

Ted Whybrew

25 September 1938 – 20 January 2019



This booklet is largely based on "Ted Looks Back" - recollections he wrote in 2014

Ted's father's family came from Great Bardfield in Essex and were recorded as agricultural workers in the 19th century. His grandfather was a London policeman who had three sons, the youngest of whom was Ernest, Ted's father. The three boys in turn were awarded a scholarship to Hertford Grammar school which Ted also attended.



Little is known about Ted's mother's side of the family. There is a copy of an agreement dated 1909 between the National telephone company and Elizabeth Mary Castle (Ted's grandmother) for her to provide the duties of operator and caretaker at Ware telephone exchange. For carrying out these duties she was paid 11 shillings (55 pence) a week –and given accommodation sufficient for her twelve children – who according to family tradition went boy, girl, boy, girl etc. Ted's mother, Winnie, was the youngest of the twelve. She was in Ware in 1925 when Ted's father, who was in a shoe menders shop at the time, saw her walk past and he claimed to have decided there and then that she was the one for him. They were married in a matter of weeks.



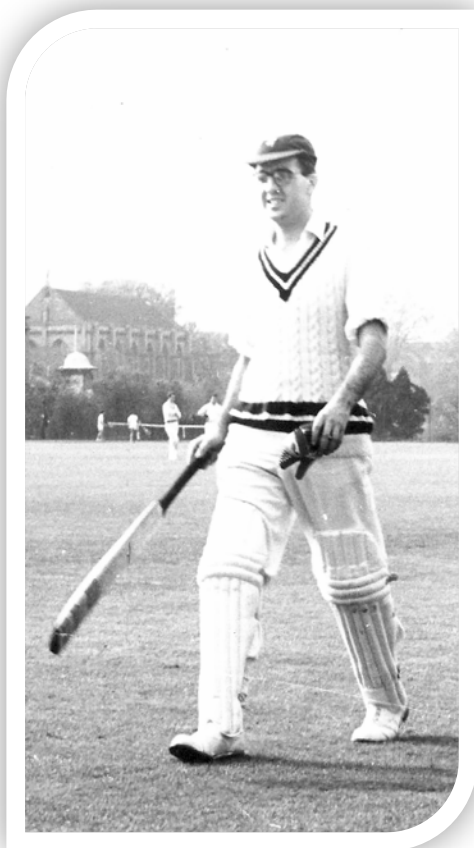
They had four children of whom Ted was the youngest and he arrived when his mother was 42. Ted was born in crisis week 1938 when Mr Chamberlain returned from Munich waving a piece of paper.



Ted was an evangelical Christian in his early teens. He went to a church youth club weekend and came home having found God and convinced that he should try to help others see the light. In Oxford he was a member of the evangelical Oxford University Christian Union. Their views slotted in with his support for the underdog. These included the

just reward of labour, the help we give our neighbour and the work we do in caring for the hungry and despairing.

A term studying Moral Philosophy and books like Christopher's "Death of Grass" and Wyndham's "Day of the Triffids" ate into his faith. He could not accept that there were moral precepts that were absolute and applicable in all circumstances. He also saw that conflict occurred where people believed their views were the one true belief and that others should be made to see the light.



Ted appreciated girls all his life and according to his family had his first girlfriend at the age of three. Ted could not remember that, but he could remember aged five giving a threepenny bit and an eraser to his then love, Anne. Years later Julia mentioned Anne at a supper party with friends; one of whom knew Anne from their school days. Ted said it was one of the very few moments in his life when he was genuinely embarrassed. A good number of other girls featured in his

reminiscences and it seems that he was almost permanently in love from the age of five onwards. When he was older Ted was regarded as a suitable partner for wayward girls and three mothers encouraged their daughters to settle down with him, but fortunately the girls concerned disagreed.

When Ted came to London in 1963 he developed what he called a theatre club. This consisted of a few girls whom he would take to the theatre, cinema or for a meal and even on one occasion a recital by Yehudi Menuhin, but without amorous intentions. At this stage any more serious intentions were reserved for Bridgit whom he had met while in Oxford but who was by then working away from London. Julia came on the scene in autumn 1965 and at that stage he had the Theatre Club in London and Bridgit miles away.

Julia, like Ted, worked in the Department of Economic Affairs. Her boss, a lovely man, called Norman Ablett decided after a week or so that she should meet some people of her own age. At first sight Ted realised he would like her at least as a member of the Theatre Club. After Julia joined Ted's group for lunch a couple of times Ted went to her room and asked her if she would come to the theatre with him. She was sorry she couldn't but they fixed another date a few days later. It was typical of Ted that he wondered if she knew his name so he phoned her to give it to her in an unobtrusive way. Ted subsequently discovered that the 'commonwealth dancing' to which his first invitation related involved a great deal of erotic topless dancing which might not have been perfect for a first date.

At this time Ted was living in a caretaker's flat above an engineering works in Kennington managed by Bet, one of his sisters. It had an outside lavatory which was papered with smutty jokes. The flat had no bathroom and Ted bathed once a week with friends or went to the Lambeth Municipal Baths which were a 10 minute walk away. He had learned to cook four different dishes from Katharine Whitehorn's "Cooking in a Bed Sitter". Once that range of dishes had been completed, if

the relationship continued, it was back to square one or the visitors could cook.



Julia says she knew Ted was the man for her after two weeks and Ted said it took him six weeks to realise the relationship was getting serious. They shared many interests and disinterests. They were both somewhat left wing but Ted found it difficult to forget Julia had been on an Aldermaston March supporting unilateral nuclear disarmament. Their joint lack of interest in music removed a potential difficulty. Julia's mother once asked one of Julia's musical flatmates who, out of Ted and Julia, sang most out of tune. The flatmate replied, with feeling, "It depends which one I heard sing last."

Unlike with several of his previous girlfriends Julia's mother was unsure if Ted was the son in law she wished for her daughter. She wanted an Earl with a deer park and got a dear but no park. One evening at dinner she was sitting next to one of the three top officials in the Department of Economic

Affairs where they were both working. She asked if he knew a fellow called Whybrew as her daughter was seeing quite a lot of him. The official's response was "Yes, clever young man but serious" an odd but not bad recommendation to a potential mother in-law.

It was some fifteen months later that they decided to get married and their engagement featured in an item in the London Evening Standard "Love has blossomed in the arid and unpromising atmosphere of the Department of Economic Affairs".



They were married in 1967 and Julia moved into the Ted's flat though she insisted that they put in a lavatory and bath. In 1969 they bought a house in Hanover Gardens, a square behind the Oval Cricket Ground. They could do this because Ted left Oxford with more money in the bank than when he went there, and from 1963 to 1969 he had lived almost rent free in the flat. They bought the house for £6,000 and let out the basement in exchange for some rent and later babysitting. In 1986 they took over the lease of a ravishing, but unbelievably cold cottage at Rousham.



Ted left Hertford Grammar School in December 1957 and went to Oxford, first to Balliol to read PPE and afterwards to Nuffield College to do some research on overtime working. After two years the research was not finished but the grant had run out so he accepted a job working on manpower planning and policy in the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA). Ted found he enjoyed, and was good at policy development and briefing and it established him as a civil servant without having to go through the assessments and exams that had scared him off originally. It was at DEA that he met Julia.

When DEA was abolished Ted moved to the Department of Employment and spent nearly 10 years on various research projects such as what happened to those workers who lost their jobs when two big aircraft contracts were cancelled? How could industrial relations be improved on large scale construction projects?

He had very little sympathy with what Ministers were doing in the 1980s, but he developed mutual respect with some unlikely characters, especially Norman Tebbit. Tebbit

would focus on the issues, hear differing points of view, make his decision and stick with it. According to Ted he had an excellent sense of humour and Ted remembered Tebbit interrupting a meeting when the name of Astrid Proll – a German terrorist – was mentioned. Tebbit recalled a piece of graffiti about her on the wall of a garage on the way to his constituency. It read 'FREE ASTRID PROLL' and underneath some wag had painted 'WITH EVERY FOUR GALLONS'.



Ted's work became increasingly involved with disputes and trade union affairs. He was closely involved with briefing on the 1984 miners' strike and he organised the smooth abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme which had given registered dockworkers a statutory monopoly over dock work.

When he was 52 Ted had a small stroke and took early retirement from the Department of Employment. He became the Certification Officer of Trade Unions working three days a week on Trade Union affairs. After that he had a number of part time jobs of which the ones he enjoyed the most were head-hunting and advising an all-party group on funding options for the political parties.

Ted was brought up in a family that loved sport, especially cricket and football. His father had been a very keen cricketer but was injured in the First World War and so could no longer play. Ted could remember when very small being given a balsawood bat and encouraged to defend the leg of their sofa against others throwing a table tennis ball at it. Later Ted's father got full sized used bats cut down for him. It is surprising Ted was a good enough batsman to play for his school and college as he had a vertical squint which

was only eliminated when he was 65. Until this time Ted had never seen depth and he had worked out how to hit the ball by relying on a combination of seeing the way the ball left the bowler's hand and that things got bigger as they got closer.

Ted loved playing cricket and when he met Julia he was playing both days every summer weekend. They got married at the end of September so that Ted did not have to miss any of the cricket season. Julia made sandwiches for cricket teas and as a great concession Ted let her choose what they did one weekend a month after their first child, Adam, was born. When Ted was watching cricket on TV and things were going well for England he would not get out of his chair in case it somehow disturbed the way the cricket was going. Ted wanted to go to the cricket pitches where Test matches were played and as Julia did not share his passion for cricket he sometimes took their third child, Anna instead.



Football was Ted's other great interest and he followed the fortunes of Spurs so seriously that he was noticeably cheerful when they won and vice versa. He once took Julia to a football match at Chelsea and they were standing in the Shed. Julia shouted for the other side and Ted was frightened how the Chelsea supporters would react. He did not

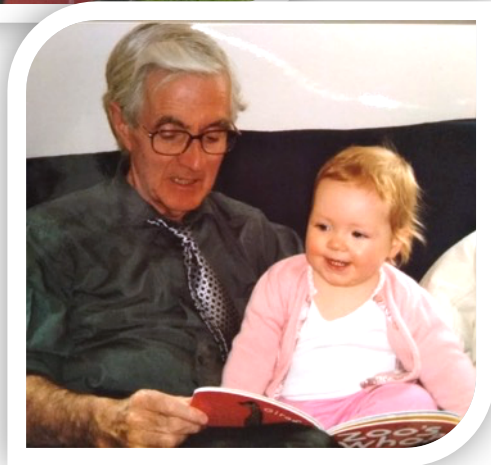
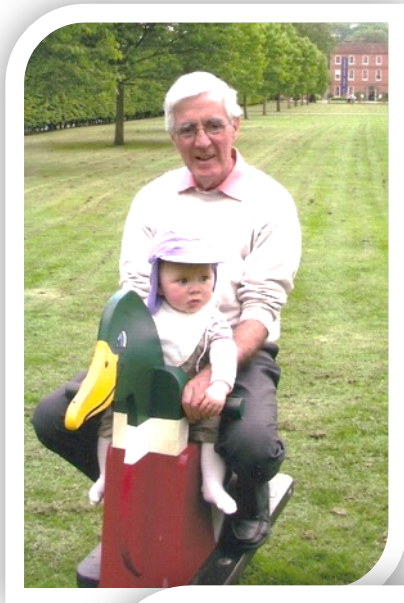
take her again. He enjoyed most sports and as he got more disabled sport on TV was an interest which endured.



Ted's overwhelming interest was his family. Iris, his eldest sister had a son when Ted was 14 and from that moment onwards Ted was very keen to have children of his own. He told Julia his favourite daydream from before he was married was to be walking upstairs following his child crawling up the stairs ahead of him. He was a devoted father, invariably kind and concerned but never interfering. He was always reasonable, even when a child tried to provoke him. Julia can remember Ted getting cross only once in his 48 years as a parent. Ted's rage was so startling that the child who had provoked the anger (Katherine) behaved impeccably for at least six months afterwards.

Ted was accepting of whatever the children wished to do and he was meticulous in not putting pressure on them. For example, Adam did not realise until he was an adult that Ted would have enjoyed playing cricket with him if Adam had been so inclined. Another example is that the children were never given the slightest hint of what Ted thought of some of their boyfriends or girlfriends.

Ted was hugely proud of his children and he wrote about them *"Each of them has given us great pleasure. They have returned our love and between them given us four lovely grandchildren and four step grandchildren."*



With Adam, the highlight was seeing that he had been awarded the third scholarship at Westminster School. With Katherine, the confident way she answered a probing and critical question about the lecture she gave to the Cambridge Medical Faculty reporting her finding on judging fever levels. With Anna it was the first class degree she was awarded in her finals exams."



Ted and Julia married in September 1967 and they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2017. The heading on the invitations described the party as '50 years of wedded bliss' and this is exactly what it was. Ted told Julia that when they married he had been determined to make a success of their marriage and it was his endless love, unfailing kindness and great sense of humour which ensured he succeeded. Julia and the children are so grateful for the love and laughter they had with him.



