

2 Brompton lads; 1899 and 1928

The first did not talk about himself very much, unlike the second. This may help his descendants to know him better.

Horace Appleby, was born 15th September 1899 to Tom and Martha, in a High End cottage in Brompton, Northallerton, where the garden went down to the beck from which the Linen Factories drew water. He was very much the junior of the family, joining an older sister Mabel and step sister Bertha. Physically small, he was brought up in the disciplines of a Wesleyan family with loyalties to the factory owners. A bright lad at the village school, he graduated with one of only two Kettlewell charity scholarships in 1912, aged 12, to Northallerton Grammar School, founded in the 13th century as a choir school.

Two years later the nation was at war against the Germans. Horace volunteered as a 15 year old boy sailor in the Royal Navy and reported to HMS Ganges on 15th March 1915. His records, J39046, describe him as 5' 3" height, 34" chest, light brown hair, grey eyes, fresh complexion and mole on inside right arm.



Horace pictured while on attachment to the Royal Australian Navy on HMAS Sydney.

He served from 1915, aged 15, to 1920 and 7 years in reserve.

Kitted out and square bashing completed, he then went to HMS Impregnable for further training on the very latest technology of the century; wireless telegraphy. So started his naval career on the 21st May until 17th July and on 21st Oct 1915 he went from Boy Sailor to Boy Telegraphist. The newly trained technician reported to HMS Victory1 on 22nd Oct 1915 to finish the first stage of training and he signed a Statement of temporary Service to the Royal Australian Navy.

He reported to the cruiser HMAS Sydney, the largest ship in the newly created Australian Navy with six warships in 1913. Not as a Boy Sailor

now but as Ordinary Seaman Telegraphist on 14th Jan 1916 to 6th Dec 1917. On 30th Sept 1917 he returned to HMS Victory1 for 3 weeks further training and back to the Sydney as Leading Telegraphist Horace Appleby 39046; the rank he held until his discharge on 24th April 1920.



From the Sydney he went from ship to ship; I can only assume he was passing on his training to others. Those with his level of knowledge and skills would be few and far between then. On 13th Dec 1917 he returned to the Royal Navy at HMAS Depot London and reported to HMS Defiance on the 14th as a British Tar again. He must have been very

happy about that and celebrated excessively earning himself 7 days in the cells. From the Defiance, he went to Europa11 for 5 months, followed by Cormorant Oct 1918 to May 1919. He went overboard again on New Years Day 1919 and collected another 14 days in the cells. Getting to like it by now, eh? From the Cormorant he was 4 months on the Chrysanthemum and collected his gratuity on Sept 1919 aboard HMS Bryony. He was 4 months on Vivid after this and 2 weeks on Revenge before getting his discharge. In all, 5 years active service and still only 20 years old. His records say 12 years service, so he must have been on reserve for 7 years, taking it to 1927. That's when our mam, Mary Hoare and him were married in Brompton and I made my appearance the following year at 15 Water End, the first of a family of five children. Could have been that they planned to wait until his reserve was over before they married. Two doors away in the two bedroom cottage at number 19, Mary's mother Agatha Hoare lived with her husband John, her young sister Retta and her four brothers Danny, Johnny, Edgar and Desmond. She had brought them all up on her own while John was away fighting in France. He had also fought in the South African Boer War, injured there, awarded an invalidity pension and was again injured in France. She put in a strong claim on me, her first grandchild, and I was known by some in later years as one of hers when I went back to live with her and work for Danny. She has given me so much.

The great depression in 1929 - 32, the worst ever, was approaching. Even worse than what we are going through now in 2008. Jobs were being cut and the only work Horace could get was as a porter on Northallerton station. The railways were still expanding, even in those bad times. It wasn't long before his job was also cut but he was offered the same job at Hawes in Wensleydale. Mary and her mother Agatha had been working part time for Miss Fairburn in Northallerton, who Mary had worked for as maid companion before her marriage. They were now living in one of Miss Fairburn's houses in Northallerton and had a lodger; Harry Mitchinson. It was a big decision. They made the break and everything they had was put on the train for Hawes.

We moved into a middle cottage in the small hillside village of Burtersett about 2 miles outside Hawes. The sheep looked into our bedroom windows from the steep field outside. I was not yet two, and a bit on the fat side. My mam and I went into Hawes for shopping and would walk back with my dad, when he finished work, up the steep hill home. In those days the dales railway was very busy. It carried most of the traffic up and down to the villages. Farm animals and birds, race horses and racing pigeons, mail, papers, building materials, food and supplies; pretty well everything went by rail. Mam and I were there when they were loading cattle onto trains and one of my first observations was "daddy carry moos chuchoo." My dad's pal at work was Tom Wood and he offered to lend us the money to buy the cottage we were renting from Mrs Metcalfe. We were only there 6 months when a permanent job of Warehouse porter was offered at York and my dad accepted. My grandma Agatha had made several visits while we were there but my mother was very home sick and they thought York would be better for getting home to Brompton.

Once again, everything was loaded on a train and off we went to rooms with Mrs Gallagher in Wellington Street, near the cattle market in York. I think John would be due or already here by then and we moved again into a rented house in Rose Street, Haxby Road. All I know about that is that my dad woke during the first night and his hair was standing on end. Switching on the light, the floor was covered in bugs which disappeared in a flash. The fumigators were called in. John would be with us by now and we were offered a better house at 27 Kingsland Road, Leeman Road. It was just a short walk from the railway warehouse; my dad's work place.

Some of my earliest memories are from here. The railway yards were behind a wall of rail sleepers, on end at the other side of the road and there was a bus stop there. We had a back yard with a back lane through the yard door. I watched the people in the bus queue through our keyhole and got a styne on my eye. It had reached maturity and throbbed. My mam wanted to bathe it in Boracic powder and I was very much against that. I escaped into the back lane and raced her round the lane and front street before being caught and subjected to the torture. I remember a boy called Derick Harey and the Sunday School at the church. I also have a vague recollection of soup being served there. I may have attended St Barnabas school but I aren't sure. Mam and dad became friendly with the Rosewarne family, who lived at the end of Kingsland Terrace next to Boyes the diary. They were a Quaker family involved in the labour party. Mr Rosewarne was a train driver and, when they were on the same shift, they walked together to work. Their oldest son Arthur took me to a childrens' group at the Co-op buildings in Rougier Street. Flora was on her way and we needed an extra bedroom. That must have been the deciding factor in us getting a council house and we moved again to number 280 Fifth Avenue in 1934. It was a god sent answer to our needs and I can't help thinking there is a crying need now for all those Maggie Thatcher got rid of to be replaced. Bring back the prefabs.

It had 3 good bedrooms, a proper bathroom, toilet and a good sized garden. The rent was controlled by the council, not at the whim of a private landlord and all repairs and maintenance were carried out by them. There are many

young people with small families today who would be better off in life with the same. Instead, they struggle against rising property prices to get their feet on the first rung of the property ladder, only to lose it when the markets plummet. After a short time attending Heworth school, until Fifth Avenue was included in the York Council area, all five of us John, Flora, Harry and David all went to Tang Hall Schools and grew up in Fifth Avenue. The youngest, David, was born at the start of the second world war. I was 11 and John 9. We were regular tattie pickers in the October holidays, mainly in Heslington. We also picked peas, carrots and snagged turnips. It helped towards the winter school clothes from the Co-op on a mutuality cheque which Mr Varley called for weekly. I think we got some help from the council too and had free milk and dinners at school. My dad earned £4 a week at the outbreak of war. He had to buy a bike after moving so far from the warehouse and they hadn't a lot to raise five children on.

He was small in his size six boots, filled the big garden with all sorts of veg and soft fruit, leaving just a small area for chrysanthems and sweet peas, which I used to sell to neighbours in the street. My mam's brother Danny was doing well in his fruit and veg business at Brompton and he called with winter veg and plants for the garden on his way home from the wholesale fruit market at Leeds. We attended the Sunday School at St Hildas and John and I took the younger ones to Tang Hall Park to play on the swings. I passed my eleven plus to go to Nunthorpe Grammar School in September 1939. The year war broke out.

John was a very unlucky lad when it came to play. He fell out of trees, rolled on broken glass hidden in long grass and had countless other ways of getting hurt. We were working up a long swing which other kids sat on in the park. When it was swinging back and forth to a good height, he got his knee caught under the heavy plank the kids sat on. I had to take Harry out of his push chair and put John in. He cried all the way home and most of the night and was taken to the County Hospital the following day where his leg was put in plaster. We still had a deep pram so he was put in that during the day and learned to propel it by turning the wheels and grabbing one side wheel to turn in that direction. He was diagnosed with TB and put in the Fairfield Hospital on Shipton Road for two years. Eight at the time, it stopped him from getting to a grammar school. Never the less, he has done very well for himself, his wife Alma and his family of six. Now retired in Folkestone he was Clerk of Works with the Dept of Environment and responsible for much work at home and abroad. His last job, for which they kept him on after retirement age, was at Dover Castle. Flora made it to Mill Mount Grammar and Harry to The old Archbishop Holgate Grammar. David went into a trade too, as electrician and did well. Both he and John worked on the early warning station on Fylingdale Moor near Whitby and John lived there with his family during that period.

When war started and most young men were called up into the forces, my dad moved up as a goods guard and worked in that job all through the war. He was often away for long periods, sometimes 76 hours in the guards van at the back of trains full of essential war equipment or supplies. He was away on the night of the big raid on York; a lovely bright moonlit night. I was responsible, with

my mam on such occasions, for getting all the others out of bed and into the air raid shelter in the back garden. Mr Dale next door came to see that we were alright and I went to the front gate with him. The bombers were diving over the city, dropping their bombs and turning back over our side of city before going back with more bombs and strafing. Mr Jameson, a maths masters at Nunthorpe, was killed by bullets in his bed on Leeman Road. On that particular night our shelter was full of water and we sheltered under the farmhouse table we had in the living room.

John and I did all we could in those days to get money for our parents on farms, selling excess stuff from the garden and mushrooms we got up early to collect. When i was 14 I had a window cleaning round of 40 customers round Tang hall and Burnholme until some kind person reported me for not being insured. I went on a farm 'holiday' to a farm at Wixley for a fortnight. My arms were sore lifting sheaves of barley and propping them into stooks to dry out. Breakfast was at 7 o'clock but before that I had been out chopping down thistles in the meadows. In the evening, the farmer let me have his bike and I went down to the village looking for a bit of company. Preferably female. I also worked long hours at the P O sorting office, helping to sort christmas mail for a couple of weeks each year. On one occasion, I went from there to the station on Christmas Eve. My mother sent me with a pudding and mincemeat to take to my grandma at Brompton, with a privilege ticket from the yard masters office. I fell asleep in the warmth of the train and slept through to Darlington; spent the night on the station before catching the first train back on Christmas Day, I fell asleep again to Thirsk, caught another train back to Northallerton. I had to walk to Brompton and arrived through the allotments, past the Green Tree, at 11.30am.

My dad worked long hours at work and in the large garden. He helped in the house and rarely went out. He cut our hair, mended our shoes, and clogs in winter. The longest rest he got was in bed with lumbago and even then he was knitting socks for us. We went to Brompton for our weeks holiday on free passes, except for one time when we went to a cousin on his mother's side in Scarborough called Stockdale. In between holidays, I went to Brompton regularly, either to take something or bring something back. So much so, as I was older, that I was as much at home there as I was at York. I was spoilt by my grandma and I got the things which were just not possible at home like crisps, dandelion and burdock from the shop and fish and chips from Polly Christan's. I had plenty of good pals; Stan Shepherd, Claude Marchant, Geof Forth and many others. There were girls too like Gladys Marchant, Violet Britain, the Browns and Darbishires up town. The other big thing for me was that uncle Danny always found me work with the hens, pigs and, as I got bigger, with one of them on rounds or in the market. I loved it and got a bit of pocket money too.

So it was that I left school as soon as I could and got out to earn my living. After office jobs in York, at Colmans builders in Clifton, the Water Works offices under Lendal Bridge and Shepherds in Blue Bridge Lane, I went to work for Danny full time before doing my National Service in The RAF between Jan 1st 1947 to May 1949. Before leaving the RAF I had rekindled an old friendship

with Sylvia Wroe and made up my mind that i wanted her to be my wife, if she would have me. I had known her since we were 7 or 8 and met her boyfriend from St Johns College when we joined the RAF together. I made my mind up then that he was not good enough for her and started to see her regularly on my weekend leave from RAF Warton to York in 1948.



George served national service Jan, 1947 to May 1949 pictured flying his Hillman Bantam 30 cwt truck round the hangers at RAF Warton between Preston and Blackpool, but was never given his wings. He skirmished on the beaches of Blackpool.

After my demob, I decided to stay in York and get into a fruit and veg business of my own to be near Sylvia. I made a start, without any savings, working at Rowntrees on nights and buying a bit of fruit to take round on a barrow during the day. Then I rented a mule and flat

cart from Billy Ridsdale in Osbaldwick, a railway driver my dad knew who had a small holding. I had to catch him, harness him up in the cart and feed him. I had the produce i bought stored in the old brick air raid shelter at the back of 280 Fifth Ave and tethered Jimmy in the grass lane, behind the big gates at the side of our house. He settled in very well and the customers loved him, particularly when he supplied them with steaming fertiliser for their roses, right outside their house. He had several addresses which he favoured, one of which was that of Sylvia's best friend Barbara Leadhill and that formed the lasting friendship I had with her dad Charlie.

After a couple of years, when I had developed a good round, Danny offered me the old pre-war, Morris Commercial 30 cwt builders tipping lorry which he bought from Sir Hugh Bell at Harlsey to see him through the war. Two of his lorries were commandeered for the war effort. Whilst I loved Jimmy and he loved me, I decided to take up Danny's offer. It gave me the option of going to Kirkgate market at Leeds and buying, often direct from growers, at better prices than the wholesalers in York were able to give me. I called the old lorry Sir Hugh and it was fitted with a top sheet roof so it was ideal for hawking. It was a bit basic though, being so old. The brakes were delayed action and the screen wipers only worked when you took your foot off the accelerator. More so when it was loaded. However, although my customers and I were very sorry to retire Jimmy the mule, it made a big difference to my business options. I started to buy for a couple of other retailers and took on a market stall in Parliament Street on Saturdays.

Soon after this I read an advert in the Press by a family living in a rented, unused shop and house in Townend Street, the Groves. They wanted to

exchange with a family in a 3 bedroom council house. Sylvia and I were pretty much a couple now and it was just a matter of time before we married. She agreed that it would be a good move and we could get married and she could work in the shop. We talked it over with my parents and hers and they agreed so we had a look at it and it had three bedrooms and two attics. This meant that Sylvia and I could have a bedroom and a sitting room of our own until we found a place of our own and we went ahead. Flora and the other lads were all at home. David and Harry were still at school, John worked on the maintenance staff as a joiner at the Retreat and Flora on the NCR machines in the Treasurers department of the City Council. It was a good move for my dad and Flora getting to work and for Harry to Archbishop Holgates School. David got in at Haxby Road school and John had his bike so it didn't make a lot of difference to him.

We had a lot to do to the shop. It had been a fish shop some time before and there were several thick, waxed wallpapers, each releasing an ingrained smell of fish. They were difficult to remove and new shelves, counter and fittings were required before we could open. We used local craftsmen and did as much as we could ourselves, but the costs depleted our funds. We needed to open quickly for the extra earnings. The market stall was a good help but we had no outlet for anything left when we packed up there. I started to attend Thirsk on Mondays and Northallerton on Wednesdays. That helped, and I had a few more shops to supply on my return from Kirkgate wholesale market at Leeds. The wedding was planned for Saturday the 24th of June and we had hoped to have the shop up and running by then but we didn't make it.

On the day before the big day, I took Sir Hugh to load up at Leeds and supply my wholesale customers for the weekend. The load included a lot of strawberries and soft fruit from the local growers who came into Leeds. Calamity!! Catastrophe!! Sir Hugh broke down coming out of Leeds at Crossgates, and they needed a full day to get him running. I had to get home by bus and arrange to return on Sunday morning, because I was getting married the next day on Saturday. My wholesale customers needed to be told about the situation and I had to prepare myself for the wonderful bride I was marrying at Heworth church. We hadn't arranged a honeymoon so the trip to Leeds for Sir Hugh and my strawberries would be our honeymoon. So it happened.

The wedding and reception were said by many among the hundred guests to be the best they had been to. It started to spit with rain while the photos were taken and we just got into the hall before it started with thunder. The wooden scout hut between Heworth Hall Drive and Heworth Village was rented for the do and everybody shared their resources. Mothers and aunts were baking and preparing food right up to the early hours of the night before, and the males were taking it all down to the hall on my rubber wheeled barrow. Everything was still in short supply so soon after the war and a lot was still rationed. Billy Barker, the butcher at the end of Sylvia's road, gave us a cow's tongue. Robert Grey, at the shop where she worked previously, gave us two chickens. Clothes coupons and food rations were swapped and tins of salmon, spam and anything else that they had. Pottery, Knives forks and spoons were lent, with

different coloured cotton round the handles to distinguish whose they were. All the tables and chairs had to be put out, put away afterwards and left tidy. Sylvia's Aunt Mary made her wedding dress. She had a fawn silk dress with flowers, fawn coat and brown shoes for afterwards. Our sisters Margeret and Flora had turquoise dresses and posies of sweet peas with the same head dresses. Sylvia's was a long trailing bouquet of tea roses and red roses which cost twenty five shillings from Fulford cemetery. (One pound twenty five pence in todays money)

Two people known to Aunt Doris who said they would come and serve on, didn't turn up and Doris and Sylvia's mam Gertie had to take over, helped by other guests. Wines and beer were bought in and there were two or three piano players amongst us. The meal was sit down followed by those with party pieces doing their thing, jokes were told, singing and dancing began and it was a wonderful occasion going on until midnight, and costing very little.

We went back to our new home in one bedroom and an attic at the shop house and got up early next morning for our trip to Leeds. The garage was paid and we returned, put a trestle outside the shop and sold off the strawberries cheap. Then we had to concentrate on getting the shop open. Davidsons, potato merchants from Murton, delivered a ton of their best into the brick store in the back yard, I set out the window, shelves and compartments with all the best products available at Leeds, with price tickets, and Sylvia, my mam and I were ready for what we hoped was a good response from locals. We were not disappointed. We quickly became very busy and people came from a wide area. We were pleasantly surprised that among them were Miss Vaux of the north east brewery firm and Peter Rowntree of the chocolate family as regulars.

By now, our mam and dad were getting out to the theatre and a single drink together. John developed a love for classic music, through accompanying patients from the Retreat with their nurses to concerts. He treated us all with his favourite records while laying in bed on Sunday mornings and everything was going well. Unfortunately, Sir Hugh, the old estate lorry from Sir Hugh Bell's estate at Harlsey, which had served Danny so well during the war when he lost two of his lorries to the war effort, came to the end of his useful life with me. My most regular grower, Philip Thorne at Cawood, who I bought fresh veg and soft fruit from, told me of a second hand Commer near him. I got rid of Sir Hugh and bought the 3 ton Commer, with a view to wholesale and market trade, leaving the shop in the hands of Sylvia and my mam. I started going to Hull and bidding for fruit straight from the ships getting some good buys.

Sylvia was soon pregnant with Ruth and we were happy but our situation had changed a lot now. The Commer was taking most of what I could earn. We sold the business to my mother for one pound and Danny would call on his way back from Leeds wholesale market with fresh produce for her twice a week. Flora finished her job at the council and helped in the shop. I got a job with a farmer, potato and carrot merchant at Allerthorpe near Pocklington. Jimmy O'gram employed me to buy from farmers for him and sell to wholesalers. He provided me with a ford V8 car and I took up residence in the small office just

inside his house gates. I stayed for a couple of years, during which time my mam and dad bought the house and shop, which had been rented. John got married, we got a terrace house across the road and enjoying our baby daughter Ruth. Things were very settled.

I was doing good trade for Jimmy and getting about quite a bit. I bought onions from South Cave, potatoes, carrots and beetroot wherever I could find them, sold them on in Newcastle and Leeds. I picked up potato pickers in York for his own crops, took them back at night and cut the hair of Jimmy's father. The trouble was I was on my own in that tiny little office when I wasn't out and about and it was boring.

On one of Danny's calls at the shop, he was asking how I was getting on and I said I might look for something else. He had lost some of his help and the next time he called he said if I wanted to come back to him, he could get me a new council house at Brompton so think about it. We decided to go.

The house was 38 Hilton Green, modern three bedroom semi and Mr and Mrs Tom Jobling with their son Vernon lived next door. Fred and Freda Wetherill were on the other side. Danny bought me a new bike to get me to and from work and a new bed to be sure I got there fully rested. There were good sized gardens back and front so we made a start.

There was a glut of potatoes. The government paid farmers a guaranteed price and offered them at £3.10.0 a ton for stock feed through merchants like Danny. Some of them were first year crops so I planted the whole garden with them as seed. There is no better way of cleaning grassland and, after lifting a heavy crop, I filled the back with veg and the front with lawn, borders and roses. That done, I got into the old familiar work pattern of Danny's business and meeting old customer friends again. Long hours and short holidays.

John had married Alma and moved his job to become a clerk of works with the Air Ministry. He worked on the early warning station at Whitby and the lived in the town. David had gone into work as an electrician and worked up there at the same time. When John's work came to an end there they went to the Middle East and he was responsible for work on RAF bases in Egypt and Cyprus during the troubles between Greece and Turkey. There was disputed ownership of parts of Cyprus between them and a lot of terrorism was taking place. They were soon increasing family and we got regular photos of Christenings with the men wearing pistols.

The shop was doing well when my dad suffered a minor stroke. He was transferred to a lighter job in the signal box on the bridge at York Station. Harry was working for York Corporation in the Engineers Dept in St Leonards after studying Heating and Ventilating at the London Polytechnic and passing out as the youngest ever with his qualifications. David met Tina when he fell off his motor cycle at her feet, got together at her parent's bungalow on Huntington Rd and married.

Life for the whole family changed considerably when our dad suffered major strokes from which he never recovered, aged 58 in 1958. Flora married Ian, Harry married Eunice and went to work for a very successful man who provided architectural and engineering services to Public Authorities from Pontefract. Our mother suffered with nerves, sold the shop and came to back

to her roots at Brompton. Flora, Harry and David, with their families, emigrated to New Zealand to be joined later by our mother after she made visits. I left Danny and went to work for manufacturers selling to retailers, commerce and industry over the remainder of my working life. This took Sylvia and our family to York, Birmingham, Reading, back to Birmingham and eventually back to York.

Having recently suffered a mini stroke and recovered to enjoy life again, I can only think, in todays world, our dad would have gone on for many years. instead, after leaving school at 15 and volunteering as a boy sailor, serving 5 years, across the world, and 7 in reserve, he worked long and hard all his life. Together with our mother they brought us up and gave us a good start in life only for him to be taken away at the young age of 58. I have pills and eye drops for glaucoma, blood pressure, clot busting, prostate, keeping blood vessels open, red nose, cholesterol and have had both cataracts replaced. I am now looking to the goals set by my mam and her mam of 92, by which time there should be new knowledge and aids to keep us going longer. Sylvia has survived a terminal lung cancer diagnosis, chemo therapy, radio therapy and being taken to the very brink, so we may even see the century together. It is a good thing we don't know what life has in store for us, but also that we have to try and make the most of what we have.

George Appleby
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