# The Life Story of Marjorie Ferard

# née Smyth

*Widow of Colonel Cecil Ferard MC, RA, and*
*mother of Elizabeth Monica Lady Janion and George Charles Hawkesworth Ferard*

Originally published privately 1986, first published online 2011, formatted for 'booklet' printing.

For further information or permissions, contact dominic@ferard.co.uk.

Edition: 2019-12-19

By the same author:

Musing and Amusing – Selected Poems

# The Life Story of Marjorie Ferard née Smyth

*Widow of Colonel Cecil Ferard MC, RA, and mother of Elizabeth Monica Lady Janion and George Charles Hawkesworth Ferard*

## Contents

## *Editor's Note*

This autobiography, dictated by Marjorie my grandmother c.1982, was first typed and circulated c.1986. In producing this typeset copy, I have also used some of the author's hand-written annotations, and I have added some photos. The text has been reordered a little, especially the earlier sections, but otherwise the words are the author's.

George Ferard wrote on the front of one copy 'quite a lot of facts and dates are wrong!' and this is certainly true. Marjorie was more concerned about telling a good story than about factual accuracy, and she had little opportunity to check dates or other details while dictating. In a few particularly egregious cases I have added footnotes.

I would like to thank my cousin Vanessa Jones for her help in locating images of Knockdrin in Canada.

*Dominic Ferard, March 2011 / March 2012*

## *Foreword*

This has all been recorded at Caragh Villa in Ibiza, and I want to thank most gratefully Mrs Suzanne Flindell West [?] who has with great devotion sorted and written and typed all these chaotic memoirs for posterity. As I am aged 90 and have had a stroke and been partially paralysed, I have now made my home in Somerset with my son-in-law and daughter Rear Admiral Sir Hugh Janion and Monica (née Ferard). He commanded the Royal Yacht Britannia for the Queen for seven years.

## *Childhood: India and England*

I was born in India on the 1st August 1896 in Belgaum, Bombay Presidency, and baptised in church there. Mrs Tweedie (Aunt Emily - 'Aunty Mill', née Smyth) was my Godmother and Uncle Harry Levinge was my Godfather. Shortly after my birth my parents and I returned to England, my father, an Army Officer, being posted to Beverley, Yorkshire as he was in the East Yorkshire Regiment.

Very early memories I have are of the celebrations at the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and because of the celebrations, the gorse on Tunbridge Wells Common caught fire. I remember seeing the Police, in silhouette, running about, trying to control the crowds, and at the same time, trying to help the fire services to douse the raging fires. I remember getting into terrible trouble as for the occasion, I had put on a beautiful gold snake brooch, given to me by my father, and I had lost it. I was four years old. My brother Thomas Reginald Hawkesworth Smyth was younger than me by one year. He had bright waving red hair.

My mother took me by the hand into the nursery in Hull, to see a little box, lined with white satin, which I put flowers in. In it lay another baby brother, Dennis who had died with convulsions just a few days old. My

mother returned home after receiving congratulations from friends nearby to find the nurse standing at the head of the stairs with the new baby upside-down, quite blue in the face and dead. My father was a Captain in the East Yorkshire Regiment at the time and he was recruiting officer for the Regiment.

The (rented) house in Hull was at 89 Westbourne Avenue, almost next-door to the Polo ground. He used to play a great deal and suffered injuries, and as a Subaltern fell off and broke his nose on the gravel. He hated horses ever after. My mother on the contrary loved them and hunted at West Meath in Ireland. She had a habit made by an Irish country tailor and she told him it was a bit tight across the shoulders, "Ah sure, Miss" he said, "I'll let it out the bredth o'the black o'mi nail."

When I was born my mother spent the whole night being pushed about to avoid roof leaks in the monsoon weather. On board ship, on our return to England, Mrs Honeyset, took me as an infant into her cabin to care for me as my mother was too ill to look after me.

We returned to Hull in Yorkshire, to the 1st Battalion H.Q. of the Regiment, my father was a junior (or canteen?) Major and very conceited. He played the flute. He was also extremely jealous and wouldn't allow my very pretty mother, with titian red curly hair, to go out for midnight picnics and parties. We lived there eighty-seven years ago.

Mother had twenty-five canaries in Father's smoking room at Hull, which had divisions of cages so that the birds could fly the full length of the room, when they were removed. She showed the birds at Crystal Palace with great success. She kept them until one day Billy, her favourite canary caught a cold from her and died. After that she lost interest in the birds. She had a pet swallow as a girl and used to whistle the bird from the top of the towers in Knockdrin Castle, her home. He

would come down to her hand, until one year, of the third migration, he did not return.

Tommy had a trick. He would sit at the street corner in Hull and howl, shedding real tears, and old ladies used to come along and give him a penny to be a good boy and go along with nanny. He made a small fortune and waited till they were out of sight and started all over again.

I remember my brown pram. My nanny's chief joy was to visit the Cemetery where she loved to see the marble angels. Mother thought the air was not good, and very unhealthy!

In 1897 my brother Thomas Reginald Hawkesworth Smyth was born. The next year Dennis was born, but died in infancy. Then my sister Constance Gwendoline was born in 1910[1]. She died on 1st January 1926[2] - when I was 28 and in Switzerland. She was a most amazing artist, horses being her speciality and could dash off a jibbing or a rearing horse at a moment, but put a rider on his back and she failed. The pencil drawing of the 'family of lions' drawn by Gwen was thought, by Desmond Kenny the artist of 'Camelias', to be the work of a fully grown adult. She died of oedema of the lung, the rarest form of pneumonia then known, and from which there was no known cure. At fourteen my sister was out shooting in the covers with Tommy, and came in with a feverish cold. Mother sent her to bed. The child got worse. That was the last night of the Old Year. The doctor said there was no need to sit up with her and gave her something to help her to sleep. Her breathing became laboured and she could neither cough nor swallow and froth was coming from her lips. At 1 o'clock in the morning, she wished my Mother a

[1] Actually 6 March 1911

[2] The official record is 31 December 1925 but see Marjorie's comment later in this paragraph

Happy New Year and died. On this very day I became engaged to Cecil and was in Switzerland and knew nothing of the sad event.

## *Family History*

My mother was Constance Levinge. Her father Henry Levinge adored her. He never inherited the title, owing to a family feud - the title missed a generation. The Levinges were brilliant, but the Hawkesworth Smyths were undistinguished.

Mother's home was Knockdrin Castle, meaning Hill of Strife, four miles from Mullingar, Co Westmeath, Eire. The marriage between Constance and Hawke, was to please my mother's father, as he longed for this alliance between the two neighbouring families. Wellington proposed to one of her forebears, but was refused. The Earl of Sligo wanted to marry my Aunt Florrie, her elder sister, who turned him down.

Knockdrin Castle

The Levinge family stemmed from King Harold's brother Leofwine who was a ‘Knight of the Saxon Shore’. One of the four oldest families in England.

One of the last people to be executed at Tyburn was Earl Ferrers, a Levinge ancestor of mine, dressed in white satin and blue ribbons, and the whole of London turned out to cheer him. This was in early Georgian times. He'd shot his Irish Steward dead, and this is recorded in the National Biography.

The Smyth family is descended from Thomas Cromwell whose name was Smyth[3]. He sent relatives onto agricultural land in Ireland to settle the unrest, under the British flag. If you look him up in the National Biography you will see his name is Smyth and one whose family settled on the rich lands of central Ireland. He was an adviser to Henry VIII. Before that the Smyth family came from Rosedale Abbey in Bradford, Yorkshire, having rented or bought it from the Earl of Warwick. Miss Hawkesworth of Hawkesworth Hall – which is now an old people's home – figures in Ancient Houses of Yorkshire. She was an heiress and brought much money with her when she married into my family.

My father Thomas Gibbons Hawkesworth Smyth (Hawke) was brought-up knowing he was going to inherit Ballynegall with 1,600 acres; he had two sisters (Aunt Eleanor and Emily or Milly - Mrs Gloucester of E Yorks) and was the only son of the family. He was ruined as a young man, and could do no wrong.

I and my family used to go home to Ballynegall, Mullingar, West Meath in Ireland, where we fished, shot birds - grouse driven in the bogs. This property and neighbouring property Knockdrin Castle, mother's old home, were adjoining properties, separated only by a high road. Knockdrin Castle is now owned by an Austrian Count, where he shoots and runs a saw mill. There are two very fine lakes to Knockdrin Castle where 20lb pike have been caught.

Grandfather and my mother used to make fishing nets by hand, and then lots were drawn for the workmen cottagers to have fish for Fast Day Friday in R.C. Ireland. Wonderful Hunt Balls were held in Knockdrin

[3] The connection if true at all was probably more complex than this, but Thomas Cromwell's father Walter Cromwell (often described as a 'poor man') was also known as Walter Smyth. [Ed.]

Castle and Ballynegall. I do not remember these events, as they happened in a generation before.

## *Ireland: Ballynegall*

Ballynegall in its heyday

When I was eleven years old, Grandfather, Captain Smyth, invited Constance and Hawke, my mother and father, and my family to join his household in Ballynegall, as he was alone and growing old, both his daughters by now being married. There were three drives, each a mile long. Visitors could be seen ages before their arrival! The reception rooms were splendid and in immaculate order, and the servants lived in squalor.

I was always fishing, shooting and 'calling' with Mother.

There is a famous story of the 12lb trout caught on Lough Corrib, Connemara. Tommy my brother was very badly wounded in the First World War and came home to recuperate. Mother took him down to Connemara for some fishing and in the process she hooked a big fish, and gave the rod to Tommy who played the fish and caught it. Whose fish was it? This wrangle went on till death when my mother left him the stuffed trout in its glass case – and nothing else in her Will.

Tommy was brought up to be heir to the place 'Ballynegall' meaning 'town of the Stranger' in Gaelic, but as our father lived till he was 89, he thought my brother too old to inherit, and have double death duties to pay, so Tommy's eldest son Michael inherited and after a few years he sold the property to a solicitor from Cork, for his daughter and son-in-law. They were driven out by the cold after two years, as the house had no central heating.

In Grandfather's day one hundred tons of coal came in by train from Dublin each year, just for the house. The Steward and head gardener had a share of the coal too. Mowing of the lawns was done by Billy a Welsh

pony, who mowed in leather boots. He died aged 30 years old. In the walled garden we grew melons, orchids, grapes and peaches; all looked after by nine gardeners.

In Connemara the women dressed their little boys in scarlet flannel petticoats, as security against them being taken by the fairies. These flannel petticoats were worn by women – and widows, in their case with a black band around the hem. Another theory was that the trousers were too difficult to make. The very rich black dye comes from snow-white water lily roots. The cattle in Connemara were called 'the cripples' and they used to eat the clothes hanging drying in the cottage gardens.

In Macroom, Co Cork and in Waterford, the women still wear black cloaks with huge hoods to cover their faces from the Cromwellian soldiers. We used to call them ‘The Hoodies’.

I used to [cry] when my mother warned we were to go out ‘calling’ and make my eyes so red she wouldn't take me. I've more or less always been a lone wolf and shunned society and yet when I attended any gatherings, I always enjoyed it, even though I hated the thought of it!

Our Protestant Church was inside the boundary of Ballynegall and near the border with Knockdrin. It was built by mother's and father's families, and served the two properties. All the servants attended the church, called Portnashangan. I played the harmonium for them for twenty-three years. Ballynegall was designed by Samuel Johnson and now has fallen into a ruin. That same architect, a Georgian, designed Trinity College and the Bank of Ireland. Thirteen servants used to run the house with four storeys and a flat roof, a porch, and a huge conservatory. A green hood covered the bath area in the bathroom.

Servants slept downstairs in the basement, in box-beds with hoods made of wood over them. Mother scrapped them when she became chatelaine. The flooring in the basement was of stone flags.

There was a bell code in our home. A long rope was pulled to summon a visitor's carriage from the stable yard, and four strokes were made if any member of the family was required.

During the 1st World War, my father was always goading me to go and 'do something for the country', but never gave me even a copper to go to London. I cared not for him, neither he for me.

My mother was very suspicious about the awful smells of drains in Ballynegall and waited until Grandfather went to a Board Meeting as Director of M.G.W. Railway in Dublin (he went by canal boat and ate boiled mutton and caper sauce). Plumbers were then called in to find that all the pipes in the house were burst and solid – with sewage running down inside all the walls, an appalling state. Mother faced her father-in-law with this news on his return. All he said was "What's good enough for us is good enough for you Connie." My mother said that unless this was put right we would leave immediately. My Grandmother died in 1895 of septic throat. (She was a Miss Bessie Ankletell-Jones, from a Connemara family.) My mother insisted that something be done about the drains and so Grandfather had them cleared. Wheelbarrow-loads of solid sewage were wheeled from the house. Every pipe in the house was burst and the men were literally sick and had to be given barrels of ale.

I was confirmed at the age of about 15 by Archdeacon Scott at the small town of Bray, Co Wicklow, Ireland, because I was at the French School there, my parents having motored up from our home for the occasion. In the pew in front of me sat a man with gills, this is an extremely rare sight, and is a throwback of countless millions of years to the earliest origins of man. Both sides of his neck were open, as in the gills of a fish, and were flanged inside with red gills pulsing rhythmically with each breath, and it was obvious that he was precluded from wearing a collar or a muffler (as disguise, for self-protection), for this would have interfered with his breathing. I was completely entranced and nudged all the friends within reach to share in my phenomenon, and I had to be

prodded to go up to the Bishop! After the Service I dashed up to my parents outside the Church and told them what I had seen, and my Father said it was a vary rare sight – but that as Recruiting Officer for the East Yorkshire Regiment he had rejected a man as being unfit for service with the Army ,for exactly the same reason. Needless to say, I have never forgotten my Confirmation Day!

Another episode from my long distant past occurred while we were salmon fishing on the river Dee in Co. Louth. We did not own this fishing, but rented the lodge and water from a Miss O'Reilly for the season, usually till July when the river fell too much for sport. I used to catch some 33-35 salmon, all of them spring fish and averaging 18 lbs apiece. My best fish weighed 30 lbs and my best day was 3 fine salmon! We paid our rent by sending fish by rail up to Dublin to McCabe the big Fish merchants. There came a day when I was alone at our salmon Lodge, my Mother having gone back to supervise the running of the estate in my Father's absence, when our ghillie-cum-water-bailiff came to me and told me that as his wife was expecting a baby that day, he was going to get the midwife – and he vanished and did not return. Time wore on and I went to see the woman, and finding her in need of help I got on my bike and went round all the nearer cottages asking for some woman to come to help. Every single one refused, because the patient was Protestant (and they were all Catholics) so I went back and tackled the job myself – I was about 15 at the time! I was absolutely without any knowledge of what to do, but got through it all safely and even cut the umbilical cord – with a rusty pair of old kitchen scissors! It was a girl and they called her "Marjorie". The nurse came in the evening and said all was well – and that she couldn't have done better herself! My Mother was furious with me when she returned – but I learnt a lot!!!

Another time, years later in the Northwest province of India, I saw a horse up for Auction –very old, covered with sores and hardly able to stand. I went into the ring and ordered that the horse be withdrawn from

sale. I then had it sent down to a vet for his opinion, and said I would call next day. When I did I was told he had immediately destroyed it . I have acted on impulse all my life!

Which reminds me: I have also seen an albino man, with snow white hair and red ruby eyes; a revolting sight –but greatly to be pitied. Not much difference between him and us – merely a matter of pigment.

My father had dew ponds made at Ballynegall to provide water for the stock in the fields. They had to be puddled properly to prevent leakages.

I've travelled by rail in Ireland with a calf in my carriage - a black one - just wandering about, shoved in!

In Scotland my blue pyjamas flew from the mast-head at The Old Place at Mochrum one wild night when I was there after a grouse shooting party (without my parents!). It belongs to Lord Bute.

I was going to the shooting party in Mochrum in Scotland from my home via Belfast. There was a great crowd round the luggage van, and I asked my porter what was happening. “Sure, Miss, there is twenty-six ferrets loose all over the luggage from their travelling-crate, and sure, Miss, the train can't go till they have them caught’” “Is no one attempting to catch them?” “No Miss, sure no one durst go in there to catch them, they'd bite yer.” And then I said I'd catch them (wanting to be on the train myself with a vested interest!) So I caught the twenty-six while the porter very sportingly worked the lath which had come loose on their travelling-crate. I now realize, looking back, that I had spoilt all their fun. I was accustomed to handling ferrets at home and did so by making the noise of a rabbit and while their attention was distracted, catching them round the back of the neck. They would stick their legs straight out and spread paws, so I had to get their heads down and shove them in with an “in you go, you heart of gold” which made the passengers laugh.

My father farmed 1,600 acres in Ireland at Ballynegall. Thirty-five men and nine in the garden, also a blacksmith, saddler, head gardener, steward etc. - a self-supporting community - and an artificial lake stocked with pike and perch. All these lived in our own cottages.

My mother, Constance, was the second daughter at Knockdrin Castle, the neighbouring estate to Ballynegall and it was my grandfather's greatest wish that the two estates should inter-marry. My mother worshipped her father, and she was in India as a young wife when she heard of his death. It was a shock that she never really recovered from. Her marriage was called by the country-folk, the Marriage across the Road. I was very much the young lady and the country-folk curtsied when I passed and called me 'Alannah' which means darling or dearest in Gaelic.

At one time as a girl I bred Blue Beveren rabbits for fun and treated the skins with alum and salt. My buck was eaten one night by a fox who upset his coop and I then gave it all up. Later at Caragh Lodge I grew dahlias. I was in the field one day and heard and saw a hawk holding a rabbit in the air. The bird was screaming and clamouring and its mate flew off her nest and came fluttering below... and he dropped the rabbit to her and she caught it mid-air in her talons, then away to her nest and the babies. I heard the youngsters shrieking as they tore it to pieces. This is known as 'The Pass' and it is not common to see it.

When I was eleven I ran away from school, Morehampton House. It was kept by the three Miss Wades at Morehampton Road, in Dublin. I was very unhappy there and decided to run away with two friends. We bought tickets and on being closely questioned we said we were going to see sick uncles in the country – in Belfast and in Drogheda – with one hundred miles between them! We fled and hid in the Ladies Loo till the train came in and flung ourselves flat on the floor so as not to be seen through the windows. We were missed soon after, and two mistresses went to the station and demanded that the train should be stopped and

searched at the first stop. The authorities said it wasn't their job to look after runaway school girls – so we escaped. At Drogheda I got a jaunting–car and asked the driver to drive me to Collon where we then lived, some seven miles away. He asked me for the fare, and I said "my father will pay"... I was taken back to school the next day and the rest of the term was misery – walks –meals – sleeping – lessons supervised by one mistress, alone for fear we would contaminate the other girls. We were not to speak to anyone for the whole term. Mercifully my parents took me away at the end of this.

I then went to the French school at Bray south of Dublin on the East coast of Ireland where we spoke French every day but Sundays. I was there for six years and cultivated a fine French with broad Irish brogue. I did very well, passing Preliminary Junior and Senior Oxford exams from thirteen year old onwards. The school wanted me to take the Higher Locals but Mother said no, she didn't want a blue-stocking daughter.

Going down to the compost heap one evening at Caragh Lodge, I came across a huge brindled heap and not knowing what it was I ran my hand down the back, and found it was a badger, eating a pear. He turned and looked at me and then ambled off into the woods. My dog barked wildly. I think he was very young, or old, and deaf.

My mother and I found a hollow chestnut tree on an island on our lake at Ballynegall. In the scar of the fallen tree was an otter. We both stroked the back and luckily it couldn't turn to bite us.

We had our own laundry at Ballynegall, with three laundry maids, and one day one of the kitchen maids came up to mother and asked if she could take her washing to the laundry. "Yes of course, but why ever do you come and ask me, the laundry maids should do all the washing." "They won't M'm because I'm only the kitchen maid." Mother went and told the laundry maids to take the kitchen maid's clothes and have no more nonsense. They simply bundled it up again and returned the

kitchen maid's clothes without being washed. Mother gave them all the sack, and they started the "Hail Mary, Mother of God" and other theatricals, which made no impression on my mother. She then sent all the house linen away to the steam laundry, and closed the house private laundry, after having found out from the Miss Deases (local kindly ladies, teaching the country women to launder properly) that she had been providing washing materials for over one hundred people a week instead of the seventeen people in the household.

Mother asked a new house maid, "And what would you like us to call you, by your surname or your Christian name?" "Well M'm, they used to call me 'Little Peach' at my last place." She didn't last very long!

At Ballynegall there were great candelabra in the hall, with sconces underneath to catch the colza oil drips. These were very handsome and made of ormulu. The inner haft was the length of a cricket pitch with alcoves and plaster statues of Greek gods and great pillars dividing the inner from the outer hall.

At Ballynegall, we all slept in four-poster beds and climbed up into them on mahogany steps. We always ate breakfast downstairs in the dining room, where we were presented with all that one would expect in such an establishment!

Admiral Hawkesworth was the last resident of Hawkesworth Hall, and he came to salmon-fish in Ireland: thus I met him[4]. Hawkesworth is a baptismal name of mine and not hyphenated. Several of my grandfather's brothers rose to the rank of General. While I was staying with my son George who lives in Stockton-on-Tees, Yorkshire, we

[4] Some information about the Hawkesworth family is found at

https://web.archive.org/web/20180415192545/http://home.zipworld.com.au/~lnbdds/home/hawksworth.htm.

visited Rosedale Abbey and saw the old ruin and part of the walls and outer staircase.

I will mention here that while George was doing his National Service in Malaya and during one of his leave breaks, he trekked up the East coast and down the West coast of that country, returning to Singapore where he found his troopship ready to sail in six hours. In the meantime his berth had been reallocated, as the authorities had given him up for lost in the Jungle; but by dint of borrowing money from the Malay police and leaving all his shoes behind, he tumbled on board. During that period he made friends with someone in the RAF who flew him over the jungle and they met a tropical storm; the plane, an Auster, was forced down in the jungle and they survived. Another time he lost his Service revolver while trekking and had to retrace his footstep miles in the jungle to find it (it is a dire offence, punishable by Court Martial to lose a Service weapon). He was on his way to University College Oxford. He was seventeen years with ICI and now buys streets of houses in Stockton-on-Tees and reconditions them, and does very well.[5]

Mother would go down to see the cook and arrange meals for the day and distribute all that was required for the day and write orders for the town as required, which was visited three times a week. Dahlias and lilies and other garden produce were taken from the gardens by rail in travelling boxes. We had our own blacksmith, harness maker etc. – we were quite independent, and thirty-five men normally under our employ, counting nine in the garden, all living in our own cottages.

The church was built by the Levinges and Smyths between Knockdrin and Ballynegall where services were held every Sunday, where unfortunately, I played the harmonium nearly all my life before I was

[5] For more information see George Ferard's own recollections.

married, all funerals and marriage etc. My Mother is buried there and my Father and Gwen.

Francis Johnston [1760-1829], who designed Trinity College, Dublin in 1824 [not correct], also designed our house. The banisters were all of polished brass and the mahogany handrail was inlaid with a brass strip down the middle matching the stair rods. The whole cantilevered stair-case was of white stone and completely unsupported. There is only one other staircase like it in the whole of Ireland.

My maternal grandfather was a famous botanist who presented a complete collection of the flora of Great Britain to the Science and Arts Museum of Dublin, and they had special cases built to display them in a separate room, and he also presented complete Ferns of British India to Kew Gardens, and some of the Kashmiri flora are named after him as a compliment to him for his services to botany. He was in the P.W.D. and was concerned with the building of great dams in India, and he was very much loved by the country people living around Co. Westmeath.

We were fortunate to have no one billeted under our roof at Ballynegall. South Ireland wanted to be self-governing. Ulster Protestant North Ireland wished to keep within the British Isles and remain loyal to the throne.

Heaps of the Irish joined up and fought very bravely for the Allies in World War 2. The first Victoria Cross of the war was awarded to a man from Westmeath called Maurice Deane. South Ireland was neutral, and the ports were open and no blockade and no conscription, no blackouts and no air attacks. All the strongholds were in the cities of Dublin, Limerick Waterford and Cork.

In World War 1, Mother and Father went to Rouen to see my brother Tommy, badly wounded at Albert. Only two people, including next of kin, were admitted. The man beside him was blown to bits in the trench.

I went to stay with my grandmother Levinge in London for three weeks at this time.

During the First World War Mother and I worked very hard making sphagnum moss dressings. We gathered the wet moss in bogs and filled mattress covers with it then brought it home and dried it and cleaned every little piece of heather and stick. All this was then delivered to work parties and made up into dressings. I grew herbs, burdock and dandelion and dried them and they didn't pay enough even to cover the cost of the rail charges. Burdock root and dandelion roots were hard to harvest unbroken, also thorn-apple, datura stranomium. All these were taken to the herb centre.

When Mother became chatelaine at Ballynegall, all the maids were moved to the top floor, and on occasions maids let down ropes to garden boys for them to refill empty whiskey bottles and for them to haul them up again. All the servants were on board wages i.e. given money for their own food, the two aunts had been too lazy to house-keep for the staff, prior to my Mother coming to Ballynegall. She found that the staff were living off the dining room and decided to change the system and asked Grandfather Smyth if she could cater for the servants on a one month trial period. With ill grace, he relented and found that bills were smaller feeding the entire staff of thirteen than for himself alone. The whole staff gave notice, headed by the butler. Grandfather never touched butter but over 10lb was 'consumed' weekly in the dining room alone. A 15lb joint of beef, having only one portion cut from it disappeared to the kitchen and was never seen again. The laundry too was in chaos. Grandfather Smyth said to Mother, "My dear, there has been grave domestic treachery here." Mother's system continued.

In Ireland a maid bringing me a stool while I was making marmalade said, "You may as well sit down while you're standing up."

A Governess cart in Ireland is called ‘an Inside’. Porter shouts to the engine driver, “Mike, Mike, will you loiter the train, I see Mrs Brown’s Inside coming down the road."

## *Ireland: The Troubles (1921)*

Just at this time the Black & Tans (who were British mercenaries, and only obeyed British Officers) arrived. They would seize food and drink from the shops. I was nearly shot by them whilst exercising hunt puppies – three lorries with Black & Tans on board were shooting into the woodland, and I only saved myself by lying flat on the ground. Their object was to stop inter-county raiding and the burning of large country houses. We were all rationed for petrol. This stopped the burning of big country houses to a large degree. The Sinn Fein would force owners and staff at revolver point to pile and heap up all the furniture in the downstairs rooms — sluice with petrol and a match put to it. The Black & Tans stopped this.

All plantations of trees were planted well back from the drive for fear of people being shot at. Grandfather was under constant Police Protection and all shutters were made of solid steel. (There were Land Troubles long before the Black and Tans.)

I remember the Black and Tans vividly. They shot at random as they drove around in their lorries. I was exercising my hunt puppies one day when they came along, shooting in all directions. I threw myself flat on the ground to avoid being killed. They were British troops commandeering anything, and helped themselves to everything without payment.

We had men on the run, unknown to us, hiding in our bogs and in the icehouse, in the woods, hiding from the Black & Tans. All the windows in our home were of bullet-proof steel and you never opened the door after dark and we handed in every gun and rifle. We had heaps of blunderbusses and blasting powder which we handed over to the

Military Police. We assembled this armoury in the front hall to await removal by the police. A Constable came on his push-bike and amid laughter rode off to return the next day with a lorry. We never saw any of these things again.

At Knockdrin, Sir Edward and Lady Levinge were away and the Steward handed over a most special ceremonial dress sword that was presented by Lord Clive of India to Sir Richard Levinge of that period. It was beautifully chased, and ornamented with inscriptions and decorations. It wasn't a fighting weapon it was a dress sword. He handed it in for safety to the police so the rebels shouldn't get it and of course it was never seen again.

The rebels got to our church one night and forced the lodge-keeper to open the lodge gates and let them in, They dug up the turf and uncovered the steps leading down to the crypt under the East window of the church. They stored all their ammunition in the space between the bottom of the steps and the grill behind which were the coffins. The following night they came and removed them all. This must have been on a Friday and the removal on Saturday; we saw the turf all churned up on Sunday and asked what had happened.

During the troubles in 1921, we led a most anxious life as my Father had been a military man in the East Yorkshire Regiment. Burning of all big houses in the country was a normal occurrence. Mother stopped Kit Fleming who was ploughing one day. "I suppose it'll be our turn next." "No M'm indeed it won't M'm," and Mother said, "How do you know?" "It's my duly to know." We found out he was a leading light in Sinn Fein and word had got out that we weren't to be touched as my Father employed so much labour and so we escaped.

We always carried a plank, for use when the roads were blown-up by the insurgents, Sinn Fein (which means 'We Ourselves'.) They always left a narrow strip in the track for pedestrians or to push a bike, but not a car.

With the plank which carried the wheels over the hole, we were able to cross the hole, but we never knew if the bridge was mined.

A Battalion of the Irish Army was billeted in Knockdrin Castle, and they used a fine ceiling to floor length portrait of my great-grandfather for bayonet practice and my Mother spent a small fortune in having it repaired. There were eighteen gashes in the canvas. He was portrayed with his gun dog and Knockdrin in the background.

The Black & Tans were accountable to no one but their own officers and much hated by the Irish. We were on the Sinn Fein burning list. The British stopped petrol coming into the country so Sinn Fein couldn't get enough to burn out these large houses. The custom was to heap all furniture in each room, douse it with petrol and set fire. Heaps of friends were burnt out in this way. One family, the Coopers of Dunboden, were dining (naturally in evening dress), and a servant reported outside to Sinn Fein all they were talking about. At 9 o'clock they were ordered out in their evening clothes and the house was burned to the ground.

One of my ancestors was shot dead coming away from church by Sinn Fein, they were lying in wait in the laurels. This was a very famous murder at Barbavilla[6].

---

6 **The Barbavilla Murder by Ann Murtagh (**ISBN 0 7165 2673 5, 1999):

In April 1882, the murder of an innocent woman (Maria Smythe nee Coote) on her way home from a village church in County Westmeath sent shock waves throughout the civilised world. This study sets out to examine the murder in the context of the local tenant community, which in turn is evaluated in reference to landlord-tenant relations in Westmeath and the broader context of the Irish land question. Moreover this study contributes to the existing knowledge of the land question by appraising the complexities associated with the Barbavilla murder, which on the face of it appears to be simply one of the many agrarian crimes perpetrated during the land war. However, the author demonstrates that it also had a unique quality due to certain local characteristics. [It is not clear whether Maria was an ancestor of Marjorie's, but she was certainly a relative.]

## *Germany*

On leaving Bray at eighteen, I went to Dresden to finish for a year. Eileen Plunket and Ireme Palmer, both Irish girls, went with me and we would travel together on the train all across Europe to Dresden in the South Eastern region. We used to slip out of the English church on Sundays, and go down Prager Strasse to have chocolate and cream and gateau – with Miss Glasgow, an English mistress. We had great fun in many ways. The Yule Clap was a Germanic custom making fun of any weaknesses a girl might have –such as a vain girl would be given a tiny mirror, done up in a parcel to be opened in front of everybody or a greedy girl would be given a tiny plate piled high with food. There would be shrieks of derision and mirth from the onlookers.

The night I arrived a large bowl was handed round at supper; floating in a thick white sauce were round objects. I took one and found it was a rabbit's head looking at me with glassy eyes. I hastily hid it under potato skins. The German girl opposite me picked the eyes out of hers and ate them.

Several days later I happened to look down into the dining room of the adjacent house and there I saw a man pick up a whole leg of mutton and tear it with his teeth. This no doubt accounts for the word ‘fressen’ in German meaning ‘to eat like an animal’. We visited the china factory in Dresden and we saw plates being beautifully made and painted by hand.

I got out of Germany at the end of term July 1914, just before War was declared. Zeppelins circling round and German girls saying all the time the German Navy would sink our naval ships.

## *London & Ireland 1914-*

When I came home from Germany my mother thought I was not yet grown-up, even though I was 19, so my hair came down again and my skirt hems went up again and she sent me to another most expensive

finishing school in Queensgate, in London. We rode in The Row every day and were brought up to be young ladies — bridge, butlers, operas, newspapers, full evening dress to dine, and to Rumplemeyer for coffee. We were never allowed to sneeze or yawn and had to blow our noses, if we HAD to, out of the room. We went to the opera every week and learned the contemporary history of all European countries.

When I left Miss Douglas's Queensgate school in London, I became a 'Member of the County' with the usual tennis rounds and always expected to take my music to sing at tea. I used to sing very well, mezzo-soprano, ballads, sometimes accompanying myself. As I was so shy, it was an agonizing experience. I rode a great deal, mainly hacking which I loved. As we lived so far from other country houses, I had few friends and only met other young people at parties, otherwise I led a rather solitary life.

A frightful thing — one day mother said, "Of course you realize why all these young men come out here and play billiards, shoot and ride etc? They are here to meet you." (Young Officers stationed with the Royal Scots and East Yorkshire Regiments occupying Ireland.) I was astonished, and very much taken aback. I was very humble and unspoilt and nearly died of horror. My father begrudged my gadding about to tennis parties and wouldn't let me drive the car. I always had to have the chauffeur. Then I became engaged for three months. At the end of this time I broke it off and being very depressed, accepted an invitation to join my Uncle and Aunt, Sir Edward and Lady Levinge in Zweisimmen in Switzerland for winter sports.

It was here that I met my husband and was engaged again within three weeks. He was staying in the same hotel with his parents and one sister in the hotel called Bristol and Terminus.

## *Canada 1922? – 1924?*

Florrie, son Irton, daughter-in-law Cecil, Irton

I was salmon-fishing and Mother asked me if I'd like to go out to Canada to stay with my Uncle, Colonel Irton Eardley-Wilmot and Aunt Florrie, Mother's elder sister, (formerly Miss Levinge of Knockdrin Castle). He had been Colonel of the Bengal Lancers, now retired.

They had gone out there, fallen in love with it and settled at Shawnighan Lake on Vancouver Island, British Colombia. They built an enormous house with flag-staff – everyone else lived in shacks! They had a lady help and a Chinaman to work in the garden. The War hit them financially and both those helpers left.


S S Montcalm

So at nineteen years old I sailed out on the "Montcalm" of Canadian Pacific[7]. I was entranced with the journey over the Rockies, two days and two nights, 3,000 miles by train. Very interesting to see the huge elevators for loading grain. The trucks were so huge. When I went out I couldn't understand the huge barns for storing grain and the families living in tiny little cabins beside them.

[7] The dates are hard to reconcile. Marjorie was 19 in 1915/16, and the SS Montcalm's maiden voyage was 1922. See http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_ship.asp?sh=mont8

I went out in April, and it was like the bad lands with countless miles of bare black earth where the stubble and straw had been burned after the harvest, with not a hedge or tree as far as the eye could see. There were teams of horses, eight abreast. I asked why they didn't use tractors and someone said that they were unreliable – spare parts were very difficult to come by.

The railway engines had cow-catchers on the front and your day-berth was turned into your bed at night by the black steward. An observation carriage was at the end of the train and I spent much time taking photographs. Lakes and pine forests as far as you could see. But the Rockies were magnificent. The train stopped for us to see how the rails met from the East and from the West with a golden spike to commemorate the event - thus completing the Trans-Canadian Pacific Railway.

The rail journey ended at Vancouver where my Uncle Irton met me. He caught another ferry to cross from Vancouver to Vancouver Island, a stretch as wide as the Irish Sea, all dotted about with tiny islands.

The house was called Knockdrin after Aunt Florrie's old home in Ireland, and was in the midst of pine forests overlooking the lake, high on a hill. The system for the water supply was that my Uncle Irton went to the pump house beside the lake to start up the oil engine to pump the water up to the house. Aunt Florrie meanwhile stayed at the house and watched the weight on a string gradually descending, and when it was nearly full she would go onto the veranda and blow a whistle and the pump would be stopped.

Lake, pump house(?) to left and house to right

On one occasion the pump failed to stop in spite of the furious whistling. I was sent flying down to the lake to find out what had happened and there was Uncle Irton flat on his back, knocked out, having wound himself up by his Burberry in the fly-wheel. As far as I can remember none of us knew how to stop the wheel - I certainly didn't. Meanwhile in the house water was cascading down the stairs from the overflowing tank slopping over the banisters. People came running on hearing my screams for help and Uncle Irton was carried into the house. Aunt Florrie had got a large basin of hot water to minister to her darling husband - trod on the front of her long skirt and fell flat on the stairs.

He was a frightfully dangerous driver, we had a Ford, and he would cannon from one side of a flimsy, narrow parapet over a deep gorge to the other. Another tale of this intrepid driver was of an occasion when he roared up the drive to the golf club and couldn't stop. He had a passenger with a wooden leg which had got itself stuck under the brake pedal, and Uncle Irton was trying to stamp on the brake and having no effect owing to his passenger's leg underneath!

On another occasion we had been specially invited to see a beautiful garden. Uncle Irton charged up the avenue at about 50 mph and couldn't stop and drove over the beds of daffodils, decapitating all the flowers and everything in sight, went round and round and finally ended up having rammed a young maple tree, grazing all the bark off and smashing the headlamps, our horrified hostess was standing on her veranda and watched the whole charade. My Aunt was bouncing up and down on the back seat shouting, "Strangle darling, strangle." (They had had a car in England with a strangler device on it and she thought it reduced the

**Tennis Court and house at Knockdrin, Vancouver Island**

speed. She had no idea that this car had no strangler.) They were very much leaders of society on the Island and friends and neighbours came from miles to play tennis on one of the two timber courts and to shoot on the rifle range with moving targets. My Aunt was a crack shot and together they had masses of trophies of all kinds.

While they were in India they had all their silver stolen. It was thrown out of the train into the jungle. This happened to us too on our treks in India; one of the pack ponies would be pushed over the side of the mountain to fall hundreds of feet below for the natives' relatives to thieve from the load.

A mountain lion called a cougar in Canada or a puma and very savage, attacked a little girl and boy of seven or eight going along a mountain track. The little boy pushed his fingers into the eyes of the cougar which released his sister and saved her life. The cougar is stuffed in the Victoria Museum with the account of the brave deed.

There were lots of Siwash Indians about who lived in their settlements on the very best land, given to them by the British Government. They made leather wallets and moccasins and were dreadful thieves.

I stayed in Canada just two years and returned through the harvest, the whole country blazing with gold.

## *Early Married Life*

In Switzerland on the day that I was engaged, 1st January [1925], the two major events in my life clashed appallingly. Earlier in the day my Aunt Alys had heard the news of the death of my sister Gwendoline but I was not told about it until after dinner that evening. Somehow it cropped up in conversation that my father grew and sent to Dublin arum lilies for the Dublin market; at this my Aunt jumped up from the table and fled the dining room. I said to Uncle Ted "Whatever is the matter with Aunt Alys, shall I go to see if she's ill or some something?" I did so and found

her in floods of tears and she told me the tragic news and knew that the lilies we had mentioned would have been used for Gwen's funeral. It cast a great gloom over my engagement.

It was an exhausting return journey from Switzerland – two sea crossings to mid Ireland. Cecil had to return to his Regiment. We were married in 2 October in the Church of the Holt Trinity behind the Albert Hall in London because I was in rigid mourning for one year. We stationed in Norwich then went to the Salisbury Plain, Larkhill, where we lived in a condemned hut a few yards from Stonehenge. One night in a howling gale we were crouched over a fire to keep ourselves warm, we heard a noise like a barking dog, but Cecil said, "By God, that's the child." We rushed into her room and found our first-born Monica suffocating and fighting for breath with croup. I raced out to the garage and found some rubber tubing which I fitted over the spout of the kettle. We rigged blankets up over her cot to make a tent as a ‘hot box’ to form a steamy atmosphere, and the child recovered. I had found this information in an ancient medical book, Moores Book of Family Medicine my mother-in-law had given me. At this stage, weakness will supervene and the little patient will quietly expire.” So said ‘Moore’. I called the doctor who reassured me that only if there were epilepsy in the family was there any danger.

Cecil was never intended for the Army. He was reading Science at Oxford (University College) when World War 1 came and he joined up with his friends in King Edward's Horse. He won the Military Cross and was mentioned in Despatches on two occasions. He went through the War then to the Gold Coast with the African Rifles.

When I went out to Switzerland he was on leave, and on the verge of being posted to the 3rd Light Battery RA. We met and engaged after three weeks.

I was there to recover from a broken engagement! We were married in London on 6th October that same year as mourning (for one year) was still being observed for my sister Gwendoline.

The marriage was a quiet affair, my mother not present as she was ill, probably due to stress and grief over Gwen who was eleven years younger than I. Our honeymoon was spent in Okehampton in Devon.

Then we began soldiering in Norwich, living in the house of a senior Major while they were on leave. The servants were most unhappy that we were there, and that they were not having a holiday themselves while their employers were away.

I had great trouble with these servants who sold our food, hams, etc, at the back door to the Nuns, and they wouldn't obey any orders.

After this we were in Larkhill in a condemned Nissen hut and were frequently repairing the corrugated iron roof sheeting with sheets from a nearby rubbish dump.

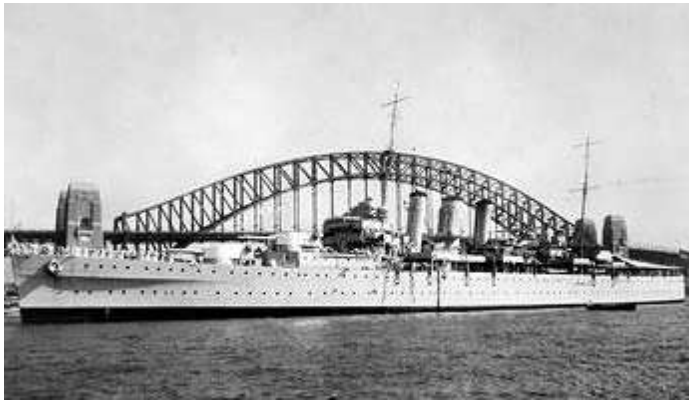
We inherited Ranelagh Cottage from Aunt Evie - a very nice house in Berkshire, furnished in the most beautiful Georgian and French furniture, also some magnificent Dutch masters. The properties were sold before Cecil inherited them. He had one brother killed in action aged nineteen and two sisters. That is why we called our son George after Cecil's brother.

Cecil's family owned two lovely homes in Berkshire - Ascot Place and Winkfield Manor (William & Mary). Uncle Charlie Ferard died and Auntie Evie née Holt inherited from him. She was of a banking family. She was a grand-dame and Cecil was apprehensive of our meeting, but it turned out that I was the only one able to make her laugh and she was very fond of me. The first time I met her she said, "I suppose you're Catholic because you're from Ireland." "No, I'm Protestant." She left me all her jewellery, which I still possess and she regretted there wasn't more. So much had gone to pay for her cataract operations. She had a dreadful companion called Miss Ablett who utterly dominated her and made great mischief.

I have been to tea at Ascot Place and was taken aback by twenty-five different types of sandwich - with flags too! Auntie Evie was a great autocrat and had great knowledge of and interest in antiques. This was a subject I enjoyed too, and that pleased her considerably.

## *India*

As a result of the croup incident we volunteered for India, and ended up on the North West Frontier. We three went out on a troop ship 'The Dorsetshire'. It was an awful journey with a small child – it took four weeks, then up country from Karachi through the Sind Desert. Just before Karachi we were horrified to see countless thousands of banded yellow and black water snakes and sharks writhing all around the bows of the ship.



HMS Dorsetshire 1929-1942 (sunk by the Japanese)

We sailed in the troop ship with the ocean stained yellow for hundreds of miles from the coast with sand washed down the rivers. I shall never

forget the marvellous smell of the hot air coming from the land and the great rivers from India taking sand many miles out into the ocean – and the heat and wonderful excitement and expectation that there was something so immense to be discovered beyond the great curtain of haze as the ship gently pulsed its way up the Bay of Bengal.

The train journey was amazing. Two days and nights through the Sind Desert. The train had fly-proof windows and shutters. The furnishings were so different to anything we had been used to – bamboo and teak and brass fittings etc. and the journey was very long and hot. I saw people recovering from smallpox on the platforms, and every time we stopped they brushed past us in our carriage armed with great baskets piled high with fresh fruit which first always had to be washed with 'pinki pani' (Potassium permanganate).

While we were in Rawalpindi a most remarkable thing happened. At Western Ridge a party of Officers who were on manoeuvres paused for the lunch break. One man, putting his hand into his rucksack to get his sandwiches pulled his hand back with a snake hanging onto the tip of his finger. So the snake was identified. He was rushed to the BMH and put to bed in a frightful state as every wound and sore and cut he'd ever had in his whole life started to pour blood. The doctors were unable to control the flow. An Indian tribesman heard of the event and came to the doctors and said “Please give me four men and a lorry and I can save this Sahib.” This was granted and they collected a lorry-load of a special grass which they tied in bundles and placed all round the ward where the patient lay, never touching him once. In seven hours, and after many incantations and prayers, the patient had recovered.

The first night of our arrival at Rawalpindi we walked out in the evening air, leaving Monica with a newly hired ayah. We came across a large area of hard-baked earth as big as a football field with a curious heap of stones in the midst of this expanse and the two of us were standing side by side when suddenly a huge furnace-blast engulfed us.

We sprang back in alarm realizing that we were standing on the top of a lime kiln. Mercifully the crust had hardened sufficiently to take our joint weights and we survived. (Twenty feet of molten lime and a very cheap funeral!)

I loved India, adored it and so did Cecil. He played polo a great deal.

A good story about an Indian cook boy - someone's native cook boy was caught straining soup through one of sahib's socks, and when reprimanded by Memsahib, he said, “But it is only one of Sahib's dirty ones.”

We spent all of our leaves in the mountains, trekking and flower-hunting in Kashmir, one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

In India, in the North West Frontier, Tar Sar was a lake we came across that stank so fearfully because the native Indians (Gujar – nomadic tribes people), drove their sheep over the hills to fresh pastures and thousands of them had died in the snow and the rains and the air was full of the smell of their rotting, drowned flesh. In the Khyber Pass anybody had sanctuary up to three hundred yards from the high road, beyond that you could be shot up and no questions asked.

The Shegai Railway Station between India and Afghanistan had a sort of gallery or balcony and a ladder to enter the fortified building which they drew up at nightfall. Everything was intensely fortified.

There was an ancient fort at Attock. Rawalpindi and Peshawar were native towns each side of the Indus River, It was a terrible place for snakes, and in the fort we had to sweep the snakes out with a broom. It is an abandoned fort commanding the far side of the Indus River. You have to carry a revolver because the Pass is commanded by Pathans, shooting down from the highest mountains above. At 4pm the Attock Bridge is closed. We were returning in our car from Peshawar and had seven holes in a tyre, made by a piece of metal plate from a man's boot, thus making

huge punctures in our tyre, and the only way to seal the last three holes was to stick the cover of the Shaler Patches made of linen, with condensed milk out of the picnic basket, having used up all the other patches already. It held good for many hundreds of miles and only came to grief when our car–boy left the lever inside the tyre, subsequently, which cut the tyre in its weak spot.

Wherever the Mogul Emperors from India went up to the hills for the cool weather, they made beautiful gardens wherever they halted. 'Pale hands I love beside the Shalimar' was a popular song of the time. The song is about one of these gardens, and I have seen it.

Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, had seven bridges over the Jhelum river. The bridges were of wood and latticed in their design. When the British came we replaced some of the native bridges with our traditional structures, which proved useless and were swept away by the monsoon waters in no time. The rivers would rise 75ft in the monsoon season. The Indus is compressed into a narrow gorge and rises above Attock Bridge. This river rises 70ft in flood. The native bridges withstood the force of the water; it ran through the lattice work.

I broke and trained very many of the Battery ponies and one day I was riding a raw youngster on a very narrow mountain track with a precipice 1000ft on my right. The pony spotted a tuft of earth that had slipped from the bank, and shied, curtseying away from it in alarm. His hind quarters slipped over the edge of the precipice. I flung myself forward over his neck and he scrambled frantically with his forefeet and clawed madly to get himself up again – which he did and stood there sweating profusely, and so did I! I took my husband to see next day 'the scene of the incident', and he said "My God".

The soldiers of the 3rd Light Mountain Battery of the Royal Artillery were recruited from the Punjabi Musulman in the North of India by Afghanistan. The Officers were immensely proud of the Queen and the

Regiment and had attended Woolwich, the Artillery Depot. Cecil and I were up in the Hazara Province.

Cecil by this time was a Colonel [??], was sent on manoeuvres to Delhi and I was with him. There are seven ancient Cities of Delhi and the Mohammedans defaced all the Hindu carvings in stone and wood because it was against their religion to depict any likeness to animals or human frame.

The Asoka Pillar would tax even modern ingenuity– it is made in one piece of steel and is entirely covered with hieroglyphics. The estimated date of it is 3000 BC.[8]

A native gentleman once invited me to visit the Taj Mahal by moonlight (unknown to me he was acquainted with my Uncle Sir Edward Levinge and it would have been quite in order, but I refused thinking it would constitute an irregularity – so I never got there and regretted it ever since). It was erected to the memory of Mumtaz Mahal, wife of one of the Mogul Kings. It should be seen by moonlight.

There are so many exquisite Palaces in Delhi. The British Government paid the Afghans and the Pathans to behave themselves in the 1930s and to keep each side of the border and not attack Peshawar.

We went home from India for a year to do a Gunnery Course lasting three months each at Woolwich, Eltham and elsewhere. We rented a house and George was born at Murree India in 1932. He was in his cot and I heard the tramp, tramp, tramp overhead and the wardrobe doors rattling in George's room. I burst into the room expecting to find it being ransacked but there was nothing there. We all heard it. A poltergeist is

[8] For more accurate information, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillars_of_Ashoka.

the only explanation we have for it. Then we were posted back to India again.

In the heat of summer we went up to the hills with the troops and our luggage went up to hills by the rope railway. 2% of everything used to fall off en route. I was so sick in the bus swaying and coasting with no brakes down thousands of feet. I had to be revived with brandy. The bus was packed with natives and hampers, chickens, calves, babies and screaming women.

At Haripur the 3rd Light RA were camped midway between Rawalpindi and Abbatobad. I was in charge of all Officers' Messes on manoeuvres. All in tents and no other Memsahibs there. I had all the groceries, wines and preserves and all the money etc. in Yak-dans (Yak burden raw hide-type of suitcase in pairs, so to make a load on each side of the animal). I had all the keys, travelling clock and money under my pillow. The camp was in an orange grove, and in a cot beside me was my baby son only three weeks old. He was fed on milk from a hump backed buffalo, whose milk is very rich and fine. In case the child stirred in the night I had a night-light. At 2 am something woke me and I glanced at the baby - sound asleep - then I glanced at the flap of the tent and it was slowly being rolled back and a native came in crawling on all fours, it was a thief and I lay and watched him and I let him come right into the middle of the tent where he stood up and looked to see what he could take. I decided against catching him because they are all oiled and armed with daggers and in his panic he would probably have stabbed me. So I sat bolt upright in bed and clapped my hands at him and shrieked "badmash, chori-wallah" "thief, ruffian" and he turned and fled, stumbling over the tent ropes. I dashed out in my nightdress calling to Cecil who was the Colonel commanding, and sleeping with our baby daughter, to rouse the troops.

The whole camp was roused and it was found that the thieves had divided into two parties, one to do the Officers' tents and mine, and the

others to do the mule lines. The man who came to my tent was the ring leader and the whole mission failed. The hoo-ha had only just died down and we'd only just returned to our tents, and then a native came singing and yelling through the lines - quite mad - and thank goodness none of us went out. He was raving mad and had just killed a man and had the axe still with him. Then he went to the Sikh temple and beat up the chowkidar (watchman) and nearly killed him. The police came out and we heard him yelling the rest of the night in the chowki. Those two events in the one night caused me sleepless nights for a fortnight.

Rory, a Subaltern then, (later Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Dennis O'Connor) said he'd never been fed so royally or cheaply as when I was running the Messing!

All our leaves we spent in Kashmir and we did some quite famous treks. 400 miles on our feet on one month - just my husband and I right up in the passes. Out of British India towards China over the Deosai Plateau - most marvellous, quite uninhabited, and only open two months a year because of the 40ft of snow and no roads or bridges. A special permit to travel was required and notice of route, destination and expected date of return; failing which a search party was sent out. The cold was extreme at night and in the day we were scorched by the heat. Sleeping at 15,000ft every night, we walked all the way and mules carried all our baggage and wood too, as we were far above the tree line. No roads, and no bridges, no humans - only yak and marmot. Our party consisted of a string of coolies and mules, cook and water-carrier, cooks-boy and eight or ten coolies Punjabi-Musselman. The map we used is in my possession; paper on linen and very fragile, with all the places we visited underlined. The gnats were a real plague and every inch of bare skin had to be protected, and the natives wound their puggarees round their faces with only eyes exposed. I wiped the gnats off my arms like black fur at 7.0 am in my tent. The gnats came from the hundreds of miles of swamp

- much too high for mosquito which can't live above 7,000 ft. We were at 16,000 ft.

We went off to see Rakaposhi in the Karakorams, and many other great peaks and marvellous sights, superb flowers lower down. We marched through hundreds of miles of wild onion and through multitudes of flowers, claret and white and yellow and the colonies of marmot screaming - a ringing cry rather like that of a sea gull - we could hear this preceding us all the way down the valley. We never saw an Abominable Snowman! Wild Yak are all black, and any with white on have come down to the plain and cross-bred, mostly for transport purposes.

Wild marmot sit up like a cottage loaf, their little round heads have inquisitive little faces and the colouring of an Airedale, with long fur and little short stumpy legs. They whizzed burrows as we passed and then popped up again straight after we'd gone. Well over forty feet of snow fall in Winter and only two or three travellers pass each year.

We were racing the monsoon which we could see massing over the peaks - some of the highest in the World. We'd come from Nanga-Parbat (Naked Bride) of 26,669 ft all one unbroken mountain peak, forty-five miles long. It is only open for two months in the year and borders Tibet. We read about 'Little known Deosai' in The Field and dedided to visit it ourselves!

Then we had to turn and recover the great desert area, trekking with veils over our faces and gloves to prevent being bitten by insects. The pack ponies were bled alive. There was not a tree for a thousand miles and no sign of humanity. We had to carry all our fire-wood for thousands of miles. The cold was intense.

We came to Burzil where we picked up the rest of our clothes and possessions and started the long trek back to Abbotabad. On the way we saw huge double circles round the sun. The Coolies said very, very

heavy rains would come and they came, and the roads were washed away, and we were late coming back from leave.

There are two Deosai, the smaller - Chota and the Burra - larger. It took over a fortnight to trek across the large one, the other only a night. The Chota was covered with Icelandic Poppies, yellow and orange. There was no wildlife in this area - no sheep or anything - but the rivers were boiling with fish, only we had no rods or bait. If you threw a few stones into the water, the whole surface became a boiling mass. We met nobody and had no compass, there were no bridges and we just marched on with mountain peaks to guide us – they looked like little milk teeth because we were so high.

Having left the Deosai we descended to the first village and I remember on this return journey my cook coming to me and saying, "Memsahib, will you show yourself to the women?" We had reached a remote village and they'd never seen a white woman before. There was a hoot of derision when I turned up with my face quite as brown as theirs. I had to pull up my skirts up to my thighs to show my white skin before they believed. Then came the next question. "Has Memsahib any children?" "Yes, I have two and I've left them with a Memsahib in Kashmir." Then the next thing was. How did the Riemsahib feed them? I said, "The same as you." They said "Na mum kin" ("That's impossible") and I asked them whatever they meant. Cook said that the women wanted to know if they can feel the Memsahib, so I said "Yes". Then they patted me all over by the whole population of women in the village who eventually believed me! I was exceedingly thin. What an experience!

We had every sort of disease brought to our tents. One man walked miles with his toe hanging off, hoping we could sew it on again. The only thing we could do was bandage it up again and give him Epsom Salts and make haste and move ourselves before the corpses started turning up. We only had Epsom Salts, Castor Oil and Iodine and the odd bandage.

I walked hundreds of miles on raisin water and Epsom Salts as I was suffering from bad dysentry (that's why I can only give blood for plasma as I've been a dysentry sufferer.)

We saw Ibex who came down very near to our camp to drink. I had a wolf skin, raw, in my bed-roll. A man came after dark with the skin (he'd trapped it and knew it was protected.) The pelt was long furred and beautiful, black and fawn, and cost 2 rupees. Cecil refused to keep the skin in his bedroll!

We came back via Jammu and there we had dreadful car trouble while we stayed in the rest-house. Cecil mercifully patched the car with a hair-pin (I hadn't had my hair bobbed) it just held two links together. The sun was red-hot by 7 am and I remember so well trying to find shade beside a lake, a marshy lake with beautiful birds like flamingoes.

Back to Kakul near Abbotabad - through terrible rains, to the children.

I wore my one skirt all the time with varying jerseys in case of cold - no overcoats. I wore a double terai hat, one on top of another and for shoes we trekked in sandals, plaited in straw by our coolies. Special socks with the big toe separate and over that the chapli straw-plaited sandals - good for sixty miles of trek. The coolies make one pair in an evening and they were firm over snow and ice and never slipped. When they wore out the coolies just made some more. Leather boots would have been certain death. A single straw thong secured the chapli. Your bistra (bedroll) and chilumchi (copper basin with leather top and handle with a strap right round) held soup and sponges. Both these things always go with you wherever you go.

On one occasion we were driving in the district of Swat, North of Khaki, where we had no business to be as it was forbidden territory, and on a mountain pass just wide enough for a car with a precipice below and a mountain above, we came round a bend and to our horror saw a huge boulder the size of a house blocking our way; we were in an awful

dilemma as we couldn't possibly turn the car, but the peasants came up to us from the valley thousands of feet below in their thin black clothes, and they turned the car by literally lifting it inch by inch. But for them, we should be there now. They were supposed to be hostile. We gave them all the money we had. It is near Mardan, the place where silk comes in bales by camel-load from China to India (the customs are levied in Mardan.)

My days were filled with riding, entertaining, polo-parties, tennis parties and dancing or knitting on the verandah. One day a kite swooped down and swiped my pink knitting and wool, and the ball unravelled as he flew off. I had been laughing at the Chil (kites) taking other people's sandwiches!

I had many troubles with servants. I was forced by my khan-samah, cook, to pay him 2 annas for each plate of soup he made for us, for which I had purchased all the ingredients. He would smoke his hookah in the kitchen, 'hubble bubble' they call it and I didn't know any Urdu in those early days. Before I'd left England I had learned three hundred words in everyday speech. (We did fifteen years before promotion to Captain.)

George, aged four years old, had his ears frost-bitten because he loved to make snow castles, as other children make sand castles. He once had dysentery and was too ill for hospital. I had been riding and shared a mango with George who dropped it and without washing it, ate it and contracted dysentery and so did I. We were only allowed raisin(?) water and Epsom Salts to cure – nothing else.

Climbing up the mountains, we came upon sweeps of rhododendrons and peonies, marvellous wild flowers, gentian brilliant blue, and poppies, primula, Siberian poppies and wallflowers, gigantic single ivory Mardan roses, on which one often found the Moon Moth - apple-

green with carmine circles like eyes on the wings of 'feathers'. I caught one which escaped to the sky and was mobbed by all the birds.

We never saw bear, wolves or snow-leopard, only ibex. The coolies 'staged' with us, then returned home, and you hired a new lot of coolies for the next stage of twenty-five miles. The further from home the more difficult it became to purchase coolies to continue with us.

We would tell our Khansama to organize a coolie party for the next stretch of the trek. He would make a 'bundobust' for us with the villagers and the party would carry all our firewood as we were miles above the timber line. Much of our foodstuff was in tins.

Water would not boil at these altitudes and though there was every appearance of boiling - lid lifting, spluttering etc. you could put your finger in it and find it tepid.

This reminds me of tea I made with sheep's milk which was the most disgusting cup of tea I'd ever had. It was like boiled cabbage water - no wonder the lambs skip!!

There are two kinds of wild rhubarb in the Himalayas; one deadly poisonous and the other completely safe. We ate fungus as high as 10,000 ft and knew the altitude according to the flowers, beginning purple then yellow mauve anenomies, yellow anenomies then white anenomies.

It is a Kashmiri custom never, never to remove a skull cap which a small child may be wearing. This is left in position until the growth of the head bursts it. The result being appaling festering sores, the whole scalp one enormous sore. I said, "You must take the cap off". "Eh! No Rasm hai!" "It is the custom."

Pink lotus lilies are very spectacular and grow especially in the Dal Lake in Srinagar. They are most beautiful and a large shady hat would fail to cover one. They stand a clear three feet above the surface of the water

and the leaves so big they can support the weight of a child. The seed pods are used as a medicine by the Kashmiris. On the Dal Lake, they have floating islands and they pole the 'islands' of growing crops of vegetables to you, peas and beans etc. all growing. They make the 'island' out of, reeds, weeds and water- plants lashed together. Kingfishers are everywhere. We came across all this while staying on a house boat on the lake.

There is a walled village in Swat called Khaki from which we get the name of the colour, which translated means the colour of sand - dust - khaki.

We were having tea on the verandah, the sky an olive-green and the rain unbelievable. The troops were continuing to play football, when the man between the goal-posts was struck by lightning and killed. He was carried into our bungalow where we worked on him for one and a half hours. No good; he turned black. He was a Gunner, a British soldier and we auctioned his kit and I had to inform his widow as Cecil was CO.

Reaching Burzil over the Pass, we made up a parcel of films to send back to Lambert's in Abbotabad to be developed and await our return and when we checked them we found any amount of them missing and thought the photographers had extracted them for commercial use. A friend said, "I know what has happened to your film. The gelatine has been cut up into small diamond pieces to trim the bonnets of the tribal women in the Gilgit area." Normally these are mother-of-pearl buttons with which they trim their floppy maroon felt bonnets." All the women wear the badge of servitude - a smock of rough grey serge-type material as they are a conquered race (by another tribe) and they all wear, pinned onto their chests, an iron ring from which hang a knife, a fork and spoon and any other articles of value. These women are not masked - no Purdah.

My Mother-in-law told me of an event several years before when they were in the Civil Service. Cecil's Father and Mother were asked out to dinner in Lahore by friends and driving up to the bungalow which was brightly illuminated, they could see their host in his dressing room at the mirror tying his tie and realized they were a little early. The tonga wallah also saw it. When their host finally came into the drawing room, my Mother-in-law apologised for being early and gave their reason. Her host said, "What do you mean, Mrs Ferard, my dressing room is round the back of the house, we never use those front rooms they are haunted."

At one time her dogs would rush about into corners of the room savaging anything with wild fury, barking etc. and nothing there to see — a relic of the Mutiny. My Mother-in-law was psychic and knew that her son George would be killed and Cecil would return from the Great War. She couldn't enter the Residency at Lahore on account of its fierce manifestation of evil. I was not at all affected by this hostile atmosphere.

(My Grandmother Levinge was in India with her husband who was in the Public Works Department. She wake to find a cobra coiled round her ankle and her one terror was that a servant, coming onto the verandah would scream and frighten the snake, so she lay for one and a half hours until the snake gently awoke, and glided away. She then fainted.)

## *England and World War II*

During World War II I belonged to the WVS and worked exceedingly hard and was the area representative of Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. Cecil was commanding all the coastal defences of England and the Clyde, protecting London from V1s and doodlebugs. He wanted to sight guns on the golf course in Southampton and had his way. He was awarded the Military Cross in the First War in France, and before that he was at Winchester and University College, Oxford. George followed in his father's footsteps and he and pals joined The Gunners. Cecil saw

service right the way through the First War in France, in fact through both wars.

The ARP in the Cold War on the Isle of Wight said they wanted something to do. "They didn't see why they should be sitting about while Mrs Ferard was killing herself running canteens and libraries and hospitals etc."

One day at Alverstoke George was sitting on my knees and I was showing him pictures in Punch. It showed a room ready for Bridge and a man and woman at loggerheads with the caption “Marjorie, after this evening we part for ever.” I told this to him, and put the whole thing out of my mind. Two days later I found George sitting on the floor eating a candle and told him what a filthy little boy he was, and that the candle was made from the sweepings off the butcher's floors. He drew himself up and in a very dignified fashion said, "Marjorie, after this, you and I part for ever."

George at nine years old said “Mummy, am I going to be killed?” I was holding an eiderdown over his head. "Well if you are I'm not going to stay anywhere near you," I replied. This made him laugh.

One night a land-mine dropped very near the house and the whole of the roof lifted and dropped again. We received no compensation from the War Damage Commission. For seven years I was the local representative of the WVS[9]. I organized a great deal. Evacuees, newspapers to the trenches. Boats left every hour for the beaches with newsprint on board and I had a special Pass to go down the pier. Baskets at street corners into which the public put packs of cards etc. tied in bundles, complete with messages. I examined each one and extracted

[9] Women’s Voluntary Service, now WRVS. For corroboration, see

https://web.archive.org/web/20110211235401/http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/59/a2885259.shtml

every 'Daily worker'! Only one other town did this. We made mighty camouflage nets for buildings and to alter the landscapes and cliffs etc. sprayed feathers on to these nets and by tying wire wool onto the strands of the netting, with thirty to forty women working on these projects. (An expert from the War Office taught us.) I also ran a Citizen's Advice Bureau for two years in Ryde during the War. We were living in Bembridge. Cecil was commanding Coast and Anti-aircraft Experimental Establishment, radar and all coastal defences. Our children were at school, Monica at Longleat as an evacuee from Royal School Bath, and George at Westbourne House.

I had some dreadfully harrowing cases to deal with. A family bombed out of London. The wife committed suicide after a very bad bombing raid at Ventnor on the Isle of Wight. This family had six bombs dropped round them. Sister killed and one child with her another child had her two ears blown off and never grew after the age of seven – and granny killed too. I had to deal with all of this as well as the other war work I was involved with.

Then I caught a thief for Scotland Yard. She came into my office and asked me for money to get back to her unit in Shropshire. I asked her what steps she had taken herself so far. She told me she had been over to Portsmouth to see the Station Master. I knew she was lying, as there was no ferry at 12 o'clock. In the meantime, I rang the Women's Land Army in Shropshire but they'd never heard of her. I then rang the Police who asked me to delay her as Scotland Yard were suspicious because of a major case of larceny that had cropped up on the mainland. They arrested her after I had told the police where she was. I had seen her lunching in a bar, and I telephoned the police who arrested her immediately, they were completely satisfied.

In Llandudno, to make money for Remembrance Day I walked round in WVS uniform and collected a vast amount of money. Being invited to sit

to have lunch with a number of strangers, I said, "No, not possible," and continued collecting.

## *Ireland*

The ruins of Ballynegall c. 2000

When we came home from India for the second time [c.1936], we were asked to go to live at Ballynegall and make it our home[10]. The name means 'Town of the Stranger'. George did something that his granny didn't like at the meal-table and she said "George my dear, we don't do that in polite society." At which George looked round askance at everyone and said, “Polite society! I thought this was supposed to he home.” Upon which there was a dreadful scene, George the offender was slung out of the dining room and I of course blazing in his defence.


Caragh Lodge

Soon after this we left Ballynegall and went down to Kerry where we bought a house called Caragh Lodge on beautiful Caragh Lake ringed with mountains which I recorded in water colour and oil paints. We spent twenty-six very happy years in Co. Kerry, Cecil having retired from the Service as Colonel. We spent our days fishing, gardening and motoring.

[10] This in fact occurred after the end of the war (1945 or 1946) – see George Ferard’s recollections.

Cecil & Marjorie, Caragh Lodge

He later developed arthritis and died in 1970. I eventually sold the property to Schapers of Berlin. He was an eye specialist. Six years before this we built a house in three acres of the Caragh Lodge parkland and called it Western Ridge.

I struggled on alone for a year after his death and couldn't take any more, and I then emigrated to Ibiza where I bought a small villa with a nice view once again of mountains. I handed over Western Ridge virtually as it stood, to George, my son.

## *Ibiza*

I decided to live in Ibiza one day when Monica and I weren't able to make our bookings to Majorca. The travel agent suggested Ibiza, and I fell in love with the island and said, one day in a pavement café, "I've a good mind to move to Ibiza from Ireland." This was in 1971.

Monica and I then went to a house agent, an Englishman, and this was the last of several properties we saw all over the island. At last he said, "I've got one tiny villa in C'an del Mar, not on the market yet." I saw it, and knew it to be just the right size and position! It was packed with crates of furniture but I knew this was IT - "I'll buy!" The agent was delighted, as so was I.

I returned to Ireland and shut up the house in preparation for handing it over to George, and said *au revoir* to all my friends of twenty-six years. They had a big party for me at Caragh Lake, and I left and flew to Ibiza. Furniture and belongings came with an Irish driver later, in a furniture van via Barcelona.

I stayed in a hotel in San Antonio and after many enquiries in Ibiza town, I saw it and claimed the van. The official demanded that first I should furnish him with lists in quintuplet of every item on board, together with the electrical number of each electric item. I said that I had not been notified of this in Ireland on loading - “you have the answer here, go ahead and look for yourself.” He at once said that I could have it, and the container was then loaded onto a transporter and I went ahead of the two drivers and crane lorry etc. - then couldn't find the house! I'd only seen it once, when I said I'd buy. We went up on the highest roads here and finally I had to admit that I was lost. The men were furious, having to turn their huge container lorry in narrow mountain roads. I was jolly glad I spoke no Spanish!! We had to go to the level again and look for a certain carob tree at a bend in the track - which I eventually found. Glory be! Then everything had to be carried down the steps into the property - the piano, deep freeze, packed with linen and weighing a ton. I worked like a black, helping them to carry, and they finally left with bad grace and a good tip.

It was dark and I found no lights of any kind. Electricity was connected but no English fittings would fit the Spanish plugs, so I could only sleep on the tiled living room floor, without bed or blankets, as I had no tools even to lift off the lid of the crates.

The next day I found levers to lift off the lids etc. Then I got into my car, having made a complete list of everything required for my house and went to a shop called Grop and asked if they could deliver everything I'd chosen before 10.30 pm that night. I was penniless. Capital hadn't come through, but the Spanish custom is to ignore your married name, it's only your mother's name that is recognized, and of course I hadn't realized this, However it was eventually put right. Mrs. Davidson was a marvellous neighbour, kindness itself - she and her husband changed every single plug and bulb, and took me shopping and at last I began to live.

I kept my big furniture container and used it as a wood store, tipping it over on its side. I dug out a place for it with a little pickaxe so that it should not show above the road level above 11' x 6". One day I heard an awful splintering of wood and rushed out only to find a man having come on a bicycle to demolish my van. I roared at him and he fled, but I was nonetheless uneasy imagining that he'd been briefed to demolish the large yellow object-by officialdom!

In the Balearic Islands the inheritance customs are that the farm goes to the eldest sons and the younger ones were fobbed off with the sea–front. This has of course caused havoc in family structure of the Ibizans and the problems people have when they try to buy a property in this country are unbelievable.

English Protestant services are held on the first Tuesday in the month at 11 o'clock, by courtesy of the Catholic Bishop. (We are in the Parish of Fulham and Gibraltar.) I was introduced to many people in this parish. I found it was the custom to take a note book and pencil, and make social arrangements for the coming month, as we have no telephones. This ensures a good congregation and our parson comes by air from Majorca. Someone gives him a shakedown for the night. We come across all kinds of people here.

In Ibiza I witnessed a most alarming thunderstorm. At 4 o'clock in the morning I couldn't sleep because of thunderstorm which lasted for nine hours and I walked onto the verandah where I saw an amazing staircase of lightning stretching from the sky to the sea – and on the top of each step was a ball of red fire – not a single step was missed. Others also witnessed the incredible phenomenon and they can confirm it.