

# **AT HOME IN THE 70's**

## **A CASE STUDY**

1970 was a pivotal year for the young Upson family. The 7-year itch was beginning to bite. Life with two young children was settling into a routine and challenge was being edged aside by mundanity. Both Keith and Jennifer began to eye-up the future and consider where they were going. High on their want list was a house of their own. At 28 years old, with a responsible job, good prospects and an annual salary of £1414 they began to explore the possibilities and dropped into the Sales Office of a new estate being constructed in Chandler's Ford. They left heartedly depressed! They still did not earn enough to support a mortgage for the £5,575 they needed and did not have the 5% deposit necessary to secure the loan. They therefore started a campaign to raise the funds. Keith took on a part-time job with an organisation called 'Clue-win' which raised money for handicapped children through a weekly draw. His task was to get new subscribers, and, for about an hour and a half every evening, he went from door to door trying to move people to support 'spastic' children with the promise of cash prizes if they contributed one shilling a week. For each new customer he signed up he received 3 shillings, and, on average, he drew in about 7 or 8 each night. Spelling out the same patten on every door step was distasteful and tedious work. For every success there were 8 or 10 rejections. Working class areas like Council Estates were highly lucrative; by and large middle class areas were very hard work. Nonetheless, Keith kept at it and their savings shot up. They also sold anything and everything of value that they no longer needed including treasured heirlooms. By the autumn, with money in the bank they had one further try at buying a house nearby. This was a 30's built semi-detached property just down the road from where they lived and although it needed renovation, it was affordable. They duly got the process in motion and paid for a survey. The surveyors report put paid to their 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 they would have to pay for the back wall to be completely rebuilt. The experience put an end to their property search in Southampton. Generally, prices were too high. They decided they would have to move away to buy. They bought a national property price guide and found three areas where they could afford to live – Devon, Lincolnshire and East Kent.

The decision was sealed in the early months of 1971 after ill-health overtook Keith. In the previous August he suffered an accident when he collapsed after a 27mile hike from Southampton to Portsmouth dressed in Arab costume organised to publicise an up-coming production of The Desert Song at the King's Theatre. He hit his head and was severely concussed. The shock knocked him off balance, things began to get on top of him, and by Christmas it became clear that he was unwell. A couple of Doctor's visits confirmed that he was suffering from anxiety neurosis and he was prescribed Valium to calm his senses. He was teetering on the edge of a breakdown and was off work for over a month. The experience knocked his confidence and self-esteem and brought the need for a change into sharp focus.

The time seemed right. He felt he had achieved all that he was likely to at Shirley Warren School and he was ready for a new challenge, Stephen was then just coming up to school age, and they wanted to fulfil their ambition of a house of their own. In April, therefore, Keith fired off about 10 applications for promoted posts in the parts of southern England where they knew they could afford to buy a house. With aspirations to return to the west country 9 out of the 10 applications were directed to Somerset and Devon. The other one was to Whitstable in East Kent and it was this one that responded the quickest. Early in May therefore, Keith attended for interview at the Sir William Nottidge School in Whitstable and was offered the post of Head of Geography and History Scale B with effect from September. The dye was cast. They were given 16 weeks to relocate their family and all their belongings to an area they knew absolutely nothing about.

Selecting a property was not difficult. There was little on the market and it actually came down to a choice of two, one in Whitstable and the other in the adjoining town of Herne Bay. In their first sweep of the area they both agreed that they preferred the planned orderliness of Herne Bay to the historic muddle of Whitstable and also thought it unwise to live within the catchment area of the school. Having picked up the details of 47, Blean View Road from almost every Estate Agent in the town on a brief visit to the town at Whitsun, they went to meet the owners and view the property. They were sufficiently impressed to agree to meet the asking price of £5250 on the spot. With just enough saved to meet the 5% deposit, they immediately set procedures in motion, took one or two photographs and returned home. In a little over 24 hours they had settled their future and did not return to Herne Bay until the day they moved on August 27<sup>th</sup>. In the intervening weeks, as Keith completed his contact at



Shirley Warren School it all seemed like a dream and they had to keep glancing at the photographs to remind themselves that it was all real. There was some correspondence to confirm measurements of windows etc. and also legal papers to sign, but otherwise there was no contact. Not unnaturally therefore, the anxiety built as the moving date approached. They were to be foreigners in a foreign land and there were so many unanswered questions.

The house was a vast improvement on what they were used to. To begin with it was only 4 years old and had all the attributes of contemporary style – large windows, a good kitchen and bathroom, ‘Marley’ –tiled floors and an abundance of electrical points. With only one careful owner it had not been abused by a succession of DIY enthusiasts, and, with the exception of the kitchen, where the colour scheme of orange paintwork, lime green ceiling and navy blue floor tiles which left a lot to be desired, the property retained the mostly magnolia colour schemes left by the builder. There was not a piece of wallpaper in sight! It was a pleasant change to occupy a house that needed such minimal redecoration and maintenance. The house seemed remarkably compact in relation to the Victorian property they had just left and it felt odd to be never more than a few feet

away from the kitchen. With a lounge of about 15 feet X 13 feet, a small dining room of about 10 X 10 ft, a porch, hall, bathroom, 2 good sized bedrooms and a box-room it was an excellent family home and had the further advantage of being centrally heated by a solid fuel stove with a back-boiler in the lounge. The living accommodation was also versatile. The lounge and dining room were separated by glazed double doors which when removed opened up a 25 ft living area. Outside there was, by today's standards, a larger than average garden, a garage with workshop space at the rear and a car port providing shelter down one side of the house. They were delighted with it.

The house was one of a 'knot' of about a dozen semi-detached houses set in a sea of bungalows on the extreme south-west edge of the town overlooking open fields. Whilst most of the bungalows were occupied by elderly folk, more than half of the houses were occupied by young families with children much the same age as Stephen and Kathryn, Keith and Jennifer's two youngsters. Not surprisingly, since everyone moved in when the houses were built there was a real sense of community and neighbourliness. With little Kathryn celebrating her 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday just two days after arrival the first thing they did was to invite the local children to her birthday party and in that way they introduced themselves to the neighbourhood and made known their eagerness to integrate and make friends. They were readily accepted into the fold and found all the help they needed in settling into a new area.

The purchase of 47 Blean View Road made little difference to their finances. The salary increase from Keith's promoted post was swallowed up completely by the cost of mortgage repayments. His annual salary rose to £1963 which produced a monthly take-home pay packet of £139, £40.59 of which was repaid to the Halifax Building Society. Their standard of living therefore remained unchanged and whilst they managed to live comfortably, holidays and other luxuries remained out of the question and, with no capital behind them, they had to cross their fingers that nothing major would go wrong. To provide extra income Jennifer squeezed in some paid employment between her child care responsibilities. In the summer of 1973, during Keith's school holidays, she worked in a sea-front Café whilst he looked after the children and she also subsequently took a job in a Nursing Home on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. When the children went to school, for a short while, she became a lunch-time supervisor before taking on responsibilities as a Home Help in the local community. She even tried the local Pie factory, but only lasted there for one morning! Her income took some of the pressure off, propped up Christmas and Birthdays and allowed them to buy one or two luxury items, but chiefly helped them across the difficulties of inflation and rapidly rising prices. They were a great deal luckier than most. Keith was promoted twice in the 70's putting him on a higher pay-scales, each with a period of annual increments. This raised his income above inflation. There were also annual pay increases. However, these never matched the march of price rises and year-by-year public sector workers fell behind. Industrial action forced a correction in 1975 and under the Houghton Review Teachers' pay was increased massively with back-pay to the tune of £350. By 1976 Keith's monthly income had risen to £308,98.

Budget records for the Upson family in 1976 show:

**Annual Budget Account expenditure:**

Gas.....£20.32	Car: Tax.....£28.90
Electricity.....£151.39	Insurance.....£15.00
Water Rates.....£24.13	Recovery.....£9.00
Telephone.....£57.71	Driving Lic.....£5.00
Coal.....£130.25	Repairs.....£28.00
T.V. License.....£18.00	
Teacher's Union.....£12.00	
Home Contents Ins.....£7.00	
Mortgage Protection.....£12.00	

**Monthly Expenditure (February 1976)**

Mortgage.....£58.00	Brian Mills Shopping.....£24.00
Rates.....£14.50	Freezer Food.....£23.00
Insurance (Life).....£7.58	Groceries etc.....£40.00
Ballet Fees (Term).....£10.25	Television Rental.....£7.70
Cash Expenditure.....£68.00	

**Income for the Month = £308.98**

**Expenditure = £304.96**

Their increasing affluence enabled them to indulge in at least some of the new innovations of the times. Although they could not afford to buy a colour television, which were expensive by today's standards, they did rent one from Rediffusion. They also invested in a top of the range stereo system and started to build a record collection, though this did not exceed 12 albums by 1980. Linking a Cassette Tape Recorder, which they also bought, to the stereo system enabled them to record a collection of favourite music from the Radio. They also bought a small electronic keyboard / organ after the central heating had ruined two pianos. Both were rendered un-tuneable after the heat cracked the wooden frames, a process accelerated by the installation of double-glazing to the inside of the main 5 windows of the house at a cost of around £250. By 1974 they were also able to afford a telephone which also quickly became indispensable allowing proper contact with family back in Southampton. Another acquisition which made a substantial difference to their lives was a Fridge-Freezer which revolutionised their shopping habits. They took to shopping once per month for meat, sausages and some vegetables and, of course, for the first time, things like ice cream, ready-made pies and tarts.

The 70's was also characterised by a rapid exchange of cars. The old A35 van bought in 1967 to transport the babies reached the end of its life in 1970 when the road became visible through the floor and was exchanged for a 1961 Ford Anglia. This car too was in its dotage and was saved and rejuvenated by one of their new neighbours who was a car mechanic. Keith traded the outside painting of his house for the maintenance and re-spray of the car, the only affordable way of keeping it off the scrap heap. In 1973 Keith inherited his father's car, a 1963 Ford Anglia, which gave good service until it was hit in the side by an intoxicated solicitor in the High Street of Herne Bay in 1974. This was then replaced by a 1967 Morris 1100 recommended and purchased from their mechanic neighbour. This was the most refined of all the lowly second hand cars they owned during the 70's. It had a sweet, smooth little engine which purred nicely and was exceptionally roomy inside. The only blemish was a slight leak in the hydro-elastic suspension which, over a period of months, caused it to tilt to starboard. Every now and then, therefore, it had to be 'pumped' up! So pleased were they with this car that when mechanic neighbour offered an immaculate 1968 Austin 1100 for sale they did not hesitate to buy it. It was a mistake! Whilst the body-work and upholstery were in far better condition the engine was not, and although it did not consume quite the quantity of engine oil, by comparison it was rough and ill at ease with itself. In 1977, therefore, this was part-exchanged for a 1975 Hillman Avenger with only 27000 miles on its clock. The newest car they had ever owned. A clear signal that their financial circumstances were improving.



Another mark of their improving affluence began in 1975 when, for the first time in their married lives, they found they could afford a holiday. With £350 back-pay in their bank they bought a one-year old frame tent and most of the equipment necessary to sustain life under canvass – a cooker, a camp kitchen, sleeping bags, Li-los etc. With everything stowed on a rack on the roof of the car they set off on their first adventure - one week in Ashburton on the edge of Dartmoor and a further week at Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset. Never having camped before and with two young children in tow it was a huge experiment. The journey to Devon was a journey through hell. Going across Dorset they hit a severe thunder storm with torrential rain and skies as black as night. It did little to ease their trepidation. By the time they reached the campsite, however, the skies had cleared and they enjoyed a fortnight of

the most perfect weather. It was the start of a heat-wave that was to last for the rest of the summer. Jennifer's talent for organisation took over and they enjoyed a most spectacular time. So successful was their first taste of camping that they had no hesitation in booking for the following year. In 1976 they therefore returned to Ashburton for an extended stay. This was the summer of all summers with weather ideal for the camping life. The children loved it. It set the seal on a good many holidays in the future.



One unexpected bonus was the camaraderie which so readily developed with fellow campers. Whilst there they struck up a friendship with their neighbours, a Dutch couple and their two young children from Nijmegen. Their English was excellent and they enjoyed a fascinating time comparing lives over a bottle of wine beneath the stars of the evening. They became sufficiently friendly to invite them for a stop-over en-route back to Holland and in return received an invitation to visit them in Holland the following Easter (1977). This was their first foray beyond home shores – a brief but exceptional adventure around Amsterdam and Northern Holland. The summer of 1977 was more normal and their holiday to Hastings was not so noteworthy.

The 70's were Keith and Jennifer's family years. It was a challenging and exciting time of bringing up young children and there was seldom a minute to spare. The children were fortunate in that shortly after they arrived a new Primary School opened just around the corner barely 200 yards from their front gate. The Briary School, as it was named, was built to serve the needs of the developing district of Greenhill. The catchment area included a large council estate as well as private housing in the lower end of the market. The social mix was such that the academic aspirations of the school were not high and it suffered more than its fair share of motivational and behavioural problems. Neither of their children were pushed there and graphs of their development correlated closely to the quality of individual teachers. There were stagnant years as well as years of encouraging gain. Throughout, Keith and Jennifer did all they could to support the school and encourage the children. Jennifer volunteered to help in the classroom listening to children read and assisting with school trips and also did a short stint as a lunchtime supervisor and there was at least one occasion when, with their operatic friends, they entertained parents at fund raising evenings. At the end of it all, however, neither Stephen or Kathryn were bitten by any real success experience. Neither were singled out as having any special talent, and neither showed sufficient academic prowess to be recommended for a grammar school place. In the words of the Headmaster they were "good average children". They were, however, happy and well behaved and that was all that mattered.

During their primary years both Stephen and Kathryn were involved in activities outside of school. Stephen joined the Cub Scouts and worked hard to earn proficiency badges in a whole array of activities. He also tasted the joys of camping. Kathryn, from quite a young age, took up ballet and attended classes at the local school of dancing. There were memorable

moments watching her perform in the school's annual show. There is something heart-rending and entrancing watching little ones perform even though behind the scenes the atmosphere is often toxic. The competitive bitchiness which existed between mothers was something to be believed and Keith always dropped Kathryn at the stage door and ran! Nonetheless, whilst she did not stick to ballet she was there long enough to take the preliminary exams which she passed comfortably. At home, whilst there was some bickering, they played contentedly. With a large area of waste ground and an abandoned builders compound opposite the house there was scope for adventure, and Stephen in particular, played happily and safely with his friends amongst the scrub. The road was also a safe haven since it too just petered out in the field and there was no through traffic. There he rode on his bike, played knock-about football and careered up and down on a home-made cart. They certainly had more freedom than would be allowed today.

Naturally, in the early days the family felt marooned and missed their parents back home. In an age when telephones were still a long way from being universal, communications were by letter. Contact was therefore infrequent and little of the minutiae of everyday life could be conveyed or discussed. They journeyed back to Hampshire for weekends when they could but, before the M25 was completed, it was a wearisome 3 ½ hour journey on the old A25 which passed through the centre of almost every town en-route. With two very young children and an aged car it was not a trip which they made with much pleasure. By Christmas 1971 when Jennifer's Mum and Dad came to stay, they had already decided that they would also relocate to Herne Bay. They missed their daughter and grandchildren too much. Jennifer's father had reached the age of 60 and was eligible to retire on his Railway pension. In April they completed on the sale of their property in Eastleigh and bought a maisonette in the central part of Herne Bay. The love and support they brought bolstered the young family and relieved some of the stresses. Keith's parents also visited in the summer of 1972 though with much less happy consequences. Unknown to Keith at the time his father was suffering the early symptoms of leukaemia. During the Autumn his condition worsened dramatically and he came to rely upon blood transfusions to stem the damage to his organs. He was hospitalised in November and Keith raced to his bedside but he died a few days later. He was 69 years old.

With ready-made baby sitters at hand Keith and Jennifer's social life took off. During their first year they were largely confined to home but made a close friendship with neighbours Margery and Michael. Keith was still trying to recover from his breakdown in the spring and was still taking Valium to help him cope. With the stresses of a new home and a new job he was finding it very difficult to give it up. It emerged that Michael was a practised Faith Healer and one evening he offered an experimental healing session. Keith had no knowledge of faith healing, or what it entailed, and was extremely sceptical about it, but he was so desperate to break his dependency on drugs and regain his self-confidence that he willingly submitted to a trial session. He was totally amazed. Michael sat him down, stood behind him and, starting with his head, moved his hands in a prescribed way across his shoulders and down his back. He could not believe the heat that emitted from his hands. It was like passing an electric iron down the back. There was, of course, no miracle cure, but he was sufficiently impressed to try again, and in subsequent weeks attended healing sessions at the Herne Bay Spiritualist

Church. Here he came under the healing hands of several healers and was totally astounded by the experience. He found that within a minute of establishing the first touch they were able to describe precisely the symptoms he was suffering, even though they had never met before. His scepticism lessened but never completely left him. What was happening was completely beyond his comprehension. During these sessions he witnessed Mediums in trances and saw first-hand the transfiguration of both face and voice. It was enough to make him realise that spiritualism was best left alone. Nevertheless, within a very short time he was off the tablets and was rapidly regaining the ebullient edge to his personality. During these weeks their friendship with Margery and Michael deepened and they began to share supper parties on a regular basis. It was at these that, for the first time in their lives, they developed a taste for alcohol. Draft Sherry, acquired cheaply from the local Off Licence, became a regular lubricant. They were soon having a glass or two before Sunday lunch and so it became a more accepted part of their lives.

In April 1972 there was a knock at the front door early one evening and there stood an envoy of the Herne Bay Operatic Society. The Society had been notified of their arrival and address through the N.O.D.A. network (National Organisation of Dramatic Art). Their friends in Southern Theatre Productions back in Southampton were fishing to ensure that they were snapped up in Kent. It was the usual story. The Society were doing the opera 'Nabucco' in May and were desperately short of men, would Keith please come and help. He did not need to be asked twice. He joined a rehearsal, was immediately accepted with a warm and generous welcome from, what seemed to be, a very nice group of people. He was impressed with what he found. There was talent, enthusiasm and a determination to achieve the highest standards. They were every bit as professional as Southern Theatre Productions even if the average age was somewhat higher. The let-down was the Theatre. After the Pavilion in Bournemouth the King's Hall was crude and tiny. The facilities were basic, the acoustics abysmal, and the view of the stage from the flat dance floor left people with stiff necks. But what it lacked in sophistication it made up for in atmosphere. During the following years it became home to a great deal of pleasure and success.

After Nabucco it so happened that the young leading tenor upped and moved to America leaving the way clear for Keith to snap up the young romantic leads. The first was 'Kismet' in November 1972. The part of the 'Caliph' suited him beautifully. It was a magnificent success and provided the springboard from which many shows were to follow. Some of these were with a different company. There was another Theatre group in Herne Bay called 'Theatre Craft' – a fairly recent off-shoot of the Operatic Society who annually undertook two plays, a pantomime and a musical. They were a little more modern and adventurous in their choice of shows and over the years offered him the most fulfilling parts. The two societies shared the available talent. Quite often they would use the same Producer and Musical Director, the same dance troupe and many of the same principles. The significant difference was in the age of membership. The tier of more elderly people brought up on Gilbert and Sullivan were not present in Theatre Craft and it made a difference, both in ethos and in the way the business was managed. They were not nearly so efficient in the scenery department and there was more than one occasion when the set was being painted around the cast during the dress rehearsal. That apart the friendly rivalry between the two groups was of benefit and the

opportunities to be involved were greatly enhanced. For Keith, he was involved in a further 20 shows during the 70's including lead parts in many of the favourites - South Pacific, West Side Story, The King and I, Carmen, and The Sound of Music. The result was a workload of three or four shows a year that would often see him out four nights a week and which laid claim to almost as much nervous energy as his full-time job. Jennifer too was actively involved in pantomimes, plays and musicals, though far less frequently with the limitations of baby-sitters.

As with Southern Theatre Productions there were countless other concerts and cabarets performed for all manner of charities and causes. The most high profile of these was for Cancer Care which was performed at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. There was also a season of Old Time Musicals performed during the summer season, and, it was during one of these that Keith had his closest brush with fame and fortune. At the interval during one show he received a message from somebody in the audience requesting a meeting after the final curtain. There he met a well-spoken, rotund gentleman with the flush cheeks of somebody who liked a drink who introduced himself as Alan Reeve-Jones. He was an author and songwriter who was somewhat smitten with his singing voice. Within 2 weeks he found himself in a recording session at the Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury laying down a demo track for a song he had written with a hugely talented musician called Steve Cameron, a member of the 'Hot Chocolate Band'. It was an awesome experience. After singing to the accompaniment of a maniac banging hell out of a piano he witnessed the wizardry of dubbing an orchestral backing track using a synthesizer and of enhancing the singing voice. The song was called 'Everywhere' and within 45 minutes it was played back over the sound system of the theatre. It was amazing. Keith received a fee and a taped copy but heard no more. Wherever it went it clearly failed to impress.

Another brush with the good and famous came when the family were invited to take part as extras in the filming of an episode of the television drama series 'Upstairs, Downstairs'. Both Jennifer and Keith spent a day clad in Edwardian swimming costumes pacing the promenade, laying on the beach and swimming in the sea whilst little Stephen then aged 6 was dressed up as a little urchin.

The chief source of pleasure in all this was, of course, the social contact. They met some wonderful characters and developed a very close circle of friends. Some were wealthy and super-talented and parties and supper evenings became regular and lavish events. Almost everyone smoked and there was always an abundance of alcohol. After-show parties were spectacular. One of their number, Violet Graham, was a musician with a magnificent talent. She was a child protégé with a gift for the piano. Her youth was spent practicing and her education was conducted by private tutor, which says something of her roots though nobody would have ever known it. She rose to national fame during her twenties and even played at the Proms. She had the ability to play anything by ear to perfection and at parties she would roll out all the favourite tunes and choruses of the shows and the assembled throng, often well in their cups, would sing their heads off. It was indescribable.

Christmases were also a high point and very special during the 70's. Both Stephen and Kathryn were then of an age when the magic was truly alive and it was such a joy to play to

the traditions and watch their eyes light up with the wonder of it all. Jennifer always worked hard to provide the family with Christmases to remember. Her foresight, imagination and flair for planning came to the fore. She was always the one to buy and wrap the presents, write the cards and undertake all the preparations for the big day. She always excelled in providing the most delicious Christmas meals and ensured that there was always a plentiful supply of the family's favourite sweets and drinks. Distance from the family meant that Christmases were always intimate family affairs usually with just Jennifer's parents and they were always happy and harmonious occasions. There were never the crossed words or tetchiness which, if the media is to be believed, seems to affect a good many families at this time of the year. Even they were not Church goers they never lost the significance of the festival. In the lead up to Christmas Keith frequently sang carols with the children around the keyboard and never missed the televised Church Service on the television on Christmas day or the present-giving programme to the needy in hospital or elsewhere. After Christmas dinner they sat around the tree for their own present opening ritual. It was always the quickest washing-up session of the year! Afterwards whilst the children explored their new things they would all generally relax in front of the television, pausing only for a cup of tea and a slice of 'Tunis' cake around 5pm. In the evening they often watched the festive editions of shows like 'Morecombe and Wise' and 'The Two Ronnies' and, perhaps a block-buster movie before returning to the table for Christmas supper. For Keith this was the real Christmas meal. The array of cold meats, salads, pickles, crisps, nuts and freshly warmed crispy bread was a combination uniquely reserved for this occasion. By this time roast chicken with all the trimmings, once Christmas fare to look forward to, had become commonplace, and the substitution of turkey was not sufficiently different to mark it out as special.

The majority of the children's playthings arrived with Santa on Christmas day. A small selection found their way into sacks they discovered at the foot of their beds, but the bulk were left under the Christmas tree to be opened in the afternoon. Compared with the extravagances of today where children seem to receive an obscene amount, Stephen and Kathryn were certainly not spoiled. Their toys were neither sophisticated nor over-plentiful. The most technically advanced toy bought for Stephen around 1977 was a 'Scalextrics' lay out with a couple of racing cars. Like the train set that Keith had as a boy, it was added to year-on-year and proved to be a worthwhile investment in terms of its play value. He also received an 'Action Man', then a popular toy of the period, along with some of its peripherals – an armoured car and different uniforms etc. over a couple of Christmases and birthdays. His other presents during the early 70's included the usual array of boyish gifts – Tonka Cars and a Tipper Lorry, Dinky, Corgi and Matchbox model cars, tanks and toy soldiers and a kite to name just a few. Kathryn, on the other hand, received correspondingly girly gifts – clothes, a dolls pram, Cindy Doll and all her accoutrements including a wardrobe. Both were given wrist watches, books, an abundance of board games and drawing equipment along with other play equipment like a pogo stick, skipping rope, hopper etc. There was not then an obsession with designer footwear or clothes or crazes for certain 'must-have' toys, and there was no peer pressure to purchase anything they did not approve of. As for Jennifer and Keith their presents seemed to orientated towards clothes, although Jennifer received a hair-dryer with a hood, silver charms for a bracelet, a cigarette lighter, toiletries and slippers. Keith received an almost

annual donation of zip-up cardigans and shirts along with cigarettes, a lighter, a pipe and craft sets and painting kits to keep him occupied during the holiday. All were utilitarian and reflected their style of living at the time.

In the quieter times of the year the television increasingly became the centre of home entertainment. The late 60's and 70's seemed to be a time of real innovation for the small screen as colour, new techniques and sheer creative ingenuity brought new and better programmes. New techniques in animation encouraged the production of a crop of new children's programmes. The children were enthralled with 'Camberwick Green' and 'Trumpton', 'The Herbs' and the 'Clangers' and the hugely successful 'Wombles' and 'Magic Roundabout'. Following the success of 'Peyton Place' there were also an ever increasing number of American offerings appearing on our screens. 'Dr. Kildare' was very popular along with programmes like 'Charlie's Angels' and 'Starsky and Hutch'. Nothing, however could compete with our own home-grown drama and there were ground-breaking series – 'The Onedin Line', 'Poldark', and 'Upstairs and Downstairs' to name but three. Of course the good old faithfuls continued to hold audience share and they were among the millions who followed the ebb and flow of life on 'Coronation Street' and tuned in to see 'Dr. Who' who was still spinning around the galaxy after over 10 years. Above all though this was the age of Situation Comedy and many of the shows introduced at this time have since become national institutions. 'Dad's Army', 'Fawlty Towers', 'Please Sir', 'On the Buses', 'The Army Game', 'Some Mother's do Av em', were all ground breaking shows which appeared in the early 70's. 'The Good Life', a comedy series which capitalised on the growing national mood of nostalgia for the old values at a time when working life was seen to be an ever more frenetic rat-race. It focussed upon gardening for self-sufficiency, all be it in a light hearted and highly romanticised way, but it captured their hearts and reawakened their interest in growing vegetables and of using nature's bounty more fully. As a result, they dug up half of the lawn, installed a cheap greenhouse, and rediscovered the wonder of nature and the thrill and satisfaction of helping things grow from seed to plate. As their commitment grew, so too did their dissatisfaction with the limited garden of their property and they began the search for more land. Once again they were beginning to feel unsettled.

By 1978, therefore, the pleasant equilibrium of life was disturbed again by the growing agitations of the 7-year itch. The challenges of school, the operatic society and the house and home had all been conquered and life was becoming more mundane and less exciting. Keith was becoming bored by it and began to search for new opportunities and new challenges in all three areas of his life. He was particularly keen to move from the Sir William Nottidge School. He was ready for promotion and began to look for openings for Deputy Headships. At the same- time they were gripped by self-sufficiency fever and began to feel the need for a larger house and more land. With the children aged 12 and 9 there was no latitude for delay without disrupting their schooling. Their plans were hampered by finding a job. Keith's non-graduate status, the type of school he worked in and the dubious support of the Headteacher all weighed against success. In the end he felt that the only way forward was to improve his qualifications and he enrolled to take a 3-year part-time course at ChristChurch College, Canterbury towards a Diploma in Education. The decision bound them to East Kent for the foreseeable future so they went seriously in search of a house. They were keen to move

further into the country, and when they saw an advertisement for a detached, 3-bedroomed house with 1/3 acre garden 10 minutes from Canterbury, they followed it up immediately. They were astonished to find that it was just round the corner in Greenhill Road, if anything a little closer to the town. One step over the door step, however, and a glance at the back garden settled it. It could not have been more perfect for their needs and they entered into negotiations and crossed their fingers.

The purchase of 75, Greenhill Road was the most fraught process imaginable. The house was advertised at £17,950 and, once again, Keith and Jennifer agreed to pay the asking price. They duly sold 47, Blean View Road for £14,950, settled the Halifax mortgage and realised £9,332 in profit. To this they arranged to add £9,000 by taking out an endowment based mortgage with the Herne Bay Building Society. The difference of just under £400 between asking price and loan was intended to give them latitude to pay for carpets, decorating costs etc. after they had moved in. Unfortunately,

at the eleventh hour the vendor decided to raise the price by £500. They were also informed that the mortgage offer was to be conditional on having the loft sprayed for woodworm and the second garage, which had been illegally converted into a room, brought up to building regulation standards. This involved laying a new floor with a damp-proof membrane and installing a fire door, potentially adding another £200 at least to their costs. It was a vicious blow to their hopes.



There was nothing they could do. It was too late to renegotiate a mortgage. In panic they searched for an alternative property but could find nothing comparable. They were forced, therefore, into clearing out their savings and raiding the budget account to find the money, once again reducing them to penury and the well- practiced habits of make-do-and-mend! They moved on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1978 and, with a hired van and the help of their friends, were quickly installed and organised in a matter of hours.

The house was very little bigger than Blean View Road. The space was gained in attached outbuildings – a toilet and utility room on one side and a converted garage on the other. The original house had been built in 1934 and, by today's standards, was solidly constructed. The walls were of 9 inch bonded construction with no cavity, whilst the roof was totally lined with wood. It was as solid as a castle. The timbers were far sturdier than you would find now and the overall standard of workmanship was far higher. However, as an older building it demanded some attention. Fortunately, they had had experience of refurbishment with the Victorian house in Southampton, and over the following months worked their way through the whole house. The biggest asset was the garden. – one third of an acre of glorious land, half covered with the remnants of an old orchard. There were 26 trees in total - apples, pears, cherries and plums. At the rear was a vegetable plot which they enlarged by felling two trees. It was everything they wanted to satisfy their passion for self-sufficiency and for 2 or 3 years they came close to achieving their aim. By selling fruit at the gate they raised sufficient money

(£80 in one year) to buy the things like potatoes and brassicas which they did not have the space to grow in quantity. It was very satisfying. In the spring of 1979 Keith built a greenhouse which enabled them to see the process through from seed to crop completely – a miracle which they never failed to appreciate. 25 years later they were still immersed in the joy and beauty of this piece of land and prided themselves on its yield. Their enthusiasm for nature's bounty of food and flower never dwindled. The children, of course, gained a wonderful play space. Surrounded by 8 foot hedges, the garden was private and there was scope to find hideaways and build dens. Stephen, in particular, was soon inviting his friends to camp out, and had fun cooking on a camp fire and curling up in sleeping bags under some very fragile constructions.

The move brought more balance into their lives. In the short term gone were the holidays and luxuries as all their energy and resources became committed to renovation and to the land. Keith once again took up study in his quest to gain higher qualifications, attending College two evenings each week and working most Sundays. He was determined to escape the constraints of his present school even if it took years to accomplish. Much to his surprise and delight, however, in the Autumn of 1979 after applying for two local Deputy Headships, he was appointed to the Conyngham School, Ramsgate. His escape tunnel had finally reached the daylight on the other side of the fence. The decade therefore ended with the prospect of a new challenge.

The 1970's was a time of personal growth for the Upson family. Jennifer and Keith took up the reigns of parenthood with all the responsibilities that that entails. Their values were refined, and their voices became more confident and authoritative. Their children and family life became the centre of their existence. The quality of life consistently rose. Housing, amenity and entertainment all improved and with them happiness and contentment. They took advantage of technical developments and were rewarded with a broader scope of amusements, less mundane workloads and more convenience. They were also fortunate in avoiding the fall-out of the country's economic woes. Keith had a stable job and an upward professional trajectory. They were not, therefore, stung by rising prices and were too preoccupied with their own lives to be moved by the cultural upheavals of the time. Violent strikes, protests, rising crime and the punk 'anti-isms' were but pictures on the television screen. They did not impinge on them. They were but a side-show to their lives. Their social life blossomed. Alcohol entered their lives and their addiction to smoking increased. All were an effective diversion which enhanced their ability to relax. The 70's might have been a troubled decade for some, but for Keith and Jennifer, now in their late 20's and 30's, it was a high point in their lives. Ambitions were realised. They had a home of their own, two beautiful children and fulfilment in almost every area of life. They still clung to the zestful enthusiasms of the young, and were eager to face the challenges of the future. Life was good!