

Chapter 1

Arriving in the City

Throughout my career I handled everyday clerical administrative tasks at the outset for about eighteen months, and again, towards the end, for a similar period at Hastings Direct, leading up to my retirement in July 2010. For all the rest of my working life – almost fifty years – I undertook or created more fulfilling roles which could broadly be listed under the heading of ‘marketing’. This is a memoir of that working career, the people I have worked with, some of the characters I met along the way, places I visited, and some of my more memorable achievements and experiences.

When I began work, the six-day working week was beginning to come to an end. Fortunately, I never had to work on Saturdays, which was regarded as something of a perk at the time and something only the better companies could offer. All this changed when I ended my working days forty-seven years later at Hastings Direct, where Saturday working was the norm for most departments. This was compensated for by having a ‘shift day’ in the week preceding the Saturday to be worked. I always hated being on the Saturday shift even though I had had a day off in lieu earlier in the week.

Somehow my career always seemed destined to be involved with financial services. As a child I can remember listening to the lunchtime news on the BBC Home Service (later Radio 4) and hearing reports of how much National Savings had increased in the previous month (£6 million net or so, as I recall). I never really understood it at the time, but I do remember thinking that ‘savings’ must be important. My father had opened a savings account for me with a Friendly Society whose agent collected money from savers at a house in Plassey Street, near where I grew up in Clive Place, Penarth before going to boarding school in Sussex. One day father said that if I wanted to I could withdraw the accumulated monies he had paid in for some years – a few pence per month. Whatever the modest sum was that I withdrew to close the account, I appreciated that saving was probably a good idea: you should not spend everything you earned (and later when it became easy to obtain, more than you had in credit)!

My general interest in financial services was later aroused at school by the elder brother of a very good school friend of mine, Stephen Swift, who himself later became a director of UBS Asset Management in London and Hong Kong. Stephen’s brother worked for Lloyds BOLSA (Bank of London and South America), a subsidiary of Lloyds Bank. Barclays also had an international subsidiary, Barclays Bank (DCO), which appealed to me. Barclays Bank (DCO) was at that time the world’s largest multinational bank with a branch network that spanned the Middle East, Africa, the Mediterranean, and the British West Indies. The combination of working with people and being involved with, if not actually travelling to, foreign parts held great appeal to me.

I had unsuccessful interviews with several nonfinancial services companies. Unilever interviewed me in their head office at the northern end of Blackfriars Bridge as a management trainee; I applied to the BBC to become a news reporter or camera man, as the idea of travel appealed, but I never received a reply; I applied for a position with the Ottoman Bank at the London Bridge end of King William Street, where I did get an interview but nothing more, and so on.

An unexpected offer of an interview with one of the biggest Lloyd’s of London insurance brokers held great attraction and appeal for me. At least it would fulfil the interest I had in working with people. It came about through my housemaster at Christ’s Hospital, who was related by marriage to a director of the company.

I travelled to London in May 1963 for my interview with Mr ‘Jock’ Holford at C.T. Bowring & Co., one of the largest firms of Lloyd’s brokers and over one hundred years old. I attended the interview at 52 Leadenhall Street in my school uniform – blue-coat, knee breeches, and yellow socks. As I walked up Cornhill I was followed by two city gents who recognised the uniform. ‘He’s a Christ’s Hospital boy,’ one of them remarked. Each of these men was probably no older than forty, but they wore bowler hats and carried tightly rolled black umbrellas. That was the standard dress for many men who worked in the City regardless of position and status. What might have been different was whether the suit was two-piece, or three-piece, pin stripe or plain, off-the-peg or tailor-made; there

were numerous city tailors in such places as Lime Street, Gresham Street, Fenchurch Street, and Little Britain. Most suits were either a tone of grey-black or blue, never brown.

At a second interview during the summer term (again in full school uniform) I again met Holford. On this occasion I was shown The Room: the Lloyd's underwriting room but more of a large open hall with a large first floor balcony. I was entertained to lunch in the Captain's Room. This was all rather splendid, with a highly polished old ship's brass bell and many paintings on the walls of old cargo sailing ships, as well as of *Lutine*, Lloyd's own sixty-foot ocean-racing yacht. We were joined by a number of quite eminent-looking colleagues of Holford's age who seemed to share a rather alien language and a good-sized brandy each. Holford, I learned, travelled from Broxbourne, a place I had barely heard of, but being told his house was in Hertfordshire and fronted onto a river, I thought that maybe one day I might be able to live somewhere similar. Aspiration!

I left school in late July 1963, and since I had already realised that long summer holidays would be a thing of the past and not being under any pressure to start immediately, I decided to enjoy my last long holiday opportunity. I began my career in September in a third-floor office at 22 Billiter Street overlooking the corner with Fenchurch Street. My office manager was a Mr Kimber, who sat in a partitioned office with windows overlooking his domain. Our office was responsible for processing paper for business brokered in The Room at Lloyd's, 'the biggest insurance market in the world' I was told. It was in a building which was across the road and around a corner in Lloyd's Avenue. Mr Kimber was a rather stern-faced man with a black moustache. He wore a single-breasted two-piece grey suit and a bowler hat. He was probably in his early fifties and gave the impression of having never worked or done anything else within the company.

I was just eighteen and London was new to me. I had arrived from Penarth, a small coastal town near Cardiff the day before and had spent the night in a rather elegant mews house occupied by two male friends of Denis Curthoys, director of the National Opera Company of Wales, in Old Barrack Yard, just off Knightsbridge close to The Grenadier pub. I had met Denis for the first time on The Welsh Dragon, a train from London Paddington to Cardiff, when I was auditioning (successfully) for the Glamorgan Youth Orchestra as a French horn player a couple of years before. We all spent the evening listening to Shirley Bassey records and went to bed rather later than I would have preferred for my first working day.

Suit jackets would be removed occasionally in the office but were always worn when outside. It was traditional for regimental ties to be worn on Fridays, and usually club, striped, plain (but never red or yellow), or polka-dot ties on other days. Yellow ties were considered totally taboo as they indicated questionable sexuality! After a few weeks I realised that the better-dressed men wore stiff white detached studded collars with plain perfectly laundered coloured or sometimes striped shirts. The detached collars came in a variety of styles, peculiarly called 'Windsor', 'Oxford', 'Classic' and so on. They had to be starched and laundered by Collars of Wembley, who would collect and deliver these collars in purpose-made square brown cardboard boxes direct to offices throughout the City every week at a cost of 9d (4.5p) per collar. I couldn't afford that, and in any case all my shirts were mostly drip-dry, white, single-button cuffs, with collar attached.

Walking from Bank underground station to the office in Billiter Street gave me the option of walking up Cornhill into Leadenhall Street and down Billiter Street or of arriving via Lombard Street across Gracechurch Street and then into Fenchurch Street. The latter was the more interesting route, because most of the old and varied Lombard Street buildings were festooned with historic, hanging signs. All the national banks had offices in the street as well as some foreign ones, and money brokers, and some still hung where now long-gone banks had been. It was a narrow street that made it possible to easily imagine what City life had been like centuries ago. At that time, there were none of the restaurants, bars, and cafes that appeared as the banks moved out in the early 2000's. At the eastern end of the street on the corner with Gracechurch Street was Barclays' grand head office which had stood there since 1864. In the mid 1960's it was knocked down and rebuilt with a new modern design and subsequently was replaced again just fifty years later. It was a sign of things to come with City buildings.

I sat next to my mentor Brian, a ginger-haired quietly spoken and apparently unruffable man in his mid-thirties, always white-shirted. We sat on rather small chairs on casters, Brian at the end and me in the middle of a row of three metal plastic-topped desks, facing another row of three similar desks – all in the same grey colour as the lino-like floor, the walls, and the metal office partitions. The office had several similar double rows of desks and accommodated more than forty people. Overhead we had newly installed fluorescent lighting.

Everyone around me was older. My colleagues appeared generally happy, routinely exchanging comments about the weather, soccer, the latest pop music, or occasionally a film they had seen. Office conversation never changed very much. Most of the people I worked amongst commuted into Fenchurch Street or Liverpool Street stations. This meant they lived to the east, in Essex, a county I knew nothing about, or in Colchester. (How far away was that?) Or they came from Southend, Braintree, Ilford, or Barking. (Is that a place, I thought, or was I mad?)

Of all the people nearby one stood out. Christine, who lived in Chelmsford, was a very large, freckle-faced girl in her early twenties. She wasn't a beauty, but she was very self-confident. She always seemed happy and had natural red hair which she kept short. To my amazement, I learned she threw the shot put and belonged to an athletics club near Hornchurch, where she lived and represented her county Essex. She was also a keen follower of pop music. The Dave Clark Five and the Swinging Blue Jeans were her favourite pop groups.

I can't remember much about the work I did in this office, other than it was unstimulating and repetitious. The office language and terminology, let alone the concept of insurance, were all alien to me.

I had at an early point been given a 'welcome' interview by Mr Kimber. He told me two things: that my position would be reviewed in three months' time and that in the meantime to 'keep your eyes and ears open, but your mouth shut!' I thought of my training period as a sort of Thomas Cook Office Tour. I have pondered from time to time what possible deeper message lay behind Kimber's advice, but I was, nevertheless, very grateful for it. As my life in general and my business life in particular developed, acting as a piece of mental blotting paper (for those who can remember what that was) would prove to be a very useful and valuable skill.

My thinking was that, since I was employed as a Lloyd's trainee broker, I didn't expect to stay too long before being moved to another department to 'learn the business' over time, without the need to know everything immediately. Anyway, after three months clerical work no follow-up meeting had taken place with Mr Kimber, so I gathered up the courage to ask for one, which to my surprise was granted quite soon afterwards. From this I learned a lesson: if I was to get on and make progress in my career, I'd probably have to push rather than wait or expect things to happen.

In due course I moved to another office, this time without any prompting on my part, within the head office building at 52 Leadenhall Street. My new manager was a Mr Eric Borgonon, an assistant director reporting to 'Jock' Holford who had recruited me. Borgonon, a man in his fifties, was rather slight in build but military in appearance, with a clipped moustache, always wearing a chalk pin-stripe three-piece double-breasted suit, with, of course, a bowler hat and a black rolled umbrella. We had the same furniture as my previous office, but there were no windows to throw any natural light, as I recall. I sat beside Len, a pipe-smoking man in his sixties, who would introduce me to North American facultative reinsurance. He was an Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute. Len commuted via London Bridge station from a flat near Croydon, and he too wore three-piece suits and had a bowler hat and had a tightly rolled umbrella.

I gave some thought about studying for the ACII (Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute) qualification by correspondence course. In fact, I made several starts at achieving this, including enrolling for evening classes at the Moorgate Institute, but I found the process of reading, paper writing, studying, and the exams (which I always hated) too much grind and bind.

Len was a mine of information about the company, the department, and its work, having worked within it for many years. He had a twinkling eye and a happy disposition. He was a numismatist and often brought old coins into the office for me to look at. On one occasion he produced a groat, an English silver coin worth four English pennies which ceased being produced in the late nineteenth century. On other occasions he showed me silver sixpenny pieces, florins, and half-crowns, and explained the various pure silver contents of each. The metal composition of these coins, Len told me, had changed from being 50% silver, 40% copper, 10% nickel, in 1920 to being removed totally from all silver coins, from 1947 to become 75% copper, 25% nickel. The removal of all silver content meant that most of the earlier coins disappeared from circulation fairly quickly, and were sought by collectors. Len also liked farthings, because of the wren depicted on the reverse side. He also spoke of his wife fondly.

Len never really showed or told me whether I was doing a good job or not, but his ability to add up long columns of figures – either in pounds, shillings, and pence or US dollars and cents – was phenomenal. The daily

work entailed accounting for premiums and commissions for reassurers to the last penny (or cent) for other insurers in the United States. Names such as Niagara Insurance, John Hancock, Fireman's Fund, and Carpenters come to mind. However, the quarterly audit in large heavily bound books was the sort of repetitive work I didn't find particularly stimulating. Obviously, any errors I made could be easily found, as columns and rows of numbers always had to reconcile, so accuracy and attention to detail were paramount – both attributes I was to need later throughout my career.

Numerical speed and accuracy was improved literally overnight with the arrival of an 'electronic' (as it was called) calculator. Up until that point, some people had been using slide rules – something I never mastered. Others used the only mechanical calculator available which had a barrel to which various small movable sliders were attached. This was mounted on a carriage that was turned by hand and moved in a way rather similar to an ancient abacus. The new electronic machine was an ANITA. It measured about fourteen inches square and five or eight inches high. It was indeed the first electronic desktop calculator. Everyone in the office shared it, but it remained in one place. The numerals lit up wired numbers in a display panel and, depending on the calculation, would take long enough that one could observe the numbers being created from the circuitry. It was extremely quick in comparison to anything else being used, and it was accurate. This was the beginning of a new age of electronic calculators!

Another newly invented piece of office equipment was a floor-standing box of a machine that could copy documents one at a time in black and white if they were placed face downwards on a glass screen. Often it was placed in its own small room because it was so large. It was made by Rank Xerox, and it was so successful and ultimately so universal that it created a new verb. To 'Xerox' something became common usage, as did 'photocopy' as a noun or verb. Other, mostly Japanese, manufacturers entered the market very soon afterwards. Hitherto copies had been produced on duplicating machines – Roneo and Gestetner were the leading makes. Copies of documents were made by hand by rolling a drum, which had been covered in a 'skin' of fine paper onto which whatever was to be copied had been typed or drawn, over sheets of paper. Typewriters (mostly manual, but a few electric) were still very much the standard method of writing correspondence for business matters to be distributed or posted. Almost all secretaries, and certainly all senior ones, could take shorthand.

The Pitman system was the most popular secretarial shorthand. It appeared to be a series of hieroglyphics to me, of handwritten strokes made on a small notepad usually in pencil but some times biro, known then as 'a ball-point pen'. In fact it was a series of abbreviations for words and common phrases, which could allow someone well-trained in the system to write as quickly as people speak. This could be as high as 180 words per minute! Most secretaries could manage 80 to 120 words per minute.

I moved into the Treaty Department after six months with Len. The manager of my new office was Mr Gladwell, a fairly portly, white-haired, and rather distinguished man in his late fifties, who always wore a dark pinstripe suit. I didn't have a specific mentor here where another form of reinsurance was administered. Again natural daylight was absent, but the most noticeable change was that the mostly male employees here seemed better spoken than in my previous offices. Frequent visits by our own brokers (only male in those days) to this office to discuss the technicalities of both new risks and claims seemed to provide the stimulus for more active engagement with the work.

Gladwell's assistant manager was Ken Stoddart, one of several Stoddarts in the business (as I discovered later) who were related to the Bowring family, a long-established Lloyd's family with generations of Lloyd's membership. Both families had several members working within 'CTB' - the Bowring Group. Some were underwriters at Lloyd's in Lloyd's building. Michael Bowring, in his late twenties, worked within my new department, not seemingly very hard, and Ken Stoddart, in his forties, didn't seem too bright but was very friendly. He owned a twenty-six foot yacht and asked me one day if I'd like to crew on it in a race from Lymington to Poole and back to Cowes. The weather on the westward stretch was cold and against the wind and tide, which meant a lot of pulling on the sheets and sail changes. Having reached Poole Bar, the furthest point, we turned around, set our spinnaker, and lay out on the deck in bright warm sunshine – perfect sailing weather!

That evening we had all been invited to dinner at the Royal Yacht Squadron in black tie, but to get ashore we had to climb across other yachts, trying not to disturb their crew members below deck. The dinner was very good and the wine flowed. What no one had remembered, however, was that the tide would have gone out by the time we wanted to return, and climbing onto and across other grounded yachts didn't seem too wise. Our yacht was still

afloat, however, and the only way to get to it was on an inflatable dinghy in the dark and with most of us feeling slightly 'tired'. It was a memorable moment.

It also became apparent that people in my new office, mostly male and in their forties, commuted from generally rather more appealing places – Sevenoaks, Bromley, Beckenham, Tunbridge Wells, and Brighton for instance, so I presumed that they were probably better paid. Mike Bowring commuted from Cuckfield, in deepest Sussex and Ken Stoddart from Godalming which was in real stockbroker belt. The realisation that at the end of my training I would be a Lloyd's broker coming to discuss business with my new colleagues encouraged me to think that my salary would begin to reflect this environment before too long.

Being a trainee broker who had brought into the business as a protégée of 'Jock' Holford, a main board director, on the introduction of Morton Peto, my housemaster at school and his brother-in-law, didn't make it easy for me to make friends. I recall a young Irishman, Rory, a heavily bespectacled fellow in his early twenties, was always having a laugh and a joke with his work mates. They all smoked cigarettes or panatelas in the office, as did my co-workers in the other offices I had worked in. Some people, such as Len, even smoked a pipe! Rory, who was popular with many of his colleagues, spent some the standard one hour for lunch with me – but as my income was set at £360 per annum, free cash for fun lunches or a pint of beer let alone two was restricted. His attempts at friendship didn't last, as my limited ability to reciprocate his invitations, let alone accept them, became obvious.

Another colleague in his twenties was Richard Lawrence, a smart dresser, quietly spoken, who travelled from Banstead. He and I had little to do with each other in the office, being in different sections, though we were doing pretty much the same job. He had been a clerk for a few years and had progressed from within a rather stolid group to become a deputy section head, which I thought quite an achievement for someone of his age. From time to time he and I would have lunch at the Lime Club, a members-only luncheon club in the basement of a building in Lime Street in Leadenhall Market. It was not particularly expensive, and the cooking was not very inspiring, being traditional, often over-cooked English fare, but it was away from the hustle and bustle of the office and somewhere where we could pass our lunch hour happily. Regulars at the club would typically be older men who mostly seemed to enjoy plenty of alcohol with their lunch – especially on Fridays. It was disappointing when Richard chose to leave Bowrings to become a loss adjuster, though he would be useful to me in this capacity some years later.

Occasionally I would take myself to the Christ's Hospital Club in Great Tower Street for lunch. I felt some compulsion to go there from time to time to support in a small way the City heritage and connections of my school, Christ's Hospital, and it was cheap. It had a rather scruffy dining room in the eaves above offices from which some school administrative functions were run, and in which I had been interviewed and examined (physically and mentally) prior to going to the school in 1956. The food was pretty dire, nobody spoke much to anybody else, let alone to an infrequent diner like me, and it had no licence.

During my time at Bowrings I suffered two bouts of incapacitating illness which kept me away from the office for six weeks each time. The first occasion in the spring of 1964 was the more serious, in that three problems occurred simultaneously. I had lymphangitis, osteomyelitis, and cellulitis, which was an extremely painful combination of ailments, centred on my right lower shin.

At this time I was living in an all-male hostel in Hampstead called HYELM (Hostel for Young Employees of Limited Means). HYELM had a number of houses quite close to each other at the top of Fitzjohns Avenue in Hampstead. I shared a room with three others at 11 Arkwright Road, a four-storey detached house, which was about 200 yards away from the main building in Fitzjohn's Avenue where the dining room, laundry and ironing facilities were. My bedroom overlooked the steep road and gardens outside. One of the other residents on my landing was John Dudbridge, a trainee wine salesman at Fortnum and Mason. After I had been bed bound and had not eaten for two or three days, I was still not particularly hungry and had a high temperature. John produced an enormous carton of fresh raspberries for me, which he had brought back from a weekend visit to his parents in High Halden, Kent. It was a very memorable and touching gesture.

Resting in bed in the hope that the leg would settle down and recover with aspirin didn't work. I was unable to stand because of the intense pain. The infected blood in the leg had caused it to balloon up to my groin, where a gland stopped it spreading to the rest of my body. I was taken to the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead and told that had the groin gland not done its job, I could have been very seriously ill. The most likely cause had been a knock I

received on my leg while playing for the Old Blues on their home ground at Fairlop, about as Far East on the Underground tube system as it is possible to get on the Central line.

In the Royal Free I was given penicillin injections three times a day by an extremely attractive French nurse. During the five days I was there, she would often joke about having to take my pyjamas down so that she could have a good target on my thigh or backside to see and aim at. 'Please let me see your skin' was her standard line, delivered in a seductive French accent. Sometimes she would throw the needle rather like a dart and other times insert it gently, and always with a cheeky smile afterwards.

Having been told by the consultant not to consider playing contact sports for fear of triggering another bout of the same problems, I rather stupidly began playing rugby again for the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) in the autumn of 1965. Sure enough, I received an innocent knock on the lower shin through shin pads and had to take more time off work again. I wasn't referred to the hospital this time, as the inflammation was caught and treated immediately. I did, however, take the advice and never played rugby or cricket again. The centre of the infection on the shin bone has remained extremely sensitive to bumps, nudges, and pressure for the rest of my life.

After eighteen months with CTB, I was appointed a junior broker in The Room at Lloyd's. I became used to the smell of the place – unlike anything I've known before or since. It was a mixture of disinfectant and carbolic soap, not unlike Germolene, an antiseptic cream! It was quite acrid and not at all pleasant, but somehow 'clean'.

I was given a call number, which would be called by the Lloyd's ushers on the speaker system – used when a broker was wanted by another person in the Room. Mine was Bowring Stephens MP40, and it was written into my brown leather slip wallet. I was to be involved in non-marine business on the first floor level of The Room, a wide gallery overlooking the ground floor.

With my promotion came a salary raise to £520 per annum – £10 a week before tax! I took pleasure in the fact that I had made the transition from trainee to junior broker more quickly than my director's previous protégée Bob Ballantine, whom most of my colleagues regarded as a 'golden boy'. In fact, Bob was to oversee my activity in the Room for several months, where my initial task consisted of visiting brokers and telling them about claims being made on policies (or 'slips') they had underwritten.

Later I would visit underwriters at companies in the Lloyd's market, all located in offices in the streets around the Lloyd's building. They operated in much the same way as Lloyd's underwriters. Usually their offices were modern, warm and comfortable and often spaciouly modern. It was perfectly possible to negotiate a route from one office to another through passageways within interconnecting buildings, with only brief dashes to be made outside in alleyways, across streets, and under railway bridges around Fenchurch Street station, if it was wet.

Around that eastern part of the City is a street called Crutched Friars. It and the narrow streets and alley ways that surround it were used mainly for the warehousing of imported items from the London docks which were still actively busy and not too far away, in railway archway spaces behind large wooden doors, as they probably had been for many decades. The area was poorly lit and criss-crossed overhead by railway tracks going into Fenchurch Street. It was easy to picture this area as it would have been in Dickensian times. The atmosphere was made even more so by the strong smell of rat poison and other noxious disinfectants.

By walking everywhere, I visited some of the offices further afield and taught myself the layout of the City. War-damaged buildings were still very much in evidence, their sides blown away by bomb blasts in the Blitz, exposing the innards of what had been offices or living accommodation. Areas of open scrub land, known as bomb sites, were still covered with mounds of rubble and overgrown with buddleia, bushes, small trees, and grass. This walking has meant that the City has never felt 'foreign' to me. Indeed, it is familiar terrain, even if many of the older and distinguished buildings, which had stood for one hundred years or more, have been replaced by modern and, on the whole, very attractive new ones.

I learned to drive by taking lessons with the British School of Motoring branch in Fenchurch Street. Starting driving lessons in a small car at the end of a working day meant dealing with rush hour traffic. I well remember one occasion when I had to confront heavy goods vehicles from London Docks in a one way system at Aldgate, coming continuously towards me with right of way at a junction I wished to enter. "How long are y'er going to wait 'ere?" enquired the Cockney instructor. "Use y'er weight son or we'll be here all night," he rather forcefully implored!

Leadenhall Market, which was close to the office, was a fascinating place to walk at lunch time. I would pass the shops of long-established City meat traders, and a few fishmongers. They took pride in making the year-round open-air displays as attractive as possible under the overhanging hooded lights. In the game season, pheasants, rabbits, and various smaller birds including pigeons would be tied by their feet and suspended so that the blood could be drained onto a white marble sloping counter top. I was shocked when I first saw a pound of meat with a price of £1 on one of my walks!

The market wasn't pedestrianised, so vehicles drove through, but the predominant feature on the roads were the black painted bicycles with their wicker baskets on the front wheel and behind the seat. They were ridden by all the shops' delivery boys wearing dark blue aprons. Underneath the bicycles' crossbars would be a painted panel sign showing the shop name, description, and telephone number.

Apart from the butcher shops there was a Robert Dyas shop selling hardware and household goods and a music shop selling the new invention of Compact Discs as well as LP's. CD's were becoming increasingly popular and sold in slim plastic covers. Cassette tapes which had preceded these as a more robust way of being able to store and play recorded music than on vinyl discs were also sold in plastic cases. It crossed my mind that someone would make a financial fortune from making and supplying these, but it wouldn't be me.

In walking around the City, I also learned of the existence and whereabouts of some of the City's old established and historic shipping and trading companies, such as the Hudson's Bay Fur Company. There were centuries-old banks such as Kleinwort Benson, which occupied a large post-war building in Fenchurch Street (since demolished to make way for a new structure known as the 'phone building'). The tailoring firms are almost all long gone now through amalgamations, takeovers, or simply going out of business. Names such as Gieves & Hawkes, Horne Bros, Dunne & Co., all gentleman's outfitters, Wooderson on the corner of Wood Street and Cheapside for shirts and ties, and others in Fenchurch Street, Gresham Street and Moorgate, have all disappeared, mostly redeveloped and occupied by banks from all over the world or have been turned into bars, and even a shopping mall.

My training and focus had remained on North American non-marine business, all of which was conducted in the Gallery, or Non-Marine Room upstairs in Lloyd's Building. The ground floor, or Marine Room, was where marine business was underwritten which included aircraft, being ships' hull and marine liability insurance. The claims I had to show to the brokers reflected my apprentice status in that I was left with the smallest lines to be acknowledged for claims settlement. Some of the claims were truly huge, running into hundreds of millions of dollars; earthquakes, hurricanes, oil refinery disasters, and huge warehouse fires were some of the most memorable. Inevitably, telling underwriters of their liabilities wasn't always pleasant. Some of the individuals were notoriously difficult and treated me as a new boy with disdain. Had I not worked for CTB, one of the biggest and oldest Lloyd's brokers, life could have been really unpleasant. I suspect that the prospect of being offered 'decent' (i.e. profitable) business was always an enticement for underwriters to take some of the 'rubbish' or poorer quality business. Anyway, life generally seemed to be pretty good now.

Whilst I was working in this department, the company announced it would go public. Although I knew precious little about such things then, I recall phoning my father from a call box from HYELM, on the evening of the day I heard with the news. He said, surprisingly, that he would make an application. I think the issue price was 119d. (pre-decimal pence) or it might have been £1.19s.0d. (one pound, nineteen shillings), and father bought a couple of thousand shares. Over the years they did extremely well, and he held on to them long after I had left the business, often remarking what a good investment they were.

The company also built a new building close to the Tower of London to house and consolidate its expanding business. It was only a few stories high, but it was built in an angular S-shape. Situated perhaps a quarter of a mile from The Room, as opposed to about 200 yards from the previous head office in Leadenhall Street, my usual lunchtime sandwich could now be eaten listening to the debates and diatribes delivered at Speakers' Corner on Tower Hill most weeks and in all weathers. Only later did I realise how famous some of the speakers were or would become: Michael Foot, Chad Varah, Trevor Huddleston, Lord Stansgate later to become Anthony Wedgewood Benn and Donald (later Lord) Soper, nick-named 'Doctor Soap-box', are just a few examples.

Other lunchtime activities included walking to Petticoat Lane and looking at the street stalls and household product demonstrations by the market traders. These were all very convincing and delivered by true Cockneys. An occasional visit to the Houndsditch Warehouse was another nearby excursion. It was a discount department store, full of mostly household items and clothing – pretty dull for a young man in the City, but a distraction and a change from sitting in the office.

To put it simply, risk underwriting was usually achieved by a senior broker from the firm going to a lead underwriting syndicate that specialised in the type of insurance risk being brokered – buildings, contents, factory machinery, oil refineries, art collections, and personal features occasionally, such as a pianist's fingers, and so on. Often, it seemed to me, R.W. Sturge, on behalf of a collection of different underwriters, would write the risk on behalf of all the syndicate members on a 'slip' by stamping it. Sometimes smaller underwriters, such as Kiln, would express frustration that they couldn't 'write the line' they wanted for what were perceived as the better risks. This process, however, saved time in having uncomplicated risks covered, but it meant that smaller underwriters with less ability to meet potentially large claims had to have utmost trust in the lead underwriter, because they were never being consulted.

For large risks, several slips were issued so as to spread the insurance cover as widely as possible in the market, and each underwriter, in addition to stamping the slip on behalf of his syndicate, each of which had its own 'box-number', had to show the percentage of the risk he was prepared to accept. Sometimes more than fifty underwriting firms would have to see the risk slip to get the risk covered. However, for a really popular insurance risk (i.e. a high premium and a low risk of claim – for example, someone's hands, legs, or teeth!) known as a 'good' risk, we, as the broker, would try to persuade the bigger underwriters to accept that the risk would be oversubscribed. There would then be a pro rata adjustment to get the underwritten figure down to one hundred per cent so that everyone would at least get some benefit – so long as no claim was ultimately made!

The individual underwriters, representing their syndicates, sat in 'boxes'. Each individual sat on a bench, which could take three or four seated people facing towards another bench, but divided by shelves of box files which recorded the syndicate's business, and reference books. New business was accepted on one side, claims on the other. Depending on the size of the underwriting syndicate, each firm would have one or more 'boxes'. It was a way and style of conducting business that had changed very little since the founding of Lloyd's in a city coffee house in 1688.

In due course I began to broker new business, as opposed to presenting claims. This was usually more fun and interesting than telling underwriters about claims they had to meet, but as a new boy in the Room, I was again only ever given risks to complete which had had most of the risk underwritten by underwriting syndicates already. The slip was usually an A4 landscape piece of thin card folded twice. It was an innocuous document in itself, typewritten with details of the risk, its location, the insured value, and the excesses, together with other technical details involving reinsurance. However, it represented enormous obligations on everyone who stamped and signed, sometimes with quill pen, their participation on it.

Whether taking around claims or new business, it was usually necessary to queue at underwriters' boxes. This could take up hours as brokers ahead of me engaged in discussions, arguments, joke telling, or sometimes just social gossip with the underwriters. Queuing for underwriters to return from lunches of sometimes indeterminate length (especially on a Friday) or waiting for them to appear on Monday mornings after a weekend in the country was all par for the course. This aspect of Lloyd's life distressed me, as did the realisation that it would take me years to make a really good income obtain through promotion. The majority of the people I was amongst in the Room probably had independent means. Many were members of long-established Lloyd's families, whose traditions and family loyalty would be obstacles to conventional promotion. This all told me that a long-term career to reach financial success here was not something I could wait nor have the patience for.

As far as I could tell everyone left the office on the dot at 5:30 p.m. Certainly in the clerical and administrative offices where I worked there was no hint of being invited for a pub visit before catching the train home from Fenchurch Street or Liverpool Street.

I had never envisaged a career in an office. My aspiration, in whatever sphere I worked, was to be creative in some way, ideally with a travel component. Several times a week I would look at classified advertisements in

newspapers I found lying on empty Underground seats, the *Evening Standard* or *Evening News*, or which I borrowed in the office. I could not afford to buy my own paper from the newspaper sellers who stood at seemingly every street corner, with the cry 'Paper, paper! Read all about it!' I never applied for any of the jobs advertised, probably because I had come to realise how lucky I was to have what I had. It was, after all, a position with undoubted but very long-term potential in a rather specialised business, at Lloyd's within the City of London. My office environment was warm, my work colleagues were all 'good sorts', but it remained something far removed from anything any of my school friends from my home town, Penarth, could have envisaged me doing.

One of my bedroom neighbours, and a good friend, in HYELM was Paul Burnett. His family lived in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight, and he was employed by Canada Life as a life assurance salesman, having briefly been a00 captain in the army. He told me quite a bit about the cold-calling and family-and-friends approach to getting life policies sold, and the potentially high rewards from bonus payments. At some point I went to his Canada Life UK head office in Trafalgar Square and met up with his manager for an informal interview and assessment. He, like all managers in his and (as I was to find out) all companies selling life insurance direct, was keen to build as large a team of agents as possible and take a cut of the sales commission.

Considerable promises of future potential prosperity were made, and examples from existing salesmen were given, should high sales be achieved. It was a tempting thought initially, but the idea of cold calling and canvassing family and connections for business didn't appeal to me.

Later I received an approach to work for Towry Law, a firm of life assurance brokers, without the need to make cold calls but instead to follow up on qualified leads, and with prospects of improving my income. This put me in a bit of a spin. My head was turned by in-house client support for complex tax and legal solutions combined with the security of life cover to pay for school fees or to mitigate unnecessary tax payments, usually at death or within a specified number of years. Their business was in another area of which I had very little knowledge, so I would be starting again from the bottom. I would be leaving the great CTB, but how to do so was another matter.

Chapter 2

Direction and Perspective Change

Telling Mr Borgonon of my decision to leave CTB wasn't going to be easy. I had been there only two years, and the tag of 'protégée' was still shining bright, though perhaps not quite as brightly as I had now begun to make my way up the career ladder. After days of deliberation about how, when, and where I would break the news to him, I seized the moment in the gallery of the Room one mid-morning. Borgonon had a shifty-sidewise walk and a slightly French-looking, haughty look, as if he had just taken snuff – which he might well have done! He was always difficult to approach at the best of times, and being nervous wasn't helping! Anyway, I approached him across the black and white chess board tiled floor and asked if I could speak to him briefly.

'What is it, dear boy?' he enquired.

'I have decided I wish to leave Bowrings, sir.'

'How come? I thought you were doing rather well here.'

Immediately I started to wonder whether I was making the best move. For the first time ever he had given me some praise, though in a curious way. Maybe I should rethink things. And in a flash I had. None of my reasons for wanting to leave had changed, so I continued.

'I'm sorry I shan't be staying longer,' I blurted out, 'but I want to move on, sir.'

'Well, I'll have to discuss it with Mr Holford, the main board director, and if you hear nothing from either me or him, you can leave in four weeks.'

We shook hands and went our separate ways. I didn't hear any more from him or anyone else, and I left my first employer in November 1965.

The next stage of my career started with my arrival at a firm of life assurance brokers, Towry Law & Co., Ltd. I had been meeting with John Dyson, one of the firm's directors, over the past several weeks on Friday evenings after Bowrings had closed for the day. These discussions had taken place in The Square Rigger pub on the north-west side of the old, known as 'new', London Bridge opened in 1831, opposite Adelaide House where my mother had worked years previously. The latest London Bridge was built between 1967 and 1973, and the 'new' one sold to an American oil magnate who, it was rumoured believed he had bought Tower Bridge to span a canal in Arizona!

My meetings with John had begun these meetings as a result of having met John socially. Quite where I had met him, I can't remember, even though socialising was distinctly unusual on my salary after travel and hostel boarding costs had been met. I also felt distinctly disloyal, feeling I was letting down all those who had given me an enviable chance to work at Lloyd's of London in one of the most respected and oldest brokerages.

John was in some ways an enigma. He wasn't public-school educated, but he spoke with a distinctly cultured and well-modulated voice. He was sure that I would be a success; he suggested that if I succeeded in brokering life insurance and investment-linked products (which were a comparatively new concept at the time) to clients of the firm, I could make a good income with every prospect of good bonuses. So I decided to make the move.

I shared an office with John at 5 St Paul's Churchyard, overlooking the northern side of St Paul's Cathedral. The small office building was built in the early twentieth century close to the entrance to St Paul's underground station. The offices were above a Moyses Stevens florist shop and had a rickety self-operated lift, which few male members of staff used, preferring to get to the offices on the third to fifth floors by striding or running up the stairs several steps at a time.

It was an amazing location. I frequently gazed out from my second-floor office trying to take in the privilege of having the view of the cathedral, even if it was being stone-washed by a company whose plastic sheeting with the name 'Szerelemy' on it covered most of the north side (the only side that I could see) for most of my time there.

'TL' was a real eye-opener. It was pretty much everything Bowrings wasn't, being young, dynamic, and go-getting. There was a collective enthusiasm to do well, to achieve results, and above all to give unquestionably good

advice. It was nothing for us to work late into the night preparing lengthy schedules, initially hand-written and then typed, of detailed recommendations for clients who had appointments the following day. Electric typewriters were now the norm. It was here that I first came across a word processor, a device which some senior secretaries had. These electric machines could memorise standard paragraphs for letters, and at the push of a button, preselected paragraphs could be typed.

The business had been set up about five years previously by Hon. C.T.H. (Cecil) Law and Nigel Paget-Brown. Other directors included Lord Ellenborough, Cecil's brother. He rarely appeared in the offices but was on the note paper, I suppose to show 'class'. Clive Seeley was a former Guards officer and a mad-hatter. Clive Scott-Hopkins ('Scottie') was reputed to be the most successful life assurance salesman in the country; he lived near Maidenhead and usually travelled in with Richard Cockroft, another director. Other than John, these were all Old Etonians, and it showed! But there were other directors who were not Old Etonians. Don Griffiths concentrated on mortgage business; David Rouse, who sadly died young with heart problems, was financial director; Peter Harris, a former barrister, was a leading authority on estate duty (inheritance tax) planning; and Clive Williams from North Wales seemed to have no special responsibilities but talked well and encouraged me a lot. A subsidiary company brokered home insurance policies under its managing director Alasdair Holbein, a very intense Jew if ever I saw one.

Everyone wore well-cut bespoke tailored suits, double-cuffed shirts with link chain cufflinks, and classically styled lace-up black shoes. From that time on, that became my standard office dress wherever I worked.

The company obtained business mostly from referrals by existing clients, as well as from small classified advertisements in *The Times* (which in those days – until 1967 – appeared on the front page) and from personal advertisements in the *Daily Telegraph* and their Sunday sister papers. This was a unique approach. As far as I know, we were the only company to target individual ads specifically at particular professions, and for a period it was highly successful.

With this set-up, it quickly became apparent that I was joining a young and dynamic company. It was nothing for several of these directors to be working until 8:00 p.m. or much later most nights, and I was expected to do the same. The company was driven by success and achievement. It was admired not only by its competitors but also by the company 'inspectors' (basically, servicing agents) from the life assurance companies whose products we used because of the amount of business they received from us. We strived to ensure we had the very best and quickest service. It was a thoroughly professional business, and high standards were expected from all who worked there in every respect. And although one or two might have had insurance (ACII) or secretarial (ACIS) qualifications, all of this was achieved without any of us having any relevant business or financial intermediary qualifications, which weren't at that time a statutory requirement! One or two might have had either insurance or secretarial professional qualifications.

The process of learning the business was to watch and listen and then have verbal tests. I recalled Mr Kimber's comments a few years earlier. As time went on, I began to make my own appointments from leads provided from the company's advertising in *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. Each director was responsible for a different area of the country, and I joined John in looking after the Home Counties. The typical client was usually pretty well-heeled and professional. Titled folk, landed gentry, and inherited wealth were significant parts of the business. These clients usually needed effective tax planning for their assets and ultimately protection from taxes on their death, then known as 'death duty'. As a new boy, however, I dealt with much smaller cases, often helping newly qualified accountants, lawyers, military officers, and doctors to obtain their first mortgages and to plan for school fees, and pensions in later years.

It was in this area of financial planning that I found the concept of investment and saving, with or without life assurance that was to become the focus of my career.

Soon after I started there, I arrived at the office wearing a gabardine raincoat my mother had bought for me. I hung it up on the coat stand in the shared office. John arrived in the office a few minutes later.

'Don't ever let me see that coat in here again!' he exclaimed. 'It is the most appalling thing I have ever seen. Do you understand, George?'

I felt rather insulted. 'Okay, but what is the problem?'

‘Just look at it. It is truly dreadful!’

There was no point in discussing it any more. In retrospect, he was right. The coat was pretty awful! It was brown and made of textured polymer material that would change different shades of brown, almost shimmering, as it moved. It was also rather stiff and knee-length. I think my mother had bought it for me because at the time gabardine coats were quite popular. But they were not really attractive for an up-market City business with a self-conscious professional image! Anyway, the experience made me aware of my dress and appearance and of the standards expected, and I never had any further problems of that type.

In a way I overreacted to this sartorial criticism. Although I could barely afford it, I had an overcoat made to measure by a small tailor in Little Britain, a narrow street off the west end of London Wall. It was a blue cashmere coat with a velvet collar, about knee length and very waisted in an Edwardian frock-coat style. I felt rather self-conscious in it, and I remember the tailor telling me that sitting down in it would spoil it, as would putting anything in any of the pockets. Father, rather disparagingly, said that it was the sort of thing my grandfather would have worn. Standing while travelling on the tube when there were plenty of seats available was a practice that didn't last long. The coat was horrifically expensive, but I thought it would last a few years, and I made sure it did.

It led to the purchase over the years of a few suits, some two-piece some three, as well as a rather loud and large sports jacket, predominantly cream but with large yellow and brown checks. In retrospect this was a rather ostentatious jacket, again very waisted, and quite full length. It came from Drew & Co., a long-established small tailoring business in Lime Street, who had been recommended to me by a number of colleagues. At that time, Horne Bros. and Dunn & Co would make suits for a reasonable price, but I felt I wanted something better than from a high street retailer.

Stories became legion about some of my colleagues. Scottie used to dictate so many letters in a day that he couldn't carry them all in his briefcase to sign on his way home. He was often to be seen going home with not only a large and bulging briefcase but also several plastic shopping bags obviously crammed full of private correspondence. (There was no Data Protection Act in those days!) He would always travel to Paddington in a taxi, signing letters until he reached Paddington, when he would be seen desperately holding on to pink office copies, whilst stuffing a post box with filled envelopes. Often pink carbon copy letters could be seen fluttering along the platforms. The signing would continue on the train all the way home.

He only showed anything remotely personal about his private life when his brother who had been Member of Parliament (MP) for North Cornwall since 1959 was re-elected having lost his seat in 1966, to be MP for West Derbyshire at a 1967 by-election. Clive was over the moon and champagne was ordered and liberally enjoyed.

Clive was a superb salesman when talking to clients directly who came to meet him in the office; he said he never had time to go out and meet them. He would also talk incessantly on the telephone. ‘No’ was just not in his vocabulary. His lines were well rehearsed and his verbal flow almost unstoppable – all delivered in the most seductive and rounded old-Etonian tones. Ultimately the pressure took its toll and he suffered two heart attacks, but he continued working in this way until well into his seventies before finally deciding to work from home near Maidenhead.

Clive Seeley was a social animal in London, a practical joker and a keen card player. He had a wonderful sense of fun, told jokes (‘dear boy’) with panache, and gurgled with laughter like a drain most of the time. Life was for living, and he made sure as best he could that everyone else enjoyed it the same way. He always wore his Brigade of Guards regimental tie. Sometime later I heard he was gay.

After a few months with the firm, I left the office overlooking St Paul's to become Clive's assistant. I was now an ‘Assistant Life Manager’! This entailed picking up the pieces of Clive's unfinished business. If the case wasn't of a particular type or size, he'd pass it over and expect me to complete it. He expected a one hundred per cent closing rate and was distinctly unhappy if that didn't happen, no matter what reason.

My new office looked down the length of Cheapside towards the Mansion House and the Royal Exchange, but sitting in the same room as Clive meant living with constant noise. Clive's Old Etonian tones were incessant on the telephone or dictating into a small dictation machine (known as a ‘Dictaphone’) or giving instructions to either of two secretaries. This was extremely wearing, but it was a good way to learn something about the business and

about how to handle both easy and difficult clients. Hearing Charles's antics in the corridor with his fellow directors or their secretaries after he had made a sale was a happy distraction – to me if not to Clive!

Clive had three telephones on his desk and could hold two conversations at once. For instance, when calling a life office on one line for a policy premium quote, he would keep a client on hold on the other line. No return calls for him!

The way phone numbers in London worked at that time was interesting. Different districts had their own area codes. Numbers were accessed by turning a dial with a finger inserted in the appropriate hole on the front of a desktop telephone, which was usually black, occasionally grey, and sometimes beige. As now, the letters ABC and number 1 shared the same position, and so on through the alphabet and numbers 1 to 0 clockwise on the dial.) A Mayfair number would be dialled as 'MAY', Bayswater as 'BAY', and so on, but some areas had codes that seemed to have no relevance to their location. (Why would 'Flaxman' be part of Fulham?) Most districts had obvious abbreviations: PUT(ney), KNI(tsbridge), BAL(ham), etc. It wasn't until many years later that these codes really became numbers so that 'Mayfair' became '628', Bayswater '228', and Putney '788'. All London numbers dialled from outside London were prefixed '01'.

One medium-sized life assurance company, London & Manchester, offered fifteen, twenty or twenty-five year policies linked to unit trusts (similar to OEICS today). In addition, the life company was able to offer mortgages, provided it had sufficient funds available, at an interest rate of around seven and a half per cent. It was a leader in this field. The idea was that, dependent on a deduction based on the proposer's age, a known portion of the premium would be paid into the life policy while the balance would be used to pay off the interest on the loan secured by the life coverage, in anticipation that the growth of the investments would not only pay off the mortgage and accumulated mortgage interest but also produce a tax-free capital sum at maturity. The premiums for this type of policy were less than for what had hitherto been available, a with-profits policy, but the returns were unknown and relied on an act of faith that stock markets would go up!

Typically, the better with-profits policies would pay an annual or triennial bonus of a declared percentage rate, applied to the premiums paid, and sometimes on already declared bonuses as well. These bonus rates were based on the life company's investment performance, which was generally announced at the end of the year in December. Once declared, these bonuses were guaranteed. In future years, added to these would be a 'maturity bonus', which would not be guaranteed until policy maturity and would be an additional sum paid on top of the already declared annual or triennial bonuses.

The unit-linked policies were usually sold in conjunction with with-profits endowment policies to fund school fees as far ahead of their need as possible. It wasn't unusual for clients to start these policies as soon as they knew a baby was expected and so hopefully gain the benefits of investing for the longest possible period before drawing from the policy as school fees became payable. At that time all premiums paid into life assurance policies, other than for term assurance policies, attracted life assurance premium relief at a rate of seventeen and a half per cent, which made saving in this way extremely attractive.

My interest in life assurance and its uses for investment and in unitised funds in particular was well and truly born. One of the biggest attractions to me was that unit-linked performance could be transparently measured and costs known. With-profits policies were totally opaque: bonus declarations were only an indication of investment performance, and only the bare minimum was given to policyholders in order to remain competitive with their peers. Investment management costs were unknown.

My own investments began in a small way with the purchase of Great Britain stamps from a shop in a parade running underneath our offices along the north side of Saint Paul's in a pedestrianised walkway that linked Cheapside with Paternoster Square. Over a few months I built up an almost complete collection of mint unused stamps going back to Edward VII, except for 'faults', which were always out of my range pricewise. As well as these, I had another collection of the same stamps in used condition, and this collection also included some stamps from Queen Victoria.

One day I went to this shop (which was a family business) and found they had a Prussian blue stamp, which was one of a small series issued to mark the silver jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. For many years controversy swirled as to whether the Prussian blue stamps were in fact proof stamps that had been inadvertently perforated or correct issue stamps that were printed in the wrong colour. The 2½d stamp was submitted in two colours (ultramarine and Prussian blue) to the King for final approval. King George chose ultramarine. The accumulated evidence strongly supports an error in printing colour. It appears that a large number of 2½d stamps were printed in Prussian blue (turquoise) by mistake. Most were destroyed. Six sheets of 240 stamps were identified for destruction, but three of these were mistakenly included in an order to Upper Edmonton Post Office and a fourth sent to an unknown post office. All three Edmonton sheets were sold. The remaining two sheets in stock were destroyed. It is not known what happened to the stamps from the fourth sheet. Thus, no more than 480 Prussian blue stamps were available for sale.

I took the plunge and paid £180, the catalogue value, for one of these stamps in mint condition and unused. My intention, as with the rest of the collection, was to keep it for as long as I could for investment purposes. Sometime later I wanted it authenticated to be sure that it was not a forgery. I went to Stanley Gibbons who had a block of four in stock. They were most interested in it but uncertain. They showed me their stamps and compared them to mine. To my eyes they were identical. If it was forgery, they said, it was the best they had ever seen. They put it into a small white grease-proof paper bag and took it away to send it to the Authentication Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society of London. This was with the full knowledge of the stamp dealer from whom I had bought it, who said that if it was proven not to be genuine, he would refund the cost. He said he personally knew several members of the expert committee.

A few weeks later I received their analysis, and my doubts were confirmed. The colour had been achieved by applying some chemical to an ultramarine stamp, a process which had also removed some of the adhesive on the back, so it was pretty convincing.

I got my money back, but shortly afterwards, being somewhat disillusioned with the experience, I sold my collections for only a modest profit. It is never a good market when such things have to be sold! (I did subsequently develop a collection of first-day covers, not for their investment potential, but as a potential legacy.)

Outside my working life, a significant event occurred when Barclaycard (later to become Visa) was launched in 1966. This was a credit card issued by Barclays Bank offering the familiar credit card facilities of today. The first credit card issued in the United Kingdom had been Diners Club in 1962, followed by American Express in 1963, but Barclaycard was the first credit card designed for mass use by 'the man in the street' as opposed to the very well-heeled.

For the most part, people were initially rather confused by the idea of being able to use a plastic card to pay for something you could own straight away without physically handing over cash. Barclaycard was the only high street bank credit card until 1972, when a consortium of High Street banks including National Westminster Bank, Midland Bank (later to become HSBC), Lloyds TSB, and Williams & Glyn's Bank (now the Royal Bank of Scotland) offered the Access credit card. This too changed its name: to MasterCard in 2002.

People had mixed views as to whether buying things 'on tick' in this way was a good thing or not. The also fairly new weekend colour magazines of the serious newspapers of the late 1960s carried endless coloured advertising promoting the card and the perceived benefits of suddenly being able to buy something without hire-purchase contracts. Applying for and using a few thousand pounds worth of instant credit appealed to many people, but for me, the monthly repayment obligation at astonishingly high rates of interest of 20% and more made me think the concept was a responsibility I didn't want and couldn't afford – at least for the time being.

Chapter 3

Investment Marketing Begins

The unit trust business, although first established in the 1930s, had not yet become a significant business in its own right, but I thought it offered me a future, not least because its products were transparent, its charges disclosed, and its valuations easy to calculate. All these features were to become of overriding importance in years to come. In a way I was ahead of my time. By comparison with traditional with-profits products of conventional life companies, they were a revelation. I successfully responded to an advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph* to become a trainee manager with Save & Prosper Group – at the time the second largest unit trust manager in the market, with £460m under management. I was interviewed by Mr Stan Baker and Mr Fred Trott at the company's administrative offices at Arodene House, in Ilford, Essex.

So this is Essex! Welcome!

I started work at the Arodene House administration office at Gants Hill. It was a mid-sixties four-storey building facing a Gaumont cinema situated at the Gants Hill roundabout on Eastern Avenue, an arterial road into London through the East End from Essex. The local community had a significant number of Jewish residents, and near the office was a parade of shops which included a wonderful Jewish family bakery called Louis. They baked bread and made fresh cakes with copious quantities of cream every day. Their donuts were exquisite. On another corner of the roundabout, reached by a pedestrian subway, was the Cherry Tree restaurant – a lunchtime favourite of one of my managers, Roger Young. Valentines Park, an Essex County cricket ground was very nearby, but I never went there.

I began at Save & Prosper in April, 1966 with another trainee, Miles Edge, who was slightly older than I, the son of a timber merchant from Craven Arms, Shropshire. Miles was married to a glamorous, out-going, and voluptuous auburn-haired Greek girl, Anastasia (Anna). They lived in South Kensington, while I was living by this time in Belsize Park. Miles was a kindred spirit and good company. He invited me to his wonderful wedding in Craven Arms parish church. We progressed in our own ways and on separate paths within the company. Sadly, I learned later that his marriage had failed, but not before I had holidayed with them in a cottage in Cadgwith, Cornwall with Polly, another office colleague. This was around the time of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

A third management trainee, who had joined a few months earlier, was Julian Tregonning, an ex-naval lieutenant who had been invalided out because of a serious leg injury. Julian too was good fun, but he seemed a bit of over familiar, always using first names when talking about or with board members – David Maitland, the managing director, Jeremy Hepplethwaite, the finance director, and Chomeley Messer, the legal director. He spent his career in the unit trust and investment industry and became a board member of NY Mellon Bank, in a career with remarkable similarities to the one we both had started together. Some forty years later I met Julian shortly after he had retired. He claimed to have a contact list of 2,500 people around the world, having been involved with setting up Flemings businesses in and throughout South America, and Jersey and with Mellon Bank in the Far East. He had been master of the Grocers Company and a member of their Court of Assistants (or Board).

Stan Baker was the general manager based at Gants Hill. He never saw me or spoke to me again after my interview with him. Fred Trott, a happy smiling man, was administration manager and supervised my training. This consisted of doing what I called a tour of the various departments based in Arodene House. We were definitely not in pin-stripe public-school country! Nevertheless, all the people were approachable and helpful. The company was to become a pioneer of what become known as equity-linked life assurance.

An inherent attraction of such policies with monthly sums invested over many years was a phenomenon known as 'pound cost averaging'. If the same amount of money is invested each month, when the prices are down you get more for your money than you will when prices are up. This technique irons out the ups and downs of a fund price over time, giving you a number of shares bought at an overall average price, and takes away the worry of timing purchases perfectly. Regular investing in this way is ideal for people starting out or who want to take their first steps towards building a portfolio of funds for their long-term future.

Hitherto S&P had obtained its business via City stockbrokers and bank trustee departments. 'Block offer' advertisements were beginning to become a feature in weekend newspapers, which my later employers, Slater, Walker, were to exploit very successfully. S&P's largest fund Investment Trust Units (ITU) were frequently advertised under the slogan 'Speculate to Accumulate'. As this marketing wasn't an area of the business I was directly involved with, I never knew how successful or otherwise it was. Other well-known funds at the time were Scotbits (Scottish banking, insurance, and trust companies) and Scotyields, a high income fund.

At this time (1968) I had moved with John Dudbridge (mentioned earlier from HYELM) to a one-bedroom flat in Belsize Park. John was working for a wine shipper L.R. Voight, famous for importing Mateus Rose. This was a very popular, almost fashionable Portuguese rosé wine sold in a wicker basket around an oval-shaped bottle. He would later move on to Fortnum & Mason as a wine salesman and end up as director of a wine merchant's in Banbury selling wine to Oxford colleges.

Travelling by Tube (1s 3d or 6.5p each way) from Belsize Park to Gants Hill (eighteen stops with a change at Bank station) took about an hour and gave me an opportunity to read the City pages from discarded newspapers as comprehensively as I could. I found information about shares or equities easier to understand than bonds and gilts, and it has remained so ever since. Tickets to travel had to be bought either from ticket machines or from the station ticket office. Nobody checked them either on the train or as one entered the platform. Not buying a ticket for the full journey was commonplace. Arriving at a destination without a ticket meant that you could claim a shorter journey than the one actually taken to the ticket inspector, thus saving some expense: not something I ever did, but witnessed frequently.

Once on board, you could enter (unlawfully) through doors at the end of each carriage. Smoking was allowed anywhere: on the trains, on the platforms, even on the escalators! In retrospect it is surprising there weren't fires every day. The carriages had opening slat windows at the top within wooden frames. They were always dusty and dirty. At busy times several people at once would hold on to the straps that hung on either side of the gangways. There was no air-conditioning other than the open windows, so personal smells were difficult to avoid, especially in summer!

Carriage lighting came from small round ceiling-mounted electric light bulbs, but it was always light enough for everyone to be able to sit and reading a broadsheet newspaper with elbows resting on the arm-rests between the seats. Those standing had evolved a way of having a paper folded so that they could strap-hang and read the paper as the train rocked from side to side through the tunnels. Not for them the pleasures of early morning TV or computers or mobile phones! My money was tight, so in the mornings I'd try to find a discarded morning paper and in the evenings a tabloid-sized *Evening Standard*, which I preferred to the broad-sheet *Evening News*.

Stations likewise were always pretty dirty with chewing gum trodden in on the floors. They were dimly lit by recently installed and widely spaced fluorescent lighting strips suspended from the white enamelled tiles, which also covered the walls where advertisements were not covering them.

Before I became involved in life insurance products, I spent my first period in the Dealing Department, where investors and agents would telephone their buying and selling instructions for units in the trust(s) of their choice. Daily dealing prices were calculated at these offices and sent by facsimile machine to the head office in Cornhill to be displayed on a board there which was in the customer centre. This was managed by an old army-type named George McGowan – definitely pin-stripe, bowler, handlebar moustache, and a Surrey man!

The Muirhead facsimile machine used for sending documents to head office was a rather large device that faxed documents by telephone line to another machine. However, it was extremely temperamental and required the receiving machine to be set to receiving mode for the whole exercise to work. The daily faxing of one A4 sheet, then known as a 'Telefax', would often take more than twenty minutes and involved several attempts to get the two machines to recognise each other. As time went by, fax transmissions would become instantaneous, and some twenty years later, they would be overtaken by email.

After several months I moved to the Correspondence Department, managed by Terry Johnson. This work suited me, because I was now dealing with customers, albeit by correspondence. I was able to use the dictation skills I had learned at Towry Law, and in the days before the existence of word processors, this sometimes meant that quite lengthy letters would be dictated repeatedly, and never uninterestingly, several times a day. Pauline

Brown was my unofficial secretary. She was one of several secretaries for three correspondents of whom I was one, with Miles and Bill Ramsbotham who had been with the company many years. Pauline, let's say preferred to work with me if she could. She was a bright and bubbly, unhappily married local girl about five years older than I, who, as was the fashion at the time, wore high heels and plenty of make-up and displayed an attractive, firm cleavage. Repeating already dictated paragraphs for similar letters with 'Polly' sitting in front or to the side of me was always fun. We worked well together and were known to get a lot of work completed.

In 1968 the company launched on a trial basis an innovative life assurance product linked to its unit trusts. Depending on policyholder age, a greater or smaller amount of each premium would pay for life coverage, with the balance being invested. A small direct sales team had been established in a branch office in Birmingham managed by Ian Gibson, a rather conscientiously active Scotsman, who normally lived in Tunbridge Wells. Ian reported to Frank Kearney, an Irishman who had previously worked for Canada Life, a direct sales-force life company. He was based at the Cornhill head office.

Kearney was a short, rotund, bouncy sort of guy, and although I didn't have much direct contact with him, he enthused people around him, was always on the move, and was never short of a word. The rumour was that he was having an affair with his secretary, an attractive dark-haired woman in her late twenties (name not recalled). This was almost certainly confirmed when Vicky, my first wife, and I were returning from a holiday in San Agustin, Majorca and found we were sharing a crowded Palma airport departure lounge with both of them and no Mrs Kearney in sight! Mr Kimber's words were applied!

Anyway, I was transferred from the Correspondence Department to a small new department to handle this new product. The knowledge of life assurance I had gained at Towry Law and my other customer-focussed skills were going to be useful in the new Customer Relations Department, which was also based at Gants Hill and was being managed by Roger Stearn, an accountant by training. Roger had taken over the office from Colin Hawtin who had been promoted to head office and later was to leave altogether to become one of the first employees of the nascent Financial Services Authority. At about the same time Miles, who had also been working there, was transferred to the Cornhill head office to work alongside George McGowan at the customer services desk. I sensed that Gants Hill might become a long-term pigeon hole, which worried me a little. I wasn't close to the centre of the action, and my two fellow trainees had made it to head office. This made me somewhat concerned at being located in a backwater, even though I was doing interesting work.

Within a few days of a trial sales team starting in Birmingham, Ian Gibson, the curly-headed Scotsman who was the manager of the branch there, appeared in the Gants Hill office clutching the first proposal form for the first sale. He had personally made the sale and quickly became extremely successful. He said he had brought the papers by train from Birmingham as he didn't trust the mail and to ensure it was all processed correctly and efficiently. Everybody was very excited. In the following years this innovative product was to be copied by other similar companies, and the unit-linked life assurance industry was born! They were very exciting times, even if I wasn't physically in the City. Anyway, the air was better out in the sticks, but commuting for over an hour took too long for my liking. On balance, I would have liked to be moved to head office in the City.

The only time I went to the City from Gants Hill was to spend sometimes several days each month with three other colleagues at British Linen Bank, later to become part of the Bank of Scotland in 1969, and later Lloyds Bank in 1999. British Linen Bank was one of the company's bankers and was the trustee for several of the trusts. The bank was located in Threadneedle Street, and we would check standing order payment slips for the amount being paid and for the correct insurance policy. The pink slips of paper were carbon copies of originals, showing the policy number, the amount paid, and the name of the policyholder. Sometimes these were difficult to decipher and had to be kept back for further scrutiny at the end of the day. They were difficult to read because the black carbon-backed paper used to copy the originally typed details onto two or more layers of paper with carbon paper in between each one would wear out, or the original typed impression hadn't been hard enough. It was extremely dull and repetitive work.

The company became keen to expand its innovative product range, and within a few further months I was summoned to St Helen's Place, just off Bishopsgate. This was Save & Prosper's head office. The building was connected to the offices of Robert Fleming & Co., a significant merchant bank that had a substantial equity stake in Save & Prosper; later it took over completely. The new white stone-faced building stood in a pedestrianised square

in the shadow of the Commercial Union Tower, a brand new twenty-storey building that was to be demolished and replaced within thirty years. The building was slightly at odds with, St. Helen's, a 12th century church which contains more monuments than any other church in Greater London except Westminster Abbey. William Shakespeare worshipped there.

The head office reception area was manned by George McGowan and Nancy Haslam, both long-term servants of the company. They were both almost incapable of being flustered by people or circumstance, and they always provided an excellent welcome to all visitors. Anyway, I was to meet 'TME' – Mark Dunn.

Mark was Business Development Director and had the responsibility to do just that! He was in his early forties and travelled from Kent, where he lived in a Georgian terraced house in Wye and later in an Elizabethan manor house on the western outskirts of Canterbury. Typically, he wore a double-breasted grey dog-tooth three-piece suit with gold watch chain and breast pocket handkerchief or a flower freshly picked from the garden in his buttonhole. He carried a rolled umbrella but wore no bowler hat. He was quick mentally, an original and lateral thinker, cultured, and for me, thoroughly stimulating and motivational company. He had previously worked for Interpublic and Burston Marsteller, both huge worldwide PR companies. He had an astonishing ability to chair meetings effectively to an unwritten agenda using his public relations skills. I became his assistant and accompanied him to meetings inside and outside the office.

Working with the S&P's actuaries (Bacon & Woodrow), Mark decided that a unit-linked Personal Pension Plan (PPP) for the self-employed should be developed. It was a product way ahead of its time but one which we believed would, after initial doubts and bewilderment, prove to be successful. The structure of the product was significantly more complicated than unit-linked life assurance, as it not only had to create a pot of money at retirement age but it also had to produce a reasonably stable, possibly growing, income thereafter. I became involved with its development; again my perceived expertise or knowledge from Towry Law was a benefit. After several months of work the product was ready for launch, but how was it to be promoted? I prepared a manual presentation in a Nyrex folder with coloured charts, graphs, and tables to help convey how this technically complex product could meet the retirement pension needs of self-employed clients.

Part of the development process was to assess the likely competition. At the time Abbey Life was the most aggressive. This was a new life company established in 1961 by Mark Weinberg (later knighted) and others, of whom Mike Wilson was the most high-profile, being the City inspector promoting the company's unit-linked life products to City intermediaries. It had been a very successful company and received significant business from the likes of Towry Law and Julian Gibbs (more of JG later), who focussed on private individuals rather than on corporate business. Mark and Mike, however, both had only very small equity shareholdings in Abbey and foreseeing the growth in the business in years to come, both left and set up another company known as Hambros Life in 1971, with the backing of Hambros Bank, a leading merchant bank in which they would have a more significant investment and potential.

As part of the effort to monitor the competition, the company had a Statistics Department. The manager was Mike Crosbie, a man in his late forties, with Mike Hockings (mid-twenties) as his assistant. They were ably helped by Jeannie, who later became Mrs Hockings. The company owned the minimum investment, typically £100, in all the competitors' funds it wanted to monitor. Crosbie was a true statistician, using sophisticated mathematical formulae to analyse fund data in depth using a slide rule and basic mathematical disciplines, which only became available more generally with the arrival of computers some twenty years later. He was a genial and understanding man, with a ready smile and twinkling eye. Hockings also was a true investment ideas man and later became editor of *Planned Savings*, the leading monthly publication for all personal investment and savings topics.

I was asked, when visiting insurance brokers, to assess how successful the new unit-linked business was. Abbey Life was the pioneer, and after a management shake-up, some of their senior management left to form Hambros Life. Mark was intrigued to know more about this new company. To this end, on one occasion I photographed documents on a broker's desk when he was called away. It all felt a bit surreal, if rather underhanded and dishonest or perhaps even unlawful. We were particularly interested to see how the brochures were laid out, because at the time the whole product concept was still very new, and Hambros seemed to have quickly become by far the most dominant player in the market.

Initially, and rather obviously, we decided to promote our pension plan to stockbrokers. They were largely attracted to the product for themselves, being usually classed as being self-employed, but also to suitable clients, not least because they would receive three per cent commission on premiums received, with a trail commission of one quarter of a per cent for five years based on the accumulated value, as well as reciprocal stock market brokering business on reaching agreed volume sales. This package of potential income compared to just one and a quarter per cent on unit trust sales.

Rather untypically for Mark, this ultimately important commission element of the process hadn't been thought through. Frank Kearney was unwilling to distract his growing network of sales offices and newly recruited salesmen with a significantly more complicated product. In addition PPP had a clearly defined, and in his view restricted, target audience (only self-employed people). In addition, the initial commission for the salesman wasn't as high, although in the longer run, with annual commissions, it paid more. He also argued that PPP was a competitive product to the life policy, which could provide a capital sum at retirement that could then be used to buy an annuity, albeit from another provider.

Mark's angle was simple. Having created the pot of money and being in the position of earning management fees from it, why then allow it to be transferred to a third party and so lose the income from management fees? I thought it was a no-brainer, but a marketing solution had to be found. It was.

We were able to find the appropriate, usually private client-focussed partner within each firm not by contacting the existing consultant force (mentioned below) who were generally un-cooperative towards my and the company's wishes, but by referring to the Stock Exchange Members' Book. Getting hold of one of these was not easy as they were only issued to Stock Exchange members. My books were usually a year out of date and were passed on when the new annual edition was issued. Contact was then made by telephone.

Save & Prosper had for many years employed retired military officers to be regional consultants. Their job was to service agents (stockbrokers, insurance brokers, accountants, solicitors, and others) for their investment needs on behalf of their clients. The work carried a significant social element, with lunchtime entertaining high on the list of their duties. The City was obviously a plumb area to cover, and Brigadier Mellor was the man there. He and the other consultants across the United Kingdom reported to Ralph (RDG) Davidson (ex-Navy), who in turn reported directly to David Maitland, the managing director.

Between the field consultants of Davidson and Kearney's direct sales force – cold calling for business from a developing branch network – there was a separate office tucked away in a room overlooking an open atrium lined with white enamelled brick. In this room worked chalk-stripe-suited, legally minded, humourless, and quiet Graham Turner with Harry Verney, an old-Etonian, tall, slim, and naturally well-spoken albeit with a slight lisp. His family lived near Alton in Hampshire and was a direct relative of Florence Nightingale. He led a fairly frantic social life that included the organisation of the annual St Andrew's Ball at either the Grosvenor House Hotel or the Dorchester, a big social event in the London calendar.

The role of these two was to evaluate new ideas and assess market potential whilst discussing projects within the building with different departments. I didn't stay with them long, because the decision to proceed with the Personal Pension Plan was being taken, and I was to be the front man in the market place.

Davidson's view was that his army of consultants wouldn't want to become involved in promoting the Personal Pension Plan (PPP), just as they weren't involved with the life product, known as the Save, Insure, and Prosper Plan (SIP). The direct sales team was barred from visiting these professionals unless by approved invitation. Obviously, access to the professional agent market was paramount in obtaining sales, and it was decided that I should be the one to do this in collaboration with the existing regional consultants. It was a delicate balancing act, not to double-book appointments within days if not on the same day with key agents. It led to some frustrations on my side and some irritations elsewhere.

Things eventually came to a head. The old regional consultant force became less significant, and my developing and more product-knowledgeable team became the company's representative outfit. I recruited internally from the existing direct sales force, and in relatively quick time I was obtaining not just PPP business from stockbrokers and other agents' clients but individual and personal business from them as well. I took it upon myself

to look after City stockbrokers and thoroughly enjoyed this development work and formed several good friendships. Additionally, I visited high street insurance brokers throughout the South-East.

One of the more unusual occurrences whilst I was working at S&P was an invitation from a broker in Hay Hill, Mayfair, who specialised in arranging business insurance cover for vending machines. Coincidentally, it was a small UK general insurance subsidiary of C.T. Bowring! The invitation was to the Annual Vending Machine Show held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane. I decided to attend the show, in part because I wanted to show interest in the broker's core business. And who knows? I might have been able to promote PPPs to exhibiting companies for their staff. (At that time, this was an unusual concept, as most businesses with pension schemes offered Final Salary Schemes, while a few had Money Purchase Schemes). Also, I had little idea about the scale and scope of vending machines and what they could do.

The exhibition was held downstairs from the main lobby, and entrance was gained through revolving doors with glass panels. As I went to push on one of these, a very attractive brunette girl was exiting through the revolving door I had deliberately selected, and we 'clocked' each other, smiled, and each continued on our respective ways. For me to 'clock' anyone was completely out of character, but I was genuinely taken by this girl's looks, generous smile and diamond eyes.

I returned to my flat, having looked at machines that could dispense chips, chewing gum, drinks, chocolates – in fact almost anything that could fit into a good-sized handbag. The girl's face was imprinted on my mind, and I decided, again unusually for me and never repeated, to contact the show organisers to find out who she was, on which stand she could be found, and the telephone number to reach her at the show. My description of her was sufficient to get me answers.

I then had to decide whether I was going to try to contact her or not and just let the episode pass by. And anyway, why should a fabulously attractive girl want to meet up with someone like me, let alone talk over the phone to a stranger? Anyway, I did call her that afternoon when I had returned to my flat off Baker Street, reckoning that if I left it until the next day or later, she might have forgotten our glances through the glass revolving door.

Remarkably I got through to the exhibition stand, found out her name and asked to speak to her by name, Jennifer (Jenny) Lewis. Without much conversation she agreed to meet again the next day at the show. After the show closed, we got along fine, even though she had been Miss United Kingdom the previous year and second (or in beauty parade parlance, first runner-up) in Miss World and Miss Universe. What I learned over the next eighteen months about this business and about her world as a model and film actress was interesting and quite different from the world I knew. I admired her for her hard work, determination, and no-nonsense approach to her career. She had a small role in *On a Clear Day You Can See for Ever*, a feature film starring Barbara Streisand, which was partly filmed in Brighton, as well as in many fashion/couture photo-shoots with the likes of a young David Bailey.

On one occasion Jenny had a photo shoot with photographer, Mike Marchant, a friend of Willie Welch's, who was retained by Gulf Oil as their publicity photographer. Gulf Oil sponsored a racing car team which entered the Le Mans 24 hour race with a team of Ford GT40's, and won the race four years in succession. These had distinctive pale blue and orange paintwork. In 1969 the car won the race with Jacky Ickx being one of the drivers. He was a rather good looking Belgian, who invited us both to Brands Hatch for a day of testing. Jenny and I went together but I came home alone

One of the interesting things about calling at different offices was to observe how visitors were greeted. It wasn't at all unusual to arrive and find the receptionist was also the telephonist, operating from a small, booth-like office without natural light near the front door, where cold drafts of wind would circulate from the street outside. Almost invariably women, they would speak to visitors through a sliding glass panel. Often the booth would be smoke-filled. The receptionist would be facing a panel of holes and cables, each with a jack plug at its end which would be inserted to give a line to an outgoing caller. This would then light up a red bulb, but it would have to be tugged out at the end of a call when the red light turned green.

Considerable dexterity was needed to ensure that people wanting a line to make a telephone call could have one and that no cables were left inserted a second longer than necessary. Occasionally the receptionist would be asked to dial a number (literally dialling a number on a rotating wheel) for some office big-wig, and when the call

had been connected, the cables would be attached and the call 'put through'. At busy times these boards, which were positioned vertically in front of the operator, looked to be a complete jumble of leads and wires, but somehow the operator knew what was going on and occasionally would pull several cables from the board with great skill in a complete rush, only for them to all fall into individual holes in a shelf where they rested until being flicked out and inserted again.

In addition to this work, the telephonist/receptionist might also be the telex operator, or at least the telex operator would be in the same room. Their work was both to receive and send telex messages on rolls of paper about one inch wide onto which holes had been punched which corresponded to letters of the alphabet. All these had to be read and then distributed. The work appeared to get busier as the day went on, so that when most offices closed at 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. there was invariably a stampede to get work done.

A leading insurance broker of the time, Julian Gibbs & Co., referred to earlier, offered a similar upmarket approach to clients as Towry Law. Getting an appointment to see Julian was extremely difficult, busy as he was with his business and writing a weekly column in the *Saturday Daily Telegraph*, in which the company advertised, and doing occasional broadcasts. On one occasion Julian invited me to lunch at his home in Trevor Square just off Knightsbridge. I duly arrived and climbed the small staircase to the front door of the elegant Georgian four-storey townhouse. To my initial surprise, the door was opened by a butler dressed in black waiter attire who was almost the same colour as the clothes he was wearing. I couldn't but help be taken aback, not only at this but the entire set-up. Julian, quietly spoken and not in the least ostentatious personally, and I dined alone in an elegant room from beautiful glass and china. The food and wines equalled the ambience and were served by a waitress and another butler.

Some other intermediaries specialising in pensions were visited outside London. Wilfrid T. Fry, founded in 1898 in Worthing where Graham Banks and John Elkins were the leading lights, offered an excellent service; they had a link with ex-servicemen's associations. Noble Lowndes in Croydon and Lowndes Lambert in the City also gave excellent new business support.

Another recollection was the variety of lifts encountered. Few buildings were more than five storeys high. In the larger office buildings, it wasn't unusual for the lift to be controlled by a lift man or operator. Not infrequently, these men were from the Corps of Commissionaires and wore an Army-blues type of uniform with a white Marines-style peaked cap. They would smoke whether they were operating or not, in or out of the lift. These men would open and close sliding concertina metal doors that looked similar to garden trellis. You would board through a 'trellis' metal door which had been moved to the side (or sometimes two which parted in the middle) and ask the lift-man to take you to the company you were visiting, and away the lift would go, each floor passing by inches away just through the expanded metal of the folding doors. The lift man would know all the companies in his building and more often than not everyone who worked there.

In smaller buildings, some lifts without operators had the same door mechanism, but you would operate it yourself. In others, movement up or down was achieved by pulling on a thick rope in the corner of the lift cabin. You stopped by having first pressed a button to the floor required on a usually highly polished brass panel before yanking on the rope to get 'lift off'. These lifts could sometimes be fitted in out-of-the-way places on the ground floor. They could be very small and were not necessarily square. I recall a triangular lift at the offices of McAnally Montgomery, stockbrokers, in Queen Victoria Street.

The final part of my time at Save & Prosper from late 1968 was spent in a branch office of the direct sales force in High Holborn, which was managed by Stuart Frystone. He had a sales team of about fifteen people of all ages and backgrounds. One of the best branch salesmen was Raoul de Rohan, who claimed that his family had invented the wooden pencil in Czechoslovakia, which was a good story but untrue! He was a keen skier and was involved with the Ski Club of Great Britain, spending annual vacations in smart Swiss ski resorts, including Zermatt where his family had a chalet.

Another memorable salesman in Stuart's office was a short upright man, Harold Margolis. Harold was a charming Jew, always smartly dressed and smiling. He was invariably the top salesman of the week or month, and consequently because a salesman's salary was wholly commission based after their initial salary had been tapered off had been exhausted, was the best paid. He regarded his job as providing a social need or benefit. He cold-called

relentlessly, found reasons why saving in a life assurance policy would benefit the customer and then sold the policy like crazy. He was a great example to the branch salesmen – especially the younger ones who sometimes only took the job whilst looking for another one.

My position in the office was rather irregular, as my work was totally different from that of the direct sales force, although there was a time when it was thought that some of the salesmen could be deployed within national department stores to promote investment centres which I would manage. This thought was way ahead of its time, but the company was unable to allocate anything like the resources and support necessary to make it work. A few futile attempts were made, but the salesmen regarded being in a store for a few hours as rather a waste of their time compared to their usual activity of cold calling and developing their client base in an area that suited them. This area was known as a 'patch', and it was supposed to be exclusive to one salesman, not to be trespassed on by others.

Stuart and I became good friends, and I spent several weekends near Marden in Kent where he lived happily with his wife, going to several, almost Bacchanalian, parties. I was enjoying bachelorhood to the full. 'Soss' James became a good weekend friend who lived nearby and introduced me to a wide circle of her mostly married country-living friends. Dame Edith Evans lived in a large house opposite Soss's cottage.

However, at work I wasn't happy being out of the swim of things in High Holborn away from head office. It looked as if the company had decided I had found my niche developing sales for the Personal Pension Plan and had no need to be near or in head office. I began to get unsettled and wanting to move on. My wish was partly fulfilled by being recalled to the City to work from Dashwood House in Old Broad Street. Here I could liaise more easily with head office personnel at St. Helen's Place with my product development work: but there was surprise in store!

As a sad footnote to this experience with Save & Prosper and despite all this innovation and dynamism, the company was sold several times by a succession of owners from 2000. It had stopped issuing new business in 1998. Following various mergers and takeovers Save & Prosper unit trust funds were, re-branded as JP Morgan Fleming, later JP Morgan Asset Management. In December 2010, Chesnara plc announced that it had completed the acquisition of the business which then totally disappeared from view. On reflection it is an example of how established City names were to evaporate over the following years, either through poor management as in S&P's case or opportunities created by new City regulation and legislation.

Chapter 4

'Go-Go' Days!

In mid-1969 Mark Dunn, very unexpectedly, left S&P to join a relatively new City business, Slater, Walker Securities Ltd. I was more than surprised, but my work had taken me away from him on a daily business as I had begun to report to Ralph Davidson. I felt secure being pretty much my own boss for the first time and happy to manage my time from my new office in Dashwood House. It was a typical pre-war, possibly even Victorian, rabbit warren of an office building whose public areas were decorated with ceramic tiles of white and very unattractive patterned greens and browns. The public area floors and staircases were covered with green flecked linoleum, and bare light bulbs hung from long electric flexes from high ceilings within the narrow passageways.

One evening in January 1970 I was at my Melcombe Street flat, just off Baker Street and opposite the Tube station, when I received a telephone call from Mark asking me if I would like to join him at Slater, Walker. SW had by this time launched a couple of unit trusts, INVAN (an abbreviation for 'Investment Analysis'), known in the vernacular of the time as a 'go-go' capital growth trust, and the Slater, Walker Unit Trust, an accumulation fund. 'Go-go' funds were in vogue because a few had achieved remarkable capital growth in relatively short periods of management. INVAN was the leader of this group and both the SW funds had established outstanding capital growth performances.

Mark was again Development Director for the investment management subsidiary of this publicly quoted secondary bank. Mark offered me a significant salary increase to around £1,500 per annum and the opportunity to join the business at an early stage and likely to be going places. It all sounded almost too good to be true, but after a few days' reflection I decided that SW didn't offer the established institutional security I had enjoyed at Bowings or Save & Prosper, so I declined.

A few months later Mark called again to repeat his offer. He asked me to reconsider but told me that there would be no changes to the original offer. This time I accepted. In retrospect, I think the extra few months had given me the opportunity to look at likely career developments where I was. I had come to believe that I could possibly stay for really quite a long time as so many of my colleagues had done and not progress very far. I preferred to think that there would be some more dynamism at SW. I wasn't yet married, so I could reasonably afford not to take the safer option. There was also the possibility of again being relocated out in the Essex sticks if I stayed!

By the time I joined Slater, Walker Investments in April 1970, the company's banking business was already involved in corporate finance, private banking, and property. The investment management company was physically separate from all the other activities, but we did receive visits from the bank and property divisions. One of these, I recall, was by a rather smooth-talking and smooth-looking man, Greville Howard (a grandson of the seventeenth Earl of Suffolk), who, it later transpired, was a close friend of Lord Lucan. Lucan disappeared in 1974 in mysterious surroundings after murdering his housemaid in their house in Eaton Terrace, apparently instead of his wife. The wife escaped with some injuries. Howard would later become Baron Howard of Rising after donating large sums to the Conservative Party, but not until after he had been private secretary to Enoch Powell and later PA to Sir James Goldsmith, who was to become Chairman of Slater, Walker in 1972.

The company would soon also be into life assurance, initially in the UK, and later still would have a Guernsey-based life assurance company run by Arthur Pierce, a Bahamian actuary. The main focus of the business was investment in its broadest sense. Getting fees for managing assets was what the business was ultimately all about. These fees, enhanced by some judicious trading of stocks and shares on the company's account, gained the company a huge popular following, which in some ways became a self-feeding success story. The company monitored, perhaps even manipulated, its own share price closely and daily.

With a salary of £1,500, I joined Mark at SW in their offices in London Wall Buildings. Working with Mark was great fun and stimulating. We sometimes lunched at the Travellers Club in Pall Mall, which was the first of many eye-opening experiences my career would introduce me to from that point on. The managing director was Jim Nichols, and Brian Banks was investment director. Both were formerly Messel's stockbrokers and were primarily responsible for the investment and administration of investment portfolios, including unit trusts. Eric Farrell was dealing director and Alan Maidment financial director. It was a small department of about twenty people.

I was to work alongside Christopher Neville, who had read Music at university. He had joined earlier in the year from EMI, where he had been PA to the company chairman, Sir Joseph Lockwood. EMI, a major British

multinational music recording and publishing business, was about as remote from being a financial services business as possible.

Although very personable, he almost inevitably had no knowledge of the City, its traditions, or of the industry he now found himself in. In many ways this was probably part of his appeal to the stockbrokers he and I were going to visit, just as I had been doing at Save & Prosper. We divided the country as equally as we could, each having a number of City stockbroker firms as our core clientele. In addition Chris took the North-West and South-West, while I took on the Midlands, Scotland, and Wales. We each were given a company car: Chris, a yellow 2000E Ford Cortina MkII with a black vinyl roof, and I, for some reason, a 1600E navy blue one, later replaced with a dark metallic green Cortina MkII two-litre version with a black vinyl roof.

Mark's ability to think outside the box was shown one day when M&G (the oldest unit trust management company, founded in the 1930s) launched a public offering for a split-level investment trust. These investment vehicles were rarely offered, but essentially they offered investors a choice between receiving either income or capital growth. These trusts had a limited life of up to ten years. The income shares entitled investors to most (or all) of the income generated from the assets of the trust until the wind-up date (usually ten years from launch), with some capital protection. The capital shares on the other hand entitled investors to most (or all) of the remaining assets after prior ranking share classes had been paid; this was a very high risk. Mark's idea was to subscribe for the whole offering of income shares, which would be invested in the Slater, Walker High Income Trust, effectively removing any investment management in that holding to M&G who had an excellent reputation in this area. Needless to say, our investment managers were not enthused and didn't support the somewhat opportunistic idea!

Mark enjoyed his lunches to discuss his ideas. His favourites included Sweetings (usually on a Friday for fish), the Jamaica Inn, and the George and Vulture, all long-established restaurants serving classic English menus. Barrington House in Aldermanbury and his club, the Travellers in Pall Mall, were other places where he could go for more discreet meetings. When not eating out, he'd have lunch in the directors' board room – more of this later – to which I and a few others of my rank would occasionally be invited to attend or bring guests.

Soon after joining SW, my life began to take on a new dimension, both career-wise and socially. Through John Dyson I had met a number of City professionals, one of whom was Derek Lidstone, a stockbroker – the first I ever knew. Derek drove an Aston Martin DB3. He and I met occasionally either in Coates Wine Bar in London Wall or in Gows, another wine bar in Old Broad Street at lunch times. On one occasion he asked me attend a party in Albert Court Mansions in Knightsbridge adjacent to the Royal Albert Hall. The party was for the twenty-first birthday of Judith, granddaughter of the recently retired *Times* editor, William Haley.

One of the discussions at the party was about Poseidon, an Australian gold mining company whose share price was rocketing. I had never heard of the company, but it transpired that SW held a large holding in the company in one of its unit trusts, which was consequently attracting a good deal of positive publicity and from which a large investment profit was made. I felt comfortable and encouraged to think I was joining a team of winners!

After years in the planning and public preparation, the United Kingdom decimalised its currency in February 1971. Strangely, London Transport and British Rail started using the new arrangements on the fourteenth and the rest of the country's businesses a day later. It was the only time there seemed to be plenty of inspectors at the entry points of the Underground. Baker Street, which was my departure point now, being the location for several London Transport offices, operated smoothly; the ticket machines all displayed the new decimalised fares and everything was going well.

Nobody seemed to have much difficulty in understanding that a pound would now have one hundred 'new' pence as opposed to 240 'old' pence. For a time prices were known as 'new pee'. 5p, for example, was equivalent to 1/- (a shilling), and for a while all prices were shown in both old and new currency. It wasn't uncommon however for people to question why prices seemed to be being rounded up, rather than down when converting old to new prices, thus creating artificial price inflation.

In the autumn of 1971 I bought a three-bedroom detached house at 8 Byng Road, Tunbridge Wells from David White, a colleague at Slater, Walker for £8,250. He had moved just a few streets away to a larger property. I travelled by train (usually getting a seat) to London Bridge. As with the Underground, people could smoke

throughout the train, and only later were specific smoking coaches introduced which were always filled with the fog of smoke.

Once a week I drove to London and parked at the HAC in City Road so that I could drive home after practice with the HAC band. Invariably, I would pick up a colleague, Alan Page from his flat in Beckenham. He was a keen Beckenham club hockey player, who knew of my mate from HYELM Willie Welch, a county standard player who played for Spencer, another leading club based in Tooting. Alan was a thoroughly good guy, and I enjoyed his helpful business and social company greatly. He also knew a route through south-east London which avoided much of the Old Kent Road and other bottle necks to get us over Tower Bridge with minimum delays.

Long before all the regional stock exchanges in the United Kingdom were amalgamated into one, I set myself the challenge to visit as many of them as I could. Most of the regional markets in such places as Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Belfast were wood-panelled and were to be found within red-brick Victorian buildings. They all reeked of local history, pipe smoke, and enterprise. I would base myself for the Birmingham and Manchester visits at the Slater, Walker's bank's offices, which in both cases were in majestic Victorian office buildings once owned by the Bank of England.

One of the characters in Manchester was Geoff Ashworth, a partner in Ashworth Sons & Barrett, a local stockbroking firm. Geoff knew Jim Slater, and his firm was used for company share dealing away from the London market. Meetings always took place in his 'other office' – a rather good restaurant where he was a regular and known to all the attractive waitresses on first-name terms.

In Birmingham the senior partner of Smith Keen Barnett, a large stockbroking firm, was Anthony Beaumont-Dark, later knighted, who was outspoken about pretty much everything, including immigration, South African apartheid, Roman Catholicism, contraception, and much else. When he became a Member of Parliament in 1979, he became a notorious backbencher. He made his mark by suggesting that the half-penny (0.5p) piece should be dropped as coinage as it was costing more to make than to use. One of the consequences of this was that a second-class postage stamp went from 12.5p to 13p, but other prices were rounded down! It was helpful that he was a friend of Peter Walker, the 'Walker' in Slater, Walker and also a Tory MP, for the amount of business he could place with SW.

The old London Stock Exchange in Throgmorton Avenue, with its hexagonal 'pitches' and open dealing system, was to disappear itself in the 1970s with the arrival of 'Big Bang'. Prior to this, I would occasionally visit the glass-fronted visitors' gallery to look down on the dealing activity – not all of it serious. Many a time someone would play a practical joke on an unsuspecting member, usually after lunch. One's newspaper might be set on fire as one read it, or occasionally a de-bagging might take place for some 'offence'. One day after lunch, I walked across the Floor myself, as a challenge from one of my stockbroker friends. I dreaded the thought of being caught and either being given a figurative or quite possibly a literal dressing down as a 'stranger'. This word would be shouted out by anyone on the Floor if they suspected such a person, and business would come to a halt whilst the offender was suitably treated. I survived intact!

Slater's investment business began to grow, and in 1971 we all moved to Leith House in Gresham Street, on the corner with Wood Street. My office initially was on the third floor, which was an open-plan space, but with the dealing director, Eric Farrell, and his assistants, Bob Dellow and Rick, sharing a glass-partitioned section at one end. There was a busy office with multiple stock market price screens, telephone handsets, flashing console lights, and constant talking to the markets. Jim Slater was often on the line giving instructions and checking deals. The company stockbroker was Joseph Sebag & Co., and it was very apparent that they shared enormous confidences with our dealers in building and unwinding investment positions in companies. Later I moved to the top (fifth) floor, a bright and airy office which I shared with Roger Porter, manager of the private clients' section and ex-Sebag's private client portfolio manager, Martyn Page, and Alan Page.

I enjoyed building relationships with my professional contacts. One such was with a firm called Foster & Braithwaite in Throgmorton Avenue. My contact was Richard Luffman, a good looking man with a ruddy face as if from taking long country walks, who was seemingly always happy and laughing. I attended his wedding to a very attractive Guatemalan girl in Norfolk where he had grown up, and where his parents still lived. Richard was to discover she had an affair within a couple of years and shot himself. We used to enjoy many a lunch in Bow Wine

Vaults in Bow Lane, where in 1974 he and I constructed a £1,500 portfolio of 15 sector-leading stocks when the stock market was flat on its back. Had I actually made the investment then, I would have become extremely rich indeed – one of several financial opportunities that either didn't go my way or that I failed to take in life. A colleague of his was Michael Savory, an amiable, extremely bright, if intense young man who was always keen to do and give business. He later became Lord Mayor of London.

Derek Greenwood, a private client partner at Teather & Greenwood, stockbrokers, was another interesting contact. T&G were specialist brokers to many privately owned water companies. His repeated view in the early 1970s was that these companies were a 'steal', meaning that they were cheap and paid good dividends and that it was only a matter of time before they'd be consolidated into a relatively small number of regional water boards and make substantial capital gains. Between 1974 and 1985, the water industry consisted of ten state-owned regional water authorities that supplied three quarters of England and Wales, and twenty-nine privately owned statutory water companies. The ten water authorities were privatised in December 1989 after the introduction of a new regulatory framework. The process, part of Margaret Thatcher's privatisation programme, netted billions to the Exchequer, along with other utility asset privatisations. I never had the resources to benefit from this revolution in managing the country's affairs!

Another good chum was Fred Carr, a stockbroker at Capel Cure Myers, based on Holborn Viaduct. Fred was a larger-than-life character and an Oxford rowing blue. He and Robin Boyle, also a member of his firm who later went to Hoare Govett to set up a specialist fund advisory service, were two of the first truly knowledgeable experts on unit trusts I met, and I embraced them. They appreciated that their firm would receive investment business from us, not necessarily just for the investment of monies invested in our funds they had bought (to keep our investment ideas at least reasonably disguised), but that there would be reciprocal business too, and so they would build their commission income.

In the summer of 1971 Fred was to meet up with Vicky, later my first wife, and me at a house we were renting with another couple, Dawn and Jeremy North. The house overlooked Cassis, a few miles to the east of Marseilles and famous for its *callanque* cliff scenery. Vicky found Fred's personality and looks very attractive. He had driven from England via Aix-en-Provence in a Mini. We had a few hilarious hours before Fred disappeared towards Monte Carlo. He and his Oxford companions bought a post card of a local scene and posted it to the Bishop of Worcester. He said he did this every year, not because he knew the Bishop, but because it was a harmless prank they had started while up at Oxford which he hoped provided the Bishop with some annual amusement and intriguing interest.

Fred became quite a figure in the City. He spent his career in stockbroking and investment management, ultimately (from 1993 to 2004) as chief executive of Carr Sheppards Crosthwaite, a big stockbroking house. This company was a merger (a phenomenon created by 'Big Bang' mentioned later) of three significant stockbroking companies, W.I. Carr, Shepherds and Chase, and Henderson Crossthwaite – all old established businesses. He later became chairman of a number of investment trusts, as well as a consultant to Investec Bank (UK) Limited.

Two more good contacts were Roy Williams, known as the Mad Major, a stock jobber with Pinchin Denny, and Robert 'Bob' Tipping, a stockbroker with L. Messel & Co. Roy was a lover of all things Spanish and in many ways looked and strutted his way about like a bull-fighter. He had a very straight back and would throw back his head *paso doble* style and had a sidling walk. He and Robert were pretty inseparable and always had lunch together in the Long Room, a Joe Lyons restaurant in Throgmorton Street opposite the London Stock Exchange. They both lived near Abridge, a small village in Essex, and were snappy dressers and rather smooth looking. We were all about the same age (in our early to mid-twenties), and the two of them seemed to spend most of their waking hours testing each other on current stock prices and dealing sizes.

Usually when we met for a convivial lunch, several G & T's were quaffed in the Long Room, followed by a good steak, salad, and chips. There would be frequent interruptions at the table by other diners, all of whom were from the 'market'. Ginge was one, a more senior jobber in the same firm as Roy, who commuted from Herne Bay, close to my parents' home in Chislehurst.

I attended a house-warming weekend at a thatched country cottage Roy bought later near Bishop's Stortford. It was an attractive typical 'Essex pink', a colour washed, hundreds of years old, timber-framed building

surrounded by a garden and orchard. We saw a preproduction Concorde fly over on a test flight, beautiful but noisy – the first time most of us had seen one. That evening we had an excellent barbecue and danced the night away to the Four Tops and the Beach Boys. We all slept on bare floor boards, in sleeping bags. I had taken a girl there for the weekend, Mary Drayson, the daughter of a partner of Greenwells, a large firm of stockbrokers where Graham Stewart, who made up this stock market threesome, worked. We had paired up for the night, but there were no fireworks!

Roy surprised us in the morning by providing sledgehammers, pick-axes, and spades with the request to knock down some internal walls. We had no idea whether the ones he wanted down were load-bearing or not, so we happily set to. We presumed the house wasn't listed, although it might well have been, it was so old! We left in the early afternoon with the house still standing. My relationship with Mary ended soon afterwards, but not before I was invited to her parents' house for lunch one Saturday in Sunningdale. Everything was elegant and comfortable, as would be expected: beautiful china, lovely traditional furniture, and so on. The one exception, which Mary's mother apologised for, was that the cream to put on the strawberries was in a carton which hardly matched the fine silverware.

Graham had an attractive sister named Annabel who worked at Belinda Belleville, a top dress designer just off Sloane Avenue, in Pavilion Road, SW3. (Her business later merged with David Sassoon's to be known as Belville-Sassoon and designed many dresses for Diana, Princess of Wales.) Annabel was a petite, bubbly, busty girl. Several times a group of us – John Dyson, Roy Williams, Graham Stewart, and our current girlfriends – would go to the Garrison night club at the bottom of Park Lane near the Dorchester to dance the night away. Later we would move on to the Black Sheep Club in Shepherds Lane to round things off. It was all way out of my league, but somehow I managed to keep my end up.

Most stockbroker firms at the time (the late 1960s and early 1970s) did not accept the unit trust concept and believed they could provide even quite low-value clients with a spread of investments outside a unit trust 'wrapper' and could earn commission on switching clients' monies from time to time. They conducted their business from sometimes quite genteel surroundings. In winter, the partners of a small two-partner firm at one end of the scale, Davey & Candy, in Throgmorton Avenue, would sit in small offices on large leather chairs in front of blazing coal fires, which were regularly topped up by staff. At the other end of the scale, L. Messel, a large firm with probably forty partners, was based in a centrally heated and air-conditioned new tower, Winchester House in London Wall. They would have afternoon tea and freshly made sandwiches and cakes served every afternoon in their 'Partners Room' on a high floor with great views out over the City.

In addition to my basic work as a rep, I was responsible for calculating fund performances and their relative daily and annual performance against various indices. I gave these to Brian Banks and Jim Nicholls each day. Another colleague, Chris Poll, was also consulted about competitor funds' performances. This later became such an involved activity that he left Slaters and set up a company which undertook to monitor the performance of all unit trusts against themselves and major indices. The company, Micropal, became by far and away the largest and most important fund performance measurement service and the benchmark against which subsequent competitor services would be judged. When it was sold to Morningstar, a US funds research company, Chris made millions.

There was significant growth at this time in putting investment management information onto computer screens – particularly stock market information for stockbrokers and investment managers. Almost all computers were made by IBM. They were bulky battleship-grey objects that sat on the desks of the dealers. Everyone else was using paper and pencil or pen for routine clerical and administrative work. Some of the dealers had two screens to look at showing different sectors or market information. The substantial cost of these computers was paid for by giving stockbrokers business on which they received commission – known as 'soft payments'. In fact 'soft commissions' was commonplace for the payment of stockbrokers' company research and other services.

The idea of using screens to get information to the public also began to develop. Through one of my stock-broking contacts, Hoare Govett, I was asked to look at a service called Ceefax (homonymous with "See Facts"). This showed information on a series of standard television screens, accessed by inputting a three-figure number from a menu page, which would then make the screen scroll through to show that page. I visited their offices in Finsbury Circus and was both intrigued and impressed. They were looking for capital to build and expand the business. Slaters declined the offer and opportunity. It was an early forerunner of how TV channel and page selection would

become, and it remained a useful and popular service for everyone, investment professionals and public alike, (from 1974 until 2012 when it closed with the arrival of digitisation), who wanted to look up any current information, from sports to news, without using the Internet which had started from small beginnings in 1990.

With Mark I also became involved with the advertising of 'fixed-price offers' for funds in the weekend newspapers. Ideally we wanted 'page dominant' bottom left-hand spaces. This meant that the advertisement had to be fifteen inches high and six columns wide. In those days it was possible to invite investors to subscribe for units by filling in a coupon and sending it to us with a cheque for the amount being invested at a predetermined price. This was what was known as a fixed-price offer.

Some newspapers were printed on more absorbent paper than others, which could be detrimental to the effectiveness of the advertisement in that paper, because fountain pen ink would splodge or run. The Express group newspapers were the worst, and because of their huge circulations of several million, advertising there cost a lot. Sometimes we would use less successful papers simply to obtain visibility. We knew that people often took several weekend papers and one of them could do the trick and produce a result. All of this was closely monitored. One of the roles of the advertising agent was to get as much space-buying discount as possible. Generally, advertising in the *Daily Telegraph* produced the best results, followed by the *Sunday Times*, the *Observer*, and the *Times*. The *Daily Mail* also sometimes did well. The mass circulation papers such as *The News of the World* or the *Sunday Express* were never economic despite huge readership in the millions.

We absorbed any increase or decrease in underlying unit price up to a limit. Invariably we had built up a book of old units from investors who had sold out, which would be resold in through advertising. This became a very profitable activity. If these were all sold, new units would be created at a back-dated unit price of up to three trading days (if the market had risen in the meantime), which again made more profit. With SW's successful investment results and reputation it was not uncommon for several million pounds to be posted in response to a weekend's campaign.

When Mark Dunn had departed he set up the London Document Exchange with Henry Seymour. Henry was also employed at the company's advertising agents, Mitfords, which was based near the Old Bailey. It was known as Mitfords because the chairman was Lord 'Clem' Redesdale, who was related to the Mitford sisters. Clem's role was not too significant, as he spent most of his time in the House of Lords or having children. He had seven! He was as friendly and 'ordinary' a man as you could wish to meet. On one occasion whilst driving from Edinburgh to London, I stopped for dinner and overnight accommodation at the Percy Arms Hotel a rather run-of-the mill hotel in Otterburn, near his family home in Northumberland. To my amazement, Clem and his wife Sarah were also having dinner there. His estates are in that area, and he couldn't have been more charming and interested in what I had been doing in the area (Territorial Army duties). He later became a vice-president of Chase Manhattan Bank in London.

The London Document Exchange was a typically innovative Mark concept, and eventually he sold out for a large sum. When it was first established, it provided a way for solicitors, for whom it was originally designed, to take and collect documents daily for other firms at a central point in secure lockable document safes without using the Royal Mail. The first two were in Leadenhall Market and Chancery Lane. Members paid a fee, and the service took off. Its success attracted other types of professions to join in; in a matter of months 'DXs' were being established all over the country. It continues to operate in the UK and internationally and is not now solely confined to the legal profession.

With Mark gone and Christopher established in a branch office in Murray Square, Edinburgh (which I had identified on one of my visits to Edinburgh stockbrokers), I became responsible for advertising and printing. Typically, either Brian Banks or Jim Nicholls would say on a Monday or Tuesday morning, sometimes after a conversation with Jim Slater (the company's founder, chairman, and investment guru), that we should run an advertisement for one of the funds or from time to time launch a new fund. If it was an existing fund, a plausible sales message would have to be drafted and approved by all three of these directors. It would then have to be approved by the fund's trustee, National Westminster Trustees, and the finally by Wilf Burnett, an ex-RAF squadron leader.

Burnett ran a small office as secretary of the AUTM – Association of Unit Trust Managers, in Finsbury Circus. The AUTM was our industry regulator. Burnett's office never seemed occupied by more than him and his secretary. Consequently, I was never sure whether he personally vetted and approved every member's publications, and advertisements before publication or not, (or referred them to another party). He was always well versed in what was permitted, how best the sales message could be expressed (sometimes in conflict with what had been agreed elsewhere), and to offer suggestions and advice. How he would fit in with the demands of today's financial regulators can only be guessed at!

Whilst this approval process was underway, the advertisement had to be drafted and space booked within an agreed budget with the national weekend papers. We used a specialist, four-partner advertising agency close to the Old Bailey now owned by Nick Royds. Royds was an international yachtsman, and keen Sunningdale golfer who had bought the Mitfords business. Henry Seymour, who lived in Hyde Park Square, and whose mother had been a lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, was responsible for buying space; Tim Miller, who lived in mansion block of flats in Islington, was an enthusiastic rally car driver and copywriter; Mike Selvey was designer; and Claire a delightful, funny, petite, attractive and unhappily married secretary, living in Harrow, was a general dog's body cum secretary. Sadly, Tim died some years later in his Caterham 7 at Brands Hatch racing circuit.

We all got on fantastically well. Meetings were frequent, focussed, dynamic and productive, and usually led to significant profits. The style adopted was simple. A reverse-type company name strap line would appear at the top. Tim and I would draft a sales message in a large font, followed by a succinct rationale for why investment was justified. Then approval would be sought from by Brian Banks, Jim Nicholls and finally Jim Slater, who would often have ultra-prescient comments to make. Occasionally, Tim and one or more of his colleagues and I would lunch, usually at the Coal Hole, a Davy's wine bar opposite Chancery Lane in High Holborn, which was also close to new offices they had moved to from Limeburner Street near the Old Bailey. Our usual lunchtime drink was a bottle of Dopft, a Gewurztraminer white wine from Alsace, to accompany our standard choice of pork or game pie and salad.

I occasionally had lunch with Henry, usually at the Turf Club in Pall Mall. Henry was also a racehorse owner whose trainer, Guy Harwood, was based in Pulborough. I can't remember one occasion when I didn't come face to face with the Duke of Norfolk, the Queen's uncle, in the high ceilinged bar surrounded by marvellous equine paintings. The Duke would be seated in a rather slumped way on a long red sofa with his companions with pre-lunch cocktails to hand. Henry was always full of good-spirited fun and useful beyond measure in establishing personal friendships whilst getting the job done successfully.

By Thursday evening prior to a weekend advertisement appearing, the advertisement copy had to have been approved by all parties and had to be ready to be sent by the advertising agents, who would have advised us by then how best to spend our budget in the selected newspapers that would be carrying the advertisement. There it would be set in hot metal for proofs to be seen and approved on Friday morning. There was no leeway for making amendments at that stage or for the advertisements to be pulled (not printed) in the selected Saturday and Sunday papers. Many a Thursday night was spent in a pub waiting for first proof blocks to be made by the newspapers for us to approve before the printing presses rolled.

It could all be quite stressful, to say the least. Nobody could afford to hold up the process at any point unless for some unavoidable reason. First-time accuracy was essential at each stage. Occasionally, of course, things didn't go well for one reason or another – especially when units were being offered at a fixed price that couldn't be held because of market movements.

Jim Slater was an interesting man. He commuted from a private gated housing estate in Esher. He had founded the business with the MP, Peter Walker, later to become Lord Walker. They started the business in Hertford Street in Mayfair in the late 1960s, later moving to a 1960s office block (Petershill House) in St Paul's Churchyard. Jim occupied a spacious but sparsely furnished office on the first floor overlooking the square. He would hold meetings there with a window always open and without central heating regardless of the weather outside. On occasion it was quite cold, but he would say, 'We make our own heat in here.' And that was that. He also had total intolerance for pencil tapping or anything else that he found distracting to his very intense and focussed concentration on the job in hand.

The building had a health club in the basement which I visited several times a week, primarily for its sun-bed and sauna and also because sandwiches and cold drinks were provided free of charge. I usually went with Bob Dellow, a practical joker and, like Brian and Jim, an enthusiastic golfer. He was a few years older than I and worked as Eric Farrell's assistant in the dealing room. He was known to fancy the pants off almost any girl in a skirt, and his reputation on all fronts was significant! The facilities were overseen by a white-suited manager who could provide massages and, it was said, had been employed by Cunard on the *QE2*. He was called into action one day when Bob and I had a sun-bed session during which one of the extremely hot bulbs fell onto my left testicle, where it seemed to weld itself to my skin. Bob thought it was the funniest thing he had seen and fell about laughing while I was terror struck! The health club manager assisted in prying the thin glass from my body, leaving a very pink and delicate area which he smothered with some cream or lotion.

When Slater, Walker ran into difficulties in the secondary banking crisis of 1972 and was 'saved' by the Bank of England's 'lifeboat' scheme, the bank and most of its other operations were cut back, but the *raison d'être* for the whole enterprise, investment management, was retained in full. At this time it was an almost everyday occurrence for one or other of the golfers in our office – all senior employees – to produce a putting machine. A putting competition would then be held, usually lasting hours throughout the afternoon. The winner could choose the distance to be putted, and it was common to have rolling golf balls run the twenty-plus yards of the carpeted office. Favoured members of staff would join in.

On one of these idle days the National Trust came up for discussion, and Brian suggested I ought to join. I thought about it for a while. At £240 or so, it seemed it a bit out of my range. On the other hand, a life time's membership at this price might not be such a bad thing with a family possible in my future. So I joined and received a silver medallion and a membership card – a green folding card covered in faux-leather. It was one of the best things I have ever bought, and I have subsequently given life memberships to family members – but for rather more money than mine cost!

One of the favoured members of staff was Annie Mackie, who was employed as the directors' boardroom cook. She was trained at *Le Cordon Bleu* and provided three-course lunches daily, often with wine for the directors and invited guests. Occasionally I would be allowed to invite stockbrokers in to be wined and dined in the small but elegantly furnished board room.

Annie was a petite, happy-go-lucky, fair-haired girl, married happily at the time to David Mackie, who was later to become senior partner of Allen and Olgiev at their offices in Old Change where he was a founding proponent of *pro bono* legal work in the UK. They lived after marriage in a small three-bedroom house in a new estate in Bow, long before the development of Canary Wharf, and later moved to a detached house off Roehampton Lane in Putney. Sometime later they divorced, and Annie moved to a small flat off Kingston Hill. She was always up for a laugh and flirted fairly outrageously with Bob Dellow and Brian. On one occasion at a Christmas party in Leith House one of these two put a mirror on the floor near to where Annie was dispensing food and drink. That was a step too far, and shortly afterwards Annie left to set up her own catering business.

In 1974 the UK stock market fell by seventy-three per cent, one of its worst ever falls. Things were so bad that, according to some, the end of capitalism was nigh. One of the consequences of this dramatic period was that fund management groups were being sold. Within a matter of months SW had acquired two other fund groups, Jessel Britannia and the National Group. The additional £250 million or so of assets under management had been purchased for not much more than £1 million. We ended up with forty-four unit trusts, several of which had the same investment management objective. The range would have to be rationalised through mergers, eventually down to twenty-one. Brian Banks was heard to say one day that if capitalism is dead, then buying these two fund groups was either going to either be very cheap or the final nail in the coffin!

When the first acquisition (that of Jessel) was announced, I visited Keith Crowley, my opposite number, at his offices in Fenchurch Street. Our meeting wasn't wholly satisfactory. I came away thinking that Keith was making plans to become the overall marketing boss after the amalgamation took place. I was concerned that I shouldn't be edged out. In the event, Keith did join our offices in Leith House, where I had moved to the top floor. Relations were cool between us; he brought with him a team of people to service professional agents. One day he came to see me in my fourth-floor office and immediately launched into a tirade of personal accusations about how surly and uncooperative I was being. This was all news to me, coming from someone who had only been in the business for

two years after retiring as a V-bomber pilot. As far as I was concerned, and those I reported to, I was doing a good job.

The rationalisation of forty-four funds, several with almost identical investment aims, objectives, and portfolio content, became a significant management operation. Ron Stone, who had joined from Jessel, and David (DLP) Hill were the two directors who undertook this task. It required all unit-holder investors in the funds being merged to vote on the proposal. At first this operation was slow, not least because everyone was learning on the job; no one in the industry had previously tried to merge more than two funds together, but now we were sometimes merging three or four at a time. First we had to select the best performing fund to be the principal and surviving trust in order to retain the investment performance record for use in future marketing. The production of a letter, a new prospectus, and voting papers was a major undertaking; distribution of these papers had to be coordinated with the half-yearly manager's reports and accounts to save postage, whilst ensuring that any adjustment to these dates should be spread throughout the year so as to avoid management and administrative overload. The trust amalgamation and merger programme took almost two years.

With the largest investment range of unitised funds in the market, I proposed that we create a 'Unit Trust Portfolio Management Service', an idea now replicated worldwide. This would be managed alongside the discretionary service, managed by Alan and Martyn Page (who were not related). The minimum sum for this new and innovative service was £25,000 compared to the £100,000 required for discretionary management. It also provided scope for discretionary use when exposure in foreign markets in particular was needed, but the costs of foreign share purchase, let alone access to foreign currency within the then existing foreign currency exchange controls which were still in force, were restricted.

During 1974, in addition to buying the two fund groups, Jim Slater had told Brian Banks that he wanted to launch a unit trust to be known as Slater, Walker Assets Trust to invest in companies with undervalued share prices compared to their underlying asset values. This was a typical Jim master-stroke: simple, obvious, and a potential good performer when the stock market recovered, which it did by 150 per cent in 1975. Jim had made his investment reputation as a specialist in identifying companies whose assets were more than the value of their shares. He had also made substantial profits by asset-stripping these companies, although he always denied the practice. This was a business model which others began to follow but which also began to cause increasing negative publicity in the financial press. Jim's response was to say, 'We make money, not things!'

The trouble with launching a new unit trust in the depths of a stock market crash was obvious. Nobody would be interested in making investments when the immediate outlook seemed so bleak. I proposed that Christopher and I should visit our stockbroker and bank trustee connections and offer to pay them an enhanced commission of a quarter per cent on top of the regulated initial commission of 1¼ per cent in return for them underwriting the launch with a commitment to buy a volume of units which would be allocated to their clients. The beauty of this arrangement was that everyone would be a winner. The company's launch costs would be proportionate to the amount of money invested in the fund, the brokers would receive commission when business was almost non-existent, and investors would be investing at the bottom of the market.

As an additional incentive, we offered to pay an on-going annual commission for investment balances held within the trust from the annual management charge of 1.25 per cent. This would hopefully get around one of the principal obstacles stockbrokers faced when putting clients into funds, namely, the loss of broking commission or management income. This was in addition to the promise to use participating stockbrokers for investment business in a ratio based on the volume of money invested.

Jim Slater was so enthused with the concept that he accompanied me to several meetings with some of his favoured stockbrokers. Smalltalk wasn't part of Jim's make-up, but those who met him on these occasions always showed immense interest in what he had to say and treated him with considerable respect, deference, and awe. What he had to say was always insightful, usually thought-provoking, and, in the way he put things, unarguable and logical. A copy of one of his speeches follows this chapter.

The *Financial Times* unit trust correspondent David Lewis headlined his Saturday column one week with the headline 'Slater, Walker Stirs up a Hornet's Nest', which only served to increase the amount of investor interest. Jim Slater was delighted with the concept and subsequent kaffuffle. By the end of the launch period of about two weeks

we had attracted £5 million for investment. At the time we said this was all that could be invested in the identified opportunities. Later we made 'limited offers' for this fund. As a marketing concept it was based on the fact that the investment managers could only identify a limited number of investment opportunities at the time these offers were open, whilst it also generated a desire by investors to get involved in a product with proven success.

Shortly afterwards, the payment of extra underwriting commissions was deemed outside the rules of the Unit Trust Association, which supervised the management, administration, and marketing of unit trust companies' funds from Finsbury Circus. Quite why was lost on me. I couldn't see how it could be remotely against anyone's interests if it was offered for enhanced sales performance – which could be easily proven. The renewal commission arrangement, however, was allowed to continue for forty years in a number of products across many product lines in the financial service industry.

Exactly how all the investments in our UK invested funds' portfolios were selected was a grey area to me. Our in-house research resources were tiny and confined to the UK. Stockbrokers provided theirs. My strong suspicion was that, despite the proclaimed Chinese Wall between Petershill House, and Leith House (which indeed was why the two activities were kept physically separate), it was perfectly easy for head office's business research to reveal suitable investments for Brian Banks' team to pursue. In this way, the share price for Jim's banking customers could be under-pinned, whilst the funds' performances benefited from the exposure the bank's clients could get via the financial media. Certainly, Eric Farrell, the dealing director, and Jim Slater gave a daily update of investment positions and prices for strategic holdings held by the bank and of the funds.

Later we were to launch the Professional Trust, a general growth trust. It was aimed at first-time investors who had never invested in unit trusts before but who could invest a minimum of £5,000 – twenty times the usual minimum at the time – and it was another innovative concept for the industry. The fund had lower management charges than a traditional fund and provided quarterly management reports instead of at the usual half-yearly. The trust's launch offer was made via the weekend financial press and attracted over £12 million, with many cheques being drawn from building society accounts. This was just the market we had been hoping to tap into. It was one that offered potentially large amounts of money that might be transferred to equity funds provided the rationale could be presented well.

Liaising with our advertising agency was part of my job I thoroughly enjoyed. The preparation of a new advertisement for an existing fund or for a new service was an opportunity to brief these gentlemen on the concept of what was needed, and then for all the copywriters, layout specialists, and 'ideas men' to put in their two pennyworth. We never had as much time as everyone would have liked, which was a good driver for getting minds focussed and things done. The creative buzz was always very energising – especially when a fresh idea had been developed that was accepted by my superiors, who inevitably all thought either that they had had the idea themselves or that they had an even better one (which almost always would not have worked).

In the mid-1970s I had the offer to borrow a British racing green Rover 2000 from an Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) friend of mine, Winthrop Brainerd. He was a gregarious bachelor and related to one of the early settlers in the US, and offered it to me for the Christmas period, as he, being a Queen's Messenger, would be away in Nepal, Thailand, and the Far East. The only condition was that it would be available for his collection at Heathrow when he returned and it should be in pristine, valeted condition. I was thrilled to have use of this car, which had a flag mast on the offside front wing and a royal household flag in the glove pocket! Unfortunately, I was hit from behind at a traffic light junction and had to drive the car to my parents' house in Chislet near Canterbury with a damaged rear wing and misshapen boot lid: with flag flying of course!

Apart from the embarrassment of having to tell my parents what had happened, although it was no fault of mine, I urgently needed the car to be mended at a time when most repair shops would be closed. Fortunately, my mother knew the owner of Swayle Motors, a Ford dealer in Sittingbourne, who was able to get the car repaired and resprayed. It was delivered back to Heathrow in pristine order.

Some weeks later I met Brainerd in the Suttling Room bar at the HAC. 'What happened to my car?' he enquired. While I hesitated, he went on, 'I heard you had an accident from someone I met when I was in Katmandu High Street!' I had nowhere to hide and owned up. He wasn't happy, and to this day I have no idea how he got to know about the accident long before the days of Internet and mobile phones.

During my time Slater, Walker, I received an enquiry from Christopher Gilchrist, a trade press writer, who wanted to write a book about unit trusts and needed a sponsor. At a cost of £5,000 he would write and publish an authoritative book which that be targeted at consumers and professionals alike. It would be titled *Unit Trusts: What Every Investor Should Know*. The only previous book on the subject, *The Management of Unit Trusts*, had been written by Oliver Stutchbury in 1964. He was a former chief executive of Save & Prosper, and the book was only of interest to institutional and industry people. We thought Christopher's book would have longevity and be good for our corporate image and at a cost well below the cost of a quarter page advertisement in a weekend newspaper. It would have good and potentially effective resonance to our traditional promotions. More than that, we would receive a proportion of each book sold at £2.50.

Slaters also formed a Jersey fund management business in 1974 – a busy year! Richard Wilkinson was the managing director, ably supported by Richard 'Butch' (anything but!) Paling and Douglas Aitken (ex-Save & Prosper and also owner of a Gloucestershire old people's home). The Jersey business had been founded on a Jersey-based fund set up by Hugh James, a bespectacled, smartly dressed, and slightly gnomish young man. He had found marketing and promotion of his fund difficult despite having established a good performance record based on his own research and investment dealing. Slaters' had bought the fund, the Growth Investors Fund, and changed its name with the prefix Slater, Walker. The fund had a board of directors which included Hugh van Cutsem, son of a successful race-horse owner from Norfolk and a society figure and a close friend of Prince Charles. Hugh's two sons were pages for Prince Charles's wedding to Lady Diana Spencer some ten years later, and one of them in 2011 was troop commander of the Life Guards out-ride detachment at Prince William's wedding to Catherine Middleton.

The Jersey operation devised a way for UK investors to buy into the offshore fund, which at that time was not possible for exchange control reasons, by creating effectively a 'mirror' fund. This mirror fund reflected exactly the underlying portfolio of the main fund and was priced in pounds sterling rather than US dollars. The currency movements obviously reflected a differentiation in respective fund values, and thus was born the concept of a managed currency fund, which would be launched in a few years' time after exchange controls, introduced in 1947, had been first relaxed and then ultimately removed in 1979.

Slater, Walker had recently also become involved in the affairs of a Jersey commercial bank. It was thought that, having knowledge of marketing funds to professional intermediaries, I should spend some time on the island and assess possibilities in conjunction with the local board. Thus began an interest in offshore funds and international marketing that would develop in years to come.

These enjoyable and happy times continued for a few years. The frequency of my calls on UK agents diminished, but my responsibilities for advertising and the production of new trust deeds and manager's reports increased.

The preparation, proofing, and printing of trust deeds required a highly specialist expertise that involved accurate and overnight type-setting and delivery service. It had traditionally been done by established City printers, and Slaters had used Greenaways near the old Spitalfields market. In the general business depression of 1973 and 1974, I received a surprise call from Willie Welch, with whom I had shared a house in Spa Hill in Upper Norwood from 1965 to 1967. We had moved there together with John Dudbridge: a HYELM refugee group!

Willie had become production director for a family printing business, WB Darley & Son in Burton on Trent that had specialised for decades in printing beer labels; in fact, they were and remain one of the largest beer-label printers in the world! He was desperate to find some ... any ... print work. With the economy in dire straits, nobody, it seemed, was drinking bottled beer as much as they had!

At some risk to my personal position, I asked him to typeset, proof, and print the trust deed and prospectus for the new Professional Trust. It was quite a challenge for Willie to get the same turnaround of hard copy as we had received from Greenaways. The work was highly specialised and completely unfamiliar to him and his printing staff. No two prospectuses were the same, unfortunately, as trust law (as it affected unit trusts) and regulations were constantly being amended. There was no such thing as a standard trust deed, and before the age of widespread computer use, it was usually a lengthy process. Somehow he managed to get overnight proofs set in hot metal and delivered on time – usually the next day: and although they were never one hundred per cent accurate until final proofs, they were good enough and eventually competitive enough cost-wise to be given every new

prospectus needed for funds which were being merged. This gave Willie several years' business income of around £20,000 annually.

Willie has never forgotten this period, which happened at a time when not only was business poor in their traditional business area, but when he had personal difficulties with his managing director within the factory. He says it saved his bacon. In later years he would invite me to Pride Park to watch a home match of Derby County Football Club, where he had an annual season ticket close to the directors' box.

After each trust deed proof had been received, they had to be checked and often amended several times by the City-based trust lawyers (usually Simmons & Simmons but sometimes Clifford Chance, or Linklaters). The trustees also had to see the proofs for checking and amendment. All this activity had to be completed by an already-decided launch date some weeks ahead. Typically, I would invite trade journalists and stockbrokers, a total of about eighty people, to a presentation and lunch at the Howard Hotel near Temple underground station. The menu would be selected by me, as would the wines. The presentation would follow a standard pattern of speakers from within the company and would be followed by questions. It was all very straightforward and always very much appreciated by the guests. However, on one occasion I selected a Vouvray wine which I thought we had ordered before, but this time was far too sweet. (Vouvray can be bone dry or overly sweet.) Did I pay for that error! The directors questioned my sanity and everything else for weeks afterwards, and rather unnecessarily I thought.

Another of my new responsibilities was the production of the unit trust manager's annual and half-yearly reports. As we now managed twenty-two funds, this was a fulltime job in itself, as the dates for their mandatory publication were spread throughout the year. Assembling the accounts and manager's investment reports from those responsible – Alan Maidment, the finance director, DLP (Dave) Hill, and Ron Stone – along with changing statutory information was a responsible role. It involved each trust's lawyers, trustees, and the Association of Unit Trust Managers (AUTM).

These reports and some other service brochures were printed by Billington Press, a small privately owned printing business based in Bow, East London. Les Billington and his son John were the two working directors and joint shareholders of the business, along with Mrs Billington. Our account was immensely important to them, and Les in particular gave us a tremendous service. In the days of hot metal type-setting, the turnaround times would often require overnight resetting for proofs because of last minute changes, but because he was familiar with our requirements and geared up to organise staff to do overtime if necessary, there was never any danger he would lose the business.

A perk was to have lunch with Les pretty frequently. Often we would go to one of several pub restaurants in Smithfield market or Charterhouse Square, or occasionally to Oslo Court in Regent's Park, which was one of his and his wife's favourites. This was a beautiful restaurant with lovely bone china, cut-glass wine glasses, linen napkins and table-cloths, and an interesting menu. We would talk about the business and people within it and occasionally about personal things, frequently about his second home at Frinton-on-Sea to which he planned to retire. Being perhaps thirty years older than I was, he had a fatherly ear. He lived in Loughton.

When he did retire, his son John took over as managing director, and although he was rather more relaxed in his business outlook and management style than his father, he appreciated the large amount of business we gave him, and Billington's continued as our printers.

It was at about this time, in November 1974, that a traditional stone-built, slate-roofed house I had bought in Wales caught fire one Tuesday night. My first wife and I usually travelled down to Rhosgoch, a hamlet just north of Hay-on-Wye, on weekends, covering the 150 miles in three and a half hours, to our property, which had four acres and trout stream. The fire made the house a total loss; three walls were left standing, and everything else lay in a pile of cinders on the ground floor. Charred floor joists were hanging, broken and useless. Forty-one of the forty-two local residents apparently left their homes to see Rose Cottage go up in flames. The outstanding member of the community not to show was a renowned miscreant. The insurers were Sun Alliance & London. In telling them of my impending 'total loss' claim it became apparent that I had not renewed the annual premium, which had been due ten days previously.

Facing the almost certain probability that there was to be no insurance pay-out, I contacted Richard Lawrence, with whom I had been friendly at Bowrings and who was now a loss adjuster. He advised me that

normally insurers would allow a grace period for premiums to be paid, typically of fourteen days. I spoke to the insurers again, and they confirmed this but pointed out that the grace period was about to expire. I drove immediately to the London head office in Bartholomew Lane to pay up. Happily and fortunately, they confirmed that the policy could be renewed notwithstanding that there had been a claim in the interim period. Phew!

Eventually, after many months of wrangling over the cover provided by the policy, and after Richard had become involved to represent my interests, and after a meeting with one of the general managers at the company's head office in Bartholomew Lane, the company paid an acceptable ninety-six per cent of the insured value. My acquired knowledge of the insurance market had ultimately been rewarded, and this early experience of dealing with senior executives empowered my approach to future business negotiations. I have advised anyone ever since not to have anything to do with an insurer who tries to settle the claim for less than they were contracted to do. The old city motto 'My word is my bond' had been tested, and I had won.

As previously mentioned, full scale banking crisis was in full swing in 1974. Slater, Walker's banking arm wasn't wholly immune, but in the autumn Jim Slater resigned suddenly. He was replaced by Sir James Goldsmith, a flamboyant and charismatic uber-rich Old Etonian. The announcement was made after a delay of almost an hour, late one afternoon in the basement of Petershill House, where the annual Krug-champagne-fuelled head-office Christmas parties were held. In the shake-up that followed, the investment management business was left largely untouched, but for some reason my star began to wane with Jim Nicholls, Brian Banks, and Eric Farrell, the dealing director, but not with Alan Maidment, the finance director, and Stuart Goldsmith, the senior investment manager and also a director. Quite what stimulated and sustained what became quite unpleasant and personally difficult times, I never knew.

It was almost as if I was being targeted for being error prone, which I wasn't. However, when fund performance dropped in daily figures against a number of measures for our other funds and those of our competitors and against indices, and when I was being picked up on trivial errors (such as spelling 'guilt' for 'gilt' once!) or other inconsequential misdemeanours (in their view), I began to wonder about my career future for the first time. Meanwhile my accusers played office carpet golf the length of the office for most of the day, card games in the dealing room, and darts in the board room whilst the stock market was virtually inactive.

As a consequence of Slater resigning, the company needed to change its name. A few names were bandied about and proposed by the advertising agency and others, and eventually the name Britannia Arrow Holdings was agreed. After the heady fast-moving days and reputation of Slater, Walker, a more conventional and traditional name was needed. Almost inevitably there was a rumpus with the Britannia Building Society over the use of 'Britannia' in the name. This was eventually settled by an exchange of letters confirming that we wouldn't solicit for deposits and they would not solicit for stock market investment business.

The fund-management business would be known simply as Britannia Fund Management. Choosing a logo and corporate colour again demanded extensive and prolonged thought. It was at this time that I realised that such things as corporate or product names, colours, and logos absorbed more management time than almost anything else they did. Certainly, this was the case when nobody was very busy! Everybody had an opinion, and when it came to colour, not everybody saw or could memorise colour the same way.

In 1976, because my role had become increasingly restricted, I was no longer travelling about the UK, and my company car was not replaced when it came up for replacement. At that time I had a three-year-old daughter Katharine and a one-year-old son William, and a car was vital. Money was pretty tight, but I found a Morris Minor Traveller (XLM 338G) for sale in the *Evening Standard* in East Finchley for £400, which I borrowed from my mother-in-law. One Saturday morning I went to see it, thought it looked okay, and drove it home to Putney. I cherished it for nearly twenty years. It was a sad day when I said goodbye to my Trafalgar-blue reliable friend in the early 1990s. She was bought by another Welshman who lived in North Wales.

At some point during this low ebb I was seconded to the life company business. The offices were in the basement of a block adjoining Petershill House. The business, known as Britannia Arrow Life Assurance Ltd., employed about twenty people. Had my Towry Law employment taken me there I wondered? There was also a subsidiary life company based in Guernsey, but I never knew why it existed or who bought its products – if it had

any. The managing director of both was Arthur Pierce, a white Bermudan accountant with a combined Bermudan and Scottish accent unique to him.

My role was to work alongside Len Stretfield, a well-known life-long expert on pensions who had, amongst other places and life companies, worked at Noble Lowndes. Len was in his late fifties, a pipe smoker and beer drinker who commuted to Brighton. The role I had was in marketing a money purchase corporate pension plan – more money in the investment management coffers! Having received enquiries, it would then be our job to calculate each member's contribution required from the company and the individual to the scheme to achieve a target benefit based on assumed rates of investment performance and known retirement age. The calculations were complex to me, but they were second nature to Len.

At mid-day sharp, Len would aim for the nearest pub, the Sea Horse, which was just up the road opposite Bracken House in Queen Victoria Street where the *Financial Times* was published. He would usually try and get someone from the office to join him on the pretext that business could be discussed there as well as anywhere else. He was given considerable freedom to 'work' this way.

Amongst my other colleagues were Mike Gordon, who was our company representative or Inspector visiting intermediaries, and John Addis, a number cruncher. Mike was a keen cricketer (a supporter of Essex) and an MCC member. His was a technical and marketing role, and he was clearly very bright. He was always 'taking the piss' and was good company. He came in one day and said that sales for Slater's own endowment policies were rather slow, so we should all take one out! I took out four policies, each for £1,000 sum assured with a monthly premium payable over twenty-five years of £2.50, which in those days attracted tax relief at 17.5 per cent. This meant a total net payment over the period of £637.50 each. I used them later for mortgage collateral purposes. When they eventually matured, having been taken over by Swiss Life, they each paid out over £12,000!

Mike went on to become marketing director at Skandia Life and retired when he was fifty-five. I envied him his retirement greatly, because at that time (the year 2000) my business career was seriously threatening to crumble. He and I would meet up from time to time after the Slater years at international conferences with a colleague of his, Clive Cowdery, who later founded Resolution Life Group Limited, an investment acquisition company with some Slater nuances. This Guernsey-based company became very successful at buying up dormant life company funds and making significantly better returns than they had previously achieved. These people were names to conjure with in years to come.

John Addis was a quasi-actuary announced one day that he had a proven formula for winning the football pools. He and his father regularly picked up winnings, he said. Naturally everyone was sceptical, but he nevertheless persuaded us to chip in, in my case a few unaffordable pounds. In the first week we won about £20 each and in week three over £150 each. We thought we were on a roll, but it never happened again, and after a few weeks no one was participating.

When Chris Neville decided to leave the company in 1978, I was recalled to the investment arm of the business. I had survived my uncomfortable personal crisis and was soon approached with a sponsorship proposal for the restoration of the steam railway locomotive *Britannia* No. 70000 at a cost of £25,000 with a similar sum to acquire the rights to use it for promotional purposes. Having our company name on an iconic steam engine as it travelled the length and breadth of the country held some appeal, but when it became clear that sponsorship didn't include ownership, we backed out.

As part of my resumed brief to generate business through stockbrokers, I had visited those in Douglas and Ramsey on the Isle of Man several times. On one of my visits to the island I visited a brokerage and investment business in Castletown called Mannin International. It was a privately owned investment banking business, and operated from a smart and large Georgian house, approached from a driveway and full of antiques. The majority shareholder was James Gilbey (of the gin family). The other directors were Ronnie Buchanan, the chief investment officer, Graham Reid, a close friend of John Dyson with whom I had worked at Towry Law, and Pieter Kuntz, a South African. As far as I could tell, these were the only male employees. They were interested in my joining their team to offer tax planning and investment advice to wealthy expatriates in a rather similar way as Towry Law had done with its UK-based clientele. For reasons I can't now recall, I didn't accept their offer. It may have been the family disruption, the lack of longevity of the business, or perhaps even the rather difficult characteristics of the people I

met – apart from Graham, who was extremely charming, highly knowledgeable on tax mitigation matters and good fun to be with.

Through a connection my mother had made in the 1960s with Clifford Irving, who was then Minister for Tourism for the Manx government and a leading island politician, I was keen to accept his invitation to talk with local civil servants in the Finance Department of the island's government about opening a branch on the island, which my directors had suggested at an out-of-the blue meeting. In retrospect, it shouldn't have been a surprise that the Manx government was very encouraging, as the financial sector of the economy was perceived as a growth sector. Tourism had peaked in the 1950s, agriculture wasn't growing, and competition from other offshore centres, notably the Channel Islands, was increasing. Fishing which had been important economically was also in decline. Manx smoked herrings were no longer exported on a significant scale.

In 2012 I attended my fourth or fifth meeting of the Petershill Reunion Society. It was the thirty-eighth reunion of those who have worked at Slater, Walker, either in the bank, in the property company, or the investment management business. The annual reunions began after SW changed its name in 1974 and become Britannia Arrow Holdings Ltd. As on previous occasions, a motley crew of people tuned up to talk about past times, catch up on what was going on generally and personally, reflect on some who had died since we met last time, and to enjoy stories from the past. I still maintain that, even with most of us now in our late sixties, seventies, and mid-eighties, if we were all put in a room to make a business, we would do so, and it would be more than just successful.

Jim Slater gave a speech in Toronto in 1973, which conveys the way the business was created and run, how employees were motivated, and also something of the man himself who inspired so many to think outside the box, take reasonable chances, and be meticulous about detail. Much of it is as true today as it was at the time. The text of the speech follows this chapter.