

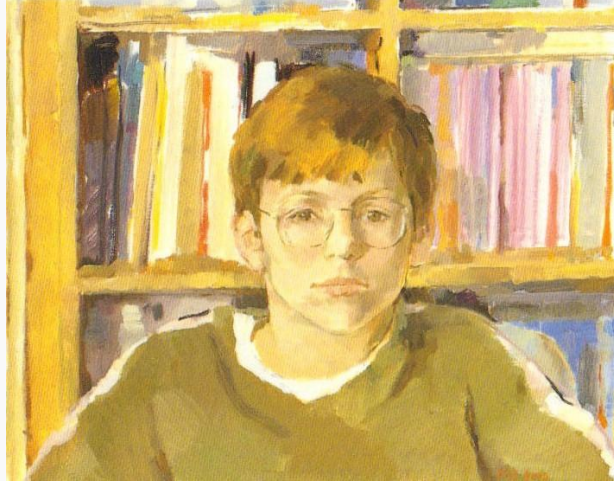
# Philip Reid

Born 30.1.1989.

Childhood life story by his father Alex.

Available online at [www.livesretold.co.uk](http://www.livesretold.co.uk).

## Introduction



Philip, age 10, by Minna Stevens.

I am writing this life story of my son Philip, here at 27 Millington Road, Cambridge in my quiet top floor study looking south over the playing fields. I am 67, and Philip is 19. He is away in Swaziland, working at an SOS orphan village during his gap year. Before telling Philip's story, a word about my wife Sian and myself.

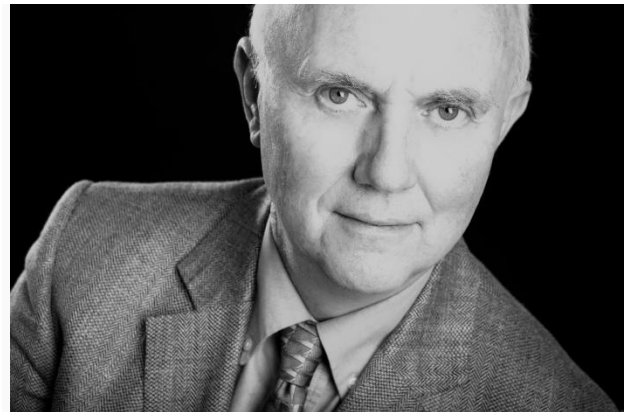


Philip's mother Sian.

Sian is Welsh. Her father Emrys Roberts joined the bar and served in the RAF during the Second World War. After the war he was elected Liberal MP for Merionethshire. He lost his seat in the next election, and spent the rest of his career with Tootal, rising to be Company Secretary.

Sian's mother Anna Tudor came from a prominent farming family in Montgomeryshire.

Sian was educated at Cheltenham Ladies College, Altrincham Grammar School, Bristol University, and the London Business School. She worked for the Wales Tourist Board, Resurgence Magazine, British Telecom, and Legion Telecommunications.



Philip's father Alex.

My father Philip Reid was from a Scottish family which was connected with India over several generations. My mother Louisa was a Luttrell from Somerset. I was educated at Winchester College, Trinity College Cambridge, and University College London.

After five years as a helicopter pilot in the Royal Navy, I worked for 11 years for British Telecom, then in venture capital, and latterly at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Sian and I were married in February 1988. It was my second marriage, and I have two daughters, Anna and Kate, from my first

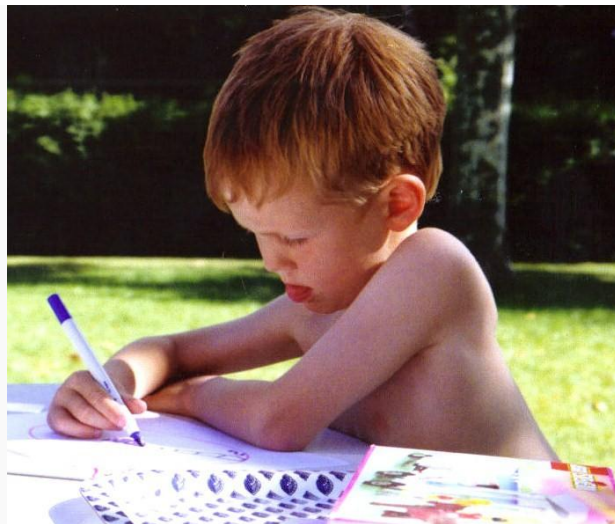
marriage. We were living at 64 Kensington Park Road, London, when Philip was born in January 1989.

## Kensington Park Road

Philip was born on 30th January 1989 at St.Mary's Hospital Paddington. We were living at 64 Kensington Park Road, London W11.



Sian with Philip in the Welsh hills.



Philip concentrating.



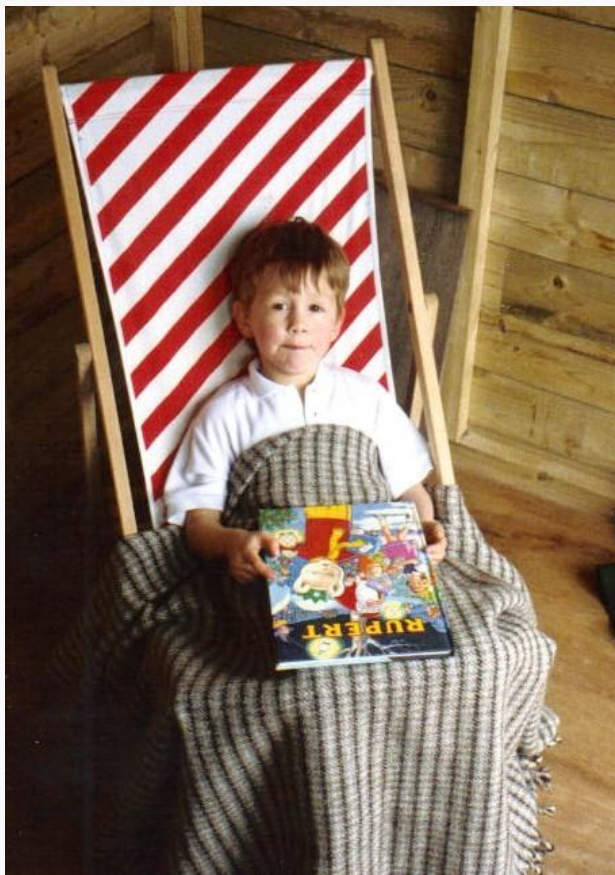
Acorn Nursery School. Philip third from left.



Kitchen at Kensington Park Road. Timney Fowler frieze.



Philip among the beach huts, Studland.



Philip cosy in beach hut E10.

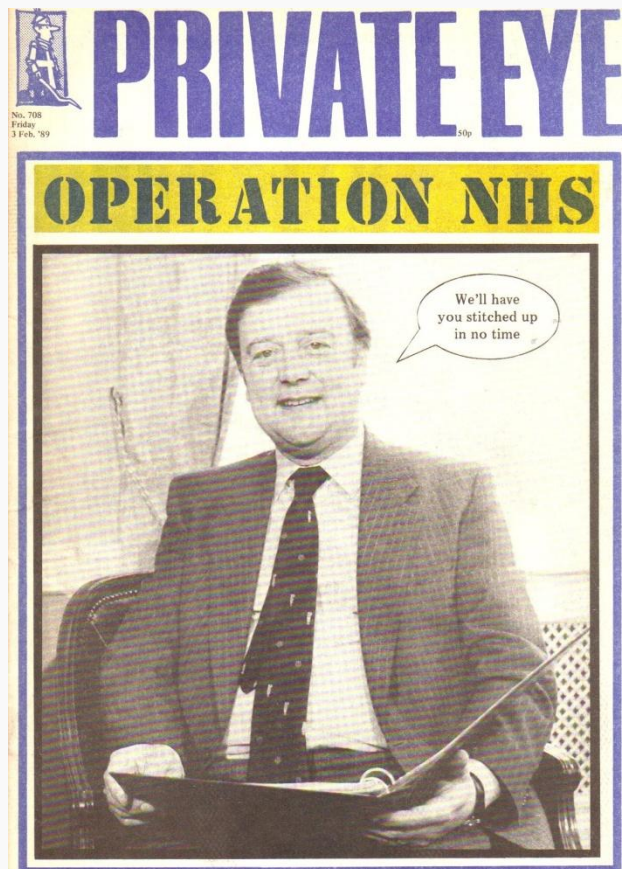


64 Kensington Park Road was a tall Victorian terrace house, with a basement plus three stories.



An electric Playmobil train ran around the wall

We made a rather special room for Philip on the top floor, with an electric train running around the room at picture-rail height. He probably thought that was quite normal.



We also put together a 'time capsule' for him, containing newspapers and magazines (including Private Eye, above) published in

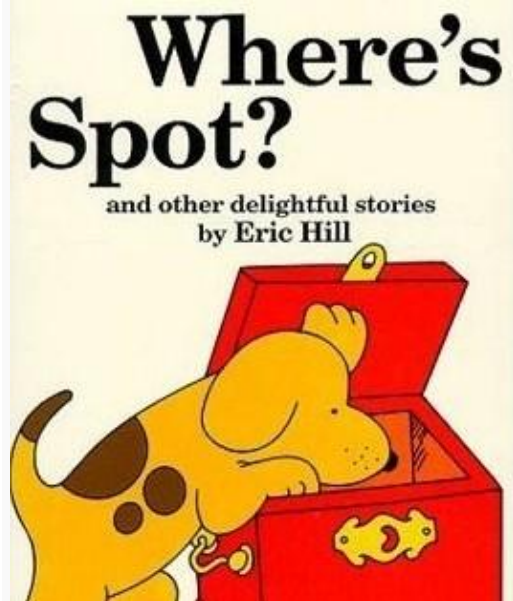
the week of his birth. It is in a tin box in our attic.



Sian with Lizzie, Hugh, Miranda & Philip



It's a spider.



Adventures of Spot.

Philip's sister Lizzie was born in August 1992. In May 1993, I started a diary which I kept up intermittently for a couple of years. The following extracts give some flavour of Philip's life at 64 Kensington Park Road:

*19.5.93. Leaping over Lizzie on our bed this morning, Philip landed on her. Much screaming - understandably - from Lizzie. Philip justifies his action by saying, with injured innocence - 'I was only being a rainbow!'*

*20.5.93. After being put to bed, Philip asks to be told a story. I start one about a duck. No! No! says Philip, tell me the story about how Philip and Lizzie and Sian and Daddy go the dinosaur museum. I suggest that others might be added to the party. Philip accepts all the suggestions, and we end up with Lizzie, Mummy, Nain, Daddy, Hugh, Miranda, Michael, Robert and Simon 'and their grown ups', Eleanor and Edward 'and their grown ups', Sara 'and her grown-ups' (and the baby - Fiona), and Kate (and Emma) and Andrea. We decide it will be necessary to hire a private bus for the outing. We also decide to include Lily and Ruth and Phil.*

23.5.93. Had breakfast with Philip in the back garden. We both had muffins with honey. He 'spotted' which of the back windows corresponded to which rooms. Played with Philip the curious electrical game we brought back from France consisting of a model bath with plastic bubbles jumping about which you stab with a miniature sink plunger.

26.5.93. Philip is keen to practise his somersaulting in the drawing room. It mainly consists of pushing his head into the ground.

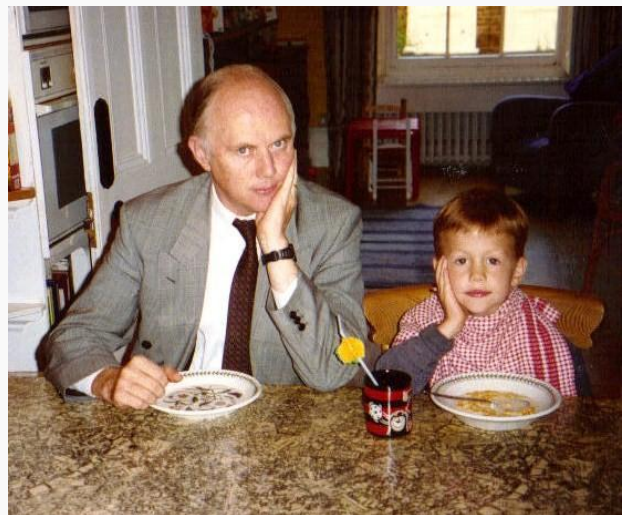
9.8.93. It's been difficult getting Philip to sleep with all the excitement of the French trip impending. The night before departure he sat up in bed at about 10pm saying 'Isn't it useful having a basin in your room'. Then, with an expansive gesture - 'Let's pretend all of this is a hospital!'

15.8.93. This afternoon Sian and P and L return from their trip to France, all looking very well. Philip has had a hair cut in France, and looks like a little French boy. Lizzie is looking very bouncy, with more fair curly hair, and big blue concentrating eyes. Philip liked the garden at the chateau, and said to Sian 'When we get back, let's go to the garden centre and get a really big garden with a pool in it'.

21.8.93. Day before yesterday Philip spent the afternoon with me at my new office (37 Uxbridge St.) and on errands with me in the car. We went to collect a fax machine from DEGW, bought two phones, and a German Hoover from John Lewis. Philip enjoyed the escalators. On the way back to the office he explained that goats eat everything, and embarked on a half hour monologue reviewing the things that goats might eat - people, houses, books, boats, biscuits, filling stations, buses, tourists at Madame Tussauds, policemen, bus shelters, etc. He said that Kate had told him that goats eat everything.



200 balloons.



Deep in thought.



Studland chain ferry.

6.9.93. A very nice fresh-air weekend with a picnic in Richmond Park on Saturday - the four of us plus Nain. Philip did bicycling on the closed-off road. In hide-and-seek Philip asks the hidden person 'Please squeak!'. When hidden, he squeaks almost continuously, like a Geiger counter. At

*breakfast this morning, Philip learned to read without moving his lips - with frowning concentration and pursed lips. He now has 2 elephant jokes (custard and cherry trees) and can tell the story of the Wide Mouthed Frog.*

*26.9.93. Philip and I sorted his Lego into 4 categories today - chunkies, thinnies, flatties and oddies. Our most numerous category is oddies.*

*4.12.93. Much practising and dressing up as Joseph for Philip, ahead of the Acorn school nativity play next week. He looks just like Yassa Arafat, with a red and white checked napkin on his head. Lizzie is now into very grown-up dresses, but the shoe shop won't sell her shoes yet, as they say she curls up her toes. Yesterday Philip said he had a dream that it was Christmas, and we were all together unpacking presents. He asked me what present had been in a particular box - and couldn't understand why I couldn't remember the details. He clearly thought we dream the same dream if we appear together!*

*14.3.94. Philip's fifth birthday party on Jan 30th was a success - he asked that it be just like his fourth birthday party. So I went to the BOC depot in Wembley and rented a cylinder of balloon gas complete with 200 balloons. They all went up into Philip's bedroom, and the guests brought them down to the drawing room when they arrived. The usual games - pass the parcel, musical cushions, charades (with the slight problem that the performers tended to shout out the subject of their impersonation), and matching the halves of cut-up Xmas cards. The birthday cake was in the shape of a train, with a smoke machine in the funnel. It produced a rather feeble wisp of smoke - calculated only to impress the adults, who are surprised that a cake can smoke at all. Philip was an excellent host. As on the previous birthday party, a surprisingly popular feature is the water balloon event, where the children crowd into the garden*

*(with the more timid looking out of the window) while I fling balloons filled with water against the high end wall of the garden. These splash a good deal as they burst - causing squeals of delight and fear.*

At Philip's fifth birthday party we decided to use the balloons to launch a capsule. The capsule was a small plastic box, into which we fitted a plastic mole (the 'Astromole') and a message with our name and address. We took the balloons into Ladbroke Square Gardens, tied about forty together, and attached the capsule. We stood in a circle, chorused a count-down, and away it went. Astonishingly, we heard two months later from a schoolgirl in France who had found the capsule and Astromole in a bale of hay at her family farm.

Philip was a voracious reader from a young age. He liked the Hungry Caterpillar book. His favourite videos were Spot the puppy, from which he graduated to Postman Pat.

During our time at Kensington Park Road we started going to the seaside at Studland at weekends and for holidays. First we rented a beach hut (E10) on the Middle Beach. Then in 1994 we bought a former council house at 2 Pinewood Cottages, Studland.

On our first weekend there Philip rigged up a way of crawling from the top of his chest of drawers to his top bunk along a horizontal ladder. We loved going to Studland, from the moment when you boarded the chain ferry across the narrow mouth of Poole Harbour.

Philip and Lizzie spent a lot of time on the beach, including standing on small dunes and shouting 'Geronimo!' as they jumped off. Other holidays included skiing, and various trips to France. We stayed with Phil and Ruth Steadman and their daughter Lily at their chateau near Perigueux. We had a good time, with walks, bathing, and food markets.



Philip standing, Lizzie bending, at the Steadmans

We gave the Steadmans an electric cherry stoning machine which we had bought en route. Phil cooked a green cake (the cake as well as the icing being green) following a recipe attributed to Matisse.

Years later Phil, who was a researcher in design at the Open University, filmed an educational TV programme about geometry and tessalation in our kitchen at Kensington Park Road. Sian's mother Anna knew nothing of this.

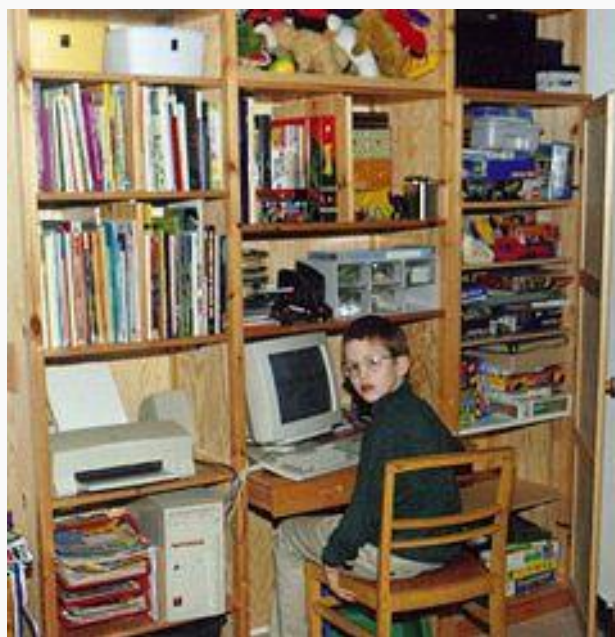
But she happened, in an insomniac way, to be watching random television in Wales at about 2am when the programme was eventually broadcast. She was astonished.

## Lansdowne Walk

In 1996 we moved from 64 Kensington Park Road to 9A Lansdowne Walk, just the other side of Ladbroke Square.



Philip in Cameron House uniform.



Shelfstore in Philip's bedroom.



Crazy Golf at Swanage.



With the Faulks in Ladbrooke Square.



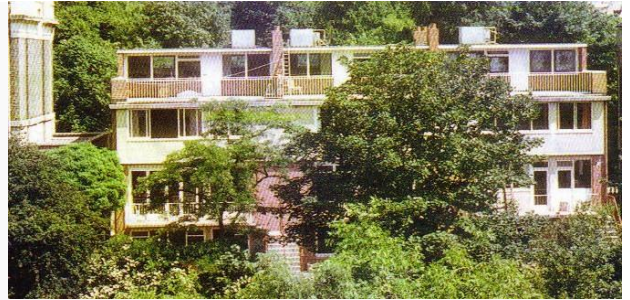
Spotting terracota pots.

We were kindly tipped off that the house was for sale by our friend and next door neighbour Catherine Faulks.

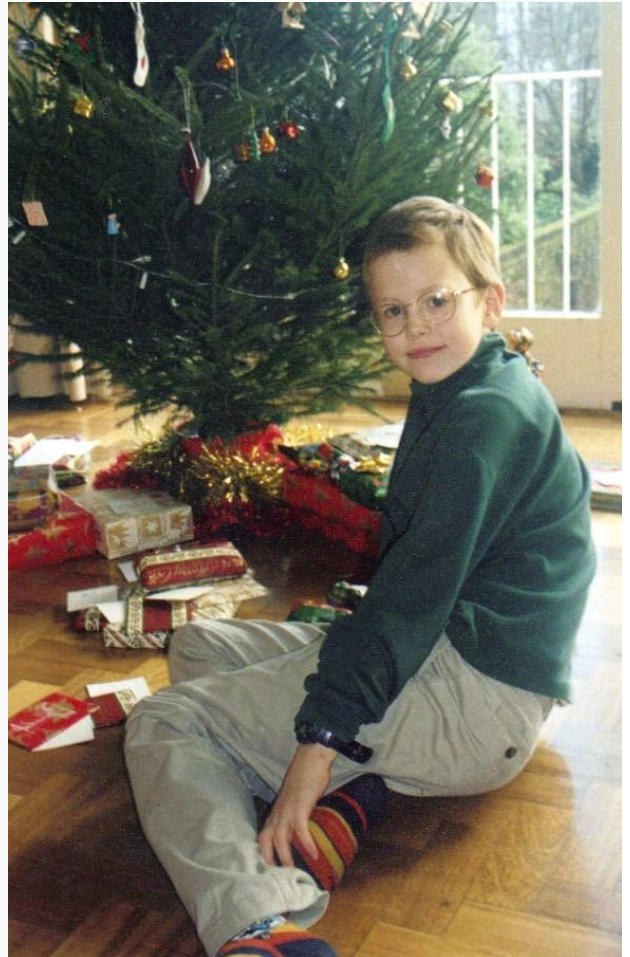
She had thought of moving there herself, but her husband Edward was quite clear he wanted to live in period house.

9A Lansdowne Walk had been designed by the Swiss-born architect Rudolf Mock in 1953. With two friends, he built a row of three modernist terrace houses on the site of two bombed Victorian villas.

It was in a beautiful quiet street, looking out to private gardens to the south, and looking onto the greenery of Hanover Square to the north.



Lansdowne Walk.

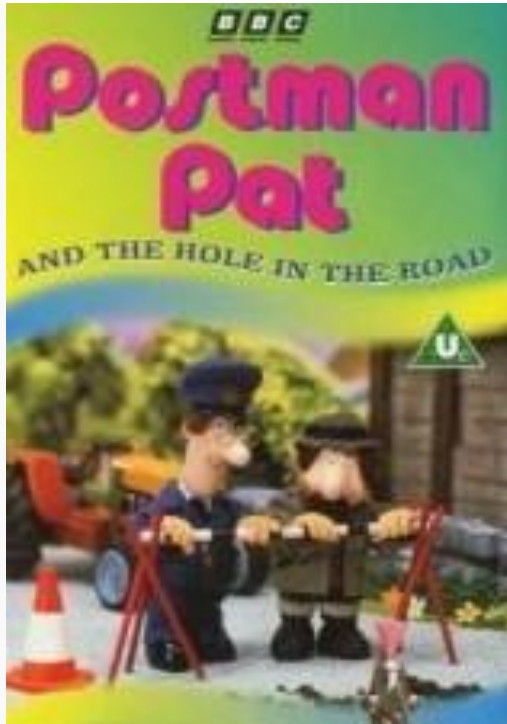


Christmas 1998.



With the Faulks at Studland

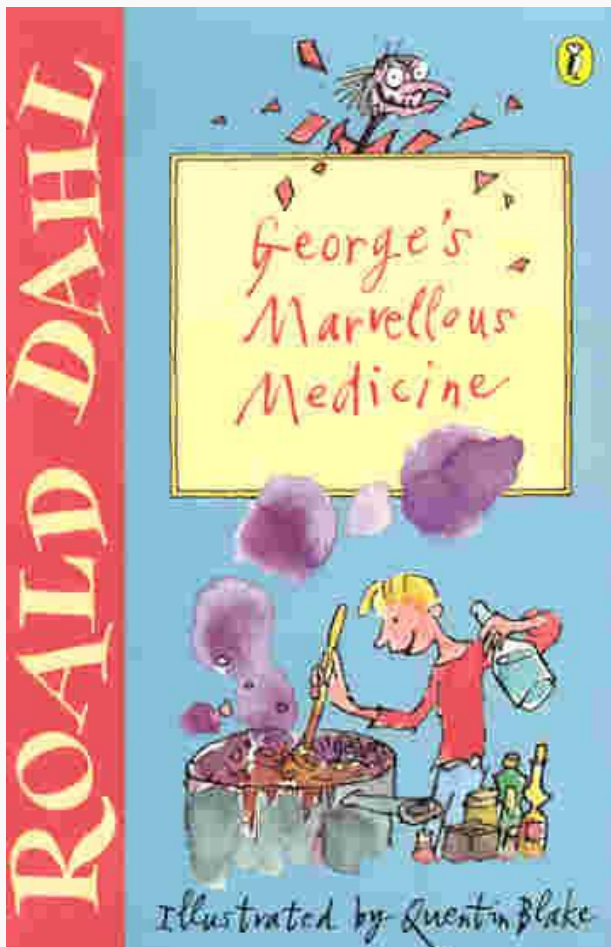




Postman Pat.



Studland beach.



Book Day.

Philip had moved from the Acorn Nursery School to The Hall in Swiss Cottage. This did not work out - too big, all boy, and unlucky with some difficult boys in his class. Also he did not respond well to the military style of discipline operated by the formidable headmistress. With great good fortune Sian found a wonderful school at Cameron House, just off the Kings Road in Chelsea, where Philip had four happy years. The school was squeezed into a big house just opposite the extremely stylish Bluebird delicatessen and restaurant owned by Terence Conran.

Philip learned the piano, and a highlight of his time at Cameron House was a school concert at which (with parents squashed into every corner of the room) he played and sang The Snowman. He did it with great feeling.

One of the features of Cameron House was that it had 'Book Days' when the children would come to school in fancy dress based on a children's book. One time Philip went as 'George's Marvellous Medicine' by Roald Dahl. He had about twenty empty plastic bottle tied to him with pieces of string, each

with a carefully printed label describing a grisly medicine. The most challenging costume was for a creature which had the head of one animal, the body of another, the arms of another, etc. My sister Griselda later knitted him one.

We had very nice neighbours: an Australian family called Guest to the east, and initially a nice American couple to the west. She was a newsreader at the London bureau of CNN and went to work in pastel suits. On our first day she came round with a generous welcome basket including chocolate, fruit, and home baked muffins. When they moved on they were replaced with an equally nice French family. Philip and Lizzie found ways of climbing from our balcony to theirs to visit their son Thibault. On one such expedition they were intrigued to find Thibault's grandfather deeply asleep in an arm chair, with his mouth hanging open. Our good friends Catherine and Edward Faulks, who had been our next door neighbours in Kensington Park Road, also moved across Ladbroke Square, to a larger house in Ladbroke Grove - just round the corner from us. They have two boys: Leo (almost a twin of Lizzie) and Archie. The four children are fast friends.

I used to take Philip to school at Cameron house in the car. We played a game called 'spotting' in which he would call out (with rotund emphasis, rather like calling the score in a darts match) a list of about forty interesting items which we had identified en route. These included Holland Park Mews, Renault Megane Scenic, Square Clock, Neon Sign (known as Neoff if it was off), Square Glasses, Round Window, and Terracotta Pots. It became a ritual.

Philip was keen on Lego, and made a beautiful gym, complete with figures operating various exercise machines. The person on the trampoline was held in the air by a small stack of transparent bricks. Postman Pat remained one of our favourite

videos, long after we should have grown out of it. We all felt Pat was the very model of community engagement.

We continued to make good use of the cottage at Studland, and in 1995 bought a small dinghy to keep there. I wrote in my diary:

*The Toad is great - 8 feet six inches long, with oars or sail. Dark green hull and tan sail. It has come into its own this summer, both for sailing and rowing, and as a swimming platform. We have found a splendid spot for swimming, in about six feet of water with a sandy bottom near the 'castle' on the rocks between South and Middle Beaches. We put down the anchor, and Philip takes to the water wearing both life jacket and rubber ring. We then visit neighbouring yachts (with me pushing Philip ahead) and shout out 'Ahoy there! What ship are you?'. Some invited Philip aboard, up little ladders - he inspects all such craft with care and approval.*

*Sian did two long walks with Philip - one along the top of Ballard Down and to Old Harry, then back via the Glebe - all with Miranda, who stayed for three days. They set off, each with a knapsack, as a jolly crew, back in time for lunch. Sian's other walk with Philip was from the Ferry Road, across dry savannah-type country with horses, like the Wild West, and back through Aggleston Road. The high point was when Philip found a very fine antler, in beautiful condition, which was brought home as a valued trophy.*

We had a neighbour in Studland who tinkered with old bangers. He told us one day that he would be banger racing his Reliant Robin the other side of Dorchester next Saturday. Philip and I decided to make a day of it, and I drove him over there.

On the way I planned to buy some things at a DIY store in Dorchester called Do-It-All. In the car, Philip asked me what we would see. I explained that there would be banger

racing, with cars crashing into each other and rolling over, and a stunt motor cyclist who would jump over a line of cars and leap through a flaming hoop. And, I said, we are going to Do-It-All. Philip, who had not heard of Do-It-All, assumed that we would be doing it all - crashing cars, leaping through hoops of fire etc. His jaw dropped and his eyes blazed with excitement at the prospect.



Reliant Robin

## Cambridge



With Cesca & Lizzie outside 27 Millington Road. Mrs French's house is behind.



Studland in winter with Miranda.



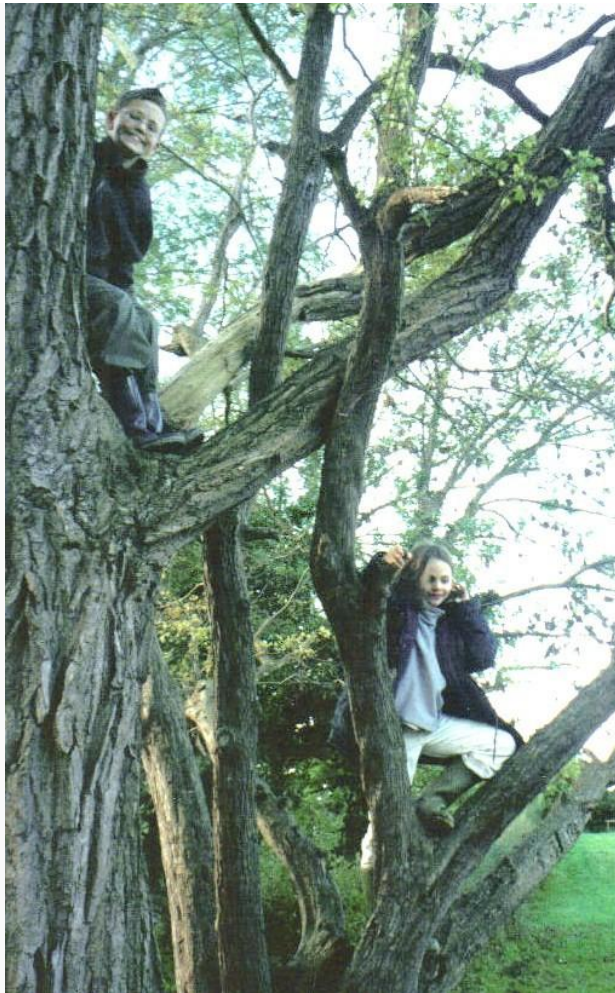
Studland in summer with Miranda.

In 2000 we moved from London to 27 Millington Road, Cambridge. Philip started at the Leys School, and Lizzie started at St.John's School.

He learned the guitar, and became involved in the theatre club. His specialty was working the sound system backstage. His acting credits included an Owl, and a singing gangster.

He performed with his guitar in the Plugged (electric) and Unplugged (acoustic) concerts, to much acclaim.

He joined the Naval Cadet Corps, and one day I drove him down to Portsmouth for a week at sea. Not exactly at sea, since although he lived in a warship, it was fixed to the dock with an arrangement of sliding poles, so that it could go up and down with the tide but not forwards.



Climbing a tree in Grantchester Meadows



Diving in Turkey.



Sailing in Turkey.



Philip cycled to and from school, sometimes carrying his guitar on his back. Luckily you can go from Millington Road to the Leys School almost entirely off-road: through Newnham Village, then across the Lammas Land park.

Just across the playing fields from Millington Road is the path to Grantchester Meadows. This was much trodden by the Reid family, particularly after they acquired Cesca, their Golden Retriever. There was a tall old tree at the far end of the path, very suitable for climbing. Also another which reached out over the river in a perilous way.

We continued to make good use of the cottage at Studland, where Philip became skilful at driving the Toad solo. He and Lizzie also went to sailing courses, at Plas Menai in Wales, and locally in Studland. We had two excellent holidays in Turkey with Sunsail, where Kate had worked as a sailing instructor during university vacations. The second had a shadow over it, because Sian had to stay at home recuperating from a successful operation for breast cancer.



New York City, with Hugh, autumn 2004.

Sian has a nephew Hugh, both of whose parents had died when he was a child. He was brought up by his stepfather, Michael Stern, together with his younger half-sister Miranda. In 2002 Michael was tragically killed in a car accident, and he named Sian and myself as guardians of Hugh (then aged

21, and just finished reading English at Clare College, Cambridge) and Miranda (then 15). Both joined our family, which was much enriched by their addition, and Philip effectively acquired an older brother and sister.



USA holiday collage.

After Cambridge, and after working in the policy unit at No.10 Downing Street, Hugh went to New York to do a Master's course in international relations at Columbia University. We took advantage of this to undertake two American holidays in 2004 - to California in August, and to New York in October. Hugh and Miranda were with us on both holidays.



2 convertibles in Los Angeles

Since we could not fit six in one car, we splashed out and rented two white convertibles in Los Angeles. We drove them up to San Francisco, and felt like millionaires. From Philip's California diary:

*We got up early to have breakfast at Infuzion. We met a nice man who showed us the way to UNIVERSAL STUDIOS!! We drove to the studios and parked in Jurassic Parking and walked to the Theme Park. We decided to go on Back To The Future first. It was a really cool simulator. Next we went on the Studios Tour. It was so amazing. We saw original sets from films, eg. House from Psycho! We went on Jurassic Park next. It had loads of animatronic dinosaurs and an 84ft drop at the end. Next we went on The Revenge of the Mummy. It is the fastest indoor roller-coaster in California. Next we checked out the Nickelodeon Blast Zone. It had all these water guns and water jets. I got a little bit wet. Lizzie got soaked because she got caught in Blast Off! I bought her a Sponge Bob Square Pants toy.*

Memorable highlights of our California holiday included the Nepenthe Restaurant on the Pacific Highway, the Marina Motel in San Francisco, the Yosemite National Park (where we saw bears) and Big Sur (where we did not see mountain lions). Notices in Big Sur advised:

*Most lions will avoid confrontation. Give them a way to escape. Stay calm and face the lion. Do not run, because this may trigger the lion's instinct to attack. Try to appear larger by raising your hands.*



Lizzie practised the latter. We also visited the Jelly Bellies jelly bean factory. It is the world headquarters of the Jelly Bellies corporation, equipped with robots which did a dance for us. We came away with

jumbo bags of rejects, known as Belly Flops.



Belly flops

## Gap Year



After Miranda's 18th birthday party, 2005.



Philip moved up to the Sixth Form at the Leys in 2005. He took his AS and A2 exams in Business Studies, Psychology and Theatre Studies. Kate and Alex and her three boys had moved into their house, just round the corner, at 79 Grantchester Meadows. Philip got on particularly well with the oldest, Jocelyn, who would look in

with his Dad before lunch on Sunday - returning muddy from rugby. Jocelyn appreciated Philip's willingness to engage in shoot-out and wrestling games.

A big event in 2007 was Philip's passing of his driving test. He had long wanted a vehicle of some kind, even coveting the electric invalid cart driven by Mr Clarke who lives at the end of Millington Road. He passed his test with flying colours on his second attempt, and became adept (after two large dents) at nipping around in Sian's Peugeot 107.

Another big event was Philip's 18th birthday, after which he could buy drinks at pubs and clubs with his friends Roper, Walker, Miffy and Smiffy. Also Philip and I had a good weekend in Dublin, during which we enjoyed Fiddler on the Roof, visited the zoo and toured the Jamieson's whiskey distillery. We did the Guinness experience, where Philip had his first glass of stout.

During 2007 Philip greatly enjoyed the company of Nathi, from Swaziland, who lodged with us while he was doing information technology courses at the Cambridge Regional College. Nathi was brought up at the SOS orphan school in Swaziland, where Miranda had worked in her gap year. In the summer we rented a house in Edinburgh for a week of the Edinburgh Festival. Philip, Lizzie and Miranda all had various friends to stay, and spent much time in stand-up comedy shows and in the Pleasance Courtyard. Philip was offered and accepted a place at Aberystwyth University to read Business Studies.

Philip undertook various money earning jobs in the autumn of 2007. These included working at the Orchard Tea Rooms in Grantchester, bar work, and a spell at a huge shed in Duxford checking exam papers at Cambridge Assessment. He wore headphones, had a computer screen and a

foot pedal, and got through more than 5,000 papers on a good day. In January 2008 Philip went out to Swaziland to work at the SOS orphanage for ten weeks.



Peking Duck with music at Charlie Chan. The night before Philip flew to Swaziland, 2008.

The night before, we went to Charlie Chan in Regent Street, Cambridge, for a farewell meal including Peking Duck and Lemon Chicken.

Luckily, being a Friday, the elderly Silverette dance band was playing. Philip flew out from Heathrow, via Frankfurt and Johannesburg, loaded up to the baggage limit with Lego and stationery. Email communication, which was sparse, included, on 11th February:

*I need you to send some things out to me urgently. 1. my bank card (v.important). 2. i have run out of books, so i need you to send out my adrian moles (especially the capuccino years), my alex rider books (should be in my bottom left book shelf) and also the latest harry potter book - the dealthly hallows (should be next to my xbox). 3. i forgot to pack my shorts from gap so could you send those out too please. please reply asap because i will be in the cafe tomorz (tuesday).*

We responded promptly with two parcels, wrapped in brown paper, sent from Jack's Post Office counter at the Derby Stores in Newnham.



Books to Swaziland

### Postscript

Philip went on to get an undergraduate degree in Audio and Music Technology at Anglia Ruskin University and a master's degree in Environmental and Architectural Acoustics at South Bank University.

He also obtained a qualification in child care, and at the time of writing (November 2019) has decided to take that career direction. He has been working through a supply agency, dashing off every day to various nurseries all over London. Much of this commuting is done on a Santander bike. He comes back full of tales of the engaging behaviour of the small children he looks after. They call him Mr.Philip.



Santander bikes



Luxborough Tower

He is living in a studio flat at Luxborough Street, Marylebone. Sian and I are living in Cambridge, with a one-bedroom flat, where we spend a couple of nights a week, on the same corridor of Luxborough Tower as Philip's flat.



Where Philip makes his audio mixes.



Philip on the Boating Lake, Regent's Park



Luxborough Tower is a few minutes walk from Regent's Park, which we make good use of. The Boathouse Café makes you feel you are at the seaside. The boating lake has pedalos and rowing boats. And the bandstand is the venue for our annual family picnic.



Annual family picnic at the bandstand in Regent's Park



Sometimes Philip and I have breakfast at the Bonne Bouche, Marylebone.

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