

Going Down Another Lane

John Young

Ashwood Books

First published in Australia March 2020 by Ashwood Books
PO Box 73, Franklin, Tasmania 7113
ISBN Paperback: 978-0-9874111-2-9
ISBN Kindle: 978-0-9874111-3-6
This edition © Ashwood Books
Text © JMR Young 2020

Acknowledgements

I thank my daughter, Sue Young, who reminded me of the details of some memorable occasions and helped me get my grammar and syntax right; my son Stephen Young made it possible, with great patience, for me to write this book on a computer; my son, Philip Young took me sailing in the Southern Ocean, took care of many major tasks that would otherwise have delayed me even further from completing this book, and set an example to me, by writing his own book. I hope he's forgiven me for letting my two ton boat fall on top of his fibreglass canoe. Most of all, I thank my wife, Ruth, who has overcome many difficulties, has always supported me at times when I have most needed it, and filled my life with love.

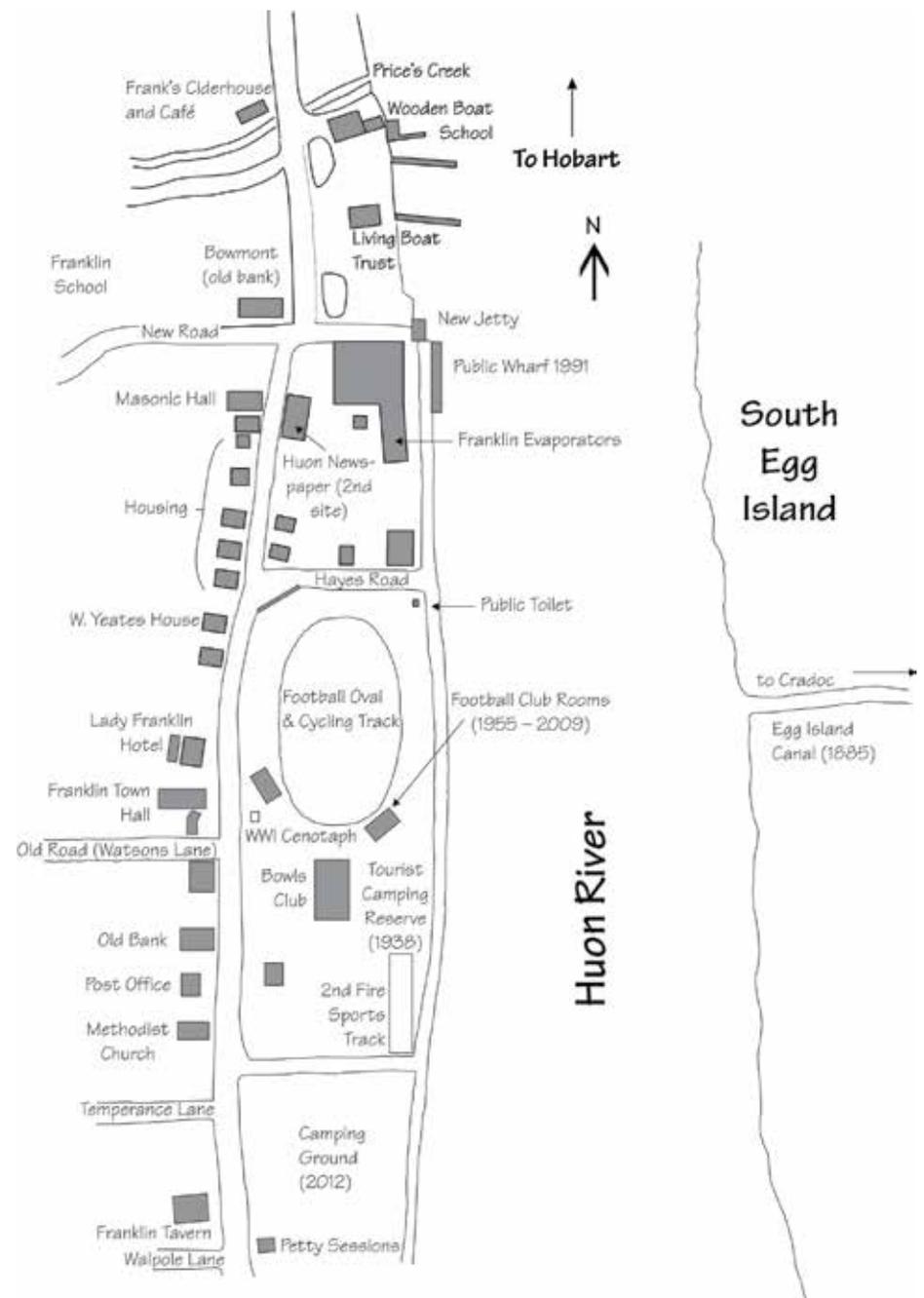
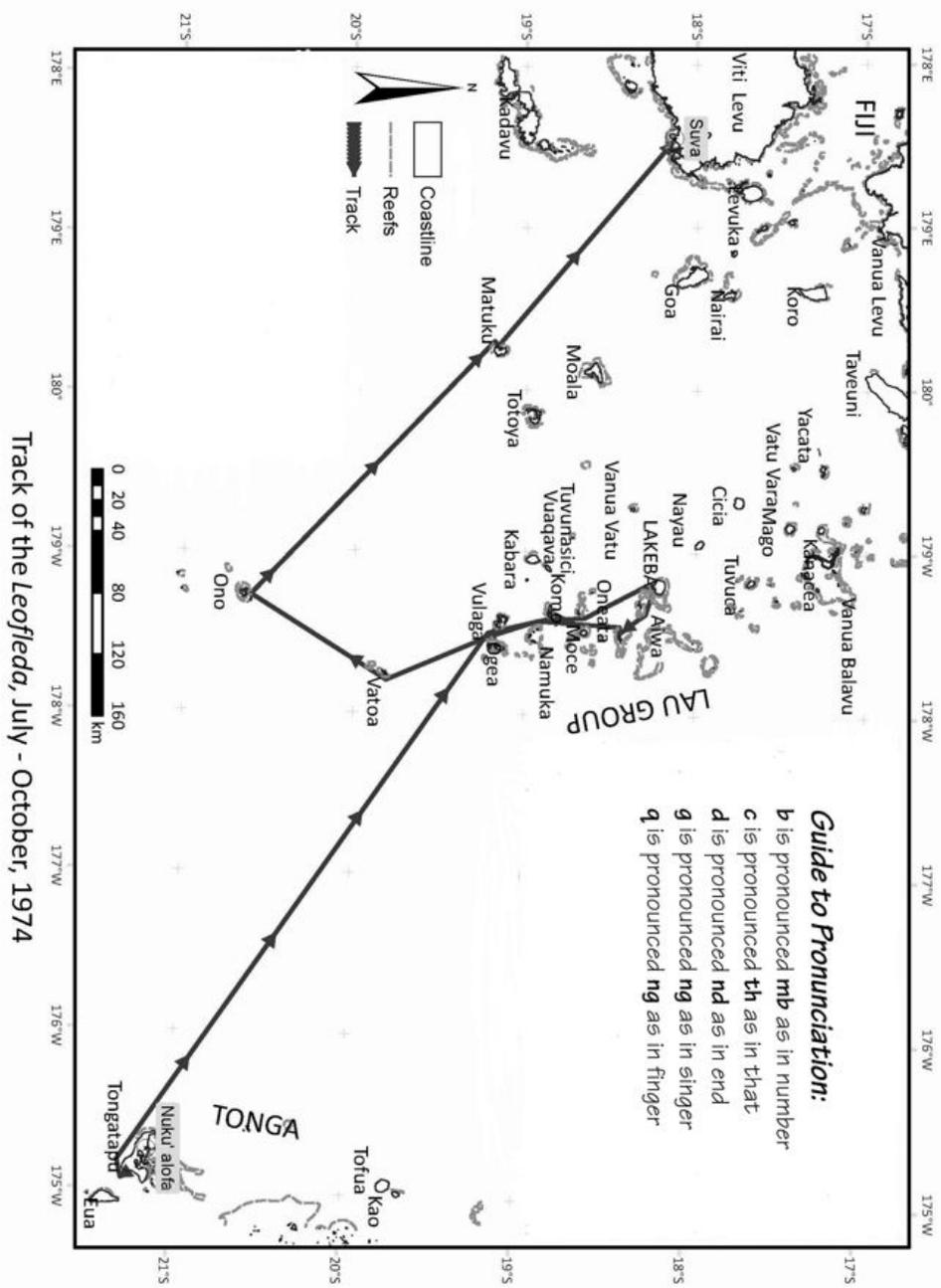
Thanks also to those who generously gave me permission to publish their work: the photographers Graeme Duckworth, Captain H M Denham, Jenny Scott, David Walker, Chris Burke, Bruce Hutchinson, Southerly Dolling, Stephen Young, Richard Forster, the late Mike Peters and the Huon Valley News. Tony Millatt of the Mersey Museum, Essex, helped me to locate the photo of the Thames Barge, *Leofleda*; the State Library of South Australia provided the photo of *Annie Watt*; Alan Cato provided the photo of Egg Island Canal and Don Ash (on behalf of photographer, Edward Ash) gave permission to reproduce it; the map of Eastern Fiji, including *Leofleda*'s track was created for me in 2014 by the School of Land and Food, UTAS. Thanks to Joel Pett for the use of his cartoon "Climate Summit;" to Steve Gadd for the use of his poem *The Lions' Den* and to Adrian Dean for his drawing of the trading schooner he has designed.

Jonathan Sturm, of Ashwood Books who undertook the task of publishing the book and postponed his own very significant deadline to do so. He has given me much food for thought and good advice.

Any profits from the sale of this book will go to a fund for the construction of Adrian Dean's trading schooner. Without the co-operation of the people listed here, this book would never have been completed.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Glossary	vi
Chapter 1: The Pig and the Crocodile	1
Chapter 2: "A Most Likeable Scoundrel?"	16
Chapter 3: "Un-gentlemanly sentimentalities"	34
Chapter 4: Youth at Risk	62
Chapter 5: Actor, Sailor, Boat builder, Failure?	74
Chapter 6: The Beginning of the getting of wisdom	90
Chapter 7: "If this be Love indeed, Tell me how much"	110
Chapter 8: The Challenges of Reality	124
Chapter 9: Boats, Teaching, Dreaming spires, and Babies	139
Chapter 10: The course of true love never did run smooth.....	161
Chapter 11: Building a Career.....	176
Chapter 12: Babes in the Wood	199
Chapter 13: Adelaide History and the South Seas	230
Chapter 14: Midlife Complexity	262
Chapter 15: One and All.....	279
Chapter 16: "Earth might be fair and all men glad and wise"	306
Chapter 17: Career Changes From Theory to Practice	327
Chapter 18: "Whatsoever things are lovely..."	358
Chapter 19: "Men make their own History..."	393
Chapter 20: "...but they do not make it just as they please"	423
Epilogue: For my Teachers	439



Mudmap of Franklin township.
(not to scale)

Glossary

Bure	A Fijian house built of whatever natural materials are locally available.
Caulking	Using an iron or wooden tool to fill the external gap between strakes of a wooden boat with cotton or oakum or both.
Close-hauled	Sailing as nearly into the wind as you can without allowing the sails to flap.
CMS Cutter	The Anglican Church Missionary Society A fore and aft rigged vessel with a mainsail and two headsails. The naval open boat, 31 feet long, however, only has one headsail, and is actually rigged as a sloop.
Dolly	A short, hand held shaft of iron or steel, held against the head of a nail while the point of the nail is peened with a hammer.
Fairmile	A motor launch designed and built by the Fairmile company during World War II for anti-submarine work. It became a general purpose vessel when the war was over.
Grappa Grecian	A home-made alcoholic drink made by the Italian community. Grecian—in this context, a senior student at Christ's Hospital School. Deputy Grecians were the equivalent of Year 11.
Girt Heave-to	A horizontal timber along the side of a shed. A manoeuvre to maintain the position of a sailing vessel by sheeting the sails on opposite sides, while holding or lashing the tiller on the leeward side of the vessel, thus pointing her into the wind. A sea anchor will help too.
Ketch	A two masted vessel with a mainsail, mizzen, and usually a foresail and a jib.
Lee Locum Mansion House	Means down-wind of a vessel or a stationary object. A locum is a substitute for a regular employee on a break. The Mansion House is the office and administration base of the City of London.
Nissen Hut	A prefabricated military building made from a half cylindrical skin of corrugated steel, conceived by American Major Norman Nissen during World War I.
Port and Starboard	Port means the left side of a vessel looking forward. Starboard, derived from Steerboard, where the Vikings placed the board they steered with. It means the right side of a vessel looking forward.
Privy	A toilet. The house on the deck of <i>Adi Lau</i> , intended for sanitary purposes.
Ribbands	The longitudinal timbers fastened to the moulds of a vessel.

They then provide the support for the ribs as they are steamed, bent, and fastened to them. Ribbands are then replaced one at a time, by the planking.

Rode Rove	The rope or chain attached to the anchor of a boat. A conical washer, pushed onto the copper nails in a boat. A dolly is then held against the head of the nail while the rove is pushed onto the nail with a nail punch from the inside of the boat while another builder holds the rove punch onto the rove, cuts off the very end of the nail and then rounds the end with a peen hammer.
Scarf	A long joint between two planks, both of them identically tapered, and fastened to achieve continuous strength of a strake.
Schooner	A multi-purpose, two or more masted sailing vessel, usually fore and aft rigged. Two masted schooners have a main mast taller than the foremast.
Sea anchor	A canvas device with an open mouth tapering to a smaller tail. Put in the water over the bow, it keeps the bow pointing into the wind. Usually used to ride out a strong wind. When the wind drops the tail is pulled aboard and the vessel continues its voyage.
Seagull	A person who is a casual wharf worker and has a seagulls card from a wharf workers Union.
Sextant	A device used to measure the angle between the sun or moon and the horizon from the deck of the boat.
Spiling	Spiling is a technique used in building wooden boat building, in which a smaller component is used as a pattern against which the outline of a larger component can be drawn.
Stringer	A longitudinal timber lying and fastened on the inside of the ribs of a vessel
Ute Whaler	A utility vehicle, or pick-up truck. An open double ended boat used by European and American seamen for hunting whales between the early 17th century and the mid-20th century. Those designed by Lord Montague, of the British Navy, were also used for naval operations. They were rowed by 7 men, and were rigged with main sails, mizzen and foresails. Overall length was 27 feet.
Yaqona	Otherwise known as Kava. This is the celebration and ceremonial drink of Fiji. Originally prepared by young women who chewed the Yaqona plant until it became liquid and could be passed around to be drunk by the chiefs and guests.

Chapter 1: The Pig and the Crocodile

It was late summer in 1938 when the story of the Pig and the Crocodile came into my head. I was four and a half years old, in England, with my sister and our missionary parents on a six month “furlough” from Sierra Leone. My parents had rented a house in Broadstairs, a small seaside resort on the Isle of Thanet in Kent. It was raining and so I was bored. Normally we would have been on the beach; making sand castles, learning to swim and watching the endless procession of ships on the horizon, as they came out of the Thames estuary and turned south, beyond the Goodwin Sands, down the English Channel and across the oceans of the world.

My father, Reverend Robert Render Young, must have been equally bored, as he strove to interest me in books and games. “I’ll tell you what,” he said, “Let’s write a story of our own.” “I’m no good at writing,” said I. “You make up the story then,” he said, “and I’ll write it down as you tell it, and then we can do the pictures together.”

“What shall we call it?” I thought for a minute and said, “Let’s call it *The Pig and the Crocodile*.” My father got fountain pen and paper and sat down next to the big bay window that looked out onto the rainy street.

“Once upon a time,” I began, “there lived a little pig, and his mother told him to go and pick some blackberries for tea. But he didn’t do that,” I said. “He went down another lane.” (Our first stop after arriving in England from Sierra Leone was a visit to my Aunt Molly, Dad’s sister and my grandfather who lived together in the village of Lockton on the North York Moors, where stone walls straggle across the heather but blackberries are used for hedges in the softer landscape of crops and grazing paddocks near the villages.)

“And at the end of the lane there was a wood,” I said, “and he didn’t notice that he was going further into the wood. And he saw a pool. (Here I possibly drew on a now unremembered African experience.) “And he fell into the pool, and he saw a great big mouth. And what do you suppose it was?” I asked my father, “That’s up to you,” said he. “It was a Great Big Crocodile!” I answered:

And the crocodile locked him in his house, and he got exciteder than ever.

And some woodpeckers came and they pecked and pecked at the crocodile until they pecked his mouth off.

Then in the afternoon some boys came; and the boys had long pockets in their trousers with swords in, and the boys stuck their swords into the crocodile, and the crocodile felt poorly and went to sleep after that.

And then, later in the afternoon, there was A Great Big Growly Noise. And what do you suppose it was? It was a Crocodile Hound!

(I remember a fox hunting meet in Lockton with a pack of dogs and I’d developed the theory that all species were matched by appropriate hounds, which kept things in balance).

It snuffed all round the crocodile, and then got the crocodile into its mouth... It had a

great, big mouth and then it ate the crocodile all up.

And then, later in the afternoon, a farmer came and he had a very special key that could unlock any door; even if there was a key on the other side. And he unlocked the crocodile's door and then he asked the pig where he lived. And then the pig told him and he took him home and then he lived happily ever after. The End.

Then we settled down to the illustrations, with my dad interpreting my verbal descriptions to my satisfaction.

I have sometimes wondered if this story of a naive young animal has some unconscious allegorical relationship with my life that followed it, particularly the bit about the pig being diverted from his primary task of picking blackberries to go down another lane. Maybe I'll know by the time I have finished telling the real story.

Apart from that possibility, the story above has some biographical value in that it tells me a lot about my father, whom I never knew as well as I would have liked to. For most British children of my generation, growing up in wartime meant an absence of fathers. Though just too young to be a soldier in the First World War, and too old to be one in the second, Robert's family saw little of him until it was over. Later that year he was to return to his missionary post in Africa, for the next eighteen months, while our mother, knowing that war was inevitable, stayed in England to look after us children.

My parents had been travelling regularly between Sierra Leone and England since their marriage in 1926. My mother, Edith, whose maiden name was Laycock, was of Huguenot extraction, her ancestors having fled as protestant refugees, from Catholic France, in the eighteenth century. They had settled in Hull, a fishing and trading port at the mouth of the Humber River in southern Yorkshire.

Edith was the only daughter of Edward Laycock, a railway station master and his second wife. He had three older daughters by his first wife. They had left home. His second wife gave birth to Edith at the age of forty seven. I have a letter telling me how, in their retirement from the mission field, my mother and father re-visited Hull, and enjoyed the memories of Edith's childhood that came back to her. She remembered how she effectively grew up as the only child of ageing parents and her job was to "set" her father each morning before he went off to work, in return for a halfpenny every day, for her trouble.

She was sent to a large city school where she became a favourite pupil of a young teacher, my Aunt Lena, who was my father's elder sister. Sensing that Edith's domestic obligations may have restricted her opportunities to enjoy the friendship of young people her own age, Lena invited her to spend her Christmas holidays of 1915, with her own family in the North Yorkshire village of Rosedale, where her father was headmaster of the local school.

The Youngs came originally from the village of Ecclefechan, just north of the Scottish border, where the family name is still remembered. My great grandfather, Robert Young (1828–1879), is the earliest ancestor that I know anything about. He was a surveyor, who served in the British army during the Crimean War, and was

married to Alice Bond (1828–1905). They had four daughters, Margaret, Emma, Lucy and Lena, and one son, William Henry Bond (known as Henry), who was my grandfather, and a significant presence during my childhood. My guess is that it was Robert and Alice who left Ecclefechan, probably at the end of the Crimean War in 1856. The populations of the towns of the north of England were increasing rapidly as the industrial revolution accelerated, and a man with a military and engineering background and a young family would have been attracted by the employment opportunities across the border.

Robert and Alice moved to Eppleton in the county of Durham, where Robert evidently worked as a surveyor. Their son, Henry, received his teacher's certificate from the Durham Training College for teachers in December 1887, at the age of twenty-two. Arthur J Bott, of the Training College staff wrote a testimonial:

Having been a student during two years, Mr Young has shown himself a pleasant and able teacher during his residence at this college, he displays a large amount of intelligence in selecting the matter for his lessons and he has the gift of placing his subject before the children in a simple and interesting manner. In addition to this he has a very quiet and pleasant manner, yet at the same time maintains excellent order.

Henry completed a required period of probation in the North Raunceby Church of England School; and had a certificate that qualified him to superintend pupil teachers. He also gained two years' practical teaching experience at North Brancepeth Colliery School, and had built on his good reputation. Thomas Vasey and M F Halliday, two of the school managers reported:

We have pleasure in certifying that Henry Young successfully completed his apprenticeship in one of the largest schools in the county. His abilities are considerably above the average. He is accustomed to large classes and his teaching power is good.

On 27 May 1890, at the age of twenty five, Henry was married, at St John's Church, Durham, to the post mistress at Brandon Colliery, Isabella Ada Render, aged twenty eight. Isabella was the daughter of Richard Render, a local draper. Since April 1888 Henry had been teaching at Eppleton school, but Isabella was soon pregnant with their first child and he decided to apply for a headmastership. He obtained a reference from Thomas Lishman, who represented the School managers, that must have helped his next move. Lishman had "not the slightest hesitation in recommending him for the position of Headmaster in any school." His next appointment took him south, on 2 June 1890, to Raunceby School in Grantham, Lincolnshire, where he taught until he got his next job, starting on 27 June 1898, at Rosedale, an ancient village ten miles west of Pickering on the southern edge of the North Yorkshire moors. The Rosedale school also provided the Headmaster with a house, and it was here that this hitherto mobile family put down roots, and brought up their children.

Until the protestant reformation, Rosedale was the seat of a Cistercian Priory, founded in 1158, and occupied by a small group of nuns. They were pioneers who made a living by running free range sheep on the adjacent moors. Other settlers

followed the example of the nuns, took over the sheep farming and created a secular community. The priory was closed in 1535 because of the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII, but Rosedale survived as a moorland village until the nineteenth century, when, in 1855, small scale iron ore mining began to expand on an industrial scale, reaching a production peak in 1873. By this time, a narrow gauge railway had been built to transport ore for shipment to the convenient ports of Middlesbrough and Whitby. By the beginning of the twentieth century the industry was in decline, but still important, resulting in a busy school in which both Henry and Isabella taught until her early death from breast cancer in 1905.

Henry and Isabella had their first child, Lena, in about 1893, and there were no more children until Robert, my father, was born on 5 February 1900, soon to be followed by Molly in 1902, and Arthur in 1904. From September 1908 to July 1910, Lena replaced her mother as an assistant, presumably part time teacher, at Rosedale school, while also obtaining more practice with older children at Lady Lumley's Grammar School in the local market town of Pickering. An undated testimonial from E G Highfield, Headmaster of the Grammar school states that, "From my knowledge of her character and ability I can strongly recommend her for a post in a school and I feel sure that she will prove an exceptionally capable teacher and have a good influence over the pupils." In 1912 James Wharram, Vicar of Rosedale wrote Lena a reference for admission to the Diocesan Teacher Training College at Durham: "I have had frequent opportunities," he wrote, "in the last six and a half



My mother, Edith, 1924, aged 22.



My father, Robert Render Young, 1926, aged 26.

years, of observing her general conduct. She will prove a credit to any institution." Two years later, on 27 March 1914, Eleanor Christopher, Principal of St Hilda's Training College, Durham, had "great pleasure in recommending her as a really valuable teacher and a loyal and enthusiastic colleague." Lena's first appointment was to a large school in Hull. In 1915 she took thirteen year old Edith Laycock home for Christmas for the first time, and introduced her to her young siblings. By then the younger children had settled in well, and made friends with other children in the village, especially Joyce Moncaster, daughter of Thomas Moncaster, who was the manager of the Rosedale iron ore mine (and went on to write a history of the mine in 1936).

The Young children had always made their own fun during their school holidays. They were a creative bunch of kids, as indicated by the survival of their hand written and illustrated family magazine, *The Entertainer*. Early editions contained poems about fairies, and Art Nouveau-style illustrations. The issue of 1916 survived and was edited by Molly, aged fourteen. Other contributors were Robert Young, fifteen, Arthur Young, twelve and their friend, Joyce Moncaster, aged thirteen, who wrote an article, "The Bombardment of Scarborough," an eye witness account of the German naval attack on that harmless seaside resort on 15 December 1915. Contents of *The Entertainer* include "A Peep into Fairyland" by Molly. She still believed in fairies as an adult, and took me once when I was still young enough, to the traditional annual performance of J M Barrie's *Peter Pan* pantomime in London. The climax was an appeal to the audience to declare their belief in fairies by standing up, to save the life of Tinker Bell. We stood together. I spent a lot of time after that, trying to fit the existence of God and fairies together. Molly just said "Why shouldn't they be?"

Molly nourished a hopeful appreciation of leprechauns as well, and wrote a poem, for the *Entertainer*, about "A Summer Night," together with "Items of Interest," and an Editorial about the romantic night-life of Tom, the family cat. She also wrote "A British Chieftain's Story," a stirring tale about Celtic resistance to Roman imperialism, and a pastoral meditation called "The Coming of Spring." Arthur contributed "Dance of the Elves," a piece of piano music that plays tunefully, illustrated by a drawing with watercolours. Robert drew a pencil sketch of his father asleep in his chair, entitled "Forty Winks," and a treatise on "Six British Trees," describing their identifying features, timber qualities, habitat and useful purposes. By this time, as they had lost Isabella, their mother, Lena had become their senior, but distant, female adviser and role model.

Molly went on to write and publish poems and short stories about local characters in the distinctive dialect and idiom of the North Riding of Yorkshire. She kept a letter from her printer/publisher, Horne and Sons Ltd, offering to make a book of 32 pages, plus a cover. "You could make quite a good profit," they said, "if you sold at 2/- but you could easily earn 2/6... we shall appreciate your instructions... Candidly we **Do** like the poems." She went on writing all her life, but trained as a nurse and midwife.

The Entertainer summons up a picture of relatively well educated and energetic Edwardian family life. This was a family keen to demonstrate its literary and artistic talents in a small isolated industrial community. For my mother, Edith, meeting the Youngs was an exhilarating experience, and she took an early interest in Robert, just two years older than herself. Both of them shared a strong Christian faith and a spirit of adventure. From 1915 onwards they met regularly during school holidays. Edith found herself to be, in effect, a member of this studious and deeply Christian family. She left school when she was fourteen and trained first as a typist before she trained as a teacher in London.

Robert was a student at Pickering Grammar School when he first met Edith. After school Rob went to Durham University to train as a teacher and to read theology, in preparation for a missionary career and ordination in the Anglican Church.

My parents must have fallen gradually in love, as they looked forward repeatedly to holiday reunions. But from 1919, when they became engaged, until 1926 when they got married, theirs was a romance of constant longing. Much of their holiday time was spent at Rosedale. Rob used to ride down from Durham on his bicycle, a distance of 70 miles, while Edith travelled with Lena by busses and trains from Hull. Soon Rob and Edith developed a plan to work together as missionaries, and applied for membership of the Anglican Church Missionary Society. The *Hull Daily Mail* summarised Edith's education and new ambitions in a news item printed on 21 April 1926. There was to be a "send-off at Holy Trinity Church, in Hull, to Miss E Laycock, who is leaving Hull next week to take up work in Sierra Leone."



My parents' wedding, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1926.

Funds had been raised by girls of the Auxiliary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS):

...thus sending Miss Laycock, who was for four years a typist, to the Hull Training College, where she was very successful, and was the only student of her year to be accepted by the London County Council as a teacher. Later she attended the Kennedy Hall, London, for special training. She is taking up work in the government schools in Sierra Leone, and is also to conduct missionary work.

There were various speakers at the occasion. One of them was the Rev Dr DJ Jordon, who sought to explain the link between mission work and education. "He looked upon Miss Laycock as a modern missionary. Modern missionaries looked at things in a new way. Education and Medical missions were quite as necessary as evangelisation." Edith was excited at the prospect. "Her work would be to superintend the native schools, and would mean constant travelling around the outlying school districts. Many of these schools had not seen other teachers for years. She would also hold missionary services, and form Girl Guides and scouts."

By this time both Rob and Edith had devoted a lot of thought to preparing themselves to work as partners, wherever God decided to send them. Edith always thought of herself, not merely as a missionary's wife, but as a missionary in her own right. Much later, in 1966 she gave a talk to an Anglican congregation in Broadstairs, about the excitement of her first assignment. After much uncertainty about their destination, she found herself on board *MV Aba* heading out alone, from Liverpool for Freetown. Robert was to join her later on another ship. She explained why:



Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1926.

I had offered to the CMS for missionary work, and as I was a teacher, there were many places where I might have been sent. In fact I was already located for Hong Kong, when there came from Sierra Leone a most unusual request for two married teachers to supervise bush schools.

I was not then married, but I was engaged, and my fiancé was also a teacher. But in those days the mission required four years unmarried service before allowing its missionaries to marry, so as we were quite young we had agreed to this condition. Then came this most unexpected request, and CMS looked round and found that they did not have two married teachers, but we were the nearest, we were engaged, and so they came to us and said "Will you get married and go and do this job?" We could only say, "this is the Lord's Doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

But being of a somewhat practical turn of mind, I then asked the mission doctor, "What happens if I have a baby?" You see, this was the "white man's grave," and no white children were allowed there. No one apparently had thought of that contingency, and no answer was forthcoming, but instead of going together, my fiancé was kept back to do a short medical course and I was sent on ahead to see if I could stand the climate.

She also revealed that she "was closely chaperoned by a senior woman missionary, who was returning to Lagos as head of one of the girls' schools there." Rob did come some weeks later, and they were married on 5 September 1926 at the Bishop Crowther Church in Freetown.

Edith had never enjoyed herself so much in her life. "Even seasickness has its compensations," she wrote, "when you regard it as a new experience... At least one had the great privilege of living dangerously." In July she wrote two circular letters to the friends she had left behind in Hull, and, reading them, I felt her delight



Our house at Bunumbu.

at a new and very different place, its warmth and colour, the sights of mountains and palm trees, canoes alongside the *MV Aba* in this still very underdeveloped African port. "We anchored some distance from the shore, because there is as yet no harbour at Freetown... it almost seemed that the hills were pushing the town into the sea, so close did they rise up above the houses."

There was the strangeness of black people speaking a swathe of languages, and the combination of pleasure with the company of the several expat communities, commercial, missionary, educational, government, and military, and revulsion at most of their attitudes towards native people. She played tennis, and won against her languid opponents, and enjoyed ping pong and bathing:

We have a lovely little beach just below the House, from which we may bathe as long as we take care to keep out of the way of the sharks. We went across to Bishop's Court, and found tennis in progress there so we joined in. Dr Lowe, (a recent female medical Graduate from St Andrew's Hospital in Edinburgh) and I played a set against Mr Humphrey, a Fourah Bay College Tutor, and a Mr Herd, one of the Government people, and we not only beat them, but I won my service with a love game. It's dreadful to crow like this isn't it? But it was lovely to achieve something on my first day in Africa, which I had never done in England.

She also went bush walking in the hope of seeing a leopard, "but we had no such luck." At the same time, she sensed the racism of a dominant colonial culture, and hated it.

The average white man here regards the African as a different species of animal from himself... I think part of our job, as missionaries, is to foster a better understanding between the races, but I think we shall only do it as we mix freely with both, for you don't convince people on mere philanthropic theories.



Parson's Piece, Hawley, Hampshire, where I was born.

And mix she did. So did Rob. Very poorly equipped “bush schools” had been established for some time in the Protectorate that surrounded the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone. Their indigenous teachers relied for books, advice, supplies, medical help, assessment, and encouragement on regular visits from the surprisingly ecumenical cluster of Christian mission stations that had been established at Bunumbu, a village in the territory of the Mende people, a short distance from the Liberian border. Methodists, mostly American, worked with British Anglicans and the United Christian Council to establish a teachers’ training college; this was eventually achieved with the founding of Union College in 1933. My parents walked along bush paths, in the absence of roads. Edith sometimes got carried in a hammock, but it made her feel uncomfortable, as she disliked the customary racial divide in principle, and this was appreciated. She kept a letter she received in 1932 from Ncole, an ordained convert who then ran the parish of Waterloo, to congratulate her on the birth of my sister, Heather Margaret Young, the previous year.

Ncole had attended the CMS grammar school in Freetown in 1879, and had then returned to his native village, where Rob had recently visited and preached. He says the baby “Margaret” (Heather’s second name), should have been given an African name:

... as it is the custom to give names in the language of tribal areas in which children are born. Please give our baby my kiss of peace. I always give all the children whom I baptised this kiss of peace. Kindly give your daughter this for me, and tell her it comes from a Darkey.

With warm Xtian affection and regards, I am yours ever sincerely, Ncole.

Rob and Edith returned to England together in 1928. They had proved that it was possible to lead a healthy life in the “White Man’s Grave” and they continued to commute between England and Sierra Leone for about two years each time, with six month “furloughs.” Back in England, Edith trawled the length of Harley Street in search of up to date advice about contraception. She found Marie Stopes herself, and for five years my parents managed to postpone pregnancy, but not without stress. At Christmas time in 1930, they conceived for the first time, and my sister, Heather was safely delivered in a London hospital the following September. Heather went back to Sierra Leone with them as a very small infant. Two “house-boys,” Ali and Bokery were employed to help with housework, gardening and child care. Furloughs were spent now at Cropton, five miles from Rosedale, where Henry taught for a short time before retirement; then at Lockton, five miles north of Pickering, just off the Whitby road.

Edith fell pregnant with me at Christmas time 1933, and as September 1934 approached, plans for my delivery had to be thought about. Molly, who was by this time a professional midwife, advised a home birth, since Edith was in good shape, and Molly was more than happy to officiate. Heather was also in good health, demonstrating the fact that white infants could survive in West Africa, so it was decided that all four of us should go to Sierra Leone this time. Passages were booked for early in October. It was then discovered that the CMS owned a most convenient

property in the village of Hawkley in Hampshire; and this well maintained, capacious, thatched eighteenth century dwelling was offered to my whole family. The days of waiting for my birth were short, and by all accounts that I have heard, a wide choice of names were discussed, causing considerable mirth. Molly wanted me to be called Michael, because a senior guardian angel might be good thing to have in your corner in an emergency, and the name “Render” would acknowledge Isabella, Rob’s mother. Neither name, though, could be easily shouted over a long distance. A boy was hoped for, and that would be important. So they hit on John, the name of Jesus’ fondest disciple, and an easy word to shout, which was, they thought, bound to be necessary. I was born on 20 September 1934. Ten days later, my parents, Heather and I, now dubbed John Michael Render Young, were on board *MV Apapa*, and off down the Irish Sea from Liverpool, bound for Freetown.

My memories of Sierra Leone are few and flash-like. But I remember Ali and Bockery; Ali wheeling me in a push-chair and Bockery jogging down a bush path with me on his shoulders. I have spent quite a lot of my life, so far, with coloured people, and I have always felt comfortable and safe in their company, which I put down to the care and affection of those two young men. I remember the village dwellings close to our house. I used to think that our house must have been built of concrete but it was probably mud brick. It had a roof and verandah of corrugated iron anyway.

I do remember a voyage, looking down on a flat calm ocean, but which voyage that was I have no idea. There was time for two “tours” of eighteen months in Bunumbu before I would have to go to school. There is an old photograph of me dragging a black and white wooden dog called Reggie across the deck. Reggie was cleverly made so that as I pulled it along, its legs walked.

It was decided in 1938, in the shadow of war, that we children should return to Lockton for the rest of the summer and that Edith would return at the end of the



Me with “Poro” boys in background. The Poro is a male secret society in Sierra Leone, introduced by the Mende people.



Me on board *MV Apapa* with my toy dog, Reggie, 1937.

six months furlough, with Rob, to Sierra Leone. I would stay at Lockton, with Molly and our Grandfather Henry. Heather had already started school as a boarder at St Michael's, a day and boarding school which had been built at Limpsfield in Surrey, especially for the children of missionaries. It started with a kindergarden, and went on to Year 12. Heather would join us at Lockton in the holidays.

Our parents' departure for Sierra Leone is one of my worst memories. I sulked all the way in the bus from Lockton to Pickering, then to Malton where we got a train to York. We changed platforms for my parents to catch the first of a series of trains that took them to Liverpool. The train finally came in and I just said "But Africa's Too Far!" and burst into tears. I can remember now the prickly feel of my mother's fox fur as I clung to her and buried my head in her bosom as she did her best to comfort and soothe me.

Molly thought the best way to cheer us up would be to wipe away our tears and take us to have our photographs taken. And that did work—a bit. Back home in Lockton I expressed my grief and anger by climbing onto the kitchen table and pissing on the floor. Molly snatched me off the table and said that was a terrible thing to do and very wrong. I must say sorry immediately. She has mimicked me many times since then, in the North Yorkshire dialect I quickly acquired in Lockton. "A Weant say ut," said I. "Well we can't have supper 'til you do," said Molly. "Say Sorry to your Ant Molly." "A weant say ut," and so on as she took me in her arms and walked round the kitchen with me perched on her hip. In the end I got hungry, and I leant over her shoulder and whispered in her ear, "Sally Mally." "That's better," said Molly. "It'll do for now," and we sat down for the evening meal.

My "Ant" Molly was in fact, a saint. Not only as a person of deep religious faith but by her works. Like many women who reached maturity at the end of the First World War, she found it difficult to find the kind of husband she wanted and deserved. So she invented a man for herself. His name was Angus, and as children, we got to know him quite well. He was a countryman with parochial loyalties who knew a lot about North Country folklore, and liked listening to Molly's poems in Yorkshire dialect. Politically he was egalitarian, though I doubt he would vote for a labour party. He was fond of the glories of nature; good with his hands. A useful kind of man who enjoyed telling stories. A bit like Christ really.

Grandad Henry thought it might be a good idea to have a bit of home schooling in preparation for going to school. I wasn't impressed, so he said, "Alright, let's just talk about things instead." That sounded a better idea. He was a long term subscriber to the American National Geographical Magazine, which used to send out beautiful maps of countries, oceans, and continents all over the world. So we sat down with a map of the North Atlantic on the floor and talked about scale, latitude and longitude, contours, compasses, tropics and bearings. I still have that map, with a long curving row of red dots I made with a crayon as we plotted the course my parents had taken to West Africa in *Apapa*; across the Bay of Biscay, past the Spanish peninsula, around the bulge of the Sahara desert, and into Freetown

harbour. "Look what a lot you've learnt," said Grandad, "without even having any lessons at all."

We did more things during successive holidays that I don't remember in the proper order. I "helped" Grandad make concrete paving tiles for a path across the back yard to the outdoor privy, and a swing off the branch of a tree in the corner of the paddock behind the vegetable garden. I enjoyed it so much that I got over-enthusiastic and fell off it at its height and into a bed of nettles.

My father once brought back with him a model of a dugout canoe like the ones that came out to the ships in Freetown. I took it to bed with me. I figured that it might take a lot of time, but it was theoretically possible to make such a craft by shaping and hollowing out a log myself. Since it was built of wood I was sure it would float. There were problems, to be sure, but I read more maps and followed the moorland beck down to the River Seven in the Vale of Pickering and on past York to the Humber estuary. How could I go wrong with my unsinkable all wood canoe?

I began to eye off suitable trees and talk about Muckanoo (my canoe), the craft I would build to re-join my parents. Grandad diverted my interest in shaving and hollowing tools into making bows and arrows, with feathers from Ant Moll's chooks: Faith, Hope, Charity, and Mrs Wardle, who was named after the woman who had given her to Molly. I had a friend called Colin, who had a bicycle, and I soon became a bit of a marksman. I managed one day to shoot an arrow close to the ground to go through the spokes of the front wheel just behind the forks, which had the splendid result of causing Colin to fly over the handlebars and land, luckily, in the soft grass of the paddock.

After returning from Sierra Leone, Mother took a flat in Limpsfield, near the school, and it was hoped away from the expected bombing of London. This arrangement



On the swing my grandfather built for me in Lockton.

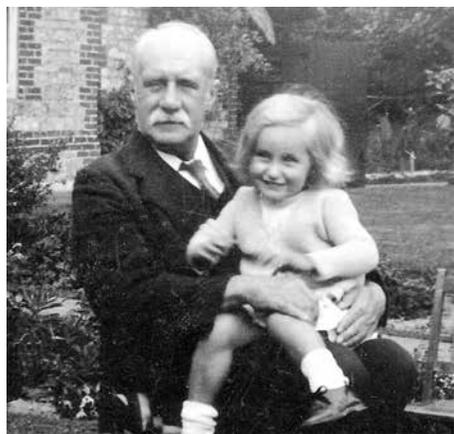


My "Ants," Lena (L) and Molly.

enabled her to engage vigorously in “Deputation Work,” in other words, fundraising, for the CMS. It meant public speaking, which she was very good at, and a lot of travel all over Britain, both of which she enjoyed. It helped her to feel that she was doing the best she could to support her husband and fulfil her own part of the missionary vocation they shared.

In September 1939, just weeks before I turned five, it was time to start boarding school kindergarten at St Michael’s, after a long train journey to London, across London in the tube, then to Limpsfield, close to the North Downs. The other kids asked me where I came from, so naturally, I told them I came from Africa. That is where I had been for most of my life. I was fairly dark skinned anyway. Someone else thought my surname must be spelt “Yung,” and concluded that I was really Chinese. All these identity problems were made worse by my broad North Yorkshire dialect, so it was a while before I made friends and felt integrated. I was teased about my accent so I told a crowd of my school friends they had better shut up because I had a knife in my pocket and they had better watch out. We were in the corridor just outside the office of Mr Williams, the Headmaster, and hearing the ruckus he came out to find me with my pocket knife in my hand and the blade opened, as the crowd vanished. My parents had explained that bad behaviour at school could be punished in various ways, so I was not surprised when I was told to come into his study to be caned. I determined not to cry, and succeeded, but I have thought since then that it was a bit rough for a five year old. He took my knife too, but he gave it back at the end of term.

Not that St Michael’s was a harsh school. Soon I enjoyed it because my mother had already taught me to read, and I found learning was good fun. A lot of it was rote learning, of tables, and later of conjugations. Children just enjoy the rhythm, and can learn without effort. Then they can begin to think. I must have been six or seven when I began to learn French and Latin, and anyway I was in love. The object of my affection was a beautiful young black woman called Miss Newsome, a



Grandfather Henry and Heather.



My grandfather (L) and my father.

teacher from Jamaica, who taught us nearly everything. Beginning with the classic experiment of growing the broad bean, she went on to deal in the most confident and least embarrassing way I have ever experienced, with plants, animals and humans, their anatomy and bodily functions, including reproduction. I began to read more widely. Another missionary family, Geoffrey and Dora Rogers, and their four children introduced Heather and me, to Arthur Ransome’s *Swallows and Amazons*, the first of a series of children’s classics that Jonathan Cape succeeded in persuading Ransome to complete, in time for every Christmas, every year. The stories were all about children my age having the time of their lives in wooden boats. They used only sails and oars, and regarded engines as positively sinful. Villains and enemies were cast as wasteful, noisy people, like the Hullabaloo of *Coot Club*, and the young, working class, petty criminals, of the *Big Six*. The books promoted high ethical standards and helped countless worried parents to keep their minds off the war. Ransome was also a countryman, who had the knack of sharing his sense of ecological appreciation and of “place” with his readers, without them even knowing it. For me, and my sister Heather, they were part of growing up.

I asked the glorious Miss Newsome if she would establish a Wolf Cub pack for us. She just said, “Yes, of course!” and got on with it. Soon we all had uniforms and were into the Mowgli stories, and learning how to track animals, and light fires with only one match.

Though Heather and I continued to see our mother at weekends at the Limpsfield flat, the school was keen to establish in us the necessary habit, for a missionary family, of writing regular letters every week, and a special time was set aside to ensure that silence was observed and the letters were obediently written. Heather, by this time was writing eloquent epistles, with no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. My efforts were not so promising. One of them survives:

Dear Mummy and Daddy,

On Monday I played Rugger. On Tuesday I played Rugger. On Wednesday I played Rugger. On Friday I did not play Rugger. Lots of Love from John.

So not so long after the story of the pig and the crocodile came about, a bit of growing up had been done, but not much.