

AT HOME IN THE 80's

A CASE STUDY

The 80's was a decade of great change for the Upson's as their children moved through adolescence into adulthood and fled the nest. Year by year the burden of responsibility was lifted from Keith and Jennifer's shoulders. The luxury of some freedom returned, accompanied by a level of income enough to support a much higher level of indulgence. However, responsibility did not completely disappear. In the early 80's the family expanded. In September 1979 Jennifer's father died and her mother gave up her apartment in the town and moved in with them and soon after they acquired a new baby – a Puppy!

The addition of another adult in the house was, at first, a squeeze. Keith and Jennifer created a lounge for her in the converted garage to allow her and them a degree of privacy and she shared a bedroom with 11 year-old Kathryn. She integrated so completely, however, that she never used her lounge and it rapidly became a play-room / study for the whole family. With the sale of her property they began to make plans to use the capital to build an extension to the house to create an additional bedroom and a new kitchen. A colleague of Keith's drew up plans to his specification and submitted them to the council for planning consent. This achieved they approached three builders for estimates. This was an interesting exercise. The three were completely different characters. There was the whiz-kid who dismissed the whole thing as an easy job which he would have done and dusted in six weeks. He just plucked an estimate out of thin air (the Cheapest). There was then a staid professional who exhibited little interest and whose estimate was grossly over-inflated to ensure he didn't get the job. Finally, there was the little man who measured everything and calculated everything and asked lots of questions. It was no contest. They selected the little man with his measuring tape and a good decision it was too. Work commenced in September 1980 and was completed



towards the

end of January. Progress was slow but sure. The builder was a meticulous craftsman who would not be rushed and as he nibbled away at the job he almost became one of the family. The building work cost £8,500 and added another 50% by area to the house. By the time they had fitted out the kitchen there was little change out of £10,000 but it was worth every penny. The work included modernisation of the bathroom and the provision of a separate toilet upstairs so space and amenity in the house were greatly increased. They wanted nothing more.

For many, a resident mother-in-law is a recipe for tension and disharmony. Not so for the Upson's. Jennifer's mother was the most amenable and uncomplaining person imaginable. She was never an intrusive force. Whatever opinions she had she kept to herself and when visitors arrived to see them she melted away. She was generous and considerate and devoted her life to the family. The children thought the world of her and there was never a moment of discord. Her presence gave Keith and Jennifer a new freedom. An extra adult in the house meant that they were not so constrained by the children and household chores. Jennifer gave up her job as a Home Help and took part-time employment at Woolworths. When her mother arrived she went full-time starting at 9am in the morning and finishing at 5-30pm. The additional income both from Jennifer and her mother, plus the salary increases attendant upon Keith's promotions took them into a new phase of life. For the first time in their lives they could entertain buying a few luxuries. However, with their fairly austere upbringing neither were prepared to mortgage their life away with hirer purchase debts so they bought little that they could not afford to buy outright.

A Typical Monthly Budget for 1981:

<u>Income:</u> £637.38		Gross pay per year = £7779	
<u>Outgoings:</u>		<u>Budget Account Details</u>	
Mortgage	£105.24	House Insurance	£65.10
Mortgage Endow.	12.98	House Contents Ins.	39.15
Insurance	13.85	Car Tax	70.00
TV Rental	9.53	Car Insurance	60.00
Budget Account	91.00	Car Recovery	30.00
Rates	26.57	TV License	34.00
Water rates	4.32	Union fees	20.00
Housekeeping	222.42	Telephone	25.94
Book Club	3.00		
Catalogue Shop	<u>20.00</u>		
	<u>£508.91</u>		

By the end of the 80's the pattern had changed:

Income: £1189.98 (Keith's Salary)

Gross Pay per year = £20,814

<u>Outgoings:</u>	Mortgage	£70.91
	Mortgage End.	43.18
	Insurance	23.14
	TV Rental	22.95
	Budget Account	190.00
	Rates	67.30
	Water Rates	12.23
	Housekeeping	421.00
	Catalogue Shop	50.00
	St. Martin's	20.00

Budget Account Details:

House Insurance	£159.20
House Contents ins.	121.70
TV License	71.00
Union fees	75.00
Gas service Contract	67.00
BUPA	£410.04

£920.71

In neither case have either Jennifer's earnings or her mother's contribution to housekeeping been included so the scale of the excess is far greater than that shown. Nevertheless, in the early and mid-80's most of what they managed to save, they spent. During son Stephen's college years, for example, the whole of Jennifer's earnings were taken up by supporting him. They therefore still had little security against the unexpected. The situation changed dramatically when Keith's mother sold her bungalow in Hampshire and donated £10,000 of the proceeds to them. This gave them a valuable safety net. By the end of the decade when both children had fled the nest they were banking several hundred pounds a month in savings. They never looked back!

It is worth dwelling briefly on the budget figures for they reveal some interesting comparisons. A reasonable indication of the rate of inflation between the two years can be gained by comparing Gas and Electricity costs.

1981 : Gas	£311.86	1989:	£501.42
Electricity:	£186.84		£296.01

These show an increase of 61% and 59% respectively. The rise in take home pay was 86% so there was an appreciable improvement in the standard of living. The rise in gross salary, however, was 167% a clear indication of the effect of having to pay higher rate taxation (40%). Mortgage interest repayments were against the trend. As the government fought to control

inflation so slowly the bank-rate eased down. In 1981 it stood at 15% and they were having to pay £105 per month. By 1989 it was down to 9.5% with only a £70 per month outlay. Later it reduced again to £42!

The most notable improvements in lifestyle were in cars and holidays. In 1981 they traded in their Vauxhall Avenger for a nearly new Ford Fiesta Ghia. It was a top of the range motor car with velour upholstery and such luxuries as a radio cassette recorder and a cigarette



lighter! It was a small car, essentially a super-mini with an 1100cc engine. It cost £4000, which, with the help of a loan from Jennifer's mother, they paid for in cash. As with all his cars, Keith cosseted it and cleaned it, but being pristine and unblemished, he did so with extra enthusiasm and greater frequency. Owning it and driving it gave him a real sense of satisfaction and achievement. It seemed to endow status and

confirmed that he was making progress in life. However, they did not keep it long. Early in 1983 they began laying plans for a continental holiday for all 5 of the family. The car was too small for comfort over long distances and so they exchanged it for a NEW one!! Now he really felt as though he had arrived. Pride was now accompanied by reverence as every minor



blemish was quickly wiped away. The smell of newness was like an aphrodisiac. The car was the newly launched Austin Maestro – a larger, more versatile hatch-back with folding rear seats. It was a base model with no frills, metallic red paint and a 1300cc engine. The total cost was £5008, but, with part exchange they paid £1670. As a new car with everything firm and tight it felt like a quality vehicle, but it wasn't.



When in 1985 it was given a glancing blow on the off-side rear by a passing van whilst parked in Herne Bay, it crumpled and most of the back had to be replaced. It was a signal to go shopping again. Enter Maestro No 2, this time a mid-range HLE version in light green, the result of a good deal at a local garage. Apart from an irritating water leak it was an improvement on its predecessor, but not as good as



Maestro No 3 which they acquired in late 1987. This car was supplied by Kent County Council as part of Keith's new job and was, by far, the best of them. It was a white 1600cc version and seemed to have a better build quality than the others. For the following three years it provided a phase of very cheap motoring. As a lease car it had the advantages of free road tax, insurance, road-side recovery, servicing and maintenance as well as a mileage allowance for petrol for all journeys associated with work. Furthermore, at the end of three years there was an automatic replacement with another new car of your choice. In 1990, therefore, Keith



opted for a new Rover 1600. During the 80's the motor

industry had cashed in on the advances in electronics and had made huge strides in the refinement and reliability of cars. This vehicle embodied them all. With velour upholstery and walnut fascias it had a comfortable and luxurious feel, a world away from the humble Vauxhall Avenger.

With an increasing disposable income the 80's was a period of more adventurous holidays, although by today's standards they would be considered pretty tame. For two or three years after they moved into Greenhill Road, however, their energies were directed towards revamping the house and conquering the two-thirds of an acre garden, and they had neither the funds nor the ambition to travel far. By necessity therefore, holidays were low-key and cheap. They camped in a number of locations:

Hastings (1979), Suffolk (1980) and Ashburton, Devon (1981). In 1980, however, with mother installed to look after the children, Keith and Jennifer began the habit of taking short weekend breaks, and for the first time since their honeymoon, ventured into hotels. There were several that were memorable. The first was a fabulous weekend in a



posh hotel in Alfriston, Sussex in the autumn of 1980. The next year they descended upon the Country Hotel in Bournemouth and there followed breaks to London, Ottery St-Mary (Devon) and Eastbourne to name but a few. Ambition broadened in 1983. With son Stephen approaching his 17th birthday, and unlikely to consider a family holiday in the future, they decided to push the boat out and took their first continental holiday. Their only contact with France previously had been day trips to Boulogne and, for Kathryn, a school holiday in a north coast resort, so the whole thing was something of a journey into the unknown. They booked a 'Gite' (holiday cottage) out in the country near Gaillac in the Tarn. The 750-mile journey took two days. On the outward journey they took an overnight stop in a hotel in Poitiers. It was a night to remember. It was as though all their tensions and anxieties about travelling abroad for the first time were released like pulling the cork from a bottle. Over dinner they dissolved into fits of uncontrollable giggles fuelled by wine which they thought was £1 per bottle 'plonk' but, in fact, turned out to be £10 per bottle classic Bordeaux. An overnight stay in Orleans on the return was just as eventful when they flooded a bathroom and made themselves ill on 'horse-burgers' from a budget café. Between they travelled hundreds of miles and had a wonderful adventure exploring all the five-star attractions listed in the Michelin Guide. They visited Cordes, Najac, the Tarn gorge, Rocamadour and the Les Sidobre areas south of Castre, returning each evening to their farmhouse lodging amidst the vineyards complete with a lake for swimming. It was an unforgettable holiday.

During the rest of the 80's they tended to alternate between holidays in this country and the continent as follows:

- 1884: Farm Cottage holiday in Ilfracombe, Devon
- 1985: Gite (a converted Mill) near Villefranche en Rouergue
- 1986: Ashburton, Devon – last holiday in a frame tent

- 1987: Trailer tenting Wye Valley
- 1988: Trailer tenting – Tarn Gorge, France
- 1989: Israel (February)
- 1989 Caravan – Cambridge, York, Cheltenham
- 1990: Trailer tenting – Black Forest, Germany

They were fortunate in that they were all trouble free – a testimony to Jennifer’s gift for organisation and a string of new cars. In 1985 Kathryn was 16 and the holiday in France was the last she shared with her parents. Henceforth it was Derby and Joan. In August 1986 they invested in a trailer tent – a very smart dark blue and grey Conway Contiki costing £1100. They loved it and it provided them with holidays for the next seven years. In 1989 they also bought a caravan – a very comfortable 4-berth van for use at weekends and holidays which they used until 1994.



The high point of their foreign meanderings was undoubtedly a pilgrimage to Israel in 1989. They flew with a group of friends from St. Martin’s Church overnight to Tel Aviv. They then transferred to Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee where they spent two days touring Capernaum, Tabgha, Banias, and the Golan heights, Gergesa and the Kibbutz Ein Gev. On the third day they travelled to Jerusalem via Mount Taber, the Jezreel valley, Nazareth, Cana, and Caesarea, ending up at the very respectable Mount Scopus Hotel. From there they visited all the significant religious sites in Jerusalem as well as Bethlehem, Qumran, the Dead Sea, Massada and Jericho. It was an amazing experience.

During the 80’s Stephen and Kathryn grew to adulthood. Whilst Keith and Jennifer’s lives plateaued out theirs exploded upwards and outwards. Stephen’s passage through Herne Bay High School led to some very good results at C.S.E. and G.C.E. ‘O’ Level. He was a diligent student who earned his successes. He mixed well, acquired some good loyal friends and was well liked by staff. He emerged a socially confident, well-rounded and confident young man intent on making progress in life. His schooling revealed an aptitude for the visual, technical and mathematical subjects and he particularly excelled in Technical Drawing. His progress with English, Science and the factual subjects was a little constrained by his struggle to spell. Nevertheless, he prevailed and, with the exception of English Language, which he had to sit several times before he won through, he managed very good grades, certainly good enough to win him entry to the 6th Form of Geoffrey Chaucer School in Canterbury. There he studied

Technical Drawing, Art and Maths between 1983 and 1985. After a year he substituted Maths for Graphical Communication and went on to achieve three good 'A' Levels. Certain now that his future lay in some facet of Art he then took a one-year Foundation Course at the Medway College of Art and Design. There he discovered his vocation for Graphic Design and in 1987 he was accepted into the 2nd year of a 3-year Course at the Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design, graduating in 1988 as one of the top students with a Higher National Diploma. He then proceeded into employment in Croydon.

Fortunately, Stephen's journey through adolescence was largely trouble free. Apart from one incident where he was dared into petty shop lifting by a toe-rag of a boy, he kept good company and avoided mischief. He had the good sense to direct his energies into purposeful pursuits, particularly making money! Like his father, as soon as he was legally permitted to work at 13 years of age, he took a morning paper round, but as time went on he became involved in a variety of other money-making enterprises. He collected lost golf balls from nearby links and sold them back to the golfers, delivered a local advertising paper in the evening, cleaned shops, worked Saturdays in a Sports shop, undertook weekend / holiday work at a local Camping Centre and worked as a member of the stage crew at the local theatre. He was no couched potato! He was always busy and on the go, either with his friends or with one project or another. He was prone to ambitious ideas which he would pursue with relentless determination. Some of them, like building a bed on top of his wardrobe, showed some of his artistic quirkiness, others were ingenious, like setting up a rolling ball-bearing device to turn off the light, and others were beyond his capacity to see through, like building a clock, which ended in a fit of frustrated anger. He applied the same determination to acquiring the things he wanted. For example, once he had decided to buy something he would not be thwarted. Sometimes this caused financial difficulties. From somewhere came an appreciation of quality and an aversion to the cheap and nasty. His purchases were therefore seldom from the budget end of the market and paying for them caused some pain. He struggled to afford a light-weight racing bicycle and a snooker table with all the attendant paraphernalia. In both cases he propositioned for a short-term loan to make up his short-fall. His enthusiasm was such that it was difficult to refuse him. Once he had decided upon a course of action he was deaf to advice. This caused some friction within the family, particularly his mother, who found this difficult to accept. Fortunately, disagreements were minor and his adolescent rebellion was a fizzle rather than an explosion. This was largely due to a peaceful and ordered home life and, to some extent, the presence of Grandma, who both children respected, who was now an ever present calming influence. Weren't they lucky!

Perhaps the most significant sign of his burgeoning wealth and independence was the purchase of a motor bike in 1983. He bought this largely to avoid the long and tedious bus journey to the Chaucer School. This sparked a passion for motor scooters which gave vent to his teenage individualism. Whereas the extremes of his age group expressed themselves through multi-coloured Mohegan haircuts, torn clothing, body piercing and heavy metal music, Stephen only ever got as far as a Parka jacket and a skeletal Lambretta scooter which he built himself. The closest he ever got to a 'rave' was the scooterists weekend meets he attended with his mates at Margate and elsewhere.

As a young secondary school student Stephen indulged in the adolescent fervour for collecting things. Football cards and 'Smurfs'- little rubber pixie-like models that were given away with petrol were particular favourites but he also collected old bottles which were retrieved from a Victorian rubbish tip he discovered near a local stream. The advent of more sophisticated electronic games began to catch the imagination of youngsters in the early 80's and whilst Stephen rarely watched television he happily settled in front of it when it was plugged into an Atari Games Consul. The challenge to constantly improve upon your score in games like Space Invaders, Asteroids and Pacman seemed to be compelling. He was also swept along with the Rubics Cube craze and learned to solve the puzzle in seconds with a number of deft twists and turns. None of the family has ever been sporty – it's just not in the genes, but Stephen was a tad more athletic. He enjoyed swimming, gained some mastery at Roller Skating and played Basketball. He also enjoyed camping and made the most of his working association with W.M.Camping by gathering all manner of shop-soiled equipment including about three tents. He took his holidays under canvass with a mixed group of friends. Keith and Jennifer never dared to enquire about what he got up to!

Like most fathers Keith lived his own boyhood through the passions and activities of his son. He enjoyed playing with his toys almost as much as Stephen did. The fact that their interests and aspirations were quite similar added a poignancy to the relationship. It was a special bond. His relationship with his daughter Kathryn was every bit as special but was very different. He loved her, was very protective of her, and could refuse her nothing but naturally he did not have the same appreciation of her girlie pastimes. She was altogether a different personality. Whilst Stephen was possessed by 'things', Kathryn was more interested in people and relationships. She did her apprenticeship in gossip during her adolescent years and was inquisitive of all the gory details of anything that befell human-kind. Happily, her interest was accompanied by a truly wonderful capacity for compassion and thoughtfulness and she developed the knack of making supportive gestures at needful moments – something she has refined and extended over the years. Her interest in humanity made her a more avid televiewer than Stephen and she was into several 'Soaps'.

Her adolescent years were even quieter and smoother than her brother's. There were no tantrums or histrionics and no starry-eyed mooning around with desperate crushes on boys or any idolisation of pop stars. Her bedroom, though never particularly tidy, was remarkably free from the usual posters over which teenagers drool. But then she was an altogether more private person than her brother and she talked and played out her adolescent shenanigans with her friends either in the privacy of her bedroom or elsewhere. She had a succession of close school friends who always made a bee-line for her room whenever they came visiting. Goodness knows how they managed to pass the hours. Kathryn was not absorbed by trendy clothes or fashion and had no particular penchant for pop music – the usual girlie topics. No doubt 'boys' figured in their conversations but Keith and Jennifer never interfered and were careful to protect her privacy. Within limits they gave her her freedom, even though on occasion trust was strained by pretty bland accounts of where she had been and what she had been doing. This was the most agonising aspect of letting go, which, for Keith, was much more difficult with Kathryn than it was for Stephen.

Kathryn's secondary education at Herne Bay High School was uneventful. She coasted through it. She was never particularly excited by any of it, worked sufficiently hard not to be noticed and graduated with very average C.S.E. results. In her early years, aged 11 and 12, she was more actively involved and took part in the school production of 'Oliver' and went on a school holiday to France. Outside school she dropped ballet and, instead, was persuaded by her friends to join a gymnastics club. For a while, therefore she donned a red leotard and went for a weekly work-out. She also joined the Girl Guides, although that too was fairly short-lived. She seemed happiest in the company of individual friends rather than a group. From the age of 14 this undoubtedly included boyfriends but they were never invited home. The first boyfriend Keith and Jennifer met was Wayne – the son of a driving instructor, who arrived briefly on the scene when she was about 17. They had little chance to get to know him since Kathryn dragged him into the privacy of the study or her bedroom before there was any chance to strike up a conversation. From the age of 15 or 16 she struck out more assertively for independence and there were tensions about the time she should be in at night. Beyond this her adolescent rebellion was mild and innocuous. There were no eccentricities beyond green make-up and the odd cigarette or two. She was remarkable conformist.

When Kathryn left school in 1985 there was widespread youth unemployment. The problem had been developing since the mid 70's. The government deemed it crucial that the young should be purposely occupied and introduced the Youth Training Scheme. The intention was to provide 16- year-old school leavers with training in a choice of occupations and they offered financial inducements to employers to take on trainees. At first the scheme fell into disrepute when unscrupulous employers used it as a means of getting cheap labour, but by the mid 80's this had been rectified and the major companies were offering well-structured training programmes supported by Technical College courses. Kathryn expressed an interest in office work and was accepted on one of the best Y.T.S. Schemes organised by Kent County Council. The scheme lasted 2 years and provided her with a small income and free travel. In a 15 month period she undertook 3 placements – The Ramsgate Careers Centre, the Canterbury College of Technology and the Margate Magistrates Court. She also attended Technical College one day per week and achieved a BTEC in Business Studies and R.S.A. Typing, the latter with distinction. During the 2nd year trainees were encouraged to apply for jobs and, as a result Kathryn gained her first real job with Prestige Insurance in Cliftonville. The immediate hoist in income, together with a bit of sponging from Dad, led to driving lessons, the test, and the purchase of her first car – a little red Mini which brother Stephen spent a large part of the summer holiday of 1987 doing up for her. It was not long before she transferred to Provident Life Insurance in Canterbury where she fell under the wings of an influential matriarch who taught her a good deal about the insurance industry before the office was closed down. Unfortunately, much of the confidence she gained was knocked out of her in her next job at Pharos Insurance, Herne Bay. After about a year, relationships here became so strained that, when she showed too much interest in moving on, she was dismissed. However, she picked herself up and acquired another post with Thanet Insurance, Herne Bay where she settled happily. All the while, of course, her income rose steadily and in 1989 the Mini was sold in favour of a Ford Escort. Keith and Jennifer smiled happily and quietly

wrote off the unpaid debts of her Mini, whilst coughing up more to help her pay for the new car. What else are parents for!

By the end of the decade both Stephen and Kathryn had found partners. Whilst at College in Bournemouth Stephen befriended a fellow student, Paul, and during his second year there they, plus two others, pooled their resources and rented a house together. Their close association meant that they both met each-others sisters. So it was that Stephen started going out with Donna and Kathryn struck up a relationship with Paul. When Stephen started work in Croydon in 1988 things were sufficiently advanced for Donna to move in with him and they found a small flat together. Paul returned home to live but the strains of a long-distance relationship caused Kathryn to find a job and accommodation in North London in 1989 so that she could be close to Paul. It was not long before they too found a flat and moved in together. Keith and Jennifer were happy for all of them even though such pre-marital shenanigans would have aroused strong criticism from their parents. It showed how attitudes had changed and the degree of moral liberation in post-war Britain.

The need to socialise diminishes in middle age. It is a phase when working life is most pressured, when stress levels run high and when there is a greater need for peace and quiet. At least that was Keith and Jennifer's experience. There is also less need for diversion because there is enough happening within the family, especially if the children are adolescent. So you sit on the touch line as an observer and live life through the children. There is a certain fascination there which triggers memories of your own youth that make it compelling. The demands they make as they pull away from the apron strings absorbs an increasing amount of time and energy. With ferrying them around, playing open-house to their friends and rescheduling meals and household maintenance around their commitments, they become an ever more dominating influence upon your life. That is not to say that it is not enjoyable. There is a satisfaction in smoothing their way and sharing their pleasures, even if there is a niggling inclination to protect and police them. You love them and will do anything for them. It comes as something of a shock to the system, therefore, when they suddenly leave home and it all comes to an abrupt end. When Stephen left it was not so bad. He was going to College, they had plenty of warning and they knew he would be returning for holidays. They missed him, of course, but Kathryn was still at home to divert their attention. Her decision to leave was, however, sudden and unexpected and she was gone in days. She left a huge vacuum in her wake and they struggled to come to terms with the emptiness. They were worried about her ability to cope in the big City. With a generous mother and an over-indulgent grandmother always at her beck and call they felt she might be vulnerable and in for a bit of a shock, but not a bit of it! They were amazed at how well she coped even if she did have to call home to find out how long to boil an egg!

Life at home improved greatly during the 80's. The new building extension transformed the property and provided an abundance of space for the enlarged family. Grandma acquired a light and spacious bedroom and the separation of toilet from bathroom added to 'convenience'. The greatest asset, however, was the large, modern fitted kitchen with all the cupboard / larder and worktop space you could need. Equipped with a new Gas Boiler and a new up-to-date cooker it abutted the pre-existing kitchen which was remodelled as a dining

area via an arch creating a 28ft X 15ft space. For the Upson's it was a dream. As the decade progressed new devices were added. A micro-wave oven soon became indispensable along with other new gadgets like a 'Soda Stream' and even an electric carving knife. The only modern convenience which was rejected was an automatic washing machine because Jennifer preferred her twin tub. The family also embraced the movement towards home produced vegetables and fruit. The large garden was put to good use. With the addition of a greenhouse it yielded a sufficient surplus to warrant preserving by racking, bottling or



freezing. A huge chest freezer, bequeathed by the previous owner of the house, was diligently filled during the summer months with fruit and vegetables to see them through much of the winter. So satisfying was this that gardening became a passion for Keith and Jennifer throughout the 80's and beyond, and they became proud of their harvesting and processing successes. Elsewhere in the house new technologies were being embraced to enhance entertainment and convenience. Stephen became much attached to an ATARI Games Consul and Keith discovered the benefits of an Amstrad Word Processor complete with printer. Towards the end of the decade he also acquired a lap-top computer providing an E-Mail connection to Kent County Council's internal computer network and a great deal less dependence on his secretary.

Whilst home became a more important sanctuary during the 80's Keith's involvement with the amateur stage began to change and wind-down. After an appearance in 'Brigadoon' in 1981 his attention turned towards production rather than acting and he directed 'Oliver', 'Fiddler on the Roof' and 'Kismet' before stepping back as his professional life began to demand precedence. From 1986, therefore, he 'guested', picking invitations to participate in a wide variety of shows, cabarets and concerts. This included Ramsgate Operatic Society's productions of the 'Mikado' and 'The Sorcerer' and Canterbury Operatic's production of 'Fiddler on the Roof' plus prestigious fund raising Variety Shows at the King's Hall, Herne Bay and the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury. Amongst these was a highly acclaimed 'drag act' in partnership with a friend emulating 'Hinge and Bracket' – a comedy act set with operatic songs around a piano, and two hilarious outings as the Dame in pantomime.



Also during the 80's Keith and Jennifer returned to the fold of practicing Christians and started to attend Church. For Keith, after spending a sizeable part of his youth as a chorister

in Church, it was a home-coming. Their local Church – the ancient Church of St. Martin in Herne – was the second oldest Christian foundation in the country and after more than 1500 years of worship on the site it had an ambience of prayerfulness and tradition which they found particularly alluring. They also liked the incumbent, the Rev. Patrick Sales, and it was largely his influence that moved Jennifer along the path of Christian belief and devotion. For Keith it was more the music that drew him in. He loved the singing and the challenge of four-part harmony. With a local reputation it was not long before he was drawn into the choir for high days and holidays with the privilege of making solo contributions on many subsequent occasions.

One of the most momentous events of the 80's for both Keith and Jennifer was giving up smoking! Since his first tipped 'Woodbine' smoked in the bushes at the age of 13 Keith had smoked more and more. By 1983 both were smoking 20 a day and sometimes at parties, where you smoke to drink and drink to smoke, they would smoke 20 in a single evening! By this time there had been a total change in public attitudes towards smoking driven by the cancer scare and it was in full-scale retreat. Smokers were becoming the exception rather than the rule. With 6 flights of stairs at school which Keith had to scale many times during the day he was noticing some breathlessness. It was the danger signal which gave him the impetus to quit. They had both tried to give up smoking countless times before but only one of their efforts lasted very long. When the irritability of withdrawal began to kick in they would goad each other until one or the other cracked! This time, however, they gave up separately. Keith had his last cigarette at Easter 1983 and Jennifer gave up on her birthday in January 1984. They found it surprisingly easy once they had convinced themselves of the serious health dangers.

The most notable and life-changing acquisition of the 80's was a four legged friend named 'Ben', a Border Collie dog who they bought in 1984. He became a shining light in their lives. Neither Keith nor Jennifer were doggy people. There was no family background of dog



ownership. The idea took shape on a cottage holiday on a farm near Ilfracombe when they saw border collies at work. Whether it was child-replacement therapy or just a spur of the moment urge they knew not. When they returned home they immediately located a breeder and brought home a bundle of fluff who quickly wormed his way into their affections. His loyalty, absolute delight at seeing you, and the sheer pleasure of being with you tugged at the heart-strings. He was obedient, docile and loving. Keith walked him twice a day and spent hours exploring the woods, walking the shoreline and throwing a ball – things that he would not otherwise have dreamt of doing. He was a loyal and trusty companion. At home he earned his bones! He was good company for Jennifer's mother and had a bark loud enough to be a real deterrent to any would-be intruder. Ben lived to a ripe old age and became a much cherished member of the family. Jennifer has often joked since, that if she had known what a delight dogs were, she would not have had any children!

The 80's were a good time for the Upson's. Cocooned and secure within the Education profession they gained in wealth and stature and were largely unaffected by the economic

turmoil and industrial strife that beset the country. Boom and bust meant little to them. It was all but images on the TV screen. That is until 1989! Keith's career took an unexpected turn in the mid-80's. After 5 years in Deputy Headship he was granted a secondment to study for a Master's Degree at the University of Sussex. Successfully achieved he turned his back on School and took up a new post as Area INSET Co-ordinator, an administrative post for Kent County Education Department, to pioneer a new system of In- Service Education and Training for teachers. In 1989 he was finally hit by the Thatcher Revolution! In May, commanded to attend a meeting of all Education Department Staff, he was informed that everybody was to be made redundant. The Department was to be restructured with far fewer staff. The new structure was outlined and everyone was invited to re-apply for their jobs if they existed. Keith's did not. His job had been redesigned and enhanced. He was therefore faced with competition and a rigorous selection procedure to have any prospect of a future. There were troubled times ahead!