Kitty Holt

her life and her legacy

Discovering my lost Grandmother

by Jan Pahl

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Before I began writing I spent some time talking with those members of the family and others who had been alive when

the events described in the book took place. Almost all of them contributed something to this book. I have always wanted an opportunity to say how fortunate we all were in having such an excellent band of aunts and uncles. Sadly they are no longer with us, but on my mother's side they were: Margaret and Bruce Anderson, Catherine Linehan, Diana and Donald Currie and Edith Whetham. On my father's side they were Jean Cockburn and Norman and Kathleen Cockburn. My special thanks go to my parents, Elizabeth and Jim Cockburn.

This book is dedicated to Kitty and Cecil, their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, with my love.

Jan Pahl
Canterbury
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A Note of Names

Some members of this family had an idiosyncratic approach to names, so it may be helpful to clarify potential areas of confusion.

One of the few people who kept the same name throughout their lives was Robert Holt, Kitty's father. His wife and Kitty's mother, Laurencina Holt, was usually known as Lallie, probably to distinguish her from her mother, who was Laurencina Potter.

Most of Robert and Lallie's eight children were usually known by diminutives of their first names: Richard (Dick), Catherine (Kitty), Robert (Bob), Elizabeth (Betty), Philip (Phil), Edward (Ted), Mary (Molly) and Lawrence.

When Kitty married Cecil his full name was William Cecil Dampier Whetham, but he was known as Cecil Whetham. However, over his life he used many different versions of his full name. The title pages of their jointly authored books described them as William Cecil Dampier Whetham and Catherine Durning Whetham. Their 'anonymously' authored book, *Back to the Land*, was said to be written by C and C1. When he was knighted for services to agriculture he chose the name Sir William Dampier, perhaps reflecting his hope that he was related to the great explorer.

So the person who was called Kitty Holt as a child, became Catherine Whetham when she married, and ended life as Lady Dampier.

Kitty and Cecil's first two children were Margaret and Catherine, but for the first few years of their childhood they were known as Billy and Jimmy, perhaps expressing their father's longing for a son. The children that followed, however, were known by the same names all their lives: they were Diana, Lawrence, Elizabeth and Edith. When they married Margaret became Margaret Anderson, Catherine became Catherine Linehan, Diana became Diana Currie, Elizabeth became Elizabeth Cockburn. Lawrence and Edith both retained the surname of Whetham.

This book draws heavily on the letters which passed between Kitty and her parents and between Kitty and Cecil. Her parents wrote to their daughter as 'My dear Kitty'. However, when she replied she usually signed herself, 'Yours affectionately Catherine Holt' or after her marriage, 'Yours affectionately Catherine Whetham'. Her brothers and sisters continued to call her Kitty throughout her life.

A famous Cambridge joke tells of a man called W. C. Dampier Whetham who lived at Upwater Lodge and had a dog called Flush. The only part of the story which is not true is the dog's name.

The family trees in Appendices 3, 4, 5 and 6 are a guide to the Potter, Holt and Whetham families.

Chapter One
Introduction

When I was a child I sometimes wondered what had happened to my grandmother. I remembered with affection my father's parents, who lived in Edinburgh but who both died when I was about five. I knew my mother's father, a Cambridge don whose work had been rewarded with a knighthood and Fellowship of the Royal Society. I enjoyed the company of a wealth of other relatives, who included aunts and uncles, cousins, second cousins and even third cousins. But one central figure was missing – my maternal grandmother.

She was never mentioned, she did not appear in my mother's photograph album and yet no one ever said that she was dead. As an anxious child, perpetually worried about doing or saying the wrong thing, I thought it safer not to ask about her.

All this changed when I was 14 and at boarding school. Both my parents wrote to me every week with news from home. On this particular week my mother's letter began, 'My mother, who has been in a mental hospital for 33 years, died last week'. I can still feel in my bones the mix of shock, horror and dismay which I felt when I read the letter. I still feel ashamed that I wrote back to my mother saying, 'How sad for Grandfather',

rather than, 'How sad for you'.

After that exchange of letters very little more was said. I was not aware of a funeral, though some of my grandmother's possessions, including her Broadwood piano, arrived at our house. I learned that the oil painting of a very beautiful young woman, which hung in the hall in my grandfather's house, was a portrait of my grandmother. Years passed and she and her illness were rarely mentioned, at any rate in front of me. I assumed that the whole subject was too painful and shameful and not for general discussion. Somewhere in my mind lurked ideas from novels about the 'mad woman in the attic'.

All this may have been exacerbated by the fact that in the 1950s mental illness was still surrounded by fear and misunderstanding. People with mental health problems were committed to large specialist hospitals, often located in the countryside. The aim was to provide them with 'asylum', away from the strains and stresses of life, but the effect was to separate those who lived there from the wider community.

However, thirty years later my views were to change fundamentally. Working as a social science researcher I was asked to carry out an evaluation of the move of long stay patients from mental illness hospitals into ordinary houses in the community. This was part of a much larger movement aiming to close down the hospitals, reduce the stigma attached to mental illness and provide more appropriate care for patients.

I found myself spending time in these hospitals, chatting with

patients and staff, and finding out about their life histories, their hopes and fears. It became clear to me that many of the patients I was interviewing were likeable, competent people who had come into the hospital because of some family crisis or because their relations had not been able to cope with teenage rebellion or adult eccentricity.

Gradually it dawned on me that in my own family I had an example of the process which could lead to someone being consigned to a hospital and abandoned there. I began to ask very tentatively about my grandmother and about how she had come to be in hospital. However, my questions were not welcomed. It seemed that other members of my extended family shared that anxiety about mental illness and were reluctant to dig up painful subjects after so many years. The whole topic seemed to have become a shameful family secret.

I began with my aunts. My maternal grandparents had six children, of whom five were girls. (The story of their only son is another family secret, to which we will return). My grandmother went into hospital in 1919, when her daughters were aged from nineteen to eight, so I hoped they would be able to tell me something about what happened. I am sorry that my questions distressed some of my aunts, but it was their help which enabled me to start on what became a compelling quest.

As I talked to them, I was struck by the fact that in answering my questions each aunt gave a different explanation for her mother's illness. 'It was a hormonal problem; today she would have been cured with medication', said my aunt who was a

biochemist. 'She went off her husband, and that was seen as a sign of madness in those days', claimed my aunt who was twice divorced. 'She just kept talking too much, and buying too many iced buns and too much cheap jewellery', said my most chatty aunt. 'We were all in the nursery and didn't know anything about it', said my mother, despite the fact that she was aged ten at the time. 'It was the horrors of the First World War that upset her', reported the youngest aunt.

It seemed that no one had explained to these girls why their mother had suddenly disappeared from their lives: each had made up her own explanation. I decided that I would try to find out the truth about what happened. Three motives lay behind my quest. I wanted to honour my grandmother by telling her life story. I longed to reassure members of her family by showing that our grandmother's life had much in it to celebrate. And I hoped to make a contribution to broader debates about mental illness, personal relationships and the impact of family secrets. This book is the result.

Chapter Two
Childhood in Liverpool

As I sat in the Liverpool City Archives, my grandmother's voice came to me clearly. It was a child's voice, because I was reading a letter she wrote when she was five on 7th December 1876. The letter is headed 'Standish', so she must have been on a visit to her Potter grandparents in Gloucestershire with her mother and her older brother, Dick. In a large, flowing, copperplate hand she wrote:

> *Dear Daddy. I received your letter this morning. I liked it very much. Aunt Mary came yesterday with Uncle Arthur to dinner. Dick is going to Longfords on Saturday week. Goodbye with love from Kitty*

Who were the people mentioned in the letter? Where did they live? How did they shape Kitty's early years? To answer these questions it will be necessary to look at the wider family into which she was born and to draw on family histories and on the long-running diary kept by Kitty's parents.

Family background

Kitty Holt was born in 1871 into a prosperous Liverpool family, being the second child and eldest daughter. 'Daddy' in

Robert and Lallie Holt, Kitty's parents.

the letter above, was Robert Holt. He was the youngest of five sons of George Holt and Emma Durning and worked first in his father's cotton-broking business. He went on to succeed to his father's firm and later entered politics as a Liberal, becoming leader of the local party. He was a councillor from 1877, and was the last Mayor and first Lord Mayor of Liverpool from 1892-3. Over the course of his life he became known as a local politician, a philanthropist and a leading Unitarian in the city.

Robert Holt's brothers, and Kitty's uncles, were Alfred and Philip Holt, who in 1865 founded the Ocean Steamship Company, often known as the Blue Funnel Line. They pioneered the direct route from Britain to China, benefitting from the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Over the following years Blue Funnel ships became by far the largest user of the Liverpool docks and the major carrier of Britain's cotton and woollen goods to Far Eastern markets, returning with tea, tin and tobacco.

Kitty's mother, Laurencina (Lallie) must have helped her write the letter. She was the eldest daughter of Richard and Lawrencina Potter and one of the eight sisters of Beatrice Webb. 'Aunt Mary', in the letter above, was another of the sisters, who had recently married Arthur Playne, a local landowner who lived at Longfords near the family house of Standish in Gloucestershire. 'Dick', who was to visit Longfords, was Kitty's older brother, who later became Liberal MP for Hexham.

When she wrote the letter Kitty, and her mother and brother, were staying with her maternal grandfather. He was Richard

Potter, an entrepreneur, investor and speculator. From a modest beginning he had built up a range of businesses on an international scale, holding directorships in railway companies in Canada, the United States and Europe. He was a director of the Hudson Bay Company and had investments in the South Wales Coal Company and the Severn Bridge Railway Company, among many others.

Richard Potter was devoted to his daughters, taking a close interest in their education, which began at home with governesses, but which extended in their teens to boarding school. The girls were encouraged to read widely and to discuss issues of the day with family friends such as Herbert Spencer, who visited Standish frequently. Their father once said, 'A nice-minded girl can read anything and the more she knows about human nature the better for her and all the men about her'. When he travelled abroad on business one or other of his daughters often accompanied him.

Kitty's grandmother on her mother's side had come from Liverpool and it was during a family visit to the city in 1865 that Lallie and Robert Holt met. They were married in 1867 and by all accounts Lallie settled comfortably into the close and sociable world of the Holt family, beginning married life in the house of her widowed mother-in-law. Their photograph, taken in the early years of their marriage, shows a respectable, if rather stiff couple.

Early years

The young couple moved soon after into the new house which

Robert had built for his growing family. Their first son, Dick, mentioned in the letter above, was born in 1868, with Kitty arriving in 1871. The family diary for 3rd January 1872 recorded:

> *Robert and Lallie, with their two children, Richard and Catherine, the baby, and nurses, Caroline and Annie, slept in the house, Rake Lane, (now 2 Durning Road) for the first time.*

The house was on two storeys, with ample space for entertaining, for the growing family and for the servants. Lallie began with three servants and added to their number as the arrival of children meant employing a nurse, a nanny and later a governess. Eventually the family numbered eight children, five boys and three girls. The size of the family was not regarded as unusual; Lallie herself was one of ten children and Robert the youngest of six (see the Potter and Holt family trees in Appendices 3 and 4).

Lallie was considered by her sisters to be a devoted mother, but one who failed to discipline her children sufficiently. When Beatrice Webb visited the family in 1873 she commented that the Holt children were, 'charmingly dispositioned' but 'decidedly spoilt little monkeys'. Robert, too, was an affectionate father, and his diary reveals his constant care for his children's progress and development.

A Holt Family Diary was kept from 1830 to 1927, eventually running to eleven leather-bound volumes, which can be read in the Liverpool Archives. During the early years of Kitty's life

the diary was kept first by Anne Holt and then later by Robert Holt. It provides a rich account of the life of the family and of births, marriages and deaths. It is full of entries about local politics, family gatherings, children's achievements, and travels to visit relatives or to the Lake District or Scotland.

By 1885 Kitty was 14 and the diary records the trip which she took with her parents on one of these family visits. They first visited their son Bob, who was away at school in London. On 26th October his father wrote:

> *The boy looked well and happy. Spent Tuesday morning with Kitty and Bob in the British Museum and in the afternoon returned Bob to school and we went off from Waterloo Station. Lallie and Kitty to Mottisfont and I to Winchester.* (Subsequently) *Lallie and Kitty went on from Mottisfont to Henry Hobhouse at Hadspen House.*

This trip underlined the continuing close links between Lallie and her sisters, since Mottisfont Abbey was the home of Georgina Meinertzhagen, while Hadspen House was the home of Margaret Hobhouse. (See the Potter family tree in Appendix 3 for more details).

On Christmas Day 1885 Kitty was again the focus of the diary entry:

> *A mild day, rather dull and damp but not rain. At breakfast Kitty surprised us by a large dish with a cover which (illegible name) placed before me as if a dish of fish*

> *or meat but when the cover was removed there appeared a large assortment of presents from the children for the family. After breakfast we looked over the money boxes and calculated interest etc. Then we took the pony carriage and drove over to Crofton and Sudley with some small presents and returned to midday dinner.*

Visiting Crofton and Sudley meant visits to other members of the extended family on her father's side. Looking at the children's money boxes and calculating interest was something which happened every Christmas Day. This may seem an unusual activity for Christmas afternoon but it reflected the Holt family's concern with the management of money.

Family finances: a continuing concern

Kitty was born into a family which was on its way to becoming immensely wealthy. From modest beginnings in the mid nineteenth century, members of the family took advantage of the opportunities which flowed from the industrial revolution, the opening of the Suez Canal and the growth of world commerce.

As a cotton trader, her father was importing raw materials from all over the world for the cotton mills of Lancashire. Her uncles, Alfred and Philip Holt, were leading the Blue Funnel shipping line to a preeminent position in world trade, as the business prospered and the fleet of ships grew from just three in 1866 to 41 in 1900. The company had a reputation for the high quality of its ships, for its meticulous attention to the safety and working conditions of the crews, for the loyalty and

excellence of its Masters and its efficient handling of cargoes.

Two influences seem to have shaped the Holt family approach to money. The first reflected the economic imperatives of a global business enterprise. Alfred Holt had been trained as a civil engineer on the railways, but had gone on to work as a marine engineer, designing the steamships which were currently challenging the dominance of sail in world trade. His knowledge of marine engineering led him, with his brother Philip, to commission their first three ships and to set up the Ocean Steamship Company in 1865. Historians of the company all stress that its success reflected a combination of business acumen, high standards for ships and crew and strong leadership from the family members who dominated it for the next 75 years. As a family company with unlimited liability, financial soundness was essential.

However, these economic imperatives were shaped by the moral influences of Unitarianism. This is a religious denomination founded upon the doctrine that God is one being. Although it has roots in Jewish and Christian traditions it is open to insights from all faiths, and from science, the arts, the natural world and everyday living. Unitarians have been actively engaged in many of the more progressive movements of their time, and in the nineteenth century were involved in the fight for universal suffrage and gender equality, for the expansion of educational opportunities and against slavery.

The Holts were strong supporters of Unitarianism in Liverpool, attending the chapel in Renshaw Street and then funding the

building of a new chapel in Ullet Road. Their moral principles were expressed in their support for many projects in Liverpool, from the setting up of the Mechanics Institute in the 1840s to the funding of Liverpool University when it was set up in 1881. Today the Philip Holt Educational Trust still funds fifty engineering and social work studentships each year and gives grants to community projects in the city.

Crosbie Smith has written about the 'moral economy' that characterised the Liverpool Unitarian world of which the Holt family were leading members. This world was made up of a network of shipowners and merchants, centred on the Renshaw Street chapel. They attended services together, formed alliances by marriage, met socially, invested in each other's ventures, shared technical knowhow, embarked on philanthropic ventures and engaged in the politics of liberal reform. Taken together the result was a moral economy that stood in contrast to the material or political economy of the capitalist system.

A crucial element in this moral economy was an abhorrence of waste. The Holt ships were built to standards which avoided both extravagance and parsimony. They were not luxurious like the ships of the Cunard line, but neither were corners cut to save money. 'Holt class' ships were acknowledged to be built to higher standards than the highest Lloyds standards. Waste and show were equally to be avoided. So Alfred Holt wrote in his diary in 1868, after the funeral of William Rathbone, another Unitarian ship owner and reformer: '*No mourning coaches, no plumes to the hearse, no pall over the coffin and avoiding show, I admire it much. May my life be like his*'. When he died Alfred

permitted no memorial to himself, even in the Ullet Road chapel which he had funded so generously.

Kitty grew up in this world in which great wealth was combined with avoidance of waste and in which economic imperatives were balanced against high moral standards. It may be that this background will help to explain why in her family Christmas Day was always the occasion for the children's money boxes to be opened and interest calculated!

Teenage years

The Holt children began by being taught at home by their mother and their governess. Later the sons of the family were sent to away to prep school and Winchester and then to Oxford. The girls were largely educated at home, going on to local day schools in Liverpool, though Kitty had a brief stay at a boarding school in London, a stay which was cut short by ill-health. She later went on to Liverpool University College. In 1887, when she was 16, there is mention in the family diary of 'our three school-going children'.

The girls were taught to paint, and as we shall see, Kitty became an accomplished water colourist. In addition, they learned to play the piano and other instruments, and were able to accompany dancing parties. On 23rd October 1886 her father recorded in the family diary:

> *Took Kitty to St George's Hall, small concert room, where the certificates for local exam, Trinity Coll. London, were given. She received hers from the hands of the Mayoress*

Lady Radcliffe which as Kitty observed was the only drawback. After conclusion of the ceremony walked home and called at Bedford St upon the newly married niece, Mrs Hugh Melly nee Cecily Holt. She was 'not at home'.

Kitty's scathing comment about the Lady Mayoress reflects the Liberal sympathies of the family and the Conservative domination of the council at the time. The 'newly married niece' was to become the grandmother of George Melly, the jazz and blues singer.

Later that autumn Kitty was entering for public exams:

13th Monday Kitty commenced her Cambridge Examination and finished the same on Saturday 18th. Satisfied with herself in all but the Latin.

Christmas Day 1886 followed the same pattern as previous Christmas times:

After our 8.30 breakfast the children gave their presents to the household and then those for themselves. After these had been sufficiently examined the Boxes were brought out and the savings and interest carefully calculated. Betty had got £20 so her account will be transferred to the Savings Bank.

A few days later there was a party for the extended family:

A dance of about 70 people especially for Kitty and Dick. The cousins muster in full numbers.

Both the Holt and the Potter families had business interests around the world so it is not surprising that travel for pleasure was also part of their lives. Kitty's first trip abroad seems to have been to Italy. On 5th March 1888 the diary records,

> *Lallie and Kitty left home and joined me* (her father, Robert) *in London and we started for a trip to the north of Italy. Our first resting place was Cannes: then Menton, Bordighera, Genoa, Pisa, Florence. Here we stayed a fortnight. Then to Bologna, Milan, Zurich …. and home. At Florence we were joined by Dick and George who after spending a few days with us were joined by Professor Mackay and went on to Rome.*

After extensive complaints about the weather the diary records that, '*The more particular history of our wanderings is recorded in numerous letters and journals*'. This family was indefatigable in recording its life and activities.

Later that year Kitty was travelling again, this time with her uncle, Alfred Holt. The diary for 9th June records:

> *Saw Kitty down to her Uncle Alfred's yacht Argo – left about 9.30 for the North Pole, the land of the midnight sun. In the afternoon Lallie and three smallest went to Windermere and I took train for Oxford and Winchester. Dined with Dick and spent about four hours in his company and then on to Winchester spending Sunday and Monday with Bob…. Dick and Bob looked flourishing and in a good way.*

On 12th June there was, '*A cheerful letter from Kitty at Tobermory where the yacht was at anchor for rest and quietness after a stormy passage*'. On 16th June, '*heard of safe arrival at Bergen*'. On 8th July:

> *We have had several letters from Kitty who writes cheerfully though evidently under the trying circumstances of cold, rain and fogs. The weather while in the Arctic Circle has hardly admitted of seeing the sun at any time. The midnight sun was but dimly seen.*

Nevertheless, on 15th July the diary records that, '*On Monday last Kitty returned safely with all the yacht party. They were in blooming health and had enjoyed themselves immensely in spite of some cold wintery weather.*'

As 1888 moved into 1889 the diary records a continuing flow of family, social and local political events, with Kitty being mentioned more and more often:

> *Thursday 20 December. Took Kitty and Dick for the first time to the Wellington Rooms. A very small ball but both enjoyed their first dance in these rooms. Phil and Bob returned home looking very bright and well.*

> *Thursday 7 Feb. Kitty's 18th birthday. Presented her with a remembrance of the day in a necklet of opals. She received also presents from uncles and aunts. Lallie laid up with a cough so had to go by myself to tea at Knowsley by previous invitation. Had a pleasant hours chat with*

Ld and Ly Derby without once touching on the political question of the day.

Wednesday 3 Sept More council meeting. Municipal work not at all satisfactory. A great deal of wrangling over trifling matters and large interests are not grasped. Commenced portrait of Kitty by Mr Percy Bigland. He is of a Liberal family and has done some good work.

Percy Bigland was one of the leading portrait painters of the day, and would be elected to the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 1891. His portrait of Kitty is on the cover of this book.

The life of the Holt family should perhaps be seen in the broader context of the city where they lived. When Kitty was travelling round Europe and going to balls, and her father was busy with council work, a new Unitarian minister arrived in Liverpool. He was the Rev Acland Armstrong and he described his first impressions of the city in the 1880s:

I admired its public buildings, its stately shipping, its splendid shops, its lovely parks. ... But after the first glance I was appalled by one aspect of things here ... The contiguity of immense wealth and abysmal poverty forced itself upon my notice. The hordes of the ragged and the wretched surged up from their native quarters and covered the streets like a flood. Men and women in the cruellest grip of poverty, little children with shoeless feet, bodies pinched and faces in which the pure light of childhood had been quenched, swarmed on the very pavements that

> *fronted the most brilliant shops; and the superb carriages of the rich, with their freights of refined and elegant ladies, threaded their way among sections of the population so miserable and squalid that my heart ached at the sight of them. I had seen wealth. I had seen poverty. But never before had I seen the two so jammed together.*

Attending the Unitarian chapel, the Holt adults must have been reminded regularly of the contrast between their own wealth and the needs of the city where they lived and their response came in the form of philanthropy. At home, however, the children continued with their education and there is little mention in the family diary of any charitable activities. Perhaps philanthropy was seen as the responsibility of the male members of the family, who kept a tight control of finances, as later chapters will reveal.

Moving towards higher education

In July 1889 the diary records Kitty passing the London Matriculation Exam, in which she was placed in the first division. Her older brother, Dick, was already at Oxford. Nevertheless, the idea that she might apply to go to Cambridge University must have been a big decision: Cambridge had only accepted women since 1869 and had only allowed them to take exams since 1882.

We get a glimpse of Kitty at this time in the diary of her aunt, Beatrice Webb. A family wedding brought together a crowd of relations, including the Holts from Liverpool. On 21 August 1888 Beatrice recorded:

The Courtneys and Mary Playne, Kitty and Bill are here. Miss Kitty is a slim, graceful girl. She longs for a Career (with a big C), little knowing, poor child, the strain, the loneliness, the patient endurance needed to make even a little headway in work. Evidently at present she envies me! Poor child!

The decision to apply to Cambridge may have reflected the influence of Anne Clough, who, like Kitty, was the daughter of a Liverpool cotton broker. She was born in 1820 and was keenly interested in the education of women. She went on to work with Josephine Butler, the social reformer, to found the Liverpool Ladies Educational Society, which provided courses of lectures for women which called for intelligent and sustained work.

So successful was the scheme of lectures for women that it spread to other cities and was renamed the North of England Council for the Higher Education of Women. Anne Clough was its secretary from 1867 to 1870 and later its president. In 1871 she was asked to take charge of a house for women attending Cambridge university lectures. When the house developed into Newnham College in 1880 Anne Clough became its first president. In a letter to her mother, dated 3 August 1889, Kitty said:

> *Dear Mama You will have read the letter from Miss Clough. I think she seems very kindly disposed towards me and I shall follow her advice about the exam … On the whole I am satisfied to have entered for Newnham. Aunt Bee* (Beatrice Webb) *has sent me a letter from Mrs Crichton. She says that the division into three halls*

> *at Newnham is a great advantage as the heads can see more of their girls, and that the drive in stuffy cabs from Girton is a great drawback, and that the Newnham girls are much more 'in it' with the Cambridge life.*

There is no evidence that Kitty had to argue her case for going to Cambridge, or that there was any family opposition. This was very different from the situation for many young women at the time, for whom lack of money, lack of information or sheer prejudice presented insurmountable barriers.

So nine years after the founding of the college, in October 1889, Kitty went up to Newnham, accompanied by her father. In the family diary he wrote:

> *Left by 9.45 train for Cambridge with Kitty. Arrived about 5 o'clock and deposited her with Miss Clough, principal of Clough Hall. Beforehand went over the college and saw the arrangements also Kitty's bed and sitting room. These were very plain and bare but I think in a short time under Kitty's fostering care they will smile as the wilderness when properly cared for. It was my first visit to Cambridge and I spent some of my time making the acquaintance of the various colleges. They compare most favourably with Oxford – which has the advantage I am not prepared to say.*

In the next chapter we turn to the experiences of Kitty herself, one of the pioneers of university education for women.

Chapter Three
Cambridge and Elsewhere

Lallie Holt kept some of the letters which Kitty wrote home from Newnham and they were later edited by my mother and published by Newnham College in 1987. They give a vivid impression of her life, both very like and sometimes very different from the life of today's students.

In addition, there is Kitty's own private diary, which tells a rather different story from her letters home. So for example, after her first full day at Newnham, on 10th October 1889, she confided in her diary:

> *Alas! I am disappointed and sore at heart. If this is Newnham, why did I leave Liverpool? Perhaps I can hardly judge yet but I have fearful misgivings: I am going to be bored - I am going to long for a soul to talk to - visitors, they say, are not encouraged. Everybody is full of their one subject, they do not take a general interest in anything; there are no men to keep our conversation from getting hysterical. Ah me, for the old University College and the jolly talks at home.*

Her first letter home is dated Oct 12th 89, and is more positive:

> *Dear Mama*
> *I attended my first lecture yesterday: it was Chemistry; there were about 8 students from this college and three from Girton; with a large background of undergrads and medical students. Afterwards we adjourned for a couple of hours to the laboratory here; Miss Freund is the presiding genius, a jolly, stout German, whose clothes are falling in rags off her back. We made a lot of horrible smells and got back here for lunch at quarter past one.*
>
> *In the afternoon I was 'at home' and had a perfect stream of callers, all the students are supposed to call on each new girl and these calls have to be returned at the end of the week; and as the wretched girls neither tell me their names nor their residences I shall have a piece of work to find out who they all are.*
>
> *Miss Chamberlain is next door to me and we are going shopping together this afternoon – she is going to work for the mathematical Tripos. She came in yesterday and brought her work, and we had a long talk about Birmingham affairs.*

Helen Chamberlain was a niece of Joseph Chamberlain, who was for many years Mayor of Birmingham and a close friend of Kitty's aunt, Beatrice Potter (later Webb). The 'work' that they did together will have been needlework or mending.

The themes which emerge in this first letter are ones which

recur throughout the letters: academic work, the life of the college, friendships with other women students, an interest in politics. In addition, the letters make it clear that Kitty enjoyed herself enormously, despite frequent headaches, and that she kept closely in touch with her family in Liverpool and received many visits from members of her large extended family.

These visits were not always welcome. Her private diary allowed her to express a rather different view from that contained in her letters home. So on 6th March 1890 she wrote:

> *On Thursday Mama came down for a night and stayed with Mr Evans. I can't say that I care to have relations up here; they are rather in the way; besides they are unsettling and there are only nine weeks of term.*

Academic work

The University of Cambridge did not allow women to receive degrees until 1948. When Kitty went up in 1889 it was less than 20 years since women had first been allowed to study at the University at all and then they could only do so by attending one of the two women's colleges, Girton and Newnham. Girton College had from the start insisted on women following the same courses as the men and sitting for the same exams, even though they could not be awarded the same degrees. However, Newnham College was more relaxed in its attitude, allowing its students to attend lectures in quite an ad hoc way and to take what exams they chose.

The two key exams were Little Go, the qualifying exam which

allowed a student to work for a degree at the university, and Tripos, the final exam which led to the granting of that degree for male students. Little Go required students to pass exams in Latin, Greek and Logic, and early letters from Kitty report that she is struggling with these subjects: it seems that she had started attending lectures without having completed Little Go.

In the early years the Tripos was widely considered to be too hard for women. Of the 250 students who attended Newnham in its first ten years only 58 entered for the Tripos, though by 1885 four fifths were working towards the Tripos and a majority of the rest for Higher Local Examinations. As we shall see, Newnham took particular care of students when they were sitting for these exams.

Kitty's letters record that she attended lectures in Latin, Greek and French, Logic and Mathematics, as well as Chemistry and Physics. As her time at Cambridge went on, she focused more and more on science subjects. Lectures were provided by the university and at these the women students were in a very small minority among the crowd of young men. In an early letter Kitty complains about the Chemistry lectures, '*The lectures are fairly good; the worst part is the undergraduates who talk incessantly the whole time*'. The relative autonomy allowed to students comes across in a letter Kitty wrote in October 1889:

> *I have rather altered my plan for work and shall probably not take all the Little Go at Christmas, but leave the Classics till next June. I think the French, Logic and*

> *Mathematics will be sufficient to get up before Christmas; and then I shall be able to do some more Greek books which I expect I shall enjoy, and not specialise so much on Science. In fact the Principal says that as I do not want the Tripos for teaching purposes, I had better read either a little History of Literature instead of going completely for Physics. I am going to think this over and make my mind up after Christmas. The girls all say I am not strong enough to do honours in the Science Tripos, as even the strong ones break down at it, and it seems much better to get a low place and a more general education.*

Lab work was a key part of the Chemistry course. For the most part it seems to have taken place in the college, which had its own specialist teachers, though towards the end of her time at Cambridge, Kitty is doing experiments in the Cavendish Laboratories. However, in November 1889 she wrote:

> *I am slacking off work for the end of this week as I had another headache yesterday evening. The Greek and Chemistry prove rather too much. I rather think it's the hideous smells in the latter; we got arsenic and phosphorus fumes at the lecture yesterday morning and a frightful smell of ammonia at the Laboratory afterwards. It was perfectly disgusting. All the same Chemistry is great fun and I did some splendid experiments yesterday.*

Kitty's letters reassure her parents that she is working hard and has a regular timetable. In November 1889 she explains her routine:

> *An average of five hours study goes to the daily round, which is quite enough for any ordinary mortal. I always do at least three hours between breakfast and lunch and at least two hours more, either between tea (3.30) and dinner (6.30) or from 7.30 to 9.30. At 9.30 Helen and I have our supper and after that one of us works and the other reads aloud till bedtime. We have finished Aunt Bee's article on the Jews* (this is Beatrice Potter, later Webb)*, we have read several of Stevenson's essays, and now we are tackling Corneille's Polyeucte. After that we intend to tackle King Lear or Racine's Phedre.*

At the end of her first term Kitty sat for most of the Little Go exams. She found this stressful despite the efforts by the college to take care of its students. She described one exam day like this:

> *Helen roused me at half past seven and informed me that there was a cold bath waiting for me – not a piece of intelligence very conducive to early rising when there was six inches of snow on the ground. The Principal came upstairs before her breakfast and kissed me affectionately, rolled me up in furs and gave me a rug – she also sent up about 7.30 to say she had ordered a cab; she is such a dear old lady. When we got back at half past eleven my friends had a roaring fire ready and a coffee party going on. It was delightful to have a cup of something hot. ..Each day the College has provided a special hot early lunch. They say in Tripos week here there is a special table for the Tripos people where they are fed like prize turkeys.*

The following year Kitty was there when the Part 1 exam results were being read out from the steps of the Senate House. On 29 May 1890 she described:

> *A rather curious performance. We were a crowd of about 400 undergraduates and other university people. Three dons in long gowns stood on the steps with the lists and began reading out just as St Mary's rang the last stroke of nine.* (The men's exam results are then read out) *Then the dons read out 'Women' and raised their caps, an example which all the crowd followed. Two or three voices called out 'Ladies, Sir, Ladies', at which the dons repeated 'Women'. This is a standing joke. There was a certain amount of applause at P.G.Fawcett's name, but of course the lists are not classified.*

The lists were not classified because this was only Part I of the Tripos. When Philippa Fawcett sat for the Tripos two years later her results were above those of the Senior Wrangler, the male student with the highest marks that year.

This famous incident is recorded in Kitty's diary in June 1890:

> *Philippa Fawcett is above the Senior Wrangler and the College has gone off its head with excitement. And what a day we had! A wonderful scene in the Senate House; a triumphant chairing procession into Clough Hall. We decorated the whole College with flags and at night we had a bonfire with fireworks.*

The life of the college

Kitty's letters paint a picture of an active and popular member of the college community, while her diary is naturally more revealing. Life at Newham centred on the college, with occasional visits to Girton. The men's colleges are hardly mentioned in her letters. Kitty uses the terms 'student' or 'people' to describe the young women who were studying with her, but 'undergraduates' when she is referring to the men studying at the university.

Her letters describe a whirl of activity, which involved a great deal of chatting over cocoa: '*I have been having such a dissipated time of it these last few days. Each evening a cocoa party, and other entertainments besides*'. She was a keen dancer, teaching other students to dance the Lancers and the Pas de Quatre, and being much in demand to play the piano while others danced. She sang in the choir, played tennis and hockey.

Her diary reflects the same hectic round. At the start of her last year at the university she is pleased to have been appointed to various posts in college: Captain of the Clough Hall Fire Brigade, President of the Fiction Library Committee, of the Raleigh Musical, Secretary of the Modern Languages Club and a representative of the college on the Women's Southwark Settlement Committee. The entry in her diary for 25th October 1891, lists these new responsibilities and includes some rare introspection:

> *This comes of being considered capable, for certainly I am not popular with the body of students. I fancy they imagine there is something radically wrong about a person who stays*

> *up three years, takes no Tripos, goes in for every possible kind of Society and amusement, and chaffs and dances with the authorities. I believe I am never liked till I am known, at least that is my impression from what various people have told me after they got to know me better.*

At the start of her last year at Cambridge her mood was very different from what it had been on her first day in college. On 21 November 1891 she wrote in her diary:

> *My last year at College, alas! It cuts me to the heart to think I shall never again watch the greens deepen into Browns and the yellows to russet, along the dear old Backs or across the Fens towards Granchester. Only two more terms and Cambridge will lie behind me. In less than seven months this place will know me no more. A stranger will be in my rooms; there will be another Captain of the Fire Brigade and another President of the Raleigh. Why cannot life be, so to speak, fixed at this moment? I am happy as I have never been before; I am contented as I did not think it possible to be - and yet it all must go. When again will I be able to spend a whole day in an armchair with my feet in the fire, dipping alternately into Keats and Wordsworth, Horace and Virgil, my chosen friends around me and my time my own. O Cambridge, Cambridge, you have made me too happy; you have stolen my heart.*

The wider world

There is a great sense of enjoyment in Kitty's letters but nothing about the constraints which still impeded women or

about the grudging attitude of the university to their presence. For example, she does not complain about the fact that women students could not go anywhere without a chaperone and were not allowed to receive men in their rooms. She comments on the poor food and cold rooms, but does not link this with the inadequate funding of women's colleges by comparison with the men's colleges. She never mentions the fact that women could not receive degrees and could not vote, no matter how engaged they were with political debates.

Kitty's interest in politics had been formed during her childhood and in her letters home she continued to take a keen interest in Liverpool political life, regularly commenting on items in the Liverpool Daily Post. In her letter to her father in November 1889, after thanking him for sending her some port wine, she complains:

> *Its such a shame that wretched Smith and Son wont provide Today, the socialist organ, and we don't know where to get it. Do you know who the publishers are? There are several socialists here; one of the girls' brothers has distributed his wealth and is working as a common hand in some North Country mills. I believe she would like to do the same.*

She was active in college politics, making her maiden speech for the Liberal Party in November 1889 and describing it as, '*An awfully nervous job*'. However, by the end of her first term Kitty had become more confident about her role in politics. She wrote:

> *You will be amused to hear that the Liberal Party are going into office next term at the Political. I shall probably be in the Cabinet, either as Secretary of State for War and Admiralty – or Foreign Affairs. I rather want to get the State Secretaryship or to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I suppose being only a fresher I have no chance of those.*

Her parents did not keep all her letters, so the next mention of college politics comes in her third year, when she wrote to her mother:

> *I have received an addition to my numerous offices. I have accepted the Irish Secretaryship in our new Liberal cabinet. This term we are reforming the House of Lords, but next term we shall be expected to tackle Ireland: that means a lively year ahead for me. But its all included in third year work.*

She also had many links with leading figures in the political world of the day. In her letters home Kitty mentions the following fellow students:

- Helen Chamberlain, her best friend, niece of Joseph Chamberlain, the reforming Lord Mayor of Birmingham, who was a close friend of Beatrice Webb
- Phillipa Fawcett, daughter of Millicent Fawcett, the suffragist, and her husband Henry Fawcett, Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge
- Mary Bateson, daughter of W.H Bateson, the Master of St John's College, whose wife Anna was active in the suffrage movement in Cambridge

During her time at Cambridge Kitty continued to be in touch with her family and with the circle which surrounded them. Her letters mention contacts with brothers, sisters and cousins, invitations to family parties, visits to relatives in London and gossip about other family members. There is only space here to give a few examples.

- In her first term she is invited by Mary Marshall, wife of Alfred Marshall, the economist, to meet Charles Booth, the philanthropist, and his wife Mary. Charles's sister was married to Kitty's uncle Philip Holt in Liverpool
- Her college organises a fancy dress ball where Helen Gladstone, daughter of the Prime Minister, dressed up in Japanese costume. Helen became warden of the Women's University Settlement in Southwark
- In her third term Mrs Horace Darwin, daughter in law of Charles Darwin, calls on her and Kitty notes, *'I was in the midst of writing a paper and the whole room was littered with notes and books. I liked her very much'.* Her visitor went on to found the Central Association for Mental Health

Friendships and love

Kitty's friends at Cambridge seem to have come mainly from Newnham College. She was particularly friendly with Helen Chamberlain, niece of Joseph Chamberlain, and Gertrude Elles, who became a noted geologist and first female Fellow of the Geological Society. Gertrude will appear several more times in this book.

There are few mentions of men friends until, that is, 'Mr Whetham' begins to appear in her diary. In her letters home he is mentioned only once, and then without being named. So on 24th October 1891 she writes to her mother to say:

> *On Tuesday evening we had the first meeting of the Cavendish Physical Society for this year. One of our cleverest "young men" has got a Trinity fellowship and we were all congratulating him.*

We only have a few letters for the rest of her last year, and none of them mentions Mr Whetham, but her private diary tells the story of a growing relationship, as well as giving a vivid account of her life in those last few weeks at Cambridge:

> *13th May 1892 I spent four hours in the morning at the Cav Lab working with the polariscope - and as usual wasting a considerable amount of time conversing on extraneous subjects with Mr Whetham.*
>
> *14th May The Alfred Holts came to Cambridge on a three day visit. They stayed at the Bull Hotel. The visit included walks round the colleges, a trip to Madingley, a dessert party in Newnham and a service at Kings.*
>
> *Sunday 15th May After the service I got Mr Whetham to show us his rooms and take us to see the commencement of hall.*
>
> *Tuesday 17 May Working at Lab with the big*

spectroscope - very interesting work. Thursday - con.fab with Mr Whetham and more spectroscope, this time a hydrogen vacuum tube.

Tuesday 24 May More spectroscope - this time I gave a demonstration on the subject to Mr Whetham. In the afternoon he came to call; had tea and stayed for an hour and a half.

Thursday 26th May Last lecture on Electrolysis and Solution from Mr Whetham, who subsequently helped me with Induction coils upstairs for nearly an hour.

Saturday 28th May In the evening dined in Mr Whetham's rooms in the Trinity Great Court. I went there escorted by Mrs Wilberforce - altogether a party of ten - a Mr and Mrs Smedley from Derbyshire, Mrs and Miss Whetham, Mr Parry (one of the deans), and two undergraduates. .. A most pleasant evening, though I felt rather strange at first. After dinner we had a good deal of talk and a certain amount of music. The Great Court looked perfect as we walked back to the Gate, with the stars all out and the moon rising over the Hall.

1st June It turned out such a glorious evening that I wandered down the Backs with calls in view. However, meeting Mr Whetham, he took me into the Trinity Fellows Gardens which are perfectly lovely, and then into the tennis courts where a single and a double were going on. It was the first time I had seen the great game played.

> *6th June* Mr Whetham took me to see the charming old Fellows bowling green out of the old court and we looked over the Practical Physics Tripos questions together, which he had been invigilating. I was much gratified to find I could have done them all except one.
>
> *9th June 1892* Mrs and Miss Whetham and a friend of theirs came to tea soon after four o'clock and stayed for some time, going over the College and sitting about the grounds.

We shall meet these characters again, but at the time Kitty did not know that. So we end with the last entry in her Newnham diary:

> *All those who were going down were called to the high and went in after dinner to see Mrs Sidgwick. Since then I have packed, sold our goods by auction and said many sorrowful goodbyes.*

Conclusion

Kitty herself never sat the Tripos exam, and as a woman she could not be awarded a degree. However, she went on to marry a scientist and, with him, to build a house which had its own laboratory: clearly they saw science as an important part of their family life. Of their five daughters, four followed her to Newnham, of whom three read science subjects. Of their ten grandchildren, six studied at Cambridge, with natural sciences predominating among their degrees. Our mother would often remind us, '*You must remember, we are a scientific family*'. My decision to become a social scientist was always a disappointment to her.

Kitty went to Cambridge at a time when few women went to university at all, with fewer still thinking of Cambridge. However, it is important to set this particular story in its wider context. Families from liberal minded, educated, affluent classes knew each other, and valued education for girls. So sending daughters to university, as their sons had gone, was a natural development: their daughters made up a large component of that first generation. Though it seemed like a radical move to send a daughter to university, for this small sub-group, or 'tribe', it was not. As we have seen, Kitty went to Cambridge knowing many girls who were already there or who were to follow her. Her life at Newnham was full of visits from relatives and friends of the family and there is little in her diaries or letters to suggest that she saw herself as a pioneer.

Chapter Four
A Season of Rest

What plans did Kitty have for the future, as her time at Cambridge drew to an end? She was certainly very much aware that her life was about to change.

On 2nd June 1892 she wrote in her diary:

> *My last morning at the Cavendish Laboratory! I have been there at least every other day and sometimes every day for the last three years. It was very sad to say Goodbye to the dear dusty building and to think that there will be no more of those pleasant mornings spent over one's work. I dare say I will never go inside it again: but one never knows how oddly things may work out.*

This last sentence seems to hint that she is contemplating the possibility of a future which could include Cambridge and even the Cavendish. She had, of course, been seeing a great deal of Mr Whetham over the previous few weeks and months. However, this note in her diary also suggests that nothing had been decided.

From the perspective of today, it seems extraordinary that Kitty could leave Cambridge without my real plans for her

future. Neither in the letters home, nor in her diaries, is there any mention of what is to happen next. Not only are there no visits to careers advisers, but there seems to have been no consideration of any options.

This was not because of a lack of models in her social circle. For example, on 22 February 1890 she recorded in her diary:

> *Aunt Beatrice has been staying in Cambridge over Sunday with the Creightons. She came to call with Mrs C in the morning and I went back to lunch there. Full of her work as usual; is just going to interview the Cradley Heath chain makers with Mrs J R Green and then goes back to Box House. We smoked after lunch and talked.*

Aunt Beatrice was, of course, Beatrice Potter, who was to marry Sidney Webb just two years later in 1892. On 15th December 1891 Kitty met some more potential role models. In her diary she noted:

> *I lunched with Ruth Caine on Clapham Common and afterwards we went down to Southwark together to the Women's Settlement, where we discussed business affairs with Miss Sewell. Miss Octavia Hill came into the room for a few minutes: a jolly, stout old lady, shockingly dressed, with a clever, bright, handsome face and keen dark eyes.*

Ruth Caine had been brought up in Liverpool, so probably knew Kitty from earlier years, but by this date she had moved to live with her husband in London and was active in religious

Kitty with her sisters, Molly (standing) and Betty Holt.

and philanthropic movements. Miss Sewell was Warden of the Southwark University Settlement, while Octavia Hill was active in the field of housing and founded the National Trust.

Perhaps Kitty felt that she was entitled to *'A Season of Rest'*, in the words of the title of her book of poems published in 1898. The title poem begins:

All labour finished for today,
All earthly duties put away,
Lost till tomorrow.
Nor will I strive to fill the flying hours,
But let them go
Bearing an empty burden for my share.
This life devours
So much of strength, so great its wear and tear,
That the soul needs
Periods of idleness and seasons of repose.

Kitty had grown up in a family with eight children. Her mother was the eldest of ten and her father the next to youngest of eight. She might have expected that she too would have a large family, if she married, and in the words of Barbara Caine's book about the sisters of Beatrice Webb, this was a family in which girls were *'Destined to be Wives'*. It was assumed that they would have to make a choice between motherhood and a career, in a period when many careers were not even open to women. So perhaps she saw this as a brief time for fun before taking on the responsibilities of marriage and family life.

The next four years of her life would be spent living at home in Liverpool, travelling, sketching, playing the piano, writing poetry and visiting relatives. It was the typical life of a privileged young woman whose family could afford to provide all that she needed

and wanted. The photograph of Kitty with her sisters, Betty and Molly, hints at the closeness between the three girls in the family.

Travelling

By any standards, Kitty in her early twenties was a great traveller. Her enthusiasm for travel was helped by the fact that her family owned the Blue Funnel Shipping Line. At the time this was one of the leading merchant shipping lines in the world, carrying goods around the globe from South America to South East Asia and from Canada to Australia. So she could travel on the family boats, chaperoned by her father, or by uncles going on business trips, and often accompanied by cousins or siblings.

Everywhere she went she painted what she saw, creating watercolours and sketches which are now in the Newnham College archives. Each was meticulously dated and placed and together they give us an idea of the breadth of her travels over these few years.

1888 Norway: Bergen, Lofoten islands, North Cape, Tromso, Trondheim
1890 Greece: Athens, Salamis, Mycaenae, Corinth, Marathon, Corfu
1891 France: Tours, Chenonceaux, Amboise, Paris
1893 Scotland: Loch Awe, Glen Strae
1894 France and Italy: Rouen, Dieppe, St Michel, Cannes, Alassio
1895 Orkney
1895 West Indies: Teneriffe, Grenada, Barbados, Trinidad, St Lucia, Cuba

Kitty's painting of the mosque in Minieh on the Nile in Egypt - and the mosque in 2016.

1895 November to 1896 March: Egypt, starting in Venice and returning via Gibraltar

1897 North America: Washington, Montreal, Niagara, Quebec, Lake George

In addition to these major trips, she was also spending time travelling in the UK, to the family's holiday home at High Borrans near Keswick, or visiting her maternal aunts and uncles, including the Hobhouses at Hadspen House in Somerset, the Cripps family at Parmoor House in Buckinghamshire and the Meinertzhagens at Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire.

The trip to Egypt in 1895 was one of the longest, lasting for four months. During this time Kitty produced around 30 watercolours, noting on each the date and place where it was painted and often the names of her travelling companions. The party started with the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx, travelled up the Nile by boat, stopping at Megara, Minieh, Assiout, and Assoun, and then returning to Cairo for a second visit to the Pyramids before embarking on the Blue Funnel steamship Pyrrhus to return home.

She travelled with her aunt and uncle, Kate and Leonard Courtney, and Sir John Scott, for whom she did some secretarial work. Leonard Courtney was a Liberal MP and was for years the leading Parliamentary spokesman on women's suffrage. The couple were keen supporters of the Women's Suffrage Appeal Committee, though they opposed the activities of the militant suffragettes. Kate was also active in the peace movement. Sir John Scott was a judge who been appointed by the British

Government to the International Courts of Appeal in Egypt. He spent many years working in that country, showing a particular concern for reforming the courts and reducing corruption, and being rewarded in 1894 with a knighthood. It must have been an interesting trip for the young Kitty.

In April 2016 my brother and I sailed on Movenpick MS Hamees from Luxor to Cairo. This trip had been planned ever since we discovered that our grandmother had sailed the same stretch of the Nile - but 120 years earlier. We wanted to follow where she had journeyed so many years before.

She was a talented water colourist, so when we might take a photograph Kitty sat and sketched what she saw. One such painting was done at 'Minieh' on 5th December 1895: it shows a mosque on the bank of the Nile and several feluccas moored by a rather muddy shore.

When we arrived at Minya, which is the modern name for Minieh, we hurried on deck to compare our grandmother's painting with the view before us. It was thrilling to see that the mosque was still there, though surrounded by crowded roads and high rise blocks. And there on the other side of our boat were the feluccas, skimming over the Nile just as they had done when our grandmother sat down to paint.

At that moment the Manager of the MS Hamees came on deck. When I explained about our grandmother he took the photograph which illustrates this chapter, showing the mosque as it now is. The other illustration shows my grandmother's

painting. There is the very same mosque, though the muddy river bank has been replaced by the parks and gardens and traffic of modern Minya and the feluccas are used for leisure now.

As well as producing paintings, Kitty also recorded her impressions in poems. Some of these were published in 1896 in a book of sonnets under the title,*'Scenes in Egypt'*. The last of these is entitled One Winter:

> *Was it a winter that I spent with you,*
> *O sunny land beyond the midland sea?*
> *There were no frosts, no snows, no stormy days,*
> *And yet the earth was bare when first I came,*
> *And fruit trees were but flowering when I left,*
> *The buds just bursting. What a long array*
> *Of mosques and palaces and sun-baked towns,*
> *Of temples and of villages, I saw!*
> *Yet to me, as of old, seemed longer far*
> *The stream of faces and more fraught with all*
> *The varied interests of humanity.*
> *And if just one or two stand out above*
> *The shifting crowd, and range themselves as friends,*
> *Why then, the winter was not spent in vain.*

When the trip to Egypt ended the travelling companions went their separate ways, but Kitty and Sir John Scott began to write to each other. For the rest of her life she kept the letters which he sent her over the following year. Over 30 of the letters survive, each one carefully numbered by Kitty. The letters make it clear that he had fallen deeply in love with her.

The first letter is dated 22 March 1896 and ends, '*Goodbye my dear secretary. I hope you are very happy. Keep well for the sake of all who love you and for the sake of, yours always, J Scott*'. Over the following year the friendship deepened and a year later Sir John was ending his letters from Egypt with, '*Goodbye dear, much love, yours ever, J. Scott*'.

We do not have Kitty's replies but the penultimate letter from Sir John suggests that she had written from Cambridge to tell him that she had another attachment. The letter, dated 12 March 1897 and headed 'Ministry of Justice, Cairo', begins:

> *Your Cambridge letter has startled me. I never let myself think how dear you are to me. But it is just as it was and always will be – and what you say – and still more what you have left unsaid – makes me sad and everything seems cold and grey. It is not that I do not want you to be happy – I do, I do. Never a day passes but I wish it. I will write no more about it. I know you do not like it. Only I think I shall be content if you are happy.*

We must assume that in her letter from Cambridge Kitty had written to Sir John to explain about Mr Whetham.

Mr Whetham

During these years of travel, did Kitty continue to be in touch with Mr Whetham? The two little books of poetry which Kitty published in 1896 contain several love poems but it does not say to whom they were addressed. However, we do know that they kept in touch, corresponded and sometimes visited each other.

All this is revealed in a letter she wrote to her father in July 1897. It is a long and thoughtful letter and it is only possible to quote parts of it here. She begins:

> *My dear Dad Do you remember at the time of the British Association one Cecil Whetham stayed with us for a couple of nights towards the end of the time? I did not mention it at the time but we were old friends and had often worked together in the Cavendish Labs, and especially throughout my last term we saw a great deal of each other and got very intimate.*

The British Association for the Advancement of Science met at Liverpool in 1896, so this must have been the occasion when Cecil stayed with Kitty's family. However, clearly her family were given no idea of the importance of the relationship. Kitty was writing to tell her father that she was proposing to marry a man he had hardly met.

The letter goes on to describe at length her doubts about the relationship, her initial reluctance to settle down in Cambridge, his offers of marriage, her vacillations and pleas for more time, his willingness to wait, their discussions about their financial situation, and the final outcome:

> *Yesterday (Sunday) morning we settled it all up and are, I think, about as happy as it is possible to be. I believe Cecil is writing to you himself and he intends to go up to London tomorrow to see you. I hope very much that you will like him. I think he wants a good bit of knowing. He*

> *is thoroughly liked and respected here, both from the work point of view and the social standpoint.*

Towards the end of the letter Kitty writes at length about their mutual interests:

> *I forgot to say he is a Fellow of Trinity and Lecturer of Trinity College and his special subject is the borderland of Physics and Chemistry which was also the work that most attracted me. It is a great delight to me to think that I shall get back to a small extent among the Scientific Instruments. I have always missed that very much. It was a great disappointment not to be able to make use of my three years training, especially as I had put a good deal of conscientious work into it.*

The letter ends with a promise from Kitty to tell her mother all about her relationship with Mr Whetham when she goes home tomorrow. It is not known how her parents responded to this news. However, the young couple were married five months later.

Who was Mr Whetham? What had been his life before he and Kitty met in Cambridge? To answer these questions there is his autobiography, published in 1948 under the title, *Cambridge and Elsewhere*.

Cecil Whetham was born on 27th December 1867 in Belsize Road, South Hampstead. His father was a business man, while his paternal grandfather was for a time Lord Mayor of London. Cecil sometimes acted as his page and so saw many of

the interesting people who came to mayoral banquets, such as Disraeli and Gladstone.

The family spent holidays with his uncle, Thomas William Dampier-Bide, who lived at Kingston Manor in Yeovil and had a shooting lodge at Hilfield Manor. So Cecil was introduced at an early age to hunting and shooting, which became life-long interests.

Having delicate health he did not go away to public school, much to his regret, but was taught at home and by private tutors in London. They must have taught him well because in 1886 he was accepted by Trinity College, Cambridge, and went up to read Chemistry. His comments on that time describe his experience, but also give us a flavour of the man:

> *As I had no school fellows and few acquaintances in the College when I went up as a Freshman, my first term, spent in lodgings in Park Street, was very lonely. I remember being glad when it was over.....It was only in my third or fourth year that I overcame the handicap of no public school, came to know a large number of men and was elected to the Pitt Club. I joined the Volunteers and took to rifle shooting, and in the summers played lawn tennis.*

His interest in Physics was stimulated by the lectures of Professor J. J. Thompson and it became clear that this would be his chief subject of study. He was placed in the First Class in the Natural Sciences Tripos of 1889 and in the autumn of 1889 was awarded the Coutts Trotter Studentship for research

(just as Kitty was arriving at Newnham for her first year).

The Studentship was important because it provided an income at a time which was financially very difficult for the family. In his autobiography Cecil attributes this to the death of his father, not mentioning that his father had committed suicide because of his financial problems. It is said that he was the first person to die by throwing himself in front of a train in the London Underground. Following this catastrophe, Cecil's mother and sister, Mabel, left London and settled in Cambridge in 5 St Peter's Terrace along Trumpington Street.

The Studentship kept the family going financially, till he was elected to a College Fellowship in October 1891, a promotion which, as we have seen, Kitty mentioned in her letter to her mother, without giving away his name. Six months later comes the 'glorious evening' when he showed Kitty round the Fellows Garden. In 1895 he was made a Lecturer of Trinity College and in 1907 a Tutor. He wrote in his biography:

> *Thus the main lines along which my early career ran were laid down by repercussions of my scientific interests, and from them my connection with Trinity College, to which I owe everything, was made certain for life.*

This quotation introduces some themes which will recur later in the story. Their marriage took place in Liverpool on 10th December 1897, when Cecil was 29 and Kitty 26.

Cecil's autobiography records that:

> *In 1897 I married Catherine, eldest daughter of Robert Durning Holt, of Liverpool and High Borrans, Westmorland. For many years my wife, besides being an excellent housekeeper and hostess, helped me in many other ways.*

They spent their honeymoon in the Lake District and in France and as usual she recorded their travels in water colours. On their return they set up house in Cambridge and two years later the first of their six children was born. Kitty's Season of Rest was over.

Chapter Five

Early Years of Marriage and Children

Two rich sources of information provide a vivid picture of these years of Kitty's life. First, there is the family diary, which she kept from the start of the marriage, following her Holt family tradition, with occasional input from Cecil. Secondly, there are the letters which she wrote to her mother and father and their replies to her. Both these sources are by their nature chronological, with different topics coming and going. In the three chapters which follow the material is grouped by topic in order to make it easier to follow the main themes of her life.

Kitty's diaries and letters contain a great deal about the couple's very active social life, with extensive accounts of dinners given and attended, guests to stay, and trips to visit relatives and friends. Children are mentioned less often but are clearly a source of great interest and enjoyment. Almost all the letters include expressions of thanks for meat and fish, eggs, fruit, flowers and baby equipment sent from the parents in Liverpool to the young family in Cambridge. Perhaps that expressed Kitty's mother's concern that her daughter had married a relatively poor man, who could not provide the standard of living of the family in Liverpool.

Portrait of Kitty Holt by Percy Bigland 1889.

Portrait of Cecil Whetham by Percy Bigland 1897.

Cecil's contribution to the diary are typically focused on his research and on his colleagues at Trinity College and in the scientific community. His professional life and his role as a Fellow of Trinity are described in detail in his autobiography, *Cambridge and Elsewhere*, so this chapter focuses on Kitty and the home life of the family.

Marriage and children

The wedding day in Liverpool was not as happy an event as it might have been. Robert Holt, Kitty's father, wrote in the family diary:

> *All the arrangements were good. The only serious and regrettable drawback from a perfectly joyous and pleasant wedding was Kitty's strange obstinacy in refusing to allow Molly to appear as her bridesmaid – very rough on the girl and has created much feeling in the family – this curious attitude seems to arise out of some idea on her part that it might offend her Newnham friends, Misses Chamberlain and Elles – most absurd. However, rather than have serious 'ructions' we have yielded and Betty acts alone.*

The newly married couple spent their honeymoon at High Borrans, the Holt holiday house in the Lake District near Windermere, a house which is now an Outdoor Activity Centre owned by North Tyneside Council. Four days later Kitty wrote to her father:

> *Dear Dad There is really nothing to write about because we do absolutely nothing all day – take a constitutional before*

> *lunch, doze till tea and so on. The weather is treating us most kindly and the whole countryside is looking very beautiful.*

The couple set up home together at 5 St Peter's Terrace in Cambridge. Their portraits, by the distinguished painter Percy Bigland, show how good looking they both were at this time. The family diary provides a vivid picture of their life. It begins with an entry by Cecil about his scientific research:

> *At the time of our marriage I was in a joint investigation with E. H. Griffiths of Sydney Sussex College on the properties of very dilute solutions and was consequently working in his private laboratory at 12 Parkside. Kitty set to work at once to help me and since then all my work has been due as much to her as to myself.*

Kitty begins her part of the family diary with other concerns:

> *We started our housekeeping at St Peter's Terrace with a household of three – Annie Evans, who had been kitchen maid at Ullet Road, came with me as cook, Ellen Webb as house parlour maid and Horace Goddard as our boy of all work.*

From the start they were a sociable and energetic young couple and the diary and the letters are full of references to friends, social events and parties, as well as to shooting and hunting, and cycling trips around the neighbouring countryside. Kitty wrote:

> *About 150 people called on us when we first settled at*

> *Cambridge and we are now on visiting terms with some 200 households. We have had our full share of dinner parties and entertainments and I have always tried to ask friends to our house in a quiet way.*

During the early years of marriage, the young couple took the opportunity to travel before children arrived. In the 1898 Easter vacation they travelled around the south of France, while in the summer they spent three weeks in Brittany with Cecil's sister Mabel. They also went with Kitty's brother Lawrence to Belgium and then on to Paris. Here they met up with Prince Camille de Polignac and his daughter, members of a family with which Kitty's family had a friendship going back to the mid nineteenth century. The Polignac family became frequent visitors to Cambridge. However, the birth of their first child seems to have brought foreign travel to an end. It may be that Cecil did not really enjoy these trips. A family story claims that he replied to any queries on the topic by saying, 'Abroad? I've been there. I didn't like it'.

Kitty also began to engage in a variety of different voluntary work at this time. She mentions joining the committee of the Cambridge Association for the Care of Girls and being persuaded to take on the role of treasurer. Other committees in which she was involved included the Cambridge Training College and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, and she also made tea for meetings of the Cavendish Physical Society.

Their first child was expected in April 1900. In preparation for the birth Ellen was engaged as nurse and equipment arrived

from Liverpool. Kitty wrote to her mother on 8th April:

> *Ellen arrived safely and seems to be settling in comfortably. I have unpacked all the various cases except the box Ellen brought with her. The cot is very nice and the basket and stand. I am so glad it is all white.*

Kitty goes on to thank her mother for clothes for the baby and china for the house, before commenting that, '*Gertrude came on Friday – we don't do very much except knit and talk and sleep*'. 'Gertrude' was her closest friend from college days, who as 'Miss Elles' was bridesmaid at her wedding. She will appear again in this book.

Kitty and Cecil's first child, Margaret, was born on Saturday 21st April 1900. There are gaps in both the letters and the diary until August, when Kitty wrote to her mother:

> *The babe is perfectly splendid in health and spirits. She is out about six hours a day and still sleeps nearly eighteen and is quite brown and rosy. I am having my old racoon fur cape made up into a winter perambulator rug for her.*

Kitty's energetic and sociable life continued, presumably while the baby was left with Ellen. The letter reported:

> *This afternoon we are to go on a long ride with the Conybeares to see the churches of Guilden Morden and Ashwell on the borders of Cambridgeshire and Herts. We start at 1.45 and hope to be in for 7.30 supper and shall*

cover about 25 miles of road.

The next letter contains more news of baby Margaret:

The babe is exceedingly well and vivacious. Cecil is very amused and interested in her. We keep her from 7.30 to 8.30 am while nurse does the room and goes down to breakfast and he takes charge most efficiently while I have my bath.

By October the baby could roll over and was beginning to pull herself up, and there were concerns about diptheria and scarlet fever in the town, but Kitty and Cecil were very busy entertaining. On 18th October Kitty wrote to her mother:

We had a very successful evening party last Saturday – about 70 people came and talked hard the whole time. We have sent out cards for the four next Saturdays 9-11. I don't suppose as many will come as the first evening, but everyone is allowed to choose and there is no RSVP. Anything may happen. About 500 are invited and we believe the house could hold 150 at a pinch. We shall just have tea, coffee, cakes and bread and butter, fruit and claret cup. Many people have told me that they are coming and seem to like the idea but I feel it is rather bold of us to venture.

Kitty and Cecil also continued with their scientific research. In November 1900 she wrote:

We have at last got a room to research in. Prof Ewing has

> *kindly given us a beautiful attic in the new wing of his Engineering Lab, with hot water pipes, gas, electric light, water and a sink and will put us on leads to his electric current. We shifted all the apparatus there this afternoon in a hand cart and are ordering all things for our next piece of work. By next week we ought to have all our spare time engaged there.*

Their scientific research is described in Cecil's autobiography, *Cambridge and Elsewhere, so* it is not necessary to go into details here. However, his work on electrolytic conductivity was recognised in May 1901 when he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society.

There cannot have been much time for Kitty to continue with her research and that summer the family went on holiday to Kingston Manor, Cecil's family home in Yeovil. In her letter to her mother, Kitty describes the baby Margaret, now nicknamed 'Billy':

> *Billy is a terror for climbing. If she is left alone for a moment she swarms up something. The only safe plan is to put all the chairs on their sides on the floor. She turns head over heels in her bed and she is as slippery as an eel to catch hold of. Some neighbours have asked us to dinner on Thursday and there is a horse show in Sherborne and that is about all that is happening here.*

Home again in Cambridge, and with another baby expected soon, plans began for the building of a new house for the growing family in Chaucer Road.

Upwater Lodge

Cecil became a Fellow of Trinity College in 1891. Until a few years earlier Fellows of Cambridge colleges had not been allowed to marry. However, in 1882 a Statute lifted the ban on marriage and stimulated a boom in the building of family houses in the city. The Pemberton family, who owned land in south Cambridge, made plots available for building along Chaucer Road and Latham Road. As a friend and shooting companion of the Pembertons, Cecil was able to acquire two leasehold plots at the end of Chaucer Road, with gardens running down to the water meadows along the River Cam.

Some quotations from Kitty's letter to her mother in November 1901 give a sense of progress:

> *The building plans are at present at the builders, with whom we have another interview on Tuesday, when we hope to get the revised plans. In which case I will send them on to you.* (Kitty then draws a sketch of the plots in Chaucer Road and goes on) *The plots 1 and 2 are what we are after. The Pollocks would take 3. …The plot marked 1 contains about 11/2 acres, 2 exactly 1 acre. We should build on 2 to get further from the river, using the top of 1 as a kitchen garden and making a river walk along its west edge. Plot 1 is the best because it has such a beautiful open view but it is certainly too near the river valley to place a house on it in this land of fen and fog. We hope to get an estimate for the house of about £2200 and should allow another £200 for finishing off and gardens.*

Kitty went on to explain that the bank would lend the money at 4 per cent, adding that the house could always be sold if the family left Cambridge. She seemed very confident in her knowledge of the family's financial arrangements. This may reflect the fact that the building of Upwater Lodge was being financed by the £15,000 dowry which Kitty was given by her father on her marriage, described as her 'marriage portion'.

Kitty and Cecil's second child, Catherine, was born on Thursday 26 December 1901. In January 1902 Kitty wrote to her mother:

> *I have been up to our 'estate' this morning to see the planting. It all looks very nice and our row of horse chestnut and Norway maple alternately very imposing. The next lot of trees for the kitchen garden will come in ten days' time and I will supervise the planting of them myself.*

The building of Upwater Lodge began later that spring and the family moved to their new home in December 1902. It must have been a busy year for the young mother with the two little girls shown in the photograph.

Upwater Lodge was from the start, and remains to this day, a large and comfortable family house with a beautiful garden. It was built with plenty of space for entertaining, for the growing family and for the servants who looked after them. There was also a library and a scientific laboratory, of which Cecil wrote:

> *When we built our house, Upwater Lodge, we designed one*

room as a laboratory. In it we have carried out experiments on radio-activity and extended our work on solutions. Both classes of investigation are still going forward.

Rooms in the attics housed the servants (and are now occupied by university students). Not long after they moved in, Kitty wrote about the servants:

When our eldest daughter was about three months old Nurse Smith came to us. After the birth of our second daughter we engaged Lily Brooks, then a girl of 15, as nursemaid. So after 8 years of married life we find ourselves with one servant, Annie, of 8 years' standing, one Nurse, with 6 years, one, Lily, with 4 years and two, Eliza and George, with three and two years respectively. I should like to place on record my gratitude for the faithful and willing service I have always received from all members of our household. I must not forget to mention our good old gardener, Patman.

In the letters and diaries of this time the two daughters, Margaret and Catherine, are now known respectively as 'Billy' and 'Jimmy' or 'Jim'. On 6th February 1903 Kitty's father, Robert Holt, sent her an amethyst and topaz necklace, with matching earrings, for her 32nd birthday. He wrote:

You are getting quite an aged woman and the light and festive ornaments suited to your juvenile days will have to be stored up for 'Billy' and 'Jimmy' when they make their appearance in this gay and festive world. So in

Kitty with Margaret standing and Catherine on her lap in 1902.

commemoration of this your 32nd birthday I am sending you a truly lovely and appropriate ornament. …You may not care for the earrings but as time goes on they may be made into pendants for your two dear little girls and given to them in remembrance of their Grandfather.

The two dear little girls were already making their mark. In a letter in July 1903 Kitty said:

> *I am doing head nurse and enjoying it very much. The children are wonderfully good, except for their evil habit of early waking (6 am sharp). Jim is quite delightful. It is a treat to see her and Billy shelling peas together. Billy opens the pods and Jim extracts the peas and puts them in the basin. They assist me in digging and washing potatoes and are quite intelligent in pulling up the suitable carrots.*

Throughout these years Cecil was busy with teaching, researching, examining and carrying out all the duties of a college tutor. He was often very tired. In February 1904 Kitty wrote:

> *Two or three days last week he left the house before 8.30 and was not back till 8 o'clock dinner. After dinner he is usually too tired to work so I have been reading Jane Austen to him. We have finished Mansfield Park, Emma and Sense and Sensibility and are just beginning Pride and Prejudice.*

By 1904 Kitty was pregnant again. Perhaps in preparation for the birth she began to extend the work which the children, now aged four and three, did around the house. In May 1904 she wrote to her mother:

> *The babes and I clear the breakfast table, with a view to assisting Annie. You would be amused to see them. They can do the whole thing now, putting everything in its right place except for folding the tablecloth, where I give*

a hand. They know what goes to the kitchen, what into the pantry and what into the dining cupboards and enjoy it all immensely

Kitty and Cecil's third daughter, Diana, was born on Sunday 5th June 1904. As was the custom at that time, Kitty stayed in bed for two weeks after the birth, but on 17th June she wrote to her mother:

I got up yesterday for a couple of hours and find myself none the worse for it today. So I hope it will not be long before I am about again. The baby gets on splendidly - she is visibly fatter each day. … Cecil picked our first dish of strawberries yesterday – very fine ones to look at, which is as far as I got with them. We hope to get some more today as the children have two little friends coming to play in the hay while their mother entertains me. The swish of the scythe and the smell of the new mown grass have been very pleasant incidents in my convalescence. The man has begun work at 4 o'clock each morning and has gone on till after eight in the evening.

By a year later Kitty had begun to take on responsibility for the education of her children. In October 1905 she reported to her mother:

The children are all well. Billy and Jim are quite industrious at their morning lessons with me. They do forty minutes lessons each morning. Billy reads easily, writes fairly, tries a little French, History and Arithmetic and sews well. Jim writes a little, sews, reads short words. Diana insists on

> *having a pencil and paper and sitting up with them at the table trying to write.*

Picturing this scene explains why it was that my mother and my aunts all wrote in the same clear, graceful style: they had all been taught to write by the same person, their mother and my grandmother.

That autumn the social round continued unabated. One dinner party was organised for the visit of Aunt Maggie and Uncle Henry (Hobhouse). It was attended by 12 guests, which as Kitty said, '*Is quite the limit of our seating capacity and also of our chairs and table silver*'. As well as her Hobhouse relations, the guests included Horace Darwin, son of Charles Darwin and Fellow of Trinity College, Nora Sidgwick, the principal of Newnham College, Aldis Wright, the Vice Master of Trinity College, Alfred Whitehead, the philosopher, and his wife, and various other guests. Kitty listed the menu in her next letter to her mother:

> *Our dinner was – clear soup – turbot and lobster sauce – cutlets and beans – partridges from Madingley – chestnut cream and caramel pudding – anchovies on toast.*

Other social events in the autumn of 1905 included several shooting trips for Cecil in the country near Cambridge; a round of visits to different branches of Kitty's extended family, including time spent at Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire, the family home of the Meinertzhagen cousins, and Hadspen House in Somerset, family home of the Hobhouse cousins; dinner for a group of undergraduates, including the young Charles Booth;

visits by Arthur Hobhouse and by the Clays; a farewell gathering for the Bishop of Ely; the reading of a paper by Cecil and Kitty at the Royal Society; and the annual meeting of the Association for the Care of Girls, the last at which Kitty would be Treasurer.

Diana was now nearly two years old. On 13th April 1906, Kitty wrote to her mother:

> *Yesterday the children came out with me after tea, picked daisies and went to see the six black puppies at the keepers. It was the first time Diana had run about outside and picked daisies for herself; she was greatly delighted and enjoyed herself immensely. She shrieked with rage when she saw nurse coming across the garden to fetch her in and tried to hide under a bush.*

As few days later Kitty recorded in the family diary:

> *Saturday, being Billy's sixth birthday, I took all the children, even Diana, out in the pony cart. We went to a field just beyond Barton, picked cowslips and ate chocolate and biscuits under a hedge out of the wind. We all had tea at Brookside* (where Cecil's mother and sister Mabel lived).

The next addition to the family was Lawrence, who arrived in 1907 and was a long-awaited boy. Cecil recorded in the family diary:

> *On July 10th about 10 o'clock in the morning our fourth child and first son was born. He is a fine, fat baby with*

> *great powers of sleep. The three girls have gone with Mother and Mabel to Sheringham. Mother has taken a cottage belonging to my old pupil Dunbar-Kilburn for three weeks.*

On 4th September 1907 Kitty added to the family diary:

> *The four children, two nurses and myself go tomorrow to Ullet Road* (her parents' house in Liverpool) *on a three weeks' visit to my father. The baby has got on excellently well and was put in short clothes on Sunday. We have called him Reginald Lawrence Dampier – a rather long name for such an atom of humanity.*

There was no mention of the fact that little Lawrence had Down's Syndrome, but perhaps that had not yet been diagnosed? If Lawrence is hardly mentioned in the pages which follow it is because he rarely appears in the diaries, letters and other documents which have come down to us.

Kitty's correspondence with her mother came to an end in 1906 when Lallie died at the family home in Ullet Road in Liverpool at the age of 61. The last few years of her life were rather sad, because of her estrangement from her husband, her dependence on laudanum and her distress at various family disputes, all of which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7. Lallie's three daughters, Kitty, Betty and Molly, were with her when she died. Kitty wrote in the family diary, '*I can honestly say that she was the kindest woman I have ever known, and one of the most able*'.

Two more children were added to the family in Cambridge over the following years. The birth of Elizabeth in 1909 and of Edith in 1911 meant that Kitty and Cecil finally had six children. (See the Whetham family tree in Appendix 5). This also led to the addition of a governess to the team which was helping them to bring up their family. Christine Elliott had been the head girl at the Perse Girls' School. She was first employed in 1908 and became a key member of the household, both in terms of education and in terms of the stable environment she provided for the children as they grew. Upwater Lodge was extended by the addition of a school room, with storage spaces below it for bicycles, tools and garden equipment.

After this time the family diary often notes the division of the children into two groups, the 'School room party'(presumably Margaret, Catherine and Diana with their governess) and the 'Nursery party' (presumably Lawrence, Elizabeth and Edith with nursery maids). For example, in 1913 an entry read:

> *The May term was uneventful. The schoolroom party devoted itself largely to geology and geological excursions, the result of attending Prof Hughes lectures during the past nine months. …. The nursery party went off to Hunstanton for five weeks sea air on May 19th.*

This chapter has given us a view into the life of a privileged academic family in Edwardian Cambridge. The evidence from diaries and letters suggests that Kitty enjoyed the company of her husband, had a full social life and loved her children, while depending on nannies and a governess to help care for them. She

seems to have managed her household well and to have gained the respect and loyalty of her servants. Apart from a tendency to suffer from headaches and neuralgia, she was usually well and she loved to go on long cycle rides with her husband. All in all, there is no evidence of the mental health problems which were to come.

Chapter Six

Writing, Researching and Public Life

The previous chapter focused on family life up till 1907, while recognising that at the same time Cecil was pursuing his academic career, doing research, writing books and giving lectures, often in association with Kitty. This chapter focuses on the couple's academic work, on the books they published and on their engagement with the issues of the day.

Astonishingly, between 1907 and 1917 they produced eight books, as can be seen from the bibliography at the end of this book. In addition, they were responsible for publishing many articles, as well as for presenting papers at academic conferences and giving talks at political events. They were active in current debates and shared platforms with some of the most distinguished people of the day. At the same time Kitty in particular was engaged in charitable and voluntary work.

During these years their family grew from four to six children, so family life must have been ever present, even though servants helped to free the couple from many everyday responsibilities at home. In addition, they bought and renovated a neglected

Elizabethan manor in Devon, turning it into a much-loved family home, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

It is striking that so many of their publications were joint efforts, with both Cecil and Kitty being named as authors. Unlike many academic couples of the mid twentieth century, where the man's professional career was supported by the unpaid work of his wife, who was mentioned only in the initial acknowledgments, this seems to have been a much more equal affair, although underpinned by the work of many less-than-equal servants.

It appears that serious thought was given to the ordering of the names of the authors of each book, with sometimes Kitty and sometimes Cecil coming first, while in their history of Ottery St Mary, their daughter Margaret is listed among the authors, though she was only 13 years old at the time. Despite that, the title pages of the books where Cecil was first author were worded in a rather less than equal way. They refer to the authors as, 'William Cecil Dampier Whetham, MA, FRS, Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Cambridge and Catherine Durning Whetham, his wife'.

In this chapter there is space only to outline the main topics on which they wrote and researched.

Scientific research

Kitty and Cecil did much of their courting in the science laboratories at Cambridge. Kitty remembered looking with 'Mr Whetham' at the Practical Physics Tripos questions, working together on induction coils and 'wasting time' in the Cavendish

labs. After they were married Kitty went on being involved in the experimental lab work and, as chapter 5 showed, when they planned their home it included a laboratory.

However, the first books and articles to be produced were authored by Cecil alone. He gives a clear account of his scientific work in his autobiography, *Cambridge and Elsewhere.* His research began with an interest in moving liquids and developed into an exploration of the function of the solvent when an electric current is passed through a solution. He went on to investigate the electrolytic conductivity of different solutions. The results were published in 1895 in his first book, *Solution and Electrolysis.* Unlike most academic books this one had a poetic dedication, which reveals the author as both witty and self-deprecating:

> *Although this book you may not read*
> *I send herewith a copy;*
> *It is a heavy, tiresome screed*
> *And most distinctly sloppy;*
> *So very dull you'll hardly care*
> *With house-room to provide it,*
> *For neither is there cover fair*
> *Nor sparkling wit inside it.*
> *Still on your bookshelves let it lie*
> *Mid other bindings brighter,*
> *And it may, when it meets your eye,*
> *Remind you of the writer.*

He himself was critical of this first book but he went on working in the same field, publishing many articles, and

seven years later produced a much larger volume, *The Theory of Solution*. This remained the standard book on the subject for some years. Cecil's work on electrolytic conductivity was recognised when in 1901 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. In later years he served for a time as Vice President of the Royal Society.

The late nineteenth century was an exciting time to be working in physics. The revolutionary discoveries which began in 1895 changed the general outlook of physical science and its philosophic consequences. As Cecil commented in his autobiography, it became clear that, '*The universe is a much more huge and complex structure than we then thought, and much less easily understood*'. A popular interest in science developed and the newspapers of the day carried what Cecil called, '*Some surprisingly inaccurate accounts of current investigations*'. His response was to write a book which would introduce readers to new discoveries in the field. *The Recent Development of Physical Science* became one of his most successful publications, with the first edition selling out in a week and five editions coming out over the following twenty years.

The book had chapters on the liquefaction of gases, fusion and solidification, the problems of solution, the conduction of electricity through gases, radioactivity, atoms and astrophysics. It was fortunate that the book appeared shortly before the 1904 meeting in Cambridge of the British Association, and that the President of the Association, Arthur Balfour, devoted his address to the physical and philosophical results of the new knowledge and said some appreciative words about Cecil's book.

Their involvement with the international scientific community is underlined by a dramatic story in a letter from Kitty to her mother on 17th May 1904. She wrote:

> *I believe Dewar has had a terrible catastrophe in his lab. He borrowed half of the Curies' supply of radium, about a quarter of the available supply in the world and consequently quite priceless. He was treating it with liquid hydrogen or something of that sort and left his experiment on overnight. Something broke and before Dewar arrived on the scene the charwoman had swept up and carted off the debris. Dewar and his assistants have spent days grubbing in the dustbin, to no appreciable purpose. Half a gramme of brown powder is not easily collected. We have 5 milligrammes of the precious stuff. At least it does not belong to us but to Trinity College which lends it to us – a very convenient arrangement. It cost £7.10 a month ago and is now worth over £10. Its effects are marvellous.*

She did not say in the letter what those effects were. However, the story makes it clear that Kitty continued to be engaged with scientific research and was involved in some of the most exciting scientific advances of the day.

Heredity and society

Seen through the lens of the twenty first century, the next set of books looks distinctly problematic, if not shocking. Cecil and Kitty produced four books and many articles on the topic of heredity and society, and were very much part of the contemporary movement for eugenics. It is important to remember that this

was a mainstream concern among many intellectuals at the time. The term, 'eugenics' was coined in 1883 by the English scientist, Francis Galton, and was derived from the Greek term 'eugenes', meaning 'well born or of good stock'. Galton himself had been very influenced by the work of his cousin, Charles Darwin, and of Gregor Mendel. The debate was given greater standing in 1907 by the setting up of the Galton Eugenics Laboratory at University College London. On his death Galton left money to set up a chair in National Eugenics at UCL.

Cecil was interested in the work of both Galton and Mendel, and he had also spent some time researching his own family history. As he says in his autobiography, this led him to an interest in heredity and to the ways in which family traits descend from generation to generation. It is clear from the family diary that Kitty shared his interest. Debates about eugenics had been going on since the late 19th century. In 1896 a pressure group entitled the National Association for the Care and Control of the Feeble Minded was set up in Britain to bring about the lifetime segregation of disabled people. A Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb concluded in 1889 that intermarriage between these groups was to be strongly discouraged.

Kitty and Cecil's ideas are set out in a series of publications, but here we focus on their first book, *The Family and the Nation*, published in 1909. This was a summary of existing knowledge and current thinking but also included the results of their own investigations into the differential birth rates of various groups of the population.

The book begins by pointing out the success of the selective breeding of domestic plants and animals. It is suggested that by this means the quality of stocks of cattle and horses, fruit and flowers has been greatly enhanced. The argument is then made that the same principles could apply to human beings. Those concerned about the future of the nation must have regard to whether a particular policy will favour the growth of those elements of the population which are '*Known to be of national worth*' or encourage the reproduction of those who are '*Detrimental to the community*'.

The book continues with an analysis of what constitutes 'national worth' in this context. It is suggested that physical vigour and mental ability are important, but that also, '*Those races of men endowed with fellow-feeling and a spirit of self sacrifice alone are capable of forming a strong and homogenous people*'. These categories of people are contrasted with the groups identified by the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble Minded, which was set up by Winston Churchill in 1904. This divided the population with which it was concerned into eight categories. They range from '*persons of unsound mind*' and '*idiots who are incapable of shielding themselves from common dangers*', to the feeble minded, moral imbeciles and hopeless inebriates.

The original investigations reported in *The Family and the Nation* are based on analyses of birth rates among different segments of the population. It is shown that the birth rate had fallen among the '*more successful part of the nation*', which is taken to include the aristocracy, the official, professional and commercial classes, as well as the thrifty and provident skilled artisans. By contrast:

> *There is little or no fall as yet in the ranks of the casual labourer and of the feeble-minded men and women still at large among us. Thus the stocks which are least successful or definitely unsound are increasing fastest (page 209).*

The conclusion discusses some possible actions which might be taken in response to the situation. There is criticism of the Poor Law for the way in which it has failed to abolish the prevalence of poverty, so that, in spite of all efforts:

> *The number of those that are parasitic on the rest of the community shows signs of growth. An increasing share of each competent man's labour goes to support – even to create – those who cannot support themselves* (page 210).

What did Kitty's aunt, Beatrice Webb, make of all this? In 1909 she had just led the team which produced the Minority Report for the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and she must have been aware of the views of her niece. The Minority Report called for a structural understanding of the causes of poverty and argued for a larger role for the state in preventing and ameliorating hardship. Many of its ideas – labour exchanges, a national health service, a minimum wage – became key parts of Labour Party policy. In this it can be said to have laid the foundations of the modern welfare state.

There is no mention of Beatrice Webb's Minority Report on the Poor Law in *The Family and the Nation*. However, there is approval for the Majority Report and for its proposals for the care and control of the 'feeble minded'. The Majority Report

suggested that the Poor Law authorities should be given the power to detain the feeble-minded mothers of illegitimate children who come under their care. Kitty and Cecil quote with approval the proposal:

> *For depraved women we recommend that the Local Authorities should have the power to arrange for their detention in suitable institutions. Should these recommendations be carried out, we confidently anticipate a great diminution in the numbers of the latter class and also in the numbers of illegitimate and degenerate children, who are born only for an early death, or to become a lasting burden upon the Community.*

This might be the place to remember Lawrence, the little boy with Downs Syndrome, born to Kitty just two years earlier. One wonders how his parents reconciled the views expressed in *The Family and the Nation* with the daily experience of living with their own disabled child.

Public debate about these issues reached its peak in the run-up to the 1910 general election. In 1912 the first International Eugenics Congress was held at the University of London. It was organised by the British Eugenics Education Society and dedicated to Galton who had died the year before. Around 400 delegates attended including illustrious figures such as Winston Churchill (who was then First Lord of the Admiralty), Lord Balfour, the previous prime minister, and a number of European ambassadors.

Charles Darwin's son, Leonard Darwin, presided at the

conference. In the run up to the First World War, he lobbied the British government to establish flying squads of scientists, with the power of arrest, who would travel around the country identifying the 'unfit'. Those classified as such would be segregated in special colonies or sterilised. This echoes ideas in *the Family and the Nation* about the segregation of certain groups of people to discourage them from producing children.

Both Cecil and Kitty were very much involved in debates about eugenics from around 1908 onwards, both locally and nationally. Kitty was involved with a committee for studying the question of the Feeble Minded in Cambridge, where she was, '*Assisting with an enquiry into the number and condition of the feeble minded*'. When Kitty visited her family in Liverpool in 1910 she was invited to give a lecture on 'Heredity and the Family'. She also published a brief piece in the Eugenics Review about her visits to three 'Baby Welcome' events, at which she noted the much better physical condition of the children from better off families compared with those from poorer homes. She concluded that,'*The community held it in their hands to make the celebration of permanent eugenic advantage or not. And the mothers were encouraged in their efforts to bring up their children to be as healthy as circumstances permit*'.

Together with Cecil, Kitty attended the 1912 International Eugenics Congress, where they presented a joint paper on, '*The Influence of Race on History*'. In this they argued that Britain has various racial elements. The Mediterranean race, spreading up the shores of the Atlantic, predominates among the people of the south-west, while the northern element, coming from the shores of the Baltic and North Sea, is strongest in the east and north.

There is no mention in their publications on heredity of another great issue of the day, the women's suffrage movement. Instead there is much discussion of the need to promote more births among the 'successful classes' and of the dangers of female employment in discouraging women from devoting themselves to motherhood. Kitty set out her views on motherhood in her own book, *The Upbringing of Daughters*, published in 1917.

The Upbringing of Daughters

Kitty prefaced her book with a dedication: *To Cecil and Margaret, Catherine, Diana, Lawrence, Elizabeth, Edith, who have taught me so much, this book is inscribed by their obliged and affectionate wife and mother.* She goes on to thank, '*My friend, Miss Christine Elliott*', for her work in preparing the book for publication. It is significant that in 1917 Lawrence, aged 10, is still very much part of the family and that the children's governess is described as a friend.

The book has chapters on the life of the family, household duties, health, dress, outdoor life and games, education and instruction, the arts, holidays and entertainments, books, money matters, professions for daughters and religion. Interestingly there is no chapter about science education, despite the importance of science in Kitty's own life. There is only space here to dwell on a few sections, and to do so in a way which may throw some light on Kitty's views on these topics.

A strong theme running though the book is a preference for home schooling and for seeing the home as a place where many useful lessons can be taught. In particular children can learn

about the work which must be done to keep the home running. It is argued that all those who share in the advantages of living in a home should make some contribution to the work done there. Since children cannot earn money they should give in other ways:

> *The laying of the table for meals, the washing up of crockery, the dusting of rooms, the making of beds, little errands of fetching and carrying, the occasional superintendence of younger children, the picking of fruit and the preparing of vegetables, the putting away and giving out of linen and household stores are some of the forms of service which from an early age appeal to nearly all children.*

As we have seen, these were just the sorts of tasks which Kitty encouraged her own children to undertake.

By contrast, the school is presented as a place where children are expected to follow a fixed curriculum, and where subjects are presented at a time dictated by the teachers rather than at the time when a particular child is ready to explore a particular topic. It is argued that at school children have too many '*attendants and instructors*' and too little leisure and responsibility.

Another, linked theme of the book is about the need for children to learn from practice and experience rather than from theory. It is argued that it is better to learn an art or a craft from someone who practices it and makes a livelihood from it rather than from someone who only teaches it. Geography is

to be taught out of doors and should focus on the local area, its towns and villages, manufactures and populations. It is suggested that children should:

> *Trace on foot a neighbouring stream back to its source and map out from the hilltop the contour lines of a familiar countryside before they turn their attention to Central Africa and the tablelands of Tibet.*

Similarly, the teaching of history should begin with the history of the local area and of the street or village in which the child lives.

An interesting chapter is concerned with money and with the importance of openness in discussions about family finances. Kitty argues that children need to be taught the right use of money and given an insight into the problems of money management. She suggests that it is important to:

> *Have a perfectly open balance sheet for family purposes, showing all sources of income, as well as the obligations and liabilities. … Such a course of action encourages the sense of mutual responsibility (and gives the) growing mind an insight into the intricate problems involved in the possession and distribution of wealth. There are few things more lamentable than the utter ignorance of some of our young people on matters connected with the getting and spending of money.*

The chapter about money includes some specific calculations

about family budgets. Taking the example of a household consisting of two parents, four children and three servants, it is suggested that the annual expenditure of the household ought to amount to £725 per year (£42,700 in today's terms). The average household income in the UK in 1912 was £160 per year (£9400 today), while for farm workers the comparable figure was £100 per year (£6000). This comparison underlines the point that *The Upbringing of Daughters* was essentially about quite affluent families, though this point is never made explicit. However, the ideal of having a mother with time to teach the children and a well-equipped house with a vegetable garden, all imply that Kitty was taking her own family as her model.

An interesting section is concerned with the importance of women having money of their own. This may take the form of earning a living by having her own career. However, even when a daughter remains at home and helps with the work of the household, it is argued that this should be recognised, either by passing capital to her, or by giving her a regular share of the family income.

The chapter ends with some comments about disputes over family finances:

> *There are many households in which money has been responsible for endless-ill feeling and others again where money matters have never disturbed the harmony of relationships. Only when wealth and possessions of all sorts are used in an open trust, do we get the maximum of benefit and the minimum of drawback from their accumulation.*

This remark may reflect the conflicts over money which were in the process of tearing the family apart, as will be described in chapter 8.

Engagement in public life

Both Kitty and Cecil came from families where it was normal to be engaged in public life, both at local and national levels. Kitty's father was Lord Mayor of Liverpool from 1892-93 and was a leading figure in the Unitarian philanthropic community in the city. Most of her family were Liberals and her brother, Richard, became a Liberal MP in the 1907 Parliament. This was the government which went on to introduce old age pensions, minimum wages in the sweated trades, and the re-distributive 1909 'People's budget', but which failed year after year to give women the vote.

Cecil had served as page to his grandfather when he was Lord Mayor of London from 1878-89, during which time he met Disraeli, who was, he said, '*Held in veneration by my Tory family*'. As Chapter 3 showed, when Kitty was at Cambridge she was very much involved with college politics, supporting the Liberal Party, and she had a circle of friends which included the daughters of William Gladstone, Millicent Fawcett and Joseph Chamberlain.

It may have been this background which encouraged both Cecil and Kitty, not only to write books about the topics which interested them, but also to present their ideas at academic meetings and in public debates, particularly those to do with heredity and society. Their motive for action seemed to grow out of a concern to improve the world, even though some of the

ways in which they sought to do this seem undesirable today.

Altogether it seems that Cecil and Kitty were respected and influential during this period of their lives, publishing energetically and meeting up with some of the most important scientists, social scientists and eugenicists of the day and being very much involved in contemporary debates. However, their engagement with these debates, as least as far as Kitty was concerned, was cut short by their increasing commitment to Cadhay House in Devon, by the outbreak of the First World War and by the family problems which will be described in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven
Family Challenges and Changes

To understand the challenges which faced Kitty and Cecil over the next few years it is necessary to go back to Kitty's family of origin in Liverpool.

Holt family disputes

In September 1899 Beatrice and Sidney Webb spent five weeks in Manchester in a rented house with their two maids and their secretary. They were working on a study of trade unions, to be published as *The History of Trade Unionism*. They went on to spend a week with Beatrice's sister, Lallie, her husband Robert Holt and their children in Liverpool. The blunt comments in her diary may set the scene for the events which were to follow:

> *Lallie is a dear old thing, as ugly, voluble and warm-hearted as a woman could be, exuberant in her vitality and desire to make everyone happy, somewhat disillusioned with domestic life – at least with the closest relationships of home, the relationship of wife and mother. Our brother-in-law is not improving with age: his small-mindedness and secretiveness has degenerated into a sort of restless*

kind of vanity, an undignified love of social esteem. It is pathetic to see his little mind always reverting to the glory of having refused a baronetcy. Oddly it was his position as mayor (of Liverpool) *that fostered his sense of self-importance.*

Dick, the eldest son, under the influence of a charming American wife, developed into a shrewd, pleasant and public-spirited man … Bob has made a conventional marriage with the daughter of a well-connected Liverpool man. ……Kitty is married to a Cambridge don. Betty and Molly do nothing all day but amuse themselves. Phil is conceited and airified, a selfish boy … Ted is a delicate refined lad, finds Liverpool cotton-broking uncongenial and is off to New Zealand. Lawrence, the youngest and most promising, is still at Winchester. The family is commonplace in outlook and mediocre in ability.

Four years later their family life had deteriorated. On 29 April 1903 Beatrice Webb commented in her diary:

Meanwhile our eldest sister (Lallie) has been going through a tragedy of discord. For some time the family life has been a constant wrangle between the two unmarried daughters and the two unmarried sons, the three married pairs and the father – now one combination, now another.

A melancholy reflection on their upbringing. Here again there is a note of utter selfishness. Lallie has slaved to make her home one of perfect comfort – every arrangement has

> *been exactly fitted to produce the maximum satisfaction to the 'average sensual man'. …the children have been flattered and allowed to behave badly to others and to lead a life of pleasure. Now they have turned against her and against each other.*

Beatrice Webb goes on to comment that the situation is the consequence of giving children a luxurious upbringing without any sense of social responsibility. She sees it as a 'moral handicap' to be born into a such a family and she advocates the redistribution of wealth, or at least the development of a tradition of social service attached to the ownership of property.

These family disputes are reflected in Kitty's letters to her mother. On 30th August 1900 she wrote:

> *I am very sorry to hear there has been unpleasantness at home. We shall be pleased to have Betty here for a visit. She is a person who needs regular and constant occupation. I hope something can be found for her. Work and responsibility are what she needs. I expect she would be well away from home for a bit now.*

Kitty's next letter to her mother reports on Betty's visit to Cambridge:

> *I am very sorry you are having such a difficult time. I had hoped Betty would be soothed down by her visit here but I fear this is not the case. She is really exceedingly good with babies and took charge of mine several mornings quite by*

> *herself. I don't think anything could be better for her than a couple of years training in a hospital.*

Despite Aunt Beatrice Webb's comments about the idle lives of Betty and Molly, both were in fact making efforts to leave home and to develop careers. Betty was accepted by a hospital to be trained as a nurse but left after three months, finding the work too hard. Molly was interested in farming and in one letter Kitty suggests that she might like to go to one of the new Agricultural Colleges for Women.

The incident with Lawrence's dog

The problems within the family came to a head in a quarrel which is described by Barbara Caine in her book, *Destined to be Wives*. She was told about the incident by George Holt, Lawrence's son, and involved Lawrence, then aged 20 and the youngest in his family and his two older sisters, Betty and Molly. The quarrel took place in the summer of 1902 and began when Lawrence whistled to call his dog. The dog did not respond, but when his sister Betty whistled, in competition with her brother, it ran to her. Lawrence decided to punish this act of disobedience by giving the dog a savage whipping. Molly then intervened to protect the dog. At this point Lawrence turned his full fury on his sister, beating her so badly that she was unable to leave her bed for three weeks and could not use her arm for many months.

This event brought to an end any kind of family unity. Lallie was appalled by Lawrence's behaviour, but Robert sided with his son, as did the other sons, Phil and Ted. This was the

start of a permanent rift between Kitty's parents. Richard commented in his diary, '*Serious trouble at 54 Ullet Road – row between Laurence and Molly. I have acted as peacemaker, but it is all very sad*'.

An agreement was reached within the family that Betty and Molly, aged 26 and 22, would leave Liverpool, settling not less than 25 miles away, and that they would, '*Refrain from doing anything likely to cause annoyance*' to their father. In return Robert offered to pay them each £200 per annum to maintain an independent home. Betty and Molly eventually settled near Presteigne in Herefordshire, where they lived together and built a beautiful Arts and Crafts house, now called Bryans Ground. They continued to have good relationships with Kitty and her family and will reappear in later chapters.

This incident of Lawrence's dog casts a harsh light on the gender dynamics of the family. It is striking that in this family crisis the violent son who was the cause of the problem was allowed to stay comfortably at home, while the daughters who were the victims of his violence were forced to leave home. One reason for this is that Lawrence was to go into the family business and must not be upset. In the family diary Robert wrote that he was, '*Very much afraid that Lawrence would do something desperate if home is made too wretched for him*'. The whole episode underlines the extent to which the women within the family were ultimately dependent on the male head. Lallie had no legal power to refuse her son access to the family home nor to insist that her daughters should continue to be allowed to live there. This catastrophic family dispute

exemplifies the powerless situation of women at the time.

This incident exacerbated existing problems in the relationship between Robert and Lallie Holt. In her diary Beatrice Webb describes Lallie's sad last few years. Her husband came to dislike her and eventually hardly spoke to her at all. Beatrice Webb commented on 29th May 1906:

> *To her warm expansive nature, passionately attached to husband and children, this cold methodic boycott was just torture. Naturally enough she takes to drugs – cocaine to make some hours less gloomy. As her physical habits deteriorate his distaste for her company increases. And yet he wishes to retain his right to her constant attendance on him.*

As we saw in chapter 6, only Kitty, Betty and Molly were with her when she died later in 1906. Robert Holt died two years later, in 1908, and this brought to an end the family base in Liverpool which Kitty had taken for granted.

Trip in a governess cart to the West Country

The disputes between Kitty's brothers and sisters, and the death of both her parents, meant that Kitty and Cecil could no longer go on holiday to Liverpool or the Lake District. For two years Cecil's mother rented a holiday house for the family on the Norfolk coast. The children enjoyed the sandy beaches, but the parents were dismayed by the chilly weather, by the noisy singing of the local Mission and by the attempts of members of the local Women's Suffrage Party to convert them to their cause.

Kitty and Cecil decided that before next summer they would make a change in the life of their family and find a house in the West Country for their holidays. The story of the search for the family's new home is told in *Back to the Land,* published in 1910. In it they describe how:

> *Our scheme now took definite shape. We would find a small but ancient manor house, fallen on evil days and sunk to the uses of a farm. We would buy land and house and restore one wing or the whole for our own use. There we would spend peaceful vacations, secure from suffragettes and children's missions, and shoot our own partridge for dinner in our own fields of roots or stubble.*

The money for the project came from inheritance of £20,000 which Kitty was left by her father. The book begins with a chapter about the evils of financial irresponsibility, whether this takes the form of owning stocks and shares and not caring how the money is invested or running a business which exploits its employees. It is argued that a more responsible use of capital would be to use it to buy a farm which would provide employment and good homes and a chance of reasonably happy and prosperous lives for the workers.

Having made this decision, the quest began. Estate agents were contacted and asked to send details of properties in Dorset, Somerset and east Devon. Soon particulars of manor houses, cottages, bijou residences and antique ruins began to arrive at Upwater Lodge. It became clear that many were situated far from railway stations and Cecil and Kitty did not yet own a car.

And so the plan for the trip emerged.

> *Wanting a holiday, and owning a governess cart and a fourteen-hand pony, we decided on a short driving tour. Even if the houses failed us, there was plenty of interest to be seen on the way, much beautiful country to be traversed, friends to be visited, and all the roads of Western England lying open before us.*
>
> *It took us several days driving to get into Dorset, during which time we learned to avoid high roads, to dread the pretentious hotel of the smaller towns, to trust to the wayside inn, and to realise that, with care and good treatment, our pony would take us five and twenty miles a day.*

Two aspects of this plan are striking. The first is that this must have been one of the last historical periods when travelling across southern England by pony and trap was something which could be regarded as not only possible but also enjoyable. The second striking point is that the three-week-long trip was being made by the parents of four young children, the youngest a baby with Downs Syndrome. Presumably they were all left in Cambridge in the care of nannies and other helpers.

A governess cart was a small, two-wheeled, horse-drawn cart. Its distinguishing feature was its tub-like body, in which up to four people could sit opposite each other on inward facing seats. The driver sat sideways on one of the seats and the entry was from a small hinged door at the rear. The purpose of the cart was to be light enough to be drawn by a pony or cob and

stable enough to be thought suitable to be driven by a lady. This gave rise to the cart's name, since they were often used by governesses to transport their child charges

Their account of the trip evokes the lost world of Edwardian rural England. Kindly inn keepers care for the pony, while the travellers are served a meal of soup, cutlets, pancakes and macaroni cheese. The houses they inspected ranged from decayed Elizabethan farm houses to mansions with sham gables, false wood work and mock casements. They visited churches and examined the graves in country churchyards. Cecil researched his family history in dusty archives while Kitty painted in watercolours. In one place they paid a visit to the nanny who had cared for the family for many years and were treated to a magnificent tea. There is a lot of merriment in the book, many jokes and some mockery of the pretensions of the owners of the properties on offer.

The trip in the governess cart seems to have been something of an idyllic interlude but it did not achieve the goal of finding a country house for family holidays. Cecil and Kitty returned to Cambridge, to family life and academic responsibilities, and told the estate agents to stop sending particulars. Two weeks later a letter arrived giving the details of a property which seemed to fulfil their hopes. They sped westwards, presumably by train this time, and were not disappointed.

The house was Cadhay in east Devon, near Ottery St Mary. It was a run-down Elizabethan manor house, with 400 acres of land, located seven miles from the sea and with, as Cecil put it,

'Hunting, fishing and shooting, but not of the character that makes a neighbourhood a purely sporting one'.

At the end of *Back to the Land* they muse over the changes ahead:

> *The quest has been accomplished. We stand at the threshold of a new experience in life; but whether it will bring forth good or evil, no man knoweth. Moreover, as one grows older, one begins to realise how impossible it is, with our limited human experience, to distinguish between ultimate good and evil. The blessings of life come to us riding on storm clouds; its curses are often wrapped in silver paper and honeyed words.*

The next chapter follows Kitty and Cecil and their household to Cadhay, and to the challenges of renovating a historic house and coping with the First World War.

Chapter Eight

Cadhay, The War and Philip Holt's Will

Kitty and Cecil bought Cadhay in 1909. They envisaged it as a place in which to spend vacations from the university, but it became a much-loved family home, and was especially important during the First World War when Kitty and the children lived there for most of the time, while Cecil was busy with war work in Cambridge and London. Their life is described in the letters which Cecil and Kitty wrote to each other when they were apart, in the family diary, and in the *Cadhay Quarterly*, the newspaper produced by the children and their governess, Christine Elliott. Further information comes from *Cadhay and the Whetham Family*, published by their daughter Catherine Linehan in 1975.

Cadhay

Cadhay is a beautiful and historic manor house, built in the mid sixteenth century from local stone. It was originally laid out around an open courtyard, with a great hall flanked by a service wing to the west and a residential wing with private apartments to the east. Over the centuries the house was home to many prosperous families who added to and adorned the original building.

Cadhay House in Devon painted by Kitty in 1910.

However, by the time Kitty and Cecil bought it in December 1909, Cadhay had fallen into disrepair and was threatened with demolition. The building had been divided and let to two tenants and the farm land was neglected. All those who have written about the history of the house agree that their intervention was crucial in rescuing it, even though they only lived there for around ten years. Kitty's painting in 1910 shows what a beautiful house it was even before its restoration.

The restoration of Cadhay took place from 1910 to 1912 and was financed from the £20,000 which Kitty inherited from her father on his death. Before restoration could begin a new farmhouse and cottages had to be built to accommodate those currently living in the main house and adjoining buildings. Catherine, writing in *Cadhay and the Whetham Family*, reports that the farmhouse cost £1000, the two bungalow cottages

£250 each and the semi-detached pair of cottages £600. One of the latter was kept for the use of the family who spent holidays there while the renovations progressed.

Advised by the architect, H. M. Fletcher, Cecil and Kitty set out to preserve the character of the historic building while removing the damage done by neglect and sub-division. A number of sheds and barns attached to the main house were demolished and the whole building was put into a sound structural condition. Outside a lawn was laid down to the pond on the south side, while on the north side brick walls were built to create a forecourt to the main entrance.

There was great excitement when the Tudor chimney pieces and their ornate carvings appeared, as the later Georgian fireplaces and the kitchen range in the hall were removed. Catherine wrote:

> *My earliest memory of Cadhay is staying with Mother at the Fairmile Inn and going by day to Cadhay where, in the hall, I helped to pick out the carvings with her hat pin. I remember feeling very important in my work. I was eight years old at the time.*

Elizabeth, too, remembered helping her mother to pick the plaster out from the heraldic shields over the fire places. She could only have been a small child and this must have been a very early memory.

Managing the renovations at Cadhay would have been

challenging for Kitty since, to her four children two more were added, also born in Cambridge. Elizabeth was born on 23 July 1909 and Edith on 27 December 1911, the same day as Cecil's forty second birthday. Kitty dined downstairs for the first time after the birth two weeks later, to greet Cecil on his return from a week at Cadhay Cottage supervising the restoration work.

In 1912 the family diary reported:

> *We moved our household of six children and six maidservants down to Cadhay at the very end of March. A great coal strike had disorganised the railway traffic to some degree, giving a long, crowded but not really uncomfortable journey.*

In April the family diary reported that, '*Our little Elizabeth was very unwell*'. It seems that typhoid or meningitis were feared, but the trouble cleared up after three weeks.

In 1914 the outbreak of World War One led to great changes in the life of the family. Cecil was increasingly occupied with work in Cambridge and London, while Kitty and the children remained at Cadhay. A vivid picture of life for the family at this time comes from *Cadhay and the Whetham Family*. In 1914 Margaret would have been around 14, Catherine 12, Diana 10, Lawrence 7, Elizabeth 5 and Edith 3. The older children had lessons with their governess, Christine Elliott. In general, their lives seemed to be full of interest, enjoyment and fun. Catherine recalled:

> *We staged theatricals and charades in the long gallery,*

> *where also was set out the fine train set presented by uncle Ted and aunt Christabel Holt. I remember too, the wood and canvas coracle we had on the pond, and our summer after-luncheon sewing sessions for mending; these we sometimes spent up the old yew tree by the pond while Miss Elliott read aloud to us. For special treats we went by rail to East Budleigh and walked over the hill to Ladram Bay, or we drove the pony trap, pulled by our Exmoor pony, Lorna Doone, to Hembury Fort. There was an inn where we could leave the pony and a sixpenny tea of boiled eggs and Devon Chudleighs waiting for us when we'd finished exploring the hill fort.*
>
> *In 1916 an orchestra was inaugurated. Mother brought her violin from Cambridge, which was given to her by uncle George Holt; Diana learnt the cello and I* (Catherine) *became a somewhat reluctant performer on the viola, while Margaret played on the newly installed boudoir grand piano.*

Catherine goes on to comment that the piano was subsequently inherited by her sister, Elizabeth. She gave it to her granddaughter, Kate Pahl, who plays it regularly in her home in Hebden Bridge. Since George Holt, who was born in 1790, tells us in his autobiography that he spent part of his childhood in Hebden Bridge, one might say that the piano has returned to the roots of the Holt family.

However, overshadowing the family's life at Cadhay there was always the First World War. The best source of information

about this are the letters which passed between Kitty at Cadhay and Cecil in Cambridge, letters which were typed up and circulated by their daughter, Margaret Anderson in 1975.

Cadhay in the First World War

When the war began life for the children went on much as usual, as Catherine said, '*With its round of lessons, war work and domestic tasks*'. However, for their parents there were new challenges.

War was declared on 28th July 1914 and very soon changes began to take place. On 5th August Kitty was visited at 8.30 am by a sergeant of the Yeomanry and a constable to be told that ten soldiers and their horses were to be billeted at Cadhay and provided with sleeping accommodation, supper and breakfast. They were to arrive that evening. Kitty wrote to Cecil:

> *I held a council of war outside with Canon Price and Lugg, followed by one inside with the upper servants. We have requisitioned the two cottages, put fires in, taken up 10 mattresses, blankets, with basins, towels, candles and soap – and have prepared the stables. The children are very good, only rather excited, with the prospect of ten soldiers in the place. They have worked hard, cleaning the cottage and carting up the mattresses.*

In the end the soldiers did not arrive, at least not for the time being, but on 7th August Kitty was asked by Devon Voluntary Aid whether Cadhay would be available as a hospital. She replied that she would be willing to superintend the venture, with Margaret as

her assistant, with the long gallery and the roof chamber as wards and perhaps an operating theatre. Plans were being made for the hospital, but next day the soldiers arrived after all.

> *Ten cheerful Cornish boys, who left Bodmin at 10.30 and had travelled, without proper food all day and got separated from their kits. The Ulster sergeant, who is in charge, brought them to me as, 'Your boys, Ma'am'. They washed in the pantry, had an excellent supper and then went off to their quarters escorted by the sergeant and Lugg. We gave them tea and bread and butter at 5.30 and a good breakfast when they returned from parade at 8.15. It is really quite providential that we are so heavily over-staffed here.*

After the soldiers left all the members of the household at Cadhay were kept busy with picking and bottling fruit, distributing vegetables round the neighbourhood and allowing the children to keep a pig in the old pigsty under the tulip tree.

However, it was not long before a request came to provide housing for some Belgian refugees who had fled before the German invasion. The children were set to work to make the cottages ready for the two families which Cadhay had been allotted. Since they had left suddenly the refugees had brought only a few summer clothes. Kitty wrote to Cecil:

> *I have left our bevy of young women to wrestle with the re-clothing dept – finding out what is required, planning and altering old clothes and acting as intermediary between our guests and the local tradespeople. The refugees can't get*

> *over the competence and initiative of the girls. There was great joy when one of the men wished to see them home after 6 pm lest they should meet a cow on the road!*

In fact, the older Whetham girls worked hard on the farm and in the gardens during their time at Cadhay, milking cows and making cheese, growing vegetables and making hay. Diana, in particular, proved to be a most energetic contributor to the family table, keeping poultry as well as helping the local poacher to land fish and catch eels. The Belgian refugees were appalled to be asked to help with all this, being middle class townsfolk with a disdain for manual labour. Diana commented, '*You ask them what they do and they say, "Rien, rien, rien" and you ask them to milk the cows, feed the pig or fetch the wood, and they say, "Tiens, tiens, tiens".* They were at Cadhay for nearly a year, but never really fitted in.

Whetham family at Cadhay c. 1915. Back row from left to right: Cecil, Elizabeth, Margaret. Front row from left: Diana, Lawrence, Kitty, Edith, Catherine.

The letters between Kitty and Cecil which have survived were all written between August and December 1914. For most of this time they were apart, though the speed of the postal service at the time meant that a letter written one day in Cambridge arrived the next day at Cadhay and vice versa. In Cambridge Cecil was working long days, often giving undergraduates certificates of character so they could volunteer for the army: '*I feel rather like aiding and abetting a murder each time I sign one*', he said. The letters make it clear that they missed each other and that Cecil trusted Kitty to manage the household at Cadhay. On 8th August he wrote from Trinity College:

> *I wonder when we shall see each other again. We lose much by no mutual advice. But we must do things as they have fallen to our hands.*

When the request came to make the house a hospital he wrote:

> *I'm glad you have offered Cadhay. I don't suppose it will be needed as a hospital – the German fleet is not likely to get past Dover – but as a convalescent home it might be most useful. Anyway, do whatever you think best and right.*

As 1914 gave way to 1915 Kitty wrote in the family diary:

> *The war rages with unabated violence. …There seems no end in sight. Work and organisation are the tasks before us. The loss of life and limb is appalling. George Herdman was killed on the Somme in July, also Pete Melly. Paul*

> *Hobhouse has been wounded twice, Phil once. Bill Playne is still a cripple. Three Cripps cousins are wounded, two seriously. And still the toll continues and there seems no prospect of bringing it to a close.*

George Herdman was a friend from Liverpool; the other people she mentions are all members of her wider family.

In a photo of the whole family at Cadhay around 1915 Cecil sits slightly apart, dressed in a black suit, while everyone else is in white and wearing straw bonnets. Kitty is placed in the centre with little Edith on her lap and Lawrence peering round her shoulder. Margaret and Catherine stand beside their mother, looking grown-up and responsible, while Elizabeth and Diana appear vaguely ill at ease beside their father. The whole photo seems abundantly feminine, with the only man a rather marginalised figure away from the centre of attention.

The *Cadhay Quarterly* provides a vivid picture of the life of the family during the First World War. All the children, and both parents, contributed to this family magazine, which was edited by Margaret, with Catherine as the Treasurer and Diana as the 'Distributing agent'. The magazine included articles on history and wild flowers, stories, poems and pictures, lists of visitors or of relatives killed or injured in the war, accounts of plays and concerts, complaints about farm work and letters to the editor (including several deploring the actions of the suffragettes).

Lawrence, the little boy with Downs Syndrome, was seven when the war began. He appears several times in the *Cadhay*

Quarterly, in contrast to the letters between his parents, where he is never mentioned. Several of his drawings and paintings are reproduced, which make it clear that he had some talent as an artist. In 1918 there is a humorous picture of Lawrence having his hair cut, followed by his rather good copy of a Chinese print and his watercolour of 'The Muddy Gate' (see next page).

In 1919 Lawrence appears as a 'Serving Man' in a play by Diana, called, 'Beauty and the Beast, a Modern Fairy Tale'. He also does a drawing of his sister dancing. Margaret wrote:

> *The striking picture represents Miss Elizabeth Whetham practising the strange and difficult dancing step known as the 'Pas de Chat' or 'cat leap'. As the artist very well shows the performer bounds into the air with a sideways motion. .. Miss Edith Whetham can be seen in the background – or is it the foreground? – accompanying her sister on the nursery piano.*

It seems likely that it was his governess who championed Lawrence and made sure that he was included in family activities. She describes the visit of the saw mill, when help was needed to gather up sawn logs and stack them in the woodshed. She wrote:

> *Lawrence, Elizabeth and Edith most nobly volunteered for the work, which had to be done with some skill and judgement, as well as considerable speed, in order to avoid being struck by the logs which were continually whizzing in from outside. They did this work so satisfactorily that Mr Dunster presented chits for their wages at the end of the week, amounting to one shilling and fourpence halfpenny each.*

Pictures by Lawrence: Elizabeth doing a Pas de Chat and the Muddy Gate.

The chits for wages are included in the *Cadhay Quarterly*. Elizabeth and Edith, aged 9 and 7, sign their names, but Lawrence, aged 11, signs with his initials.

As the war dragged on it seems that Cecil visited Cadhay less and less often. However, the family settled in and became known in the neighbourhood, and Kitty's engagement with the war effort began to be valued locally. She was asked to sit on various local committees, such as the War Agricultural Executive Committee. Of this she commented, '*I have learned more about farming in twelve months than in the previous 45 years of my existence*'. She also organised the Voluntary Association for the Care of the Mentally Defective in Devon and took part in 'Baby Week' meetings. Catherine said:

> *At Cadhay my mother was on quite a lot of committees, she was the statutory woman on various war committees. We were mostly with the governess. We had our little pony trap and we used to go off on expeditions to Ladram Bay and Sidmouth and various places.*

In Cambridge Cecil was busy with college work and with the recruitment of officers to the army, while at the same time he was spending half of each week in London working in the Food Production Office of the Ministry of Agriculture. Later in life his daughters commented on his behaviour at this time. Diana said, '*Margaret was my father's favourite – so clever, so talented. Later he had a good relationship with Edith. But he neglected and undervalued the other three.* She went on, '*He wasn't very affectionate. I don't remember him ever kissing us or anything like that*'. Catherine said:

> *He stayed mostly in Cambridge, because he had his job, and he used to come down now and again. He was rather a distant figure. We went down with my mother and the nursemaids and most of the staff. Because father of course stayed in college. I never remember doing anything gay and jolly with him. It was more Victorian. We were entirely in the hands of the governess really.*

With both their parents so busy it is understandable that the children felt great affection for the people who looked after them on a day-to-day basis over the years. They included Miss Elliott, the governess, Annie the cook, Eliza the parlourmaid, Mr Bastin the gardener, Mr Rose the coachman/chauffeur and Mr Lugg the 'outdoor man'.

In addition to the strains and stresses of the war, Kitty was now faced with a serious dispute within the Holt family. It related to the will left by her uncle Philip Holt.

Philip Holt and the disputed will

Alfred and Philip Holt were the two brothers who in 1865 founded the Blue Funnel shipping line, also called the Ocean Steamship Company. The company specialised in carrying cargo to and from South East Asia and Australia, so the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 presented a huge opportunity. They also built and owned the India Building, which housed the offices of the Blue Funnel line and other companies, a building later replaced by the even larger India Building which still dominates the harbourside of Liverpool. The years prior to the outbreak of the First World War were some of the most successful in

the company's history, with profits on the main operation never falling below £500,000 per year. The owners of the company thus became extremely wealthy.

Philip Holt died on 27 November 1914, leaving an estate composed chiefly of shares in the Ocean Steamship Company. He was the last of the founding fathers of the company to die. He was childless, and in his will, after some bequests, he said that the residue of the estate was to pass to his five nephews, the sons of his brother Robert, that is to say, the brothers of Kitty and her sisters, Betty and Molly.

Philip Holt left a memorandum with his will, a copy of which was sent to his nieces. It ran:

> *I have made no special bequests other than £100 each to Kitty, Betty and Molly, because I thought it better to do so through their father, to whom, some years ago, I transferred one half of my holding in the India Buildings Co., hoping that he would thus deal with it. The property so transferred is worth about £15,000. Steamship property does not seem to me suitable for ladies.*

In a letter accompanying the memorandum, Richard Holt, the eldest of the brothers, repeated the statement that the sisters had already received the equivalent of their Uncle's gift from their father, Robert Holt.

However, Robert Holt, who died in 1908, left a will in which the India Buildings property, transferred to him by his brother

Philip, went to his five sons. The sisters could not identify any sum which could represent the equivalent of the India Buildings property intended for them by their Uncle Philip. They therefore suggested to their brothers that an independent enquiry should be held. Painful negotiations between the brothers and the sisters followed, both being advised by solicitors.

Two years later the results of the negotiation were set out in an exchange of letters between the solicitors. The letter from the sisters' solicitor, dated 23 October 1916, began by regretting the unfortunate differences which had arisen and expressing a wish that friendly relations should be re-established between all the members of the family. It suggested that the sisters had not received as much from their father's estate as they were entitled to expect, basing this claim on statements made to them by their mother (Lallie Holt) and their uncle (Philip Holt). The letter referred to the memorandum attached to Philip Holt's will in which it was assumed that the sisters had received their portions from Robert Holt. It was suggested that the fact that this had not happened was, '*Owing to an oversight or misunderstanding on the part of the late Mr R. D. Holt and was not intentional on his part*'.

The letter from the sisters' solicitor concluded:

> *Under all the circumstances would it be reasonable and right for those interested in the residuary estate of the late Mr R. D. Holt and of Mr P. H. Holt to make any, and if so what, payment to the daughters on the basis that there had been an oversight or misunderstanding on the part of Mr R. D. Holt?*

The reply from the brothers' solicitor to the sisters' solicitor was brutally short:

> *The brothers have carefully considered your letter of 23rd October – many of the statements in which they do not consider correct. Our instructions are definite to discontinue all negotiations on the subject of your clients' claims. Any break in the friendly relations has been solely due to your clients who can resume the old friendly footing with the brothers whenever they think fit to do so.*

The situation may have been particularly hard for Kitty, who had all the expenses of six children, two houses and high aspirations for the family's quality of life. By contrast Betty and her husband had one young son, while Molly and her husband were childless. Both had an income from the allowance they were given by their father when they were forced to leave home following the incident with Lawrence's dog, described in chapter 7. Both had been helped by the family to set up home in Bryan's Ground in Herefordshire, where they lived quite simply.

This incident underlines the gender dynamics of the family. Holt men were generous in presenting gifts of jewellery to the women in their lives, but the business which was the source of the family's wealth was the domain of the men. The result was a lasting split between the Holt 'brothers' and the Holt 'sisters', with the former continuing in the affluence of their childhood, while the girls were essentially disinherited. The sadness and stress which this created may have been one of the factors which led to Kitty's illness.

It may be that the brothers stood firm because they thought that their sisters would spend the money on big houses and lavish lifestyles, a pattern which was inimical to the Holt emphasis on not wasting money. Some support for this idea comes from a letter which Kitty's brother Richard wrote to her sister Betty, on 27th January 1915, shortly after the death of Philip Holt. At the time Richard was the Liberal MP for Hexham and an opponent of votes for women and of Lloyd George's plans for social welfare. He wrote to Betty:

> *I need hardly say that I am very sorry to hear of Cecil's illness and Kitty's financial embarrassment. It is a pity that Kitty has not thought to inform me direct of their situation. We have always suspected that Kitty was living beyond her means – a suspicion in which you concurred – and if this view is correct it is obvious that financial disaster and the sort of worry that ends in a mental and physical breakdown must result.*
>
> *If Kitty desired it and approaches me herself I am ready to see her either at Cambridge, Cadhay or London and investigate her affairs with a view to putting them on a permanently sound footing, in which I should expect to get the assistance of my brothers. I should expect – and I think they would also – that there should be no recurrence of Kitty's financial troubles, which have been a periodical worry to everybody since her marriage. Please also note that there is no connection between Kitty's troubles and Uncle Phil's death.*

Betty's reply to this rather condescending letter has not survived. However, Kitty might have pointed out that, though

her financial troubles pre-dated Uncle Phil's death, if she had received what Richard had just received through his will, her money worries would have ended.

In her family diary later that year Kitty recorded her distress about the situation following uncle Philip's death, which she described as, '*Most vexatious*'. She went on to say:

> *Our brothers still retain the property which our uncle Philip designated for their sisters and still refuse to submit the correct interpretation of his memorandum to any sort of arbitration, so no further intercourse is possible, nor is it discussed. Such a unanimous desire on the part of brothers, who are also trustees and executors, to 'do' their women relatives as completely as possible takes away from any reason for keeping up the friendly relations and good feeling usual in family life. It is an extraordinary example of fraternal greed and jealousy.*
>
> *If only our father could have followed our grandparents in dealing equally and openly with all his children alike, we should have been spared many years of divisions and jealousy. Let us hope we may be able to take warning and not leave such a legacy of favouritism and ill-will behind us.*

In the light of this comment it is interesting to look at the relevant wills. Cecil left the same amount of money to each of his grandchildren but gave additional gifts to his grandsons. His sister, Mabel, left money to the great nephews and asked that her jewellery be shared among her great nieces. Kitty made her last will in 1917 before she became ill. In it she asked that the residue

of her estate should be divided equally among all her children. So only she maintained the principle of gender equality which she had hoped would be followed.

Hilfield Manor

In the midst of all the problems with uncle Phil's will, there came another death, this time on Cecil's side of the family. In February 1916 Cecil's uncle Bide died, leaving his nephew his estate at Hilfield in Dorset. The estate consisted of Hilfield Manor and six dairy farms, mainly producing cheese. The story of how the Bide family had purchased the farms as they came on the market over the second half of the nineteenth century has been told by Elizabeth Cockburn in her book, *Hilfield and Hermitage: a Little History*.

Kitty found herself facing the renovation of yet another dilapidated house and more neglected farmland. She wrote in the family diary:

> *The little modern house at Hilfield was uninhabitable owing to a defective roof. It had never been furnished since nine coats of linseed oil 'to keep out the damp' had turned the stone walls a greasy black. Miserable larches and cypress grew right up to the house keeping out the light, air and view. The beautiful tiny church was almost derelict – the congregation was non-existent. The whole place was eaten up with rabbits, preserved for the late owner's autumn recreation.*

Over the following months the house was re-roofed, furnished and made ready for occupation. The church was restored and a re-opening service organised, at which Kitty and Margaret

took charge of the harmonium and choir to get things going. Christmas 1916 was spent at Upwater Lodge but for the New Year Cecil, Kitty and Catherine went to Hilfield. Kitty commented in the family diary that, '*We made the acquaintance of our neighbours, Lord and Lady Digby, who came to call and invited us over to lunch at Minterne*'.

During 1917 there were further visits to Hilfield. Kitty wrote in the family diary:

> *Our nursery party, with Diana and Miss Elliott, have twice during the year spent three or four weeks at Hilfield where we are beginning to feel comfortably at home.*

Why did they take on this additional property in addition to the two other houses they already owned? The answer is that Upwater Lodge was very much the family base and Cambridge was where Cecil worked. Cadhay was the place that the children loved best, and, as Diana said, '*Mother fell in love with Cadhay*'. Hilfield was important because it had come from Cecil's side of the family, and because it offered the shooting and hunting which he enjoyed so much.

Kitty's growing affection for Hilfield was expressed in a poem which she wrote at the time and which was published in 1918 in her book, *Occasional Verses in Wartime*, published by Bowes and Bowes in Cambridge. The poem, The Batcombe Road, is included here as Appendix 1. Sadly it was a dispute with the publishers of this little volume which was one of the symptoms of her deteriorating mental health.

Chapter Nine
The Crisis

The eight years they spent at Cadhay were remembered by the children as a golden age. It was all the more distressing, then, that this was where their mother's illness became more than the family could manage.

The cause of Kitty's illness may never be known. The introduction to this book described how all her daughters gave different explanations for what happened. I interpreted this as meaning that no one had talked with them about their mother's disappearance. However, it may be that they were all correct and that between them they provided a full explanation.

Kitty was aged 48 and under great stress when she became ill. The trauma of the First World War had been going on for four years. There was the stress of being responsible for six children and managing both Cadhay and Hilfield, often without Cecil there to help, as well as Upwater Lodge in Cambridge. There was the distressing quarrel between the sisters and their brothers and Kitty's own financial problems. There must have been anxiety over the future of Lawrence.

Whatever the reason, during 1918 Kitty's mental health began

to deteriorate. It may have been her teenage children who were the first to notice. Catherine described how her mother:

> *Turned against her husband, and tried to turn the children against him, which wasn't difficult, on the grounds that he never came to see them but stayed in Cambridge. Also she went out and spent money on expensive pictures and cakes.*

Diana said that there were signs of her illness even in the early days at Cadhay:

> *She sometimes spoke in a rambling and inconsequential way. Once we were out in the little pony and trap and she was talking nonsense.*

When she was eventually admitted to hospital the medical records noted that she had been suffering from 'delusional mental disorder' for the past year. The main symptom of her illness seems to have been erratic and delusional behaviour, but the precipitating factor for the admission to hospital was the writing of libellous postcards and letters, to her publisher and to her husband's college.

Admission to hospital

Kitty was admitted to Wonford House Hospital in Exeter on 14th December 1919. Two doctors certified her admission to hospital. The first was her GP, Dr Johnston of Ottery St Mary. He noted:

> *The patient admits writing libellous postcards and letter, based as she says on information the source of which she*

> *refuses to disclose. She evidently does not appreciate the seriousness of her acts. I have noted for some considerable time an alteration in her manner, preoccupied and suspicious. He husband, William Cecil Dampier Whetham, Cadhay, informs me that his wife has made groundless accusations against him of fraud in money matters, and has refused arbitration or any reasonable method of deciding the matter in dispute. She has written libellous postcards concerning him to various people.*
>
> *She admits writing the postcards to Mr Bowes of Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge, in which there are charges of fraud… She charges her husband, and her immediate relatives with being in conspiracy against her. She is very suspicious and many questions put to her she refused to answer.*

The second doctor was Dr Maurice Craig of Harley Street. He gave a very similar account, mentioning libellous postcards concerned with the behaviour of Bowes and Bowes and of her husband.

The medical records include copies of some of these cards. The postcards relating to publishing begin with one dated 13th November 1919 and addressed to Messrs Bowes of Cambridge:

> *Your letter is manifestly ridiculous. How dare you say you had sold 800 months ago and I have had 600 and only 2000 were printed. Are you aware of a felonious (sic) trade custom of dishonest practice and employers having copies of a popular work printed surreptitiously*

> *and foisted in the stock, the thieves taking all the profits. Kindly investigate. C. D. Whetham*

The book to which she is referring is *Occasional Verses in Wartime,* which includes *The Batcombe Road,* reprinted here in Appendix 1. Another postcard refers to a book of French verse which Kitty wrote in the following year. She wrote about this publication to Mr Heffer, the Cambridge bookseller, on a postcard dated 3rd December 1919:

> *The success of the blue volume of French verses is assured. I have most complimentary messages of thanks from my friends Alexander Miller and Theodore Mounod and in England from Lord Reay. I am sending copies to all the allied universities and French professors in England. Writing Shakespearean blank verse in French seems to be a unique achievement creating quite a new mode of expression.......*
>
> *I hear Mr George Bowes' mental health is gone. Is that so and likely to be permanent? I am told he is getting copies of my Occasional Verses printed elsewhere than in the press and selling them for his own private gain. I wonder if your firm would take over the agency for me and get the press to print another two thousand and circulate and put on sale in the military centres, the Colonies and India. I can get no consistent sense out of them whatsoever to my great sorrow and bewilderment. Yours sincerely, Catherine D. Whetham*

However, it is likely to have been the other correspondence

which finally triggered her admission to hospital. On 21st October 1919 Kitty wrote to the Master of Trinity College and to the Council of the College:

> *Will you please see that your defaulting fellow and scoundrelly fellow and late Senior Tutor either supports his family in the residence he chose for them and insisted on them occupying or pass the most reasonable bills of expenses occurring in equipping and maintaining his family*. Catherine D. Whetham

For Cecil, who was immensely proud of his links with Trinity, this must have been a deeply embarrassing and distressing letter. On 10th December she wrote to Messrs Watts, Watts and Henty, solicitors of Yeovil:

> *Dear Mr Watts, I am sorry to trouble you again, but I have had the enclosed letter from our land agents at Exeter, in answer to my request for half the yearly rent, which goes towards paying the wages of the outdoor man. Apparently the Cambridge lawyers have decided to embezzle that part of the income of my estate. As Messrs Ellis and Broaden pressed a demand for unauthorised income tax on me in the summer and have otherwise been unsatisfactory, I have written removing them from the agency of the estate and shall henceforth manage it myself. Will you endeavour immediately to recover the cheque? Yours sincerely, Catherine D. Whetham*

An attached note from her husband explained the situation:

> *The facts are these: as my wife refused to pay income tax on the Cadhay Estate, the rents of which she has had, I paid it under pressure of the surveyor months ago. The half-yearly rent with rates and expenses deducted proving less than the tax. There was no surplus to send to my wife. WCDW*

Kitty herself wrote an account of her removal to hospital which described what she experienced. It comes in a statement dated 28th February 1920. She wrote:

> *I, Catherine Durning Whetham, landowner of Cadhay, Ottery Saint Mary, Devon …. was forcibly kidnapped from my home, Cadhay, on Sunday forenoon, 14th December, entry having been obtained while the family were in church by the following persons:*

She goes on to list those who were there, who included her sisters, Betty and Molly, '*two females purporting to be wardresses*', a Lunacy Commission doctor, her GP Dr Johnston, '*who has not attended me for over eighteen months*' and an Assenting Magistrate. Finally, she lists Dr William Mitchell, a friend of Molly's from London, who may have been a specialist in mental illness with the power to commit an unwilling patient to hospital

This account suggests that Kitty's removal to hospital was planned carefully in advance. Her sisters, Betty and Molly must have travelled from Herefordshire to be there, while their friend, Dr Mitchell, had come from London. Her GP, staff from the hospital, a doctor and a magistrate had all been assembled: nothing was left to chance. Cecil took the children

to church in Ottery St Mary, as was usual on Sundays, but on this occasion he must have been all too aware of what was to happen that morning. When the family arrived back home for lunch their mother had disappeared. As far as I know, four of her six children never saw their mother again.

Kitty's statement about this traumatic incident continued:

> *No papers or power of arrest were shown me, the kidnapping being said to have been arranged by Messrs Longman, publishers, London, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, for whom the above-mentioned persons appeared to be acting as agents.*
>
> *After about two hours resistance, I was forcibly dragged out into one of two motor cars in attendance, by the two wardresses and accompanied by Doctor William Mitchell. I was conveyed to a Lunacy Institution known as the Wonford Sanatorium, Exeter, where I have since been confined under duress.*
>
> *At least five persons, of considerable resemblance, has come into my room, calling themselves "Doctor Morton" and have suggested that I should obtain my release by signing a document … admitting that I am guilty of criminal libel, against whom, when or what about has not been specified. They have also stated that I am certified criminally insane by all my friends and relatives.*

She could not, of course, have been certified in this way by friends and relatives, since only those who were medically qualified to do so had this power.

Kitty's statement is striking for two different reasons. Firstly, it was typed, presumably by Kitty herself, which means that she took her typewriter into hospital with her. Secondly, it was preserved for posterity, presumably by Cecil, since it was kept with other papers related to Kitty's illness and her confinement in the hospital. Why did Cecil keep a document which must have been the cause of great anguish to him? Is it possible that he hoped that one day someone would write an account of Kitty's life and her illness?

The statement was kept with a letter which Cecil wrote to the family solicitor on 5th March 1920. He wrote:

> *A terrible tragedy has befallen me and my children in the mental failure of my wife. After 18 months increasing difficulties, she laid herself open to a serious action for libel from Messrs Bowes and Bowes, publishers, and for her own protection I and her family were obliged to have her certified as of unsound mind and removed to Wonford House Hospital, Exeter.*
>
> *For some time she seemed satisfied and content, regarding her residence there as a rest cure and refusing to receive or write letters. Now she is beginning to resent her detention, and has written two letters, one to you, which I enclose, and one to the clerk to the Devon County Council, in similar terms. She wishes you to act as her solicitor.*

After giving some details of names and addresses, Cecil's letter ends:

> *When I got control of the situation I found that there was another libel action coming into being against my wife, and that she had incurred debts of more than £3000. The Master in Lunacy has appointed her friend and executor, Miss G. L. Elles, of Newham College, Cambridge as Receiver.*

'Miss G. L. Elles' was Kitty's close friend from her days at Newnham College. She has already appeared in this story as one of Kitty's bridesmaids at her wedding and as a someone who stayed with Kitty when she was waiting for the birth of her first baby. She kept in touch with the family and I remember her as 'Aunt G.', an elderly lady showing us how to find fossils in the chalk pit on High Stoy Hill at Hilfield. She came every year to see us, loyally keeping in touch with the children and grandchildren of her friend from college days.

First days in hospital

As Cecil said in his letter, in the days following her admission Kitty appeared to accept what had happened. The records on her case are kept in the medical records department of the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust. In the days following her admission to hospital there are relatively frequent notes in the records. On 18th December, the day after admission, she is said to be:

> *Very quiet, writing most of the day, reading a letter. She is suffering from delusional insanity with exaltation, eg. she claims to have been appointed 'Admiral of the Fleet', official visitor to asylums, etc. Her manner is tense and*

> *reserved and she says she prefers not to talk about her affairs. She is in good health.*

In terms of modern thinking on mental illness this does seem to be evidence of delusional insanity or schizophrenia or what has been described as, 'grandiose Napoleonic delusion'. On 15th January the medical notes record:

> *She is not improved. She is reserved and aloof and will not discuss her position here. She does not leave her room or take any interest in her surroundings. She writes most of the day but will not say anything about it. She refuses to see her husband and she writes no letters. She is in good health.*

On 26th February:

> *She informed Dr Morton, the Superintendent, this morning that he was a 'uniformed imposter' and that since she has been here she has seen three separate individuals who called themselves 'Dr Morton' and that neither of them resembled him.*

Two days later she wrote the statement about having been kidnapped. It must have been this which led Cecil to consult Sir Marriott Cooke, who had been the Commissioner in Lunacy in London until his retirement in 1914. He went to visit Kitty in hospital and reported in a letter to Cecil:

> *I had a prolonged interview with Mrs Whetham as the result of which, while not regarding her case as absolutely*

> *hopeless, I thought the prospect of her recovery very unfavourable. She talked incessantly when I was with her in an unreasonable, exalted and rathe hostile manner and would not allow that her mind was in any way unhinged. An unfortunate feature of her case is that she refuses to be guided by the advice Dr Morton gives her and has, so I was informed, positively declined to leave her room and take outdoor exercise since she has been at Wonford House, which is of course extremely bad for her.*

Sir Marriott Cooke goes on to suggest that she might be better in another hospital, where she would be, '*further away from her former activities and her home*'. He suggests either a sanatorium in Virginia Water or Herrison Hospital in Dorset. The medical records show that attempts were indeed made to move Kitty to another hospital. The first such attempt took place on 1st July 1920:

> *Arrangements have been made to move her to Virginia Water, but she refuses to go. She never leaves her room, is abusive and ill-mannered. She writes numerous letters.*

On 5th October 1920, another attempt is made to move her;

> *On an order of the petitioner, her husband Mr Whetham, and with the consent of the Board of Control, two nurses arrived from Herrison, Dorchester, to remove Mrs Whetham to the Herrison Asylum, but she declined to go, turning the nurses out of her room and calling them, 'criminal brigands' and finally slamming the door in their*

> *faces. It was suggested to phone Dr Peachel that hyoscine should be administered, and under its influence the patient should be removed, but to this Dr Morton would not consent. Mrs Whetham declines to leave her room, never going outside the door. She is very confused in her ideas, easily becomes violent, and mistakes identities.*

In the years which follow she gradually became more settled. From 1921 she began to go outside, first in the company of a nurse and later on her own. Following this she began to gain in health and her colour improved. However, the medical records continue to mention 'delusional insanity and exaltation' and at one stage she announces that she has been appointed Admiral in Chief to the British Navy. Perhaps this claim reflected her long links with the Blue Funnel Shipping line and her experience of being an honoured passenger when, thirty years earlier, she had crossed the Atlantic Ocean on ships belonging to her uncles? Whatever the explanation, it seems that Kitty continued to be mentally unwell.

Chapter Ten

The Long Years in Hospital

After the drama surrounding her admission to Wonford House Hospital in Exeter, Kitty's life is poorly documented. The evidence about her comes from three main sources. The medical records kept by the hospital constitute an important source of information, though one which is rather impersonal and terse. However, there is also a letter written by my mother to my father in 1935, which gives a rather different perspective. Finally, there was one of the nurses who worked at the hospital in the 1940s and 1950s and who personally looked after my grandmother. Her memories provided a vivid picture of Kitty's life in her final years.

Few members of the family visited Kitty in hospital. The only visitors seem to have been her daughters, Catherine, who went several times and who registered her death in 1952 and Diana, who went to the hospital only once, partly because she was living abroad for many of the years when Kitty was ill. My brother Malcolm remembers Diana sending a basket of goodies from Tripoli to 'Lady Dampier' in 1951. Diana reported that when she did visit she said to Kitty, '*I'm Diana*', to which the reply came, '*You're not Diana: you're a grown-up woman*'. Diana

described her mother as, *'Finding it difficult to follow a train of thought'* and thought it sad that no one else visited.

There is no evidence to suggest either that Kitty wanted to leave hospital or that her children would have liked to visit her but were prevented from doing so. Her eldest daughter, Margaret, used to write to her mother in hospital but did not visit. We do not know whether Kitty wrote back or not, but no such letters survive, as far as I know.

The medical records

The medical records tell us almost as much about the mental health services of the time as they do about Kitty's life in hospital. Details about her welfare were recorded about twice a year, probably by a nurse, while every five years or so a doctor would be asked to visit her and comment on her physical health and her state of mind. There are also copies of a few notes from Kitty herself.

The entries are very brief, typically taking the form of five or six hand-written lines in a big ledger. At many points in the records she is said to be suffering from 'paraphrenia'. This has been defined as a mental disorder characterized by an organized system of paranoid delusions with or without hallucinations (the positive symptoms of schizophrenia) but without deterioration of intellect or personality (its negative symptoms).

The term *paraphrenia* is not currently used as a diagnosis. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) it has been replaced by other terms, grouped in the category of DSM-5. So psychiatrists often diagnose patients presenting with paraphrenia as having

a-typical psychoses, delusional disorder, schizoaffective disorders and late-onset schizophrenia-like psychosis.

The medical records, however, focus on her behaviour. Many words and phrases recur with monotonous regularity, suggesting that the authors were to some extent copying what had been said in the previous entry. She is often described as amenable and pleasant, or grandiose, solitary and aloof. Frequently it is recorded that she is passing the time contentedly with reading, embroidery and painting, but that she would become hostile when her symptoms were discussed. Her health is regularly described as 'good' and every year she refuses to submit to a medical examination.

On 28th February 1928 the notes record:

> *She is suffering from Delusions with Hallucinations. Has the idea that she is a much more highly exalted personage than is granted by others. She resents any intrusion into her room or interference with her desires.*

The entry for 20th December 1930 is unusual in making reference to her husband:

> *She is at present pleasant and amenable. She is however solitary and does not mix with the other patients. She believes that she is in touch with the next world and auditory hallucinations are evidently present. She is hostile towards her relations and expresses delusions of identity concerning her husband who she describes as a complete stranger to her and an interloper.*

In 1931 she was reported to be on parole and allowed out of the hospital:

> *She has been visiting a Mrs Chard who keeps a confectionery shop. Yesterday she left a box of small presents all bearing the recipients' Christian names with no address for Mrs Chard to deliver. Parole to be stopped if it happens again.*

In November 1932 Dr Bertha Miller, MD, was asked to visit her and reported,

> *I had a long interview with Lady Whetham in her private room, and she received me very cordially. I found her busily occupied, sitting at a table painting in water colours. She looked perfectly happy and contented, and she was very interested at once in discussing drawing and designing with me.*
>
> *I explained to her that I was a medical woman, and had come specially to see her, to enquire if I could do anything for her with regard to her health, or to know whether she had any suggestions of any kind to make to me, and if I could help her in any way. Her reply was, 'Oh no, I am quite well thank you, but I am a doctor myself and I shall be very glad to treat you'.*
>
> *I then mentioned many other subjects, and found her quite willing to discuss many things, such as places she had visited, scenery, etc. In fact she conversed very readily, but she wandered from one subject to another, and became very*

> *disjointed in her remarks, showing inability to concentrate and a weakened memory.*

Dr Miller concluded her report by saying:

> *This lady is suffering from fixed delusions of grandeur and a mistaken conception of things around her, so that it is impossible for her to adapt herself to a normal life. In my opinion her mental outlook is not likely to improve and the prognosis is not hopeful. She seemed to me however, to be quite happy and contented in her surroundings, which in imagination she controls and directs.*
>
> *Lady Whetham was alone with me during the interview and I am quite satisfied that she is well cared for in every way. She is probably as happy as it is possible for her to be and I would not advise any change being made.*

On 22nd August 1933 Kitty herself writes to Dr Mullins, the Superintendent of the hospital. What she writes casts light on her state of mind at the time:

> *I think you cannot be privy to or have overlooked the understanding between myself and the Council of England D (sic) as to the nature of my residence here. The original events which led to my being a resident are not now in relevance, but I remain by agreement for purposes of private work in mystic and holy (sic) in this parish and in the Cathedral, having the assurance from the Council D that I am not subject to medical examination, treatment*

> *or institutional study but continue as a quiet private law-abiding inmate, at their expense, and as a person in a hostel or bede house regulated for moral health and piety.*

By 1935 she yet again refuses a medical examination. The records note:

> *She is quiet, amenable, pleasant and enjoys outside parole. She is grandiose in manner and asocial. She does not discuss herself with any freedom and becomes rather excitable and incoherent when any attempt is made to talk about her affairs. She states that she has no friends or relations. She occupies herself with books and sketching – very weird subjects depicting trees and immortals with whom she states she is in mystic communion.*

The entry for 11th November 1937 is typical of many:

> *She is amiable and amenable. She occupies herself with needlework and reading. She becomes hostile immediately if any reference is made to symptoms and refuses to discuss them. She sleeps well and takes adequate nourishment.*

Two years later the Second World War has begun, but the records note:

> *There is no noteworthy change. She refuses to accept any of the War regulations, blackout, or other instructions as being of any importance to her. She refuses to keep her room darkened or to have anything to do with a gas mask.*

In the years that followed she became increasingly confused, and the onset of dementia is mentioned. However, her physical health continued to be good and she spent more and more time in the hospital gardens. On 6th November 1944, the records note:

> *She is becoming childish. She collects stones and hoards cheap jewellery which she bought at Woolworths. The stones which she picks up in the gardens she believes are rare specimens. She is unable to give a rational account of herself. She is able to amuse and occupy herself. In moderate health. She will not consent to a physical examination.*

Kitty died on 16th March 1952, aged 81, when the causes of death were given as cerebral thrombosis and arterio-scelerosis. She continued to refuse any medical examination until two days before her death, when it was recorded that her heart beat was irregular and that she seemed tired, but was not in any pain.

The letter from my mother to my father

My mother never saw her mother's medical records. Having read them myself, it was poignant to come across a letter which my mother wrote to my father during the years when the records above were being compiled. At that time my parents were engaged to be married, having met when they were both going round the world by steamship visiting relatives. My father came back to begin work as a farmer, while my mother continued with her trip and they kept in touch by letter. In May 1935 she wrote:

> *It is about my mother. She is not dead as I expect I let you believe, but sometime after the war her mind went*

> *funny. I don't think she is very mad but I don't really know much because we don't mention it in the family very often and we were children at the time. But she sends us things occasionally and takes quite an interest in us all including the younger generation and they seem quite alright. But even worse I have a brother who is mental in a different way. He is sort of arrested development, his mind never grew up at all. Perhaps you can explain it better than I can, because I don't know about mental physiology. If it makes a difference to you I shall quite understand because it is a beastly thing and I suppose I should have told you before. The only thing I can say in support of myself is that none of my family seem to expect it to matter so I hope it doesn't.*

The reference to 'the younger generation' reflects the fact that at the time the letter was written Kitty had five grown-up daughters and six grandchildren, with four more yet to be born.

The letter is striking in several ways. First, it reveals the depth of the shame which surrounded both mental illness and learning disability. The shame was so great that it might have prevented my parents' marriage taking place. Indeed, my father's brother, Norman, remembered discussions taking place at the time about the risk of any children inheriting the mental illness or learning disability.

Secondly, there is the contrast between the hospital patient, who is always described as so unsociable and who claimed to have '*No friends or relations*', and the statement in the letter that, '*She sends us things occasionally and takes quite an interest in us*

all'. Was someone else, perhaps her daughter Catherine, who continued to live near Exeter, visiting and creating this positive impression? Finally, there is the secrecy which surrounded the topic, which meant that she was rarely mentioned in the family and her children knew so very little about what had happened to their mother and their brother, but felt only that it was 'beastly'.

The hospital nurse

A letter to the local paper in Exeter revealed that there was still a nurse who remembered Kitty. Mrs Snell had started work at Wonford Hospital in 1942 and rose to be Ward Sister, leaving in 1951, so her time there coincided with the last ten years of Kitty's life. In 1994 I met her at the hospital and was able to see round the fine Victorian mansion and the spacious grounds where Kitty spent so many years.

Mrs Snell's account came as a refreshing change. She described Kitty as:

> *A wonderful lady. Never any trouble. Quite happy in her way. Not at all difficult to look after. She had long flowery gowns down to her ankles. Never saw her in a short skirt. Her hair was nut brown – not very grey. Other ladies thought they were titled but she was the only real titled lady.*

In referring to her as a 'titled lady' she is remembering the fact that in 1931 Cecil had been granted a knighthood, so from that time on Kitty was indeed Lady Dampier. Mrs Snell went on:

> *She had a big room overlooking the hard tennis court and*

> *a croquet lawn. Never came down and had her meals with the rest of the residents. When the gong rang for tea, while the ladies were having their tea, she'd do her round. She'd go into the drawing room and the visitors' room – she'd do an inspection every day at tea time. In her room she had armchairs and book cases and a daily paper. She'd meet you on the corridor and say, 'Good evening'. If she saw you arranging the flowers, she'd say, 'That looks nice!'*

Mrs Snell described a hospital which was 'an asylum', 'a place of refuge'. The coming of the NHS did not make much difference, because, as she said, '*The same matron was in charge*'. The hospital was divided into a men's wing and a women's wing, and each of those was divided into first, second and third-class wards. Conditions in the latter grades of ward were probably very much less benign than in the private ward where Kitty lived.

Following the tradition of the Victorian asylum, there were gardens to provide fruit and vegetables for the patients and flowers were sent up to decorate the wards. Patients might be allowed 'Town parole', 'Grounds parole' or 'Court parole', when the only exercise they got was in the court adjoining the ward. Kitty, however, was in the first category, so she was allowed to go on her own into the city, where she went shopping and attended church services.

An interesting insight on her life at this time comes from the book written by Georgina Meinertzhagen. In *From Ploughshare to Parliament*, her history of the Potter family, she wrote about Kitty's great grandmother, Mary Seddon. Mary was born in

1793 and in 1815 married Richard Potter. In the following years she gave birth to four children, the eldest of which was another Richard Potter, Kitty's grandfather. Mary was described as, '*Cultivated, witty, full of fun and kind-hearted … a handsome and gypsy like girl*'. However, in 1823 ill health, both mental and physical, led to her being placed in some sort of institution, where she lived till 1874. During her seclusion she studied languages and music and became a good Hebrew scholar. Georgina Meinertzhagen, who knew Mary Seddon her old age, said that,

> *She recovered her strength and reason, and received constant visits from her children, which were a great pleasure to her; but she would never be induced to take up her former position of wife and mother in her husband's house.*

Kitty might well have known of the life of her great grandmother: perhaps she followed something of the same path?

Chapter 2 began with a letter from Kitty, written when she was five years old and on a visit to her grandfather Richard Potter. This chapter ends with a final note from Kitty, written when she was 77, four years before she died. It was a pencilled note in her copy of the works of Alfred Tennyson, which came to me after her death. In the margin beside Tennyson's poem, '*Crossing the Bar,*' Kitty wrote, '*In Crediton Congregational Church, 12 August 1948*'. Crediton is eight miles from Exeter, so this confirms that she was allowed to leave the hospital when she wished. She may perhaps have chosen a Congregational Church because of its similarity to the Unitarian chapel of her childhood in Liverpool.

The poem she chose to highlight begins:

> Sunset and evening star,
> And one clear call for me!
> And may there be no moaning of the bar,
> When I put out to sea.

Perhaps, after all those years of activity, with all the demands from husband and children, all her responsibility for complicated households and troublesome finances, and all the anxiety surrounding the First World War, Kitty had in the end found a way of living which met her needs and gave her a sort of contentment?

Chapter Eleven
A Continuing Legacy

Writing this book has changed my understanding of my own family history. When I began work my view of my grandparents was clouded by the shame surrounding my grandmother's incarceration in a mental hospital and by my memories of the dry, disappointed and rather pompous man that my grandfather became in old age. As I explored their story I was astonished by the zest and energy with which they spent their younger days, by their love for each other and for their children, and by the contrast between the family myths which surrounded them and the reality of their achievements in the heyday of their lives.

The information for this chapter comes from conversations I had with Kitty's daughters, my aunts, from autobiographies produced by Cecil and by my mother, and from family members more generally. As the bibliography shows, her daughters contributed to keeping the memory of their mother alive by publishing edited versions of her letters to her parents from Newnham and to Cecil from Cadhay, as well as recollections of the family's years at Cadhay.

What happened next?

After Kitty went to hospital, Cadhay was let and eventually

sold, with the money going to pay for care for her and for Lawrence. The family retreated to Cambridge, with holidays being spent mainly at Hilfield. Cecil's sister, Mabel, came to live at Upwater Lodge and, with Christine Elliott, was the main carer for the daughters as they grew up.

Cecil's job as Tutor at Trinity College came to an end and he moved increasingly into administration at national level. He was active in the Royal Agricultural Society and sat on the Agricultural Wages Board. He also invented a new process for extracting lactose from whey, which became commercially important. In 1929 he wrote a very successful History of Science, which was re-printed nine times and which generated sales large enough to pay for a new wing on the manor house at Hilfield. This was followed in 1944 by a Shorter History of Science which also sold well and was distributed to members of the armed forces.

In the year after they lost their mother, Margaret, aged 19, went to Cambridge to read biochemistry, Catherine and Diana, aged 17 and 15, were sent to boarding school in Norfolk, while Elizabeth and Edith, aged 10 and 8, continued to be taught at home by Christine Elliott, until they too went off to boarding school at Downe House.

Lawrence was placed in an institution in 1920 and spent the rest of his life in a home for people with learning disabilities. Diana said of him, '*Father just couldn't cope*'. If Lawrence has been a shadowy figure in this book it is because he is hardly mentioned in the mass of letters, diaries and other papers

which have survived. He does not appear at all in Cecil's autobiography, suggesting that his son was too painful a subject for him. In reality Lawrence's level of disability was such that today he would be living at home or in a supported community house. As the *Cadhay Quarterly* showed, at Cadhay he joined in activities with the other children, had some artistic talent and had learnt to sign his name, if not to read and write.

He died on 13th October 1959 at Springfield House at Kempston in Bedfordshire aged 52. The cause of death was described as, 'Broncho-pneumonia and mongolism'. Springfield House was opened as a private asylum in 1837. By 1925 it was licensed to accommodate 48 patients and housed around 40 at any one time, with around 26 care staff. Lawrence was visited every year by Bruce Anderson, husband of his oldest sister, Margaret.

In the crisis created by Kitty's illness it might have been expected that her brothers and sisters would have come to the aid of the bereaved family. There is no record that any of her Holt brothers were concerned about the situation. However, her sisters, Molly and Betty, became important supports to the children. Betty's husband had been killed in the war, so they lived together, with Betty's son Dick Russell, at Bryan's Ground, the house they had built for themselves after their banishment from the family home in Liverpool, described in Chapter 7. Diana said:

> *When all the troubles took place the two people who were most helpful were Christine Elliott and Aunt Molly. Aunt*

> *Molly was a wonderful person. She took care of Dick when his mother, Betty didn't.*

Over the following years Aunt Molly organised many holidays for the Whetham children. One such was recorded in a diary kept by Elizabeth, my mother, aged 13. The holiday was spent in a gypsy caravan with her governess, Christine Elliott, her cousin Dick and his governess, Miss Hall. The caravan was located near Bryans Ground, where Molly and Betty lived. Staying with them was their aunt Beatrice Webb and Sydney Webb. The diary begins on 26th July 1922:

> *The day was fine. We went after dinner. Dick and I lit a fire by the stream. Aunt Betty and Aunt Molly had some tea. Miss Hall and Miss Elliott took our photos. After tea we went for a walk up a neighbouring hill and played in the bracken. For supper Dick had sardines on bread. The rest buttered eggs on toast. And then Miss Elliott read 'Bevis' aloud.*

The holiday was spent happily until the day when it started to rain and the caravan leaked:

> *It rained harder and harder until it began to come through the roof. Miss Elliott held the washing basin under the wettest place just above the bed. Miss Hall came gallantly to the rescue with a dish cloth and an enamel plate. Dick and I on the contrary retired under the bed, however, it soon stopped and we washed the floor and tidied up. Aunt Bo and Uncle Sydney were to have come but they were not well enough, so Aunt Betty and Aunt Molly came.*

> *We went for a walk by the stream and found three new flowers. For supper we had buttered eggs on toast.*

As the years went by Aunt Molly became something of a mother to the family. I remember her as a kindly old lady when as a child I was taken to visit her in the 1950s.

Kitty died on 16th March 1952 at Wonford House Hospital in Exeter. The cause of death was given as cerebral thrombosis and atherosclerosis. She was 81.

She was cremated at Weymouth Crematorium and her ashes were scattered in the churchyard at Hilfield, at a ceremony attended by Margaret, Catherine, Elizabeth and Edith and other close family members. She had no memorial until 2002, when I put one there, together with a memorial for my mother, her daughter Elizabeth. All Kitty's daughters described her as a wonderful mother. Diana said, '*She was very warm and affectionate – a real Potter*'. Perhaps that is how she would like to be remembered?

Cecil died a few months after Kitty on 11th December 1952 aged 85. He was honoured with a plaque in Trinity College Chapel which describes him, in a translation from the Latin in which it is written, as, '*A fellow of the College for 61 years. A kindly, good natured man*.'

I have come to the view that Cecil was indeed a kindly, good natured man, though a rather traditional one, who found emotions difficult. His autobiography suggests that he was

much more at ease in the all-male world of Trinity College than in the largely-female world which his home became as more and more girls were born. He was bitterly disappointed not to have a son to share his passion for science, shooting and the world of agriculture, while the loss of Kitty was a cruel blow from which he never recovered. His interest in heredity made what happened doubly distressing. He assuaged his grief by sheer hard work, to which his later achievements and honours testify.

Their legacy

Kitty and Cecil met at Cambridge where she was at Newnham College and he at Trinity College. Both began as undergraduates reading science, though he was four years ahead of her, and both went on to work as scientific researchers. The pattern they set has been a powerful influence on their descendants. They left a legacy that was both intellectual and material.

Of their five daughters four followed Kitty to Newnham, with Margaret, Diana and Elizabeth reading natural sciences and Edith reading economics. Of their ten grandchildren six studied at Cambridge, with sciences predominating among the degrees. Of their 23 great grandchildren ten went to Cambridge.

Many family parties have taken place in Clough Hall, in Newnham, the beautiful white and gold college hall which had been opened just two years before Kitty arrived in Cambridge, and where she ate her meals, debated and played the piano for college dances. One such party was organised by her daughters Catherine and Edith in 1982. The photo of the event shows three of Kitty's daughters, Margaret, Catherine and Edith, surrounded

Family photo: 1982, Clough Hall, Newnham College.

Back row from left to right: Dick Russell, Malcolm Cockburn, Peter Holt, George Pearson, Toby Anderson, Ray Pahl, Bill Perry, John Pahl, Edward Anderson, Nick Pahl.

Second row from back, left to right: Sophie Pearson, Michael Ledzion, Jan Pahl, Ian Ledzion, Jo Perry, Anthony Pearson, Charles Anderson, Bill Anderson, Matthew Perry, Jean Currie, Sylvia Wright.

Seated row, left to right: Margaret Somerville, Margie Anderson with baby Toby Anderson, Mary Ledzion, Emma Pearson with baby Matthew Anderson, Bruce Anderson with baby Christian Anderson, Catherine Linehan, Margaret Anderson, Edith Whetham, Christina Anderson with baby Frances Anderson, Catherine Wright.

Front row, left to right: Jane Pearson, Kate Pahl, Kitty Anderson, Ben Anderson, Charlotte Perry, Eleanor Wright, Susannah Perry.

Kitty and Cecil's descendants at the party: 3 out of 5 daughters, 8 out of 10 grandchildren, 17 great grandchildren, 2 nephews.

by a bevy of grandchildren and great grandchildren. Did Kitty realise when she came up to Cambridge in 1889 that she was starting such a long and vigorous tradition?

Kitty and Cecil left another legacy in terms of the houses they built, renovated, lived in and loved. Each of their daughters continued to have links with one or more of their homes.

Upwater Lodge was left in Cecil's will to his and Kitty's eldest daughter, Margaret. His sister, Mabel, continued to live there till her death in 1956. Margaret and her husband Bruce brought up their own family there and it continues to be a much-loved family home. These days the children who play in the garden are Kitty and Cecil's great, great, great grandchildren. The house is celebrated in a poem by Edith Whetham, written in 1991: see Appendix 2.

Catherine settled in Sidmouth, just seven miles from Cadhay and 19 miles from Exeter. It was she who visited her mother most often in hospital and who kept in touch with the staff who had looked after the family at Cadhay. It was she too, who wrote a book about the family's time at the house they had all loved so much.

After years spent in India, Australia and Tripoli, Diana and her family settled in Herefordshire, near Aunt Molly and Aunt Betty. Her descendants still have links both with that part of the world, as well as with Cambridge. Llynhillyn Cottage in Powys, which Aunt Molly bought in 1922 as a holiday cottage for her nieces and nephews, is still a place for holidays for family members from across the world.

The Hilfield estate was sold in 1947 to my father, Jim Cockburn, because he was the member of the family most able and willing

to farm the land. So essentially it came to Elizabeth, who published *Hilfield and Hermitage: a Little History* in 1977. It is still an important place for the family, though these days they do not live in the manor but go to Hilfield to walk, to work in the woods and to spend holidays in Jessops Cottage. Members of the family still walk up the Batcombe Road to the top of the chalk downs, which look today much as they did in 1919 when Kitty wrote her poem: see Appendix 1.

Edith became close to her father in his later years. He was very proud when she was appointed Gilbey Lecturer in Agricultural History and Economics at the University of Cambridge, the city where she lived for most of her life. After he died she lived at Upwater Lodge for a time before moving to Newnham village.

Kitty's illness and Lawrence's disability, and the way they were managed, left a burdensome legacy for the family. The prohibition on telling anyone about what had happened must have made things doubly difficult. Some of the daughters could never talk about what had occurred; others only spoke of it with great sadness. When it came to marriage, other families in Cambridge were reluctant to see their sons marry the girls from such a 'flawed' family. The ideas which Kitty and Cecil had developed on genetics and heredity were still widespread: my father's brother told me that when my parents were contemplating marriage the possibility that mental illness might be inherited was seen as a very real hurdle.

Late in her life Cecil and Kitty's daughter, my mother Elizabeth, admitted, '*It was all very sad. I wish I had known her better. They*

put her away in the hospital and we weren't allowed to talk about her. I suppose it was for our protection'.

There is a lot to be said about this remark. It is possible that it was not for the children's protection but for the protection of Cecil that what had happened to Kitty was not to be discussed. Perhaps he simply could not cope with what had befallen his wife and his son?

It may have been easier for Cecil not to have to talk about it, but the implications for his children could have been more damaging than he realised. The fact that it was a secret made both the illness and the hospitalisation seem shameful. The children were grieving for their mother and yet they were also ashamed of her and of what had happened to her. Such a secret is a heavy burden for children to bear. It makes one very grateful for the much greater acceptance of both mental illness and learning disability today.

Clearly it is unbearably sad for a child aged ten to lose her mother. However, Elizabeth's comment that she wished she had known her mother better makes it doubly saddening. She was born in 1909, that is in the year when Cadhay was bought, so her early childhood coincided with some of her mother's busiest years. Kitty was renovating Cadhay and then had to take on Hilfield in its delapidated state. With Cecil largely in Cambridge or London, she was running both households by herself. She was dealing with the effects of the First World War, welcoming solders and refugees to Cadhay and coping with the mounting death toll. She was also getting involved in committee

work in Devon. It is not surprising that the children complained they did not see much of her and that little Elizabeth felt she did not know her mother as well as she would have liked.

Becoming a shameful secret meant that Kitty's joys and achievements, her struggles and her successes were cast into the shadows rather than brought out into the light and celebrated. Her achievements were many. She was a scientist and a writer, a poet and an artist, a loving wife and a devoted mother. I hope that this book has returned Kitty to an honoured place in the history of her family and has shown that there was a very great deal to celebrate in her life.

Chapter Twelve
Postscript

Finally, I would like to reflect a little on the experience of writing this book and on what I have learned from that experience. When I began there were people who did not want me to write it, including some of my aunts, Kitty's daughters. They explained that they did not think it would be helpful to revisit such painful events. I hope that this will not be the case and that the book will have given an interesting and sympathetic insight in the lives of those whose story it tells.

The account I have presented here is based on the wealth of material which has survived – diaries, letters, photographs and documents of many different sorts. It seemed important to let the voices of those most involved be heard as clearly as possible. This means that the account comes largely from the perspective of those who kept the diaries, wrote the letters, took the photographs and stored away the documents. The voices which might have been critical of that account are largely missing.

Seen through a twenty first century lens there is much in this story which readers may find disturbing. What created so much distress at the time, Kitty's mental illness and Lawrence's learning disability, are not now causes of shame to be hushed

up and suppressed. However, I personally have been disturbed in writing this book by some other issues which seem not to have been problematic at the time. And it is likely that there are features of my account, which I have taken for granted, but which will cause amazement or shock to future generations.

The section on eugenics and on Cecil and Kitty's work on heredity was particularly hard to write. With hindsight there are clear links between these debates and some of the darkest years in twentieth century history. Nazi policies related to the 'Final Solution', and to the murder of specific groups considered 'undesirable', all reflected ideas developed by those who wrote about eugenics. Cecil and Kitty's suggestion in *The Family and the Nation* that the 'feeble minded' should be discouraged from having children may not have been read by Hitler, but ideas like this were reflected in the Nazi programme which led to the sterilisation of 375,000 people with disabilities.

It was also hard to reconcile the casual acceptance of affluence which permeates the books, letters and diaries written by Kitty and Cecil with wider knowledge about the realities of the world in which they lived. One example of this came when Kitty wrote in her book, *The Upbringing of Daughters*, that the annual expenditure of the household ought to amount to £725 per year. She seemed to be making a point about the need to be careful with money, but the fact was that her ideal budget was more than four times the average income at the time and more than seven times the average farm worker's income. It is true that Kitty and Cecil were poor compared with the enormous wealth of some members of Kitty's wider family, particularly

the male members, as evidenced by the flow of provisions from the parents in Liverpool to the young family in Cambridge. However, compared with most British people at the time Kitty and her household were extraordinarily privileged.

There are many alternative narratives which might have been presented. For example, I found it striking that Kitty had so little engagement with the great issues of her day: feminism, socialism and pacifism. Many incidents in her life might have made her aware of the gender discrimination which was rife in the Holt family, from the banishing of the girls from the family home after the incident with Lawrence's dog, described in chapter 7, to the fact that it was the brothers and not the sisters who benefited from Philip Holt's will, as described in chapter 8. The descendants of the 'brothers' continued to benefit from the immense profits from the Blue Funnel shipping line; the descendants of the 'sisters' have had to make their own way in the world. Many of her friends at Cambridge went on to be active in the women's suffrage movement, while her aunt Georgie Meinertzhagen attended suffrage meetings, marches and demonstrations, often accompanied by her daughters. However, it seems that Kitty was not concerned about the discrimination experienced by so many women at the time.

She also seems to have been largely uninterested in socialism and in the inequalities which characterised the world in which she lived. She was clearly a good employer, caring for those who worked for her and being rewarded by their long-term loyalty. But she was also a very privileged person in an unequal world. Many members of Kitty's wider circle were very much engaged

in the struggles of the time. As we have seen in chapter 3, at Cambridge she was interested in reading Today, the socialist paper, and had some friends who were socialists. In chapter 4 we saw that after she left university she visited the Southwark Women's Centre and met some of the most radical women of the day. She must have been aware of the work which her aunt Beatrice Webb was doing with the trades unions and with the setting up of the Fabian Society, the Labour Party and the New Statesman journal. Her cousin, Stephen Hobhouse, was a leading pacifist of the day. Perhaps Cecil, who described himself as coming from a traditional Tory background, did not encourage any radical tendencies in his wife?

Thinking about the legacy left by Kitty and Cecil has led me to realise that I, too, may have been influenced by them, sometimes without even being aware of it. I too went to Cambridge and went on to work in a university, do research and write books. I have been happy in several of the houses where they lived.

Something that I did not realise at the time, but which struck me as I wrote, was the way in which my academic work has explored issues which have emerged from this family history. My professional life was spent as a social researcher. The topics which I investigated included the control and allocation of money within the family, domestic violence, support for families caring for a child with a learning disability and the provision of care for people with mental illnesses. I did all this research when I knew hardly anything about Kitty and was unaware of the significance of these issues in her life. I cannot believe it was just a coincidence.

I have learned a lot from writing this book but would like to mention just three topics. First, I have learned the value of seeing someone in the context of their whole life course and not just at one stage. It is easy to be misled, when meeting an older person, to fail to see the very different people which they have been at different stages in their lives. Remembering my grandfather as an old man made it hard for me to see, until I wrote this book, that he was also the romantic young man courting Kitty in the Trinity Gardens, the happy father playing with his new baby and the serious scientific researcher working in the Cavendish labs. Remembering the trauma of their mother's illness may have overshadowed her children's memory of the loving, hardworking and efficient mother she had been for much of her adult life.

Secondly, doing research for this book has highlighted for me the way in which family history can provide insights into larger, national or global history, what some historians call 'Big History'. This book has thrown light on many of the events happening in the wider world. Kitty's grandparents on both her father and her mother's side were among the entrepreneurs of the second half of the nineteenth century, making fortunes from building railways across the world, developing merchant shipping routes around the British Empire and trading in cotton and other goods. In the story told here we can see the impact of the wealth they accumulated and some of the opportunities and problems it created.

Cecil's scientific research work was for a time at the forefront of investigation and he and Kitty were discussing that work with some of the leading scientists of the day; the story in chapter 6 of the radium which was spilled on the floor of the lab must surely

be of interest to historians of science? There have been many accounts of the horrors of the fighting in the First World War but perhaps fewer accounts of the impact of the war at home. Kitty's struggles to welcome Belgian refugees, provide emergency accommodation for soldiers or deal with the bereavements which affected every family remind us that what occurs on the world stage can have a powerful impact at home. The family's experience of mental illness and learning disability tells us much about the ways in which people with disabilities were perceived in the early twentieth century and about the role of the enormous institutions built to house them, but now largely demolished.

Thirdly, writing this book has made me value the wealth of material which was left for us by earlier generations. Sometimes I wondered why they kept the family diaries and their own private diaries, why they collected letters in leather-bound volumes and photographs in albums, why they retained wills and deeds and other documents. However, I was very grateful that they had done so and I think it is important that we do so too. What records will we leave for future generations? Are we keeping diaries, printing out emails and photos, retaining the key records of our lives? It may be that these things do not matter. However, the experience of writing this book has led me to believe that there is much to be learned from the past and that life stories can help us to think about where we have come from, how we might choose to live now and what we might hope for in the future.

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Appendix 1

The Batcombe Road

There's a road climbs onto the Batcombe Hill
Where the sky and the bare downs meet,
'Tis washed by the tears of the salt west wind
And trodden by dusty feet.

It leaves the church with the golden tower.
With the green mounds under the grass,
And goes upward away through the thorn-strewn slopes,
Where the nibbling down sheep pass.

Just as it reaches the top of the hill
It turns out of sight and is gone,
And some folk say that it comes to an end
And some that it travels on.

O Batcombe road climbing onto the hill,
What is this tale you tell?
For the dust and the tears, the graves and the thorns,
Belong to life's road as well.

And at last wherever life's track may turn
We needs must step into the West,
Where some folk say that we journey on
And some, that we come to rest.

But pondering upon it I think I know
What they mean, for don't you see,
That one may be true – if you know the road,
And the other be true for me.

Just for the moment, I've something to do,
But the time will come, no doubt,
To lay down my scrip and take up my staff
And find the answer out.

Note

Batcombe is a small hamlet in Dorset near Hilfield, the estate which Cecil inherited from his uncle, William Bide in 1916. This poem comes from a book of poems written by his wife, Catherine, and published in the year before she became ill.

C. D. Whetham (1918) *Occasional Verses in Wartime*, Cambridge, Bowes and Bowes

Appendix 2

Upwater Lodge

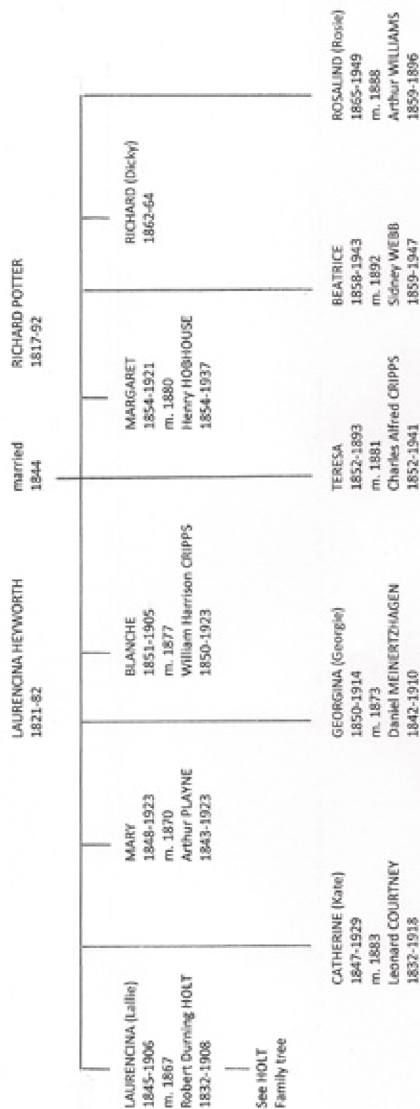
Green meadow sloping gently to the river
Where poplars stand in line along the dyke,
Where snipe and heron, coot and duck find cover
Safe from pursuit save rat and straying tyke.

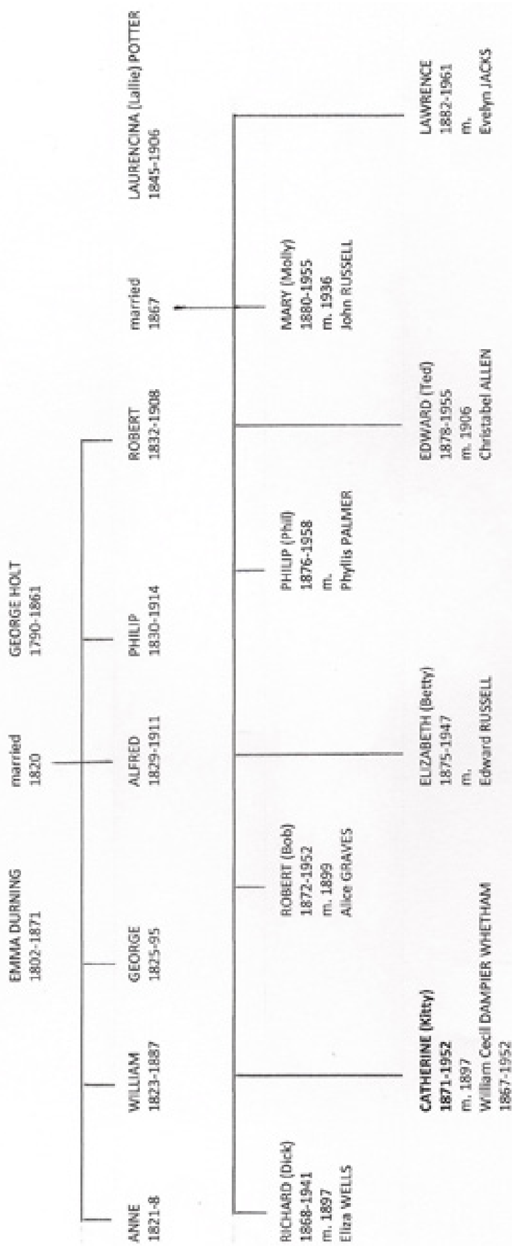
Here ninety years ago a house was built,
The chestnuts planted firm on shingle top;
Beneath the orchard, Roman graves were split
To find deep soil for fruit and kitchen crop.

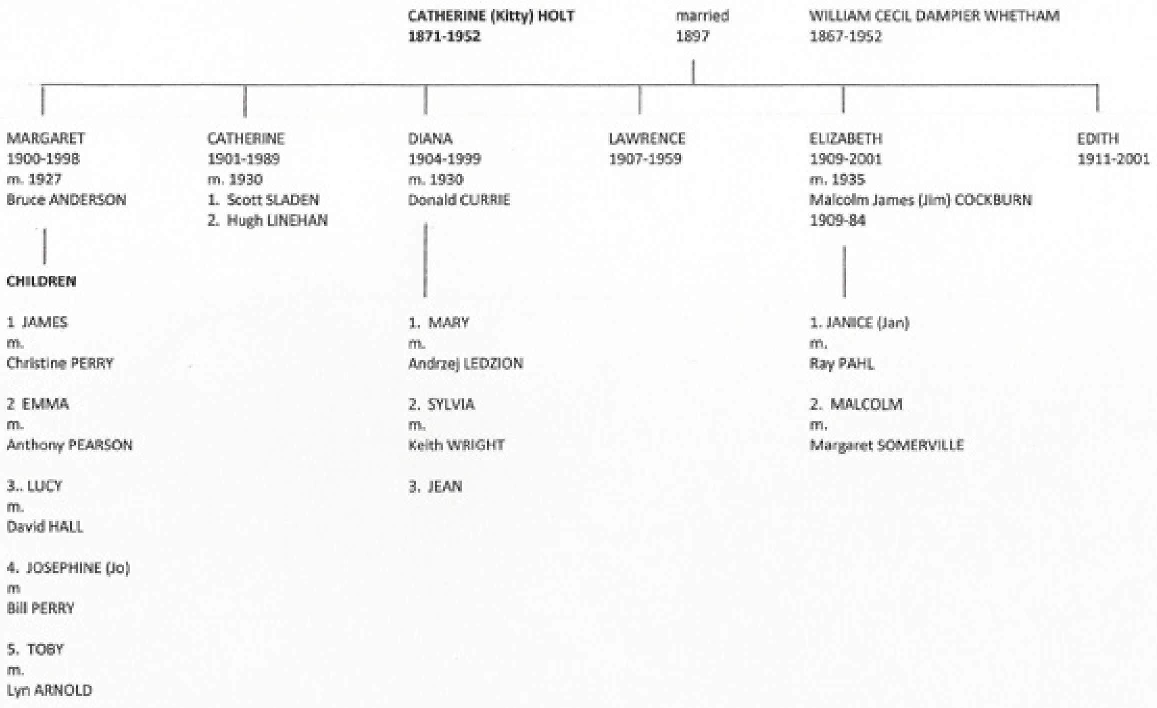
Here once again the children run and play,
Not knowing those who planted, built and planned
In hope fulfilled that here a home should stay
For those they bred and taught to love this land.

By Edith Whetham
1991

APPENDIX 3 POTTER FAMILY TREE




APPENDIX 4 HOLT FAMILY TREE
EMMA DURNING
1802-1871
married
1820
GEORGE HOLT
1790-1861
ANNE
1821-8
WILLIAM
1823-1887
GEORGE
1825-95
ALFRED
1829-1911
PHILIP
1830-1914
ROBERT
1832-1908
married
1867
LAURENCINA (Lallie) POTTER
1845-1906
RICHARD (Dick)
1868-1941
m. 1897
Eliza WELLS
CATHERINE (Kitty)
1871-1952
m. 1897
William Cecil DAMPIER WHETHAM
1867-1952
See WHETHAM
Family tree
ROBERT (Bob)
1872-1952
m. 1899
Alice GRAVES
ELIZABETH (Betty)
1875-1947
m.
Edward RUSSELL
PHILIP (Phil)
1876-1958
m.
Phyllis PALMER
EDWARD (Ted)
1878-1955
m. 1906
Christabel ALLEN
MARY (Molly)
1880-1955
m. 1936
John RUSSELL
LAWRENCE
1882-1961
m.
Evelyn JACKS


APPENDIX 5 WHETHAM FAMILY TREE
CATHERINE (Kitty) HOLT
1871-1952
married
1897
WILLIAM CECIL DAMPIER WHETHAM
1867-1952
MARGARET
1900-1998
m. 1927
Bruce ANDERSON
CATHERINE
1901-1989
m. 1930
1. Scott SLADEN
2. Hugh LINEHAN
DIANA
1904-1999
m. 1930
Donald CURRIE
LAWRENCE
1907-1959
ELIZABETH
1909-2001
m. 1935
Malcolm James (Jim) COCKBURN
1909-84
EDITH
1911-2001
CHILDREN
1 JAMES
m.
Christine PERRY
2 EMMA
m.
Anthony PEARSON
3.. LUCY
m.
David HALL
4. JOSEPHINE (Jo)
m
Bill PERRY
5. TOBY
m.
Lyn ARNOLD
1. MARY
m.
Andrzej LEDZION
2. SYLVIA
m.
Keith WRIGHT
3. JEAN
1. JANICE (Jan)
m.
Ray PAHL
2. MALCOLM
m.
Margaret SOMERVILLE