

MARRIAGE, HOME, FAMILY THE EARLY YEARS

After returning from College and starting work Jenny and I began to get our lives back together again. Jenny's health improved and with the continued help of 'Purple Hearts' she conquered her fears and regained her confidence. We began to feel we had something to celebrate so we planned a party for Halloween and hired a function room at the Eastleigh Hotel in Southampton Road and a three-piece band. Jenny's Mum and Dad pitched in and helped us to prepare the food and decorate the room. All Jenny's friends from School, the Town Hall and the Castle at Winchester came and we enjoyed a very successful evening talking and dancing (you could then do both with comfort!). The evening was a watershed marking the end of our trials and the start of the rest of our lives together. Shortly afterwards we approached the local Vicar, booked our wedding and named the day. Everything we had dreamed of was about to come true.

The following months were spent in planning both the wedding and the start of our married lives together. Unfortunately with only a few weeks at work I had had no chance to accumulate any capital and we had to make stark choices about our future. In the first instance there was no way we could afford to buy a house. My starting salary was £630 per year, a take-home pay packet of just over £39 per month, after stoppages. A three bedroomed terraced house sold for about £2500 at the time and the maximum mortgage available was calculated on the basis of three times the salary of the main breadwinner. A wife's earnings could not then be taken into consideration. Consequently, even if we could have found a deposit, the most we could borrow was well short of what we needed. We had no alternative therefore, but to look for somewhere to rent. There was then a real shortage of property and what was available tended to be pretty grim and pricey. Fortunately luck was on our side and a chance conversation with a fellow member of Southern Theatre Productions, the Operatic Society we had both joined, led us to the landlord of No 3, Pointout Road, Bassett. He was a young entrepreneur who had recently bought the house and was in the process of bringing it up to letting standards, principally by adding a bathroom to it. Upon the recommendation of our operatic friend we were offered

the tenancy for the sum of £4 16 shillings per week including rates. This was an enormous sum, nearly half of my weekly wage, but we had two salaries coming in and we felt very lucky to have found a house rather than a flat. We took occupation on August 1st, 1965 and swung into action to scrub and clean, furnish and equip it so that we could move in on our return from honeymoon on August 28th.

Pointout Road was on the edge of a posh part of Southampton, just opposite the Sports Centre, a large, landscaped area providing facilities for almost every kind of sporting activity. It was also only about one mile from Shirley Warren School and only yards from the main road to Winchester and shops providing the basics. It could not have been more convenient especially as one of Jenny's work colleagues lived close by and gave her a lift to work each day. The house itself was a tiny two-up, two-down terraced house with a 6ft by 6ft kitchen and an adjoining bathroom. We began shopping for furniture as early as January and, thanks to Mum Lawford's friends at the Co-op, we managed to set aside a bedroom suite and a lounge suite that we particularly liked. In July, when our needs became clear, we completed the purchases and added other essential items to the list. By August, with a little help from our families and the generosity of our friends, we had managed to create a cosy and comfortable home.

Our main living room stretched across the whole width of the house and was about 14ft by 11ft. It was accessed by a narrow passage from the front door and had been recently decorated with pastel shaded wallpaper of modern design and cream coloured paintwork. The fashion of the time was for long, sleek furniture and the 3-piece suite we had bought consisted of a 6ft 6inch studio couch, which opened out to a double bed, and two armchairs. It cost 69 guineas. We also installed a sideboard,

bought as a wedding present by Mum and Dad Upson for £25. It was mahogany faced with teak drawers either side of a drop-leafed cocktail cabinet. To complete the room we had a coffee table, a present from the staff of Shirley Warren School, and a cheap, tufted carpet in a light pink colour which we bought direct from the mill for £5. To enhance the decoration Jenny made red curtains and I framed a large mural painting of a waterfall and fixed it on the chimney breast, something that was fashionable at the time. Before the fireplace we also set a half-moon 'Ready cut Wool' rug which we had made during the long winter evenings. At first we had no television but just before Christmas, once our finances had begun to settle, we decided to rent one. There was, of course, no colour televisions, it was black and white with just two channels, BBC and ITV.



1963

The front room was tiny, little more than about 10ft square decorated with bright red wallpaper with a floral motif. It became our music room/study. In it we put the items of furniture that I had made – a bookcase, which I had constructed with wood given to me by brother Alan for my 21st birthday, and a large desk which I had made whilst at the Technical School. This was a rigidly rectilinear piece of furniture with a top designed as a full imperial drawing board, not the most attractive article to house so, during the school holidays, I reshaped it and faced it with mahogany veneer to match the bookshelves. We also acquired a piano which cost us only the cost of removals and renovation. We employed the piano tuner who had tuned the piano at Chalk Hill. He was a sandwich short of a picnic but was good at his job and cheap! He dismantled the piano, tied all the hammers and dampers in bundles and took them away to be re-felted. I remember watching him drive away on his moped with the insides of our piano hanging off the back!

The kitchen was even tinier with just about enough room for a gas cooker, a cabinet and a small table and two chairs. The cooker was the only item we bought on H.P. and the cabinet was one of the most useful and versatile pieces of furniture we have ever owned. It offered good storage space, a drawer for cutlery and kitchen tools and a drop down work surface. It served as our larder as well as a cupboard for crockery and saucepans. Apart from floor coverings which we gleaned from wherever we could, the table and chairs were the only second-hand furniture we had. They were gifted to us by Jenny's parents who had bought them from a relative. We had no Hoover, fridge, washing machine or dryer. We cleaned using a carpet sweeper, broom and dustpan and brush and Jenny washed everything by hand. She either used an old wringer to ease the drying, or we took the wet washing to her mother's in Eastleigh to be spin dried. The only luxury we can claim to have had was hot running water from a gas multi-point boiler situated in the bathroom next door.

Upstairs we only furnished one of the two bedrooms. The room we chose had also been redecorated with wallpaper that matched our light oak furniture perfectly. The suite consisted of one large and one small wardrobe and a dressing table and stool. It was manufactured by Lebus and cost 59 guineas. We also bought a good quality carpet second hand from friends and Dad Lawford cut wood effect lino from beneath his carpets at home and laid it as a surround. Our bed, including everything that went on it, was a wedding present from Mum and Dad Lawford and had a matching light oak headboard. We covered it with a pink candlewick bedspread which made the room look outstanding. The bed alone cost £40 and, in the pre-duvet age, good quality blankets retailed at about £4 15 shillings each.

Outside, the garden, which was about 75 feet long and the width of the house, was completely overgrown. I set to work during the summer holidays to bring it under control and created a little vegetable patch, a small lawn and a rockery made from pieces of concrete that I had dug up. I also reclaimed the path to the back gate so that I could drive my scooter up to the back door. Altogether we were very proud of our achievement, especially as we managed it all on a shoestring.

Our wedding was perfect and the hours that Jenny spent organising the details paid off. We were married at All Saints Church, Desborough Road, Eastleigh at 12

noon on Saturday 21st August, 1965. We elected to have a small, intimate wedding and use what money we had to furnish our home rather than squander a fortune on a lavish and ostentatious affair. Our guest list therefore, included only our closest relatives and friends, a group of about 30, although many others attended the Church service. Jenny looked stunning in an empire line gown that complemented her petite figure perfectly and she had an entourage of three bridesmaids. Two were her friends from work, Cynthia James and Stephanie Goodyear who were dressed in knee-length apricot dresses. The third was Alan's four year old daughter, Karla, who wore a full length pale blue dress. The colours were designed to match those in Jenny's bouquet. I was supported by my College friend, Graeme Thompson as Best Man and had, of course, invested in a new three-piece suit. Whilst the good Lord did not exactly bathe us in sunshine he did contrive to make it dry when we needed it although, on our journey to Church, Graeme and I travelled through a violent downpour and had to wait in the car for it to stop before we could enter the building.

In preparation for the wedding we both celebrated the last rites on our single status by holding a 'hen' party and a 'stag' night. By today's standards they were tame and civilised with not the remotest possibility of after effects that would tarnish our big day. Graeme had arrived from his home in Bridgewater on Thursday and on Friday the three of us went to Beaulieu Motor Museum and toured parts of the New Forest. In the evening we held our separate gatherings. Jenny entertained her friends at home with sherry, wine and biscuits whilst my party assembled at a Chinese Restaurant in Kingsway, just opposite Edwin Jones in Southampton for a meal.

The wedding service itself ran smoothly and we spoke our vows to each other with sincerity and feeling. Cousin David played the organ and the combination of two musical families and our operatic friends led to some hearty singing of the hymns we had chosen – 'The King of Love my Shepherd Is', 'Love Divine all Love Excelling', and 'Bread of Heaven'. Even the vicar commented upon the unusual level of participation. David played Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' on Jenny's entry into Church and played us out with 'Widor'. So proud was Auntie Fay of her son's musical talent that we were instructed to take our time walking down the aisle so that people could appreciate the full 'breadth' of the music! It was certainly a rousing sound. Afterwards we all assembled around the vestry door for photographs. To save money we took up the offer of a young friend, Colin Strange, to act as photographer. This was really an economy too far and the quality of the final photographs was a little disappointing.

The reception was held at the Wessex Restaurant, part of the Co-op, now long since demolished to make way for a new shopping complex. After a sherry reception we sat down to a three course meal comprising soup, a ham salad, and a sweet followed by coffee and fancy cakes. The room was arranged formally with a top table upon which was placed a two tier wedding cake. Dad Lawford had spent a sizeable part of the morning cutting flowers from his garden and arranging them in vases along each of the tables and the room was smart and inviting. After the meal came the speeches. As is usual, Graeme as Best Man, acted as Master of Ceremonies and opened the proceedings with a few kind words before reading the greetings

Our Wedding

*12 noon, Saturday 21st August 1965
All Saints Church, Eastleigh*



Honeymoon

Shanklin, Isle of Wight



telegrams we had received from absent relatives and friends. The baton was then taken up by Sister Helen from the National Children's Home at Alverstoke who had remained a close family friend since Jenny's adoption at the age of 9 months. She proposed the toast to the bride and groom to which I nervously responded. After the ritual cutting of the cake Jenny left, went to her home, changed and collected our suitcases before returning to say cheerio to all our guests. Graeme then drove us to the railway station, followed by a contingent of our younger guests who waved us goodbye as we left on the train to Portsmouth harbour. The whole ceremony, the product of months of planning had taken just a little over 4 hours!

For our honeymoon we returned to Mrs Axworthy and the 'house of the china horses' in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. As the place where our relationship had really taken off it seemed an appropriate destination. We had previously booked a beach hut and spent the majority of the time on the beach. Unfortunately the weather continued to be unsettled and throughout our time there it was cool and wet so we spent as much time in the hut as out of it. I remember reading a Georgette Heyer novel on William the Conqueror. Towards the end of the week we counted our pennies and booked for the theatre to see Dora Bryan in a revue type production. It was, perhaps, not the most memorable of holidays but it was the place where we first genuinely slept together and it holds a very special place in our affections. As a parting gesture Mrs Axworthy made us a gift of a china horse as a memento of our stay. It graces our home to the present day. We returned home on Saturday 28th August virtually broke and hoping that our pay cheques would be paid into the bank very promptly.

We immediately took up residence at Pointout Road and began to discover the joys and challenges of independence and the value of privacy. Like most young couples we found it such a pleasure, even a relief, to have our own space to do whatever we wanted without the knowledge or judgements of others. It was just so nice to be able to pull the curtains on the world and be ourselves. Although we had been together as a couple for four years we still had to learn to live together, to establish routines and to settle a division of labour that was equitable and robust. I can so well remember sitting tired and weary before a dwindling fire with an empty coal bucket, listening to the rain tipping down outside, waiting to see who would go outside to fill it up, knowing that whoever weakened was likely to set a precedent for life! Fortunately such incidences were rare. Our personalities were young and pliant, we were very much in love and we moulded easily to each others needs. We learned to give and take and to cope with each other's tired and fractious moments without ever arguing or falling out with each other. In the early weeks the pressure on Jenny was the most intense. She worked the longest hours and had to travel the farthest to work, leaving home at 7.45am and not returning until about 6.20pm. From the beginning she took her domestic responsibilities very seriously. Her mothering instincts were strong and there was never any question about not doing the cooking or washing. So when she got home from work she had to start again. By November the strain was beginning to tell and she resigned her post with Hampshire County Council and took up employment as a Clerk with the Southampton Co-op, then

3 Pointout Road



The Music Room!



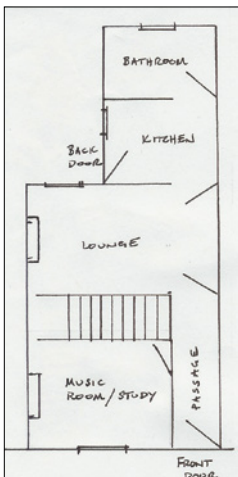
The Bedroom



First Christmas in our own home



First Christmas in our own home



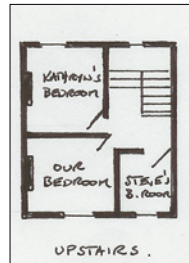
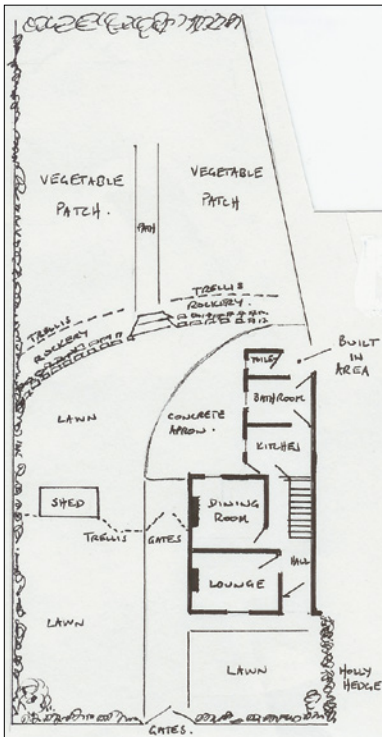
First Christmas in our own home

situated near the Civic Centre. At about the same time she decided she would like to start a family and we started being less careful about our lovemaking!

In late September, before Jenny left the Council offices, we were to experience one of the most memorable weekends of our lives in the company of Rosemary Sign, Jenny's office manager, and her husband Roger. One of the areas of administration dealt with by the Education Department was the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, then quite new. It so happened that a weekend expedition had been organised to the Brecon Beacons and there were spare places in the hostel which were offered to us free. We journeyed on a Friday night after work and it rained heavily all the way. We were welcomed at our remote destination by a violent thunder storm and a power cut. To say that the accommodation was spartan would be an understatement. Sleeping arrangements were organised in two dormitories of bunks and iron bedsteads on bare floorboards. With an undertakers next door it was like something out of a Dickens novel. The first day we decided we would do some walking and headed for Penny-Ffan, one of the highest peaks of the Beacons. Halfway up Jenny weakened and decided she could go no farther, but not wanting to be a kill-joy, she decided to sit and wait whilst we went on to the top. So she sat alone, surrounded by sheep, on a mountainside for well over an hour and hated every minute of it. We also decided to visit the annual Agricultural Show at Brecon and that too turned sour. The heavy rain and the foot traffic had turned the show site into a mud bath, and as unprepared as we were, we had to pick our way around it very carefully. On our way back to the hostel we stopped at a wayside inn. It was unbelievably primitive. We made for the Lounge Bar which had clearly not been used for years and was heavily draped with cobwebs. An elderly lady, clad in black, gave us a subdued welcome and was totally bewildered when we asked for a Babycham. She had never heard of it. She proceeded to fetch beer from a back room/cellar in a jug! It was altogether another world and one which Jenny was not happy with. She could not have been more relieved to go home. For her it was an unrepeatable experience and confirmed that she was not really the outdoor type!

After Christmas Jenny contracted a severe bout of bronchitis and discovered that she was pregnant. She took sick leave from work and consulted the Doctor. He expressed some concern that the coughing fits could cause a miscarriage and ordered complete bedrest. Jenny desperately wanted the baby and was alarmed at the possibility of losing it, it was, after all, to be her only blood relative. Just the hint of a miscarriage was enough to cause her to rethink her options. To protect its future, therefore, she resigned her post at the Co-op in order to concentrate upon prospective motherhood full time. Happily, once over the crisis of bronchitis, she blossomed and glowed with good health. Pregnancy suited her. Unfortunately our finances were not so stable. After a short while the loss of her income began to bite and we were forced to make stringent economies. Jenny threw herself into the challenge of making ends meet. She took over the finances, budgeted everything to the penny and pruned our expenses to the absolute minimum. We ate the cheapest food we could find and she made all her own maternity clothes. She was brilliant and at the end of each month we scraped in with just pennies to spare. From that time on she took over the finances completely.

In April we received some good news from my mother. One of the houses owned by her employer, Mrs Lucas, was to become vacant and we were to be offered the tenancy. The property was 210, Spring Road, Sholing, a large, 3 bedroomed 1870's built semi-detached house with a very large garden overlooking the Veracity recreation ground. The rent was to be £1 12s 6d, a saving of more than £3 per week. However we had to wait until the end of May before the house was empty and we could view it and a further month or more before it was in a sufficient condition for us to move in. The house had been occupied by an elderly woman who lived in one room. The remainder of the house had not been occupied for years and was in a grim state. Even the nails of the wartime blackout curtains were still in evidence around the window frames. Beyond this there was only an outside toilet at the back of the house, no bathroom, and no hot water. The entire ground floor was boarded to a height of four feet, the cupboard under the stairs had been used as a coal hole and the garden was an overgrown jungle with a barely visible path leading to the road. We had our work cut out! Mrs Lucas installed a bath and hand basin with a multi-point gas water heater in a room next door to the kitchen and during a blazing hot June we spent every moment of our spare time decorating, scrubbing and generally preparing the house for occupation. I remember the garden being so infested with huge stag beetles that each evening as we arrived to start work we would regularly squash them under the wheels of the scooter as we drove up the path to the concrete apron around the back door.



We started on our bedroom at the front



of the house. Stripping the walls was not a problem. The wallpaper on the outer walls came away in complete sheets, a testimony to damp penetration in a house with no central heating. With the help of two friends from the Operatic Society we redecorated with white paintwork and a pretty pink carnation patterned wallpaper. It was the first wallpapering we had ever attempted and we were overwhelmed at the transformation from dingy 30's or 40's to bright modern 60's in just a few hours. Unfortunately the downstairs was an altogether different matter. The late Victorian wallboarding was hideous and totally out of fashion and we decided it would have to go. Brother Alan put us in touch with a plasterer and quoted us £10 to undertake the work. By this time our finances were on a knife-edge and we were literally calculating to the half-penny, so when the final bill came to £18 we were both embarrassed and angry. These were the days when credit was hard to come by and bank managers were very hot on unauthorised overdrafts. Somehow, however, we got by although relationships with Alan were just a little soured by the experience. The completed job left us with a lounge, hall, passageway and dining room with old wallpaper at the top, bare plaster at the bottom and no skirting boards. We immediately set to work on the lounge but it was many months before we could afford to tackle the hall and stairway which demanded a huge amount of wallpaper. Once again the make-over was enormously satisfying. We modernised the panelled door and blocked off and painted the fireplace and eventually used an old table, a tomato box, hardboard and stone effect wallpaper create a feature in one alcove to conceal the meters and to provide a much needed horizontal surface. Jenny once more made curtains and we bought another cheap tufted carpet of a more serviceable brown fleck to match the beige and brown décor. With the two key rooms complete we finally moved in at the beginning of July, 1966. On the evening before the move, as we were putting the final touches to the packing, there was a knock on the front door. It was the Vicar who lived next door but one in Pointout Road. After 10 months he had come to welcome us to the parish! We had a job to keep the smile from our faces as we explained that we were leaving it the next day!

During the following weeks and months we worked hard on the improvement process. I remember using the redundant wallboarding panels to build a connecting passageway to the outside toilet, in effect building it in so that we would not have to brave the elements to use the loo. I also recall that I came home from school one Friday to find that Jenny had stripped the wallpaper from the kitchen and discovered nearly new plaster beneath. Now neither Jenny nor I have ever been ones for procrastination. Once a project is started we work doggedly until it is finished, so once more we threw ourselves into renovating the woodwork with white paint and emulsifying both ceiling and walls, the latter with an exceptionally attractive summer blue colour. By Monday or Tuesday it was finished. Jenny's Dad and I applied the same enthusiasm and determination to decorating Stephen's bedroom as a surprise for Jenny when she was in hospital recovering from the birth. We papered that room one Saturday in about six hours! Bit by bit over the ensuing months and years we renovated the entire house. Outside in the garden I peeled back the undergrowth to reclaim a vegetable patch, levelled and seeded an area outside the

back door to make a large lawn and created a rockery with the smashed remains of an old concrete base. Eventually we invested in wooden front gates and a shed, and I constructed six foot trellis gates and fences with offcuts of wood obtained from a woodyard for nothing as a secondary line of defence to ensure the safety of the children from the busy road.

Not all was sunshine and light, however. Old houses have their problems. With no central heating the house was cold. We only heated one room with an electric fire. The remainder of the house was unheated. It was not uncommon, therefore, to awaken in winter to beautiful patterns of condensation frozen on the inside of the bedroom window. To protect the pipes from freezing we bought a 'dalek'-like paraffin heater to keep the temperature in the kitchen and bathroom just above freezing. I remember that we collected paraffin from a self-dispensing machine outside a shop nearby for 2/9d for about $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of a gallon. There was also a problem with damp and condensation in the rooms at the back of the house – the dining room, Stephen's bedroom and the bathroom. In the dining room we opened up the fireplace, swept the chimney and had cosy coal fires to help alleviate the problem, but the bathroom was a lost cause. It had only a single brick wall and the wallpaper we so carefully applied did not last long on the outer wall. Above the bath there came a time when only the frieze kept it in place! The other major 'inconvenience' was the outside toilet. If you were taken short in the night it was almost a five minute walk through a cold house to reach it. Although the wallboarded construction helped, it was not a place to sit and muse. It had distempered brick walls, a high cistern and a heavy door with a latch, so typical of the Victorian privy.

Despite the drawbacks we spent five very happy years in this house. We invested so much of our creative energies on it that we formed a real attachment to it. What made it so very special, however, was that it was the home into which our children were born and where our true family life developed. I have so many happy memories of the infancy and toddlerhood of Stephen and Kathryn here. Wonderful times, full of new joys, new challenges, new friends, new risks and new acquisitions. It was a time of gathering responsibility and of real personal growth and discovery; a time in which life was advancing on so many fronts. Undoubtedly among the best years of my life.

Giving birth to children is one of life's events which become indelibly imprinted on the memory. For us it all began about midnight on the 11th October when Jenny's pains began. By about 1am the intervals between contractions were such that we needed to alert the Maternity Unit and take their advice. This meant a 200 yard dash to the nearest telephone box. By 1.30am the pains were sufficiently frequent to agitate me, let alone Jenny! Once more I ran to the phone box, this time to ring for a taxi. As luck would have it, as I reached the phone box a taxi appeared around a corner and I flagged it down, piled Jenny in the back and then followed behind it on my scooter to the General Hospital which was the other side of the City, about five or six miles away. Fortunately the journey was uneventful. There were then no such thing as birthing partners, not even husbands were welcomed in the delivery suite, so as soon as Jenny reached the reception desk I was dismissed and told to go home.

So I went back to bed, got up and went to school as usual and only learned of the outcome of Jenny's labours when she telephoned me at about 12.40pm from her hospital bed! Later that day I had to journey into Southampton to have my photograph taken for the upcoming production of 'Desert Song' before visiting Jenny during the prescribed visiting times. There I found her in bed without her baby by her side and learned of the need for a forceps delivery when Stephen's heart began to tire. I got my first view of him, still bloodied and unwashed, through the window of the special baby care unit where he spent the first three days of his life. Needless to say Jenny was not happy. She did not even get to hold her baby for three days whilst the other young mothers on the ward had their babies with them from the start. All came right, however, and Jenny and Stephen were transferred by ambulance to a recuperation ward at the Southampton Chest Hospital, eventually returning home on Friday 21st October after nine days in hospital.

The arrival of the first-born brings about the most fundamental change in lifestyle and values. To begin with you have to learn quickly how to cope with the demands of an infant. From the beginning Jenny was a natural and I cannot remember a moment of uncertainty or panic. She instinctively seemed to know what to do and did it with real confidence. The very helplessness of tiny infants seems to stimulate an all enveloping love and draws out the instincts to protect, care for and nurture. They quickly become the centre of your world. The new found responsibility is more a purpose in life than a burden and it brings a unique kind of satisfaction and fulfilment. The utter dependence of the infant upon its mother sharpens the senses and it is amazing how quickly she becomes attuned to every whimper day or night. The mission in life is to ensure that the baby is comfortable and has everything it could possibly need.

In an age before the advent of disposable nappies and modern feeding practices, routines were very different and much more labour intensive. Jenny used terry-towelling nappies with a disposable nappy liner designed to protect the baby from the coarse material and take the worst of the mess. Folding them, putting them on a tiny baby and fastening them with giant nappy pins was a work of art. Much more significantly, however, was the fact that they had to be washed, dried and aired daily. This was not an easy task. We had no washing machine and in any case the nappies needed to be boiled. So we invested in a Burco Boiler, a spin dryer and a Flatley Dryer. The down payment on the spin dryer was my 21st birthday present to Jenny. You cannot imagine her relief at receiving it for towelling nappies held water and were incredibly difficult to dry during the winter. After nearly three months of trying it was the answer to her prayers. We bought the Flatley dryer second-hand. It was a metal cabinet about 24 x 18 inches in dimension standing about 3ft 6 inches in height. It had a heating element at the bottom and a lid under which were wooden slats to drape clothes over. It was expensive to run but at least you could be assured of dry clothes. We also had a clothes horse to stand before the electric fire and later, a large fireguard over which we could also air things.

Although Jenny initially breastfed, after six weeks she substituted the bottle. The preparation of baby food was also quite different. In the 60's powdered milk needed

Stephen



to be mixed with boiling water and then left to cool until tepid. I remember testing the temperature of the milk by shaking some on to the back of the hand. Jenny usually made bottles up in batches and then used an electric bottle warmer to keep the milk at the right temperature. This was particularly convenient for night-time and early morning feeds and we kept it on the bedside table. Fortunately Stephen picked up his mothers' confidence and was a good baby. He soon settled to sleeping through the night until about 5.30am. During the week Jenny allowed me my sleep and always did the feeding, but to give her some respite and a well deserved lie-in I took over the task on Saturday. From such humble origins began a lifetime's habit of getting up, seeing to the children and cooking lunch (always sausage, chips and beans) on Saturdays to give Jenny some time off!

Young couples with babies seem to attract the interest and attention of people and we were no exception. It's as though they are reminded of the high point of their own lives and as they cooed over the baby there was real generosity of spirit. Being the focus of such attention was flattering and reassuring and for a while we rode high. We were fortunate in having very good neighbours. The adjoining house was occupied by the Holmes family – a large clan presided over by Mrs Holmes, the mother hen, who was beginning to collect grandchildren from the eldest of her eight offspring whilst we were there. Needless to say there was very little she did not know about the rearing of children which was a comfort to us in our more anxious moments. Her daughter, Susan, who was about 18 or 19 years old, became a good family friend and between them they often helped by babysitting. Next door, on the other side, were the Wilkinsons, a very pleasant elderly couple. Ernie used to potter in his garden and we often spent time chatting over the garden fence. We also, quite naturally, began to widen our circle of friends to include other new, young parents. As babies become the focus of your life so they also become the subject of much chatter as notes are compared and peace of mind is sought by checking the normality of things.

Whilst Spring Road was not as convenient for me as our home in Bassett and left me with an awkward journey to School, in most other respects it was a pleasant area to live. There were three or four shops only yards from the house which could provide the basic essentials and there were quite a wide range of shops within half a mile which could satisfy almost every requirement you might need. I remember two in particular which would be classed as rare jewels in today's world. The first was 'Spake's' the family butcher whose shop was just two doors down. They not only provided a personal service but made the most wonderful sausages and pies. The second was a most amazing chemist, Simpson by name, an elderly man who was an apothecary of the old school. He ground and mixed his own medicines for the more common ailments and they were unbelievably effective. His cough linctus far excelled any proprietary medicine. Rather like visiting the doctor he would respond to the symptoms you described and mix a solution accordingly. His shop was fitted out in dark mahogany with shelves filled with bottles and flasks of chemicals – hardly a packet of anything in sight. It was a step into Edwardian England.

Strangely, as Stephen arrived on the scene we discovered the means to loosen the

financial straightjacket and free ourselves from penury. In the first instance I was promoted to a Scale 1 Graded Post in September 1966 for which I received an extra £120 per year and this, with the savings on rent, helped considerably. More importantly, however, we discovered the 'Budget Account' and, a little later, 'Brian Mills Catalogue' shopping and both were to open up our world and relieve our anxiety. The Budget Account allowed us to overcome the tri-monthly problem of trying to meet the Gas and Electricity bills at the same time. This always reduced us to praying that nothing else would crop up. The Account worked on the principle of estimating the annual cost of the utilities and other bills and then of paying in twelve equal monthly instalments, thus spreading the cost. So for example, by adding vehicle maintenance to the list we could pay for any major repair without having to worry. The whole thing made our life so much easier. So too did the Brian Mills Catalogue and by budgeting a constant amount each month to this kind of retail outlet we found we could afford things we would otherwise have found very difficult to buy. Over the years we must have spent thousands of pounds in this way and although it is necessary to be sensible, it is good to be able to have things when you need them rather than when you can afford them. I remember our first purchases were made by promising to give up smoking and by committing the savings to the weekly repayments for a bed for Stephen and a Hoover Constellation, the latest vacuum cleaner, for ourselves. The non-smoking lasted fifteen months until we both fell victim to temptation at a dinner dance at the Cumberland Hotel in Southampton, but the purchases continued on and we discovered another of the advantages. There was 12.5% commission on every item bought. Over time this accrued to worthwhile sums of money which Jenny used to subsidise Christmases.

In the early years of teaching the salary was so poor that there was no question of a holiday. I needed to find a job for four weeks during the long summer holiday to help prop up the finances. In 1966 and 1967 I found work with a painter and decorator, a small businessman called Ron Withers who was a member of the Operatic Society. Initially, in an effort to make it beneficial both ways, we agreed that my employment was to be on a purely casual basis and that neither of us would declare my earnings to the tax authorities. Consequently when I received a tax form later in the year I did not disclose my additional earnings. The following February I received a letter from the Inland Revenue inviting me for interview and there I learned that the dear Mr Withers had reneged on our agreement and I had to feign a poor memory in order to extricate myself. The result was that during the following summer, 1967, half of my wages went to pay my tax debt. We were not happy people! Nevertheless I enjoyed the work, worked both outside and in, and learned one or two of the tricks of the trade. The following summer I ventured into an altogether different kind of work and landed up in an office above a shop in Southampton High Street analysing road traffic accidents for the Ministry of Transport. This involved reading through Police accident reports and witness statements and classifying the salient features on punch cards. This was not particularly stimulating work but it paid well and certainly yielded a few laughs. Some of the accidents were impossible to believe and the witness statements showed up

the shortcomings of the vernacular – some were just hilarious. Happily in 1969 I was promoted again to a Scale A Head of Geography Department and the additional earnings, about another £130, relieved me of the need to work in the summer holidays again.

One of the first real issues to confront us upon the arrival of Stephen was transport. Jenny's Mum and Dad provided us with a wonderful pram with a detachable top which could be used as a cot/carry cot and we also acquired a smaller, more manageable carry cot with a collapsible trolley, but the problem was family transport. There was no way of taking a baby on a scooter! We found the answer in a little Isetta Bubble Car which could then be driven on a motorcycle license. It was a light blue, right-hand drive, three wheeled vehicle with a 250cc 4 stroke engine and cost £175 from a dealer in Shirley. Stephen's carry cot fitted beautifully on the back shelf and there was space for all the other paraphernalia either on the bench seat or on the floor. After the scooter it was luxury. I remember driving through a cloudburst in Swaythling one day relishing the fact that we were not getting wet. For some months during 1966-67 it served its purpose but it was not a vehicle that I would recommend. It was not a reliable starter, it was noisy, not overly stable and positively dangerous in a strong head wind. I remember driving to Eastleigh one day realising that the lightness in the steering was caused by the little car being lifted by the wind! Fortunately the controls were like any other car and I leant to drive in it. In the summer of 1967 I had six lessons from the British School of Motoring to refine my skills and polish my knowledge of the Highway Code, I entered my test and passed. Shortly after a colleague at school offered me his little



A35 van for £60. It was two-tone grey and maroon in colour with a dented front grill and it offered us all the space we could want. After the Isetta it seemed as quiet as a Rolls Royce and was firm and positive to handle. Unfortunately it guzzled oil but the garage recommended by my friend, who had been looking after the car for years, fitted a reconditioned engine for £30, which, thanks to the Budget Account, solved the problem. This car went on to serve us well for about three years until the floor rusted out of it and I part exchanged it for a grey Ford Anglia late in 1970 at a cost of £120. The one sadness in all of this was the sale of my trusty scooter to two young boys for £25 in 1967. This little machine had travelled 83,000 miles and, not surprising really, was beginning to object to starting. It was the 'vehicle' to so much happiness over the years that it was sad to see it being wheeled away. I've often wished I had kept it.

Jenny's aspiration to drive was short-lived and came to an abrupt end. She decided to have a try in 1967 and was doing very well until an incident occurred at a busy junction at the foot of Lances Hill in Bitterne. Jenny was at the head of a queue waiting to turn right into the main road. A notorious lunatic of a policeman on traffic duty, seeing the 'L' plate on the car, brought the traffic to a standstill and with a flamboyant gesture signalled her out. In her embarrassed haste she released the clutch pedal too quickly and the car shot forward and stalled, but only for a second. The car behind hit us up the back and shunted our engine back into life enabling Jenny to drive on around the next corner. We stopped and found no damage to either car (crumple zones had then not been invented) but the shock produced a terminal blow to Jenny's confidence and she never ventured behind the wheel again in Southampton. It was a pity for the lack of a vehicle restricted her life. Being stuck at home with a baby starved her of adult company and she felt somewhat isolated and lonely. She looked forward to my homecomings so that she could talk and share my experiences. Unfortunately I had been talking and performing all day and was pleased for an opportunity to rest the larynx and to relax and refuel a bit. It was a dilemma that tracked through our early years when the children were very young.

In May 1968 I faced a dilemma of a far more serious kind and took a shameful decision which I have since regretted. The result was that when Jenny really needed me I was not there for her when I should have been. The problem materialised on the morning of Sunday May 5th. It was dress rehearsal day for 'Glamorous Night' being staged that week at the Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth. I was in the chorus but two weeks previously I was asked to take over the part of one of the minor principals who was being admitted into hospital for a hernia operation. As I was preparing to leave, Jenny, who was about two months pregnant, started to miscarry the baby and was in some pain and distress. With the clock ticking towards departure time I had to decide quickly what to do. Having accepted responsibility for a part I was weighed by the fact that so many people in the Theatre Company were relying upon me. I felt that I couldn't let them down. On the other hand I knew I should stay, though I could not see what I could do to help. I elected to go to Bournemouth and left Jenny to cope with it all on her own. With no telephones it was not possible to let anyone know or to summon help. It was one of those times when we had cause to thank Mrs

Holmes and Susan who called the doctor and offered what support they could. It turned out to be one of the worst weeks of our lives. On Thursday Jenny was admitted to hospital for a D and C and her mother looked after Stephen whilst I saw my commitments through. On Sunday Stephen and I went to pick her up from hospital. I shall never forget the moment when Stephen spotted his Mummy in a corridor. He ran and threw himself into her arms in the pure delight of seeing her. It was one of those touching moments that you mentally re-enact in slow motion. His expression of such unconditional love contrasted sharply with my own shameful callousness. There have not been many wrong decisions in my life, but this was one of them.

Happily seven months later Jenny announced that she was pregnant again and on August 29th, 1969, my little girl Kathryn struggled into the world after a 30 hour ordeal. Things started to happen about midnight on the 27th August when Jenny's waters broke. Throughout the night contractions were a little tentative and it was not until about 8am that I took her to the Maternity Unit. Once again I was dismissed and left Jenny in the capable hands of the midwives. There followed what must have been one of the longest days in Jenny's life. Upon arrival at hospital they discovered that her blood pressure was abnormally high and prescribed pethidine to control it. It halted her labour. Throughout the day her pains started and stopped and it was not until about 11 pm that her labour started in earnest. Kathryn was born about 5am. In the immediate post-natal period Jenny's blood pressure remained dangerously high and she was put in a darkened room for about 24 hours until it subsided and stabilised, and that's where I was introduced to my daughter when I visited later that morning. Unfortunately, isolated in her own room, the hospital staff seemed to forget that she was there and eventually she had to go in search of something to eat. In their neglect she had no alternative but to breastfeed the baby. It was the one and only time, for Kathryn fastened on to her and bit her unmercifully. Whilst Jenny suffered I reached a peak of elation. From the moment I telephoned the hospital for news at 6am and learned that I had a baby girl I was overjoyed. I ran back to Mum and Dad Lawford's house in Desborough Road where I was staying with Stephen and played Happy Birthday on the piano. We had a sister for little Stephen. It was perfect!

The second baby always seems easier than the first and it doesn't take long to fall back into the established rhythms and routines. Kathryn's infancy was, however, a little more problematic than Stephen's. Unfortunately she was born with a Hiatus Hernia which seemed to restrict her food intake to the extent that she would regurgitate milk in some quantity. The Doctor said there was nothing we could do and that she would eventually grow out of it. So we became accustomed to her condition and came to know exactly when to cup the bib under her mouth to catch the outrush! We even propped the top end of her cot up on books in the hope that gravity would keep her food down! Beyond this there were one or two other crises in health which gave us cause for anxiety and which I remember with some trepidation. Infant maladies seem to strike with some speed and disappear almost as quickly. Whilst Stephen succumbed to them and just lay inert, Kathryn cried. I remember so vividly the anxiety of trying everything to console her throughout an evening and

Kathryn



half the night knowing that something must be wrong, but not knowing what. The biggest crisis of her early years came when she was just five months old. She suffered such a serious bout of gastro enteritis that she was almost admitted to hospital. Being a sickly child we did not recognise the onset of the illness and Jenny went through a terrifying day of frayed nerves attempting to pacify a very grizzly baby. Eventually the Doctor arrived and we received the help we needed. It was one of those situations where your own powerlessness is a source of real frustration and worry. Not a good place to be!

Fortunately for us there were few such moments to mar the joy and satisfaction of watching two little tots grow up. Like most parents we saw to it that they had all the toys they could need and endeavoured to provide things that had an educational bias. Whilst the medium of toy manufacture in my youth was die-cast metal or tin, by the 60's most were constructed of highly coloured and pliable plastic. The electronic age had not yet arrived so most remained fairly unsophisticated and mechanical in operation. Needless to say, apart from the early toys designed to introduce shape colour and size and to stimulate manual dexterity, Stephen's toys erred towards cars, tools and building bricks whilst Kathryn's were orientated towards dolls and all the associated peripherals. Try as you might to avoid it, convention seemed to dictate such segregation of the sexes. So whilst I remember little Stephen carrying his purpose-made carrying case for his collection of Matchbox cars, I remember Kathryn pushing a doll in its own little pram. Beyond this I particularly recall a garage I made Stephen for Christmas, friction cars and a tricycle and little pedal car.

From a very early age we introduced both children to books and I always put them to bed and read them bedtime stories. Enid Blyton's Noddy Stories were a firm favourite with both of them and they both had their favourite stories that they demanded over and over again. Kathryn came to know some of them so well she could almost recite them word for word. We also started to collect reference books which we thought might be useful to them later. In 1968 we began subscribing to 'Mind Alive', a new part-works publication which, in 120 weeks, built into a full scale encyclopaedia and in 1970 a door-to-door salesman tempted us to purchase the New Caxton Encyclopaedia which came complete with a package of books being offered as a sweetener. Each volume was then valued at £15 and we often joked that one book was worth more than our car standing on the drive!

By 1970, after six annual increments and two promotions my annual salary had reached £1,414. We were beginning to feel that it was imperative to get a foot on the property ladder and buy a house of our own. At that time a new estate was being built at Chandlers Ford and we dropped by the sales office to explore the possibilities. We left thoroughly depressed. My salary was still not enough to support a mortgage for the amount of money we needed to borrow. One of the problems was our lack of savings. 100% mortgages were rare and we needed capital for a deposit. The only way of accruing money was to earn extra and I answered an advert in the newspaper for a part-time job with 'Cluewin', an organisation which raised money for handicapped children through a weekly draw. My task was to get new subscribers and so, for about an hour and a half every evening, I went from door to door trying

to move people to support 'spastic' children with the promise of big cash prizes if they subscribed just 1 shilling a week. It was a bit of a con and morally distasteful but for each new customer I received 3/- and, on average, I drew in about seven or eight each night. It was not a job I relished. Spelling out the same patter on every doorstep was tedious in the extreme and for every success there was probably 8 or 10 rejections. Much depended upon the area. Working class areas, like Council Estates, were highly lucrative; by and large more middle class areas were very hard work. Nonetheless it had the desired effect and our savings shot up. Jenny also sold anything and everything of value that we no longer needed to raise extra cash. Along with the pram and other baby things we also advertised and sold the Trix Twin Model Railway which Alan and I had spent much of our childhood building up for something like £20. Alan was grief stricken! With all this money in the bank we had one further try at buying a house nearby. It was a 30's built semi-detached property just down the road from where we lived, and although it needed renovation, it was affordable. We duly got the process in motion and paid for a survey. The surveyors report put paid to our hopes in seconds! Not only did he discover a subsidence crack right down the back wall but he also stumbled across an unexploded bomb in the garden. In order to get a mortgage we would have had to pay for the back wall to be completely rebuilt. That was the end of our property chase in Southampton. Generally prices were out of our league. We would have to move away to buy. We bought a property price guide and found three areas where we could afford to live – Devon, Lincolnshire and East Kent.

Whilst the period from 1966 to 1971 saw huge changes in our lives there were also significant changes in the world at large. The pace of change was accelerating. Popular culture was dominated by the Beatles, the peace movement and flower power and England's success over Germany in the World Cup elevated the popularity of football to new heights. The most important gains were, however, in the realms of science and technology. During this period the first heart transplant took place, both the Harrier and Concorde took to the skies, and man's experience in space went from the first space walk to walking and driving on the surface of the moon. Unfortunately there were also horrors. The disaster at Aberfan touched the world as did the Torrey Canyon disaster and the assassination of Martin Luther King. Under all this change the economy began to creak, there was a large devaluation of the £ Sterling and the beginnings of rampant price inflation which was to become the scourge of the 70's.