by the back door of the farmhouse – we were going away for a week or two. Eventually he decided to follow on foot, something we discovered before we had progressed very far along the road. We were able to send him home. Then fortunes changed. Dad became too ill to keep the Rosevears farm and had to move into Launceston. What could he do with Rowdy? None of the family could take a dog that had been in the habit of running miles per day. Rowdy had to stay with the farm, and the new owner neglected him. He didn’t last many more months.

One of my early duties was gathering eggs from the fowl house. We kept about 8 chooks. The fowl house was a special wooden shed, about 8 feet square and tall enough for a person to stand in, in the farmyard. It had raised perches along the back wall, a chicken-wire screen occupying the entire front (east) wall, nest-boxes lined with straw on the south wall, and a concrete floor. The chooks spent the night in the fowl house and were allowed out to forage during the day. They never went far, because the best foraging was in the farmyard where the grass wasn’t usually grazed, and where the kitchen scraps were thrown. The chooks were in no danger from diurnal predators. It was easy to get them back into the fowl house at sunset. We just called them (“chook chook chook”) and sprinkled their daily ration of wheat or alfalfa pellets inside the door. Those were easy jobs for children. By the time I was three, I could remove the eggs from the nests, and carry them back to our mother in a tin can. I remember one mishap. I had put the tin can on to the post at the hinge-end of the garden gate, then opened the gate, not noticing that the gate would move the can. Mum was very forgiving about the loss of that day’s eggs.

The concrete floor was very important for the survival of the chooks. At night, rats would circulate. If they could enter the fowl house, they would climb up to the perches and gnaw the legs of the chooks. A chook that fell to the floor was doomed. So a rat-proof floor, a tight door and walls without gaps were necessary. From time to time, the rats would gnaw their way through the walls. There were always rat burrows underneath the concrete floor. The rats also infested a storage shed behind the fowl house. That’s where we kept the wheat and pellets, in 44-gallon drums. A rat that got into a drum couldn’t get back out and would put up a fierce fight when cornered. I realized we had a severe rat plague one year

when I went into the storage shed and heard a scuttling sound. I stamped my foot on the floor and twenty large rats ran up the walls, leaving one of their number in the wheat drum. The situation was rather scary, because if that many rats had decided to go on the offensive, I don't know how I would have coped. I decided to wage war. Poison wasn't an option – what if a dog ate a poisoned rat? The most obvious avenue of attack was to go after the rats underneath the fowl house. I blocked all but five entrances – one each for my sister and me, one for Scamp, and one for Rowdy, and one for a hose. The dogs understood exactly what we were about. Their kennels were close by, and I suspect that the rats had been taunting them at night. The rat-burrows filled with water, and out poured the rats. The dogs fought by biting. Judith and I whacked the rats with pieces of wood. The first time, we killed sixty or so of all sizes. We tried again a week later and took another fifty. A week later it was thirty or forty, and after that, the rats weren't much in evidence.

One other canine on the farm is worthy of mention, namely Tiny, the Australian terrier the Granda and Auntie Win kept as a house pet. Tiny was small, but fierce. He recognized Judith and me as residents of the farm, and would allow us to pat him, unless we were in a mood to see what would happen if we called "Puss, puss, puss" in his presence. For some reason, Tiny had learned to object vehemently to those words. As I remember, Granda and Auntie Win had no cat at the time, so calling an actual cat wasn't an issue. Tiny was also known to object strongly to strangers. There was the case of the caller from the Salvation Army, who left Granda's doorstep soon after arriving with a torn trouser leg and money from Granda for a new pair of pants.



Rowdy at the Rosevears farm, about 1970



Dad and Smoke moving sheep at Entally bush run, 1958

Snowy the sheep

In the parable of the Good Shepherd, a shepherd leaves 99 well-behaved sheep in order to find one that has become separated from the flock. To children growing up in the Illawarra farming district of northern Tasmania, who saw the Good Shepherd in a stained glass window every time they went to Christ Church on the hill overlooking our farm, and who interacted with sheep very often, the meaning of the parable was quite obvious. Our father even modeled the Good Shepherd, or in his case, the Good Farmer, on our very living-room hearth.

Lambing occurred at the cold time of the year, and from time to time new-borns would be weakened, orphaned, or rejected by their mothers as a result of an untimely spell of cold, rainy weather. An early morning inspection would turn up the problem cases, with any luck before the ruthless crows came marauding. Dad would attempt to force a ewe to accept her lamb if they had separated, or to take a foster lamb if she had lost her own offspring. This involved considerable time spent in a small pen, and some coercion, because a ewe that had decided that her lamb smelled wrong would refuse to let it suckle, and butt the youngster away. Every unattached lamb was valuable, so the most difficult cases would eventually appear next to our living-room fireplace in a low-cut cardboard box with an old hessian bag in the bottom. If those lambs survived, we would raise them with cow's milk from a bottle. My sister Judith and I did some of the bottle-feeding.

A child five years old is easily attracted to all kinds of young animals, especially white, woolly, cuddly, playful ones that greet the milk bottle with enthusiasm. So, in 1958, it happened that I bonded with one particular lamb and it became a member of the family, just like the lamb in the story that Nathan the Prophet told in order to accuse King David of appropriating the wife of his soldier Uriah. However, nobody took my lamb away to feast guests, and Dad didn't put her back into the flock after she grew up. This lamb lived near the farmhouse and would even accompany us on short outings while she was small. She took the name Snowy, and eventually found a home on her own in the small paddock just over the vegetable garden fence. The paddock was a luxury posting for a sheep, because all of the weeds – tasty ones like fat hen, charlock, sow-thistle – and the unusable produce from the garden were thrown over the fence. Such fodder was far more delicious than grass. Snowy as a grown sheep even developed an obsessive liking for rejected tomatoes. She became very fat. She was lucky enough to find the garden gate open just once as I remember, and she must have headed with alacrity for the vegetables. Not content with finishing one or two, she progressed along the whole row of lettuces, tasting a little of each heart.

Snowy was a Border Leicester, a breed with a long, sloping, flat muzzle, and coarse white wool. They are raised for meat, but still need to be shorn annually; their wool is suitable for carpet, for example. Dad would give me \$20 each year for her wool, money that I saved, and which made a handsome contribution to the purchase an old VW Kombi van when I went off to the university.

A sheep raised in close relationship with humans does not develop a flock mentality. Sheep are not stupid animals, but when they live in flocks, little individuality is required of them. Their habits as flock animals make them easy to manage. Snowy's lifestyle was different from the very outset. She became a loner, an animal with attitude, a beast with boundaries. She would not tolerate certain sorts of teasing and would inform me that she was displeased by butting at me. (One of the first things my

much-younger sister Helen learned to say was “She’ll butt you”). Snowy knew very well what was going to happen if she was taken to the shearing shed – only once a year, mind you – and eventually refused to be led there with a length of hay-bale twine as a leash. From then on, the only way I could get her to report for duty was to ask the sheepdog to accompany us. Then she would follow me anywhere, no strings attached. One spring, she befriended a young cat, stunted by starvation, that had presumably been abandoned along the road and then found its way to our farmyard. The cat would nestle against Snowy’s fleece while she was sitting, chewing her cud. As a final example of her idiosyncracies, Snowy harbored a lifelong grudge against Auntie Win.

While Snowy was young, she had the run of the farmyard, and later in her life we would allow her to graze there in summer, when the pickings in her paddock were insufficient. In her first year, she trotted over to see what Auntie Win was doing at the clothesline, and light-heartedly jumped into a basket of freshly-washed clothes. Auntie Win was understandably peeved by such an outrage, and must have sent her off with a good hiding. Six or seven years later, in summer, when our family was away at the beach, Snowy had her revenge. Auntie Win, who had by that time had surgery for a brain tumor and was unsteady on her feet, encountered Snowy in the farmyard in a narrow spot between the water tank and our garden fence. Snowy stood her ground, grinding her teeth, refusing to let Auntie Win pass, and Auntie Win had no choice but to retreat.

Snowy had only three lambs, one in her second year, and twins the next. At the time, I didn’t understand why she failed to produce any more. I was still too young to comprehend that you actually had to put a ram in the paddock to make lambs appear; Dad must have arranged the ram for just long enough while I was away at school. While it was good to have the extra animals to add to the farm flock, they inevitably made rogue members. Just how aberrant their behavior could be became clear to me at shearing time one year, when I was moving sheep between holding pens in the shearing shed. I paused for a snack, a banana I had in my pocket, and one of the penned sheep came over to me to ask for the peel. Although I could no longer have distinguished Snowy’s offspring from other animals in the flock by sight, the behavior -- the individuality, the fearlessness, and the liking for exotic banana peel -- was unmistakable. Some sheep, at least, have very good memories.

I was in Grade 1 of primary school when Snowy joined the family. She moved with us to the smaller farm at Rosevears in 1968. The new place was not a sheep farm, and we no longer had the services of professional shearers using electric machines. So it was that I experienced the old way of shearing, with sprung steel hand shears; that’s how my grandfather had made a living while seeing outback Queensland before he settled down on the Illawarra farm. Hand-shearing a sheep is something that you get better at with a lot of practice. It’s easy to hurt an unwilling sheep seriously. Snowy survived my first attempt at shearing with just one small cut.

In 1970, I set out for the university in Hobart, beginning a new life that afforded me much less time at home. It was in my second year of study there that I returned home for a weekend and found Snowy unable to get to her feet. I gave her some grass to eat; she took it gladly, and then I had to walk away sadly from a creature who had been my friend for most of my life. I have since regretted that I didn’t ask Dad to shoot her. She had died by the time of my next visit home. Snowy had been with us for thirteen years.



Top left: Judith and Christopher feeding a lamb that was probably Snowy, about 1958. Top right: Billie, Judith and Christopher Eastoe on the bank of the south Esk River, near Entally, late 1958. Smoke the sheepdog and Snowy the lamb accompanied us. Bottom: Left to right: Christopher Eastoe, unnamed sheep, Judith Eastoe, Snowy, Nigel Carins, Andrea Carins, about 1959.

Agates, fossils and grace

My father had not willingly become a farmer. He had had the best technical education that could be obtained in the nearby city of Launceston. In his early twenties found himself in the Australian Army, eventually bound for conflict with the Japanese along the east coast of Borneo. Thus he saw some of the outside world, even if under difficult circumstances. At the end of World War II, he returned to the farm, but with ideas about making a living another way, perhaps as an engineer with the Tasmanian railways. His father would not hear of such a thing, however, so my father settled down on the farm four miles outside Longford, a rural town of a thousand or so inhabitants.

By the mid-1960s, it was becoming clear that our piece of land, despite all the improvements my father implemented, was becoming marginal economically. My parents could see no rosy future for their children as farmers. They encouraged my sister Judith and me to get all the education we could and to look elsewhere for a living. For me, the career choice -- geology -- was made by the age of 13 or 14. Here is how that happened.

The first stirrings in that direction, the first I remember, took place very early. I must have been only 7 or 8 years old when my parents gave me a dinosaur book for Christmas. That wasn't a common gift in those days. I found the dinosaurs just as captivating as children nowadays do, and so I learned early about fossils. There were no dinosaurs to find in Tasmania; the requisite Jurassic and Cretaceous sedimentary rocks are almost completely absent (though there are Triassic rocks with a fine fauna of small reptiles that lived there under near-polar conditions). Other interesting fossils were close at hand, however. It happened that the Poatina hydro-electric power station was being constructed at the foot of the great escarpment of the Western Tiers, about 30 miles from the farm. The project included a tunnel to bring lake water under the dolerite crest of the escarpment, a penstock running at least 2000 vertical feet down the slope, and an underground power station excavated into Permian limestone and mudstone about 270 million years old. The piles of rock waste excavated from the cavern yielded fossil seashells. So it was that some internal casts of brachiopods appeared in a nature study display at Longford Primary School. It must have been in my grade 4 year, 1961. Our teacher had asked the class to bring in interesting items to show. I wasn't responsible for bringing the fossils, and I can't even recall what I contributed, but I certainly remember admiring the brachiopods that Elvin Mills (if I remember his name correctly) brought in. Those are bottom-dwelling bivalves, something like clams and scallops, but they're not molluscs, and they have a different symmetry. Their modern counterparts -- lamp shells -- still wash up on Tasmanian shores.

Our farm lane ran a quarter of a mile from Illawarra Road to the farmhouses. The mailbox was at the road gate. In those days the Longford baker would deliver our standing order, one loaf each of white and brown bread, to our mailbox. On Saturdays and during school holidays, our mother would send Judith and me to the gate to collect the bread and the mail. Young children find walking so far to take a long time, so there is ample opportunity for supplementary activities. One such activity was sampling the wonderful, fresh bread at the soft end of the loaf, sometimes to such an extent that the loaf would arrive in the kitchen looking decidedly hollow; on one occasion, little but the crust of the brown loaf was left. Our mother reacted fairly well to the loss. Another activity, one that gradually crept into my consciousness, was looking at the pebbles in the gravel with which the lane was surfaced. That particular batch of gravel contained a variety of different rock types, including some with fossils. I also began to pick out small pebbles that were red and yellow, some translucent, some banded in different

colors. Eventually we identified these as cornelian and agate, varieties of the mineral chalcedony. Finding those agates and cornelian did more than any other event of my childhood to tilt me in the direction of geology as a career.

The gravel had come from one of several local gravel pits, so it seemed like a good idea to search for more agates in those. Some gravel pits proved to be more interesting than others. I soon began to amass a collection – not just the agates, but also jasper, petrified wood, and small pieces of Permian mudstone with fossil bryozoans. So the hobby developed. The farm itself yielded some other interesting specimens. There were concretions of iron oxide from the lake sediments on the hill where the shearing shed stood; these weathered out as dark brown, somewhat shiny, round masses that were hollow inside, as Dad had discovered when he was young. A layer of low-grade bauxite capped the hill on the other side of Illawarra Road, and aboriginal stone tools occasionally emerged from one of our paddocks. Every time the paddock was ploughed, a few of the tools would surface in the area around a patch of soil of unusual colour, probably an ancient campsite. Those specimens were really intriguing, because they were rocks that had been carried from far away. There was a hard, grey rock; I now know that it was hornfels. It originated as Permian mudstone, heated by the Jurassic dolerite that occurs all over Tasmania. The aborigines had quarried it along the South Esk River near Perth, about 5 miles away. We found just one piece of a type of red jasper that they must have carried from the coast near the present-day town of Penguin, 65 miles to the northwest.

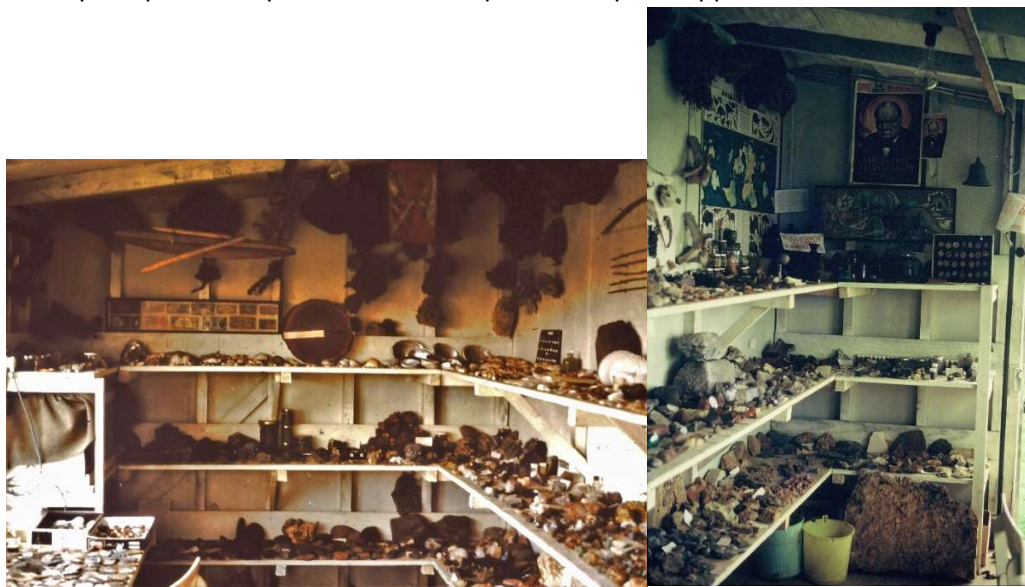
Dad eventually heard about a quarry with fossils at Western Creek, at the base of Western Bluff in the Western Tiers. The whole family set out on a day trip to see what we could find, equipped with two home-made geological hammers that Dad had welded in his workshop. The fossils of brachiopods, bryozoans and molluscs turned out to be more beautiful than any we had seen before. We came home laden with small specimens and a large fossil-decorated slab that the family has kept to this day.

In such ways, our parents actively encouraged me and my sister in developing non-farm interests as we progressed through high school. They had decided that we should both attend city secondary schools where the sights of the teaching staff were fixed firmly on university education for those students who might succeed at it. When Dad could afford the time, we would set off with the family caravan to explore distant corners of Tasmania during the school holidays. The island in those days was an ideal place to go out collecting, especially in the old mining districts of western and northeastern Tasmania. Lyn Sutherland, who at that time was the resident geologist at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, gladly helped me with mineral identification and with much encouragement. The playhouse Dad had constructed from a wooden shipment box that originally housed a tractor eventually became a “museum” to house the growing collection of geological and other specimens. Judith and I grew too tall for the box, and the collection outgrew the space it provided. Dad solved those problems by adding a room to one end of his workshop.

By the middle of high school, I had decided to study geology. Clearly, a farm boy (even with a city high-school education) could have had little practical idea of what a career in geology might involve. Fortunately, the interests I had developed during school proved adequate to sustain my transition into serious study of the subject at the University of Tasmania.

But what about Elvin Mills, the boy who brought the brachiopods to school? Couldn't he, too, have become a geologist? Perhaps he didn't have the right kind of encouragement at home; perhaps he didn't have interesting gravel to observe. I was fortunate to benefit from a conjunction of willing

parents and teachers. They were ready to foster whatever abilities and imagination they thought might have a chance on a non-agricultural career path. However, there's also another element at play. Consider this: what if my father had surfaced the farm lane with gravel from a pit with no agates? I can't overlook the occurrence of what I have come to call grace – a powerful influence beyond planning and reason, always a surprise, always undeserved in any sense, and present at several turning-points of my life. In this case, some beautiful pebbles happened to be available in a place where an unprepared farm-boy would notice them, and his life would evolve along an unforeseen path as a consequence. Grace is not the same as opportunity waiting to be recognized. Reflecting on the agates, and on certain later turning points, I am led to the conclusion that grace functions as the “priming” agent that prepares a receptive person to perceive and act upon subsequent opportunities.



My “museum”, the addition Dad built on to the workshop at “Springfield”. The lower photo is of the slab of fossiliferous Permian mudstone we collected at Western Creek.



Of church-mice and churchmen

In 1842, the Dumaresq family, who were the wealthiest landowners in our district, erected a small stone church on their land, on the north slope of Mount Attraction, about 500 m east of Illawarra Road. The site had a broad view across the Illawarra farms to the dolerite bluffs of the Western Tiers. The Dumaresqs endowed Christ Church Illawarra with the income from a 200-acre glebe farm, “Sunnyside”, that was next to our property “Springfield”, and which we leased. It was said that the Dumaresqs intended the church to be the nucleus of a village. The original church, built of rough-hewn, weathered dolerite, eventually became the nave of an extended building. In 1910, a chancel, a transept and a metal-roofed tower were added, the lower parts built of trimmed fresh dolerite. There was originally a wooden stable, essential up until the mid-20th century, but which had fallen into complete disuse and disrepair by the late 1950s. It was demolished not long afterwards. The stained-glass windows were mainly of simple design, plain tinted glass with symmetrical swirls that looked like precursor *art nouveau*. Two opulent memorial windows, catalogue items in romantic style, were placed in the west-facing wall of the nave by the Dumaresqs. One depicts the Good Samaritan, and the other the Good Shepherd. A heavy plaster font sits by the door.

A wooden altar, bearing panels painted with angels by Arthur Boyd, sits against the “east” wall of the chancel. It’s surmounted by a gold cross given as a memorial by my parents. Tom Roberts, the leading light of the Heidelberg School of Australian impressionism, is the one reason our little church is known anywhere outside the district. His second marriage, into the Boyes family of Esk Farm, took place there, and he is buried in the graveyard.

I was baptized and confirmed in that church. Baptism came in November 1952 (age 2 months for me), so I don’t remember anything about that ceremony, but I still possess a silver napkin ring and a silver mug from the occasion. I do clearly remember confirmation day. The bishop came all the way from Hobart to confirm Allen Atkinson and me on a Sunday afternoon. Our preparation was a series of confirmation classes given by our minister, Mr. McKean, on Wednesdays after school at his daughter Margaret’s town-house in St. John St., Launceston. Both Allen and I were attending the Launceston Church Grammar School by that stage, and that’s why the classes were in Launceston. I remember one thing from those lessons, when Mr. McKean was explaining the Eucharist. On the one hand, he taught that we should take Communion as often as we could; on the other, he commented that drinking a whole barrel of Communion wine would make us no better than taking a sip. It seemed amusing at the time, but profound later on.

In those days, it was the custom that children took Communion only after confirmation. Prior to that, particularly during primary school years, our parents tried two strategies for coping with restless children, namely me, my sister Judith and Allen. One strategy was to let us go out and play at the beginning of Communion. Another was to leave us at home altogether, at the time when we were old enough.

Each strategy had its advantages and its disadvantages. Left at home, we risked coming to some harm – though Granda and Auntie Win, who had ceased attending church in their old age, were close by. I can remember only one mishap. One Sunday, I decided to ride my bike as fast as possible down the gravel lane leading downhill from the shearing shed. I had done this plenty of times before, and normally, I could just coast out into the farmyard, where I had plenty of flat ground for stopping. This time, however, it was windy, and a gust of wind blew the gate at the bottom of the hill shut when I was about

half-way down. I had no way to brake in time. The result was a badly scraped knee as I skidded to a stop, hitting the ground just before the gate so as not to collide with it full on; I slid into the space beneath it. I decided that I would just have to deal with the problem myself, until Mum came home. Letting us out to play created a different problem – noisy, exuberant children. If we were far enough from the building, we weren't noticed, and a favorite activity was running through the gorse patch in shorts, seeing who was tough enough to withstand the prickles. One Sunday, however, I got the idea of yelling into an external ventilator to see how the sound would propagate, perhaps through the other ventilators. I hadn't really thought through how the ventilators were likely to be constructed. Uncle Arch, Allen's father, came out very quickly to put a stop to the experiment. Nobody was too angry with us, though; I suspect the adults really thought it all a bit funny, too.

The building had no electricity during the years our family worshipped there. Services therefore had to be held during daylight hours. Winter mornings could be rather chilly inside the church, and we had to dress warmly. A couple of smelly kerosene heaters that could be lit only shortly before the service were of little effect.

Our minister, who was rector of Carrick Parish, also had to look after churches in Carrick, Hadspen and Bishopsbourne. He was usually able to lead one service for us each fortnight, Holy Communion alternating with Morning Prayer. At times, however, no clergy were available, and my father, licensed as a lay reader, would lead a Morning Prayer service. The liturgy was plain, low-church style, from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Use of the 1662 prayer book persisted long after our family moved away, at least as late as 2011. The minister wore a clerical collar and cassock. We had traditional Church of England music: *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and at Morning Prayer, we sang the canticles *Venite, Te Deum* and *Benedictus* to Anglican Chant, always employing the same chant melodies. Our music was accompanied on a harmonium, played by Mr. Pat Gee.

The harmonium was difficult to care for in a building that was occupied only twice a month. One Sunday, Mr. Gee discovered that a set of felts, essential inner components of the instrument, had been stolen. Any rats that tried living in the church would have no proper food, so they would gnaw at the harmonium felts. To prevent such damage, Mr. Gee put out rat poison. This had the desired effect of killing the rats, but one unintended consequence. A rat died inside the harmonium, and the corpse had ripened richly by the time of the next service. As Mr. Gee pumped away at the pedals (the bellows of the instrument), the aroma wafted out over the congregation. The smell of deceased rat does not enhance the spiritual dimensions of church worship – or for that matter, any dimensions of worship.

Church rodents didn't move in very often, no doubt because the living was so austere. I remember them on one other occasion, when a mouse was running back and forward along the skirting board behind the altar. Those of us in the nave could see its antics clearly during the sermon. Preaching at the pulpit, Mr. McKean was facing the wrong way to observe the mouse, but was mystified by the back-and-forward distraction in the eyes of the congregants. All was revealed to him as we greeted him at the end of the service.

Christ Church Illawarra is where I learned my first aspects of religion. I can't remember many specifics now. My eventual love of the stories of the Bible was imparted from elsewhere: from Sunday School material taught by correspondence from the Diocesan office in Hobart, and from the excellent teaching of Revds. Harold Pickup and Ivor Clark at school. Those early church days can set the course of life in ways both positive and negative; I know well from several friends that an early-sown crop of guilt yields

an abundant harvest in later life. I acquired liturgy and tradition, continuity with my ancestors, at Christ Church Illawarra, but no guilt, and I can now acknowledge what a difference that makes.



Christ Church Illawarra, photographed in May 2018



The altar. The brass cross was given by my father in memory of his father Arthur. The paintings are by Arthur Boyd.



The Good Shepherd window.

Stars and signs

The sky over our farm was a wonder to behold on a clear, frosty night. The city of Launceston and our nearby villages threw little artificial light into the sky, and we had minimal outdoor lighting. So we saw the southern stars in all their glory, and the Milky Way as a bright trail across the heavens. We learned to identify relatively few of them, however. We took the stars for granted. Not so later in life; during nine months in Nancy, France where misty skies and city lights precluded sightings of stars from my city-center dwelling, I may have noticed a star or two. I had to wait until 1982, when I camped out during a field trip to the Colorado Plateau in Arizona, to see the northern stars in their glory.

Judith and I were sleeping soundly one night when Mum and Dad came and roused us out of our beds. I was four, I think, and I was a bit grumpy about the disturbance. We needed to come to the back door, they said. We saw something we had not seen before: white flakes falling from the sky, lit by the back-porch light. Next morning, our farm was white. The snow wasn't very deep, just a few inches, but the landscape was whitened as far as the eye could see. We built a snowman by the clothesline in the farm yard. Snow on the farm was to be a rare event. There used to be enough to cover the ground only once every ten years or so, and I didn't see the like again.

By the time I was five, I must have been well aware of where the sun should rise and set relative to our farmhouse. Therefore, I was surprised to see, from the south-facing window of my sister's bedroom, an entirely pink southern sky before sunrise one winter morning. Something strange was happening! Mum and Dad, intent on getting us fed and sending me off to school, had no time to think about such a thing. The memory stayed with me. Years later, I happened upon a reference to a Great Pink Aurora on the internet. It soon became impossible to re-locate it, because someone decided to manufacture a Great Pink Aurora necklace, and commerce overwhelmed all other forms of information on that subject! In 2018, I had reason to research giant solar flares and I came across a good reference to the aurora – also known as the Great Red Aurora. A NASA document, at <https://pwg.gsfc.nasa.gov/istp/outreach/events/58/>, states that the aurora occurred between February 10 and 12, 1958, and was a global phenomenon, seen at latitudes where auroras are relatively uncommon.

Another memorable sighting in the heavens occurred when I was twelve or so. Dad was smudging a ploughed paddock (breaking up clods by dragging the flat, wooden platform that he called a smudge with the tractor). He told me I could provide some extra weight by riding on the smudge. I looked up at just the right moment to see a brilliant, glowing object gliding slowly eastward across the sky. It was white-hot and seemed almost as large as the sun. I yelled and yelled, but I couldn't get Dad to hear me above the noise of the tractor. The next day I discovered that I wasn't the only one who saw it; the newspaper had a short article about someone in Branhholm (about 80 miles northeast of the farm) who had observed a similar object. It must have splashed down in the Tasman Sea.

My last celestial phenomenon to report doesn't really relate to the farm, but this is a good place to write something about it. I was a university student in Hobart by this stage, and I was driving my old kombi van down the Midlands Highway in Tasmania one night, winter 1971 (I think), after visiting the family in Rosevears. Cynthia MacLaine was in the passenger seat. We were just north of the village of Kempton, looking south over a large hill called Kempton Quoin. First, I noticed three lights moving together as though constrained to a tilted plane. The lights were distant, at least 6 miles away. One light seemed fixed, and the other two were oscillating in a way that could have been interpreted as movement in a

circle around the central, fixed light, on a rotating disc seen edge-on. The lights were of different colors -- like sodium and mercury light -- the central light of one color, the two oscillating lights of the other color, but I can't remember which was of which color now. The "disc" glided towards the horizon. Just before it became hidden, a fourth light appeared, smaller than the others. It seemed to move off on its own from the "disc" on an irregular path, and then turned back towards the "disc" just as all four lights disappeared from view. The sighting was in the general direction of Hobart Airport, so I phoned them the next day and asked if there had been any aircraft flying after dark. They said no. Even if they had said yes, I couldn't have explained what I saw. In the early 1970s, there were no aircraft capable of making those movements, as far as I knew.