

6 UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON 1938 – 1941

In October 1938 I went up to University College London, travelling daily from Welwyn Garden City to Kings Cross, and then walking to Gower Street. I had a useful but minor County grant, but the bulk of my expenses were shouldered by my parents.

Living at home and making a long daily trip is not a particularly satisfactory *modus vivendi* for a student, notably because it greatly restricts the social life which is so important a part of what a university should offer; however I made a good effort to join in college activities. Still uncertain about Christianity *per se* I joined the Student Christian Movement and made some good friends, I played squash, I listened to talks by Professor JBS Haldane, who was given to carrying out experiments using himself as a guinea pig in the interests of humanity, I became friendly with a fellow student -Don Kitchener, an industrial chemist, who travelled daily to UCL on the train from Welwyn North. We often travelled together.

My principal objective was defined as obtaining a degree in Geography, but on account of having failed my Latin "O" level, necessary as an entry qualification for an Arts degree, I was obliged to switch from the Faculty of Arts to that of Science, both of which included Geography as a study. This meant entering the first - Intermediate Level - year of the Science Faculty, which would have been unnecessary in the Arts Faculty.

In the end this extra year was for the best. I would feel deprived not to have taken both arts and science mainstream studies to a reasonable level. Moreover my Latin failings channelled me into membership of a rather select group - a scientist with an arts background.

My chosen first year topics at UCL were Geography, Physics, Botany - my long time interest - plus Geology, this last to make up the four subjects needed and because it was advised as easy and as most relevant to Geography.

The physics was uneventful. I will not say I particularly enjoyed it, but it followed on naturally enough as a progression from my O level of 1936, and very useful it later turned out to be when the start of my army days was to involve a crash course in electronics. Medical students also took this physics course in their first year. As many of them hardly seemed to take their studies - of physics or anything else - particularly seriously this fact left me with, I fear, a permanently warped view of the medical profession.

The Geography Inter course was a disaster. As in the case of a number of subjects, the departmental head, in this case a well known geographer named Professor CB Fawcett, chose to lecture to first year studies himself. His principle foundation topic was natural regions, on which he had written a beastly little book, and his announced intention was to begin at fundamentals in order to direct his students into the correct frame of mind from the start. This meant pedantically crawling across ground well below the level I had already reached at school. Professor Fawcett, although well intentioned, was also humourless and uncharismatic. He rapidly put me off geography - in hindsight it was perhaps as well.

The botany course also received its lectures from the departmental head, a Professor EJ Salisbury, joint author of "Plant Form and Function" by Fritsch and Salisbury, a learned tome to which I still refer. Unlike Professor Fawcett, Professor Salisbury was a good teacher, small, rotund, busily and competently earnest. Despite my botanical enthusiasms I turned out to suffer from the disadvantage of finding myself in a class of students of whom most - probably all - had studied academic botany for a number of years at school. Much to my chagrin I ended by getting a second in the Botany Inter exam.

The Geology course was the surprise, and again the whole tenor of the department was set by the departmental head, Professor WBR King. He was an inspirational lecturer, charismatic and radiating an aura of being personally interested in the achievements of all his students. He was later to become Major King, head of the army geological branch (concerned with matters such as conditions on "D" day beaches, and seabed conditions for the cross-Channel oil pipeline to be laid out soon after the invasion), and later again Professor of Geology at Cambridge and President of the Geological Society of London - he thoroughly deserved all these appointments. He was tall, dark haired - saturnine I suppose, with a sort of concave face and eyes which blazed with enthusiasm for all things geological.

The topic of WBR King was stratigraphy. Oh the fascination of the Reading Beds and the London Clay! It was not long before I was well on my way to deciding that Geology rather than Geography was to be the subject of my degree. Such is the relevance of the teachers with whom one happens to come into contact in one's formative years.

There were only three other staff members in the UCL Geology Dept in those days - MacGregor, WB(?) Wilson, and Chubb. MacGregor was a relaxed friendly soul, petrologist and a Scottish farmer, who went back to farming when the war started; WB Wilson was a fairly inspired structural geologist much turned on by obscure structures denoting stresses in hard rocks; he was to move to Imperial College at the start of the war; Chubb was white haired, dozy and a palaeontologist who had worked in the Caribbean - for the Colonial Survey I believe.

We went on a number of departmental excursions, notably to Arran from 24 to 31 March 1939. It was the Arran trip, partly led by Tyrell, author of the Geological Survey memoir on the island, which confirmed my definitive turning to a geological career. I put a lot of effort into my report/diary of the visit and was much encouraged by the favourable comment it elicited. We stayed at Heathfield, Brodick, and covered most of the varied geology of the island largely on foot. This was the trip on which one of the senior students - by name Lucas - demonstrated his policy of soaking his shirt in water early in the day in order thereafter to feel no hesitation in getting himself as wet as may be in the course of his field work. Fortunately it was not an approach I felt motivated to emulate, and I never again heard of Lucas in later years.

In later years, however, I discovered that the more senior members of the Geology Dept considered our first year class to have an unusually romantic aura, due to the physical characteristics of some of the female geography students who were taking geology as a subsidiary subject. I believe these included Brenda Parkin, Eddy Hole Baker, Margaret Coombs, Margaret Bratherton and Margaret Nicholls, also a distinctly good-looking

blonde whose photograph appears in my photo album but whose name I have regrettably forgotten - she disappeared at the end of the first year, when the war began. These were all geography students and most were also in the geology class for the same reason as myself - although not with the same resulting change of career.

The only three men in the Geology Department near to my own year whom I remember at all well were Tom Barnard, later Professor of Palaeontology at UCL, Andrews, who later committed suicide in Aberystwyth partly on account of unsatisfactory relationships with two young Welsh ladies, and Hla, a Burmese who was by 1947 Director of the Burmese Geological Survey - in which capacity he offered me a job which I declined - as a coalfield geologist in Burma. Hla was in the year after me and Barnard and Andrews in the year ahead. The shadowy figures of Lucas and Llewellyn I believe to have been in the year ahead again. Llewellyn distinguished himself by opting not to take his finals in 1939 because he did not feel ready, then not being able to face repeating his final year in the disaster condition into which the UCL Geology department descended on evacuation to Aberystwyth at the start of the war.

I fear that during my London year with UCL I twice took part enthusiastically in student rags of the worst type, aimed at the forcible abduction of the college mascots of rival colleges, notably Reggie - a large red painted wooden lion - belonging to Kings College, and a beaver which was the mascot of LSE (the London School of Economics). An unruly mob of us - entirely male I might mention - actually stole the beaver from the dining room of LSE after marching noisily through the London streets to Kings with the intention of abducting Reggie, only to be balked at the college gates by the police. LSE was an easy substitute target, and the alarm on the faces of the diners when they leapt to their feet and scattered as we crashed in was very satisfying. I also derived much pleasure from having thrown some ripe tomatoes at the police, albeit from a position safely well back in the throng

The other occasion was more of a formal encounter, both Kings and UCL displaying their mascots on one or other of their sports fields during some inter college sporting event. The UCL mascot was Phineas, a wooden Scotsman. I believe there may have been those who actually went to watch the sport but my lot - dressed appropriately - went to fight the opposition equivalent. Regrettably on this occasion it was Phineas who ended up in being levered into the back of a van and hijacked. One of the problems of the encounter was that it was very difficult to tell friend from foe, close observation being needed to ascertain who was pushing and who was pulling - I know, because I was pulling but pretending to push. In the melee I succeeded in getting my trousers severely torn, but at least did not lose them as did a number of participants on both sides; collecting trousers from the opposition was one of the principal side activities.

These two events gave me the only real opportunities I have had to appreciate the operation of crowd psychology. The crowds were effectively temporary multi-bodied organisms in their own right, with their own objectives and reactions - I found it stimulating to surrender myself to becoming an element of these organisms striving mightily in a common cause. Part of the binding cement was the chanted UCL war cry, whatever it may mean - "Foster, Foster, Gregory, Foster, Gower Street, Gower Street, UCL, L, L, UCL."

I suppose football crowds and nationalist/racist rabble undergo comparable experiences; as probably do troops in some situations on the field of battle – they need to. Flocks of birds and shoals of fish often act in similar unison, as well as a few of our fellow mammals - such as lemmings.

I have mentioned Don Kitchener. He lived at "Rowans", Purcell Close, Tewin Wood, with his parents and elder brother Joe, an organic chemist with whom I also became friendly and who was a Reader on the staff of Imperial College. Don and I frequently travelled on the train together. He was an upright square faced man of principle, one of whose chief interests was gardening; he was also involved with boy scouts and the church, and was a keen swimmer and fisherman. Academically undistinguished, he finished at university by failing his chemistry finals in summer 1940 - he was one year ahead of me. Joe, on the other hand, was smallish, darkish, with a bulging forehead and clearly gifted.

In my first winter vacation at UCL, Don and I volunteered to assist teaching English at a refugee camp for German Jewish boys somewhere on the east coast. These were pleasant youngsters whom I was surprised to find looked virtually indistinguishable from English boys of the same age - although young and of good class, they had been despatched abroad into the unknown by their parents in the (successful) hope of escaping events in Germany.

The camp was a highly ad hoc set-up organised by the UK Jewish community in the unheated wooden chalets of a summer holiday camp; the cup of water we put by for our morning shave for example was apt to be frozen solid when we woke up. Various Jewish organisations contributed in kind. Don and I, as camp residents, were each adjudged eligible for issue of a nice pair of shiny black boots in order to help deal with the cold - a welcome bonus until, proving to be made of cardboard, they rapidly fell apart.

The boys were all touchingly grateful for our presence, and readily attached themselves to us in the hope that we could guide them in the ways of their new country. Alas! I fear our efforts were pathetically inadequate, but for a brief period we did our best. Life in the holiday camp proved impossible, and its entire complement finished by being transported to sleep on the floor of a hall somewhere - later we received a card in broken English saying that 90 boys had found accommodation in four houses at Broadstairs, Kent, and asking us to come back to continue the English lessons. At the time we did not realise how lucky these boys had been.

Don's stated objective when the war started was that he intended to survive it, and with this in view he - as an industrial chemist albeit with a BSc (failed) - obtained exemption from military service by entering civilian work in a chemical factory in Irvine, Scotland. In May 1941 I received a letter from Joe to say that Don had died in a factory accident at Easter - he breathed in some toxic fumes on Easter Saturday and died the following day. I had had a letter from him not long before - dated 11 February - in which he said how well he had settled down in Irvine with the local kirk and scouts, and had got in a lot of swimming in the sea until October, followed by skating when the river froze over in January. His job was to work shifts supervising the running of the factory, making sure 'none of the men fooling around, and so on'. L'homme propose ...

I am jumping ahead of myself again.

The probability of war had been obvious to everyone since late 1938, and the expectation was that London would be thoroughly bombed at an early date. When war was finally declared on 3 September 1939 UCL therefore had detailed plans in place for an orderly evacuation. Departments were to be relocated to a number of reception universities out of London. The Geology Dept was to be billeted with the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth.

3 September fell near the end of the summer vacation, which was extended slightly to permit the necessary organisation, and in due course a special train departed from London for Aberystwyth loaded with about 500 student evacuees. Pulled by a tank engine, the train finally chuffed its way through the freshness of the Welsh mountains, to be greeted by a welcoming crowd of local students when it reached its destination. There were only about 700 Welsh students at Aberystwyth, so our advent came near to doubling the numbers at this little university.

The method of welcome chosen by the local students consisted of bursting into spontaneous mass song, an initial surprise to the Londoners but a Welsh habit to which they soon became accustomed. With no opportunity for preparation, the only immediately available response was to chant the UCL war cry, perhaps hardly appropriate but it was chanted with feeling and was well received.

The Welsh students, though, had a better riposte - the Aberystwyth College Song - which in the next few years we evacuees were to adopt as ours by right also:

*Some boast their classic stream
Where nymphs and naiads dream,
Their buildings touched by time till old and grey;-
Our College towers in pride
By the Western water's side,
Where wild waves vainly beat along the bay.
"What may your motto be,
O College by the sea?"
"Nid byd byd heb wyb-od-aeth," answer we.*

*From near or distant home
Her sons and daughters come,
Awhile to tarry by the wind swept shore.
Dim midnight oil they burn,
Nor sport and pleasure spurn,
Those days shall dwell in mem'ry evermore.*

*To South, West, East, and North,
Her children travel forth,
Bright kindle learning's torch like morning star,
Across the purple main,
The flamma sacra burns and shines afar.*

Fair may your future be,

*Our College by the sea,
Where winds and waves make merry minstrelsy.
Rage, ye gales! ye surges seethe!
Aberystwyth fu a fydd.*

For the remaining two years of my degree studies I became effectively an Aberystwyth student, although somehow working towards a London degree examination - a slightly difficult task, the coping with which called for an element of ingenuity. My method was to acquire the examination papers of the previous ten years and analyse them for the periodicity of a number of recurring key questions or topics; these then became the matters to which I directed my largely unaided studies.

The powers that be did their best to maintain London loyalties, but it was not too easy in a remote geographical location - there were to be several generations of UCL students who knew no other student life than that of Aberystwyth.

Of the four UCL geology staff only one - Dr Chubb - appeared in Aberystwyth, and although he tried loyally he was of very little help. As instructed, we attended the appropriate Welsh geology lectures, but it soon became apparent that the syllabus to which they were directed diverged fundamentally from that of London University.

One immediate difference was that the Welsh honours course lasted three years, compared to two for that of London; the result was much less pressure to make rapid progress in the former than in the latter. Also, and importantly, the Welsh syllabus was oriented to Lower Palaeozoic studies, whereas that of London was oriented to the much younger rocks of SE England.

These problems were not, however, of too much consequence during my first Aberystwyth year, when in addition to Geology I studied Geography plus optional first year Zoology.

My mother had an ex-Welwyn Garden City friend - a Mrs Daisy Poole - living at Llanfarian, about 3 miles from Aberystwyth, and it was arranged that I was to live with Mr and Mrs Poole plus 30-year old unmarried daughter Gladys. They had a big rambling house called Aberllolwyn, set in fairly substantial grounds which included two largish ponds - useful for skating when they froze in winter.

The Poole household turned out to be an odd one, since I soon discovered that the three members heartily disliked each other. Mr Poole was a somewhat dry and sarcastic intellectual with a taste for mildly pornographic poetry, Mrs Poole normal and pleasant but undistinguished, Gladys an embittered old maid who went about the housekeeping in a perpetual state of thinly disguised irritation. My main problem was to avoid a near overwhelming desire to laugh at inappropriate times as my hosts interacted. One bad moment was when Gladys dumped his morning boiled egg on the table in front of Mr Poole so energetically that it toppled and rolled slowly to the edge before falling to smash itself on the stone floor. Mr Poole broke the tense silence which followed with a quiet "Thank you" in his most restrained tone.

From Llanfarian I cycled into Aberystwyth daily, and sometimes more than once in a day. As the road was hilly I rapidly developed appropriate leg muscles, and in fact soon

came to feel remarkably fit, but this was the only positive aspect of the situation. I found myself once again semi cut off from college social life, much more active in this new tight knit community than in the London jungle.

After two terms it was decided I should move to town, and I arranged to share digs with Tom Barnard at a house called Cader Idris, located in Cliff Terrace. Our landladies were Phyllis plus her resident aunt.

I was not short of friends during this first year. Notably Don Kitchener was also evacuated to Aberystwyth, and he had a friend called Billy Youdale - we formed a threesome at weekends, taking our books out into the countryside to swot for our respective exams. There were also the UCL geography/geology girls, together with their Aberystwyth equivalents.

A not insignificant problem, though, was that the RAF chose to locate one of its first-stage pilot training bases in the town. These, to me, rather ungifted young men were drilled in platoons on the prom, and in their off duty time chose to take an unnecessary degree of interest in the lady students. All these latter were closely closeted in Hall, and it was very off-putting to approach their common room only to hear the animated voices of RAF types issuing from the inside. More than once I turned away in disgust having changed my mind about knocking for admission.

Despite this I took a number of the geology/geography lady students to the regular weekly dances, although none of them became regular girl friends. They included Gwyn Jelley, who later married one of the airmen. She had a mass of auburn hair, and the moon across the sea at Aberystwyth was a romantic sight. When I told Gwyn that she was the first girl I had kissed she seemed slightly dazed, as if not sure that she appreciated being an object of experiment.

Margaret Nichols was exceptionally good looking, but she was also exceptionally religiously inclined. I once went to a church service at which she presided, including the giving of a sermon which proved nearly, but not quite, convincing enough to convert me from my state of doubt. In view of all her qualities I found it mystifying that she settled to consort with a red headed Aberystwyth male who seemed to me to be singularly lacking in any qualities other than an inexplicable ability to chat up females.

Margaret Bratherton was also basically good looking, but since she suffered from mild acne was very unsure of herself. Behind this, though, she was pleasant and unassuming, and as she lived at Watford, not far from WGC, I got to know her quite well and we became good friends. We cycled between home and Aberystwyth together. At the end of Aberystwyth year one she had the misfortune to die very suddenly of diphtheria not long before penicillin could have saved her. This Margaret had been the only child of a widowed mother, and I felt it incumbent on me to call and offer my condolences. I was met by the assembled family, including the grandmother, and was taken to be the boy friend, although in the accepted technical sense my status should not correctly have been so designated. However the assembled family, which was understandably very upset, had need for there to have been a boy friend, so I did not demure from standing in briefly for that role.

Brenda Parkin I will not discuss, except to say that from day one it was clear we would be long term friends, and it has turned out so to be. Later she became a meteorological officer in the WAAF, and later again married Stanley Miles, with whom she had seven children - no less.

To me, Tom Barnard was a mixture of persons. A year ahead of me in his studies, he was clearly cut out to be a palaeontologist. His palaeontology notebooks and diagrams were meticulously clean and well organised - I was particularly impressed by the draughtsmanship of his diagrams of ammonite sutures. Much as I would have liked to emulate Tom Barnard I was well aware that there was no way I could reach his standard of draughtsmanship. He was destined to become an authority on foraminifera, important in oilfield exploration, and later to become Professor of Palaeontology back at UCL.

Whatever his palaeontological qualities, however, I found him singularly flat as a person - in no way weak or lacking in a slightly sardonic humour, but so neutral as to be on the slightly tarnished side of plain uninteresting. At Cader Idris we each had a study/bedroom but shared a dining room/sitting room in which Phyllis served our joint meals. As flatmates we rubbed along entirely satisfactorily, without a cross word or even a cross feeling, but we never consorted socially - anyhow he spent most of his time studying and I believe he never consorted socially with anyone. He ended with a well merited 1st.

He had a girl friend at Esher in Surrey over whom it would be fair to say he gurgled when he talked. During a college vacation he went to visit her at home on the day after an air raid - her house was located in a terrace row, and he found that one house to be represented by a blank space, like a missing tooth.

The Welsh musical inclination was one of the features of life at Aber. Every Sunday evening there was singing on the prom, and on Saturdays there was a semi-classical concert in the theatre which also involved communal singing. One day Ian Masaryk, politician and folk hero of Czechoslovakia, came to give a public address in this theatre. For some reason there was a delay, during which the assembled throng filled in the spare time with impromptu song. When eventually the curtain was drawn open to reveal Ian Masaryk and his host seated at a table, Masaryk proved to be in tears because - he explained - the singing was so beautiful and so like that in his own homeland.

Another local tradition was the kicking of the bar. The bar was - perhaps still is - a low rail at the north end of the prom, the kicking of which assisted in propelling a stroller round to return in the opposite sense. A turn or two along the prom was a favourite recreation.

After three terms in Aberystwyth it was decided that UCL was to return to Gower Street at the start of the 1940-41 academic year. The fragmentation of the college had proved extremely difficult for the administrators, and although there were air raids the disastrous bombing expected for London had failed to materialise - life in London was in fact proving survivable. For her greater safety it was arranged with my parents that Brenda was to be accommodated in our home at WGC, the two of us travelling in daily by train as I had done in the previous year.

None of this was to be. During the summer vacation the bomb aimer in some German bomber labouring its way over central London pressed the release trigger of his string of bombs just a fraction of a second too soon (or too late) and the centre of the college took a direct hit. The central hall areas, the refectories and the library were severely damaged by just one bomb, and Frank, the porter, was killed. Hastily the plans for return were cancelled and it was ordained that evacuated life was to be resumed.

I returned to a different life. My principal friends, Don Kitchener and Billy Youdale, had completed their courses and departed, most of the geography/geology girls had paired up in one way or another, several of them (including Brenda, Eddy and Gwyn Jelley) with RAF gentlemen for whom I had very little time, Tom Barnard had departed and Andrews had committed suicide. Margaret Bratherton had died. I was the sole student taking the geology honours course, although Hla was sometimes bracketed with me for mini-lectures – he was the Burmese whom destiny was to be Director (and perhaps tea boy also) of the Burmese Geological Survey.

1940, though, was the year Dennis Walshaw appeared at Aberystwyth to take a Geography degree. Dennis was a fine upstanding roundedly square person with wavy mouse coloured hair who came straight from being Head Boy of my old school, Hertford Grammar School. He became my flat mate in place of Tom Barnard, and again the relationship was entirely satisfactory, and again we consorted little socially. In this case, however, it was because Dennis consorted exclusively with one particular lady geography student in his own year, Eileen Burton. Eileen, too, had wavy mouse coloured hair and was roundedly square - in fact she looked like a slightly smaller female version of Dennis.

Dennis and Eileen became inseparable, forever billing and cooing in the most delightful way as the months rolled past, and indeed Eileen was a poppet well worth billing and cooing over, being quietly pleasant as well as roundedly good looking; it was apparent to all that this was a relationship made in heaven.

Some years later I was stricken dumb to learn that Dennis Walshaw had married another, also that Eileen had failed her finals on account of the upset caused by the break from Denis shortly beforehand. Although stricken dumb I did not fail to opine that, whatever the unknown circumstances, the action of Dennis in having allowed this situation to come about was highly reprehensible, and I fear I instantly dismissed his tentative moves to renew our acquaintance in the immediate post war period.

In 1940/41 that, however, was still some years ahead. The fact was that in 1940/41 I felt rather short of close friends, so as a substitute plunged myself into final year studies as best I could in the absence of any effective guidance. Chubb, it is true, was there at Aberystwyth, and his role was to provide me with solo lectures on vertebrate palaeontology. These consisted of me sitting at one side of a table and Chubb at the other, while he dictated his lecture notes in a monotone of utter disinterestedness and I wrote them down.

One of the conclusions from my statistical perusal of the London University honours papers for the previous ten years was that the Welsh stratigraphy lectures were a 100% waste of time as far as I was concerned, since they were heavily concentrated on the

Lower Palaeozoic of which I needed no more than a general knowledge readily obtainable from one particular paper in the Proceedings of the Geological Society.

Professor Lewis was the Welsh stratigraphy lecturer, and like Chubb his method of imparting knowledge was to dictate his lecture notes, including details of something like 27 localities (or was it more?) for an inch-thick green band used as a Lower Palaeozoic marker horizon. It was in the middle of the dictation of this list that I decided to abandon the Welsh stratigraphy lectures and learn my stratigraphy by reading it up - fortunately Prof King had given me a thorough foundation in the first year, and indeed he lent me an extremely scruffily written copy of his own lecture notes.

Despite the abysmal boredom inspired by his lectures I think of Prof Lewis as a friendly well meaning Welshman. He had only one arm as a result of World War I, but was active and led a number of local geological field trips which I much enjoyed.

My first year foundation at London in Petrology and Palaeontology was also of critical importance, because in neither of these topics were the local lecturers of much help. Challenor, the Welsh Palaeontologist, believed in keeping things well organised and simple, suitable in fact for simple souls; he discussed, for example, *Calymene blumenbachi* with the greatest of thoroughness, displaying large clear diagrams.

Platt, the petrologist, worked on a comparable basis. I am perhaps being unduly unkind to the memory of two men who honestly and pleasantly did their best for us; the problem was the rather fundamental differences between the Aberystwyth and London syllabuses.

Included in the pre-war UCL lecture programme were weekly palaeobotany lectures by Professor Gordon of Kings College, London. The Geology Dept of Kings was evacuated to Bristol, to which it would have been impossible to commute weekly from Aberystwyth; instead it was arranged that Hla and I go to Bristol to receive the year's ration of lectures in one week during, I think, the Christmas vacation.

We duly arrived in Bristol and waited. Professor Gordon failed to appear. He had forgotten. We waited for three or four days, during which we experienced two air raids - not, it may be said, particularly alarming ones as experienced from where we had our digs. However, Professor Gordon had reason to be contrite, and in due course he made amends by himself coming to Aberystwyth. As he was able to stay for only two days he was obliged to unburden himself of a full year's lectures in a rather concentrated fashion, by means of two sessions of twelve hours each.

Professor Gordon was a world class palaeobotanist, also an authority on industrial diamonds, a selection of which he carried around in his pockets and displayed enthusiastically whenever an opportunity presented itself. The fact that he was another inspired lecturer on a par with Prof King managed to show through despite the circumstances. He presented Hla and myself with an excellent collection of palaeobotanical photomicrographs which I still treasure, even although sixty years later I have still to assemble them into the photo album I purchased at his behest because he wished that they retain their value as an organised collection.

I think it must have been during the Easter vac of 1941 that I met Professor Gordon for a one-to-one appointment in Edinburgh; laid on for me as a wartime substitute for the more conventional Easter field trip regarded as essential to an honours student. We “did” Arthur's Seat together, also collected Carboniferous plants amongst the lavas at North Berwick, and large numbers of spectacular single Carboniferous corals weathering out in the floor of a reservoir in the Bathgate area. It was perhaps not a good idea to amass so many of the latter, but their conservation interests would no doubt have been assisted had they not laid themselves out so attractively in front of a potential research palaeontologist.

I was struck by the fact that Professor Gordon proved to have a streak of un-geological fear about the consequences of trespassing. As he held back he explained that it was all very well for me as a student, but for a person in his situation it was a matter of greater consequence.

As the period of the honours examination approached I worked harder and harder, turning myself into a mindless memory machine. About two weeks before the exam Denis Walshaw and I were so unwise as to incur the wrath of Phyllis, our landlady. One word led to another, and finally either we were asked to depart or I indicated that I would depart. This incident was a pity really, because I had always liked Phyllis. Tom Barnard had done so too, but I had allowed myself to be caught up in a chemical dislike between Dennis and Phyllis.

The immediate cause of our ejection was pathetic. As one element of our tea Phyllis provided us with a pot of some marmite like substance called 'Oh-so-Tastee'. Finding this substance not too much to our liking we added a question mark after the name on the top of the pot. This much distressed Phyllis, who explained forcefully that she had simply been falling over backwards in her efforts to provide something attractive for her lodgers- no easy task in wartime rationing conditions.

I was far too preoccupied with my finals to be much put out by this little mishap, though, and immediately after my finals there was the problem of a world at war to be tackled.