

# Richard Wilson

Born 1942.

Life story interview by Alan Macfarlane.

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# 1. My Parents

Born in Cardiff in 1942, though technically in Glamorgan as my mother had me in the midwife's home; before she died my mother said she wanted to show me where I was born, but we drove around without success as she could not remember where it was. My birth certificate says Rhiwbina, district of Caerphilly, county of Glamorgan. My parents had been living north of Newport and moved to Cardiff. My father was called up into the R.A.F. in 1942. My mother followed him and rented a house; then my father was sent overseas, so my mother found herself in the middle of Cardiff, which was being bombed, and no family near.

My sisters who were ten and eight and a half years older than me had been sent to mid-Wales, to a boarding school, because of the War. My elder sister, a strong personality, came home to help my mother look after me. My earliest memories are of fear. I was debating with Gabriel Horn quite how much one can remember and how soon, but I do have memories which seem to me both genuine and very early, and ones that no one else could have told me about; basically, they were fear of aircraft overhead.

I can remember being in a cot and hearing aircraft and being very frightened; I can also remember being taken under a table; we had a very large oak dining table and I can remember being taken under it during air raids. I remember seeing the ceiling with cracks in it and a man coming to see whether it was going to come down or not. I remember that the cracks looked like spiders; I can remember bands passing and disliking sirens. These are all things that I don't think anyone else would tell me.

My parents came from two, pretty modest, middle-class families in South Wales. My maternal grandfather had come down from Scotland and started a store in Newport; he then had a small manufacturing company at the base of Newport transporter bridge. I never knew either grandfather. My maternal grandmother had been born into a slightly more superior family; she had been sent to New Quay in West Wales and only spoke Welsh for the first years of her life. When she married my grandfather, she was told by her mother that she would not be able to mix socially with her sisters because they had married into a professional class.

Her sister Myra who married a man called Dr James lived in a rather smart house in the middle of Newport. That great aunt and her husband were the grandparents of William Rushton (right) who became a television star; he was a few years older than me and his clothes used to come to me second-hand. I used to stand festooned in cricketing sweaters that would droop off me as I was thin and he was much larger.

My father's side of the family had a strong church background; my grandfather was a solicitor and my



grandmother, Nelly Lloyd, came from a family which had owned a very large coaching inn in the middle of Newport. Neither of my parents went to university; my father was born in 1903, mother in 1904. Both were Edwardian children and some of the flavour of Edwardian England lingered through into my upbringing. My father became a solicitor and then was called up; after the War they moved back to Llantarnam, north of Newport, very close to a new town called Cwmbran. Before it became a new town we used to go there to get my orange juice. My father resumed his practice but it was a very grim period, business was pretty slim, and we just about scraped through. I went to school in Newport until the age of eight.

My parents were shy, and my father did not make friends easily. My mother had had very little education; she didn't seem to have gone to school except for one year in London. My maternal grandmother had been a spirited lady, who had wanted to be a doctor and to go out to the Boer War, but her parents wouldn't let her. She trained a bit as a nurse and then she became a suffragette in Newport; they had an office on Stow Hill in Newport; my mother used to say in a jokey manner that she retired as a suffragette because she sat on a crochet needle and got a rather nasty flesh wound.

They used to have discussions about when they were going to commit a crime, and she had a close friend who was going to put a brick through a window and chose to do it in August because she was a keen gardener and August is the least interesting month in the garden. My grandmother had a marvellous spirit.

Both grandfathers died before I was born. My father's mother died in about 1947 and I do remember her dimly but not well, so the only grandmother I knew was my mother's mother. My father hated argument which was difficult because I used to like argument. I liked to say things as a teenager to see what they sounded like; it was painful really.

My mother was a highly intelligent woman but with no self-confidence. Her father had been an extremely difficult man and had tried out nearly every religion, including Christian Science. She always remembered how, when she had had some illness like chicken-pox or measles, he had come in and thrown at her Mary Baker Eddy's book and said that her illness was all in the mind and that she should heal herself. She felt distinctly aggrieved.

My father had been to a private school in Weston-super-Mare which he had left at sixteen, and had taken solicitors exams in the late twenties. In the early 1950s my father sold his share in the solicitors' practice and became solicitor to the Church in Wales. We had always hung round the edges of the church, became Registrar and then later, Secretary for the Church in Wales, which is independent of the State. He was the senior non-cleric in the church; he used to go to a synod every autumn in North Wales, and the children I used to play with were sons of clerics.

## 2. Prep School

My father used the money from selling his practice to educate me. Although my parents wanted me to have a private education, they were very much at a loss. They found a prep school in Weston-super-Mare, which was very well described by Roald Dahl in his book, 'Boy'; he rather cruelly lampooned the classics' master, who was known as Capiro Lancaster. Dahl couldn't bear the school and describes some of its culture. It was quite a tough boarding school of that period. I think for me it was a huge shock. It was very isolated living near Newport, and I don't think my mother had the faintest notion of what to do with me, so I was on my own a great deal. I used to long for theatre, and when the pantomime came, or the occasional performance by the Newport light opera company, that was the most marvellous treat. Similarly I used to love cinema which was a very rare treat, but has left me with a lifetime's love of movies; that would be my treat before going back to school.

I was pathetically unhobbed. I learned to play the piano from the age of four and was reasonably competent at it; I continued playing until I left school at seventeen. The thing I loved doing was reading. I used to read the most inappropriate things; whatever books I could find in the house I would read, authors that no one reads now like W. Harrison Ainsworth, Francis Brett Young, W.W. Jacobs and H.G. Wells. It is extraordinary to think of me at six or seven, sitting there, wading through 'Mr Perrin and Mr Traill'.

I look at some of the books now that I read then and wonder how I possibly could have done so, but anything that was around I swallowed up. I taught myself to read very early, when I was about three; I would read awful books like 'Odette', which one of my sisters had bought; so I would read books that they would read. I did not wear glasses as a child; no one noticed that I was short-sighted, and I didn't know that it could be better.

One of the most revelatory moments of my life was in the C.C.F. at school; we had some sort of training exam and they asked me to focus a rifle on a target, a stone ball on a wall, and I couldn't see it. I began to realize that I wasn't just stupid but really could not see. They tested my eyes and found that I was very short-sighted. Walking out into the street with glasses on, I discovered what it was like to see clearly; until then I used to survive by going up to the blackboard after a class and seeing what had been there. Why I never noticed it myself, I don't know; I was brought up not to make a fuss so didn't. That explained why I was hopeless at cricket. I used to wonder how people saw the ball as I had no idea where it was

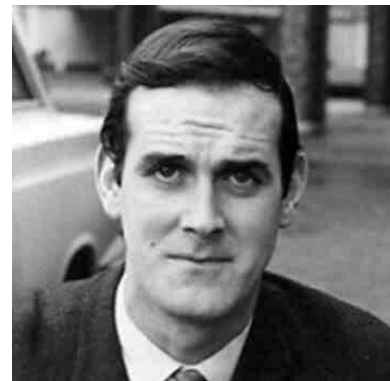
I hated the boarding school as I didn't fit in, and didn't know how to cope with it. It was a school where, as through the whole of my education, sport mattered. I was hopeless at it and was extremely thin and weedy, had not much strength, and was pretty uncoordinated. There were things that I liked; books have been a huge support to me, and I read completely indiscriminately; I read all of Conan Doyle, P.G. Wodehouse, Leslie Charteris – 'The Saint', all of John Buchan. I used to find an author and would drill into them. This when I was nine or ten; I still have sets of authors such as Jerome K. Jerome.

A lot of my upbringing had a strong Edwardian flavour; the prep school was quite 1920s 1930s with fist fights in the changing room and beating. I was beaten. I was a good child, and in the dormitory everyone else was having pillow fights; we had all been warned not to and the Headmaster said we must all come to his study in the morning. We were all beaten, and I still think it was extremely unfair as I was actually hating it all.

I think I was taught some things extremely well; there was a master, who I am absolutely certain now would never have got through a child protection register - there were a number at that period as people were not alert to it - but I was not a pretty boy so never attracted that sort of attention. However he taught me maths absolutely brilliantly, and when I was working in the Treasury, controlling half of public expenditure, and I would do a basic bit of algebra I would tip my hat to him. I am really strong on quadratic equations and Euclidian geometry.

English was not taught very well; I don't really know what they taught me but they kept me occupied. I developed a minor flair for acting; I took the part of Shylock which was the highlight of my time there. I was deputy head boy, so I didn't do badly, but I did find leaving home and being parted at the age of eight extremely difficult to cope with.

I think, probably, it did me good but it wasn't much fun at the time; it was an interesting school as another person who was there, and a couple of years older, was John Cleese (right). He was extremely tall, a good boy, a good cricketer, who showed no signs of the man who emerged in comedy later on. He was a solemn, serious, able prefect; I remember we were all rioting slightly and he came in and broke it up.



The first Shakespeare I ever saw was a truncated version of 'Twelfth Night' in which John Cleese, aged ten or eleven, played Malvolio. To this day I think he was the best Malvolio I have ever seen; the other thing about him is that whenever I see him I think of him as a day boy - there were about ten of them and they never really belonged - and I still can't think of him as a comic character as that wasn't how he was. His parents, I believe, kept a hotel in Weston-super-Mare, so the seeds of 'Fawlty Towers' were no doubt being laid at that time.

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### 3. Radley College



Radley College.

I was then sent to Radley because my parents asked the Headmaster where I should go; he suggested Radley and there I went in October 1956. I arrived late because I had been given a double smallpox vaccination and was extremely ill. That was not anything like as good a school as it is now (I am Chairman of the school council now). It was a school that also gave huge weight to athletics and sport, but it did do rowing. I learned to row and loved it although I was not very good at it; I used to go sculling on the Thames and you could go off down the river for a pleasant afternoon. I also rowed in boats which were great heavy tubs which were difficult to move at all fast.

I am President of Emmanuel College Boat Club now and I can identify with that; I would have liked to have been good at sport but the poverty of eyesight was a factor. Sport brings out qualities which are quite good for running an empire, and I think that that was what it was about. I think I had a very good education to send me out to a colony or part of the Empire; I was taught qualities of standing on your own, endurance, leadership, all sorts of things about uprightness, probity, what a chap does and what a chap doesn't do, which you never really lose.

In the fifties I still caught the flavour of the Kipling period; there were all sorts of things that I missed out on; my parents never had a television, so I have never watched it much. The first time I did watch it was when men landed on the moon, and I rented a television, but I was in my mid-twenties by then. There were other boys at school who would talk about television programmes but I had no notion of what they were talking about. I was brought up on middle-brow music, so I knew every Gilbert and Sullivan opera except for 'Ruddigore' and 'Princess Ida', but I knew the words and music of them absolutely backwards. It has always been useful as it is full of quotations you can use.

I love 'Iolanthe' and its references to the House of Lords, and there are still lines in it that are relevant. I have never sung in it but would love to have done. Radley gave me the opportunity to do singing but I missed the choir tests so never joined it. I did sing there, but Gilbert and Sullivan was a craze I had about the age of eleven. I did play the piano but have always had the problem that my brain knows what it wants to do but my hands never quite keep up with it.

I am a great living expert on musical comedies of the early fifties, so can do all of 'Annie Get Your Gun' etc., because they were performed at New Theatre, Cardiff, and that would be a treat. Coming to Cambridge, the whole world opens up in front of you; at Radley I learned fairly orthodox things on the piano, and we did not have access to radio. There was one old gramophone in the house library where people were actually playing Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly; I was a bit shocked at first, but developed a taste for them later on, and the pop music of the sixties was fantastic. I have moved to chamber music now, and in times of trouble a bit of Schubert or Beethoven's late quartets, I find hugely consoling or inspirational. I carry music on my iPhone; the ability to carry round such a lot of music now is quite extraordinary. I also like Ella Fitzgerald and Sinatra on his good days

I did acting at Radley in a number of productions, and produced a play We did such plays as 'Our Town', Shaw's 'Caesar and Cleopatra', and I got a lot of pleasure from that. When I came to Cambridge I did sign up for acting but it was a period when there was an extraordinary number of people who wanted to go on stage; so the Marlow Society of 'Macbeth' was produced by Trevor Nunn with Richard Eyre, Miriam Margolyes, John Grillo, and Mike Pennington - all sorts of people who actually have established themselves as pretty good names.

I was a spear holder in my first term; I still have the scar because they sharpened the knives, I think on Trevor Nunn's instructions, and I had to go off and have two stitches in it. The best part I had was in 'Bartholomew Fair' where I was Moon-Calf to Tim Brooke-Taylor's Ursula, the pig woman. I gave it up after a while, mainly because it took too much time, but also because I wasn't that good and they were terrific. It was a good thing to do as it taught me to appear before an audience; when I became a Permanent Secretary and found I had to make speeches and appear before audiences, I drew on that experience.

At Radley there was one master called Paul Crowson (right) who was my Housemaster, and he was hugely important for me - a father-figure, and a wise man, and a huge influence on me for life. I owe him a huge debt; later in my career there have been a number of occasions when I have been aware that I have said things, both to Mrs Thatcher and Mr Blair, where I was repeating things that Paul Crowson had said.



He taught me English but was also an historian; he was a terrific figure in the school and extremely wise. I think he had T.B. as he was always stooped, and spoke in a slightly funny manner; for me he was absolutely the person at the time when I needed it.

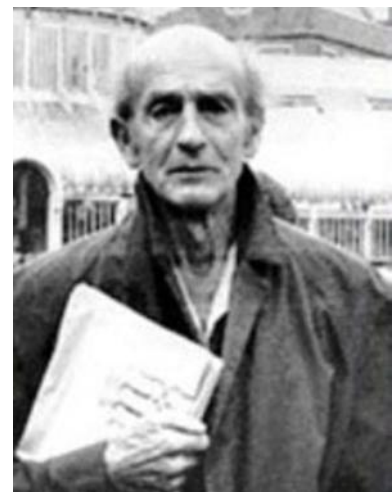
I was well taught there; I used to think afterwards that I went through school as if under anaesthetic - a lot of my schooling, I just sort of closed myself down. I think I was a lot brighter than they gave me credit for, but my family didn't really like people being clever. I remember being told that I was not clever but just worked hard; South Wales was not a place to be clever in; so what I did was just get through, and you learn to enjoy the little comforts and endure the rest.

The things that I enjoyed, quite often were things of the intellect, and suddenly I had a period when I did well. I had done satisfactorily in my 'O' levels, but when I got to 'A' level I suddenly took off; I had slightly gone off reading as I couldn't find anyone to read at fourteen, fifteen, but then I had a very good master who said if I wanted books I could buy them and he would put them on my parents' bill. So I read the whole of Evelyn Waugh, a huge amount of Thomas Hardy, and I suddenly graduated to grownup books in a different way.

I threw over science, which I regret sometimes, and I did classics - Latin 'A' level in one year, and English, History and French; I suddenly connected with myself. It was hugely liberating, I found some friends and we started a school magazine. I wrote under the name of Apollo, I can't think why; it was just a period of eighteen months, and I came up to Cambridge to take a scholarship exam.

I remember Paul Crowson saying that I should do the exam but would not get a scholarship but I might be offered a place, so I came up to Cambridge. In December 1960 I was leaving the school because my father had run out of the money to keep me there. I had never been to Cambridge and came because the school said they had not sent anyone to Clare College lately, but I was also put down for Worcester College, Oxford. I brought all my books with me in a suitcase, and remember taking a taxi to Clare and then dragging this huge suitcase along the path to Memorial Court.

The excitement for me of taking that exam was just phenomenal; I had no idea that anywhere could be as beautiful or exciting as Cambridge. A few other friends were taking the exam at the same time, and the taste of freedom and the excitement of being here, I just fell in love with the place and have never fallen out of love. It was a very deep imprint which took immediately. I remember seeing Leavis (right) this old man in a mac apparently without a shirt, as we took our exams in Downing; I was so excited at seeing him because I had read all his books.



They gave me an Exhibition which was really nice of them; I remember the telegram arriving while my mother was making a Christmas pudding, around the 18th December - I have still got it - saying that Clare College would like to offer me an Exhibition. The school was absolutely astonished.



## 4. Cambridge University

I think that Cambridge is hugely important to me because I had already connected with myself in some way that is very creative, and I hadn't the foggiest notion why or what was going on; I came to Cambridge and it just allowed me to grow all the bits of me that I had suppressed during the previous eighteen years. It is totally undisciplined, but I had people here who were like me who I could make friends with. It was a sort of revelation for me that the world could actually be as good as this, and I am very grateful indeed.

I read law; that was a silly thing really, but a great debate had broken out that English was not useful. My parents said that I must read Law because I was going to be a solicitor; it was a good subject and I did perfectly well in it, but it didn't have the kind of excitement of other subjects that if I had had the strength or courage I would have done. I would have read English or History,

History is the subject I really wish I had read; I don't want to sound ungrateful because Law was a really good discipline for me for the rest of my career, and has served me very well in all sorts of ways. I was taught by another very important person in my life, Bill Wedderburn (right) who was a Fellow and Director of Studies in Law at Clare, and was a huge influence on me; again I was very lucky in the father figures whom I accumulated through a period when you need them; I became his research assistant for a year at LSE after doing a BA and LLB, as I wanted to go to the Bar, or thought I did. He was important to me because he was very left-wing and he did all the things that I wanted to do, which was to ask questions. I remember horrifying my mother by asking if the family had a future, why should we all live in families.



Bill Wedderburn, who was very radical, was someone who was prepared to debate without all the constraints of a pretty tight middle-class upbringing which I had had; on friendships - there was a group of us, mainly lawyers, but also classicists and others, and we still meet once a year or thereabouts; I had some of them to lunch with their wives two weeks ago; the nice thing about them is that you pick things up with them however much you see them or don't see them

I was very religious for a period, first of all at my prep school; the Scripture Union had a little green badge with a lamp in the middle, and they would send you readings which I found so exciting. At Radley I came to love chapel; it was all the things that you don't have now like the Common Prayer book, and I liked the atmosphere. It was a relief in those years of anaesthesia, and a place where you could actually have a few moments privacy with your own thoughts. Paul Crowson was very religious; I was Confirmed. At about sixteen, seventeen, I suddenly went off religion, and shed it gleefully when I came up to Cambridge.

It was all part of that rebellion; I did have a very strong rebellious reaction against my upbringing for a period. Although it was strong for me it was actually extremely modest; I never became a hippy or a CND member. I remember buying a pair of jeans and I walked down through King's wearing them; I wore them home and my father took me aside and said he didn't like to see me wearing them, and if I was short of money I should let him know.

It was true for me that the sixties really did not begin until 1963; in the week Kennedy was assassinated I met my future wife and that was probably the most important thing that could ever happen to me; Caroline was in her sixth week at Newnham and I was in my third year at Clare; we met at a party in Corpus. We took a long time getting round to marrying which we did in 1972. She and our children are the most important people in my life.

I think from the age of sixteen-seventeen onwards, the message I want to convey is that I am a hugely lucky man; I have had a blessed life, and the investment my father made in my education - although I did not get on with him at all because he was a withdrawn and pretty cold figure - was what gave me the break. I owe my parents a lot for that. They were not at all rich and in their old age it was pretty tough; seizing the chance and winning a place at Cambridge, everything flowed from that.

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## 5. Joining the Civil Service

Caroline Lee, 'Caro', read English and got a first. She didn't want to settle down and get married after Cambridge so she went off to Nigeria on V.S.O. and was thrown out when the civil war broke out. She didn't want to come home and tried to renounce her British nationality, and has loved Africa all her life. She came back and was a teacher at a further education college, and taught 'A' level English. She gave up that job in 1976 and our son was born in 1979.

After we had been going out for a bit she broke to me the news that her father, Frank Lee, was Master of Corpus; it came as a shock to me and was not wholly welcome, and I was very reluctant to meet them. Her mother engineered a meeting and I became very fond of her parents; her father had been a civil servant; he had worked with Maynard Keynes in Washington after the War, and was very close to him. They were lovely people and became an important influence on me. Caro has sisters who are great friends.



I went to the Bar, took the exams, but I suddenly realized I had not got any money and you needed a private income; you had to pay for your pupillage and maintain yourself, and I didn't see how I was going to do it. Frank Lee one day asked me if I had ever thought of entering the Civil Service. I had actually been very impressed by the train of civil servants who had gone through Corpus, people like Richard Powell, Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade, William Armstrong, who at that time was a rising star, and Dame Evelyn Sharpe; I liked these people and thought their talk was interesting, and I picked up a sense of the Civil Service which I found very attractive.

I thought I would take the exam, which I did, and I came in second. I enjoyed the exams, the tests and interviews, though not the written bit. I took to it like a duck to water. I was put in the Board of Trade as an Assistant Principal, which I joined on 5th September 1966. I was put into a job to do with trade in South Africa; I was not particularly happy at the time because Caro was in Africa and I was missing her. I also got mumps, which was dreadful.

After a while I moved on to consumer protection where we had a Bill going through Parliament; everyone was ill at Christmas and I took over control of a bit of drafting of the Bill which had defeated everybody, which was about price comparison; if you shop and things are advertised as being reduced in price and it's false, how can you get at that. I think I can claim that I invented the law, which is still the law, that you have to have sold it at that price for twenty-eight days beforehand - Clause 11 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. I got it through and I think I took off then.

The Civil Service for the next thirty-six years gave me a succession of jobs, all of which completely stretched me, and I loved it. I had the most interesting possible career that anyone could have had, and I was lucky at every step; lucky in getting an

Exhibition to Clare, lucky in meeting Caro, lucky in getting into the Civil Service,  
lucky in all the jobs I had.

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## 6. Making my Way in the Civil Service



The Civil Service gave me thirty-six years of a succession of jobs, each of which was more difficult than the last, stretched me hugely, and taught me I could do things I had no idea I could do. It began in Private Office. The Private Secretary to a Minister looks after his diary, his papers, his meetings, and takes notes of all the meetings. It was a terrific experience for a young person, and teaches you a lot about how Government works. Had Tony Crosland at the Board of Trade, then Roy Mason, and then we had the election in the summer of 1970. We all thought that Mr Heath would lose and Harold Wilson would come back.

I was working for Wilfred Brown, a Labour Peer, and we sent him off the evening before saying we would see him in the morning. He rang me at six the next morning. I can hear him now saying, "Richard" - long silence - "it's terrible. Can I come in?" I said "Of course you can come in. Until the Queen has Harold Wilson's resignation you can still use an official car". He came in to collect his belongings, he had a party in the office, we had drinks in the middle of the morning, and people were outside tearing up the papers, like the sacking of an embassy.

It was a maudlin, extraordinary occasion. We packed him off about lunch time when the Prime Minister had been to the Palace. Then an extraordinary quiet falls on Government in that period when there is a change of Government. Everything stops and everyone is waiting. Then I got a phone call from the Permanent Secretary's Office saying that my new Minister was Mr Fred Corfield, and please would I make contact with him and arrange a meeting. I rang him in Gloucestershire; I hadn't got a photograph of him and we didn't have the Internet; he asked me to meet him at Paddington Station. I asked how I would know him and he said he would be wearing a Concorde tie. Within hours of Wilfred Brown having gone, we were arranging the first briefing meetings with the new Minister of Civil Aviation, as he was.

There had been a slight reshuffle and I was dealing with a different subject; I remember in the meeting suddenly seeing that the glasses from the party which we had given for Wilfred Brown were still behind the curtain; no one understands outside Government what a brutal business Government is for people, one minute you are there and the next minute you are out and you are nothing. In terms of relationships, you work with Civil Servants for three years or whatever, and suddenly you have no dealings with them and you can't look to them for help.

It is difficult for us too; the way I dealt with it was always to think of them as my clients, and as long as they were my clients my job was to find out what they wanted to do, to help find out the most practical way of implementing it, and to try and make it happen; also to support them because Ministerial jobs are very difficult. I learned a lot about that in those early days; I had Fred Corfield for three months and then there was the October 1970 reshuffle, which for the connoisseurs of the Civil Service were very important as it was when Heath set up the Central Policy Review staff, and the beginning of the criticisms of Whitehall's ability to make policy.

I then had a new Minister; he had fallen out with his Private Secretary in what became the new Department of Trade and Industry, a man called Nicholas Ridley whom nobody had heard of at that time; he was very close to Enoch Powell whom he often went to see; he later became a key figure in Mrs Thatcher's Government, where I met him again. A lot of my life has been like Anthony Powell's novels - people come through in different roles, like Cathy Ashton today but that is another story.

So I rescued Nicholas Ridley from the mess he was in; he didn't know what engagements he had got, the papers were in chaos, and the whole Private Office had broken down. I worked for him for a year. There was a terrible week when the V & G affair - which nobody now remembers - broke, and I thought for a period that my career was over. I was told mud sticks and sometimes it is unfair, but anyway it didn't turn out like that. In the middle of that week Frank Lee died; that was the first time I discovered that when one thing goes wrong so many other things can go wrong at the same time

I was then promoted to the Cabinet Office on the Assessments Staff. At that time no one could talk about it because it was where the intelligence from all the different services were brought together and assessed by a team of people who brought to it an objective view, and whose role was to ensure that the departments provided an independent objective assessment of all the intelligence. When I was on it you were sworn to utter secrecy and you were not allowed to mention the Assessments Staff. I remember one occasion I mentioned the word Cheltenham and I spent the whole dinner party mortified, though it was in no way improper and I wasn't referring to GCHQ.

Nowadays we are much more open and everybody knows about these things. That was a very interesting period, because although I began on what was then an experiment on economic intelligence, I moved to political intelligence and I covered the war with Bangladesh because someone was ill - a lot of my life at that time,

stepping in when someone was ill at important moments, gave me an important opportunity. I dealt with Bangladesh and an assessment of what it all meant.

I then worked for a man called Sir Percy Cradock, a great man on China. I went out to Australia for a conference and got involved with doing political assessments on the attitude of China towards Hong Kong. I went to Hong Kong and I stood at the frontier to New Territories looking north into China, and seeing the Red Guard, but the idea of going in to China knowing the things you knew - that was out of the question in 1973. I did a lot of travelling at that period which was quite fun. I went to Siberia, Moscow, and Iran. I did that for two years and then in October 1973 I was told that I was going to go to work on energy policy in the DTI.

I prepared myself for it, and at that time there was a very clear energy policy based on cheap oil, lots of nuclear energy and coal fired stations etc.. The weekend before I was going to take up the job the Arab-Israeli War broke out, the oil price started spiralling upwards and ended up quadrupling. The three day week and all of that developed; I found myself in the middle of the energy policy crisis in what, on the 8th January, became a separate Department of Energy.

I was writing speeches by candlelight saying there was no energy crisis; then all sorts of things became important, like energy conservation, which I discovered nobody had dealt with since the Attlee Government. Renewable energy also suddenly became a topic which was my job - wind power, wave power and all those options. I was dealing with energy conservation, all the renewable sources of energy, and putting together an energy policy for the UK which took account of the new price of oil.

It was a fantastic job and I was frantically busy writing endless papers. North Sea oil had just been discovered and every year we were upgrading our estimates of North Sea oil and gas - an extraordinary achievement. Suddenly I found myself in a department which was at the cutting edge of a lot of policy issues at a time when they were really very important within Government. There were only about a thousand people in the department, but it attracted a generation of people, a lot with scientific backing, who were excited by energy issues. It was a marvellous, young department, untrammelled by a lot of history, which some departments are, and I made lots of friend there and it was a good place to be.

I got promoted there in 1976 to deal with nuclear power which was a hugely contentious area. I dealt with nuclear power policy, thermal reactor policy, and fast reactor policy, and also the finances of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, financing their research projects.

This was at a time of thermal reactor choice when new nuclear power stations were being ordered and the question was, should the thermal reactor system be the American light water reactors or should we continue to use the British advanced gas-cooled reactors, or should we actually go with what Eric Varley, the Secretary of State for Energy in 1974, had chosen, which was the steam generating heavy water reactor which mercifully was later rejected.

I had never dealt with expenditure before, and I was responsible for £400,000,000. I learned how to deal with money on the job as I hadn't had any training. It was a

time when it was assumed that a gentleman knows how to do anything he is asked to do. I learned the science of nuclear power stations and I went inside reactors before they were commissioned.

I was working for Tony Benn (right) for four years; that was exciting because he was a minority within the Callaghan Government, and had been sent there in exile on 4th June 1975. He didn't want to be there, ordering nuclear power stations, but the pressures on him from the centre were extremely tough; so I found myself dealing, not only with a subject matter which is highly contentious, but also this extremely difficult relationship between Tony Benn and the centre of government. He was saying he didn't want us to talk to the centre without his permission, and the centre would ring me up, from the CPRS or Number 10, asking me for briefing. It was a very good experience in actually managing difficult political issues in important policy areas. Benn stopped talking to the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Secretary and the Under Secretary, and only dealt with me. I appeared in his diaries as a "junior official".



I found myself in very difficult situations, where my senior managers were telling me not to write the papers that Benn wanted because he had not told them what his decision was, and Benn was instructing his special advisors, Francis Morrell and Francis Cripps, to work with me on papers.

I was having to say to them that they couldn't say things because they were not true; we pulled out of it a decision to order two advanced gas cooled reactor orders at Torness and Heysham, and also a design study on Sizewell.

Then when Mrs Thatcher came to power in 1979, suddenly the whole thing changed because Walter Marshall, Head of the AEA, was a close friend of hers. She was very much in favour of nuclear power, and the Sizewell design study which I had got through became the new project. Of course it got bogged down in the planning enquiry and it didn't happen for years.

I drafted a statement to Parliament that said that there would be one new nuclear power station order a year for a decade, which no one remembers and did not happen. But it was a very rewarding four years, and I learnt a lot of things about handling high politics, policy etc..

My advice to an aspiring Civil Servant would be to try to keep good relations with everybody, and try to work out what the right answer is, what the best advice is, and try and see if you can navigate it through. Don't get thrown by all the politics that go on. I remember Toby Aldington, a former Minister whom I dealt with a lot - a lot of it involved Arnold Weinstock of GEC - and his advice to me at the time was to never let them know how clever you are, keep them guessing, don't show your hand.

I got moved to deal with North Sea oil and gas policy which was pretty good after



nuclear policy. I found myself in the middle of the great privatisation programme. Although it was not part of the 1979 manifesto I knew all about it because I had worked for Nick Ridley in the Heath Government, and they wanted seriously to take it up. We were asked whether we could privatise gas, electricity and coal. I remember we had a meeting where everyone laughed at the suggestion, but of course it all happened.

Nigel Lawson became the Secretary of State; we had started planning a National Savings Certificate, the coupon on which would be linked to the average price of a barrel of oil - thank goodness it had never got off the ground, but I had been working on that in lieu of privatisation.



Nigel Lawson called me down and said, "If I told you we were going to privatise the British National Oil Corporation, what would be involved and what would be the quickest timetable you could do it on?".

I told him that you would have to pass a Bill, draw up a prospectus, divide the Corporation in two as part couldn't be privatized, and then you would have to have the offer for sale; if everything went right I told him it could be done in a year.

He said that he wanted to do it and was putting me in charge of privatising it in a year from then. He said that he and the Prime Minister would back me, and it was the will of the Government. It was extraordinary. I remember before my first meeting with merchant bankers, I went out to a book shop in Horseferry Road and found a 'Teach Yourself Business' book, and looked up merchant bankers under M, I had no idea what a merchant banker did.

It was a super project; there were lovely people in BNOC; Jennie Page, who later went on to do the Jubilee Line and then the Millennium Dome, which she built to time and to cost - I want history to know that. Also Roy Dantzig who was brought in from the private sector to be Finance Director, and we did it. It was amazing; we got the Act through Parliament, we got the Corporation split - there was terrific hostility inside the Corporation, people leaking things to 'The Times', which was unhelpful - and we drew up the prospectus.

I had never done a prospectus in my life but we had very good merchant bankers, Warburgs; Freshfields, the solicitors, were also terrific. We had very good accountants, and we made it happen pretty much by the day that Nigel Lawson wanted. I am very proud of that.

It coincided with a dreadful period in my life; our son was born in March 1979 - that was lovely, one of the most important things in my life, that and the birth of our daughter in 1981 - we had moved out to Buckinghamshire as we had agreed that when we had a family we wanted to bring them up in the countryside with a village school. We chose a place with a good school, Dinton near Aylesbury, and bought an old bakery with two shops; I converted it all myself so it was pretty badly done, but it was a lovely place to bring up children.

Then a number of blows fell; in January 1980 we found that Tom was profoundly deaf, a painful moment for us, but he is a fantastically bright chap, done hugely well, and got a first at university. Dealing with profound deafness at that time was quite a struggle. Then my mother died in June 1980, and my father died during the committee stage of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Bill. Then my second sister died in 1983 - and my favourite uncle died in October during the offer for sale.

So that there was a period in my private life where we had three or four deaths and our son's disability. Out of it emerged a nuclear family which is just the joy of my life, and my career had had a huge boost through working successfully for Nigel Lawson. It was one of the early privatisations and was very successful in the sense that the Government made a lot of money; because the oil price dropped in the middle of the offer for sale the underwriters had to take up the shares, which was a pity, but it showed it could be done.

I got promoted and was put in charge of all personnel and all finance in the Department of Energy. I learned then all the things I needed for the rest of my career about running a department, looking after finance, and looking after people. It was a very good period and a nice department to cut your teeth on and to learn how to do those things. I caught the eye of the centre; Peter Walker had been our Secretary of State and that was itself an instruction. He couldn't have been more different from Nigel Lawson. You learned that the difference in view between Ministers within a Party can be as great as the views between Ministers of different Parties.

I was headhunted to go to head the Personnel Management Division of the Cabinet Office, where I dealt with personnel management policy for the Civil Service as a whole. I did this for only eighteen months and then I had another fantastic break. I was summoned by Robert Armstrong (right) the then Cabinet Secretary, who asked me to head the Domestic and Economic Secretariat at the Cabinet Office, under Mrs Thatcher. I thought here is life stretching me again and I was pretty nervous because she had a reputation of being quite demanding to work for; my first morning I had a half an hour handover with my predecessor - a nice man called Brian Unwin - and asked if he had any tips about dealing with the Prime Minister. He said that I would be sitting next to her and she liked to make a good exit. She would have put her handbag between my seat and hers, so do not get the legs of your chair mixed up with the straps of her handbag or her exit would be spoilt. He had done so and she did not forgive him for months.



I met her, and she was indeed formidable and demanding. I had my heart in my mouth at the beginning. She was full of energy and very different at every meeting. She would go into the room first and you waited outside, and all these grey men would rush in after her. If you didn't get in quickly she would announce something like the paper was completely wrong and we should be doing something else. If you missed that you would miss the summing up. Then after three months Robert

Armstrong called me in and told me I was OK; he said, "She thinks you're OK, you are through, you have passed the test. Congratulations"; after that she gave me lots of things to do and relied heavily on the briefs that I wrote.

She could be scary; I can remember her saying that the brief said one thing and the Secretary of State said another, and which was right?. The whole Cabinet would be staring at you knowing that you had written the brief. It was a very exciting period, full of radical change - the national curriculum went through, the abolition of ILEA, the NHS reforms - we had a committee which I was secretary of, and ultimately Mr Blair took them up again. Local government was reorganized, the Poll Tax went through; I sat there minuting all this, briefing her, then having to tell Departments, chairing little groups on this and that, including how to make the Poll Tax work.



There is a whole saga about the Community Charge which I was deeply involved in. I was summoned to Chequers on a Saturday afternoon, which was mercifully not far from where we lived, to explain to her a very complicated submission I had put to her about how to try and adjust the Poll Tax which was going wrong. Don't ever get into local government finance, it is incredibly difficult stuff. She always had this theory, I think, that I didn't eat enough. She got tea for me and made me sit there with a cup in one hand and a cream bun in the other, explaining to her about all these difficult financial changes in the formula for local government finance.

Many Civil Servants who worked directly for her have huge appreciation for her because she was a very good person to work for, not necessarily good to be a Minister in her Government as she would be very tough with them. She treated us well; once she had accepted you as being inside the stockade - "one of us", she never showed any interest in my politics - what she wanted was a good service. Someone who could get on top of the brief, master it, understand where she was coming from, give good advice, then deal with departments in a way that made things happen in the way she wanted, and draw up proposals in the way that reflected her thinking.

If she felt that the service you were providing was of the quality she needed then she gave you absolute support, and would be a very rewarding person to work for. She would use your briefs and arguments, she would do them better or would change them, but it was really interesting. She would rely on you sometimes at moments when you knew that if you let her down she would be in some trouble. If you did it she would thank you; she was a much more complex and interesting woman; seen from my perspective. She was quite unlike the 'Spitting Image' of her; there was some truth in it, as with 'Yes Minister', but is by no means the whole story. I was very privileged in having a ring-side seat watching the Thatcher Government at work for three years, which was absolutely the best show in town

Then I was moved by Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary, to the Treasury on the

grounds that everyone ought to have time there; I did it for two years and had responsibility for half of all public expenditure, which at that time was nothing like what it is now; I think it was about £98,000,000,000. There was the need to allocate this between departments, and I learned the Treasury job of how to say no and how you deal with people who are trying to bounce things through. I saw public expenditure from the other side; having spent many years myself doing that to the Treasury. It was quite good to be at the receiving end.

Then in 1992 after the election, John Major, whom I had known well from working in the Cabinet Office, promoted me to being Permanent Secretary at the Department of the Environment. That was a huge jump because I knew nothing about the Department, and being Permanent Secretary is a big step up in Government; I did that for Michael Howard; we repealed the Community Charge or Poll Tax and produced the Council Tax. Michael Howard did quite a lot on the environment, climate change - Rio Summit which he went to in my first week - and I cut my teeth as a Permanent Secretary. Then after a year he was moved to the Home Office; I remember saying "Congratulations and bad luck", because although Home Secretary is one of the most important Secretaries of State in the Government, it is also one of the most thankless because you gather all the failings of every other policy, like education drop-outs or mental health problems, problems that are probably insoluble.

John Gummer came in and I had a good year with him, a hugely competent departmental Minister; he took a department that other people had had a lot of trouble with, and quietened it down. He laid down the policies; when I was at Cambridge I used to go to the Union every Tuesday and see Michael Howard, John Gummer, Kenneth Clarke, and Norman Lamont, all in action. I had never spoken myself but I had observed them. Now I worked for each of them - with Norman Lamont in the Department of Energy and Treasury, Kenneth Clarke on Inner Cities in the Cabinet Office;



Then out of nowhere in April 1994 Robin Butler rang me and said that the Prime Minister wanted me to go to the Home Office as Permanent Under-Secretary; I had given my opinion of the Department but didn't know it at all. It became very clear very fast that Michael Howard had asked for me, although he never said so, but I found myself in an invidious position as the Civil Service had wanted someone else to get the job, so that was quite difficult.

The Department was in some uproar because Michael Howard (below), in a speech at the Conservative Party conference, without really consulting the Department, had said that prison works and had announced a thirty point plan. I asked Robin for time to think about the job; next morning I said that if he told me I had got to do it, that John Major and he wanted me to do it, then of course I would, but it would not be my choice as I had only just settled into the Department of the Environment. Robin said that they wanted me to do it, so I did. It was a really difficult period, not only because Michael Howard was at odds with the Department, but also, within months

of my being there we had a very serious escape from Whitemoor Prison and three months later, Parkhurst. The enquiries into that and the consequent dismissal of the Director General of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis, which I had to handle, consumed my life.



There were also huge management reforms of the Home Office which we carried out. I was regarded with great suspicion initially by the Home Office, and I had to win over the staff. I think I had done so by the time I left; I also had to deal with the Department of the Environment who felt let down that I had left them after only two years. I had promised them so many things, and had asked them to do things, and I felt very bad about leaving them. It was a very demanding part of my career, but crime went down for the first time in a century in my four years at the Home Office. We did reorganize it and make some much needed management changes, like introducing computers; they had virtually no IT in the Immigration Service when I arrived and only one word processor on every floor of this enormous building. They had messengers whose job was just to keep the papers up to date.

I recruited lots of people to help us out and there were a lot of staff changes in my first year; by the end of three years we had roughly got it all in place. Then we had the election, and the Blair Government was swung to power on a huge majority. I had talked with the opposition - Jack Straw, whom I knew slightly as I knew his wife, Alice Perkins, who was a civil servant and a friend. All the things that happened in 1970 when the Heath Government won happened again only this time I was the Permanent Secretary doing the ringing up and telling people in the Private Office to speak to so-and-so.

As we waited for Jack Straw (right), whom we expected to be appointed, to come, I asked the Private Secretary if we had emptied the drawers; of course we hadn't, and they were full of Michael Howard's things; someone produced a couple of Waitrose carrier bags and we flung them in; I found a cupboard that had evidently not been opened for many years because there were a couple of elephant tusks in the back with Henry Brooke's name on them. He had been Home Secretary in the 1960s; anyway, we got on with Jack Straw and that was a good period; he knew what he wanted, was a very easy man to get on with, and was full of enthusiasm.



## 7. Cabinet Secretary

There had been a lot of press speculation about Robin Butler's successor - and one morning I got a phone call to say that the Prime Minister would like to meet me, and would I come at 5 o'clock to talk to him. I met Tony Blair and sat on the balcony outside the Cabinet room; we chatted about everything under the sun for an hour, and that was it.

A couple of days later I got a phone call saying that Derry Irvine would like to meet me at 8.30 tomorrow. I knew him, though he didn't remember me, because he had been at Cambridge. The last time I had seen him was on a pub crawl down Fleet Street. He, interestingly, had rung Bill Wedderburn about me; anyway, we had a chat, again no reference to anything in particular.

Then about three days later I got a phone call from Robin Butler asking me to go to see him; he said, "I am not telling you this but Tony Blair is going to ask to see you this afternoon at 5 o'clock, and is going to ask you to be Cabinet Secretary, and I want to be sure that you are going to give the right answer".



Tony Blair.

He told me not to show that I knew I would be asked, or say that I had spoken to him; I got the phone call and went to see Tony Blair who said he wanted to talk about the press release. I asked him what it was about, and he said that I must know the answer because Robin Butler would have told me. I don't think I was ever offered the job; so then I became Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service. I had a few more months at the Home Office.

It was a sad period as Caro's sister, Sue Lee, who was Deputy High Mistress of St Pauls, died of cancer; that dominated that period; on 1st January 1998 I took over, and that was the job I did until the end of September 2002. It was an extraordinary period.

On Tony Blair, you could not ask for an easier Minister in some ways. He is the most sweet natured, easy-going guy (his sort of word) you could ask for; I have known him angry but he is very controlled and doesn't lose his temper. He is someone you can be direct with, honest with, and say what you think, and he will not take offence and hold it against you, which is rare. His charisma, his charm, is quite extraordinary. He can walk into a room of people who are hostile and against him, he can talk them round. He picks things up quickly.

Roy Jenkins asked me what my Blair factor was; I asked him what he meant, and he said that when he saw Tony he would walk tall for a month and then wonder what he had got out of it. He can give you a sense of pleasure but you are not actually sure what he said. I sat there writing notes, and people would think that he had said something. I think that this is the root of some of the tensions that we can now admit existed between Blair and Brown because I don't think Gordon ever listened quite to what Tony said. You would know if you wrote it down he hadn't said something, but people would think he had.

He also has a performing style to die for; he can find the right words - I have seen Alistair Campbell giving him a few phrases, then go out and talk to the media and find the right language. He is a performer of extraordinary calibre; I have sat next to him when he has delivered a speech to a hostile audience, and you can feel him reaching out to them. A real skill which very few people that I have worked for have got in that kind of degree. The truth is that his skills and Gordon Brown's skills were complementary, and between them they had all the skills they needed when they worked together well, which sometimes they did.

The politics, as the world knows, were much more difficult. Blair is a much more complex man than I make him sound because different things coexist within him. He is an easy-going, affable lad, a charmer, and orator, and then there is the really tough guy who sacked Peter Mandelson. I can remember seeing him granite faced; a man living on a world stage, which in some ways he is comfortable on in a way that none of us would be. He is at ease with himself bestriding the globe like a Colossus in a way that I think is unusual. He can be cunning, manipulative and very political, and glide through narrow impasses where you think there is no room. His complexity is well camouflaged

I am not going to talk about Blair's weaknesses although I have implied some when I talk about him and Gordon having the skills between them. He isn't always a man to read all the papers. Gordon will know what is in annex C paragraph 23 and why it conflicts with the main paper. I think the question that history will ask is what Blair achieved in the Blair years, because he was in the most powerful position you could possibly imagine for a Prime Minister. He was powerful in the Cabinet, they were so grateful to wield power and to be back in Government.

Most of them were new to it so they all had steep learning curves. There were only four or five people in the hundred and nineteen Ministers who had ever been in Government before. He was powerful in Parliament as the back benchers, many of them new, were hugely loyal, supportive and adoring of him. The Labour Party was quiescent, the Trades Unions were quiescent, the economy was prosperous for

longer than it had been for many years, and the opinion polls gave the Government and Blair a more consistently higher rating than anyone had had since polling began.

In terms of power he was powerful; I think the question which I would ask is what did he use that power for. I have written an article about the way Government changed in the 'Political Quarterly'; he started off from a very centralized position; he had never worked in a Government department which was a handicap, and none of the people around him had managed anything of any reasonable scale.

There is a control tower analogy, and I think New Labour were very confident in themselves; although they didn't have experience they believed they could do it. They initially had a proliferation of targets; I remember a chap from the NHS coming to see me and saying they had seventy-two top priorities, and could I find out which were the really important ones.

So there was a great debate in which I was deeply involved about how you actually make things happen in Government. Blair was unwilling to use the Cabinet Committee system; quite often the really important things that happen in Government happen unnoticed, it is very odd. One of the things that happened, began with Mrs Thatcher, but accelerated hugely over the last decade, was that a whole tier of local government, of democratic accountability, was effectively destroyed.

Nick Ridley had written a paper about this in the 1980s. Local government has become an agent of central government rather than being its own tier; that was part of the centralisation. Then the State started behaving as though it didn't trust the public; that was partly the fault of terrorism, but that was after I ceased being Cabinet Secretary - close-circuit television, airport security. As a teacher in a primary school you can't cuddle the children, can't drive without being photographed - there may be people you can't trust, but to treat everybody as though they are not trustworthy indicates a loss of trust of Government in the public which is quite a serious change in the climate in which we conduct our civil liberties.

The centralisation of Government, the wish to attract power not only to Government, but within Government to the centre, is also serious. Things which had previously been announced by a Secretary of State are announced by the Prime Minister; you expect the Prime Minister to answer for everything. I think all these things have become greatly accentuated, and it is again partly the lack of trust of Government departments from the centre; it is too complex to deal with now but there are quite serious issues there.

I was Cabinet Secretary during the first Iraq bombing which no one remembers now; though technically I went on in the job until the end of September 2002, my last day of work was 2nd September; that was the Friday before the Monday when the Government ordered the preparation of the dossier; the build-up to the Iraq War began in earnest that Autumn.



## 8. Master of Emmanuel College Cambridge

I was elected Master of Emmanuel College Cambridge. I was flat out after 9/11 and was rung up and told that if I wished to apply for the job, although the closing date had passed, I could still do so. Initially I was too busy as it was the beginning of all the stuff in Afghanistan.

Then Lord St John of Fawsley approached me and suggested that I just go and see the College; I went, met the Fellowship, saw round the College, talked to the Bursar etc., dined at high table, sat in the parlour, and chatted to people; I walked back on a crisp November evening across the grass of Front Court and looked up at the Wren Chapel, and suddenly thought that I really could get to like this. It reconnected with my Cambridge past; when they invited me to do it I took it seriously; I applied and went through all the hoops, and I much appreciate the honour the Fellowship did to me in electing me to the post. I accepted it of course, because that was what I wanted.



When I came here I felt as though I had died and gone to heaven; I cannot tell you how the contrast between government and Cambridge is, and I haven't stopped feeling like that. Firstly, there is the lack of stress; I chair lots of meetings here and nothing that anyone says is going to appear in the 'Daily Mail' tomorrow. I don't have to go and brief Alistair Campbell or go and tell the Prime Minister that we have got a problem, or ring up a department and ask them to do something as quickly as possible.

I used to walk into my private office in the Cabinet Office, ask for the news and be told there was a slight problem, and then something ghastly would emerge; all the time you are juggling difficult issues which you have to be alert to; you can't have a day off. You have to be ready and able to do it, to see people to sort out difficulties, while keeping all the other balls in the air, and do two boxes of papers in the car on the way home so they are done by 9 o'clock the next morning.

Here the pace is so much kinder, and I don't have to do two boxes at night; things matter to the College in the context of Cambridge, but you don't feel that if you get it wrong people on a large scale are going to be hurt, or that you are going to be lampooned in the 'Daily Mail', which I have been.

The other thing that is different about Cambridge is that discussion seems to be divergent whereas in Government it is convergent. In Government if you have a meeting, you may have twenty people there, they know you have got an hour, you know you have got a problem and have got to reach a solution by the end of the hour, and people have got to sign up to it. People understand that, so that although they are all fighting their departmental corners, they know the rules of the game; part of the job it to make sure that the Cabinet government system delivers the result on the timetable that is needed.

In Cambridge, you have an issue, but people have no sense that a decision has got to be taken necessarily, and if you let them take up a position too deeply they regard it as a matter of honour that they can defend their position, and dig themselves in more deeply; the discussion will be divergent and go to all sorts of places unless you are very careful. So the skills you need are very different. Sometimes chairing Permanent Secretaries on a Wednesday morning, discussion could be like that, so life has given me some preparation for this, but the skills and techniques you need for Cambridge are different. Also the time scales are different; it is a joy to me that you don't have to do it by 10 o'clock tonight



Emmanuel College Cambridge.

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## 9. Religion

We made sure our children knew about religion and gave them the choice. We moved to a small village in Buckinghamshire in 1978 when we started our family. We used to go occasionally to church, and to nativity plays, but I even had difficulty under Paul Crowson's tuition with what we used to call Holy Communion.

I have never quite understood why; I was also struck by the fact that my dear father, who had been so involved with the Church in Wales, lost his faith in his later years. I think he watched the Bishops arguing. He had a terrible heart attack when he was younger than I am now, and when asked why, he said it was just seeing them argue so much among themselves. He was very disillusioned by the church and I think he lost his faith; he never talked about these things, he didn't believe in talking about any of the things that were interesting in life; sex, politics and religion were all subjects that were not allowed to be talked about.

When I came to Emmanuel I had thought that there would be a time later in life when I would think about religion; I asked the Dean how I could help him and he said it would be very helpful if I would go to Chapel. I do go to Evensong every Sunday, and quite a lot of the things I liked about Chapel at Radley come back to me at Emmanuel. I like going on Sunday at six. I do regret the way the Church of England has developed; I had a good talk the other evening with the Assistant Chaplain on what has happened. When I went to church as a schoolboy it was part of the social structure of the English establishment, and based on the Book of Common Prayer which I loved, and still do, and the King James Bible, which I think is marvellous.

I have not taken to the way services have developed or the use of modern translations of the Bible, which have lost the beauty of the language without adding anything much. But I support it because of the choir, and think it is a force for good in the College community, and there are people for whom it meets a need. I have had to cope with death quite a lot, and you do grieve and wonder about life after death, and I end up with a pretty agnostic position. I find when listening to the New Testament that Jesus Christ is a really interesting person; a lot of the incidents which take place are really very graphic, and I do think the picture of him is interesting. If I turn out to be wrong and there is an afterlife, then I will say I am glad and that he was a very important man. It is a pretty trivial approach, but it is very hard not to view religion as an anthropological development in mankind. I have very great difficulty with St Paul and all those letters. Don Cupitt (above) was at Emmanuel and Norman St John of Fawsley, a Catholic Master, with whom I am still in contact.



## 10. Epilogue

We left Dinton finally in 2005, we have bought a house in Cambridge. I am very sad to leave Dinton but it wasn't right for these later years of our life; it had no shops, the bus service was pretty poor and you had to drive a long way to get to anywhere, and to move into Cambridge is marvellous; so we have rooted ourselves up - my mother-in-law lived here ever since her husband died so we were here for her final years.

In a way it is the right place to be because for both of us it is such an important place and we want to live, work, and spend our final years here. I don't think that many people are as lucky as I have been.

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