

Prelude

It was late winter in 1935 when the young Jewish girl gave birth to her baby girl in the German town of Kitzigen. The child's father, a soldier who decided that being the father of a Jewish child would not help his progression through the ranks of Hitler's army. Her family were not critical of her instead they showed understanding and supported her through the pregnancy. She named the child Ruth. Her father ran a successful civil engineering company that dealt with the British industrialist, Sir William Bromfield. Sir William spent most of his time visiting German enterprises that dealt with his engineering supply companies. Their business relationship had developed into genuine friendship.

Life for Jews became unbearable in Germany as it became the practice for any senior German Officer to just take whatever Jewish belongings they wanted. The "brownshirts" were even worse. Claiming to be patriots, they were nothing but organised hooligans and thugs with no respect for human life or belongings, especially Jewish. The government followed Hitler's ranting that all of Germany's troubles had been brought about by the Jews and now, payback time!

When they seized her father's house they had nowhere to live so, he moved his family to nearby Frankfurt, some 130 kilometres away. Their British friend, Sir William, helped them as he seemed to have influence because he found rooms for them in Frankfurt. She never knew exactly what he did for a living but he

travelled a lot and she overheard him and her father talking about his brother in England. His brother was a Church of England minister in a country town about three hours north of London.

By early 1938 the situation became intolerable for the Jewish community. Besides the constant harassment and beatings, many were arrested and thrown into prison for only not showing allegiance to the Nazi party. Also, it was now impossible for them to leave Germany. Her father suffered many beatings and her mother became a nervous wreck. They could not go to a synagogue for over six months and he feared for Ruth and her mother. When a scuffle developed just outside the building they lived in, the police arrested her father and they never saw him again. Her mother asked Sir William to enquire if he may help. He tried to find information as to his whereabouts but, as he attracted attention to himself, he stopped his enquiries. Realising that she would never be with her husband again the pain was unbearable, so she climbed to the top of the five-storey building and jumped.

Ruth's mother was distraught. She had now lost both parents who she loved, and she held fears for Ruth's safety. She confronted William and asked for help and advice. He told her about the "Kinder transport" movement being set up by the Jewish and Quaker communities in England that rescued Jewish children. The laws changed to allow unaccompanied Jewish children to enter England provided they had a sponsor that would care for them. If she surrendered Ruth it

would mean she would not be with her again until after the war. After several agonising days, she asked him to find out what arrangements may be made.

It took only two days before he returned with an answer. His brother would accept the responsibility for bring her up until she reunited with her after the war. Although he was a minister in the Church of England, he promised that Ruth would be exposed to the Jewish faith during her upbringing. If she accepted the offer, John (William's brother) would meet them on Frankfurt railway station next Friday. He would not be allowed to leave the train and she would have to place Ruth at the steps of the train where John would take her. John should be able to talk to her through the window before the train left for Holland and the channel crossing. She agreed to this arrangement.

She was tormented over the next few days. What if she never saw Ruth again? Is it best she should be brought up by strangers than risk the horrors the Nazi regime seemed to pose?

Then finally the big question....How did William arrange everything so fast? William answered by telling her that when he was in England last his brother told him

"On 15 November 1938, five days after the devastation of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, in Germany and Austria, a delegation of British Jewish and Quaker leaders appealed in person to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Neville Chamberlain. Among other measures, they requested that the British

government allow the temporary admission of unaccompanied Jewish children, without their parents,"

He indicated to Sir William that he would consider accepting one of these children into this family.

When she told Sir William to make arrangements he got a message to John, and the reply came back. He then told her he had contacts within the English defence community. (What he didn't tell her was that he was in effect an undercover intelligence agent.)

Early Friday morning she packed a small bag of clothes along with small amount of food for Ruth to take on her Journey. Ruth had been told that she was going on a train with a nice man for a long holiday and one day soon, mummy would join her. Sir William walked to the station with them. He was particularly on edge that morning and kept looking over his shoulder. Ruth had her identification card on a ribbon around her neck and seemed happy like any three year old would be, if going on a holiday.

The station platform was crowded with so many parents there to say goodbye to their children. Most realised it would be the last time they would be with them, and yet they held out hope for the future. A larger contingent of soldiers on the station that usual worried no one.

The train pulled into the station and almost at once the engine unhitched while another hitched at the other

end. Sir William sighted John at the open carriage window and then approached the window with Ruth and her mother. In the brief conversation John could reassure them he and his wife (Madeline) would take good care of Ruth. He also told her he would make arrangements for a Rabi to help with her education. She finally felt relieved. Ruth will be taken care of by good and understanding people. Sir William had previously told John about Ruth's family so he knew of this of the trauma she may have experienced.

Two soldiers stood at each of the carriage steps and checked the identification of the children before they were passed onto the train. Two additional soldiers were at each set of steps with their rifles at the ready in case any of the adults tried to board the train or any of the passengers tried to leave the train. John took Ruth into his arms and they returned to his seat so Ruth would be able to wave goodbye to her mother. The soldiers kept a three metre gap between the parents and the train but they could still talk to each other, but not touch. As the train departed, three Gestapo officers grabbed hold of Sir William. John saw this in horror from the carriage and was even more horrified when Sir William broke free and the Gestapo men shot him. If that was not distressing enough, when Ruth's mother leant over William, they shot her through the head, and he heard them laugh and call out, "die Jewish whore!"

A new life begins

He was grateful Ruth had been distracted and never saw her mother murdered. Ruth noticed however, John muttering almost silently with tears in his eyes and making the sign of the cross. John needed to hide his grief for Ruth's sake.

The journey to the Rotterdam became the first chance for John to get to know Ruth. He was grateful William taught Ruth some rudimentary English even although he learnt a workable knowledge of the German language while at school. He thought he should be known to her as "Uncle John" and he would introduce Madeline as "Aunty Madeline". It was a slow journey and fairly uneventful until they reached the border crossing near Het Kwartier. The Dutch border police were very civil while the Germans extensively examined the documents of every passenger and seemed to glare with disgust at every child. John was glad they did not search his bags because he had documents including her birth certificate, along with her mothers' and her grandparents. Also among the documents was a declaration William smuggled in to Germany that gave John and Madeline the authority to act as Ruth's guardian in England. Ruth's mother signed this and had it witnessed by a well-respected Rabi in Frankfurt. The German Identity card Ruth wore around her neck being endorsed for one way travel out of Germany.

When they arrived in the port of Rotterdam, the Dutch Quaker community organised tables full of hot food. This amazed John as another example of the organisation in place.

The ship taking them to take them to Folkestone in England looked like an older freighter, chartered by a British member of the Jewish community who paid for the charter out of his own pocket.

Ruth slept on the boat and when they arrived in England, he saw Madeline waiting at the dock for them. Realising the trauma, the immigration officials looked only briefly at each child's identification before stamping it and letting them in England. Their only concern being, that appropriate responsible people were on hand to care for them. They boarded the train for the two hour Journey to London where they had a three hour wait for their train to Millbrook.

It had been a particularly long day and three year old Ruth was completely worn out. Even the excitement of a new home with a bedroom all to herself could not enough to keep her awake. John and Madeline looked at her asleep in bed, then knelt down and prayed that Ruth would not have to witness any more horror.

The next morning Ruth woke to a brand new world. From her room she saw daylight, and she heard birds chirping outside her window. She slept in a room all by herself for the first time of her life and it was a pretty room. A vase with flowers on it in the corner and in the

chair in the other corner sat a huge teddy bear. The door open and in came Aunty Madeline. "Goog morgen darling" she said "Haben Sie eine gute sleep?" Ruth laughed at the strange accent and replied in English, "Yes thank you, I slept well." Madeline knew at once that language would not become a problem. She took Ruth to the bathroom and after washing her and cleaning her teeth, they went down to the kitchen. John was sitting down with his bowl of porridge and he said to her, "Sie sehen schön heute morgen" She laughed and replied, "Mummy said that I must try to always speak English now, and I must learn twenty more words every day." John smiled and replied, "Well, from now on it will be English only."

Madeline put a bowl of porridge in front of her with a glass of juice and Ruth replied. "Danke schön er thank you." They all laughed.

Madeline suggested that after breakfast she takes Ruth into nearby Bedford and go shopping for a new wardrobe for Ruth. Although her mother had tried to look after her, new children's clothing was a luxury along with toys in Germany. It had been hard enough to gather food. The only toy Ruth brought with her was a shabby rag doll. She did however have two dresses, a coat, and a pair of gloves. She also had the shoes she wore and three sets of underwear.

She dressed Ruth, and they walked to the bus stop and caught it into Bedford. Ruth; memory in later years always recalled how people were all smiling and

laughing. Those she left behind in Frankfurt never smiled.

Ruth really liked Aunty Madeline and clung close to her and held her hand tight. Madeline liked the feeling as well. When they went into the shop Madeline asked her every time what she thought of each item. At first Ruth said she liked everything. Madeline realised that although she was only three years old, Ruth had been taught to appreciate every gift and not to “turn her nose up” at anything she didn’t particularly like. Madeline took her out and into a cake shop. She told Ruth to go and choose the cake she would like to eat. Ruth walked up and down the row of cakes many times. Madeline saw the smile she gave towards some cakes and the frown towards others. When Ruth finally chose the one she wanted she sat her at the table and ordered it and tea for herself and a soft drink for Ruth. Madeline then explained to Ruth that just like the cakes, she must choose the dress and shoes that she liked best. Ruth could have four dresses and two pairs of shoes. She could also have two pairs of pyjamas and some singlets and underpants. She could also have a swimsuit. Ruth now would choose carefully and Madeline was great full that Ruth was now showing her individuality.

Although English was not Ruth’s natural language she chatted endlessly and although she had a broad accent, Madeline understood most of what she said. After a morning’s shopping they were heading back to the bus when Ruth saw all the dolls in the window of a toy shop. She said nothing, but she stopped and smiled

as her eyes browsed all over the window display. Madeline smiled and said to her, "Uncle John may get mad at me, but you should have one new doll." Ruth jumped for joy and said "danke! Can I have that one please." pointing to a small doll in the corner. Madeline bought it and all the way to the bus stop Ruth held it tight. Madeline thought it was probably the first new toy she ever had.

When they arrived back at the vicarage, Ruth ran inside with the parcels and shouted "Uncle John! Look what Aunty Madeline bought for me. Clothes! Dresses! Shoes! Gloves! A doll! Underpants! All for me! Uncle John, I am so lucky. I like living here with you and Aunty Madeline."

John smiled and winked at Madeline. The joy this little girl was bringing into their life overshadowed the events that were developing over the seas,

While they had been shopping John made arrangements for the Rabi from Cambridge to visit them the following week. Being no synagogue in Bedford, the Rabi based in Cambridge, made regular visits and he would call on John during his visit.

John also had called his Bishop as he needed to be clear on the direction he planned to take on Ruth's upbringing. With both the Bishop's and the Rabi's blessings, John thought that Ruth should be baptised as soon as possible and attend Sunday school. At the same time she should spend a part of Saturday with a Jewish

family and occasionally join them on Friday evening for “shabbat-dinner”. It would be nice although not essential if John and Madeline both accompanied her. As she approaches the age twelve she should be prepared so she could take her “bat mitzvah;” When she is thirteen she should be allowed to take her confirmation into the Church of England if she wants to.

If the Bishop and the Rabi agree, this would make sure that she has a spiritual upbringing and is exposed to both faiths. Taking her bat mitzvah at aged twelve Jewish traditions is that she would now take responsibility for her own faith and morals. This would allow her to be confirmed *if she wanted* to.

The next morning, after breakfast, Madeline took Ruth for a walk around the church grounds and the church. She explained to Ruth that she could play anywhere within the grounds but not to go out of the gate without a grown up. She was fascinated by the church itself. Ruth loved playing outside, and she took three days before she had explored the whole grounds. Madeline made it appear that she was by herself but, while she played outside, Madeline watched her like a hawk from the rectory windows.

Their first Sunday was significant and yet Ruth went about things normally. She woke up, went to the bathroom, cleaned her teeth and dressed for breakfast. All by herself! Ruth loved choosing what clothes to wear and especially as they always smelled nice and clean. After breakfast she heard the church bell for the first

time. Madeline explained to her that John was the vicar of the village and on Sunday mornings people came to the church to pray and learn about God and John helped them pray and learn. Ruth's eyes widened, and she asked if she could go and learn. Madeline laughed and told her "of course you can."

As they walked over to the church Ruth saw many people going in. She noticed some children as well. They sat about in the middle of the church and most of the ladies spoke softly to Madeline and smiled at Ruth. Ruth thought this was exciting. Whenever she was in a crowd in Germany, everyone was frowning and looking around. In this place no one frowned and many people all smiling.

Suddenly everyone stood up! Then a voice from the rear of the church spoke. Immediately the church filled with music (she didn't know it at the time but that was the organ starting.) Then everyone started singing, real loud! Ruth looked around (Madeline had sat her at the end of the pew so she could see everything). Some people were walking in from the door holding books and singing. She saw Uncle John immediately after the man holding a wooden cross high. She went to run to him but Madeline held her hand tight. After that she did not take her eyes off him for the whole service. Near the end of the service everyone started to walk to the front where Uncle John and two other people stood. They knelt down and Uncle John gave them something to eat and the other two people gave them something to drink from a shiny glass. She knelt next to Aunty Madeline and when Uncle

John came in front of them, he gave Aunty Madeline a piece of the bread (it was a tiny piece) and he put his hands on Ruth's head. Ruth didn't know what it meant but was sure it must have been important.

Finally during what was to be the last song, the people who were with Uncle John, started walking out of the church and Uncle John followed. All the other people moved and follow them. When they came to the door Uncle John stood there shaking everyone's hand and talking to them. Madeline held her hand as she talked to the other women outside church. A couple of the ladies asked Ruth what was her name. Then a small boy came up to her and said. "Little girl, can you play with me sometimes?" she looked up at Madeline who then said. "Of course you can." Ruth turned to the boy and said, "My name is Ruth, what is yours?" Ruth had made her first English friend.

The Bishop called on John the following Wednesday. After the pleasantries were out of the way John outlined to him the plans he had for raising Ruth he hoped to gain his approval. The Bishop agreed with his motivation but said that he had reservations about a priest of the Church of England raising a child as a member of the Jewish faith. John pointed out to him he thought the protection of the child was his first responsibility along with the promise he made to her mother.

The Bishop pondered for a while then he advised John. "If the child is baptised her soul would be safe. If

she was exposed to the Jewish faith and eventually took her bat mitzvah that would not be a sign of rejection of Christ as Jesus being a member of the Jewish faith. When a Jew turns to Christ, he is not asked to reject Moses' teachings. Although I still have grave reservations about your plan, I cannot fault it spiritually. I do question the possible confusion for the child and the reaction of your peers and congregation." John replied that as long as there was no hiding the reasons for this journey, his peers being good and loving Christians would accept this. If he and Madeline adopted Ruth after the appropriate wait and he addressed the congregation he felt it would be a living example of Christian love. The Bishop agreed and suggested that after John met with the Rabi a meeting should be arranged between the three of them and an unofficial memorandum of understanding be drawn up. John agreed.

The meeting with the Rabi the next day went even better. The Rabi liked the approach that John proposed and did not find fault with. He appreciated that John took Ruth, and he agreed with her being baptised. If John was to be her father as a child she should be raised in a Christian family. Being exposed to the faith of her mother and grandparents was the right thing. And after her bat mitzvah she should be free to accept either faith or both. He thought he knew of a local Jewish family that would be glad to have John, his wife and Ruth join them at times for their shabbat-dinner and other Jewish festivals. John thought to himself how Ruth would be so lucky to be able to share a Passover meal each Easter.

The Bishop and the Rabi joined with John, Mary and Ruth the next week and formulated the unofficial memorandum of understanding. In a surprising move the Rabi asked the Bishop if he could attend Ruth's baptism. The Bishop agreed and asked could he attend her bat mitzvah. They then all prayed for guidance and asked for God's blessing on this unusual arrangement.

They arranged for Ruth's baptism to take place in a month's time. John advised his congregation of the arrangement and announced that Rabi Jacobs would be present. The Bishop would perform the ceremony. This way the congregation would know the Bishop's approval and the Rabi's acceptance. The Jewish family who they would be sharing the shabbat-dinner with would also be invited.

In less than three weeks of Ruth arriving in Milford she had developed a small circle of friends. They were mainly children of John's parishioners but through Madeline's sewing club Ruth was also exposed to other children. Madeline also allowed Ruth to play with other children at their homes. Her English was becoming perfect, and she rarely used German words. Her best friend was Jody whose Dad was in the army.

John spoke to Charles Wilson, a solicitor and a member of his congregation about how to go adopting Ruth and what Ruth would need to be naturalised. He was told that some obstacles existed as there was no evidence to Ruth's mother's death. He made enquiries and was advised on the path to follow. It would possibly take six

months to sort out but it appeared after formalities were sorted out Ruth would need to be declared “abandoned” and made a Ward of the State. John and Madeline could then adopt her. All the preliminaries would need to be in place and all relevant declarations in the hands of the court. At the court hearing there would be three separate rulings. Ruth would be declared abandoned. Then the court would appoint her a Ward of the State. This would be followed by the granting of John and Mary’s adoption of her. All three rulings would take place in the same court and immediately follow the previous hearing. English law can be cumbersome but with the correct steering, the outcome can be achieved.

When John first addressed his congregation he saw confusion on the faces of some of them. They all praised and supported John for taking Ruth in and saving her from certain death, but, some were confused over the “dual religion” situation. Madeline listened to their reaction and told John. The one comment that amused both of them was that one woman had been overheard saying, “Being a Jew is not as bad as being a bloody Catholic!”

John brought them all around by ensuring all the readings over the next few weeks mentioned that Jesus came from a Jewish Family and all the early disciples were Jews. The most convincing readings came from the Gospel where Jesus prayed in the synagogue. He drove this home further with Paul’s letter to the Hebrews.

On the day of Ruth's Baptism, Madeline prepared a celebration feast. She was careful not have any food that could be objectionable to the Rabi and other Jews present. Madeline being already aware of the need to avoid ham and bacon from the day Ruth first arrived.

They had asked two members of the Parish Council to be Ruth's God Parents. They did not expect many to attend the Baptism but expected the Goldbergs would be there.

John decided that he would not be wearing his robes as the Bishop would conduct the service. Ruth wore a new dress that Madeline had been saving for the occasion and Madeline asked one of her friends to take photos with her brownie box camera.

When they entered the church they felt honoured to see it packed. Rabi Jacobs and the Goldbergs were seated in the front pew (the Bishop told the usher that two pews needed to be kept for any members of the Jewish community.)

John also noticed the Roman Catholic Priest and some of the nuns also there. They all wore street clothes because at that time Catholics did not go into protestant churches. Other churches also had representatives mixed in with the congregation.

John felt so humble with the support being given to Ruth on this most spiritual occasion in her young life. Even though John and Madeline had taken pains to

explain the Baptism and significance to Ruth she was still in awe of the proceedings. When the Bishop said “Ruth er I baptise you in the name of...” Ruth said “My name now is Ruth Bromley!”

Madeline smiled and wondered how Ruth knew their surname. It appeared Ruth had overheard a parishioner refer to John as Father John Bromley.

The reception developed into an interesting affair. Every one (except for the Catholic Priest and nuns) stayed for it. John made an extra effort for Ruth to meet the Goldberg’s and their son Jacob. Jacob was just a little older than her. The Bishop and the Rabi seemed to get along with each other and John was somewhat surprised when the Methodist and Presbyterian pastors joined them. By the time John joined them they were in deep conversations wondering what their responsibilities would be when the war started. It later became obvious this occasion would be used a starting point for conversations that will need to happen regularly between them if war broke out. Ruth’s presence had become a constant reminder of the evil that Hitler’s Third Reich was spreading in Europe.

Sir William Bromley

Although John was deeply shocked to witness his brother shot down at the railway station, he was not surprised. William had known of the dangers but his repugnant distaste of the Nazi regime drove him to take the risks for his country.

The Bromley family were wealthy industrialist who for the last three generations ran Bromley Industries. A group of engineering and manufacturing companies. Traditionally the family kept only a small proportion of their wealth for themselves. Most of the profits went to the Bromley Family Trust which supported many charitable organisations. The company's organisation allowed for William as well as his brother, John not needing to be involved in the daily running of the enterprises. John had entered the Church while William pursued his interest in innovating machinery development. William had developed a reputation as a leading designer of farming equipment and other mechanical methods of farming. He travelled extensively studying farming methods all over Europe and had developed a wide network of farming equipment manufacturers.

With the rise of the Third Reich and Hitler's expansionist plans, many German farm equipment factories developed weapons and military vehicles. No doubt many British manufactures would follow suite.

William had been contacted by the War Department early in 1934 and asked if he would be willing to continue to travel to Germany and by using his contacts, note what developments were taking place. This would be the basis of vital intelligence should war break out. William could also use this information in the development of any equipment that the family companies may be required to manufacture for the British Government. Initially, it would be a low key operation and there would be minimal risks to William's personal safety. Later on the War Department asked him to map out the locations of the factories. This increased his personal risk as he would now be conveying military information. They gave him a small camera, but he committed most information to memory and placed the locations on maps each time he returned home.

William didn't raise any suspicion with the Germans until he was observed drinking coffee with Ruth's grandfather. Although just a casual observation, a minor official thought it may be worthwhile to see who this foreigner having coffee with a Jew was, it became obvious that as William's business caused him to called on industrialist he would need needed further investigation.

William stayed under surveillance for the rest of that journey. The Gestapo continued their investigation, so the picked up the Jew William had been seen having coffee with. They interrogated him with all the force they were known for and even though he knew nothing

of William's activities, other than him being English industrialists, he died while being interrogated.

On William's next visit, (somehow the Gestapo missed him at the border) he noticed that his friend was not at the usual coffee shop. He did however, run into his distraught daughter who told of his arrest and her mother's apparent suicide. That is when he told her about the possibility of getting her young girl out of Germany. He sent a message to England requesting the paperwork that would be needed to admit Ruth into England. When the woman agreed to send Ruth away William crossed the border to France where he met with a British courier. He also sent a message to his brother. His brother replied almost immediately and made arrangements to be on the next "Kinder transport".

When William crossed back into Germany the Gestapo expected him. Their agents in Paris had seen him receive a package from the courier and they decided to follow him before they would apprehend him and investigate what the courier gave him.

Leaving the train at Frankfurt William caught a taxi, and the Gestapo followed him. Three blocks from the station a truck carrying a full load of bottles failed to stop at an intersection and crashed into the car carrying the Gestapo. The last thing the truck driver saw was the flash from the pistol the injured Gestapo man held in his hand.

William, being unaware he had been under surveillance met with Ruth's mother and gave her the documents. He arranged to meet her in two days' time at the station where Ruth would go with William's brother John to England.

The Gestapo by this time were searching everywhere for William but they were having no luck until he was seen on the platform at the railway station. As there were guards at every door of the train, there had been no need to check everyone going onto the platform so William met up and after he spoke to his brother through the carriage window passed Ruth to him at the door. He and Ruth's mother returned to the window and as the train started to pull out William was recognised. Realising it was the Gestapo he wanted to move away from the train and Ruth's mother so she would not appear to be with him. They called out for him to halt but he kept moving. Three shots rang out, and the Englishman lay dead on the platform. Ruth's mum saw all this and ran to help William. When she bent over him she was shot with one bullet to her head.

Between John's account along with another agent's (who was on the station at the time) account the British developed an exact account of what happened.

The maps that William had provided turned out to be extremely valuable to the British after the war started and the lessons learnt that William passed on to his company enabled a new division to be set up specialising

in water storage and transportation, (Dams and Pipelines).

John needed to address the board of the company to inform them of William's death and to assume the role of "non-executive president of Bromley Industries."

John would only need to attend board meetings four times a year and would not have any active role in the daily running of the company. He did however, received regular reports and kept a keen interest in the "Water storage and Transportation." division.

War Comes to Millbrook

Ruth settled in to her new family and really loved Uncle John and Aunty Madeline. Aunty Madeline read bible stories to her each night before she went to sleep. Ruth often made it difficult by asking a lot of questions which Madeline answered straight away.

One particular night a mention of “heaven” was in the story. Ruth asked what heaven was and when Madeline gave a simple answer Ruth replied. “Is that where mummy went to?” Madeline did not expect a question like that as there had been no mention of her mother’s death, with Ruth nearby. She held Ruth tight and replied in a soft voice, “Yes dear, your mummy is in heaven with God.” Ruth smiled and looking Madeline in the eye said, “I am glad because mummy would be happy now.” She closed her eyes and fell immediately asleep with a smile on her little face.

Madeline told John, and he said he was relieved as he did not know how to approach the subject. They decided that night to start the adoption process.

The following day at lunch Ruth, who had been playing with other children during the morning, looked straight at John and said, “Uncle John, if you were my daddy then Aunty Madeline would be my new mummy, is that right? John replied to her she was so clever to work that out. Ruth then stood up and said to him, “Well, would you please be my daddy?” John replied he would

be proud to be her daddy. Ruth then ran to Madeline and put her arms around her and said, "Mummy, daddy said it would be all right." From that moment on Ruth always called them mummy and daddy.

They started the habit of going to the Goldberg's on the last Friday of each month to share shabbat-dinner with them. Mrs Goldberg explained the traditions to John and Madeline and John were delighted to be able to get this insight. For Ruth it was a nice outing, and she enjoyed the food being a little different to what she ate at home although, familiar to her in a strange way.

By October that year it became obvious the possibility of war with Germany neared. Even the signing of the Munich agreement with Hitler promising peace by permitting Nazi Germany's annexation of portions of Czechoslovakia along the country's borders inhabited by German speakers, did not allay fears so the government issued gas masks to the population.

By Ruth's birthday the prospect of war developed, so Black out exercises started in Bedford and Milford. The adoption hearings were held on the following day. Ruth grew fast and so much was happening around her.

War had yet not been declared but on the 1st and 2nd of September 17,000 children had been evacuated to the countryside around the district. War was declared the following day and only two days later air raid warning sirens filled the air. The warnings were false alarms, but equally scary.

Madeline had always run the Sunday school and Ruth went right from the time she first arrived. With such a large influx of children, the Sunday school needed to be broken up into many classes. She recruited two parents to help, but she also had to rely on two or three teenage girls to help.

John on the other hand was getting very busy. Because of the fears of war the weekly attendance at church increased to the stage an extra service needed to be scheduled for each Sunday. John was also required to help at St Paul's in Bedford on the 1st of October for the 1st National Day of Prayer service and then return to his own parish to conduct services. Petrol rationing had begun and that meant he would need to plan visits around the parish extremely carefully.

By the end of October everyone had an identity card issued and all men 20-22 had registered for National Service.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) had commenced training pilots at nearby Cardington where the Royal Airforce Initial Wing was established while at the same time Bedford sub area Military HQ was established at 27, The Embankment in Bedford. These two establishments were the first signs of military training around the area. Kempston Barracks had been reactivated at nearby Wyburn and Bletchley Park there was a lot of strange activity.

To Ruth, now four years old, it was a great time because there were lots of other children to play with and so many strange machines passing the front gate of the Vicarage plus the aeroplanes flying above all contributed to a child's wonderland. She vaguely recollected the sight of gruff soldiers before she came to live with her new parents but the ones who passed by her playground all seemed so nice and they always seemed to be singing.

When Christmas came around it was a new experience for Ruth. A week before Christmas her dad cut a small tree down from the forest down the road and put it inside the house. Her mother then put all pretty paper and things on the tree and some pretty parcels started arriving around the base of this tree. When she asked her mother about it Madeline read to her the Christmas story. She explained that as people had bought gifts for the baby Jesus; we give presents at Christmas to celebrate Jesus's birth. Then on the night before Christmas the church overflowed with people and even though it was cold everyone seemed happy and cheerful. The next morning when Ruth woke up her Mum and Dad sat her down in front of the tree and handed her a parcel from beneath the tree. Ruth tore the paper off and inside the parcel was the most beautiful doll she had ever seen. She rushed and kissed them both but she looked sad. Madeline asked what was wrong. Ruth answered, "You and Daddy are so good to me and you give me this lovely doll to play with, and I cannot give you anything!" John took her in his arms and said to her, "Ruth, having you to love is the best present. Jesus

makes everyone happy and you make Mummy and me happy. That is a beautiful present.”

That day they had an enormous dinner and some of the people from the church joined them.

The next Friday when they went to the Goldberg’s Ruth told them all about her first Christmas. Mrs Goldberg said that she was honoured that Ruth shared her feelings with her.

Her father seemed awfully busy, always going somewhere and leaving her mother to look after her.

Other fun days occurred when the Air Raid Protection (ARP) held air raid exercises. Ruth did not know what it all meant but when a siren sounded in the village everyone ran to their special places. Their special place was in the big underground room beneath the church that her mother called “the crypt.” It was a bit spooky the first time and always crowded. About thirty families gathered in the room so she had plenty of other children to play with.

A lot of the other children’s dads had joined the army or air force. A mother would come to see her dad crying and holding a telegram in their hands. Ruth’s mum always took the children to play with her while her dad and the lady said a lot of prayers. She often wondered if everyone said as many prayers as her mum and dad did.

On one day in May all the grandfathers in the village went into Bedford to the Police Station. Seemingly there had been a call for volunteers to join the National Defence Forces and all the men who thought they were too old or sick to join the real army volunteered. Her dad said that the queue went for five hundred yards. Later on everyone called them "The Home Guard" but everyone called them "Dad's Army." They marched around the countryside in groups, looking under bushes for *the enemy* and they carried their broomsticks over their shoulders just like the real soldiers carried their rifles. One day a boy thought they looked funny and laughed at them. Ruth's mum told the children they should not laugh at them but admire them. If Germany ever invaded, they would be their protectors. After that whenever they marched by Ruth and her friends would stand on the fence and wave at them.

Her parents took her with them into Bradford on a Saturday morning to wave at the Bedfordshire Women's Land Army. These ladies all volunteered to work on the land (and in other jobs) that the men who joined the army had done. From eight-fifty volunteers when the war started they grew to over one thousand by the end of the war.

Ruth loved Sunday school with so many children to play with and talk to but now another two thousand more arrived from the towns on the south coast. Ruth didn't know why they all came although she had noticed a lot more planes in the sky every day. Except for all the RAF planes they saw nothing of what became known as "The

Battle of Britain.” It must have been a busy time because during those four months none of the men from the air force base came to church. There were several air raid warnings, but they led to nothing.

Not long after her fifth birthday, a plane dropped two parachute bombs over Bedford. The first one exploded over waste ground near Queens Park and the other opposite Kempston Barracks. A lot of buildings suffered damage, but no one was injured although, one old lady died of shock.

Ruth’s father at the church services that Sunday spoke a lot about whenever anyone was away from home important rule that, during an air raid if a proper air raid shelter everyone should jump into ditches or gullies or even drains. They should not shelter in buildings and never shelter against buildings or bridges.

A few nights later the family, woken by air raid sirens rushed into the Crypt. About 400 German planes covered the skies. They passed overhead. No bombs dropped on the town or even nearby Bedford and in less than an hour later the planes returned in the opposite direction. The sirens didn’t sound the all clear for another hour after that. This was the longest time they ever spent in the shelter and some of the children were becoming extremely restless. Although only five years old, Ruth calmed them down and her mum organised games for them to play.

The shelter at night became an eerie place, having no lights on the outside and the entrance covered with “black out” curtains. These were five heavy black curtains spaced about a foot behind each other. This stopped any light being visible from outside and meant that at no time could you see who came in until they passed the last curtain. The air raid wardens all agreed what Madeline had achieved with her curtains was the best blackout in all of Bedfordshire.

Several army depots in the area had now been converted into Prisoner of War camps. Ruth would often pass groups of men working in the fields of the farms who all had guards with them. Her father told everyone in the church congregation that the army said they had nothing to fear. Most of the prisoners were Italian and were all well-guarded

Ruth was growing fast and so were the numbers in her groups of friends. The closest group comprised those who attended Sunday school at her father’s church. They played many games although the girls seemed to prefer playing nurses with their dolls while the boys played at being pilots. The second group comprised children from the surrounding houses who would always play with her when in the “air raid shelter” and on occasions when everyone played outside.

Although a large amount of schools in major centres had closed down it was decided that the two schools in the town would stay open. The nuns ran the catholic school, where the government school was run by

teachers too old to fight and assisted by volunteering mothers. The two schools often combined their resources and the standard of primary education was good and considering the war, could be seen as being excellent.

Because of the large numbers of children who had been evacuated from the cities it became necessary to have two schools operating in the same buildings. Half of the children went to *morning school* while the other half went to *afternoon school*. The dedication of the teachers being such, that most taught in both the morning and afternoon. Ruth went to the *morning school* and allowed her to have every afternoon for play. Ruth especially enjoyed Fridays because Mrs. Goldberg would collect her from school and she would play with Mrs. Goldberg's grandchildren until dusk when her parents arrived and they joined the Goldberg family for shabbat-dinner.

As time went by more Jewish children joined them for play. More Jewish families arrived as they escaped from the Nazi persecution and settled in the district. Ruth enjoyed what had become known as the Friday play group. This pleased John as she now had the opportunity to mix with Jewish children of her own age as well as the Christian children.

Even at the age of eight, Ruth showed her natural leadership qualities and was often asked to look after new students. She was a natural as she mixed so easily with the children of Christian and Jewish families and those from families that had no religious beliefs.

Additionally, she had become a brilliant student who showed great promise.

Every so often the Rabi from Cambridge called on John and they developed a close friendship. He confided he believed that, whatever religion Ruth followed in later life, she would be a credit to her upbringing.

During on one of these visits he told John that because so many Jewish refugees moved into the district, a synagogue would be established in nearby Bedford. He invited John and Madeline to the commissioning and they were delighted to accept. Once the synagogue was established the Rabi hoped to conduct several school groups where Jewish studies for children would be taught for two hours a week at each location. John said that he would like Ruth to go to if one was set up in the town and the classes were in the afternoon or on Saturday.

Ruth confided to Madeline that she thought she must be special because how many eight-year-olds go to three schools. She would go to normal school, Sunday school and now Jewish school. Madeline laughed and told her, “not special, just very lucky to have such a well-rounded education.”

Ruth asks Questions

Shortly before her ninth birthday when Ruth went to Madeline with a deep and sour look on her face. She had been playing with some of the boys who bullied her.

“What is the matter?” Madeline asked her. Ruth replied about one of the boys calling her names and made some vulgar comments about her Jewish friends. “Mummy, am I a Christian or am I a Jew?” She asked.

Madeline sat her down and spoke softly to her. “Darling you are both. A Jew can be someone who practices the Jewish faith and a Jew can also be someone who is a member of the Jewish race. I mean someone who is descended from Abraham and once called *Israelites*. A Christian is someone who believes that Jesus is the son of God and came to save us all. Jesus was born a Jew and followed the Jewish faith. However, some Jews at the time thought that his teachings were wrong as it upset them. Others followed him and remained Jews. They preached to and accepted non-Jews (called gentiles). The Jewish leaders did not like non-Jews so they rejected him.”

“So you see darling,” she continued, “you were born with a Jewish mother so you belong to the Jewish race. Your father and I have taught you about Jesus and, Mrs Goldberg will teach you about the Jewish religion. We all believe you should be able to follow whichever direction you may want to as you grow up. Next year the

Rabi will prepare you for your bat mitzvah which will accept you into the Jewish faith. Then you will be given the opportunity to be confirmed into the Church of England. So darling, you are both a Jew and a Christian, just as Jesus.”

Ruth sat silently for a minute then said, “You said I was born to a Jewish mother, but you are my mother, I do not understand.”

Madeline said she would be back shortly and went to get John. She told John of the conversation and he returned with her. He looked at Ruth and said they should sit out in the garden because it may be a long story to tell. They sat under the big oak tree.

John started, “Ruth, I am sure your friends have told you awful stories about how the Nazis treat the Jews in Germany, Poland and many other places.” Ruth looked at the ground and mumbled that she had heard some of the horror stories. “Well, your real father went away when he found that your mother was going to have you. His friends did not like Jews and he would not accept you as his daughter. It was a horrible place for Jews and your mother moved in with his parents (your grandparents.) My brother knew your grandfather but my brother, a spy for Britain, although no one realised it. One day your grandfather and my brother were having coffee when a member of the Gestapo, (Hitler’s secret police) saw them. His curiosity was aroused as to why an Englishman would be friends with an elderly Jew in Frankfurt, so he followed my brother and he got one of

his colleagues to follow your grandfather. The one who followed my brother was not good at his job, and he lost him. The one who followed your grandfather arrested him for questioning in front of your grandmother and your mother. Your grandfather was never seen again and your grandmother killed herself so she could not be sent to a concentration camp.”

“Your mother, now all alone with a young child, had no job and was in fear she may be arrested at any time. When my brother could not find his friend at the coffee shop, he went to his house and your mother told him what had happened. She was crying and told him she was scared for your sake. She could not leave Germany and asked him for help. He knew about *Kinder transport* so he made enquiries back in Britain, as he travelled weekly between Germany and Britain it was easy for him. He told us about you and your mother and we agreed to sponsor you and take care of you until after you mother could take care of you again.”

“I went to Germany but could not leave the train. I promised your Mother that we take care of you and make sure that you were exposed to the Jewish faith. She handed you to me through the door and when we sat down the train pulled out of the station. That same Gestapo man saw my brother and called for him to stand still. As my brother did not want any harm to come to your mother ran away from her and was shot dead. Your mother ran to him and as she learnt over him she was also shot and died on the spot.”

“After you and I returned I contacted the Rabi and my Bishop and told them that Madeline and I wanted to adopt you but still keep you mother’s wish for you to be exposed to the Jewish faith. That is why we go to the Goldberg’s on Fridays. We both love you and will always take care of you.”

Ruth looked up and although there were tears in her eyes she said, “Thank you daddy, thank you mummy for loving me. I will always be your little girl.”

Later that afternoon she asked Madeline, “Do you think that my granddad would still be alive?” Madeline answered, “I don’t know, but I hope so.” Ruth then surprised her and said, “mummy, can we go into the church and ask God to look after grandmother’s and other mum’s souls? Can we also pray that my grandfather is alive and that someday I will meet him?” Madeline, with teary eyes, took her by the hand and led her into the church where they both knelt at the altar rail and prayed together.

Ruth loved going to Sunday school, and she loved going to church with Madeline. She thought all the ladies looked nice in their “Sunday best” and the hats, well they were fabulous. The men dressed always in the best suits or uniforms and although they always wore hats, they took them off when in church. She once thought that the other children may have been Jealous of her as she ate with the vicar all the time but, she realised that was silly as the vicar being her dad.

When the day of the synagogue commissioning came around they all dressed in their best clothes even though her dad wore a tie instead of his usual clerical collar. Ruth questioned him about that and he replied that it was out of respect for their friend, the Rabi. Mrs Goldberg met them outside and explained the customs and procedures to John and Mary, even though they had already studied them.

Ruth was bewildered! She realised that it was some sort of church but it did not have a cross outside. She grew even more bewildered when the women all went into one door and the men in another. Inside all the women sat on one side and on the other side of a fence sat all the men. They sat down about halfway down and as Ruth settled into her seat she realised what was wrong. Not all the ladies wore hats inside and even more strange all the men wore either hats or little cloth things on their heads. (Mrs Goldberg explains that they were called yarmulke or kip pah.) During the service the Rabi sometimes spoke in a strange language that seemed familiar. She realised that it was the same as Mrs Goldberg spoke during shabbat-dinner.

The service made Ruth feel good but at the same time, very strange to her. After the service Mrs Goldberg introduced John and Madeline to many of the people there. Some were slightly curious why a Church of England priest would be there but the Goldberg's explained to them about the unique situation with Ruth. One of the older men came back to John, shook his hand and told him he must be truly blessed for what he was

doing. He told John that he knew of several Jewish Christians but never expects them to enter a synagogue. If Ruth can grow up welcome in both places of prayer, she would be truly blessed. John thanked him for his thoughts and shook his hand and said. "Shalom." The man walked away smiling.

Mrs Goldberg had invited them to join a group of her friends back to her home for afternoon tea. This delighted Ruth because she Mrs. Goldberg's grandchildren would be there. Except for two babies, Ruth had been the only child at the synagogue so it was a chance to be with someone her own age. Madeline engaged in deep conversation with a group of the women and they all realised how much they had in common and the day to day difficulties the war caused. The women who were refugees never complained but, those who had always live in England complained about the weather, the rationing, and the government, the same as John's parishioners.

When the Rabi arrived he was asked to make a speech. The Rabi thanked everyone concerned for the efforts that made the day a success and welcomed everyone present. He asked everyone to bow their heads while he said a prayer for the Jewish community and those that will now worship in the new synagogue. Then he gestured for John to join him. He said, "For those who do not know him, this is our good friend Father John from the Church of England. Please make him and his family welcome." They all politely applauded. The he turned to John and said, "Father John, please kindly

join me in a prayer for the war to end soon and then lead us all in The Lord's Prayer?"

After John finished he explained "although *The Lord's Prayer* is taken from Christian teachings it can be used by both Christians and Jews alike, it can also be used by Moslems." The Rabi replied. "How true! How true!"

Ruth told Madeline that she thought the day was marvellous and they went home. They reached the vicarage when the air raid siren sounded. When they were all in the shelter of couple of strangers went up to John. "We are Jews from the main London synagogue and we came up for the commissioning. We would like to thank you for your part of today and we now realise that the world will be a better place soon if we can all forget our differences and concentrate on our similarities (like you have demonstrated). When we return to our own community we will ask our Rabi to start building bridges between us and our Christian neighbours."

When the all clear was given, Madeline invited the two Jewish men in for a cup of tea. They declined as they said they needed to return to London that afternoon. John shook their hands and Ruth waved as they walked toward the railway station.

Now with the synagogue in operation Madeline and Mrs Goldberg took Ruth along to services there once a month. When Ruth approached her tenth birthday the Rabi made preparations for her to study for taking her

bat mitzvah. Although the normal tradition was that girls waited until they were twelve, but during the war, it had been decided that the age would be lowered because most children had matured beyond their years.

Ruth was a natural student and possibly because of John's natural emphasis on the Old Testament in his teachings, Ruth understood the Tora better than the children from Jewish families who studied with her.

On the day of the ceremonies John was particularly proud of the confidence Ruth showed in her readings of Tora. She spoke in a loud and clear voice and even the parts of the service that were in Hebrew, Ruth spoke clear and showed confidence.

On the way home they stopped and had sandwiches and a drink beside the river. John asked Ruth what she thought the ceremony meant. She surprised him by telling him all about the Jewish traditions surrounding the ceremony but then she said, "Daddy, in the Jewish faith a child is not required to keep the Ten Commandments, but as she is now considered an adult she must keep them all. Also, it means I can now make my own decisions about my moral behaviour and religious beliefs." John was taken aback slightly, and she continued. "When I was baptised as a small child, you and mummy and my God parents promised to look after my belonging to Christ. As I am growing up I would like you to arrange for my confirmation so I can be responsible for my duties. I will then be a genuine Christian Jew, just like Jesus."

Madeline never felt as proud as she did at that moment. She hugged Ruth with such enthusiasm it began to crush her.

John made enquiries about when the Bishop would be available. The Bishop said he would be available on the 6th of May. That was only eight weeks away so the following Sunday he announced in church that confirmation instruction would begin on the following Thursday. When Thursday came around one hundred and three children turned up for the classes. Not only children of the parishioners but many of the children from the cities wanted to be confirmed before they eventually returned home.

The confirmation classes began as a noisy affair with so many so John divided them into four groups. Children who went to afternoon school went to confirmation class in the morning with John and Madeline alternated in running the class. Those who went to morning school went to class in the afternoon.

Classes started with John addressing both groups before they split into two. Both groups came together to conclude the instruction session with joint prayers. This arrangement allowed John to interact with all the candidates with Madeline helping with the details.

The church held around three hundred people at a crush and this created a problem. With over a hundred candidates that left only room for two hundred supporters. The Bishop suggested that two services be

held where the morning group would be confirmed before lunch and the afternoon group in a separate service after lunch. A more difficult potential problem was that because most of the men of the village were overseas there were only three Liturgical Assistants to help with 2 potential large communions. This Bishop solved problem when he approached a few military chaplains based at nearby facilities and asked for their help.

No air raid warnings were heard since the day of the synagogue's commissioning and the stories coming out of Europe suggested that the end of the war may be near. Excitement developed within the village especially when it became known that some of the children from London asked their parents to come to their confirmation. Normally after a confirmation light refreshments would be served. With so many people coming, Madeline was beside herself worrying how to cater for so many. Then without warning, the Chaplain from the nearby RAF base called on her and told her that the cooks on the base would accidentally be baking too many loaves of bread and they ordered too many eggs, tomatoes and butter for that Sunday. He asked if they could "dump" them at the church hall. Madeline cried tears of joy. She organised the ladies of the congregation to be there early that Sunday and to make sandwiches from the donation from the RAF.

John and the Bishop had agreed that the morning confirmation ceremonies would be combined with the normal Sunday service and the afternoon one would

mirror the morning service. Ruth would be confirmed in the morning.

When the day came Madeline was woken at 4am by two RAF trucks. The driver of the first truck said that he was asked if the RAF could store some folding tables and about a hundred chairs there and collect them the next morning. Not only had the chaplain organised the food he also managed tables and chairs.

The first of the ladies arrived around 7am and a production line started. As the RAF drivers had set the tables and chairs up outside under the trees with three tables just outside the hall doors to serve from so the ladies could make the sandwiches in the hall and covered them with dampen bedsheets to keep them fresh.

The Bishop arrived an hour before service starting as did the two chaplains that would help with the communion. The army chaplains smiled when they were told what their RAF brother had organised. They turned to John and the Bishop and told him that there was not a Church of England chaplain on the RAF base, only a Roman Catholic. They all smiled being thankful of an ecumenical act.

Madeline had organised for all the children being confirmed to congregate in the crypt half an hour before the service was due to start.

The church filled rapidly and even the children who were to be confirmed after lunch joined the congregation

to support their friends. When the organ played, and the procession entered from the rear everyone stood. The candidates entered first followed by the official party. Ruth had decided on her own to wear the same dress for her confirmation as she wore for her bat mitzvah. As they walked down the aisle she noticed in a pew near the rear of the church Mr and Mrs Goldberg, their grandchildren and the Rabi (without a hat.) She smiled at them.

As the service progressed it came time for the readings. Ruth had asked John if she could read the first reading. Being the first reading it was taken from the Old Testament. Instead of reading the passage she recited it with a loud and clear voice and everyone saw she was not reading. Mrs Goldberg and the Rabi both had enormous smiles on their faces as she read with such conviction and authority.

The next day the announcement that Germany had surrendered was made. Celebrations continued through the district for several days although tempered because England was still at war with Japan.

A continual stream of parents from coastal areas arrived to collect their children. The temporary school system remained until the end of the year when schools would return to the pre-war status. No more half day schools. This suited Ruth because the time came for her to begin her secondary education.

After the war

John needed to become more involved with Bromley Industries as there were changes to be made. The companies needed to change from a war footing and re-establish the core engineering and manufacturing business. During the war civil construction had come to a complete halt and now there was a country to rebuild. Methods of construction needed to be conceived that would allow rapid construction of public housing to replace all the war damaged housing and it would become a basis for future expansion that needed to be occur. With the war end and subsequent demobilisation meant that many military chaplains would be released so John requested for an assistant priest to help run the parish while he attended to the family business. John thought that he could do the companies' justice if he spent on average, two days a week at the office. As it turned out one of the chaplains who assisted at the earlier confirmation service, had reached retiring age. He relished the opportunity to fill in for John as required as it also gave him the opportunity to keep in touch with his wartime unit. Madeline was grateful to have another priest assisting John and was delighted to find out that his wife would be joining as soon as she was able to be discharged from her wartime role in the War Office.

Father Brian Williams and his wife, Dorothy moved into the cottage next to the church ground shortly after. Dorothy would be able to join him at weekends for the first year as many loose ends needed to be tidied up at

the war office. There were still many servicemen to be repatriated from Europe and the need to keep a sizeable occupational presence there. In addition, there were many servicemen still serving in the war with Japan and the many prisoners that the Japanese held.

When the Pacific war finally ended it became obvious that Dorothy would not be unable to join him for at least another twelve months at least. Their daughter lived in a nearby village and joined Brian whenever possible.

Ruth continued the habit of joining the Goldberg's each Friday evening and attended the synagogue at least once a month. She also limited her activities on the Saturdays so she could respect the Sabbath. On Sunday she was always leading the Sunday school and never failed to take communion.

As 1945 came to a close Madeline made arrangements for Ruth to attend the Bedford Girls Modern School in the New Year. Before Ruth started there the name was changed to the Dame Alice Harpour School in honour of the wife of Sir William Harpour who had originally donated the land for the school. The school had always had a Christian ethos upholding traditional values and standards but it was still an ecumenical school.

On the first day the headmistress, Miss Foster, welcomed all the new students as well as the few who had attended during the war. She explained not only had

the name changed, but it was essentially a new school and yet it would be upholding the traditions and history of the old school. Ruth felt comfortable and when she discovered that as well as girls from her father's parish, there were some of the Jewish girls that she knew from the synagogue.

John found Brian a real asset, and he became accepted by the congregation at once. Brian could talk to the bereaved war widows due to his understanding of the military and his deep feelings for the families of all servicemen. As news filtered back from the former Japanese prisoner of war camps a lot of the wives were informed that their husbands had perished while prisoners. Brian's compassion helped to ease their pain along with his understanding of the support systems available. His reputation spread quickly throughout the district although it surprised him when a Jewish widow came to see him. She didn't think the Rabi lacked the knowledge and understanding to deal with the widows of servicemen who served in Asia. The Rabi was great with those who lost loved ones in the Holocaust and even those whose loved ones fought in the resistance but, as he didn't have the military experience, he endured difficulty in relating to widows of servicemen. Madeline suggested that he may want to get Ruth to help him working through the issues that may apply to those of the Jewish faith. Ruth being mature for her age was able to help him in areas of faith and it wasn't long before other Jewish widows approached him for help.

When Dorothy came home at the weekends he related what had developed and she expressed no surprise after all as an army chaplain he had dealt with those of many faiths. She also expressed her pride with him being able to do God's work to all with all and show so much compassion. He told Dorothy who fascinated he was by how much a twelve year old, Jewish daughter of a Church of England priest, was able to help him so much. He confided to her that he was sure God must have important things in store for young Ruth.

John was grateful for Brian's help in the Parish as this allowed him to spend time with the business. Although he lacked engineering knowledge and was equally mystified by accounting, John's business skills and in particular his understanding of what motivated people made him an ideal Chairman of the board. He also showed skill in dealing with public servants and government ministers. The company grew and prospered and being a private company he could make sure all profits were re-invested in projects that would help the company grow and bringing great benefits to the nation. He worked in the company offices in London on Tuesday and Wednesday and in the Parish for the rest of the week. Madeline suggested that he stay overnight in London on Tuesday nights and that he take most Thursdays off. Because full board meetings were held monthly, he could always change his days around if church duties required him to do so.

To his surprise he found that he grasped most of the basic engineering concepts quick and throughout the company and its subsidiaries, his respect grew.

When he was on his way to his hotel one Tuesday evening he ran into two men who seemed familiar. “Good evening Father Bromley.” One of them said. “Good evening! I know your faces but I can’t place them” John replied. “We met you at the commissioning of the Bedford synagogue.” One of them replied. “Oh yes, I now remember you.” The other man spoke, “There is a nice tea shop around the corner. We would be delighted if you joined us.” John replied that he would like that so they adjourned to the tea shop.

They introduced themselves as Joseph and Steven. They asked about Ruth and mentioned how Ruth impressed them with her attitudes. John replied about how proud he was and the maturity she shows on the subject of religion.

After a pot of tea arrived Joseph started the conversation. “I suppose you are curious to who we are?” John said he was even more curious to why they remembered his name.

Steven then spoke, “We knew your brother well in Germany. The last time we saw him he asked us to make enquiries about Ruth’s grandfather and his whereabouts. We had only found out he was still alive and being held at Gestapo headquarters when we heard about Sir William’s death. We discovered that Ruth’s mother had

been killed at the same time and as Ruth had gone on the Kinder Transport, we made no more enquiries about her grandfather. The resistance helped us to escape, and we came to England to work with the Jewish Board and to help resettle those who escaped from Hitler's grasp. Many of those we assisted are now resettled in America, Canada and Australia. An even larger amount we managed to get them to Palestine."

"We went to go to the commissioning of the synagogue as the Board's representatives and reported back on the commissioning. When the Rabi told us about Ruth and how you raised her we realised who her grandfather was and that you were Sir William's brother."

"When Germany surrendered we started our life work trying to reconnect families or at least bring closure to those who lost relatives during the Nazi reign. We work closely with several other Jewish organisations especially the groups that are ensuring all the war criminals are brought to trial. Often we exchange information we come across. We still haven't put together all the movements of Ruth's grandfather but we know that as late as 1944 he was still alive and being forced to work on some of the Nazi engineering projects."

"Last week Joseph saw you leaving your office building and followed you. When he discovered where you were staying he contacted me and we spoke to several members of the board. When they looked at

Ruth's file (a collection of notes from the Rabi) they told us that as you had adopted Ruth and had raised her both in the Christian and the Jewish traditions, we should speak to you to find out if we should try to find her grandfather or at least discover what eventually happened to him. And that is why we are speaking to you now."

John took a deep breath and replied. "I am sure you gentlemen have an important task ahead of you. I think that you should concentrate on re-uniting lost relatives first and not spend time on searching for Ruth's grandfather as Ruth is in a happy and comfortable family situation, not like so many other Jews are. Saying that, if you do come across any information on her grandfather and he is alive, I would need to arrange for him to meet Ruth straight away and whatever happens from there would be Ruth's decision. I won't say anything to her about our arrangements until she is at least old enough to go to university."

Steven replied that the Rabi was right. John is a good man who wants nothing except what is best for Ruth. Before they parted John mentioned to them that they would always be welcomed at both his office in London and at the rectory in Millbrook.

When he got home the next night he told Madeline all that happened.

Ruth settled into Dame Alice Harpour School and she excelled her subjects in the first year. She showed

particular talent in the mathematical areas and manual arts. By the second year she had been voted class captain and embarked on several charitable pursuits. She helped raise funds for the elderly citizens and was a regular visitor along with the rest of her class to the war veteran's repatriation hospital.

Dorothy now joined Brian and between her and Madeline the parish had an extremely social leadership. Many women in the district who worked in the factories and farms during the war were now concentrating on their families. At the same time, many of the women suffered from abuse from their husbands who were in turn suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress and took their frustrations out on their wives. After the war little was known about PTS, and so, no treatment being readily available. It fell on the social conscience of the medical practitioners and clergy to help the women and protect the children. Madeline and Dorothy seemed to call on women in distress continually. This group of women occupied more of their time than the many war widows had.

John had been occupied with the company more than he originally expected to. One division in particular was the Far East Engineering Corporation (FEEC). This division developed engineering projects all over Asia and about to tender in Australia for a part of the proposed Snowy Mountain Scheme. They were also heavily involved with the rebuilding of the ports of Singapore and Hong Kong.

John took charge of FEEC tendering and proposals for sections of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The Scheme was to collect and store the water that would flow east to the coast and divert it through trans-mountain tunnels and power stations. The water would be then released into the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers for irrigation. Within the project was the largest hydroelectric system to be constructed in the world. Construction was to begin in 1949 and it not expected to be completed until 1974. It comprised sixteen major dams, seven power stations, a pumping station and two hundred and twenty-five kilometres of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts. Because of the size of the project the engineering would be spread over many companies throughout the world. FEEC's participation would be enormous while it would be only a small proportion of the total project.

During the initial phase John would need to make several trips to Australia to complete arrangements. He decided that it would necessitate taking six months leave from the church. This did not create a problem as he was entitled to take long service leave and Brian would happily take care of the parish with the assistance of a locum priest. When he approached the Bishop the Bishop suggested that instead of a locum, a newly ordained priest could be appointed as a curate and assist with the parish under Brian's guidance. As John would still be Parish Priest he would continue to live in the rectory and the curate would live in the rooms at the rear.

Ruth was in the senior school where she continued to excel in her studies and knew that engineering would be the direction her life would take. When John told her about the Snowy Scheme she begged for him to take her during the school summer break. John had already made three trips to Sydney and Canberra and when Ruth's holidays came around he needed to go to Cooma and Jindabyne to sort out minor problems. He relented and as he would only be away for two weeks, agreed for Ruth to accompany him. He offered to take Madeline as well, but she was adamant she would not sit on an aeroplane for 1½ days each way, so she stayed at home and helped out around the parish.

When they arrived at Heathrow Ruth heard for the first time her father referred to as ***Sir John***. She was familiar with the title of Father John, Reverend John or even as Vicar, but never Sir John. After they were seated on the aeroplane she asked him about the "Sir". He explained that he inherited the title from his brother but decided not to use it in the parish but in the "Bromley Industries" role it was an advantage when dealing with government officials. He smiled at her and said, "In the church situation I could never figure out if my official title would be *the Reverend Father Sir John Bromley* or *Father Sir John Bromley* or even *Father John Lord Bromley of Millbrook*". The both laughed in unison and she now understood.

The flight was long with the first day a stop in Tripoli before an overnight stop in Cairo. The second day they landed in Karachi and Calcutta before an

overnight stay in Singapore. While an overnight stay in Singapore wasn't enough time for any sightseeing there was enough time for a brief meeting over dinner with the Singapore harbour reconstruction project manager. This would be the first time that young Ruth would be present on any management meeting. She may not have understood it all but; it certainly raised an interest in complex engineering projects with her. The following morning they took off for Darwin and eventually they landed in Sydney.

After such a long flight John arranged for them to spend the night in Sydney and a good rest. Although it winter in Australia, to Ruth, it felt more like late spring. Her father needed to be at to a long list of meetings over the next two days so he arranged for one of the graduate engineers (a junior engineer who although qualified was considered to be akin to an apprentice. A graduate engineer could not practice until he gained a certain level of experience under the guidance of one or more senior engineers) to show her around Sydney.

His name was Tom, and he proved to be a good host. He took her to Bondi beach on the first day where she frolicked in the surf before going to a Rugby match in the afternoon. Ruth had reached the age where she started to notice boys and although she enjoyed flirting with Tom, he ensured that he did not encourage her. After all, in his eyes, she was a child. The next day he took her on a harbour trip to Manly and back before having a look around the city. Ruth was delighted when they had fresh seafood for lunch. For an indescribable

reason the Sydney fish tasted better than what she had been used to.

The following morning they were collected from the hotel and driven to Canberra. The wide open countryside fascinated Ruth and she commented to her father about the obvious lack of winding lanes and canals. He laughed and said that because, in Australia there was enough room for wide roads and they could be constructed in a straight line (i.e. straight compared to winding English country lanes.) After lunch John went to several meetings with government officials and Ruth stayed at the display that had been set up to explain the "Snowy Scheme." There were maps and models and posters showing the water flows and everything else that may have been interesting to the public. One guide noticed Ruth and how intense she studied every minute part of the display. He asked her if she had any questions he may be able to answer and she asked questions on many of the details. Of all the details she absorbed she showed a great amount of interest on why the town of Adaminaby needed to be flooded and where the new town would be built. She asked questions on the design of the new town and the relocation of the residents. By the time her father collected her she knew more about the project than most Australians. She spent that night after dinner writing about all she had learnt.

Making Cooma their base, they visited many points around the scheme and while her father became involved in discussions, she was able to look around and it helped

her understand everything she had learnt. Three days later they were back on an aeroplane heading home.

John told her they would spend two days in Singapore before flying on home. The time in Singapore was also amazing to Ruth. Although there still were many reminders of the Japanese occupation, everyone seemed happy and concentrated on rebuilding their country and their culture. The culture mixture of this nation also intrigued her. Malays, Chinese and Tamils made up the country's population with English the official language. With a diverse ethnic mixture there seemed to be no racial tension. Even religious differences seemed not to create divisions.

When they left Singapore Ruth talked to her father about all she had seen and learnt. She had loved Australia and admired Singapore. She told him how proud the family company getting involved in such a magnificent project as the Snowy Scheme made her. John then told her he would not likely to be needed to travel again and was looking forward to being a simple parish priest.

At the hotel in Cairo the receptionist handed him a message from the London Office saying that that two men, Steven and Joseph, had called and said that they had some news and would you please call them when you arrive back in London. He sent a cable back and asked his secretary to arrange a meeting with them as soon as he returned.

Madeline was at the airport to meet them. Ruth was so excited and while her father went to his office, Ruth and Madeline went to a fashionable tea room. Ruth told her all about the trip. How she loved Australia, the food tasting different and the magnificent project the family company would be involved in. She talked with so much excitement that Madeline could not get a word in. When she finally paused for a breathe Madeline asked if she missed her. Ruth threw her arms around her and exclaimed "Of course I did Mummy, very much"

When John arrived at his office Steven and Joseph were waiting for him. After exchanging pleasantries they adjourned to the meeting room and John told his secretary to bring some tea and then he did not want to be disturbed.

Steven told him the news. Ruth's grandfather was alive. He had been forced to work by the Nazis and now he was in extremely poor health. Long hours, shortage of nourishment and atrocious conditions had all taken a toll on his health. He is in a care facility in Israel and his mental and his physical condition is deteriorating rapidly. He is not expected to last another month. If you want, Ruth to see him we can arrange it, it is up to you. It could be distressing for her and he won't know her.

John thanked them and said he would get back to them the next day.

Instead of returning home John arranged for the three of them to stay in London that night so he met

Madeline and Ruth at the hotel. He took Madeline aside and told her what had happened. She did not hesitate and said that Ruth must be told at once. They gathered in the suite and John told Ruth.

“Ruth, we have kept nothing from you. You know we adopted you after your birth mother had been shot by the Gestapo. I lost my brother at the same time as you lost your mother. Remember how I told you that the Gestapo took away your grandfather and your grandmother could not face life without him. She feared that he was dead and would not face life in a concentration camp or worse.” Ruth nodded and replied in a soft voice. “Yes daddy. I remember you telling me and I remember how sad you thought often of Uncle William.”

John continued, “Remember when the synagogue was commissioned and afterwards two strangers came to the vicarage for a short time. They told us told they were two Jewish officials from London.” “Yes, I remember them.” Ruth replied.

“Well, it seems that they now have a special job finding out what became of those Jews who the Nazis imprisoned. I ran into them a few months back so I asked them to see if they can find what happened to your grandfather and to find if your mother’s grave had been marked.”

“I received a message Cairo that they wanted to meet me so I met with them after we got back today.

They had no luck trying to find where your mother was buried (or what became of my brother's body.) They could however trace your grandfather's movements."

"After the men who arrested your grandfather realised who he was, arranged for him to work for the Nazis on engineering projects. They treated him poorly and forced to work extremely long hours with little rest or food. By the end of the war when he was liberated by the Russians he was a broken man. He was extremely sick and suffered from many ailments; his body had little strength to fight. His mind had also deteriorated. The Russians thought that as he worked for the Nazis, he must have been a collaborator. They kept him in prison for over two years and by the time they realised he had no choice other than to work for the Nazis, they released him in East Berlin."

"By now his mind deteriorated to the degree that the only words he uttered were *Ruth* and *Kitzigen*."

"A group of Jews that planned to go to Israel discovered him wandering around aimlessly. They took pity on him and when they looked at the release papers issued by the Russians, they could only guess what he endured during the war and then in a Russian prison. Figuring that for all the misery of his life, he deserved a chance for a new life of freedom or at least he should be able to die with dignity. They took him on their long pilgrimage and they cared for him."

“After they arrived in Palestine his condition further deteriorated, so they arranged for him to be admitted to hospice care. My friends Joseph and Steven found him there and confirmed his identity. He now can’t talk and is confined to bed. He can’t recognise anyone and he keeps looking at an old faded photo of a baby. On the back of the photo is an inscription *Ruth zu ihrem 1. Geburtstag. Liebe zayde*, which means *Ruth on her 1st birthday. Love to grandfather.*”

Ruth now had tears in her eyes and said to John, “Daddy, can we go and visit him?” “I’ll see what I can arrange darling.” he replied.

The next morning the three of them met with Joseph and Steven. Steven said that he would make the arrangements if they could fly to Tel Aviv the following week. John still had three weeks before he was due back in the Parish and Ruth still had two weeks left of her summer Holidays so it was possible. Luckily Madeline renewed her passport so the three of them had nothing stopping them. Madeline was not looking forward to the flight but felt better when John made the travel arrangements. They would fly nonstop to Cairo then onto Tel Aviv the next day. This gave them all morning to explore Cairo before they flew on to Israel. They would spend a week in Israel and they were to fly to Cairo and by road to Port Said where they would catch a ship back to Southampton.

Steven told them that Joseph would meet them at Tel Aviv airport and take them to a hotel. He would then

take them to the hospice where the grandfather was. He also took the opportunity to stress on Ruth that her grandfather may not know her and very close to death.

They decided to stay in London until they flew out and this gave Madeline the opportunity to take Ruth shopping. They planned to fly out on the Monday morning and it Ruth who suggested that they visit the London synagogue and ask the Rabi for prayers for her grandfather. She then wanted to go to Westminster Abbey with John and Madeline and pray for a safe journey and ask God to keep the grandfather alive and comfortable until after they saw him. After Ruth went to bed, John whispered to Madeline, "We have raised a fine Jewish Christian there."

Madeline felt uncomfortable on the flight to Cairo and even though the heat was unbearable, she was so glad to be able to walk around the shops. The flight to Tel Aviv was a lot shorter and Madeline admitted later that she actually enjoyed looking out the window at sights she had only ever heard about.

Joseph met them at the airport and took them straight to their hotel. He told them that the grandfather was now very close to death and possibly that they may be too late. He picked them up the next morning and drove them to the hospice, about ten miles north of their hotel. Her grandfather's doctor met at the hospice and he sat them down in the visitors lounge where explained the grandfather's condition to Ruth. He showed great compassion and obvious to all that his main concern was

the grandfather's comfort and dignity. John suggested that Ruth go in with the doctor alone but if she wanted her mother she should go as well. The doctor agreed but Ruth insisted that if his condition was so bad it would be better for him if Ruth went in alone for the first time.

When Ruth went in she was shocked at first when she saw what appeared to be no more than a skeleton lying on the bed. She sat next to him, kissed him on the forehead and said to him in German "Großvater, ich bin ihr Enkelin Ruth gekommen, bei euch zu sein" which translates to "Grandfather, I am your granddaughter, Ruth who has come to be with you"

She held his hand, and she was sure she felt him squeeze her hand back. She recited the song of David (the 23rd psalm) in Hebrew to him. The doctor later commented that it was the only time a smile appeared on his face. About thirty minutes later he muttered "Ruth" and then life left his wretched body. The doctor left them alone for a moment and gestured for Madeline to come and comfort Ruth.

As it is the Jewish custom to hold funeral services as soon as all the relatives gathered, the service was arranged for the next day. John insisted that the Bromley family pay all expenses and arranged for a suitable grave for the old man. At the service a Rabi made particular mention to the care and love that had been showered on the old man's granddaughter by her esteemed and holy family.

The day after the funeral John took Ruth on a drive about one hundred and fifty miles north to a hill on the north western side of the Sea of Galilee. They sat on top of the hill and talked about what her grandfather's life must of been like. Ruth had heard stories about life for Jews under the Nazis from her friend at school and at the synagogue. She still shed tears for the man she had never known but he carried a photo of her with him through all that hell like existence. John let Ruth release her feelings and after a while a peace came about her. A gentle breeze came up from over the water and up the slope of the hill. Ruth smiled and told John how honoured she was to be able to spend the last moments of his life with her grandfather. She then asked him to join her in a prayer for her grandfather's soul. They then got onto their feet and John asked Ruth if she thought that their prayers would be answered. She replied, "Most definitely! I have a strange feeling in my stomach this place is something special." John smiled, "do you know where we are?" Ruth looked at him and shook her head. "This," he continued, "Is Mount Eremos, or Mount of Beatitudes. It is reputed that where you are standing Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount."

On the way back to their hotel Ruth asked John if before they flew to Cairo they could visit as many of the Holy Sites as possible. He replied that they could and her mother would love that as well.

Over the rest of the week the three of them visited many sites and John ensured that the balance between Old Testament and New Testament sites remained even.

As they sat on the dock at Port Said they reminisced on the events that happened to Ruth on this summer break. They were enjoying a cup of tea at the kiosk when they first saw the ship heading towards them. As the ship grew close to the dock Ruth saw the name on its bow. It read "RMS William Bromley."

"Daddy does our company own ships also?" she asked. "Only ten was his reply." At the end of the war the Americans had a lot of Liberty Ships that were built for the war and now they were for sale. Bromley Industries had bought ten initially and at a later date fifteen more were added to the fleet.