

Veronica Mary Price (née Watts)

Born 22.5.1949.

Life story by Veronica Mary and her three siblings.

Available online at www.livesretold.co.uk

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This life story was extracted in 2020, with permission, from The Watts Family Chronicle, a family history compiled by Gordon and Veronica Watts's four children: Anthony (Tony), Paul, Veronica Mary and Clare. It is one of seven life stories extracted from the same source: the others are of Gordon Watts (their father), Veronica Watts (their mother), Patrick Thompson (their stepfather) and Veronica Mary's siblings Anthony Watts, Paul Watts, and Clare Lockwood (née Watts).

1. Preface

We have written this family history for our children and grandchildren, so that they can know more about their forebears, and the family of which they are a part. We have written it together, drawing upon our different memories and the various photographs and mementoes which we each possess. Veronica Mary carried out most of the research, using Ancestry and other sources; Anthony has co-ordinated the writing and selection of photographs. But we have all contributed, and have shared and approved the drafts.

The text is inevitably somewhat uneven. On our ancestors our information is often scanty, and confined to official records. We have included all of this, so that the book can be used as a source of reference. We have also leavened it where we can with some photographs and contextual detail. On more recent times we have more documents, a lot more photographs, and our own memories (increasingly erratic as they are). We regret, however, the many documents that have been destroyed, and the lost opportunities to collect family stories from our parents and grandparents. This is why we have decided to pull together what we know now, while we still can!

For the purposes of the Lives Retold website, we have split the collective family narrative into seven separate biographies. Some parts only appear in one of the biographies, but others appear in two or more, in order to make each biography as self-sufficient as possible.

The four families from which we were derived were named Watts, Goodliffe, Wells and Griffiths. We have traced back each of them in turn, drawing from parish records, census data, family mementoes, and other sources. The details are included in the biographies of our father Gordon Watts (for the Watts and Goodliffe families) and our mother Veronica Watts (for the Wells and Griffiths families), also available on this website.

From what we have learned about these families, three general conclusions can be drawn.

First, each of the four families was remarkably stable geographically, all in the south of England and in the midlands. Despite some mischievous comments from Veronica Mary that we should recognise the Welsh roots of the Griffiths family by supporting Wales in rugby matches against England, we have been unable to find any evidence of such roots (much to the relief of her brothers). Indeed, we have not found any member of the family who was born or died outside England – or even, indeed, in the north of England.

Second, extraordinarily, the roots of the four families are in the parts of the country where each of us now lives. The Watts family came predominantly from Somerset, where Veronica Mary now lives (in Frome); the Goodliffe family from Cambridgeshire, where Anthony now lives (in Cambridge); the Wells family from

Middlesex and Kent, where Clare now lives (in Chiddingstone, Kent); and the Griffiths family from Warwickshire, where Paul now lives (in Dunchurch). This is totally accidental: our childhood was in many other locations, and each of us has moved to where we now are for a variety of reasons, that have nothing to do with our family roots – of which we were in any case largely unaware until recently. But it represents, in our view, a very happy set of coincidences.

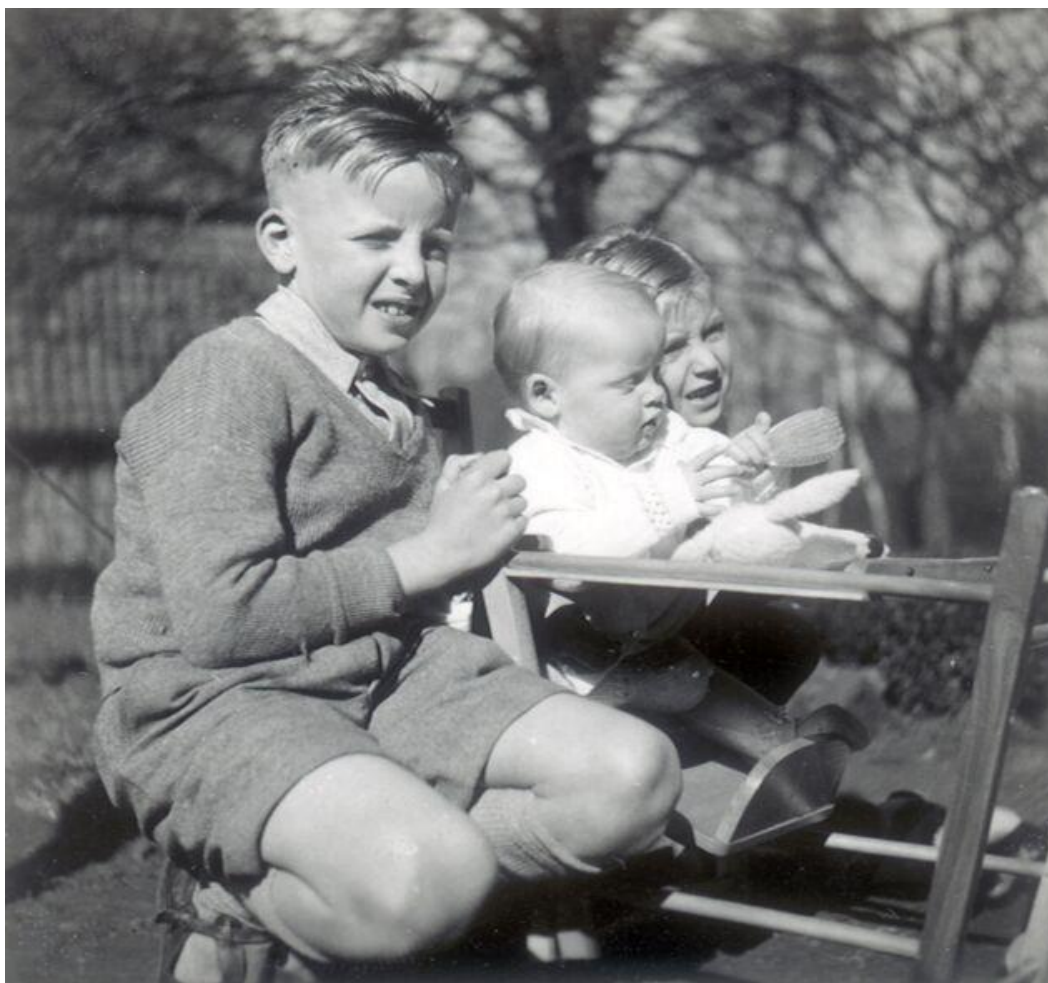
Third, we come from good solid working-class stock – as do most English families, of course. Any hopes that we might find traces of nobility or wealth have been unfulfilled. We owe a great deal to our parents and grandparents for providing us with opportunities that would have been inconceivable to their forebears.

Our family has had some difficult times, as most if not all families have, and we have tried to be open about this, disinterring some skeletons and seeking to lay them gently to rest. But there has been much happiness too. We all feel very fortunate to be part of such a close and loving family.

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2. Early Years

Veronica Mary was born on 22 May 1949 at the BAOR Hospital in Rinteln.



Anthony and Paul with their new baby sister 1949

In July 1950, Veronica (our mother) returned to England while Gordon (our father) was moved to Bonn in Germany. The family went through a very turbulent period. Anthony initially went to Alverstoke to stay with Nellie and Norman (Gordon's parents) for two months; while Veronica, Paul and Veronica Mary (only just over a year old) went to Fareham to stay with Violet and Teddy (Veronica's mother and stepfather). In August, Veronica Mary stayed in Fareham with Violet and Teddy, while Veronica went with Paul to Swindon, to hunt for a house.

In September, Anthony and Paul were sent to La Sagesse Convent, a Catholic orphanage near Romsey, while Veronica continued house-hunting; they stayed there until November.

In October 1950, Veronica collected Veronica Mary from Fareham, and both went back to Swindon. Then in November 1950, all the family except Gordon – who was still in Germany – were reunited in our new house in Princes Road (probably No.27), Petersfield, Hampshire.

In June 1952, we moved to Cairnsmore, Nunney Road, Frome, Somerset. Meanwhile, in July 1951, Gordon was moved by the army to Manchester.

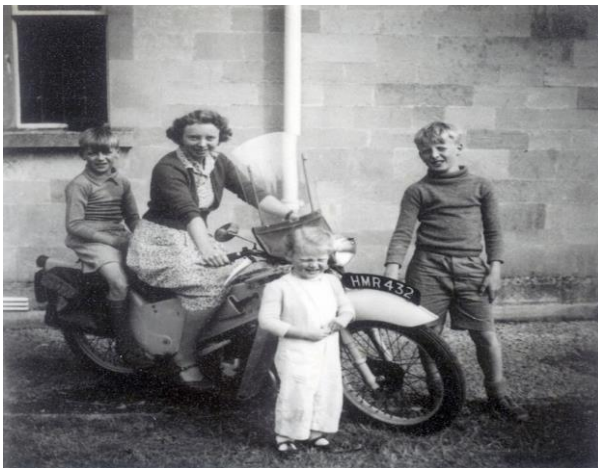
We have no clear memories of visits from Gordon during all of this period: there may have been, but he certainly never lived with us. There was however a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to which Veronica went, presumably with Gordon.

In retrospect, it seems possible that Veronica and Gordon had decided to split up, at least for a period, but then decided to try to get together again when we returned to Germany in 1954. So far as we can recall, we were never told anything about all this.

Shammy came to live with us for some of this period – certainly in Frome, and possibly in Petersfield too. She was Irish, and a close friend of Veronica's. We think they may have met in Lübbecke, and that Shammy may have worked there for SSAFA (a charity supporting Forces personnel and their families). In 1952, with our growing financial problems, Veronica decided to move to Ireland with Shammy and the children, and Anthony and Paul said their farewells at Cricklade. At this point Brother Robinson, the President of Prior Park, offered what were effectively very generous scholarships to enable them to return to Cricklade and later to move to the senior school: Prior Park College in Bath, Somerset. This helped to persuade Veronica to abandon her plans.

Anthony writes:

Our house in Frome was rather lovely (though it was on a hill, and the garden was over the public lavatories!). Paul and I used to play cricket in the tarmac path leading to the garage – which was leased out (we had no car of our own) to a rare Terraplane (a favourite answer in future Paper Games!). We also used to go to the nearby park to play cricket and football, and come home for bread and dripping – a great treat! Father Buckley, our parish priest, was very kind to us and used to visit on his motorbike, which we found very exciting.



Paul, Veronica, Veronica Mary and Anthony in Frome (on Father Buckley's motorbike)

Veronica Mary remembers being able to ride her tricycle on a path all round the house. Paul recalls:

We used to make washing up more bearable (Ant was always in the loo when washing up time came!) by estimating the number of items we washed/dried. Motti would sometimes add clean pieces to help me 'win'. I never let on that I knew!

In 1954, Veronica and Gordon decided to start living together again, and we moved to Oldenburg, near Bremen in north Germany. Whereas in our earlier stay in 1946-50 we had lived in requisitioned German houses, and (like other officers' families) had German maids and boilermen, by 1954 most British families lived in specially-built enclaves, with their own amenities (e.g. NAAFI shops), separate from the German population.

We lived at 33 Hindenburgstrasse, Oldenburg, from June 1954 to September 1955. We then moved a few miles to Delmenhorst, where we lived at 25 Franz-Schubert-Strasse from September 1955 to January 1958, and at 26 Bachstrasse from January to July 1958. We subsequently moved back to England, to 52 Lidgett Lane, Roundhay, Leeds, where we lived from July 1958 to March 1959.

3. Childhood: The Family Chronicle

The Chronicle of the Watts Family was started by Anthony in August 1954 and continued until September 1958 (it was retitled *The Family Chronicle* in December 1957).

The Chronicle provides a detailed picture of our family life during the years 1954-58. It contained family and school news, articles (on topics like current affairs, sport, hobbies, the makes of local cars, etc.), results of family games (reported in great detail), and book and film reviews. Much of it was written by Anthony, with plaintive appeals for others to contribute:

Again I must ask for support. It is regretted that if this support is not given the Chronicle will have to be disbanded. This is the last plea. Please help. (2 April 1955)

Later, however, other members of the family did contribute, including Veronica, Paul and Veronica Mary.

We used to have occasional Family Councils. The record of one stated:

Mummy took over all offices (chairman, president and secretary) and 'didn't bother about any minutes'. (9 April 1955)

There are lots of details of family games, which Gordon in particular loved to play. They were very diverse: Rummy; Knock-Out Whist; Solo Whist; Table Tennis; Bezique; Lexicon; Ballyna Cricket; Monopoly; Totopoly; Canasta; Pit; L'Attaque; Fland; Pelmanism; Spillikins; Scoop; Scrabble; Wembley; Flutter; and, of course, The Paper Game (which has continued to be a favourite game across our family). Anthony and Paul also played a lot of cricket, sometimes with Veronica Mary (though she claims that, disgracefully, she was never allowed to bat!).



Anthony, Paul and Veronica Mary playing cricket in the garden at Oldenburg

Gordon was not so keen on family outings, but Bill Delvin – a subaltern in a regiment that shared the same barracks as Gordon’s regiment – used to take us out a lot: especially swimming in the sea at Brake in Holland (where the water was always excruciatingly cold) and to fairs:

On Easter Monday Bill took us to the Fair at the Pferdemarkt [horse market], and we had a smashing time shooting, going on the dodgems, on the ghost train, and on two very fast and bumpy ‘roundabouts’. (16 April 1955)



A family outing to Brake in 1955

We had a dog, Antje:

Antje has been ‘on heat’ for the past week and despite precautionary measures she has managed to get out three times. As she has been out with mongrels or dogs of a different breed she will have to have an injection to prevent her from getting puppies of a mongrel type. (30 July 1955)

Antje was the beginning of Veronica Mary’s lifelong love of dogs.



Veronica Mary with Antje in 1955

Our house in Oldenburg (33 Hindenburgstrasse) was a large house, with five bedrooms, a study, a living room, a dining room and a playroom (15 August 1954). In autumn 1955 we moved to 25 Franz-Schubert-Strasse in Delmenhorst:

It seems very cosy and much more like 'home'. The rooms are, of course, much smaller, but 'no loss'.... The BFES school is only twenty yards away and it is proposed to send Vim [Veronica Mary] there next term. (6 August 1955)

The final issue for the summer holidays of 1955 stated:

No one can deny that it has been very happy, the only trouble being that we were unable to go camping.... We wish Mummy all the best of luck [for the birth] of Peter Russell [presumably what Clare would have been called had she been a boy] and hope that Vim will enjoy herself at BFES school. Don't cry on the station. Think of the happy things: P.R., Christmas, etc. Big hug and kisses from us both. Have a nice time at Delmenhorst. Good-bye to you all: Mummy, Vim, Antje, Daddy, Bill. – Ant and Paulo. (14 September 1955)

The next issue was just before Christmas:

We are in England this time: Mummy, Vim and Clare at 59 Serpentine Road, Fareham; and Daddy, Paul and Anthony at 'Alfortville', Gosport. (24 December 1955)

It noted that during the term:

The main event was the birth of Clare Alecia on the 13th of November. She is a lovely baby and very good. (24 December 1955)

One of the main features of this holiday was our first experience of domestic television:

These holidays the family is having the opportunity of watching television on the lovely set which Uncle made himself. (24 December 1955)

Veronica's close friend Shammy (see Chapter 2) came to visit us:

Shammy came down on Monday... On Wednesday she took Vim, Paul and Anthony to see 'Red Riding Hood', a pantomime on at the Empire Theatre, Portsmouth. Shammy's friend, Michael, is the manager of the theatre, and he allowed us to sit in a box. (14 January 1956)

There continued to be fairly regular references to correspondence with Shammy in subsequent issues of the Chronicle, through to late 1958.

The first issue of the 1956 Easter holidays included comments on ‘the girls’:

Clare is much more fun these holidays – laughing, talking, and crying rumbustiously – and had her first Rusk on Friday for tea. She has Farex regularly. Veronica Mary gets worse and worse every holidays. Last week she phoned up Mrs Matthews to say that Daddy wouldn’t get up! However, she honoured the boys by refusing an invitation to a birthday party on Thursday. (31 March 1956)

Veronica Mary provided some ‘news’ for the Chronicle (adroitly taken from her English book at school). Entries included:

June 4th. It is my birthday party today and I am going to have ten children at it, which counting myself makes eleven. We are going to have lots of fun.

June 12th. I took my baby [doll?] for a walk when I came back from school and she laughed because she loves it. Afterwards I helped Mummy do Clare.

July 6th. It is sixteen years since my mother and father were married, and so this morning I dressed myself and went down stairs into the garden and picked some flowers for them. (28 July 1956).

We had a maid and a putzfrau (cleaning lady), which could cause problems:

Crystal, our maid... has been sacked for various inefficiencies and because of an incident which we cannot recount here. During the past week, Erika has been helping Margaret, the ‘Putzfrau’, but it will probably be some time before a permanent arrangement is arrived at. (14 April 1956)

Towards the end of the holidays, the Suez crisis had a big impact:

Daddy is thinking that war is imminent on account of the Suez incident, and thus in the evening a family council was held. It was decided that we will move to England if possible in the near future because of our proximity to East Germany at present and also because of Daddy’s fear that he will not pass his next medical because of his deafness. But perhaps we were unduly pessimistic. (1 September 1956)

Anxieties about this threat receded, but a later comment favoured a return to England for financial and other reasons:

The incessant parties and similar social necessities and activities cost a lot of money and tend to become monotonous and even irksome. (12 January 1957)

The social activities were sometimes over-intrusive:

In the afternoon Mr Fulcher came unexpectedly, and thus frustrated another attempt at having a quiet afternoon writing and sewing. How impossible this apparently simple aim seems in practice – something always seems to prevent it. (24 August 1957)

We craved more time on our own:

We had an absolutely lovely time this afternoon in the garden. Mummy did some sewing while Paul and Anthony played football, and then the whole family played on the slide etc. In fact, a real family afternoon. (7 September 1957)

Being in Germany seemed less pleasant than it had in the family's earlier stay there:

We had enjoyed a very happy stay in Lübbecke from 1946 to 1950... But this part of Germany is most unpicturesque [and] unhealthy. (12 January 1957)

Also, our relations with local German people seemed more distant and less friendly:

On the whole their attitude to the British is one of mild antagonism... The reason ... is the conspicuous lack on both sides of enthusiastic attempts to overcome the harm caused by misunderstandings, memories of war, and our veiled envy of their fantastically swift return to power and prosperity. (4 May 1957)

There was also concern about defence cuts and particularly

... the announcement that five thousand officers, mainly majors and lieutenant-colonels, are to be disbanded from the army. Daddy suspects that he will be one of the unfortunate victims. (20 April 1957)

In August 1957, however, there was more promising news:

Daddy has now received the extension to April 1957 of his commission... which makes it fairly definite that he will get his pension. He can still get 'the axe', but this is now improbable, and even if he did he would get a pension and a gratuity, so in many ways we hope that he is affected by the 'cuts'. (3 August 1957)

Meanwhile, Veronica provided a note about her mother Violet (Nanna Vi):

Nanna Vi is going to Birmingham this month to see the members of her family who are living there, including Marion and Auntie Bertha. When she returns she has got to visit the Eye and Ear Hospital in Portsmouth for a specialist's examination. In connection with this it may be of interest to note that the present Eye and Ear Hospital is situated in the same building where Mummy was educated: the former Convent of the Cross. Nanna hasn't been

there since she took Mummy as a small girl of seven years old looking very bewildered in a navy frock and an enormous panama hat: the school uniform. (1 September 1956)

In September 1956, Bill Delvin took all of the family apart from Gordon to a nostalgic visit to Lübbecke:

We saw all the three houses we inhabited during our stay in the town from 1946 to 1950, the YMCA, the Toc H, the club (which is now an Officers' Mess), the lovely little church, and the BFES school where Anthony and Paul were first educated. We also visited Herr Bökamper, Mummy's old music teacher, and his wife. (15 September 1956)

A letter from Veronica later in January 1957 referred to a job application she had made:

I am feeling a bit deflated as I haven't got the Radio Bremen job. My voice wasn't any good because for one thing I had a sore throat and it came through the microphone very huskily. Secondly I was so terribly nervous that you could hear that too. It is a bit disappointing but there you are – you will never know your Mother now as a Radio Star! (13 April 1957)

A subsequent letter from Veronica on 8 February 1957 reported:

Clare took three steps quite alone the other day and then the excitement was too much for her and she collapsed on the floor in laughter. (13 April 1957)

Soon after this, Anthony reported:

Clare has now been walking for two or three months, and is always up to some mischief. Mummy declares that she is the worst of the four babies she has had – she is sweet but naughty. 'Issy' is her name for Veronica Mary, derived, Mummy tells me, from her saying 'Where is she?' (4 May 1957)

There were quite a lot of family arguments:

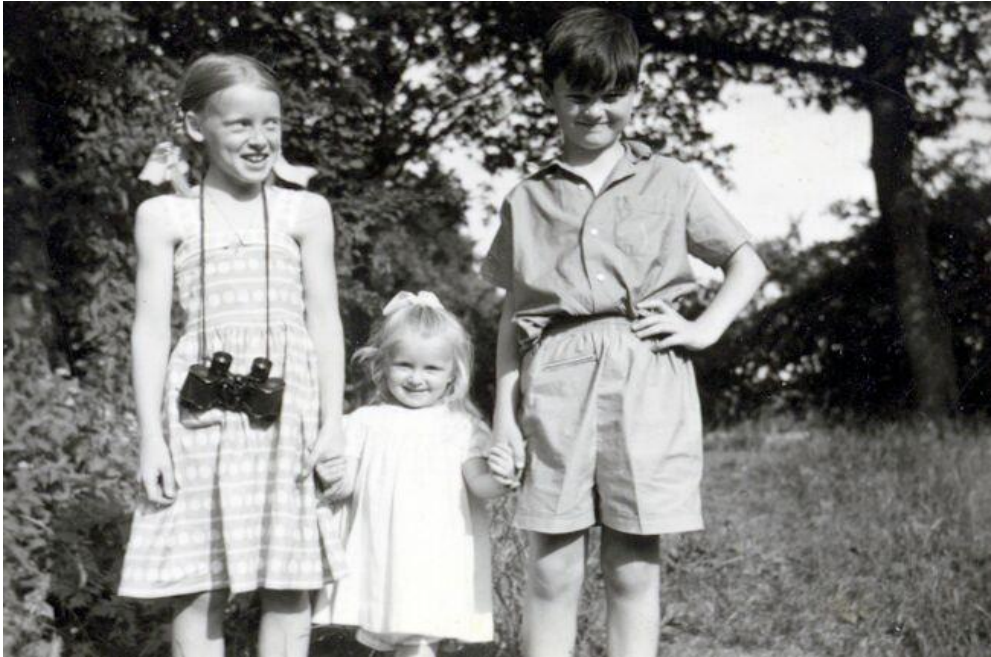
Why is it that at nearly every meal in this family there is either an argument, a quarrel, or an 'upset' of some kind or another? (24 August 1957)

Later:

We have all now taken a vow to try to minimise the number of arguments in the household. (31 August 1957)

Veronica Mary contributed several short stories to the Chronicle, and an account of a school visit to Bremerhaven and Brake which ended:

When we got back we said: 'Thank you for taking us, teachers: it was very interesting.' Then we went home and I said to my mother: 'It was very nice on our trip but I would rather have stayed at home'. (31 August 1957)



Veronica Mary with her first boyfriend (John Strain) and Clare in 1957



Tea party for Veronica Mary's First Holy Communion, with Veronica, Paul, Anthony, John Strain and others

One story – written when she was 8½ – could be read as being strangely prescient (though she was probably referring to her first boyfriend John Strain, rather than her future husband John Price!):

Once upon a time there was a boy called John. He used to go out for walks in the woods but very soon he got so used to the woods that he thought he would go on an adventure.

He asked his mother if he could go and she said ‘yes, you may, John, if you don’t go with other people or strange people.’ ‘Oh, of course I won’t. I never do.’

Next day John packed his bow and arrows and sword and spear. Two days went and he was on his journey. He had seen two snails and a tiger. The snails were going to their home, and the tiger was roaring because he was very frightened of snails.

Soon he came to a very tumbledown house. He thought a poor lady may be living there, so he went up to the door and rang the bell. A lady with a pointed hat and a wand came to the door. She said ‘What are you doing here?’ and John answered ‘I thought a poor lady lived here.’ ‘Well, what if there was?’ ‘I want to help her’, said John. ‘Well, I am a poor lady’, said the witch. ‘Come in please.’

‘Yes, certainly, madam.’ ‘Don’t call me madam. I’m a witch’, and she took John by the arm and took him to a cage in a dark, dark corner and locked him in it.

That was the end of John’s adventure, but very soon he was let free because he was going to help her in the house and garden. Very soon after a year’s working he was set free for ever. (4 January 1958)

This was followed by a note about ‘Corn Flakes’:

It will be remembered that Veronica Mary used to call Corn Flakes: ‘cumfits’. Clare now calls them ‘tooth-ache’!! But Anthony and Paul sensibly called them simply Corn Flakes! (4 January 1958)

In September 1957, before going back to school, Anthony and Paul stayed with our grandparents, alternating between them. There had been a reference in an earlier issue to some tensions between the two sets of grandparents:

Nanna and Uncle [Violet and Teddy] are both obviously feeling rather angry, because their friendship with Nanna and Grandpa [Nellie and Norman] seems to have disintegrated, and Mrs Culliford [Uncle’s mother, presumably] ‘said it seems quite incomprehensible to her after all the years of supposed friendship’. (3 August 1957)

Presumably the relationship had subsequently been patched up, to some extent at least (it was to disintegrate terminally when Veronica left Gordon in 1959).

Around this time (autumn 1958) Violet found a house in Lee-on-Solent for us to move to, but Gordon decided not to go ahead: Paul wrote an article for the Chronicle describing 'The House We Missed' (21 December 1957). The reasons were explained by Veronica in a letter to Anthony and Paul:

23rd October... We had agreed to accept and then the very day that the formal agreement arrived Daddy was told that he would be here for at least 12 months and in the Army for a minimum of 18 months, and possibly for 2½ years, and that he can't get a posting to England until 35 Regt. disbands next autumn. The General of the Royal Artillery was here and fully confirmed this news. Daddy thought and thought what was best to do but just felt he couldn't face 12 months here alone, and especially as the house cost so much, so very much. Daddy made this decision himself, which is only right, and I do see his point. I've been terribly torn, and hate terribly the disappointment this will be to you and to Nanna. (4 January 1958)

Clare's vocabulary was growing:

Clare has been rather ill this week with measles, but now has recovered her usual mischievousness and buoyancy. Some of her new words include 'Bello' (her new name for virtually anybody and everybody), and 'no' which she uses invariably when asked a question, whether the negative or the affirmative is meant. (20 July 1957)

She missed her brothers when they returned to school. Veronica recorded in a letter to them on 16 September 1957:

Clare cried as the train went out and all the way back until she fell asleep she said 'Where's Paul, where's Anthony?' and it must be almost a hundred times she's asked it since you went – even when I went in to her at 2am yesterday. (28 December 1957)

Veronica had fairly regular periods when she was unwell, but also some happy times – including some social occasions:

26th September... Even though yesterday was my first day up, I feel wonderfully better – perhaps because I had such a very happy day. For one thing the sun shone and it was as warm as summer and delicious outside. It was the famous 'Maude's Day'... I was able to go to the Parade, Cocktails, Buffet Lunch, etc., and I even went to the Ball in the evening, and instead of having an awful relapse, I feel wonderful, I enjoyed it all so much (28 December 1957).

On 23 December 1957, there is the first reference to Patrick (see Chapter 4):

Mummy and the children went to NAAFI in the morning, and were brought back by Father Thompson, the RC chaplain at Verden, who had come over to Delmenhorst to hear confessions as Father Callan, our own Chaplain, is away

on compassionate leave. He had coffee and heard confessions in the house before leaving. (28 December 1957)

Was this the first time Veronica met Patrick?

By now the Army was beginning to reduce its presence in Germany, linked to the general defence cuts:

Delmenhorst Garrison is now diminishing rapidly, and soon only 35 Regt. at Adelheide will remain, as 77 Regt. and 30 Regt. are returning to England to disband. It appears probable that 35 Regt. will be doing likewise in October – we hope so – but this has not been officially confirmed yet. (28 December 1957)

The first issue of 1958 contained a plaintive and rather poignant editorial:

The family's life since its inception in 1940 has been unsettled, nomadic but happy. However, the lack of a settled home, of 'roots', has created in many of us a desire for these things. We want to settle down in England, to have a real home, to have a stable environment. Let us hope that, through the grace of God, 1958 will see these hopes realised. (4 January 1958)

Before this, however, we were moving into a new house in Bachstrasse, just round the corner, which gained general approval:

It is one of four new houses recently built ostensibly for colonels, and the proposal that we should apply for one [presumably because we were such a large family] was suggested some months ago. It was, however, shelved, as we felt we might well be moving in the near future. But after the decision to remain in Delmenhorst, Daddy applied, and 26 Bachstrasse is the result... We are all very ecstatic about it. (4 January 1958)

The move went well, although:

Clare was rather frightened by it all: it's a new experience for her – but not for us! (4 January 1958)

Paul provided an article describing the new house in detail (11 January 1958).

During the 1958 Easter holidays news arrived at last of a posting back to England:

At last Daddy has been posted – as adjutant to a TA regiment in Leeds. For over a year now we have been expecting a posting, and for much longer than that we have been longing to go back to England. From most points-of-view, Yorkshire is the worst possible county we could go to: it is at the opposite end of England to all our relatives and friends, the country is not so picturesque [sic!], and we will be a long way from the boys' school. But on the other hand, as Daddy points out, there will be much more likelihood of

his getting a good job in the north than in the south after his probable 'retirement' from the army in 1961. (26 April 1958)



Veronica Mary, Anthony, Paul and Clare around 1957-8

For the first time, a detailed diary was provided by Veronica, covering the period from 15 January 1958 to 23 April 1958, with almost daily entries. It includes eight references to visits from Father Thompson, one adding 'talked for three hours'. It also covered lots of social engagements and family activities, including the following entries:

January 24th. First organ lesson with John (Sanders) – very confusing and complicated.

February 16th. Went... in afternoon with John (Sanders) to Maria (Ahrens) for tea, and then to opera – *Tristan and Isolde* – which was wonderful. Back to Maria's for supper.

March 12th. Went to Colin's birthday party in Mess. Buffet supper. Great fun but another very late night.

March 26th. Gordon took children and I to Bremen for shopping and bought me new tweed suit – loose line – and a blue hat: both very nice indeed.

March 30th. Gave Veronica Mary first cookery lesson. David called, and then John, and then two other subalterns.

April 4th. In evening heard St Matthew Passion on radio. Magnificent. (26 April 1958)

And then, on April 23rd:

Clare put on her 'best' coat and decided to go to school to see Issy [Veronica Mary]. She was round the corner before Paul caught her. (26 April 1958)

At the time of this early independent expedition, Clare was under 2½ years old!

The next issue of the Chronicle announced the family's arrival in Leeds:

At long last, after four long years, the family has returned permanently to England. Our enthusiasm at this long-looked-forward-to event was somewhat dampened when we saw the filthy conditions of our new house in Lidgett Lane, Leeds 8. But the whole family has set to work with a will, and now it is beginning to look clean, attractive and ours... It is furnished, but the junk left behind by the last occupants – and what a lot of it there was! – has been thrown out, and the more hideous of the furnishings have been removed into the attic. (27 August 1958)

A couple of weeks later, the Chronicle reported:

The first few weeks of our stay in Leeds are over and we can be justly proud of our achievements. The house has been thoroughly cleaned and reorganised, our own belongings have been unpacked and put tidily away, the kitchen has been transformed by a few tins of red and white paint from the ugliest room in the house (always excluding the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' next to the dining room) to the prettiest, the garden has received a surprising amount of attention – the flower beds have been weeded and dug up, and the lawns mowed regularly – and supper times are now actually approaching the ever-elusive daily time of 7.30. Achievements indeed! (13 September 1958)

The family had now acquired a gramophone, and a few records, including *My Fair Lady*.

Veronica Mary's schooling was a matter of concern, but a solution was found:

A very fortunate solution to the problem – its difficulty aggravated by the fact that Shummy, Veronica Mary's godmother, has provided a considerable sum of money for her future education at a *Catholic* school – was provided by the offer by the nuns of St Gemma's to educate her on half-fees provided that Mummy is available to do occasional teaching in case of emergency. So once again, just as with Brother Robinson at Prior Park six years ago, our education problems have been almost miraculously solved. (7 September 1958)

We also had a new *au pair* girl:

At Easter we mentioned the possibility of Maria Holm, a young Greenland girl living in Copenhagen, coming to England with us to learn English and in return to help with housework. This finally materialised, and very fortunately so, for, as Mummy says, she doesn't know where she would have been without her. She has worked extremely hard and uncomplainingly, and with her unfailing good nature and humour has befriended us all. But we hope she is also learning some English! (7 September 1958)

In addition, there was an article about a visit to the Yorkshire countryside with Mr and Mrs Cribb, which removed some negative stereotypes:

What beautiful countryside it is: high hills, deep valleys, long views of rustic quiet and grandeur, wide expanses of cultivated fields, the harvest ruined but beautiful still. (13 September 1958)

This was the final full issue of the Chronicle. There was a very brief issue in January 1959, but it contained only family sport results.

4. Our Family in Transition

Like many couples during the War, Veronica and Gordon married when they were very young, and probably before they knew themselves or each other very well. During the traumas of the War they lived very separate lives, Gordon in the Army and Veronica raising very small children. When they joined up in Germany after the War, there were difficulties between them, exacerbated by the fact that Gordon drank a lot (mainly gin) and smoked a lot (around 40 cigarettes a day). This was not uncommon in the Armed Services at the time: both were accessible very cheaply, initially at least. Gordon had a strong temper, particularly when he had been drinking. He and Veronica had other relationship problems. While, as the Family Chronicle indicates, there were many happy times during this period, it is clear, in retrospect, that there continued to be underlying tensions between them.

Throughout the 1950s Veronica had severe financial worries. She kept detailed accounts of every transaction, and was always looking for ways to economise. A visit to a shop near our house in Frome to buy ice-creams was a great 'treat'. The worries continued when we reunited with Gordon in Germany. In addition to the school fees, Gordon's expenditure on drink and cigarettes was a significant drain on financial resources.

Veronica's faith was an enormous support to her in all her struggles. Her belief in God was strong and deep. She prayed a great deal, and always tried to do what was right and good.

It is clear from the many letters we have to Veronica from Patrick that they had fallen deeply in love with one another and were beginning to plan a life together before the events that led to Gordon's court-martial in June 1959 (for details of this and of our subsequent relationship with our father, see separate biography of Gordon Watts). They had even started to write some short stories together, to provide a possible future source of income. The court-martial was, in a sense, a final straw in the breakdown of the relationship between Veronica and Gordon, but it also provided a rationale for Veronica to commit herself to what she was already wanting to do.

When Veronica decided to leave Gordon in March 1959, she wrote a series of letters about the court-martial to which there were replies that she kept as mementos. Two were from Prior Park: one from Brother Dalton, the President, assuring her that 'Prior Park will not let you down'; the second from Brother Beattie, the Housemaster of St Paul's (the senior house), stating that 'We all sympathise with you in your great trouble' and making practical suggestions about approaching Somerset County Council for help with the school fees.

Some time in March/April 1959 Veronica must have found the house at 53 Kimberley Road, Southsea, to which we then moved, with financial support from Patrick.

Patrick provided great support to Veronica, both emotionally and financially, when she made the decision to leave Gordon and move to Southsea. He had for some time been experiencing doubts about his vocation as a priest, chiefly on the issue of

contraception, on which he struggled to accept the Church's teaching. Eventually he decided to leave the priesthood and came to live with us, in Southsea. We all accepted him, without any question: we never doubted that our mother Veronica would do what was right and best for all of us. He changed his surname by deed poll to Watts, to reduce the chances of scandal (this was still a morally repressive time in England). We thereafter always called him Poppa.

After an interval, through the good offices of Bill Delvin, Anthony and Paul made contact with Gordon, who had gone to live for a time with his parents in Fareham. Veronica agreed, on the strict understanding that Anthony and Paul did not reveal her whereabouts to Gordon. She also felt, however, that Veronica Mary should not meet him until they were older. Eventually, once Veronica Mary was married, Gordon visited her. Sadly, the meeting was not a success, because Gordon had been drinking beforehand – presumably to steady his nerves. Later, Anthony arranged for Clare to meet him, and came to her school to inform her and make the arrangements. But Gordon died during the following week (on 5 March 1974), before the meeting could take place. Anthony adds:

‘It never occurred to Paul or me that for a long time Clare did not know that Poppa was not her father. We do not recall ever being instructed not to tell her this. We just assumed she knew.’

Meanwhile, in 1962 the family moved to Miller's Cottage, Rustington, Sussex. It was here that Veronica and Patrick set up Arun Tutors, to provide individual tuition for a small number of students, often with personal as well as learning problems. They soon decided that they needed a larger house to house the students as boarders, so they moved to Hurstbourne Tarrant in Hampshire – first to The Rookery (1964-66) and then to Dole's Lodge at the entry to a manor estate, where the students were lodged at the manor (1966-67) – and thence to The Manor at Linkenholt nearby. In 1982 they decided to retire and moved to Countryman, Cardinals Green, Cambridgeshire and later to a bungalow in West Wrating, Cambridgeshire (see biographies of Veronica Watts and Patrick Watts for details of all these developments).



Paul, Clare, Veronica Mary and Anthony at The Rookery

Veronica Mary writes of Patrick:

Most of my memories of Poppa are of the latter days at Countryman and West Wrattling. During those years he became increasingly mellow and, after Mummy died, he seemed more able to show his love and appreciation of all that we did for him. He was loving, wise, thoughtful, concerned for our welfare and had a wicked sense of humour! In those days he would love to go to the pub with John and come home for his favourite pork pie supper. He would always be interested in stories about the family, and Vicky and Michael loved him very much. Every day he would complete the Telegraph crossword, garden until he became too frail to do so, read and watch television. I felt he was able to cope with the long days on his own because of his contemplative life as a monk when he was in his late teens and early twenties. He missed Mummy so much and would sometimes walk to her graveside and sit on the bench for long periods.

When Poppa first came into our lives he was very good to me. He sometimes took me to a large outdoor swimming pool in Germany and would buy me a huge bottle of Coca Cola which, in those days, was a sheer luxury! He took me to London on several occasions and we would have lunch, or supper, in a Lyons Corner House cafe, another real treat!! He also arranged for me to go on holiday and stay with some friends of his who had a son about my age but I cannot remember their names.

Poppa could also be very strict and quite fearsome at times. He idolised Mummy and was exceedingly protective of her, and if he felt we were doing something that would create more work for her or concern her then he would step in and discipline us verbally. In my teens this sometimes caused a problem between Mummy and Poppa because Mummy would see my point of view and want to agree to whatever it was but she couldn't once Poppa had laid down the law. I remember one incident at Miller's Cottage, Rustington, when the argument got so bad and Mummy was so upset that I thought she was going to drown herself in the pond in the garden. There was a huge ship's wheel by the side of this (actually small and shallow) pond and I imagined her using the wheel to weigh herself down in the water!! The other time I remember conflict was when I was going out with Rob (my future husband) so I must have been 18 years old. We had been asked to a party and Poppa said I had to be home by 9.30pm!!

Poppa loved to write, and wrote plays for me when I was a teacher. He wrote a play called Androcles and the Lion, and a book about a young monk that was never finished. Poppa also wrote a wonderful series of five stories about the adventures of Witchy Coo and Witchy Can based on Clare and myself! He loved to sing and would often suddenly burst into old Irish songs or ones he had learnt in the war. One of his favourites was Abdul Abulbul Ameer. I can also remember that he would morph into the character of Mrs Mopp which would get us all in stitches of laughter but I can't remember why!

Poppa adored his dogs! Both Cilla and then Berry were boxer dogs living to good ages and he could do anything with them. Poppa was so soft-hearted

and supplemented their meals with gravy and vegetables. He would call them his Pooch and enjoyed walking and playing with them. When Mummy died, Berry very quickly went downhill. To lose both Mummy and Berry in such a short time was devastating for him.

I have found a card among his belongings that I sent him on his 80th birthday. I wrote: ‘...Thank you Poppa for all your love, care, support and wisdom over the years. Thank you for the cooked breakfasts, lunches, teas, suppers, G&T’s, washing up and the critical voice in my head that makes me do things “properly!!”’

I loved Poppa very much and I miss him as much today as ever. Thank you for being my ‘father’.



Veronica Mary with Patrick at Countryman in Spring 1986

Veronica Mary writes of our mother, Veronica:

The most amazing gift that our mother had was her warmth and empathy towards all. She was a beautiful, radiant spirit, strong, non-judgemental, ever patient and understanding, a wonderful mother and steadfast friend. Mummy's love for her children was passionate, fiercely protective and selfless. She weaved a web of love around us that has remained unbroken throughout our lifetimes and has sustained us and given us strength when the going has been tough.

5. Education

Veronica Mary went to various BAOR schools in Germany, to St Gemma's Convent in Leeds and to St Swithun's School in Portsmouth where she passed the 11+ examination. She then went to the Convent of the Cross, Waterlooville, Hampshire, for a year, before going to the Holy Family Convent, Littlehampton, Sussex, as a boarder. She left in 1966 with 8 O-levels, an AO-level in French and 2 A-levels in History (grade A) and English.

In 1966 Veronica Mary went to Bath School of Physiotherapy in Bath but only stayed for one term. She then became a Junior Matron at Farlington Girls School, Horsham, Sussex, and later at Lord Wandsworth College, Basingstoke, Hampshire, before going to Portsmouth College of Education in 1968-71, leaving with a Pass with Distinction in Education. After her daughter Vicky was born in 1972 she was a Home Tutor for Hampshire County Council (1972-74), and then from 1974 to 1986 was a teacher at Liss County Infants School, Hampshire. During 1984-86 she also studied at King's College, Winchester (now the University of Winchester), achieving a Diploma in Professional Studies in Art in Education for 5-13-year-olds.



Veronica Mary graduating for her DIPSE at Winchester in 1987

6. Teaching

From 1986 to 1996 Veronica Mary taught at St James Infant and Junior School, Emsworth, Hampshire, with responsibility for the Infant Department. Then from 1996 to 2000 she was Key Stage 1 Co-ordinator of the Infant Department at Pucklechurch Infant and Junior School, Bristol. Finally, from 2000 to 2009, she was a supply teacher at various schools in and around Frome, Somerset. Veronica Mary writes:

I loved my 34 years of teaching and was very fortunate to work in the schools that I did and under several excellent headteachers. David Hannaford appointed me to the staff at St James and our relationship during the years I was teaching there developed into a friendship that I have valued all my life – so much so that he and his wife became two of my closest friends until David sadly died in 2020. My teaching was based on a philosophy of children learning through creative experiences, and I have many memories of exciting projects that we undertook, some of which even included parents! These were in the wonderful days before the introduction of the National Curriculum, when education became a political football that, for me, killed creativity, fun and cross-curricular teaching. I left full-time teaching in 2000 feeling disillusioned and sceptical of all such government initiatives.



Veronica Mary with her class around 1991

7. Marriage to Rob Smith

Veronica Mary married Robert Arthur Francis Smith (Rob) on 25 July 1970 in Andover, Hampshire. Rob was born on 9 March 1948 in King's Somborne, Hampshire. His mother was Helen (née McDonald) and his 'father' Cyril; he has an older sister, Rosemary, and an older brother, Eric. After his mother died in the 1990s, Rob found that his real father was an Italian prisoner-of-war, Alfredo Totti.

Rob went to Prior Park College in Bath (the same school as Anthony and Paul), and then trained as a draughtsman before going to Portsmouth College of Art where he became a technical illustrator. After working for the Ministry of Defence, he set up his own business doing illustrations and fine art.

He and Veronica Mary lived at 61 Chapel Street, Petersfield, Hampshire (1972), 2 Spring Cottages, Liss, Hampshire (1973-75), and 7 Temple Road, Liss Forest, Hampshire (1975-83).

They divorced in 1983. Rob still lives in Liss Forest with his partner, Pamela Bush. He has played the acoustic and pedal steel guitar in several groups, enjoys walking his dog, and spends a lot of time looking after his older brother.



Rob and Veronica Mary at their wedding in 1970

8. Marriage to John Price

On 28 July 1983, Veronica Mary married John Frederick Price at Petersfield Registry Office; they had the marriage blessed at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Eastney, Portsmouth, on 30 July 1983. John was born in Bath on 28 May 1947. His parents, Janet Mary Jennings and Charles John Price, lived at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, and John spent most of his childhood years in Warminster, Wiltshire. His father died suddenly at home one lunch-time when John was 7 years old, and he was subsequently brought up by his mother. He went to technical college in Trowbridge and then joined the Civil Service, initially as a civilian working for the Army as a telecommunications engineer. He moved on to join the Navy Department and was gradually promoted to Grade 7, working as Project Manager for various naval projects until his retirement in 2000. During this time he gained an HNC in Electronic Engineering at Salisbury Technical College and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies at Bristol Polytechnic.



John and Veronica Mary with their children – Christopher, Rachel, Vicky and Michael – and Father Derek Reeve at Eastney Church for their marriage blessing in 1983

After moving with Veronica Mary to Frome, Somerset, John became Parish Clerk for High Littleton and Hallatrow and then secured a job working for BANES as project manager for the building of the Colliers Way, a cycle path from Frome to Bath. During this time he embarked on a lot of fund-raising campaigns for the cycle path – expertise which he was able to put to good use when he became Chairman of Frome Tennis Club, raising money for new court surfaces and more courts for the town in partnership with the Town Council. Since retiring as Chairman in 2018, he has continued his fund-raising for the development of the club, including the provision of free tennis coaching and club membership for children from disadvantaged families. John has also written various walking books including a self-published book called *Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs*. His interests include tennis, walking, cycling, music, writing poetry, gardening, bread-making and red wine!

Veronica Mary writes:

We met in January 1993 through a dating agency called Mamas and Papas for single parents with children. At that time John had just been divorced from his wife and was living in Cowplain, Hampshire, with his two children. When I phoned John he was cooking sausages for the children's supper; by the time we had finished talking, they were burnt! A little while later John had to undergo a telephone interview from Anthony on his suitability as my husband! [Anthony totally denies this!] Fortunately he passed and we were married in July of that year! When we got married, John's two children – Rachel and Chris – were 13 and 11, and my two – Vicky and Michael – were 10 and 3. Our life has been full of ups and downs but we have weathered the storm together and now enjoy our retirement and seven grandchildren!

Veronica Mary and John have lived at 22 Eskdale Close, Horndean, Hampshire (1983-96), at 16 Apsley Road, Bath (1996-2000), and at 27 Cheddar Close, Frome, Somerset (since 2000).

Veronica Mary's interests include cooking, reading, walking, singing, stained glass, mosaic making, and watercolour and acrylic painting; her sports include tennis, squash, badminton and, when younger, netball. She played netball for West Sussex youth teams, and at Frome Tennis Club has won the Singles Plate competition several times, as well as playing in league tennis and club doubles competitions. Around 2018, both Veronica Mary and John received lifetime Honorary Membership of the Tennis Club as a mark of gratitude for John's 10-year service as Chairman and Veronica Mary's 7 years as Honorary Secretary. Since then Veronica Mary has worked as a volunteer in the Frome Memorial Theatre box office and for the St Catharine's RC Church monthly Sunday lunches for the people of the parish.



Veronica Mary painting, with some of her creations, in 2016

Veronica Mary and John have also been on several cycling holidays. Their latest project is cycling the River Danube: by late 2016 they had covered 600km, from Passau in Austria to Budapest in Hungary. In addition, for the last ten years they have spent five weeks every spring in Tenerife, meeting friends, playing tennis and walking.



John and Veronica Mary cycling in Bavaria around 1995



Veronica Mary and John walking in Tenerife in 2010

9. Children and Grandchildren

Veronica Mary has two children from her first marriage, to Rob Smith: Vicky and Michael.

Victoria Mary Smith (Vicky) was born in St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth, on 7 March 1972, when Veronica Mary and Rob were living in Petersfield. Vicky attended Liss County Infants School, Alton Convent (for a short period), Liss Junior School, Clanfield Middle School, Horndean Secondary School and Oaklands Roman Catholic Comprehensive School. On leaving school she worked as a receptionist at ITW Switches before going to Southdown College and gaining a BTec Diploma in Business and Finance. After that she worked for Connect Lighting in Portchester, near Portsmouth.



Vicky aged 5



Vicky and Rob (her first husband)

Vicky married **Roberto Fella** (Rob) on 5 September 1998 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Eastney, Portsmouth, but they divorced in 2000. She then met **Richard James Leslie Galpin**, who is in the Royal Navy. Elizabeth was born in 2001; Vicky and Richard married in Hornchurch Registry Office, East London, on 19 July 2002; and James was born in 2003.



Vicky and Richard at their wedding in 2002

Vicky, Richard, Elizabeth and James live in Hill Head, Stubbington, Hampshire, only a stone's throw from where Vicky's great-grandmother Violet (Nanna Vi) lived in Glyn Way. Vicky works as a teaching assistant at Bay House School, a large secondary school in Gosport. She works in a department called 'the virtual school' which deals with children with emotional and educational special needs, and has completed a Level 3 Child Counselling course. She has received many moving and grateful letters and cards from the young people she has helped. Her interests include reading and music; she keeps fit by cycling to work and jogging. Veronica Mary writes:

Vicky's happiest childhood memories are of visiting Motti and Poppa. Vicky would powder Motti's face and choose a bright lipstick for her to wear, and then would brush Motti's hair for hours on end. Vicky says that she loved that because I as her own mother hated having my hair brushed!

Anthony writes:

It is intriguing that in such an unusually monogamous family, there should be just one line – Violet (Nanna Vi), Motti, Veronica Mary and Vicky – who have had more complex marital lives. All are very beautiful and very lovely women, with strong bonds between them. All, perhaps, have needed time to find partners worthy of them!



Veronica Mary with Michael aged 2

Veronica Mary's second child, **Michael Robert Smith**, was born in St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth, on 13 October 1979. At 18 months he was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Michael went to school at Liss Infants School, St James' First and Middle School, Emsworth, Hampshire, and Oaklands RC Comprehensive, Waterlooville, Hampshire. As a young boy his favourite TV programme was Ski Sunday and he became a good skier. He also played squash to a good standard, loved cycling and won several BMX races around the county; in addition, he was a very keen athlete and represented Hampshire in the javelin and discus. In fact he excelled at most sports. He played goalkeeper for a youth team in the Arun and Chichester League, and attended the Chichester School of Excellence.



Michael aged 7

When the family moved to Bath, Michael went to St Brendan's College, Brislington, Bristol, for a short time but was unhappy there. He then went on to Bath College to study Art and Photography but did not complete the course. During this time Michael's sporting interests turned to skateboarding: he took part in several downhill races around the country and came fourth in the National Skateboard Championship. Michael then went into the retail industry and after a few years became manager of a Fat Face shop in Cambridge. After moving back to the family home in Frome he had several jobs and eventually worked for a delivery company. In the course of his work there he was involved in an accident that left him with inflammatory arthritis and fibromyalgia: this has caused him a lot of pain and prevents him from doing any more sport. He has however continued to hold down his job.



Michael with his step-father (John) and father (Rob) in 2010

Michael married **Elaine Marie Smith** (née Yerbury) in Frome on 28 August 2010. Elaine was born in Bath on 11 January 1982. She has two younger sisters and a younger brother. She went to St John's First School in Frome, to Selwood School in Frome, and to Frome College. Since leaving college she has worked for Boots the Chemist as a pharmacy technician.



Elaine and Michael at their wedding in 2010

Elaine and Michael lived at Newington Close in Frome. They adopted two boys born in 2015 and 2017. Sadly, shortly afterwards, the marriage broke down and Michael moved to a flat in Whitewell Road, Frome.

Veronica Mary also has two step-children – **Rachel Anne Price** and **Christopher John Price** – both of whom are John's children from his previous marriage. Rachel was born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, on 22 August 1969; Christopher in Chippenham Maternity Home, Wiltshire, on 18 May 1971. Veronica Mary first met them at their family home in Cowplains, Hampshire, in 1983; before that they had lived in Chippenham and Corsham, Wiltshire. After Veronica Mary and John married, Rachel and Christopher both attended Horndean Secondary School.

Christopher left school at 16 and got a job as a baker in Tesco's, Portsmouth; he then moved to Bath and worked at Sainsburys, where he met his future wife, Ann. He then began to suffer from acute pancreatitis which meant that he was not able to work any longer and his marriage to Ann only lasted for a few years. In 2008 he had a son called Charlie Jay with his partner Nikki Hughes but this relationship too failed and Charlie was placed in foster care. Christopher battled for many years with drugs and drink, and this affected his relationship with the family. His health too began to deteriorate: he became diabetic and had several stays in hospital, in one of which he was admitted into intensive care for several days and nearly lost his leg. In his latter years, he found happiness with his new partner Sally Bailey. She was with him when he suddenly died during a lunchtime nap at home on 24 February 2020, aged 48.



Rachel in 2016

From 1985 to 1987 Rachel trained as a nanny and gained a National Nursery Examining Board (NNEB) certificate; she then worked in the USA as a nanny for a year. On her return she took an Access to Higher Education course and went to Oxford Brookes University where she achieved a Bachelor of Education degree (2:1), leading to teaching jobs in Kent and in Witney, Oxfordshire. After marrying Pietro Brenni in 1998 they moved to Australia for four years, before returning to England. They divorced in 2004. Since then Rachel has been living in Frome, firstly working in a local school as a teaching assistant, then running her own dog-walking business, and latterly working part-time in a local shop. She is also studying to become a counsellor.

Rachel and Pietro have two children: Joe and Alice.

Veronica Mary writes:

2020 has been an Annus Horribilis for the whole world. For our family it started In February when Chris suddenly died, and then the Covid-19 virus caused a ‘lockdown’ of the whole country for three months, causing many thousands of people to lose their lives. Life as we knew it changed completely. Everyone sought ways to keep spirits up and family became more important than ever. Social media and video webinars such as Zoom were an invaluable tool for ‘virtual’ visits. Not to be able to hug or kiss our children and grandchildren was an unbelievably heart-wrenching price to pay for our health, but we had to do it. In June we were allowed ‘social bubbles’ of two families and began to hope that we might get back to normality – one day!



Veronica Mary and John with their family on John's 65th birthday in 2012

10. Epilogue

Veronica Mary writes:

This family chronicle began with questions asked by our grandchildren about our family roots. Through endeavouring to research our forebears, we were also able to put flesh on the bones of our own family. This work was only made possible by our amazingly talented elder brother, Ant. Without his original Family Chronicle, so much history, anecdotes and narrative would have made its content bland and shallow. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his vision and dedication to the job. I feel he was back in the position he likes best: editor of the Family Chronicle, as ever issuing deadlines to us, his (sometimes) willing helpers!

Finally, I want to end on a personal thank you. Looking down from Heaven, Mummy would be so proud of her children. We have throughout our lives stayed closer than most siblings could ever hope to be. There have of course been minor squabbles but they have been short-lived. Ant, Paul and Clare are not only my brothers and sister, but my very best friends. They have always been the rock on which I have built my life, and when the road was tough they were there to pick me up. Although I was aware of this, I think it was Clare's long illness from leukaemia in 2010-11 that brought us even closer together. We faced a loss that none of us could bear to contemplate, we faced it together and our love got us through. Thank you all, and your wonderful spouses, for the love and joy, wisdom and advice, support and care. You are all amazing people and I am honoured to call you ... my family!
