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Born: 10th November 1903

My paternal grandfather was the bastard son of Lord Rodney, (6th baron) and Miss Gwyneth Thomas. His lordship was one of the great gamblers of that era

He was a most generous man and must have loved my grandfather very much as he gave him a public school education at Stow. My great nephew, Paul Joseph Thomas, is at boarding school using the same tin trunk that his great great grandfather used.

Lord Rodney then apprenticed my grandfather to a carpenter. On my grandfather coming of age he was given an estate consisting of a farm, and a mill at Brampton Brian, on the border of Hertfordshire and Powys, between Knighton and Leintwardine but, like his father, he gambled and frittered it away and returned to the comfort of my grandmother, Anne Davis, who had born a child by him some 4 years previously in 1873 – my father! They married and my grandfather was set up as a carpenter in the village of Eye, which was within the Berrington estate, the home of the Rodneys, about 4 miles of Leominster.

Like all good craftsmen he loved the wood he worked. As well as Berrington work which was put his way, he did outside work. In my youth I was proud to visit the church at Richard's Castle, near Ludlow, where did the whole of the woodwork.

After the marriage of my grandparents my father's name was changed from his mother's maiden name of Davis, to Thomas. In all my grandparents had 7 surviving children. I was their first grandchild.

My grandfather died in 1912 aged 59.

My grandmother lived to be 98. Unfortunately, during the last war she fell and broke her hip. The local doctor committed a grave error. He was of the opinion that she was too old for the bone to knit and placed it between sandbags. It knit, but in the wrong position, and after lying like that for exactly 12 months, she died.

I knew nothing regarding my ancestry until my wife was past child bearing age, when my aunts (both of whom lived into their 90s) disclosed the matter to my brother and his wife, who had a son – Joseph Glyn. They also gave them a family seal of the Rodneys. How that was acquired we shall never know.

My nephew, Glyn, was Senior Fellow, Biology at Lancaster University, but now as a farm on the edge of the Lake District. His wife is the Ombudsman for the area of The Wash to the Scottish Border, and is very often mentioned in the local press, having mediated in some local dispute.

I understand that my father started work at 12 years of age, and was placed in the racing stables at Berrington. During that period, the 7th Baron had a horse entered for the St Leger at Doncaster.

Everyone on the estate was paid up and given notice and also a sovereign to wager on the horse. When my father told me of this I commented "that would be a nice little pick-up in those days, dad", he replied "well I only put half a sovereign on". The horse lost 7 lengths at the start but still won the race.

Around this period my father was thrown from a racing stallion and received a badly injured shoulder, so on his recovery his lordship took him for his personal groom and valet and, later, he was his man servant in London. His lordship occupied one floor of a 4 storey house in Belgravia, each floor of which was occupied by a batchelor Earl, so my father saw some life!

When the 7th Lord Rodney was 34 years of age he married Miss Corisande Evelyn Vere, and a son was born to them the same year.

For their honeymoon the couple toured Scotland with a carriage and pair, coachman and groom, and my father and a lady's maid followed with a pantechnican and coachman, drawn by 2 horses with all the luggage. The retainers, however, did not visit all the beauty spots that Lord and Lady Rodney visited but proceeded to the next place where accommodation had been arranged in order to prepare for the arrival of the couple.

I have no knowledge of the date that my father the service of the Rodneys, but later, he and my mother went to work for a family residing in Sloane Square and, presumably, that's where I was born as my birth certificate, issued in the sub division of Belgravia 10 November 1903, lists my father's Rank or Profession as Butler (Domestic).

In 1904 my father obtained the post of Butler to Mr William Aldam Milner of Totley Hall, Derbyshire (Aldam Road is named after Mr Milner). The head gardener Mr David Lewis was engaged the same week and this was the commencement of a lifetime's friendship. Mr Lewis subsequently became Superintendent of the Totley Sunday School for 40 years. He was a batchelor when he first came to Totley and his sister kept house for him at the house in Hall Lane, next to Toft House.

My maternal grandfather was herdsman to Sir Walter Gilbey, the wine merchant, and a great authority on equestrian matters. I well remember the room of my grandparents' cottage with a large glass case on one wall crammed with rosettes, prizes won for showing Sir Walter's cattle.

My grandfather later became manager for a gentleman farmer at South House Farm, Little Hallingbury, near Bishops Stortford. We had some lovely holidays there. We usually went to our respective grandparents for a month on alternate years and my father would join us for the last fortnight.

Later, my grandfather farmed the land which Stanstead Airport now stands.

My first recollections of Totley were when I was just under 2 years of age. On the birth of my brother Ernest I was "farmed out" to Mr Lewis's sister. I

remember standing below the cupboard doors where she kept the sweets. I am told I was there for about 3 months "Auntie Poppy" did not want to part with me. I had shoulder length curls up to the age of 5 (Maurice Pearson, who was in the same class at school, must have worn his until he was 6 or 7 years old!).

When I was 11 to 13 years old I used to deliver telegrams. The Post Office at that time was at the corner of Baslow Road and Hillfoot Road and their garden came up to our front yard. Mrs Bradley was the Post Mistress and her husband a gardener-cum-keeper at the Hall. At that time Totley was the nearest telephone to Holmesfield and the Cordwell Valley.

There was an early socialist writer, Edward Carpenter, who lived in Cordwell at the time and was my favourite customer. He used to give me 6pence and a glass of lemonade. There always seemed to be someone at the house, walking around in dressing gown and sandals. It wasn't until I was in my 50s when I read a book on his life that I learnt he was a homosexual.

During the 1st World War there was always a battalion of soldiers at the Totley Rifle Range, which was another source of income to Bill Crooks and I. We spent a lot of time at the camp in our boy scouts uniforms, running to Totley Post Office for stamps, or the Top Shop for toffees etc.

At weekends we were on duty at St John's Abbeydale where the Church Sunday School had been turned into a hospital. Weeks before any wounded arrived we had been released from school some afternoons to go to the Masonic Hall at Dore Station for the ladies of the district (who were going to "man" the hospital) to practice bed changing whilst the patient was still in bed, bandaging arms and legs etc.

I attended Totley Church of England School, Hillfoot Road, where I met my future wife Doris Bradbury. My best pal at school was Edgar Gill and in the summer holidays I practically lived at his home at Old Hay. Three of us slept in a small patrol tent. It never seemed to rain in those days! The dam was still there, although the water wheel had been removed. Charlie Coates lived nearby. He was an excellent skater and used to spend hours and hours on the dam when it was frozen over.

In our early childhood our playground was in the croft in front of the lodge in Hall Lane. John and Arthur Holding and my brother and I used to team up - oldest and youngest - that was John and Ern against Arthur and I. We were privileged children, our fathers being in the service at the Hall. We went into the wood and pinched raisins from "Old Bradley's Hut" that was there to feed the pheasants, forbidden ground to any other children of the village.

There was always a large Christmas Party at the Hall when the family waited on the servants. All the neighbouring farm families were there as a little sop for the hunting and shooting over the land they farmed.

Our Christmas parties were at Hall Lodge, our house, or Ash Cottage. Mary Holding was the star turn; she had the ability to recite the poetry we had learned at school, and could continue to entertain by making up a story as she went along. Mary still lives at Ash Cottage. She is the aunt of a well-known Totley sportsman - David Holding.

In the bottom cottage in the 3 on Baslow Road lived Mrs Fisher. To my brother and I there was no-one like her in the world, she had 3 sons at home and the youngest daughter, Jess; 3 other daughters being out in service. Jess later became Mrs Joshua Tyzack - an affair of which I probably have more knowledge than any other living person! I loved the youngest son, Tom, and one of my earliest recollections of him (when I was about 3 years old) is of him taking me by the hand one dark winters evening and going to Ash Cottage where he milked a couple of cows for an elderly Mr and Mrs Hattersley. When he took the milk to the house he was given about a half-gallon can of morning milk for his mother. I used to go with him when he was mowing and sit on his knees on the machine for hours at a time, while he mowed the land where Main Avenue, Rowan Tree Dell and all that property now stands.

As schoolboys we had a glorious life. We roamed Totley Moss, Blackamoor, Fishers Moor to Strawberry Lee to Fox House. Blacka was a favourite spot for at that time there was a densely wooded area from the end of Short Lane where you entered a dark wood. Our favourite "ducking hole" was the old sheep wash in Bull Wood - that is the small wood between the bottom of Gillfield Wood and the field that backs onto the houses of Rowan Tree Dell.

There was another good pool in the Cricket Wood, made by Caprons of Greenoak House, and further improved by the sons of Pearsons of St Georges Farm. The pool made by Milners in Gillfield was too cold - it got full of dead leaves - but was cleared by the lads of the village around 1932, the main worker being Fred Hoole.

As schoolboys we were all in the choir, the services then being held in the school at Hillfoot Road. The school lent itself to this use at the classroom, with the large doors at the end of the big room was used as a vestry. The preacher was Captain Nicholls. Later preachers were Captain Fogarty of the Church Army and of course Mr A J Foulstone, a great man of boundless energy who did more for Totley than any other person before or since. He took us camping, and cooked breakfast for all of us. He had a bible class every Sunday morning. There was a "reading room" (as it was called in those days) which had 2 quarter sized billiard tables. When the reading room became defunct, one of the tables went to the Gill brothers and the other to Bill, Percy and Victor Crooks. Under the guidance of Mr A J Foulstone this club, the Cricket Club and the football club were merged about 1921 and became the Totley Sports and Social Club with a club room in what had been a British Legion Club in Hillfoot Road. It had 2 full sized billiard tables, 2 cricket teams, 2 football teams and a library of over 1,000 books with every bound edition of Punch from the first issue. I was Honorary Secretary for almost 15 years. We have had dances in the Labour Hall (now the Conservative Club!) and

have taken £14 at the door at 1/- a time. Totlely Club could have purchased that building for £1,000 but we missed our chance.

As mentioned earlier we were all in the choir but far from "little angels" – we did the most daring apples scrumping - Tom Wright and my brother Ern always last there but first back!

Our most serious escapade was one Sunday afternoon at the start of the building of the Heatherfield Estate. One of the first things the contractors did was to put down a light railway with small trucks to push material around. 4 of these trucks were chocked up at the top of a gradient that ran from about where the corner of Terry Road and The Grove now cross. We pulled the chocks out for a ride, but things got out of hand and the 4 trucks raced down the line towards the wood, through the wall, and down the wood into the stream below.

It was Constable Bagshawe who at that time always started investigations into what he called "the usual trio" – Thomas, Gill and Pearson (Willis).

One winter's evening Edgar Gill, Tom Reynolds and I went to Dore and congregated with the Dore lads at the corner of the Vicarage Lane and Savage Lane where there was a gas lamp. An argument broke out and then a fight. It was Dore v Totlely, and we 3 were getting the worst of it. Then "sharp Alex" (me) pulled up a grass sod that was growing between the bottom of the wall and stone pavement and put it through the gas lamp. Everybody scarpereed; we didn't stop running until we got to Totlely. The next day the Dore Constable was at our house. Fortunately, my father was at home. I think it was the fact that he was butler to the local JP that saved our bacon that time!

(There was another occasion – later in life – where the same applied. I had had to work the Sunday on a new service at Atkinsons Steel Works behind their Moor shop and had arranged not to meet Dot from Church; so Frank Taylor, Edgar Gill and I went for a Sunday evening stroll intending to go to The Robin Hood for a drink. (Beer was then 5p a pint!). When we got to the end of Moorwoods Lane we slipped the dog under the gate and nonchalantly walked up the hill. When we reached the corner of Fanshawe Gate Lane, the Keeper for Wilsons, Henry Helliwell, and the chauffeur Idra Parr, were waiting with guns under their arm. They were out for an evening's shooting. Of course, we said that the dog had gone on his own accord. Frank and they got into a heated argument then who should come around the corner but the constable from Holmesfield – Birch. I think we would have got away with it but Frank Taylor poked Constable Birch in the chest saying "Don't thee come here calling me a poacher, Birch". That did it! Names, addresses, age, occupation etc. We didn't go to The Robin Hood. Now Mrs Wilson, before her marriage, was Miss Marjorie Milner so, once again dad was instrumental in getting us off the hook.)

I left Totlely Church of England School at 13 years of age and commenced work at Totlely Hall as stable boy – black boots, leggings, and britches. My duties consisted of caring for 2 retired hunters, one a bay gelding and another a beautiful dapple grey mare named Nipper and Polly. Feeding and watering,

mucking out (and you had to pick up the droppings off the clean straw) grooming and exercising and the same for 2 dogs, one a French poodle and another a wired hair terrier, and also anything else the chauffeur John Holding told me to do. (His nephew John Walter had been stable boy before me and, by coincidence, we both later spent 50 years of our lives in the electrical industry).

The saddle room was a very comfortable little room with a coal burning stove with oven, a wash bowl and 2 upright wooden arm chairs. 2 sides of the room consisted of sliding glass doors from floor to ceiling behind which the carriage double harness, saddles and bridles were kept for sentimental reasons; but it all had to be kept clean. The Milner crest was a horse's head with just a scroll underneath. I feel sure they were silver and were on the blinkers, saddles and bridles. It was 1916 and the Great War had been on for 2 years. Master Roy, the youngest son, was killed in the first fortnight; Major Wilson had managed to get himself take prisoner. His wife (formally Miss Marjorie Milner) and their only child at that time lived at Totlely Hall during this period. This made more work for me as she had a beautiful pony and dog cart with a foot operated bell in the floor, which she used to operate when trotting down Hall Lane; and when she got to the lodge I was supposed to fly down to open the gate by the time she arrived. Mrs Wilson also kept the Barlow Hunt going all through the war and used to use one of the horses in my care to go to Horsley Gate Hall, or straight to the Meet, where her own groom would be waiting with a hunter. Some days she would go to her own home for dinner and I would be waiting for the return of the horse up to 10 o'clock at night! Her own groom had been finished hours earlier.

One day Mr Holding was out for the day with the car, usually a trip to Manchester for a Board Meeting, as the boss was a Director of Williams Deacons Bank. For some reason her ladyship walked up the stable yard and I was sat just inside the saddle room reading The Scout. The next day I was called to the boss's window and asked what I did when John was out with the car. I said I groomed the horses or brushed the dogs, or chopped sticks for Mr Holding and my mother (for we lived house, coal and light free). His reply was "well, in future, would I see Lewis and he would find me a job in the gardens". Well "Uncle David" knew how I hated gardening and I usually ended up washing plant pots or if it was a wet day Harry Prince would be up in the wood shed splitting logs. This was great fun for "Prinny" and I always got on well together.

Another thing that rankled with me was seeing the gardeners going home at 6 o'clock and me either waiting for , or washing the car. I can only remember one occasion when Mr Holding put the car away without it being washed. It was 9 o'clock at night and he must have had a tiring day.

This was the period in my life when I had my first realisation of "the great divide". They expected me, a 15 year old youth, to work for 7 shillings a week, whereas our patriotic gentry had those beautiful stables, loose boxes filled from floor to ceiling with coke, fuel for the boiler house that heated the house and the greenhouses, oh yes! Those greenhouses had

to be kept going full blast and all they produced was exotic plants and a few grapes!

I complained to my father. Well! I wished I had never spoken. "Most disrespectful boy – My duty to do was what I was told". You would have thought I had committed murder.

They gave me a new suit for Christmas 1917 and I gave in my notice. I got a job at a silversmiths in Barkers Pool soldering fuse tapes for shells. The first week's pay I received was 28/-. When I handed it to my mother she was aghast. I was think it was more than my father received but , of course, he had all his meals at the Hall and we lived house, coat and light free. Also, the decorating was done when required.

In 1917 my father and Mr Lewis, the head gardener, were directed to work of National importance – both to the Sheffield Corporation Electricity Department. My father was sent to Neepsend Power Station on shift work as boiler house labourer. This meant he had to find lodgings nearby. Mr Lewis was sent to the Mains Department Stores at Commercial Street where he could use the trains to and fro and this enabled him to keep eye on those precious glasshouses. At the termination of the war my father received a letter from his former employers enclosing a £5 note and informing him that his services would no longer be required when he finished work in Sheffield. They had decided to cease entertaining and to dispense with the services of a butler and page boy and just manage with a parlour maid.

Dad stayed with the Electricity Department but was transferred to the meter stores at Commercial Street.

Shortly after the Armistice of 1918 I obtained a job in the Chemical Yard, Totley Rise, about 200 yards from where I now live. A Mr Pell, who lived at the corner of Terry Road and The Grove, had been directed to Sheffield in charge of Ministry of Munitions. He was a director of the South of England Agricultural Machine Co of Tunbridge Wells and wanted to develop an invention of his before returning South. It was a small grist mill, operated by hand or power – most ingenious – and could grind grain to any size required from split corn to flour. George Green and I were the only locals employed there. (By coincidence George Green and I later became stepbrothers).

When this project was completed I was offered a position with the main Company at Tonbridge Wells, but I declined because Dot and I were secretly meeting by this time.

I went to work for the Butcher, Colin Thompson (it was always referred to as Colin's). I was very happy there and drove a beautiful little strawberry roan cob. He could out-trot all the other butchers' floats on Abbeydale. I delivered meat to Dore Shop, Dore Road, all around Totley, Holmesfield, Cartledge, Cordwell and Horslegate. Mondays the shop was washed out. Tuesdays I was on my bike for the Holmesfield orders. Wednesdays and Thursdays, Totley Brook Road, King Ecgbert, Devonshire, Dore Road, Totley Village. There was a farm attached with a couple of wooden cow sheds on the Back Lane and the main building in the top corner of Marstone estate, for Colin owned all the land on which that

estate is built, and all the land the Corporation estate is built on, from Baslow Road to the stream which, by the way, is Totley Brook; the other stream which is parallel to Totley Brook Road is Old Hay stream. The two streams meet at Pointon wood`end become the Sheaf - hence Sheffield - and run into the Don at Castlegate.

The farm man at Colins was Sam Mather. Bill Mather also worked there. During the inclement weather Sam drifted into the slaughtering side, and then the shop, and I could see he was a more useful employee than I, a sixteen year old youth. He was married and had served in France with the Derbyshire Yeomanry. A new farm man was engaged - Tom Derwent, so my father found me a job at the Sheffield Corporation Electricity in the Meter Department, where I stayed for 49 years. Sam stayed at Colin's all his working life, and his son, Vernon, is now a partner in the business and manager of the Dore shop.

Whilst at Colin's I found I could run faster than the average youth. My first success was at Totley Village Sports in 1919. In the afternoon I won the mile, then had to go back to work to milk a couple of cows, and as I drove them from the field (now Marstone) 'Old' Colin met me and said "Whose won the mile, Archie?" and I replied "I have, and I'm going back to win the chase". Well, he was delighted. "Get this lad some steak" he said, but I declined and Elsie, the maid, made me a light tea and I DID go back and win the chase! The cup was 10" cup of solid silver, beautifully chased and engraved, given by the financier of the Heatherfield estate, with the proviso that if won on three successive occasions, it became the property of the winner. This I accomplished (it had previously been won by Nevil Marshall, Fred Marshall, Bill Mather and Herbert Crowther. Later in life, when I was President of the Hope Valley Football League I gave it to the League and it is competed for annually and given to the League Champions. By coincidence I believe Totley won it the first year for which it was competed, and it was a great pleasure to see it displayed in the Cross Scythes.

I joined Sheffield United Harriers and was in the winning team of the Yorkshire and the Northern Junior Championship team in 1924. I am the proud possessor of a Yorkshire Gold for Cross Country. My best time for the mile was 4 minutes 28 seconds, which sounds very slow by today's standards. I won the mile at the Sheffield Corporation Tramways ground at Meadow Head with that time. The record then was 4 minutes 22 seconds.

Frank Taylor was my personal trainer and minder, and he nursed me. We all called him "Raitch" because his father's name was Horatio. He had the natural ability to train winners, be they runners, footballers or pigeons, and I enjoyed his friendship for over 60 years. His father was a great Totley character and craftsman and stone-mason. He worked on the building of All Saints Church, Totley, and another fine example of his work is between Martins and the Bridge Garage. He told me they were only half an inch out to the Architect's specifications, on reaching the top.

I was Hon. Secretary of Totley Sports Club from 1930 until 1938 when I became Chairman. With the advent

of the war, from having two football teams we were unable to raise over a solo table of men and so the ladies took over, very ably led by Mrs. Roscoe and Mrs. Haigh. The proceeds of all solo and whist drives were used to send parcels to the boys. After the war an element took over who used the money for outings etc, of their own although the club was providing all facilities so Mrs. Roscoe quietly transferred to Abbeydale Hall and that was the commencement of the Good Companions which is running today. John Hassell took over as Hon. Secretary; they made me a Life Member, and Percy Scott (Monty) took over the chairmanship which he held up to the loss of the clubroom when the owner converted it into a dwelling house.

Through my representing Totlely Sports, I was invited to become a Committee member of the Hope Valley Football League and went right through the offices to President, and was finally made a Life Member so my connections with the League amount, at present, to 59 years.

In 1926 I purchased a motor cycle. It cost 69 gns new. I crashed at about 50 m.p.h and was lucky to get away with an injured ankle, but it was the end of my athletic career. My father did not care for pillion riding so I got a sidecar, costing 20 gns - 4 speed 4 overhead valve bike, and a yellow and black torpedo sidecar - a real Sports job. My father and I used it daily to and from work but, unfortunately, in November 1929 I had an accident on Abbeydale Road, at the corner of Abbeydale Park Rise, from which my father died in February, 1930

My mother later married Mr Herbert Green, who had three sons, Albert, George and Roy, the latter being the only one still at home. And here I would like to try and express my admiration and grateful thanks to him - a perfect gentleman who did more for my mother than a lot of daughters would be capable of. He and I are the only two, out of the five of us, still living.

When the war came and we hadn't a solo team at Totlely Sports, I joined Beauchief Golf Club. I became Hon. Secretary - a job I did for ten years and they honoured me with Life Membership. I played golf until I was 74 years of age, when I had a coronary and have been in hospital five times since.

I thank God for an excellent life with a partner who was one in a million. Unfortunately my wife died in October, 1984 after 54 years of a very happy married life.

As already stated, I am a Life Member of Totlely Sports, the Hope Valley Football League and Beauchief Golf Club - honours that are not bestowed on a man for sitting on his behind! I am also a member of Dore Club - a very happy and convivial fraternity.

To date, I am still able to live in the house Dot and I have made into a comfortable home, mainly because of the help I receive from good friends. Firstly, MARY BENJAMIN (better known by other locals as Mary Wint). There is only one Mary and had I had a daughter she could not have done more for me. Also JOHN BELK who is most kind to me, and BARBARA McBRIDE who does my ironing and any little clothes

repair jobs necessary. To the ladies of St. John's Church Luncheon Club. I am one of the founder members, my grateful thanks.

Archie H. Thomas, 13th October, 1988