

DON HEWSON'S CHILDREN RISE (Book 7 in the Don Hewson series)

CHAPTER 1: Georgina Arron

We had our routine monthly meeting with the Engineering Union. There were shop stewards from every factory of Byram Engineering, and at least one manager from each factory.

Garth Stead is the Group Production Manager.

Garth chairs the monthly meetings.

Garth explained that after he closes the meeting he wishes everyone to stay behind for an informal discussion.

Garth did not say what the conversation would be about.

The monthly meeting had nothing new or exciting, which is the norm for these meetings.

Byram Engineering is a happy and successful company.

We have paid Engineering Union pay rates for the last hundred years or so. We pay good bonuses.

The Byram Group is very good about funding education for those employees who wish it.

Byrams even gives financial help for the children and grandchildren of Byrams workers to take up education or training opportunities that the local authority will not or cannot fund.

Pay is rarely an issue.

In my opinion the working conditions are good.

Safety is not skimped.

Cecil Byram insists that we managers must have these meetings with the union every month, even when there is nothing much to discuss, to keep the lines of communication open.

We were all curious to know what Garth wished to discuss informally, so our formal meeting was even shorter than usual.

"I am a professional manager."

We all nodded.

"I have come across a managerial puzzle that I cannot solve."

We were all curious.

"I monitor the productivity figures in each of the factories."

We knew that.

“The four new factories all have good manufacturing productivity statistics.

“The difference between the best and the worst of the four new factories is about one and a quarter per cent. Each month the four factories change positions in my table, all moving around between themselves.

“It isn’t a question that Cleckheaton say is idle one month and excellent the next month. Cleckheaton and each of the other factories are all hard working and consistent.

“If I had only these four factories I would be quite happy and cheerful with the productivity figures.”

A pause.

We all looked at Garth.

“Every month Neverthorpe has between two per cent and three per cent higher manufacturing productivity than the best of the other four factories.

“Every month!”

We were all surprised.

“I cannot see why that should be.

“But it is.

“So my question is, what is Neverthorpe doing different and better than the other four perfectly competent factories?”

We all sat silent.

We were wracking our brains.

I have been in every factory. They are all well run.

The machinery is often identical.

There is no flab. There is no timewasting.

The workers are much the same.

The workforces at the four new factories were all hand picked by their current managers. The new factories ought to be as good as Neverthorpe or even better than Neverthorpe.

The silence wore on.

A very good question, with no obvious answer.

No wonder Garth has asked for help!

I don’t know the answer, either.

We all pondered the question.

No wonder Garth is stumped.

We are all stumped.

We all sat silent.

Gwen Sykes started to speak.

Gwen is a third generation "Byram" person. Gwen's father works at the Neverthorpe factory. Both of Gwen's grandfathers worked at Neverthorpe.

Gwen is one of our first batch of female apprentices.

Garth has his eye on Gwen as a probable member of the second cohort of junior managers in training that Garth is going to set up when the first cohort finish their training program.

Garth has had Gwen going around schools and colleges giving talks about life as a female engineering apprentice. Gwen has also been appointed to interview and selection panels, helping to select apprentices for the following year across our five factories.

Gwen has sensible short blonde hair and a good figure for an eighteen year old.

Gwen looks attractive even in the industrial overalls that Gwen wears all the time.

Gwen Sykes is bright but she tries not to show it.

It keeps seeping out, though!

When Irene Byram (Cecil Byram's wife) agreed that the Engineering Union could take part in the assessment and selection process for employing previously battered women Irene stipulated that the Engineering Union representative would have to be female.

The Engineering Union was a bit stuck for a woman representative.

Gwen Sykes has been appointed to the Engineering Union side as Engineering Union Womens Officer for the whole Byrams Group. That is how a young female apprentice comes to attend these meetings.

Gwen hardly ever speaks in these meetings, because Gwen normally has nothing that she wishes to say.

After Gwen was appointed both Cecil and Garth both told Gwen that taking office in the Engineering Union does not endanger Gwen's future at Byrams. They both told Gwen that the experience that Gwen gains in this role will be useful should Gwen later move onto the management ladder.

I am not sure whether Gwen will end up as a senior manager or as the Engineering Union Convenor, but I think that one or the other is likely.

Whatever, Gwen had started to speak.

Everybody looked towards Gwen.

“The only difference I can think of is the catering.

“At the four new factories you have contract caterers. The food there is all right, but it is nothing special.

“Here at Neverthorpe the sausages are better, the bacon is better, the meals generally are better. Even the coffee here at Neverthorpe is much better.

“Neverthorpe serves hot sandwiches at the beginning of the day and those croissants on Fridays. That does not happen at the other factories.

“The other factory canteens do not deliver hot sandwiches to the workshops mid-morning like Neverthorpe does.

“Could that be the answer?”

Long ago, I had helped Mark Johnson to transform the catering at Neverthorpe. Cecil Byram had told Mark that Mark’s catering improvements had improved manufacturing productivity by nearly five per cent.

Mark passed this statement on to our team.

I shared this information with the meeting.

Garth had not been at Byram Engineering when this was happening, so this was new information for Garth.

Garth shook as though Gwen and I had hit him with blunt instruments.

Holding the coffee cup and looking at it,

“The answer has been under my nose all the time!”

There was silence while Garth thought.

“I am prepared to change the catering at one factory to see if that works.

“If it does work then of course I will roll that out across the Group.

“Mark Johnson is away for more than a year yet.

“I can’t wait that long.

“All right.

“I thank you all for attending.

“Georgina, please stay behind.”

The folk from the other factories were all smiling. Even the suggestion of improving their catering to Neverthorpe standards had made them happy.

Soon I was alone with Garth.

“So how do I do this?”

“The team was me, Mark Johnson, Karen Byram, and Mark’s elder sister Rebecca.

“I like Karen but she has very little catering experience.

“I have little catering experience.

“I think you should ask Rebecca Johnson.”

“What about our current chef?”

“Jason is very good at carrying out someone else’s plan. He has been here almost a year and the menu has not changed at all.

“I don’t think Jason is the person to ask.”

“Could you contact Rebecca please? Get her in.

“But first let me talk to Cecil.

“Then contact Rebecca.

“Wait for me to give you the go-ahead.”

A few hours later Garth asked me to get Rebecca in.

When I telephoned Rebecca she said that the Tryton Theatre School has closed for the summer. Rebecca starts at the London School of Economics in early October.

Rebecca is not looking for a job, but Rebecca is happy to come and meet with Garth.

CHAPTER 2 Amina Daar

We Daars had some difficult family conversations about education.

Amal said that the local High School he attends is rough. Amal is interested in going to a different school because the atmosphere in the High School is not academic.

Kali finishes with “Terrible Tykes” some time in the next year. If Kali attends the local High School Kali will be a magnet for fortune hunters and lowlifes. Fosia will also be at risk when she goes to the High School in September.

Jabril agrees. Jabril thinks the High School has gone downhill in the few years that Jabril has been there.

Ahmed is going to board with the Hewsons to attend the Tryton Theatre School and to take part in filming “Terrible Tykes”.

Kali has been listening to Sally Thornton.

If Kali and Fosia were to board with the Hewsons they could attend Bradford Grammar School For Girls, sharing a contract taxi with Sally Thornton.

We will ask the Hewsons.

We will have to pay the Hewsons something for board, obviously.

Sahid has a lot of money sitting uncommitted in his bank account. Even if Sahid earns nothing more ever Sahid has more than enough money to fund the education of all the younger Daars.

Sahid is earning very well at the moment.

Jabril and Amal have decided to weekly board at a public school called Repton which is in Derbyshire. Repton has a good reputation.

The clothing business is doing well.

Shakoora has been working hard to improve our design range.

Abdullah and Sahid and we have invited five manufacturers in China to tender for supplying our new range of wedding and bridesmaid dresses. For three container loads of clothing they will give us very keen prices.

Sahid is going to wait until the wedding and bridesmaid dresses have arrived in Doncaster before advertising them.

My father Jalil is able to go to Mosque every Friday.

We have a steady stream of old men visiting my father during the week.

All the Daar family are too busy to act as nursemaid to Jalil and to fetch tea and coffee and biscuits for his guests.

We have employed one of Sahid's friends to work for us to be a companion for Jalil and to see to Jalil's guests. His name is Hassan.

Hassan has an uncle in prison facing trial for terrorism charges.

Hassan's family are shattered. As the uncle worked but he is now in prison his family, who live in the same house as Hassan, are in need of support.

Hassan could not get a job.

Sahid has been close friends with Hassan since they were both six years old. We are happy to help out. I know that on top of Hassan's pay Sahid gives Hassan some cash each week to give to Hassan's aunt.

The run up to my sister Shakoora's wedding is not as stressful as I had feared. Once we had booked the hotel for the reception and we had ordered the catering there are only a million things to think about!

We could not simply have a traditional Somali marriage or a traditional Bengali marriage. There has to be some fusion.

Jabril went to the public library and he photocopied the electoral roll for our area.

From that Abdullah could prepare the invitations and the envelopes for the

invitations. We are inviting the entire Somali community together with friends of my father and of Shakoor's late parents.

Tohur provided a list of Ali Miah's guests. These were all the Hewson extended foster family, three friends of Ali's late mother, the Bengali imam who taught us when we were living with the Hewsons, Jane who had been the social worker for the Miahs, the family who foster the younger Miahs, Georgina Arron and partner, and a Cambridge undergraduate from China called Fan.

Mrs Shah will be too ill to attend but she has to have an invitation. Some Shahs may come.

Of course I invited my boyfriend Abdul from Los Angeles.

Sahid had a word with the Community Inspector to explain that on the day of the wedding our area will be particularly vulnerable. Extra police will patrol the area on the afternoon of the wedding.

Clothing is largely sorted. Owning your own bridal wear and clothing factory reduces one's stress hugely!

We still needed presents for Ali's family. Given that Tohur and Fulesa are already millionaires, and Ali is a very high earner, what does one buy the Miah family?

It came down to jewellery.

Shakoor and Mina bought the presents.

We Muslims do not have bridesmaids in the same way as Christians but we have made Fulesa and Monika clothing that matches the clothing that we will wear.

Ali Miah is still technically an Air Cadet, because Ali has been too busy to resign. We were surprised to learn that Royal Air Force officers from the training squadron near Cambridge, Air Sea Rescue in Wales, and the Hercules squadron in Oxfordshire all wish to come along with their swords and create a processional arch! They say that because Ali has earned these two Meritorious Service medals the Air Attache from the Chinese Embassy will be there with his sword. The Bahraini Air Force Attache will be there with his sword!

Apparently the processional arch is formed as soon as possible after the wedding has taken place.

I have never seen a processional arch made of swords. We can incorporate a processional arch.

We sent the proposed guest list to Tohur.

Tohur queried the omission of Emma Hewson's parents.

Joy and Arthur Brown had been our foster parents!

They were added to the list instantly. That would have been so embarrassing!

The Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages in Doncaster normally has three Registrars performing marriages each Saturday. The Registrar himself is coming to officiate at Shakoora's wedding.

Shakoora herself is up and down like a kite in the wind. Shakoora is very happy to be marrying Ali Miah but Shakoora is unhappy about leaving the family to live on the far side of the world.

I am very happy for Shakoora that she is marrying Ali Miah but I am distressed that Shakoora will be on the other side of the world.

CHAPTER 3: David Wilkins

Annette Edwards and I are still good together.

It is really great to have a partner who is also hard working and ambitious.

I am not disrespecting Gisela, but Gisela was more interested in having fun than in building a career.

Gisela was good for me at the time.

I still think well of Gisela.

On the few times that we have met since we fell apart Gisela has been pleasant enough. Gisela has had a couple of boyfriends since me so I am "an" ex rather than "the" ex.

Annette recognises that I have to work incredibly hard at what I do. On television what I do looks easy and fun. The viewer does not see how hard I have to work to achieve such simplicity.

Fashion is a very competitive industry. Fashion makes TV cheffing look like tranquillity!

I go to some fashion shows with Annette to give Annette support.

Annette tells me that her parents like me. Even when Gerald got me drunk I kept pretty tight control on what I told Gerald about my finances.

Gerald still goes on at home about how I have become a decamillionaire (ten millions) at an age when Gerald was still at school.

Gerald Edwards does not know the half of it.

Nor does Annette.

They have no need to know.

I finished writing my autobiography in August.

All I said about my love life is,

“As a good looking young man I sometimes meet young ladies.

“I was taught not to kiss and tell. But I do sometimes kiss!”

Mr Driburg and my publisher are happy with my book. They hope that it will have the same sales as Dennis’s book.

I think that a bit optimistic.

My book comes out in November just as I turn eighteen.

Charlotte’s book comes out any day now. Mr Driburg says that Charlotte’s book will sell very well in the United States. Charlotte will spend a few weeks in America this autumn promoting her book and her third DVD/CD.

The College course is going fine. I am always in the top three, and usually I am top in my year.

Tohur is working so hard on his judo. He exercises now for an hour each morning. The supermarket pays for Tohur to have a dietitian and a fitness specialist to help Tohur get into even better condition. Tohur has a private judo coach whom he sees two evenings a week.

Tohur is involved with organising Ali’s wedding. Tohur goes to Doncaster virtually every weekend, and then on to Tryton.

I found a leftwing bookshop near Kings Cross Station. I had a chat with one of the staff there in which I confessed my ignorance of socialism.

Now when I go in the shop assistant always has a book under the counter for me. When I have finished reading it I go in and I buy the next one. I really was very uninformed!

I gain more information with every book.

I have time to read about a book a fortnight. Some books take longer!

Andria is pregnant by Sam. No-one is surprised. Both Angelas (our mother and Andria’s daughter) are delighted.

I put a chunk of money into Andria’s bank account just to give Andria a buffer against difficulty. I have told Andria that I will top up her account again if she has need.

Helen is pregnant by Martin. I thought they would wait until later but Martin was celebrating with Helen and “whoops!”. The celebration was for Martin landing a job at the Byram Group.

Helen is quite content to be pregnant.

I do not believe Helen. The idea of Helen unexpectedly and accidentally becoming pregnant is a joke.

Martin is a bit surprised that he is being required to learn German. Apparently Martin may be posted to Belgium in a year or so.

Martin has some French. Martin's immediate need is to learn German because most of his customers will be German.

Helen says that she does not need financial help. I put some money into Helen's account anyway.

Dennis is going out with my old mate Grace Adams.

Grace has been interested in Dennis for years. I hope it goes well for them.

It is sweet that my brother Peter has no idea that he is a millionaire, but I think it might be a good idea to explain the facts of financial life to him. I will discuss Peter's financial innocence with Don Hewson.

Whenever I see Peter he is surrounded by attentive young ladies. I think the young ladies will end Peter's other relative innocence fairly soon.

Helen has given Peter her "kebab" talk. This is where Helen threatened that she will turn Peter's sensitive parts into a kebab if Peter gets a girl pregnant.

My sister Janine is much sharper than Peter.

Janine asked me to explain what "derivatives" are.

It seems that Don Hewson had said in conversation that none of the children's money is invested in derivatives, so Janine wanted to know what derivatives are.

Janine followed my explanation.

Janine is not a little girl any more. Janine is pretty verging on gorgeous. Janine has Helen's brain and my drive. Beautiful and bright and driven!

God help her poor husband!

When I turn eighteen Don Hewson will hand over my money.

Most of the money I will leave invested where it is. Don's investment policy is conservative, and I approve.

I like the idea of speculating with some of my money. I need to learn about speculating as opposed to investing.

At October half term I have a week booked shadowing Mr Porteous our family investment guru.

Next summer I have booked to spend a month working with Don's son in law Paul Thornton in his business.

Then I might think about speculating.

I have had confirmation that the Sunday Scandal is going to serialise my autobiography. That will help sales hugely.

CHAPTER 4 : Don Hewson

Our school concert was a triumph! After the extra publicity generated by the “Charlotte and Sally Johnson Entertain” television program the few remaining tables were given easily. Towards the end we were turning away requests, saying that they could come next year!

We sent them copies of the DVD we made.

Our small theatre was packed with professional casters, people who propose or who choose the casts for new productions. There were also producers.

We gave the guests little booklets with each child’s photo and a list of their skills and a list of their televised or film performances if there are any.

The catering was led by Robert Graham with help from the older Hewson teenagers.

Robert is not a pupil at the Theatre School but Robert was happy to help out.

Robert has learned a lot from Tohur Miah and from David Wilkins. The food was terrific!

The mainly London oriented guests said that the food was impressive.

As the Tykes need no further exposure the main parts in the concert were taken by pupils who have not yet had these opportunities. They showed that they are as good as or better than the Tykes.

The whole evening was a crescendo of excellence. There were four show stopping performances by unknowns and Colin Donkin’s show stopping and heart rending “Helmand”.

One of the guests said that she often attends equivalent events at the theatre schools in London. What she likes about our school is that it seems like a village where everyone wants everyone else to do well.

At our school there is no sense that the children would cut each other’s throats for a walk on part.

Two of our girls and one of our boys were invited to audition for small film parts within weeks.

The exercise was a success.

Term ended on a “high”.

We are in the school summer holiday now.

The big news of the summer is that Robert Graham can now leave his wheelchair!

Robert lurches around bent over forward and rocking from side to side.

Robert spends about twelve hours a day in the gym now trying to improve his mobility.

The film crew comes once a month to film Robert's progress.

We are all hugely pleased for Robert.

Robert always makes more progress than the hospital expects. Of course not many people are monomaniacs like Robert.

Straight after the end of term was the huge holiday camp.

I had booked the entire camp site. Over fifty youngsters came to camp. I have fostered most of the campers, but not all.

Rebecca Johnson leads the camp.

Dennis Wilkins and Charlotte Johnson are supplies officers.

Cooking is led by Tohur Miah, David Wilkins, Robert Graham, Abdullah Daar, Charlotte Johnson, Dennis Wilkins, Linda Donkin, and Freda Graham, ably assisted by every child over the age of ten years, and by some children who are younger than ten.

There are more musical instruments than there are children, and almost as many bicycles.

On the day that the filming team came to film Robert Graham there was an explosion of throwing children off the dock into the lake.

This summer is hot so the children have been throwing each other into the water every day.

Apart from booking the campsite I also hired a pickup truck to transport tents and bicycles and cooking equipment there and back.

The only disappointment was a paparazzi with a telescopic lens who took photographs covertly.

Monika Miah was swinging on a rope over the lake when she saw a man lying down observing the camp.

Monika was so surprised that she let go of the rope!

Nigel Williams was deputed to investigate.

Nigel is a big young man and Nigel is a hard young man.

Nigel used the terrain well.

Nigel got close enough to the man to immobilise him before the man even knew that Nigel was there.

The man had a camera and he was using a telephoto lens.

After Nigel had explained the man's options to him the paparazzi agreed to drive away and not to return.

Nigel did not hurt the man much.

Nigel is maturing.

The couple who run the camp site claimed to have no knowledge of how the paparazzi came to be there.

The paparazzi had told Nigel that he had been tipped off by someone who had overheard a conversation in the village pub about the annual camp of child stars.

The camera equipment was sent back to the paparazzi after the camp ended, along with a High Court writ.

Our solicitor showed the High Court that almost all the photographs taken were of children under eighteen, who have a right to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights. There are situations where the child's right of privacy can be overcome but none of the exceptions are relevant.

The High Court issued an injunction prohibiting the man from using any of the photos he took. He is also prohibited from photographing each of the fifty-odd people involved again except on clearly public occasions.

We will book a different site for next summer's camp.

Sally Johnson has taken over Robert's cookery slot on the children's TV program.

Sally took to it like a duck to water.

Sally has been cooking since she was seven years old.

Sally makes cooking look so easy. Sally smiles much more than Robert ever did, and Sally is always laughing.

David and Tohur and Robert all gave Sally advice. Not about cooking so much as about presentation. Sally has soaked up their advice like a sponge.

Sally is just naturally a laughing girl. It is not put on.

Sally is using the summer to build up a bank of recorded segments.

Robert's segments are filmed in our kitchen.

Sally wanted to film her segments in a different kitchen. The segments are recorded in Dennis Wilkins' kitchen.

Sally is able to record four ten minute segments in two hours.

Sally by law may not work for more than two hours in each day. Sally has got round this by arranging to film four segments a day for five days. A huge amount of planning went into the filming schedule.

Sally is laughing and happy all the time so she does not seem to feel pressured. Jabril Daar is playing the technician role for Sally that Sahid Daar used to play for David Wilkins. Jabril stayed with us for a week during which Sally churned out her cookery segments.

Sally is already a famous face and so Sally will hold Robert's audience easily. Mr Driburg has secured an even better financial deal for Sally than the deal that he had secured for Robert Graham.

Robert's bank of recorded segments finishes in late August and in September Sally's segments will begin.

The segments will be used at the rate of two a week and so they will last beyond October. Sally intends to make four segments each week once term begins to stay ahead.

Sally has planned what she will teach in the first six months.

Mr Vincent viewed the first three segments in the series. Mr Vincent loves our "laughing girl".

Sally is booked to appear in news interviews just as Robert formally hands over to her.

Sally is still visiting her paraplegic former soldiers.

Sometimes the men sing "Helmand" to Sally.

It is interesting how "Helmand" is popular with both patriotic people and with anti-war people.

Charlotte and Sally are both tight lipped about what they originally intended the song to be.

Next week Sally goes down to London to have some work experience in a factory that makes and repairs and fits prosthetic limbs.

Sally is far too young for normal work experience.

I organised appropriate insurance.

Rebecca is driving Sally to London and Rebecca will chaperon Sally all week. In the evenings Rebecca will see her boyfriend.

David Wilkins and Tohur Miah will mind Sally in the evenings. Knowing the three of them they will be cooking for fun.

The Donkins are going to visit Sally at David and Tohur's house in London.

After Sally's London visit Derek Donkin will travel to Yorkshire with Rebecca and Sally because Derek is going to stay with Clive and Sara for a week.

After the week Clive and Sara will take Derek to London and visit their grandchildren for a few days.

By then our gang will all be in the Algarve. The Portuguese use a lot of pork and spicy pork sausage in their cooking. We have no fostered Muslims or Jews now so we do not have to worry about halal meat on holiday.

The Miahs are off to Beijing – First Class! That will be fun for them.

The Johnsons are holidaying at Lanzarote.

The actress Candice Gumm is in England during November so the Terrible Tykes Christmas Special will be filmed then.

The first big event for us is the early autumn changeover at "Terrible Tykes". Gerald Butler's voice is just beginning to become unreliable, so Gerald is already out of the series.

Kali Daar is developing into a young woman. Kali almost leaves the series. Kali comes back for an episode once every five or six weeks.

Ahmed Daar, our Alice, and Michael Johnson have stepped forward. They begin filming in September.

Ahmed will board with us during the week, so we will be back on a halal regime again.

In the Terrible Tykes story line for the autumn there are jokes about Andrew Johnson and whether he can play the bagpipes or not. This is a running current that will culminate in the Christmas Special where Andrew will play the bagpipes.

Sally Thornton starts at Bradford Girls Grammar School (BGGs) in September.

Sally has passed her Grade Four in piano, to demonstrate that Sally is choosing to attend BGGs, not that Sally cannot gain entry to Tryton Theatre School.

Much to my surprise the Daars have asked that Kali should attend Bradford Girls Grammar School.

The Daars say that if Kali went to the mixed comprehensive school that serves their neighbourhood Kali would be besieged by male wasters, chancers, and morons.

There is a single sex religious school in Doncaster but the Daars say the curriculum is too narrow. The standards are adequate but the standards are not as challenging as BGGs.

Kali is bright.

The family can afford any school.

Kali does not wish to attend a boarding school. So BGGGS it is.

The Daars asked that Kali continues to board with us, and that she share a contract taxi with Sally Thornton.

Of course we agreed.

The Daars said that they have a similar problem to protect Fosia from idiots. They would like Fosia to board with us and to attend BGGGS. We agreed.

The Daar children are great kids, and we have the space.

With Rebecca off to London in October the household will be four Johnsons, five Grahams, three weekday Daars, four Thorntons, and us seven Hewsons. That is tight but manageable. When Tohur visits from London he will sleep in the study.

On 15th September we will all go to Doncaster for the wedding of Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar. I am so looking forward to that. It should be a lot of fun! I have booked a coach.

We had expected that Ali Miah would stay with us before the wedding but Ali is stopping with Tohur in London and at a hotel near Doncaster. At most we will have a flying visit.

Dennis Wilkins, Diana Green, Abdullah Daar and Amy Waters have all been selected to dance for Great Britain in the European Championships in Monaco in October.

There is a junior event alongside it so Amal Daar and Olivia Hudson are going to Monaco as well. The Hudsons are going, and Mrs Freeman. Mr and Mrs Waters are going.

The gang are still acting in advertisements. The theme is now a rivalry between Amy and Diana with Amy clearly regretting having introduced Diana to her brand of sanitary towels.

This autumn we have Charlotte Johnson's autobiography followed by David Wilkins' autobiography.

David's current girlfriend I understand is intelligent and attractive. I cannot imagine David Wilkins having a partner who is not intelligent and attractive.

CHAPTER 5 : Ali Miah

I am blown away by my Engineering Degree result. I was awarded four Prizes!

I have won two Prizes for the quality of my cement research dissertation.

I am surprised but I am not going to argue.

For my dissertation I conducted a literature search in Chinese, French, English, and Arabic because I could. I expect that helped to swing the Prizes for me.

The third Prize is for the best result in the Mechanical Engineering examination. The fourth Prize is for the best result in the Construction Law examination!

Mine is the second best First out of nearly four hundred Engineering students.

I had a congratulatory email from Prof within minutes of the results being posted on the Cambridge University noticeboard.

The guy who earned the best First won most of the other Prizes.

The amount of money that the University gives you as a Prize is quite small, but there is huge prestige in gaining even one Prize.

The financial value is in your attractiveness to any future employer. You are proven to be the best of the best!

The Principal of King's College also emailed me to congratulate me on my Prizes and on my very good First.

Steve has given me a bonus for achieving such a good result.

Steve's bonus represents roughly a week's pay for each Prize.

I decided to thank Allah by paying Steve's bonus to the mosque. Even after tax it is more than twenty thousand pounds.

Giving the gift makes no difference to me but it transforms the finances of the mosque.

Mark Johnson and Paul Winfield (or Paul's successor) will be moving out at the end of July to make room for my family when they visit. After my family leave I am having decorators in to make my apartment bright for Shakoora.

I have decided to wear a Bengali tunic and embroidered hat for the wedding. And pyjama type trousers, obviously.

I emailed some photos to the tailor in Saville Row and he says he can do the clothing as soon as I arrive in London. The embroidered hat is being bought for me by a Chinese stewardess who flies to Sylhet regularly.

Tohur is negotiating the detailed wedding arrangements with the Daar family.

Mrs Shah is still alive so Mrs Shah will be a guest at the wedding. Some friends of our late mother will be guests.

Don Hewson is running a coach from Tryton.

It is customary to give presents to your wife's family on marriage.

As a senior airline employee I have no luggage size restrictions or luggage weight restrictions to worry about.

The Daars have everything they are likely to want or to need. On my Wednesdays off since the exams I have hunted for jewellery and antiques and curios. One has to be watchful for fakes.

I do not want to be cheap.

I do not want to look as if I have just thrown money at the problem.

Every present has to be exquisite and tasteful and appropriate.

For Uncle Jalil I had real problems. I ended up buying Uncle Jalil a walking stick with an ornate silver head. I had the head made to show Islamic patterns.

Abdullah I decided needed a Zhong Ruan, a musical instrument a bit like a guitar.

Sahid is a natural for an ornate abacus.

Jabril I decided could use a Mah Jong set. I dared not buy a new ivory Mah Jong set because new ivory is illegal in England. Antique ivory Mah Jong sets in good condition are expensive of course.

For Amal I bought a high end calligraphy set with gold nibs.

Ahmed will have a red envelope (Chinese tradition) with a very slim rectangle of real gold in it. Ahmed's name and our names and the Muslim date of our wedding are engraved upon the gold rectangle – in Hanzi script of course!

The Daar young women and girls will all have jewellery but again I have to be tasteful. Choosing jewellery for women and for girls is so stressful!

A "simple" necklace in silver for Shakoora made by one of the best silversmiths in Beijing cost me half a month's salary.

If one thinks of it as a work of art individually crafted for your loving wife by a master craftsman, that will be an heirloom for generations to come, it does not hurt quite so much.

You can take a young man out of poverty but it takes a long time to take the habits and attitudes of poverty out of the young man!

I also bought wedding rings for both of us. Gold of course.

I took the Air Attache from the British Embassy to dinner. The Air Attache is pleased for me. He passed on felicitations on my exam results from Wing Commander Beeson and from Colonel Norman.

The pretense about Colonel Norman being called Major Dinsdale has been abandoned as the only person it fooled was me.

The Air Attache told me that the PLAAF sent a colonel to Wales to see how we teach Air Sea Rescue. In return the Royal Air Force sent a Wing Commander to see how the Chinese teach air combat tactics. This love fest has meant that the Air Attache has been visiting Chinese PLAAF air bases and a Chinese Air Attache has been visiting Royal Air Force bases.

Next month the Chinese Air Attache in London will visit RAF Alconbury, which is really an American base. Two months later the American Air Attache in Beijing will visit a Chinese base.

It will be a while before Colonel Norman and General Lee are drinking coffee together in Paris, but the process is in progress.

It all looks good!

CHAPTER 6 : Rebecca Johnson

Chester Wilson and I are serious about each other.

We know that after two years in London Chester will be assigned to a new job in the multinational company Chester works for.

Chester will be posted somewhere in the United States. Chester has fifteen months left in this British posting.

If we are to stay together I will have to follow Chester.

Being Mormons we cannot just live together. We would have to get married.

I have a responsibility to Charlotte and to the younger Johnsons. I cannot abandon them.

It is bad enough that I intend going to a university in London.

I cannot emigrate!

I would emigrate to be with Chester.

Mark is away on missionary service. Then Charlotte will be away on her missionary service.

I have to wait until the younger children are older. I cannot emigrate for a few years yet.

Under British Immigration law Chester cannot stay on in the United Kingdom after his two year stint here unless Chester marries somebody or Chester becomes a student. Chester and I have chewed this around I should think about fifteen times.

Chester would like to study for a doctorate but Chester already has student loans and Chester does not wish to plunge deeper into debt.

With Mormons a marriage is meant to be for eternity, not just for life.

Eternity is a very long time.

A year or two invested in getting to know your spouse before marriage is well worth while.

We have only been courting for four months now. Yes we probably will marry each other. No we are not in any tearing rush to marry. We are still getting to know each other better.

If we were not Mormons I am sure we would be having sex already. We are both Mormons so that is not going to happen before marriage.

We do not intend to rush into marriage just so Chester can stay here or just so I can join Chester in the United States.

For my future I need a university degree.

Apart from his career Chester has no need to rush back to the United States.

When Georgina Arron telephoned me to tell me about the catering opportunity at Byrams I wondered if this managerial job might be an answer to our problems.

The important question is how well the job pays.

At Byrams I was interviewed by Garth Stead and Cecil Byram together. They are both pretty well persuaded that by bringing the catering in-house they can add at least two per cent to the productivity of four factories.

After that they are opening another two factories making components and then two more factories making solar power gathering "fabric" and manufacturing machinery to make the "fabric". Counting Neverthorpe I will in time be managing the catering at nine factories. My nine canteens will be feeding more than three thousand people daily.

Cecil has seen me and Mark working together. Cecil has no doubt that I can do this job.

Cecil assured me that he has more managerial jobs to be done than he has managers to do them. Mark will be given a significant managerial job when Mark returns.

I asked sort of casually whether they would have space for a man who has an accountancy degree from Cornell University followed by a MBA from Harvard and some experience in commerce?

"I would bite his hand off", said Cecil.

"I am involved in eight joint projects with customers. My family owns sixteen businesses making musical instruments. I want an auditor or a representative to become engaged in all these operations.

"I am doubling the size of my manufacturing operation.

"I don't have enough managers.

"If you know someone like that, tell him to write to me."

Georgina had told Cecil and Garth that I have a place booked at the London School of Economics to begin in September.

"It is terribly bad personnel practice to appoint someone you don't know to a newly created managerial post. It quadruples the opportunities for disaster.

"You are a known quantity.

"Rebecca, I know you can do this job.

"I would much rather appoint you.

"Increasing productivity by two or three per cent goes straight to my bottom line.

"Having somebody good in this job is worth literally millions to me.

"I must have you.

"I know you want to go to university in London.

"I have to make you an offer that you won't refuse.

"I will appoint you on a hundred thousand pounds a year, plus car, plus expenses plus profit share. Plus bonuses.

"I will guarantee twentyfive thousand in bonuses and profit share. I hope it will pan out at a lot more than twentyfive thousand.

"I will also pay for you to read for a part time degree at Meldon University or through the Open University."

You go to University to get a degree to help you to earn good money.

I am being offered much more money than I ever expected to earn, and I am still only twenty-one.

I have to accept the Byrams offer.

After that I have to work out with Chester what Chester wishes to do.

On the income from Byrams I could fund Chester through a course for a doctorate.

Chester doing a doctorate gives Chester and me time to get to know each other very well. Either we marry or we don't, but it takes the time pressure off us.

Chester's company will probably be cool about Chester taking time out to obtain a doctorate.

If we marry then Chester can work for Byrams with or without a doctorate.

I am going to London next week with Sally. There is time to talk things through with Chester.

I accepted the Byrams offer. I start on the first of September.

CHAPTER 7: Georgina Arron

I have been living with Douglas Trail for a year now. Douglas is still polite and attentive and sweet.

Alison Trail his mother is a complete bitch.

It has taken a long time but Douglas has built up the courage to defy his mother.

His poor dad Tom I think sympathises with Douglas but Tom dares not cross his wife.

Alison has a history of objecting to any girlfriend of Douglas.

Previous girlfriends have been too stupid, too tall, "common", or too argumentative.

In my case Alison objects to my Sumatra ethnic heritage. Alison has said this a few times in my hearing.

Alison has not mentioned any of my other failings yet.

When Douglas told Alison that we are going to marry, Alison immediately responded, "I don't want coloured grandchildren."

I said,

"I don't want my children to have a racist grandmother.

"We are both going to be unhappy!"

That caused a frost!

Alison doesn't like it back!

Douglas said firmly,

"Mother, I am going to marry Georgina.

"You will have an invitation to the wedding.

"Come or don't come, but if you do come you behave yourself or I will quite literally throw you out."

Alison started a tantrum so we walked out.

The next development was that Alison made Tom fire Douglas.

I think Alison thought that Douglas would have to crawl back under Alison's thumb.

Alison miscalculated.

Alison and Tom gave the house to Douglas years ago. There is no mortgage to service.

I can support the two of us from my income easily.

I had a word with Cecil and Garth about my situation.

Cecil and Garth are desperate for experienced managers. On my recommendation they hired Douglas immediately.

Douglas has started as an assistant production manager.

Douglas already earns more from Byram Engineering than he did from working in his family business.

Tom is struggling in the business because Douglas did most of the hard work. Now Tom has to do everything.

Douglas hears from friends in the business that poor Tom has gone from a thirty hour week to a seventy hour week.

We have decided that we will marry next summer. This gives us time to organise everything and it gives time for Alison to come to her senses.

Cecil and Garth intend to open two new components factories over the next six months because the five factories they have are at close to full production. The sales effort is very successful. So is the Byrams web site. The web magazine and the cartoons have high viewing figures.

Cecil and Garth will be building and then operating a factory to make the machinery to produce the solar energy harvesting "fabric". They will then open and operate the first factory making "fabric".

Daniel Mason is leading on the "green" project at the moment but Daniel is an accountant rather than an engineer. Daniel will need help.

Cecil and Garth want to open a new "Ming's" in Belgium.

Cecil and Garth want to have strength in depth in management rather than being so thinly spread as they are at the moment.

Given that we are in a recession Byrams could advertise for managers and receive thousands of applications. Cecil is nervous of taking on managers who are not "right" because of the damage that a poor manager can cause.

Cecil wants a cohort of managers who can work together.

Cecil also wants to have continuity of management. In Cecil's eyes a manager who stays only three years is a waste of time.

Many of the applicants would only use Byrams as a stepping stone to better things. Cecil is desperate for competent managers who will stay.

I told Helen Jenkins (née Wilkins) about Byrams being short of managers. Martin Jenkins is now working under Barney at the Chinese depot of Byram Engineering. With Charlie Kent on leave of absence to try to become a Member of Parliament the Engineering Union have reshuffled themselves.

Dexter White is now Convenor for the Byram Group. Dexter has been the engineering union branch secretary at Neverthorpe for the last fifteen years and this is Dexter's opportunity to shine.

Dexter is sane and sensible.

Dexter has utterly no charisma.

At the next monthly meeting Garth Stead shared with the Engineering Union his and Cecil's plans for expansion. We are still in a recession, so the union side was surprised and happy to learn about the plans to open four new factories.

The first immediate consequence is that we need to recruit even more apprentice fitters to train now to work in Daniel's new factories when they open. We will advertise in the Heckmondwyke and Cleckheaton area. The apprentices will be based at Cleckheaton until the new factories open.

We also need more apprentices for the two new components factories. We just don't know where they will be yet.

Garth told the union side that Cecil intends to expand into plastic components when Byram can buy a plastics factory at a reasonable price. This will probably be in the next year or two.

Garth will give more information when he has it.

We will conduct another trawl among the workforce next year for junior managers.

CHAPTER 8: Mark Johnson

Paul Winfield as the Deputy Administrator for China opens the emails, which are usually in English.

As Assistant Deputy Administrator I open the physical mail, which is usually in Chinese. I bin most of the mail immediately.

Our duties done we pray together and then we start Indexing.

Indexing is a task that is interesting for the first twenty minutes of each session and then it stops being interesting. We do four ninety minute sessions each day.

While I was preparing to become a missionary I read a piece on the Internet about Mormon missionaries in Patagonia.

These poor guys were stood in the constant rain under umbrellas, waiting for someone to walk along the main street. As it was always raining in Patagonia there was usually no-one there to talk to. So they were cold, wet, and lonely.

If someone appeared the missionaries would engage them in conversation and walk along the street with them until they were told to go away or the person disappeared into a building.

Compared with that, Indexing is not too bad.

We expected each day to learn that we were to be relieved, but it did not happen.

In our spare time Paul taught me to play the keyboard against the day when Paul will return to the United States. I have got almost mediocre. I am working on it.

I do not play Mormon music in Ali's apartment when Ali is at home.

Paul's missionary time was running out. One day Paul had an email to say that he would be replaced by Alec the following week. I saw Paul onto a plane on Tuesday.

On Thursday Alec Windsor appeared.

Like me, Alec had been expecting to serve in Nevada. Alec does not know why he has been sent to China.

Alec is from Ontario. Apart from a single visit to a Chinese restaurant in Toronto Alec has no knowledge of China whatever.

Alec's interests are very meagre.

Alec is a nose to grindstone student who earns reasonable grades, but Alec never earns the top marks.

There is nothing wrong with Alec.

Alec is young, which is hardly his fault.

I think that Alec is young for his age, which again is not Alec's fault.

Alec has two perfectly adequate parents who also appear to be boring. Mr Windsor is a librarian and Mrs Windsor teaches little children.

Alec and his father sometimes go into the Canadian wilderness together to fish.

I was a bit impressed when Alec said that he does not go duck hunting. Alec says that if the ducks do not shoot back it is hardly a fair contest.

Alec does not apply that thinking to fishing!

I do not want quarrels so I said nothing.

Paul Winfield was interesting to live with and to work with. Paul usually had some funny story about life.

Alec has no amusing stories.

Alec does not speak unless he has something to say.

Usually Alec has nothing to say.

Alec is hard work!

This is Alec's first missionary posting. I think Alec was selected because he will not make waves.

Alec doesn't even make ripples!

We were invited to meals with the congregation so everyone could talk with Alec. I told Alec that this was the equivalent of singing for his supper and then Alec was all right with it.

Apparently in Alec's family one does not speak unless one has something to say. Inconsequential chatter is frowned upon.

That is not a Mormon doctrine, it is just Alec's parents.

Alec is learning to produce inconsequential chatter for his dinner hosts.

I play the keyboard at the services now that Paul has gone. I am not very good but at least I can play the keyboard. I do a lot of practicing.

Ali Miah is usually out at the airport.

I read somewhere that at any one time there are three hundred Mormons in Beijing. A lot of them I think are on short visits or short postings. They do not bother to come to Church.

At Thanksgiving or at Christmas we might see more than a hundred at a service. Most of them are solo men who may or may not have wives at home.

Alec and I are thinking what we could do to attract these members on a regular basis. Nothing has come to mind yet.

Alec and I had to move out of Ali's apartment because the Miah family are coming soon.

I sent an email to President Sexton to enquire whether we should be expecting another month, three months, or what?

President Sexton said that we will be in Beijing at least four months. The person selected to succeed us is retires from work in six weeks time. Then he has to learn Putonghua and then he will come.

We found an apartment for us that is small but adequate. The six flights of stairs will help to keep us fit!

When the Miah's came over from England it was only polite to go out for a meal with them.

Ali Miah has this knack of finding terrific restaurants.

All the Miah children have grown! We had hugs.

Alec came, too, because the rules for Mormon missionaries say we missionaries must stay together.

Strictly speaking I should not have gone because Mormon missionaries are not supposed to have contacts with our past life while we are on missionary service. Even if our friends and relations have come half way round the world to see us we are not supposed to meet them or to have contact with them.

[Chinese shop floor language] that!

Alec and I will just not tell anyone!

The idea of the rule is a good one.

Part of being a missionary is that you learn to stand on your own two feet. Without the rule some mums would fly to Venezuela or wherever to see their missionary child every weekend.

The rule was not intended for our situation.

We have agreed that if our rule breaking comes out Alec may blame me.

Tohur filled me in on the family gossip.

Rebecca is now not going to the London School of Economics. Rebecca is going to do catering management for Cecil Byram instead. It sounds like Rebecca has my old catering manager job, and then some!

Rebecca is in process of buying a house in Tryton. Tohur does not know who will live in the house.

If Rebecca were not a Mormon the front runner would be Rebecca's boyfriend, Chester Wilson. Chester has a job in London.

Tohur does not know if Rebecca intends to move the Johnson family away from the Hewsons.

I have not met Chester Wilson yet.

The Miah's say that Chester is a good guy.

My brother Michael thumped Jamie Harris at Tryton Junior School!

It seems Jamie thought that Jamie should have right of way in the playground. Jamie punched Michael to enforce his superiority.

Michael hit back, knocking Jamie down.

All the Harris family members I have met are thick. The Harris family are not nice people.

Us Hewson children are totally reasonable and moderate at all times, of course!

Michael has moved to the Theatre School that the Hewsons set up, so Michael does not meet Jamie now.

My sister Sally has taken over Robert Graham's cooking slot. Well done, Sally!

Fulesa showed me a recording on her mobile telephone of Robert Graham lurching around and doing gym exercises.

I am so pleased for Robert.

I wrote Robert a postcard congratulating him.

I will be sorry to miss Ali and Shakoora's wedding in Doncaster.

There is a strong chance I will still be in Beijing when Shakoora arrives here.

At last I had an email from President Sexton. I am to locate a pleasant apartment for two people. There must be a lift. The tenancy is to begin at the beginning of November.

I am not to book flights for Alec and myself until the new Administrator arrives – just in case!

Alec and I could legitimately reduce our Indexing because we needed to look for an appropriate apartment for the new Administrator. I felt that we should find a bus that passed in the street outside the office, get on it, and see where it went.

Alec agreed.

We found a reasonable looking area.

I asked in the local shops and we were shown some apartments. They were not very nice.

So the next day we took the bus again and we found another area.

"This is better than Indexing!" I said

"Yes!" said Alec.

There were no suitable apartments.

The problem is that when these apartments were built lifts were too expensive. The apartments are nice, but they have no lift.

The rest of the week we Indexed because a week without Indexing would very likely lead to trouble.

On the Sunday we met the congregation. We asked for their help and suggestions for a nice apartment.

One of the members said that the apartment next door to him is becoming vacant. He will enquire.

So it was back to Indexing!

On Thursday it was raining heavily. The member telephoned. The apartment next door is already let.

We decided to carry on Indexing today and to look for apartments on Monday.

On Sunday the congregation had no further suggestions.

I sent an email to President Sexton to explain that all the moderately priced apartments do not have lifts or elevators. If having a lift is essential then President Sexton will have to increase the proposed rent limit.

I gave President Sexton suggestions for an appropriate rent level for an apartment with a lift.

President Sexton gave me permission to increase the accommodation budget. The accommodation for the permanent Administrator will be paid for by the Church.

After two weeks of looking at apartments we found an apartment that was adequate.

We rented the apartment.

The bored Mormon wives formed themselves into a decorating committee. They took money from us for decorating materials.

The Deputy Administrator for China (me) and the Assistant Deputy Administrator for China (Alec) were told firmly to stay away from the apartment while the ladies decorate it.

We had a message from our Mission President in Las Vegas expressing concern that we seem to have fallen seriously behind with our Indexing. So we had to hit the Indexing.

On the positive side this purgatory is going to end. We will be back to normal missionary activity.

I so long for knocking on doors again!

Shakoora and Ali both look well. Married life obviously suits them. I am so pleased for them both.

Three days before we were due to greet the new Administrator we had an email from President Sexton.

One of the Administrator's grandchildren has been in a car crash. The Administrator and his wife are helping their family and so their arrival in Beijing will be delayed.

The apartment is lovely. The ladies have done wonders with it.

Now we wait.

CHAPTER 9: Cecil Byram

I have to address four related problems.

One is my difficulty in obtaining good junior managers. I am having to train them myself.

Garth and Daniel and Rose and I planned a training program for the first cohort of first level managers, which we are working through. The local college provides trainers who do the training at Willerton. As the first cohort of managers gain internal promotions they will free up more senior people for greater responsibilities.

As soon as the first cohort of managers finishes we will train a second cohort.

The second issue is a general problem in the UK with finding Engineers. It is not unusual to find graduate engineers who have never held a wrench nor set a milling machine.

The brighter better kids all believe that they have to study for a degree so they do not want an apprenticeship as a fitter.

The good youngsters normally take A levels instead of vocational subjects.

At the bottom end the schools turn out kids who might have a GCSE in General Science but who know virtually nothing. Often their Maths base is also weak.

The way to be competitive in manufacturing is not by using cheap labour, because we cannot compete with China and India in that way. The only way forward is to have upskilled labour and upskilled management and modern technology.

Once one has achieved that one will need to be perpetually upskilling.

I have to upskill my current workforce.

Employing 1,500 employees as I now do, I need to recruit and train nearly a hundred people a year just to replace natural wastage. Over the next three to four years I am going to recruit more than 1,500 people for the four new factories I intend to open. I will soon have over three thousand people to train or to upskill.

I chewed over the problem with Garth Stead, David Taylor, Georgina Arron, Tony Hart, and Rose Howarth.

My training costs are not just the costs of the education. There is also the production profit lost while the workers are training and the workers' wages while training.

At an average of say five thousand pounds a head for training one thousand five hundred staff a year I am looking at seven and a half million pounds a year for two years.

I do not blink at spending twenty million pounds on machinery each year. We are on a rolling upgrading process in the factories to keep up with our competition and to expand capacity. That costs me roughly thirteen thousand pounds per worker per year. We have excellent kit. Virtually none of the machine tools are more than seven years old.

Apart from the foundry at Neverthorpe no machinery is more than ten years old. Our Neverthorpe workers produce about six times by volume what they did twenty years ago mainly because of the modern machinery I provide.

The machine tools are written off in the books after five years. I used to have them fettled and then store them in spare warehouses. After the tsunami in China I shipped them all to China where Mr Wong used them as capital input into various businesses. My family trusts have equity in a number of businesses in the Shanghai area.

The containers would have been travelling to China empty anyway so there were virtually no transport costs.

I still ship used machine tools to China. Mr Wong sells the machine tools for us, takes his commission, and the Byram family now has more money offshore.

I would not object to paying seven and a half million pounds for training each year. What angers or irks me is that the people I will have trained will still not be good enough.

I deputed Georgina to conduct some research.

I am told the Germans have a good training scheme for engineers. Georgina will find someone who knows about foreign training systems. She will talk to the College and the University about how flexible they can be in helping with our training needs.

Georgina has a month to find the answer.

I am thinking that the factory in Cleckheaton has the space where the foundry used to be. We could use that space for training. People trained on a machine could then

move through to the factory and work on an identical machine for a week to consolidate their experience. The following week they could come back to learn a different machine.

Garth will speak to the Cleckheaton production manager to tell him what is in the wind.

My fourth problem is that I need more higher level experienced managers but that is a different challenge.

Rebecca Johnson came to me with an interesting query.

The Neverthorpe factory canteen makes four hundred baps a day for the bacon and sausage sandwiches, two hundred small rolls a day for soup, and two hundred croissants for Fridays. The croissants are frozen just before the final bake. They are left out to defrost on Thursday night and the final bake is early on Friday morning.

When all the factories are up and running we would be looking at nine times the volume of food. It makes sense to use machinery at this point rather than labour.

Rebecca's issue is that the logical machinery to buy would permit Rebecca to generate forty thousand baps a day, twenty thousand small rolls, and so forth. With the machinery Rebecca could churn out patisserie of various types by the thousand. Am I interested in setting up a bakery and patisserie? There is not enough space at Neverthorpe's canteen to run a bakery as well.

Rebecca says that the general cooking can still be done on site at each of the nine factories, but there are savings to be made by central food preparation. Once Byram has purchased the machinery Rebecca could service ninety factory canteens as easily as nine.

Rebecca is willing to manage nine canteens that are all self sufficient. Or Rebecca is willing to set up a mass catering business. It is the middle ground that is the least profitable.

Rebecca gave me a raft of calculations based upon the various options.

I passed the calculations to David Taylor to check.

My daughter Karen spent the summer learning Spanish. Karen is now well placed to take the Institute of Linguists exam in Spanish at the next opportunity.

Karen has the textbooks for her one year intensive course in Science and Mathematics A Levels. Karen will apply to University in early October. Having straight A*s from her first set of A levels will not hurt!

We have also arranged a science tutor for Karen.

Irene and Kevin are happy running the Byram Housing project. Georgina Arron is around to help if needed but at the moment there is not much that Georgina needs to do.

The planning application for the safe housing at Clickworth is lodged.

The first project, bungalow housing for senior citizens, allowed Garth to move some of his physically failing workforce to work that they can do as security staff and as grounds staff. The project generates profit and it generates cash.

Our security gate takes orders from residents for their shopping and places orders online for delivery to the gatehouse.

The rent covers the cost of the cleaners who clean each bungalow twice a week. It also covers grounds maintenance.

The elderly people took no time at all to set up a committee to run the communal hall.

I had expected bingo.

I had not expected them to join a quiz league, to form a dominoes team, a darts team, a bowling team, to have exercise classes, and a book club. They have set up a library and a communal computer terminal. There is an Allotments Group, and an Art Group. They have tea together in the afternoons.

They run a lunch club!

A charity that runs care homes all over the country runs a care home on our site, newly built to the charity's specification. As our residents become decrepit they will be able to move to the care home. They hopefully will still feel part of the community. Their friends will be able to visit them.

In the short term the charity can use the home for anyone. Our people will have priority for places in the care homes when they have need.

Each of our bungalow sites for aged persons will have a care home. The charity can expand its provision today at no capital cost, the only price being to give priority to our people when they become decrepit.

The care home is within the security perimeter. The twentyfour hour security at the gate and the surveillance cameras are a deterrent to bad people.

Byram's Housing leases the care home to the charity for a peppercorn rent.

Our construction team are working on the second housing project. We have planning permission for sites three and four.

With the amount of metal that Tony Hart is accumulating at Ming City getting the Great Wall of Ming finished is becoming a priority.

Garth and I have identified Barney Stoker as the natural leader of the training project. Barney has a degree in Production Engineering. Barney can work every machine in the company. Barney has credibility. Barney is Production oriented rather than Education oriented.

I own the premises. If I use machines I that would have shipped to China or that I would have bought the following year anyway, my only real costs are teacher wages and trainee wages. Materials consumed will either be turned into components that we can sell or they will be recycled. There should be no waste.

At a suggestion from Kevin Hanson Georgina has visited the Army Apprentice School and the Royal Navy and Air Force equivalent establishments. And the South Tyneside College which turns out engineering staff for the merchant navy.

Georgina has discovered a man who has just completed his Masters Degree by researching Engineering Training in Europe. He is coming to see the management group next week.

We have to free up Barney.

Barney says that Martin Jenkins is competent to run the Chinese Depot of Byram Engineering.

Barney told Martin that Martin is likely to be given Barney's job. Barney warned Martin that when Martin is asked what Martin would do better or different Martin had better have a good answer.

So when the following morning I asked, Martin said,

"The biggest problem is the irregular despatch of goods from China.

"We are always running out of stock.

"We have to raid the containers held on customers' sites for inventory, and then when the delivery comes in we have to run around replacing the inventory.

"It is stressful and time consuming."

"How would you fix the problem?"

"I would employ someone based in China just as a progress chaser. If Byram don't shout Byram goes to the end of the queue. If Byram have someone in China pushing for the goods to be despatched then we will go nearer the front of the queue.

"That person will also build up knowledge of who are reliable suppliers and who are not. That will help with our purchasing.

“Then we can build the stockpiles that you want.”

“Do you have someone in mind?”

“Yes I do, but I have not asked him if he is willing.

“Karl Styles is old enough to carry respect. He knows what he is doing. He already works for the China Depot.”

“Offer him ten thousand pounds a year more plus a generous expenses allowance with no receipts needed. And free accommodation. Free flights, health care, bonuses and so forth. Anything he wants.

“He can learn Chinese when he is over there.

“Okay you have the job.

“You are on five thousand pounds more to begin with, and bonuses.

“Any questions?”

“When do I start?”

“Now.

“Congratulations.”

We all shook hands and Martin left us.

Martin has not been with Byrams long. I think that Martin is still getting used to our decision making procedure.

Karl is now paid almost as much as Martin. They are both good people.

Barney left for Cleckheaton to talk to the Production Manager there.

Word seems to have got out that I have more money than sense. The Prison Service and NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) have made a joint approach to me.

The two organisations are really impressed with our Byram Housing project because it works. Prisoners released after four to ten years in prison have a recidivism rate of twenty-six per cent within one year of release. With our forty prisoners one would expect ten or eleven men to return to prison within the first year.

So far, only one man has let the team down by committing an offence. He is still with us, so even he counts as a success.

What the proposed new project is about is that our prisons hold tens of thousands of petty offenders serving relatively short sentences. The normal profile of these offenders is that are poorly educated, with low skills, and they have no hope. In these hard times even people without criminal convictions cannot get jobs.

Lowlifes like these petty offenders are in a revolving door of release, poverty, inability to obtain employment, crime, and then back to prison.

Fifty-eight per cent of those sentenced to less than one year in prison reoffend within a year.

If I would set up a project to employ some of these petty criminals the Prison Service would contribute to my capital costs. The Prison Service would also fund education and training and initial wages for the project.

NACRO would provide counsellors for these men.

I said that I would think on it. I have a lot going on and planned already.

I finished my MBA in June, save for the dissertation. The dissertation is on the recruitment retention and development of managers in industry. I am still writing the dissertation.

There is a really interesting tension between the need of managers to have a variety of experiences in their early career to equip them for senior positions and my desire as an employer to have good managers stay forever. How to resolve this tension is the main theme of my dissertation.

Part of my solution at Byrams is that I have changed the way I employ people. All finance people and all HR people and all managers above charge hand are now employed by Byram Investments to give them a sense of being employed by the Byram Group rather than by the individual companies. Their services are then charged to the company that uses them.

I can switch people around as I need. I can give them wider experiences and secondments without formally changing their jobs.

I can grow people.

All my managers know that I expect them to grow our future managers.

All the first cohort of people who finished their management training are already on the Group payroll to make it easier to move them or to promote them.

On the product side, I need to develop a capacity to make plastic components. When I have the opportunity to purchase a plastic components business I will take it.

Daniel Mason learned something interesting when he was in Germany. Apparently a German company has developed a process for turning coal into plastic. The coal is split into gases and the gases are then combined into plastics.

Arranged differently, the coal can be converted into diesel fuel.

Daniel suggests that I should buy a coal mine.

Then I should build a super clean generating plant to generate electricity.

Then I build next to that a plant for turning coal into plastic. Next to that I build a factory or factories to make plastic components.

The first advantage is low transport costs. The second advantage is that my supplies of raw materials and power cannot be interrupted except by strike or by natural disaster. If I own the coal mine there probably will be no strike.

My industrial consultancy company gave me a list of coal mines in the United Kingdom, and ranked them in the order that the Conservative government is likely to close or sell them.

I had not realised how few coal mines there are now.

The government will not close any mines until after the General Election.

One of my offshore trusts has bought land next to four of the six pits as investments in agricultural property. If the project does not come off we can use them as fields for solar energy. Or leave them as pasture land generating income.

CHAPTER 10: Ali Miah

Arthur Miller has signed off the Beijing air terminal.

Arthur has left Beijing.

Arthur owns a wooden cabin beside a lake in Minnesota that Arthur goes to when he has no work to do.

Arthur and a few friends sit in a boat supposedly fishing while they drink beer and tell stories. In winter they have a log fire indoors or they knock holes in the ice and they fish through the holes. The basic idea is to drink beer and tell stories.

“Genghis Miah and his drunken air trip” will be one of Arthur’s stories.

Arthur liked the way that after the air trip I put aside six crates of whisky for general purposes.

Arthur was a bit miffed when I explained that none of the whisky was for him.

“You do not need lubricating, sir.”

Arthur burst out laughing at that.

Arthur is also going to tell stories about how I pulled a newly built foundry out of my back pocket, how I found a PLA training school that was open to a barter deal, and how I located a team of fabricators unemployed during a major national reconstruction effort.

Arthur is amused that I knew his emails were being read before he did.

I still have not told Arthur who was reading his emails.

Arthur promoted me to “operator” before he left Beijing.

I felt honoured.

I am still known as “Genghis” across the airline and across Beijing Airport.

Sometimes internal airline documents refer to “Genghis”.

Stuff arrives at Beijing Airport addressed to “Genghis”.

My new Flight Engineering manager, Jack, honestly did not know that “Genghis” is a nickname based on my initial management style.

Jack was shocked that I am entirely serious that he has to learn Putonghua and to pass an exam in Putonghua within six months of arrival. All my senior managers need Putonghua so they can interface with the Chinese generally.

Jack commented dryly that he was so pleased to have met me now and not before when I was a tyrant with a will of iron.

Tommy Sherson my assistant and I always speak to Jack in Putonghua first before switching to English.

My bonus for completing the terminal early came through.

Two days after the two million pound bonus hit my UK bank account the Mosque secretary spoke to me.

This was after the Friday prayers, the only time that I attend the Mosque.

The Mosque Secretary said that with the very generous financial support that I have “already” given to the Mosque, the Mosque can now afford to buy a building to become a madressa.

A madressa is a Muslim religious school for children.

A madressa is very important for any Islamic community. First we build a Mosque and then we open a madressa.

The word “already” was a clue.

I could sense where the conversation was going to go.

The Mosque Committee has identified a building to purchase to use as a madressa.

The Mosque Secretary said that there is no money for teaching materials and there is no money to pay the teachers. Most of our families are very poor.

So would I be willing please to help towards the funding of a madressa?

With more than two million pounds in the bank and earning a high income I know that I should contribute to Islam financially.

I am happy to fund a madressa.

I would rather fund a madressa than fund an ornate ceiling for a Mosque. Not that I am against ornate ceilings for a Mosque. I just think that religious education is a more urgent need.

Allah has been so good to a poor orphan from the back streets of Meldon, and to all my family.

Allahu Akbar!

The Mosque Secretary wanted three thousand pounds to fit out the building, four thousand pounds for religious education materials, and then eight thousand pounds a year for heating bills and to pay three teachers. I said that I would transfer to the Mosque bank account now ten thousand pounds towards capital costs. Once the Madressa is ready to operate I will set up payments of two thousand pounds a quarter for ten years.

I warned the Mosque Secretary that Shakoora is likely to take an interest in the operation of the madressa. Shakoora will be very angry if she sees that teachers use violence to teach our religion of love.

The mosque must employ teachers who do not use violence. If the teachers do use violence the payments for their wages and for the madressa operating expenses will stop instantly.

I said that ten years from now I am very unlikely to be living in Beijing, so the Mosque Committee will have to work on building sources of income to replace my generosity.

I said that should a child appear who is appropriate to train as an imam I would in principle be prepared to help with a financial contribution towards his training, even if I have by then left Beijing.

The Mosque Secretary was very happy with our discussion.

So was I.

When you have been poor you appreciate being rich much more than someone who has always been rich.

Prof emailed me from Cambridge. Prof has shown my Dissertation on plasticisers in cement to a journalist on a Construction newspaper. The journalist worked on it, boiling down the dissertation to a twelve hundred word article which will be published in my name next month.

Prof enclosed a copy for my approval. It really is a very good article, better than I could write myself.

I approved it.

I sent a recent photo of me for the newspaper to use. I am wearing a hard hat!

It has recently been discovered that the mortar in the Great Wall of China has lasted so well because the builders used starch from boiled rice as an additive to the mortar. I have decided to write my Masters Degree thesis on the use of starch as an additive in mortar.

I used my contacts with the archaeologists to find an unemployed archaeology researcher. That was not difficult.

For what to me is a small fee the researcher is digging through all the information about building and repairing the Great Wall of China and all the information about ancient Chinese building techniques.

The first part of my thesis will be a review of the Chinese literature. Where the material is in the ancient Chinese script my researcher will translate it into Hanzi for me. I will translate from Hanzi into English. I will have a professional technical translator check my translations and the two stage translations.

Part two of the thesis is a literature search in English and in French and in Arabic and in Chinese.

There is an expression "if you've got it, flaunt it."

A literature search in four important languages is better than anyone else is likely to submit in an Engineering thesis.

It took me five working days to establish that there is virtually no literature on starch as an additive to mortar in the four languages I was researching.

The third part of the thesis will be experiments I will conduct myself, based on the Chinese wisdom.

I hope to have the thesis finished before Easter.

General Lee invited me to visit him. I had to go.

General Lee congratulated me on my forthcoming marriage.

General Lee congratulated me on my bonus.

He said that he is impressed that I am going to fund a madressa.

I was not surprised to learn that General Lee reads my emails.

General Lee must have an agent on the Mosque Committee as well.

No problem for me. I have no secrets.

Nor does the Mosque have secrets, so far as I know.

Then for about three hours General Lee spoke to me at dictation speed about China's policies and problems and interests. It is clearly an update on our previous conversation for me to pass on to Wing Commander Beeson when I see Wing Commander Beeson next week.

I do not have to understand or approve what General Lee says. I just have to pass it on accurately.

Some numbers have mystical significance to the Chinese.

One strange saying that made no sense to me was when General Lee said near the beginning of his speech,

"Four hundred and thirty-eight has more ears than the crow knows".

I puzzled on that but I got nowhere. Maybe I should make time to read the important Chinese philosophers.

My colleague Tommy Sherson will be in charge of the Beijing terminal for a month or so while I am abroad. Tommy is a little daunted but he is also looking forward to the experience.

Tommy ran Beijing when we had fifteen flights a week. We now have fifteen flights a day in our terminal, and we are still increasing the numbers of flights.

Tommy's Putonghua is pretty good now but Tommy is still having lessons.

For the moment I have rented Arthur Miller's apartment. If Shakoora is going to set up a business it would be convenient if she could run her business from Arthur's apartment.

The flight home was very pleasant.

As a First Class passenger life is good anyway. Given that I am a senior member of staff the flight attendants were very attentive.

I chatted to the pilots of course. Was I actually christened "Genghis"?

I explained how that had come about.

Of course I was "named" Ali rather than "christened" but I did not make an issue of that.

Tohur met me. We took a taxi to his house.

Tohur briefed me on everything I needed to know.

I had seen Tohur in August and we speak weekly on Skype so there was not much new to tell me.

Tomorrow I see the tailor in Saville Row first. Then I visit Wing Commander Beeson to be debriefed.

The following morning I do a little shopping in London. In the afternoon I rent a car and we drive to Yorkshire.

Tohur and I will stay with the Johnsons in their new home. I will meet Chester Wilson.

The first surprise was at the tailor. It seems that Steve the airline Chief Executive is serious about wanting me to wear only British made clothing. I have an unlimited account at the tailor for as long as I work abroad. This includes my wedding clothes. Very nice!

The Daars have dressed Fulesa and Monika. Tohur has ordered clothing for Moklisur and for himself from my tailor so we Miah males are consistent.

Wing Commander Beeson it seems has had a promotion. He is now a Group Captain named Crowe.

I suspect that he was always a Group Captain named Crowe.

I was to be debriefed at a very posh hotel in London. I was told that the conversation is to be recorded. Apparently this room is often used for confidential discussions.

Group Captain Crowe said that he believes the room is bugged only by the British.

I asked if before we spoke we could have a breath of air.

We went for a short walk.

Given that I was about to be interviewed in room 438 by an officer called Crowe I thought that I now understood General Lee's curious saying.

I decided I would pass on General Lee's curious information immediately, but not in the room.

Group Captain Crowe is no fool. Given the warning we transferred our discussion to a room in a different hotel with a tape recorder placed between us.

I recited from memory exactly what General Lee had said to me, at about the same speed.

Our conversation had been in Putonghua so I recited it in Putonghua.

I could tell that Group Captain Crowe could understand what I was saying.

I spoke for three hours without interruption.

I could see Group Captain Crowe making notes. Captain Crowe had a sidekick of Flight Lieutenant rank who was writing down everything I was saying in Hanzi.

When my monologue moved to affairs in Africa and the Middle East I noticed the two officers were even more attentive.

What I was saying was either gold dust or it was horse shit.

General Lee's allusive style made it difficult for me to understand what I was saying but Group Captain Crowe was riveted.

It is not my role to analyse or to evaluate information.

My role is to convey information accurately. That is done more easily if I do not attempt to think about what I am passing on.

When I had finished my monologue we sat silent.

Group Captain Crowe just looked at me for a few minutes.

"You don't know what you have said, do you?"

"No, sir.

"I know the words that I have used but I have no idea what message they have conveyed."

"Good.

"Don't over think things.

"That is our job.

"Are you still only a cadet?"

"Yes, sir.

"I am going to resign as a cadet.

"It is pretty clear that I am not going to return to Cambridge.

"I am no longer an undergraduate.

"I should resign."

"Don't resign until after you return to China. Then you will have completed three full years of service. That will give seniority should you return to the colours."

I have absolutely no plans to return to the colours.

Time spent as a cadet does not give seniority in the proper Royal Air Force, anyway.

Time spent away from the University ought not to count as time served as a cadet.

As Don Hewson would say, "There is a rabbit off somewhere!"

"Do you know something I don't know, sir?"

"I know many things that you do not know, Cadet Miah.

"Most of them do not concern you.

"What I know or what I think about you, you currently have no need to know."

I could tell that I was not going to gain any more information.

It is worrying that I have no "need to know" about my own future.

The information from General Lee about Africa and the Middle East said virtually nothing about what China or Britain is doing in those areas. It was all about the

activities and intentions of the Russians, the Japanese, the Saudis, the Brazilians, the Israelis, the French, the Germans, the Italians, and the Americans.

Three days before the wedding I will see Group Captain Crowe again to be briefed with information for General Lee. Group Captain Crowe is coming to Yorkshire because I will not be able to get away to London.

I was happy to see the Johnsons again, and to meet Chester Wilson.

Chester is intelligent enough to match Rebecca, and he is mentally strong. They are a good match.

I know from living with Rebecca that Rebecca will win any row they have. Rebecca is utterly determined, she has a will of iron, and Rebecca will cheat if she must.

I think that Rebecca would even cry if it were necessary.

Poor Chester has no chance!

Shakoora Daar is just as tough as Rebecca Johnson but Shakoora disguises it better.

Shakoora is a sweet submissive young woman for just so long as Shakoora is suited, and for not a moment longer.

When I used to visit the Hewsons I sometimes witnessed Shakoora laying into Abdullah.

On one Titanic occasion I overheard part of a tremendous row in Somali between Shakoora and Amina.

Abdullah and I decided to go out for a walk.

A purist might say that we ran away.

I have seen the dark side!

If I had wanted a doormat for a wife I would have married one. I need a strong woman. Shakoora is strong.

Rebecca is attractive but Shakoora is beautiful.

I hear that I will meet Amina's young man, an American Lebanese lad called Abdul. Amina Daar is beautiful. Amina is just as tough as Shakoora but Amina hides it even better. Poor Abdul probably does not have any idea what he is taking on!

We had dinner at the Hewsons.

I have been away so long that I had not met the Thornton children since Don and Emma's wedding.

The older girl Sally is a great kid.

Rupert has seen the famous rescue on YouTube so Rupert thinks I am a hero.

Fulesa tickles and roughs Rupert as often as she can, which they both enjoy.

Our twins are fun. Lucinda and Guy are fun.

Max is so tall now and so good looking!

“Little” Alice is beautiful and a physical replica of Emma Hewson. Alice is as mentally strong as both her parents.

Emma is enjoying being Head Teacher of her small theatre school.

Don is much the same but I think that Don has aged a bit.

I decided not to tell Don and Emma about the latest twists in my Intelligence saga.

They have no need to know.

CHAPTER 11: Amina Daar

My boyfriend Abdul likes our large and beautiful family. We all like Abdul.

Abdul came on a tour of our factory and warehouse. The staff had all been warned that Abdul was coming.

There is general approval. Two of the staff said that if I tire of Abdul I should pass Abdul on to them!

Shakoora’s wedding was terrific!

Nothing went wrong.

Everything went right.

The sword arch was very impressive. All the boys wanted to see and to touch the swords afterwards. The swords were shiny and sharp!

The Royal Air Force officers were really nice men. One of them is a Wing Commander who says that he was Ali’s training officer.

The Bahraini Air Attache is very handsome, but he is married. The Chinese Air Attache is a pleasant man.

Our Somali community were excited to see four TV chefs, the Terrible Tykes and some ex Tykes, Charlotte Johnson, Dennis Wilkins, Amy Waters and Diana Green.

Among the younger teenage girls Derek Donkin and Colin Donkin were very popular.

Derek and Colin are Muslims so they are not in any sense forbidden fruit. Not that that would stop some girls!

There was a lot of laughter and giggling! Derek was smiling wickedly as he does so often on television.

I thought Ali looked really good in his Bengali clothing. Ali’s medal ribbons were very colourful against the light brown tunic.

I loved the embroidery on Ali's hat. Tohur and Moklisur were dressed exactly the same except that they had no medal ribbons. They had identical hats!

One of our community elders complained to my father Jalil that Diana Green and the other Greens and the Sachs are Jewish. Why had we invited Jews?

Jalil told him that our family has friends of all faiths and of none. One of the groom's guests is Chinese!

If the sight of the Jews offends the elder then Jalil will not be offended if the community elder leaves quietly.

It would be good manners if the elder could avoid spoiling Shakoora's wedding day. About sixty of us drove to Robin Hood Airport to see the Bahraini aeroplane take off. We went back to our house and the party continued.

The next morning Abdullah and I and my Abdul went to the hotel to clear up. It was all done, because that is part of the hotel's service.

Abdullah paid the balance of our bill and he thanked the hotel staff and management.

Abdullah gave out some tips.

My Abdul insisted on cooking supper. Abdul is a good cook, of course.

Abdul and I spent the rest of the week as tourists, visiting York and Lincoln and Nottingham and Manchester.

I stopped Sahid coming as chaperon because Sahid and Abdul too easily slipped into talking about computers.

I explained nicely to Sahid that I need for Abdul to concentrate on his relationship with me!

Abdullah became our main escort.

Abdullah I know is as strong as a horse, but after twenty minutes Abdullah sits down in a café or on a bench and he allows us to go around together.

I so love Abdullah!

Abdul is going to arrange for Sahid to visit Silicon Valley. There are tours now for visiting businessmen, and another for geeks. Abdul says that he will book Sahid onto a geek tour.

Abdul understands why I cannot leave Doncaster.

Abdul's family wants me to come and live in Los Angeles. Abdul sees that that is not practical at the moment.

Abdul has never thought about leaving California.

Abdul is going to have to do some hard thinking and some family negotiation. My cousin brother Abdullah has no girlfriend. Abdullah has never had a girlfriend. There are often girls attracted to Abdullah.

When I asked him Abdullah said that he is interested in young women of course. Until Abdullah meets the right person (or near offer) Abdullah is not going to mess around with girls. As a Muslim Abdullah should be responsible.

There are too many young Muslim men who behave badly. They are a disgrace to our religion.

Joy Brown has said nicely that she does not wish to be a manager for us.

Joy and Arthur are financially comfortable already, and on top of that they have pretty regular income from fostering. Arthur is bored in retirement, but Arthur knows nothing about sewing!

Four of our women work as charge hands so I am not tied to the factory all the time. One of our workers packs all the accessories now because Jabril and Ahmed are away during the week.

The younger children have settled into their new schools. Ahmed of course has lived in the Hewson house before.

Ahmed is good mates with Alice Hewson and with Damien Hewson and with Heinz. Kali and Fosia are very happy at Bradford Girls Grammar School.

Jabril and Amal each got into trouble in their first week at Repton.

Boys are naturally a bit physically aggressive with each other while they sort out their pecking order. When a new boy enters a group he has to find his level.

In our tough Doncaster inner city schools the standard response to difficulty is to punch the other person. That is not appropriate at a public school like Repton.

The lads whom Jabril and Amal thumped were not innocent but at Repton the person who first uses violence is always punished. Often both parties are punished. It is a bit like the way that Don Hewson punishes any child who gets into a fight.

Repton has a martial arts squad. Jabril has done judo before and a few years ago Jabril was on the edge of qualifying to join the Yorkshire County judo side. Jabril already represents Repton at judo.

Amal has wrestled with his older brothers, with David Wilkins, and with Tohur Miah. Amal is fast and fit. So are a number of the other Repton lads. Amal is struggling to gain a place in the Repton judo side.

Jabril told the judo teacher that Tohur Miah is a relation by marriage so Tohur has been booked to lead a judo training session at Repton.

Amal's first love is ballroom dancing. Although Repton offers dancing Amal does not do ballroom dancing at school but only at weekends. Amal likes doing martial arts during the week and dancing at the weekend.

The school is pleased to have an international dancer among its students. Olivia and Amal will put on a demonstration after they return from Monaco.

Shakoora says that she enjoyed her honeymoon.

Shakoora attended the loading of the first container of bridal clothing for our business. It is on its way here.

Ali hired a female companion for Shakoora. Kitty teaches Putonghua to Shakoora and Kitty is helping Shakoora to explore Beijing and the Beijing fashion world.

Ali is working all hours at the Beijing airline terminal.

Shakoora is lonely.

CHAPTER 12: Cecil Byram

The Meldon University scientists have been much quicker than we expected in coming up with a "fabric" that is more efficient than solar screens. The core is extremely thin copper wire for conducting electricity with a light sensitive covering that protects the wire from the elements. The covering converts light into power. Then the wires are spun like wire wool and are formed into metre wide blankets. We could manufacture rolls that are much wider than one metre but experiments showed that one needs a frame optimally one metre wide that the rolls can be clipped to. The purpose of the frame is to keep the fabric off the ground to avoid earthing and short circuits.

We manufacture the frame which is laid first. Then the fabric is laid on top and it is clipped to the frame. We make the clips.

The power outlet plugs into a conduit that runs along the frame. The electricity trickle feeds along the conduit to a battery that stores the power. The batteries are linked to a collection network.

The frames are designed to be clipped together, even over rough ground.

The longer the wire the more resistance is created. There is a trade off between the number of batteries per mile of fabric and the amount of electricity collected.

Meldon University is now working on designing better batteries and a better power transmission system. But we can begin manufacture of the fabric and the frames. All the patents are applied for.

For completeness we manufacture every element of the system to the point where the collection system feeds into the national grid.

Daniel's two new factories are in Heckmondwyke. We needed Barney Stoker to get the first factory running to make the machinery that the second factory uses.

Georgina Arron is running the second factory that makes the fabric.

Both factories have borrowed workers and apprentices from the nearby Cleckheaton factory. They have both taken some of Kevin's former soldiers.

Some of our Byram Housing team have been hived off to lay out the first site. This is on fifty acres of disused quarry in South Wales. The men are staying in a small hotel with meals provided.

We are interested to learn how long it takes eight men to cover fifty acres in one metre strips.

As each machine is built in the first factory it is moved to the second factory where it immediately goes into production. We do not have the space at Heckmondwyke to build huge stockpiles so Ming's is increasing the stockpiles of the copper that we use to make the thin wire.

The film that the coils of wire are dipped in is made from readily available chemicals.

Ming's are building storage facilities to store reserves of everything we need.

It would be risky to build these two factories as a speculative venture. Having the guaranteed sales makes the whole manufacturing process financially viable.

The fabric is sold at cost price to a Byram company in Luxembourg which is an exporting agent for the world, including Wales. We pay Luxembourg tax on the Luxembourg company's profits. Luxembourg is a tax haven actually within the European Union.

The Luxembourg company sells the fabric to Byram Electric (Wales) or Byram Electric (wherever).

The two factories in Heckmondwyke make a small profit, almost all of it from Rebecca Johnson's catering.

My industrial research company has found a German with good English who has just retired as Assistant Principal of a technology training centre in Germany. For a pretty good salary "Herr Direktor" has created a terrific training centre at Cleckheaton.

His method is to use computers and an in-house web site as his principal teaching method. The trainees see a film about how a job is done and then they practice it in the training area.

Once they are competent they move across to the main factory and they work for a few days doing that job to consolidate their experience.

Herr Direktor and Matt and Barney and Georgina worked out a training program that is all modules.

Herr Direktor told us that the Engineering Union has a legitimate interest in the design of the training system. The Engineering Union acting Convenor Dexter White was brought into the planning process much sooner than I had intended.

Dexter asked the Engineering Union national headquarters to help him because Dexter is out of his depth.

A very sharp man in his thirties called Ted came up from London.

Ted and Herr Direktor had a conversation around certification, assessment, European Union standards, the Bologna process, UK education standards, German education standards, International standards, Engineering institutions requirements, and pedagogical models. They discussed the tensions between Education and Training.

Herr Direktor and Ted got on really well.

Matt and Dexter sat in on this conversation but both were lost after the first ten minutes.

Matt told me about this conversation. The short version is that the Engineering Union is happy with Herr Direktor.

We arranged that the next management away day would involve Herr Direktor briefing us about the Training Centre. We agreed that Matt and Dexter should attend this part of the awayday.

Rebecca Johnson's boyfriend is an American called Chester Wilson.

Rebecca Johnson is very sharp. I don't think Rebecca would have as a boyfriend a man who is not also intelligent.

Chester Wilson is very impressive, what my daughter Karen would call "a brainbox". Other than Herr Direktor and Mr Porteous, Chester is the sharpest man whom I can ever recall meeting.

Chester told me that the Byrams story is now a case study at Harvard.

Our story illustrates the advantage of not being a public company because no public company could do what we did. In a public company the shareholders would not accept decades of low dividends.

Chester is going to register for a PhD and Chester wanted my advice.

I said to Chester that I have a business problem. I am prepared to pay Chester the equivalent of a year's salary as a middle manager to investigate my problem. If Chester can generate a PhD from it then Chester is welcome to do that.

I have a lot of capital I am not using.

The interest rates the banks will give me are pathetic.

The robbing incompetent banks charge borrowers far too much.

There are a significant number of startups and established businesses that need capital or additional capital. Very often the banks will not lend.

I am in principle prepared to employ someone to read through all the proposals submitted and then to apply my capital.

I am far more interested in having equity in the new enterprises than I am in making a straight loan. I am not interested in making a quick buck, although of course if a company goes public I am happy to go along with that.

I do not wish to find that I have maybe sixty investments of which perhaps twenty are going to involve significant input of time by me or by my managers.

Chester's research question is how do I set up a situation where I can make significant investments without significant grief?

CHAPTER 13: Rebecca Johnson

I like the Hewson family. They are very good people.

The Hewsons are not Mormons.

The younger Johnsons have no experience of living in a Mormon household.

After my A levels I could have rented a house and I could have taken on the care of my family. I went off to be a Mormon missionary instead.

The children live in very good material conditions.

We have our weekly family religious meeting.

At the time Bob and Geoff were visiting as Home Tutors.

Both Bishop Collins and the Stake President said that if I was content with the conditions that the other Johnsons are living in then I should go ahead on my missionary experience. So I did.

When I came back from missionary service I really wanted to follow a degree course at the London School of Economics. Also I wanted to meet adult Mormon singles in London.

It was not practical to take the children to London with me.

We Mormons are very family centered. I felt conflicted that for a second time I was selfishly abandoning the younger children to follow my star.

When Cecil Byram offered me a well paid job all my excuses collapsed.

Charlotte's trust fund loaned me the money to buy a house outright. The loan is interest free so whatever I pay monthly reduces the loan.

I bought a five bedroom house.

My thinking was that by the time Andrew and Michael need separate bedrooms either Mark or Charlotte or both will have married and moved out.

By the time Chester and I start a family there should be some spare bedrooms.

If it is Chester whom I marry.

Even that is not certain.

Mark's bedroom is empty at the moment because Mark is in China.

I know a lot of young women would have moved their boyfriend in, either to Mark's bedroom or to their own bedroom.

As a Mormon young woman I cannot do that.

It is respectable to be courting but it is not respectable to be having sex before marriage.

I found a very small house in Tryton for Chester to rent.

Chester had never seen a back to back house before.

Chester was polite about it. Chester said that it is like an apartment in any city except that the bedroom and the bathroom are on the floor above.

There is a fully fitted kitchen but of course Chester will mainly cook and eat at my house.

Chester's PhD degree is a research degree. Although Chester has a degree supervisor Chester has a lot of freedom about when and how he researches.

Chester mainly works at my house.

If any of the children are sick, or need ferrying, Chester can help me out.

Charlotte has a people carrier car that Chester can use.

I have a Byram company car because my mileage is by far the highest in the Group.

Chester is in for the children after school.

During school holidays Chester is always there.

Chester cooks, but he is not very good at cooking. Charlotte and Sally are teaching Chester to cook.

Chester and I play our part in the Tryton Mormon community.

Bishop Singleton asked Chester to work with Geoff as a Home Tutor.

Chester is out for two hours two evenings a week. I can live with that.

If I am not home when Chester goes out then Charlotte will stop at home to mind the younger ones.

I help out at the Church by playing the piano on alternate Sundays.

Everybody knows that Chester and I are a couple. They know we are not living together or sleeping together.

Everyone seems to approve.

The English language is a bit strange. It is not the sleeping together that people really object to. It is what one is doing when one is not asleep that is the problem.

Well we are not doing it so there is no problem.

Will we marry? Probably.

We are not engaged. There is no rush.

Chester's parents came over from America to meet the young woman who has ensnared or entranced their Chester. They stayed in Mark's bedroom.

Mr and Mrs Wilson saw me.

They understand that I have a responsible job that pays very well by British standards.

Not many Americans aged only twenty-one have my responsibility at work or earn more than two hundred thousand dollars a year in salary and bonuses. Chester at my age was still in College!

My brother Mark has a well paid job in Yorkshire and a career path ahead of him as a manager for Cecil Byram.

The Wilsons are impressed that Mark although only on his missionary service currently runs the Beijing office for the Mormons.

I told them that Mark had dismantled a foundry over here and he had supervised it being rebuilt in China while Mark was still only seventeen. They were impressed again.

Mark won Apprentice of the Year in his industry.

Mark has learned Putonghua. Mark can even read and write in modern Chinese!

Mark can fly a plane.

I have always thought that Mark was the thick one in our Johnson family.

Maybe we do not have a thick Johnson!

Chester had told his parents that Charlotte Johnson is my sister.

They had heard of Charlotte Johnson of course. They were delighted to meet Charlotte. They like Charlotte's cooking as well as her singing.

Charlotte sang them some hymns that she wrote and which are on the CD/DVD that will be out later this autumn.

The Wilsons saw Sally's cooking segment on the magazine program for children.

They saw the "Terrible Tykes" television program in which Sally and Andrew and Michael are performers.

The Wilsons left satisfied that I am not some harpy who has sunk her claws into their Chester.

I am a woman of worth from a family of achievers.

We Johnsons were originally poorer than church mice. Now we are thriving!

I like Chester's parents. No-one is good enough for their darling Chester but I think that Mr and Mrs Wilson can accept me.

Chester's PhD is based on Cecil Byram's managerial and investment problems.

I was going to pay Chester's PhD fees. Cecil is paying Chester a decent consultancy fee roughly equivalent to what Cecil would pay an assistant production manager.

From that Chester pays his own fees and living expenses.

Chester contributes to our food costs. I do not need the money but Chester does not wish to be thought a freeloader.

Chester has leave of absence from his multinational to follow a PhD course, so

Chester has a career to go back to if he wishes.

Cecil Byram was really respectful about my wish to use the economies of scale from running eventually nine kitchens to set up an industrial catering business.

"The thing is, Rebecca, our potential downside is much bigger than the potential upside.

"When you and Mark transformed the Neverthorpe canteen you added five per cent to our productivity. That is worth ten million pounds a year to me.

"When you take over the canteens at the four other factories you will add a minimum of two per cent to their productivity. So that will be worth another fifteen million pounds a year to me. Probably more.

“In the four new factories when they open I am expecting a further fifteen million pounds of improved productivity from the quality of your catering.

“Your canteen operation is potentially worth at least forty million pounds a year to my bottom line.

“I do not want to risk you taking your eye off my main ball to try to make me half a million pounds or a million pounds as an external catering business.

“If your canteens wash their face financially then I gain forty million pounds or more a year.

“I don’t need more than that.

“Managing nine canteens well is a fair managerial job.

“When you feel you need more managerial responsibility than that then come back to me and I will give you more responsibility.”

Mark’s saying “restaurant quality food at works canteen prices” arrived at each factory canteen before I did.

The canteen workers were naturally concerned for their jobs but they could also see that providing better food should improve their job security.

The general pattern was that the lowest paid workers wished to stay. The highest paid workers wished to remain with the industrial catering company that employed them.

The Byram factory in Bradford has a fair Muslim workforce. I was stunned to discover that the outgoing catering provider makes virtually no provision for the Muslims. The caterer only provides cheese sandwiches because it does not have a halal kitchen.

That is not good enough!

Bradford was the first factory canteen that I improved.

I created distinct Islamic and non Islamic kitchen and display areas.

The halal meat is kept distinct from the normal meat.

I had an imam pop in just to confirm that I am religiously fine.

I employ two Muslims to cook the Muslim food. They also make the soups, rolls, baps, and croissants for Bradford.

The Bradford canteen is open at breakfast as well as at lunch, because I discovered that a lot of the workers have had no breakfast before they begin work.

Bacon and sausage and egg sandwiches are fine for some staff. Puri and chickpeas for breakfast are popular among the Muslim staff.

Ali Miah taught me how to make a chilli omelet. That is reasonably popular in both communities. We only serve it at breakfast time on Mondays, as a treat.

Quite a few of the non-Islamic workers eat the curries that we provide.

Most of the workers had never eaten real croissants but the Friday croissants sell well now.

Morale at Bradford is much improved and productivity is up. My productivity increase target was two per cent but I am knocking on five and a half per cent at Bradford.

Each extra one per cent of productivity increase saves or makes for Cecil more than one per cent of his wage bill.

That is a lot of money!

Less than one per cent of Cecil's additional profit finds its way to me in bonuses.

I have absolutely no complaint about my pay or about my bonuses.

I am working through each factory in turn. Each canteen now makes a profit of course.

Charlotte has turned eighteen.

Charlotte's agent Mr Driburg arranged for Charlotte's autobiography to be serialised in the Sunday Scandal. The revelation in Charlotte's autobiography that Charlotte is also the song writer "Emma Hewson" was a major surprise. It gained a surprising amount of publicity.

The inclusion of "Ave Maria" on Charlotte's third CD/DVD was unexpected. It gained publicity that a Protestant is singing a Catholic song.

Charlotte says that as a Christian Charlotte should sing all the best Christian songs.

Charlotte sang "Ave Maria" at a Roman Catholic religious service earlier this year and Charlotte really likes the song.

Charlotte has kept secret that after she turns nineteen she will be touring the USA, South Africa and Australia. All Charlotte has said is that when Charlotte turns nineteen she intends to go on Mormon missionary service.

The background to Charlotte's tour is that the Mormon Church is an evangelical church.

The Mormon Church is growing in numbers.

Despite our record missionary numbers recruitment rates have been slowing.

The Mormon Church commissioned polling to find out what ordinary Americans think about the Mormons.

Small “c” “conservative” was expected. What surprised and upset our Mormon leadership was “boring”, “irrelevant”, and “not for young people”.

We Mormons do not see ourselves the way that others see us!

Our leadership had paid for the poll to try to find out what the problem might be.

Once they had identified the problem they had to decide what to do.

While our leaders were trying to work out how to improve the image of the Mormon Church Charlotte’s proposal for her music based missionary tour arrived. It was a case of the right idea hitting the Mormon organization at the right time.

Mr Driburg and Charlotte intend to fund the tour completely.

In Charlotte’s case her motivation is religious commitment. Charlotte has more money than she knows what to do with, anyway. Charlotte is twice as rich as David Wilkins despite tithing and despite paying British income tax on everything she earns.

Mr Driburg appears to have no religion.

Mr Driburg says that he worships Mammon, but I am not sure that Mr Driburg is totally honest about that.

Mr Driburg sees the tour as an investment in Charlotte’s future.

There is an American Mormon music promoter called Al Way. “Al” stands for Aloysius which is strange to spell and stranger still to pronounce. Mr Driburg has retained Al to organize the tour.

All the financial and other projections were shared with the Church.

The Mormon leadership was taken by the prospect of live audiences totaling over two million people, including cable TV viewers, most of whom would not be Mormons. They also liked that the collection would be for Mormon Relief work, incidentally publicizing our Mormon Relief activity which predominantly benefits non Mormons.

Mormon musicians will take part in the tour. In the first half of each concert there would be child choirs, church choirs, and a generally religious theme. In the weeks before each concert Charlotte and other leading musicians would visit congregations and youth groups and work with them.

The second half of each concert is to be unashamedly rock and pop.

Charlotte by now is very experienced in TV and radio interviews. Charlotte would plug that the concert tickets are free, and are available from one’s local Mormon ward.

Al surprised the Church by listing Mormon pop groups, Mormon rock groups, and individual Mormon musicians whom Al said would perform either free or for a very low fee that Mr Driburg would fund.

The big surprise for the Church leaders was that Al's list ran for pages and pages! We have a much bigger presence in rock and pop than our leaders had known. Of course some of the performers are lapsed or inactive Mormons.

The Mormon Church was invited to assign someone full time to work with Al to ensure that the tour works as the Mormon Church wishes.

Al suggested that George Smith from Idaho might be an appropriate person as George has known Charlotte for years. George recently worked in President Sexton's office so George knows the Mormon leadership.

The Mormon Church is getting behind the tour.

Literally hundreds of thousands of Mormons will attend together with well over a million younger people. The tour will be proof that the Mormons are not "boring", "irrelevant" or "not for young people".

It is all quiet now. All the Stake Presidents know. They will be briefing their Stakes at the next Stake meetings.

Publicity for the Mormons at grass roots level begins after Christmas.

George's employer has given George leave of absence to help with Charlotte's tour. The Company President said that the experience that George will gain from working on Charlotte's tour will be the making of George as a manager.

The Mormon Church will have a series of regional talent shows for Mormons in each region to display their musical talents. That begins in April next year to begin to generate publicity for Charlotte's tour which begins in March of the year following.

Al Way will attend all of the talent shows. Al will also hold auditions for the professional and semi-professional musicians.

Mr Driburg will recoup as much as he can from merchandise sales at the twelve concerts. Mr Driburg says that the publicity for Charlotte is worth much more than the investment that Mr Driburg is making.

CHAPTER 14: Don Hewson

My step daughter Susie Thornton just passed away one night.

Without a heart transplant it was only a question of time.

Susie's death was terribly sad, but in some ways Susie's death was a release.

Susie was cremated in Wiltshire.

I took the Thornton children to the funeral.

Susie's brother Gordon came from Australia for the funeral.

Paul Thornton visits us every second or third weekend. There is no need for Paul's children to trek to London to see him.

Our Damien is in the wars again.

It seems that last year Andrew Johnson told Jamie Harris and Tommy Harris that if they laid a finger on Damien Andrew would use significant violence against them.

Andrew transferred to the theatre school leaving Damien without Andrew's protection and guidance.

Now Michael Johnson has also transferred to the theatre school.

Tommy Harris has enough sense not to provoke Damien.

Jamie, who is two years older than Tommy and Damien, decided to wind up Damien by saying that Jamie intended to hit Angela Wilkins.

Jamie knows that Damien can be wound up, and Jamie knows exactly how to wind up Damien.

A teacher found Damien punching Jamie's head against the floor of the playground screaming at Jamie to promise not to hit Angela.

Jamie was unable to speak.

Damien was punching Jamie's face until Jamie did speak.

Jamie was taken to hospital. Even a Harris can suffer damage to his head if you hit his head against the floor often enough.

Jamie was covered in his own blood.

Jamie was barely conscious.

Jamie had soiled himself and Jamie had wet himself.

Jamie had a broken nose and Jamie had three broken teeth. They were milk teeth, fortunately.

I was called down to the school of course.

Damien was emotionally upset, but Damien had suffered no significant physical injuries.

Damien poured his heart out about what had happened.

"Why didn't you tell a teacher?"

"They don't do anything!"

"If I had told a teacher a teacher would have told Jamie "Don't hit Angela."

“Jamie would have said “Yes Miss” and a few days later Jamie would have hit Angela.

“It is the way Jamie Harris is.

“I had to beat the shit out of Jamie to make sure Jamie did not hit Angela.

“Even then Jamie would not promise to leave Angela alone!

“The teachers don’t do anything.”

“Why didn’t you tell us?”

“There wasn’t time, Dad.

“Jamie had to be stopped and no-one else was going to do it.

“I don’t like fights, Dad, but I had to protect Angela.

“Jamie wouldn’t promise to leave Angela alone so I had to keep hitting him until he did promise.”

I agreed with the school that I would keep Damien at home until Monday.

The school told me that evening that Tommy Harris confirms Damien’s story of Jamie winding up Damien by threatening Angela Wilkins.

Tommy said that Jamie had no intention of hitting Angela Wilkins. Jamie only said it to wind up Damien.

“I told Jamie not to.

“I said Damien Hewson is a fucking nutter if you get him going.

“Jamie thought it would be funny.

“I don’t think Jamie thinks it is funny now.”

The school is aware of an incident involving Tommy Harris and Angela Wilkins in Nursery where Tommy hit Angela and Damien assaulted Tommy. The following term Tommy and Jamie assaulted Damien in the playground and had to be rescued from Damien.

There was no further incident until today, a year later.

There was a playground spat between Michael Johnson and Jamie Harris but the school is not clear who is to blame.

Jamie Harris is manipulative and this incident is entirely in character. Jamie has been spoken to about trying to make trouble several times.

There has not been a violent incident involving Jamie and Damien between September of last year and this incident.

In one sense Jamie is responsible for provoking Damien but Damien has over-reacted. All violence is unacceptable.

The degree of violence shown by Damien is just beyond belief. Damien is usually such a nice child.

The school still has to speak to Jamie and to Jamie's parents.

Ali Miah came for dinner. We probably will not see Ali again until the wedding. Ali seems well and happy.

I have no issues with the Johnsons moving out. It was a question of when they would leave rather than whether. Rebecca has landed a good job with Byrams so the time is right.

I am down to my own children, the Thorntons, the Grahams, and during the week three Daars. Seventeen children is enough.

During school hours I have Jenny Graham and our Arthur at part time nursery, baby Kate, and toddler Guy Thornton. And our dog Heinz.

Life is almost peaceful.

I have Damien at home for a few days now.

An easy answer might be to move Damien to Emma's stage school.

Emma does not have provision for a child so young.

Or I could send Damien to the prep school that Rupert and Lucinda attend. That might be better.

I object to removing Damien from the bully instead of the bully being removed from Damien.

The Harris family has no option but to send their children to Tryton Junior. I have alternatives.

I booked for Damien to see the educational psychologist again.

The educational psychologist has a cancellation on Friday morning so Emma and I can take Damien then.

Robert Graham has abandoned his wheelchair. Robert lurches everywhere with a huge smile on his face.

The filming team filmed Robert walking to school for the first time. It was a struggle for the lad because of the distance and because it is mainly uphill but Robert is determined.

They filmed Robert all morning. At break time Robert was surrounded by girls.

Robert is a good looking lad.

The camera team came home and they showed me the film they had just taken.

On the walk to school Robert became tired. Robert was in pain and Robert was crying. Robert stopped briefly a few times but Robert kept going.

I was in tears watching it. Tears of pride and empathy mainly.

I did not realize then that the camera crew was filming me watching Robert.

I have seen the footage the camera team intend to use of me watching Robert. A craggy face working, with tears, will make very powerful TV.

Although Robert's biological father is alive the reality is that emotionally I am Robert's father.

Freda Graham is old enough to have sex legally. When we realised that Freda is having sexual intercourse Emma took Freda to have a contraceptive injection.

The lad is Jacob Grundy.

I like Jacob.

Jacob is more responsible than I was at his age. Perhaps that is not a high bar, but Jacob clears it.

Jacob waited until Freda was sixteen and Jacob used contraception from the outset.

That is two levels better than me.

Jacob has not been expelled from school for decking a teacher, so Jacob is three or four levels better than me at that age.

Freda is entirely a willing participant and Freda is sixteen years old. There is no exploitation.

Yes I would rather that Freda was not having sex but there is not much that I can do about it.

Emma had a conversation with Freda but Freda is going to stay in her relationship with Jacob.

The little Grahams are fine.

I have divested myself financially of Tohur Miah, Charlotte Johnson, and David Wilkins.

I still mind Dennis Wilkins' onshore wealth.

I have the funds for Freda, Robert and Margaret Graham, Derek and Colin and Georgina Donkin, Peter and Janine Wilkins, Sally, Andrew and Michael Johnson, Kali Daar (semi-retired), Ahmed Daar, Fulesa Miah, Dan Wilbey, Max and Alice Hewson, and Gerald Butler (semi-retired). My Mormon part time book-keeper does the donkey work of entering all the financial activity.

I take financial advice from Mr Porteous.

Twice a year we have meetings of the trustee committee, but the meetings are short because the trustees have always been consulted on any important questions.

As there are no Doncaster children in care now the meeting is usually just Elizabeth Mountford, Andy Haines, Abdullah Daar, and myself.

Kali was such a popular character in the "Terrible Tykes" series that Kali still makes an appearance about every five weeks or so.

Kali is Ahmed's sister.

Kali acts the sharp tongued sometimes violent loving elder sister to all the boys and the loving older sister to all the girls.

Peter Wilkins and our Max are both excellent pianists.

Gerald Butler is several leagues of excellence above Peter and Max.

After school at Manchester Grammar School Gerald goes to the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester to be polished by some of the best musicians in the country.

The musicians say that Gerald is almost good enough to become a professional concert musician.

Gerald needs to enter and to win some competitions over the next few years before Gerald launches that career.

Gerald had to leave "Terrible Tykes" because his voice was breaking.

Gerald was in "Terrible Tykes" from the outset so Gerald is already a millionaire from the supermarket deals.

Gerald plays the piano for Charlotte Johnson on her CD/DVDs and also for Sally Johnson on her CD/DVDs. At 2% of sales Gerald currently earns well over half a million pounds a year.

Gerald feels no financial need to become a professional concert musician. Gerald just wants to be as good a pianist as he can be.

Gerald says that he intends to become a scientist when he is older.

The best thing I ever did for the kids was to locate and to recruit Tom Driburg as agent.

The second best thing I did was to renegotiate the representation contract.

Tom is on fifteen per cent of the first million he makes for the kids collectively in each year, and then Tom is down to ten per cent for the rest of the year.

Tom still grosses well over three million pounds a year so Tom is not complaining.

We call Tom “agent” but in theatrical terms Tom would be described as a “manager”. Tom is trying to grow careers for the children. Tom is not just a passive bookings clerk.

It is not fair to a child to open their piggy bank at the age of eighteen and then let them spend the money. From the age of about fourteen I involve the children in the management of their own money. So far, by the age of eighteen, they have been sensible.

Dennis Wilkins` offshore money from his autobiography is managed by David Wilkins and Helen Wilkins, two hardheaded people whom I trust.

Charlotte uses Mr Porteous to manage half her money. The other half Charlotte invests herself. That is fine by me.

I trust both of them.

While Charlotte is away on missionary service Rebecca will manage half of Charlotte`s money with advice from David Wilkins and Sahid Daar.

The Wilkins household runs on money from David which is channeled through Helen Wilkins.

Dennis Wilkins is sitting on a small offshore fortune from sales of the autobiography that David Wilkins ghost wrote for him. David does not wish Dennis` money to be dissipated into supporting the household because in David`s view Dennis will never be a big earner. David is probably right.

Dennis is earning good money from the advertisements but that windfall will end one day.

Provided that Dennis is sensible with his money Dennis should never have to work. Derek Donkin usually stays with Sebastian and Sara when he visits Tryton. Derek often brings Colin who stays with his friend Eric.

The Donkins usually arrange lifts from David or Tohur or Rebecca or Carlo Stewart from Dower Productions.

Andy Haines is the social worker for the Graham family so I see Andy once a week. Andy also comes with his family socially. Michael and Matthew Kellner are very happy to have Andy as their Dad.

Sharon is pregnant with Andy`s child. The whole family are happy.

Elizabeth Mountford is our family social worker but I do well to see her once a fortnight. Elizabeth should give us up but she says she wants to stay with our family.

Damien loves the new prep school. Nobody winds him up.

Rupert Thornton is Damien's mate in the playground.

We hear that Jamie Harris has had counseling from an educational psychologist.

Jamie is not as bad as he was.

All credit to the Harris family that they recognise that Jamie has brought his misfortunes upon himself.

I do like it that the kids who have moved out still consult me. They normally visit at the 28th December reunion and usually more often.

CHAPTER 15: Mark Johnson

Beware what you wish for!

Alec Windsor and I were eventually released from our service in Beijing.

The new Administrator is a retired High School Principal from Louisiana. At one time he served as a Stake President, so he is no slouch!

He and his wife are good people. I think they will be bored silly in Beijing, but that is not my problem.

On our flight back to the United States I was sat next to Alec.

I don't think Alec spoke.

That was fine by me because I had a lot to think about.

I have ten months of my missionary service left.

I have six months of my apprenticeship left.

Either Rebecca or I should form a separate household in which to bring up the younger Johnsons. Rebecca is buying or by now has bought a house in Tryton.

Managerial jobs like ours often involve getting up early or going home late or even sleeping in a hotel somewhere.

It is difficult to combine raising children and a managerial job.

An additional complication is that I know I will be Called. A growing organisation like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints always has more jobs to do than there are good people available to do them.

I can drive. I am reasonably intelligent.

At work I am a manager.

Once I have returned from my missionary service I will be Called.

The Call might be to organise a summer camp for teenage Mormons. It might be to work with other young adults in the Stake to create a programme of activities for young adult Mormons.

For sure Bishop Singleton will wish me to visit potential converts. I might become wingman to Bob or Geoff visiting Mormon households as Home Tutors.

It is challenging to combine any two of a management job, looking after children, and serving as I am Called. Combining all three duties will be a nightmare.

It is an honour to be Called but really I could do without it.

In our late teens and our twenties we young Mormons are Called to help with relatively straightforward tasks. We have to learn to juggle our day jobs, our family or personal lives, and the demands of our Call or Calls.

You build up a track record of competence.

Just as your professional or employment demands become more stretching and your family life or your personal life becomes more time consuming, the Calls become more challenging,

At some point in your thirties or forties, when you are working flat out at your job, raising children with your spouse, and struggling to juggle Calls and family and work the Lord decides that you are now ready for a major Call, like Bishop.

If you can manage that major Call, and still keep your family and your job, then the Lord is pleased with you and the Lord gives you further and even tougher Calls.

I suppose you could fail or not do well at an early Call, but that would be to short change the Lord.

A Mormon can't do that.

I can't do that.

I would like to have the time to do some courting!

I do not know who yet. Returned missionaries never seem to have trouble finding girlfriends.

I will certainly be looking!

Maybe being Called to a Stake wide job might not be so bad. I would meet a lot of Mormon young women!

Of course the best young women will be away on their own missionary service or they will be preparing to go away on missionary service.

I had a lot to think about on that flight to America.

I chased all these thoughts around but I got nowhere.

Once we were back in Nevada Alec and I were assigned new locations and new partners.

Our Mission President did not know that I had led Alec astray, but The Lord knew!

My new partner Seymour Bland was my immediate and drastic punishment from The Lord for breaking our missionary rules while in China.

Seymour Bland is a mummy's boy. Seymour's mother was widowed when Seymour was only two years old.

Mrs Bland never remarried.

Seymour was indulged and cosseted and thoroughly spoiled.

Seymour should have been thumped a few times during his childhood but Seymour's cousins always protected him.

I assume that Seymour's cousins were not allowed to thump him.

As a Mormon missionary Seymour is on his own for the first time in his life.

I had never realised that President Henderson is not up to his job

I was surprised to be told that President Sexton is weak.

President Barrett is according to Seymour a poor choice to be Called to be the President in charge of Doctrine.

When Seymour Bland told me all this information I was very surprised.

Seymour lives in Salt Lake City so I thought it possible that Seymour might know more than I do about the individuals within our leadership.

It is so fortunate for the Mormon Church that we have Seymour Bland.

Seymour could do any of these jobs better than the present President in post.

Seymour's mother thinks so, too, so Seymour must be right!

However Seymour must complete his missionary experience before he can be Called to run the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Seymour expects to bounce through Bishop and Stake President and onto our ruling body, the Seventy. From the Seventy Seymour expects to be called to be an important President as soon as The Lord can arrange it.

Seymour is off his head!

I am now nearly twenty. It is the first time that I have heard criticism of the higher reaches of the Church.

I heard a complaint once that Bishop Collins objected to being telephoned after ten at night or before eight in the morning. Given the person who was complaining I have every sympathy with Bishop Collins!

That member of the Tryton congregation has annoyed everyone at some time.

Bishop Collins was very patient with him.

When Bishop Singleton took over Bishop Singleton told the member that he was rationed to one telephone call a week, and that it had better be something that could not wait until Sunday morning.

I like Bishop Singleton!

Given that Seymour is the fount of all wisdom and according to Seymour a probable future President for Doctrine I asked Seymour to explain the Mormon concept of “sustaining”.

Seymour explained that we are all mortal, and hence we are all capable of error.

Positions in the Church are daunting.

Sometimes people feel uncertain in their jobs.

“Sustaining” means giving prayerful support to people doing difficult jobs, not carping and criticising and gossiping.

I suggested to Seymour that his comments on our leadership are not sustaining our leaders.

Seymour said that “sustaining” does not mean uncritical support.

Seymour sustains these Presidents until he is Called to succeed them.

We believe that people are Called to posts. Although obviously it is human beings who make the Call they are guided by The Lord.

How likely is it that The Lord would guide to Call to the post of President for Doctrine someone who is a poor choice for the job? That does not make sense.

The suggestion itself is probably heresy or blasphemy – if I knew what either word meant.

I don't know what “anathema” means either.

Sometime when I have nothing better to do I will look in a dictionary to find out.

I have met both President Henderson and President Sexton. President Henderson seems to me to be really great!

President Sexton did not strike me as weak.

President Sexton is as tough as old boots! President Sexton makes Don Hewson look indecisive.

I was torn with what to do.

Seymour is so cocksure of everything that I might wrangle with Seymour for months without making any progress.

Thumping Seymour might be spiritually satisfying, but thumping Seymour is not an intellectual or a spiritual argument. As Mormon missionaries we are not supposed to thump each other.

Sorry, Mormon missionaries are not allowed to thump each other.

I would be sent home in disgrace if I did thump Seymour.

I have never wished to punch anyone the way I wish to punch Seymour Bland.

I personally would not have approved Seymour for missionary service.

I suspect that Seymour's Bishop decided that Seymour needed to be parted from his mother!

You would think that Provo Missionary Centre would have done something about Seymour, but they must have slipped up.

With so many entrants each month I suppose Provo has to trust the Bishops not to send idiots.

I don't think that I can take months and months of Seymour!

In desperation I consulted our Mission President.

"I wondered how long it would take.

"You have lasted longer than the others!

"You are older than Seymour.

"You have been a manager.

"You have worked in a foundry.

"You are mentally and physically tough. You are robust.

"Do what you can with him."

Thanks!

Short of tying Seymour Bland to an engine block and dropping the engine block into a deep lake I am not sure what anyone can do with Seymour.

CHAPTER 16: Cecil Byram

I finished my MBA thesis. It has been approved, so my MBA will be awarded at a ceremony next year.

The MBA did two important things for me.

First, I had to read a lot of academic writers discussing a number of areas that I thought I had a fair knowledge of. Sometimes the texts would have an insight or a perspective that was so unexpected that I sat up and I put the book down.

I would think about the new information for a bit.

The second thing the course did for me was to force me to mix with the other MBA students. They are usually youngish high flyers.

I understand now why I have such difficulty recruiting good managers.

“The thing is, Cecil, I would be crazy to take a job with you.

“If I take a job with a big company I can hope to rise to the top or nearly to the top. At age fifty I will have a seven figure salary, maybe eight figures. I will have bonuses. I will have stock options.

“I am visible. I might be poached.

“Working for you, Cecil, my upside is limited. The top job is yours until you retire, and you have twenty years in you yet. I would earn a good salary, but there is no hope of seven or eight figures. There is no hope of stock options.

“So good people won’t come to you.

“If they do come they won’t stay.

“Sorry!”

I can hire consultants to come in. Some are really good. Some are a waste of time and money.

So what am I to do?

Garth Stead and David Taylor are my key people. I can give them golden handcuffs, bonuses that pay out after say ten years if they are still with me.

On the other hand they are both settled in Yorkshire. I pay as well as any employer in Yorkshire.

Rebecca Johnson is worth her weight in gold to me. Rebecca is improving the catering, increasing the productivity of each factory. How do I hold Rebecca and her brother Mark?

Daniel Mason is a fount of ideas. I want to keep him.

I want to keep Georgina Arron because she thinks outside the box as well.

Our growth this year has been a bugger to manage.

I was fortunate to find that most of the production managers whom I had identified as potential employees were still unemployed two and a half years after the Chinese tsunami. They bit my hand off when I offered them managerial jobs.

I hired four unemployed production managers to set up and to work in Daniel’s two new factories in Heckmondwyke under Barney and Georgina.

Daniel’s first factory (Heckmondwyke Factory 1) has produced the machinery to equip the second factory (Heckmondwyke Factory 2) to manufacture the energy

harvesting “fabric”. Now Heckmondwyke 1 is manufacturing machinery to install in China.

Heckmondwyke 2 is manufacturing “fabric” which is being installed in a disused quarry in Wales by some of Kevin Hanson’s former soldiers. As a consequence the building projects are delayed. They are not time critical. The wall at Ming City is the only building project operating at the moment.

The Clickworth project has planning permission, but I have loaned the Clickworth site to Meldon South Labour Party for Charlie Kent’s election campaign. The election will not be long now.

The Cleckheaton factory is going to become a training facility, so I needed to transfer most of the staff and most of the production to another site. I left the Cleckheaton manager and some of his charge hands at Cleckheaton to supervise the trainees practicing what they are taught.

I took an unemployed production manager who lives in Wakefield and I put him in charge of most of the Cleckheaton staff in their new premises in Heckmondwyke (Heckmondwyke Factory 3).

Daniel Mason is not an engineer. His background is accountancy. I had David Taylor hire a bean counter for Daniel’s two factories because I need Daniel free for other activities.

Daniel has planning permissions lined up to install as much “fabric” in the UK as Heckmondwyke 2 is going to produce over the next year.

Daniel has planning permissions to set up “fabric” factories in China, Poland, Portugal and Italy.

Those factories will take all the production machinery that Heckmondwyke 1 can manufacture over the next few years.

I asked Mr Wong to identify managers in China who are able to set up and run a factory making “fabric” and who can lead an installation team to install about four hundred square miles of fabric. I had to ask one of the Heckmondwyke 2 factory managers to travel to China to supervise these operations.

I have hired three more previously redundant production managers to work at Heckmondwyke 2. They are earmarked for the intended new factories in Poland, in Portugal, and in Italy. Alongside working as managers they are learning the appropriate local language for their proposed postings.

It is all a bit drastic.

I am having to take people I barely know and promote them to senior management positions.

Daniel is working his socks off obtaining permissions for everything.

I have had to give Daniel a Personal Assistant to mind Daniel's desk at Willerton because Daniel is abroad so much.

Martin Jenkins is "acting" manager at "Mings" as well as managing the Chinese depot of Byram Engineering.

Martin is covering for Tony Hart who has been hived off to set up a replica "Mings" in Belgium. Once Tony has that operation running right Martin will go across to Belgium to run the Belgian company.

I will need to find someone to run the Chinese warehousing operation which is part of Byram Engineering but is based at Ming City.

Herr Direktor is an absolute find. With my permission he placed an advertisement at every site we operate, and in all the local newspapers where we have factories.

"WANTED

People who know how many beans make five to train for a career in Engineering.

No formal qualifications needed as aptitude tests will be used to select the trainees.

No work history needed. Just a work ethic, and a real desire to make a career in Engineering.

Information on... (our website)."

There are thousands of unemployed Engineering workers looking for work. Most of them have established homes and lives. Even if they would commute to Yorkshire for work they would always be looking for jobs nearer home. I am better to take local people if I can.

On the web site Herr Direktor has on-line aptitude tests that weed out the hopeless applicants. Disabled applicants who pass the aptitude tests are guaranteed an interview. The site explains that the training is in Cleckheaton and it lists the cities and towns where we currently have engineering operations. We also set out that we will pay for or organize transport to and from Cleckheaton.

We operate a points system to help our selection process. The points system is fully disclosed.

My daughter Karen sent the job ad to every battered wives hostel in Yorkshire.

We had eighteen thousand applications online!

One surprise was that all Kevin Hanson's former soldiers applied and almost all passed the aptitude tests. As they are already Byrams staff and they have proved their work ethic they score well on the points system. They must be accepted for training.

Quite a few of our minimum wage catering staff have also qualified. Rebecca says she will have no difficulty in recruiting catering workers to replace them.

Kevin Hanson came to me and he asked for permission to approach the prison authorities for more former soldiers. If we are going to use say forty former soldiers to lay the "fabric" and we intend to continue the building scheme then we need at least sixty people.

Kevin can use the men who failed the aptitude tests as supervisors for the new people.

I told Kevin to go ahead.

Sending Karl Styles to Shanghai has already proven to be a good idea.

Karl visited all our suppliers and he explained his role. Karl is expeditor for our orders and he has a roving brief to identify substitute suppliers for any suppliers who do not meet the agreed delivery dates.

Karl is also identifying suppliers for our future needs.

Karl's implicit threat that suppliers who do not meet production deadlines will lose our business has ended our late deliveries problem.

Karl's role in identifying future suppliers has led to Karl being wined and dined by so far sixteen Shanghai suppliers and potential suppliers. Karl has visited so far more than thirty factories and foundries.

Karl is notifying me of his treats and inducements. They are mainly terrific blow out meals for Karl and his wife.

Both Karl and his wife spend three hours each day learning Putonghua.

Karl and his wife have never had the high life before. They are thoroughly enjoying it. It is all free or on expenses!

I hear unofficially that Karl and his wife are saving determinedly against the day when they have to come back to Earth!

We have still not been able to build buffer stocks for our Chinese import operation. Karl has circulated a list of the additional orders we are seeking to place and has asked for quotations.

Karl is very popular in Shanghai. Karl takes his wife with him to all social events just so he is not offered sexual favours. This is Karl's idea rather than his wife's idea. I do wish that Mark Johnson was here. I could so use him!

CHAPTER 17: Emma Hewson

Damien feels secure at the prep school.

Angela Wilkins has joined him there. David Wilkins is paying the fees.

They both love the prep school.

In the same way as our son Max had to adjust to the different standards of the Cathedral Choir School Damien and Angela are having to lift their game at the prep school. They are good with it.

Kali and Fosia Daar and Sally Thornton love Bradford Girls Grammar School.

Our "Tykes" are doing well.

In September Carlo Stewart asked the cast if they would be interested in a public "sing along" of Christmas carols shortly before Christmas. The kids said "Go for it!". Max and Sally said that the charity that benefits should be the Save The Children Fund. No-one had any other charity to suggest so Carlo said that he and Mr Driburg would arrange something.

Derek Donkin is a star in his own right in his TV series. Derek is such a good looking young man!

Derek's wicked smile is an audience puller, particularly for girls!

Derek's character is a bit of a shit.

Max says that Derek has modelled the character on what Gordon and Susie told Max that Don's parents had told them about Don as a teenager.

Don was not so good looking as a teenager.

Don was undoubtedly a shit.

Dennis and Abdullah and Amy and Diana are looking forward to the European Dancing Championships in Monaco. They are still churning out these TV advertisements for sanitary towels.

Amal and Olivia still love dancing.

The Probation Officer for Mr Graham contacted Andy Haines as social worker for the Graham children.

Mr Graham will soon be released from prison after killing the Graham's mother.

Mr Graham understands that the children are likely to hold it against Mr Graham that Mr Graham killed their mother.

Still, Mr Graham would like to have some contact with the children.

In the circumstances the decision has to be that of the children.

The Graham children discussed the request among themselves.

The children told Andy to tell the Probation Officer to tell Mr Graham that the Graham children want nothing to do with Mr Graham. He killed their mother.

The most positive thing that Mr Graham can do is to stay out of their lives.

The children will apply for a court order should Mr Graham contact them.

I had no part in this decision.

Andrew Johnson has spoken to Jamie Harris again. This time Andrew used violence during the discussion.

I gather that Andrew held Jamie's throat with one hand while holding his other fist against one of Jamie's eyes.

Andrew reinforced his violence with foul language that a good little Mormon boy should not know let alone use.

It was a form of language and an approach that Jamie Harris could understand.

Jamie Harris is utterly clear about Jamie's life choices.

Jamie fully understands that should Jamie be involved directly or indirectly in hurting little Arthur Hewson or little Jenny Graham Jamie will have a visitation from Damien Hewson, Michael Johnson, and Andrew Johnson that will make all Jamie's past experiences seem but mere signposts to the world of hurts that Damien, Michael, and Andrew will inflict upon Jamie.

Andrew promised Jamie more broken teeth, an itemised list of broken bones, and other injuries.

Jamie promised that he will leave Arthur and Jenny alone.

I do not officially know what happened. All I have is odd snatches of conversation between children that together have built a picture for me.

I have chosen not to raise the issue with Andrew.

Andrew is protecting my child.

We went to the wedding between Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar. Two beautiful people were married in a loving and friendly atmosphere. Seeing the officers creating an arch of swords was very impressive. I don't think that any of us had seen this done before.

It seems that the entire Somali community of Doncaster was invited to the wedding. It was just a thoroughly good event.

Amina introduced me to her Abdul. He seems to be a fine young man. We will see what happens.

Don is happy. Everything is going well. Our sex life has stepped up again because Don and I are both so happy and relaxed.

My little school was inspected by OFSTED.

As a private fee paying school there are no minimum requirements for the number of timetabled hours for Maths and English and Science and foreign language. Of course the parents expect adequate levels of achievement in these subjects as well as in Music, Drama, Dance, Gymnastics etc.

With bright hard working children and small classes and good teachers and great facilities our OFSTED inspection went well.

All of our children are strivers. Our attainment levels are terrific. Our paperwork is good.

We had "outstanding" for everything. The only comment OFSTED had was that I operate without a Deputy Head, and really I should have a Deputy.

Don and I decided that we could afford a Deputy, so I have advertised for a Deputy. I also advertised in theatrical magazines because an experienced teacher who has worked on the stage could double as a Careers teacher.

Max is a gorgeous boy. We think his voice will break soon, so this is probably Max's last season on "Terrible Tykes".

Max says that after he ceases to be a "Tyke" he still wishes to attend a stage school in London and to lodge either with the Donkins or with Tohur and David.

If Max can obtain theatrical work, that is fine. If there is no work, Max will still have the advantage of small classes and good facilities.

There is no downside for Max.

There is a significant downside for Don and me in seeing our son becoming independent of us.

We cannot stand in Max's way.

Alice is beautiful and intelligent and strong minded. Don says Alice bears my stamp rather than his.

Alice is hugely popular as an actor in "Terrible Tykes". Alice has my flaming copper red hair.

The Alice character has a temper much worse than Alice's real personality. Normally it is the Dan Wilbey character or the Andrew Johnson character who incurs the Alice character's rage.

Alice has no hesitation either on screen or off screen in confronting a boy two or three years older than herself.

When the Alice character is in full flow it requires Peter or Max or Colin physically to lift Alice away so Alice cannot further harm whoever it is who has angered her.

Off screen they are all close friends.

Don worries about Alice of course. Alice wears a GPS finder under her clothing just to stop Don worrying. It only reduces Don's worrying!

Carlo Stewart now visits Colin and Georgina Donkin on Thursday evenings to check that they have learned their music and words. Then he visits our children at school on Fridays to check that they have learned their music and that they have learned their parts. They always have.

Carlo has a whole weekend off!

Then Carlo is in Manchester for filming, meets the car with Colin and Georgina Donkin on Monday evening and he minds them overnight. After filming on Tuesday Carlo drives the Donkins back to London.

On Wednesday and Thursday Carlo does things in London around scripts and production.

Carlo is very happy with all of our children.

Carlo says that the Theatre School has made the series, which is very kind of him. Our children enjoy having normal school holidays and normal weekends. They also enjoy what they do in "Terrible Tykes".

Our "outstanding" OFSTED rating has attracted more children. Don and I are considering what to do. We can afford to grow, but at what point would we lose the "small friendly school" that we enjoy?

Arthur and Kate are fine.

CHAPTER 18: Cecil Byram

I had a telephone call from the Ministry of Defence.

We have no Defence work, so it really was a completely unexpected telephone call.

A couple of civil servants wished to visit me.

When they arrived, one was the civil servant who two years ago had persuaded me to sell aluminium to a company that I had no wish to deal with.

He had with him a more senior guy who was even sharper.

They started off by asking me my intentions. Do I intend to float Byram Engineering or do I intend to keep Byrams private for ever?

I said that Byrams' future is not their business, but my current intention is that Byrams will remain private.

They were pleased.

It seems that the Government has made some strategic decisions. The wisdom of those decisions is to me questionable, but I can see the thinking.

Britain is the fourth largest armaments exporter in the world. The problem is that wars flare and die rather than providing a steady market from year to year.

The government owns four factories that make ammunition and shells. All of these factories are working at well under capacity and so the factories are unprofitable.

The factories have been unprofitable for twenty years.

Britain does not wish to engage in wars or to foment wars just to keep these factories fully occupied. There are no significant wars on the horizon.

How can these factories be kept fully active in quiet times, but also be capable of operating at full capacity in time of emergency?

None of the current factory managements wish to be involved in a management buyout because they cannot see how to make even one factory profitable. The civil servants have looked at diversification but it is too difficult.

The logic is to sell the four factories to a purchaser who will use the factories in peacetime for peaceful purposes. The purchaser would have to undertake to maintain the capacity of the factories and their workforces to switch to full war production instantly. The purchaser could use the spare capacity in the factories most of the time, but once a year the factories would switch to full production mode as an exercise. During that period the MOD would replenish ammunition stocks for the coming year.

In any emergency the factories would be expected to switch instantly to manufacturing ammunition.

The purchaser would have to keep huge stocks of metal somewhere, enough to run the four factories for a year if need be.

The civil servants want the factory to be British owned. They do not want a public company as owner because they might discover one morning that the Russians or the Chinese or the French or even the Americans had bought all of Britain's ammunition factories overnight.

I asked how much metal stocks the factories currently have on hand? They looked uncomfortable but eventually they said,

"Three days."

It was not until the Chinese tsunami that the Ministry of Defence had looked at metals stock levels.

The Treasury had refused permission to increase metals stock levels on the grounds first that metal was too expensive and then second that there is no war on the horizon.

"So you are looking for some mug who will buy a year's supply of metal for four factories, store it for ever, and keep four factories running on civilian production but available to switch to war production at a moment's notice?"

"Yes.

"And undertake not to sell the factories to anyone else without our approval.

"We would want a British purchaser."

I sat quiet for a bit.

There are not many private companies who can afford to buy and to hold that much metal. There are even fewer private companies who would be willing to leave that much money standing idle for decades.

I am in a fairly strong negotiating position.

What puts me in an even stronger position is that the civil servants need to do a deal but I do not need this deal.

"What is the shape of the deal you propose?"

The factories would be sold to me for ten pounds each. The Government would take responsibility for all accrued pensions and redundancy obligations.

"I have an idea that explosives deteriorate after a period. How would we deal with that?"

There is a distinction between propellants and explosives. The bullets and shells use propellants but the shells use explosives as well. Whichever we are talking about, we must maintain stockpiles of the individual chemicals involved, which are stable before they are mixed. Again, a year's supply for four factories!

The factories' stocks of chemicals are currently very low, less than a week! The explosives or propellants would be mixed at the factories maybe hours before being packed into the bullets and the shells.

Storage of the completed goods would be by the Ministry of Defence on their guarded sites. The MOD would guard the factories whilst they are manufacturing ammunition and the MOD would transport the completed ordinance.

"How many people are we talking about?"

"Nearly three thousand."

I do not employ three thousand people at the moment.

"So you have nearly three thousand people working at forty per cent of capacity?"

"Yes."

"And this has been going on for years?"

"Yes."

"How are they going to take to doing a full days work every day?"

"Most of them earn less than your workers do.

"There is no overtime of course.

"No bonuses."

"What trade union are they?"

"The Engineering Union."

My experience with the Engineering Union is that they are a fairly sane bunch.

"I cannot afford a strike because my guys would have to come out in sympathy. So we need to talk to the Engineering Union."

The civil servants looked uncomfortable.

It is all "hush hush" at the moment.

"What prospect do I have of long-term contracts to supply the Ministry of Defence or the Government with components?"

"Not great.

"We purchase complete products rather than components. We already have long-term contracts with our suppliers."

"I was intending to open three factories abroad next year. I can transfer that production to your ammunition factories.

"I was going to open two components factories early next year. I can transfer that production to the ammunition factories."

“I can see a huge down side here. Giving me four factories sounds good, but I can buy empty factories for buttons any day of the week.

“I am not sure that this is a good deal for me.

“I have to take workers who have existing terms and conditions and who are used to doing nothing each day.

“And I risk my existing workers going on strike.”

There was a silence.

We all three sat silent.

I let the silence run a while.

“Are you going to fund the stockpiles that I will have to accumulate?”

“No.

“The Treasury will not agree.”

“If I have to fund the stockpiles, then you will have to pay for the materials at the market price at the date of use.”

“That is why we thought of you.

“We would rather pay extortionate prices at time of need than be unable to purchase at all.

“One problem though is that at a time of crisis you would probably control the market.

“You can set whatever prices you like.”

“What do you suggest?”

“Some form of arbitration scheme.”

“No.

“That is too much uncertainty.

“I am willing to agree a formula if you can devise one.

“Or I will see if I can devise one.”

Then I asked,

“Are you offering me any inducements?”

The guys looked at each other.

“We would pay the wages for these workers for six months.”

Wages for three thousand people is a lot of money!

“That is not very exciting.”

“In principle, what do you think?”

“Until you guys came to see me I had no thoughts about this at all.

“I need to think on it.

“Will the existing factory managers be staying in post?”

“They have nowhere else to go.”

“I will think on this.

“Obviously I have to talk to my senior staff.

“If this is to go ahead I want no trouble with either workforce. You will have to tell the union sometime.

“Also, I need to see what I might be buying.”

We agreed I would think about this for a few days. We will meet again on Monday.

I told my secretary Kelly to book Garth, David, Daniel, Georgina, and Tony for an away day meeting tomorrow. She reminded me that Tony is in Belgium.

“If he can get here I need him. Otherwise book a telephone discussion today. And book a venue for the away day. And book Tony for a conference call in the afternoon.”

“Get Chester Wilson in as well.”

Then I remembered that Chester is not British.

“Sorry, cancel Chester.”

CHAPTER 19: Rebecca Johnson

Charlotte went off to the United States to promote her third CD/DVD and her autobiography. Charlotte reckons to hit seventy American radio stations or TV stations in a three week tour.

The day after Charlotte had departed I had a message that all Group managers had to report to Cecil the following morning.

At the meeting we were all told that Cecil is about to more than double the size of the Byram group!

It was on the national news later that day.

Two days later the Engineering Union shop stewards from the four new factories all came to Neverthorpe.

Our Engineering Union committee members told the visiting shop stewards that Cecil Byram has never been known to sack productive workers. Cecil finds work to keep his people working.

Byram is production oriented and Byram is profit oriented. If you are not contributing to one P or the other P you get the third P – the push!

Byram's is serious about Production.

Cecil Byram's only child, a teenage daughter, had been sacked because she was not pulling her weight. The relevant manager (my brother Mark) was promoted instantly!

Mark's instant promotion was one heck of a signal to everyone that Production is what matters.

Karen Byram has barely been in the factory since she was sacked.

That is not exactly the correct story but it is what our shop stewards believe. No-one has explained the full sequence of events to them.

What happened between Mark Johnson and Karen Byram is private to the individuals concerned. A few of us know, but we keep our knowledge to ourselves.

The visiting shop stewards commented on the good catering at Neverthorpe.

The stewards were told that Byrams is in process of rolling out the Neverthorpe catering across the Group. I will be improving their catering as a high priority.

They all smiled.

The stewards were introduced to all the Group managers.

Garth assured them that there will be no cuts in pay. With our bonus system all the production staff should earn more pay.

The visiting stewards commented that Byrams' management is at first sight an improvement on their current management. Time will tell.

The shop stewards went home a little happier with the change in ownership.

I have to travel to Walsall in the West Midlands and Newcastle Upon Tyne and Cardiff and Ellesmere Port to take over the four very large factory canteens.

From currently eight canteens I am up to twelve. I had not properly finished the first canteens before these new ones were landed on me.

I am trying to reform four large canteens simultaneously! What a nightmare!

Once again, "restaurant quality food at works canteen prices" arrived before I did!

I don't know how that happens.

Chester is sleeping at my house, in Mark's bed, because sometimes I do not return until the early hours of the morning if I return at all. Some nights I get home to sleep but quite often I am away for days on end.

With Mark in China and Charlotte away in the United States, Sally is the eldest Johnson child at home.

Chester has had to explain to Bishop Singleton that he cannot help with the Home Visits because Chester is undertaking childcare for me. I am away most Sundays so I am not playing piano every second Sunday at Church. I play when I can.

In the new factories I had a few standup rows. I do not seek out standup rows but I do not back off them if they occur.

Byram's does not have executive dining rooms or dining rooms for managers. So immediately I arrived at the first factory I closed the factory's catering facilities for managers.

The catering staff were amazed!

About an hour and a half after I had arrived a fat walrus in his fifties with a sticking out moustache approached me.

"Young woman.

"I understand that you have closed the executive dining room.

"I demand that you open it again immediately."

If he had approached me quietly in a civilized way I would have been more gentle.

He chose to confront me in the canteen with more than thirty shop floor factory workers within earshot.

I spoke more quietly than he, but everyone could hear me.

I looked him straight in the face.

I spoke slowly.

"I am the Group Catering Manager."

I emphasized "Group".

Silence.

"As a Group (emphasised again) Manager I rank above you on any organization chart."

His face was a picture!

By now everyone in the canteen was watching the conversation. The room was silent.

He was going red in the face.

I continued to speak slowly.

"You are not in my chain of command.

"You are not in a position to "demand" that I do anything."

He went redder!

"The most you can do is to "request".

“There are no executive dining rooms at Byrams.

“There are no managerial dining rooms at Byrams.

“There is no waitress service at Byrams.

“The tea trolley for managers is also cancelled!

“Cecil Byram and Garth Stead queue up at the counter for their meals and their coffee like everyone else.

“If you don’t like that you may complain to Garth Stead.”

I could tell the walrus was very surprised how this conversation was going.

“What about the wine?”

“I am sorry.

“I do not understand your question?

“There is no alcohol at Byrams.”

“Some of the wine is worth fifty pounds a bottle. What is to happen to it?”

“The highest price on your wine list was £9.99 a bottle?”

“Yes. We were buying the good stuff at £9.99.”

I spoke even more slowly.

“Were you?”

I put a slightly sad tone in my voice.

“I am sorry.”

Then I changed to a bossy tone. I am a boss after all.

I spoke even more slowly, spelling it out for any listener.

“Byrams is a place of work for engineers.

“Byrams is not a dining club

- for incompetent managers

- who run a deficit every quarter for twenty years

- and who expect their lunchtime boozing to be subsidized by their employer.”

If I had slapped his face I do not think I would have had such an effect!

The room by now was an echo chamber.

My comments were resonating around the room which was in a shocked silence.

At that time I did not know who he was but clearly people did not normally speak to him in the way that I was speaking to him.

I was stressed. I was cross. I was not putting up with this idiot.

I knew that reports of our conversation would circulate around the factory but I just did not care.

“I did not realise that some of you managers are thieves as well as incompetents!

“The wine will go to auction.”

The man was speechless. He was as red as a beetroot.

“Just to be clear, that wine is no longer on sale. If you attempt to use your position to have any wine released to you, you will be dismissed for theft.

“Is that clear?”

He goggled.

“I asked you a question.

“Are you clear that attempting to get your hands on that wine will be treated as theft?”

“This is outrageous!”

He stormed off.

I described the man to the plant security manager. The plant security manager was able to identify the manager from my description.

The security staff will search the man’s car on the way out tonight. We agreed the man’s car would be searched every night this week.

The security manager could tell the walrus when he complains that the searches are happening on my request as a Group Officer. The walrus had failed to answer a question I had put to him about his understanding of what would constitute theft.

If the walrus did not like it he could take it up with Garth.

The security manager smiled.

Apparently managers never have their cars searched or their offices searched. The security manager is entirely happy to conduct such searches now that he has the protection of a Group Officer.

That afternoon, nothing to do with me, the walrus was sent home on gardening leave.

The bloody fool had two cases of wine in his car boot!

Of course he could not prove that he had paid for it because he hadn’t.

Most companies operate instant dismissal for theft. His company car was taken from him immediately with all his keys, passes and so forth.

The police were called. They were shown the evidence.

The police took him away.

The police searched his house. There was more wine from the factory at home that the walrus could not prove that he had paid for. Two more cases of wine.

Garth decided to prosecute for the theft of the wine to underline that Byrams does not tolerate theft.

It seems that dismissal for theft also carries with it loss of pension rights.

The walrus was a senior finance officer who among other duties had responsibility for catering. The walrus had been laying down vintages at company expense, and enjoying the wines when they matured. The walrus's exceptional judgement in wine matters was vindicated when the wine was auctioned.

The next row was when I cancelled a meat supply order because the meat was not good enough. I switched to a reliable supplier.

The small supplier immediately went into liquidation and the supplier blamed me in the local paper for cancelling his order. As far as I was concerned his meat was not worth buying. End of story.

I found a canteen worker who was ill far too often and disproportionately on Monday mornings. I arranged for HR to interview her upon each return to work. Her union said that I was victimizing the woman.

The HR officer and I sat down with the woman and the union. We went through sick records for this woman for the last five years and the aggregated sick records for the catering staff.

I said that I was not victimizing the woman. There clearly is a problem and I have asked HR to work with the woman to identify the problem.

The problem righted itself by the woman turning up for work each day.

Then we discovered from her regular display of injuries that she is a battered woman.

I discussed her options with her. She chose to be transferred to our kitchen staff at another location where she has a relation with whom she can lodge. She is now an excellent and happy worker.

My sister Sally telephoned me.

Dennis and Chester have come to a deal but the pussies are both afraid to tell me.

Chester is finding it difficult to mind Sally and Andrew and Michael.

Dennis offered that the three kids could stay with the Wilkins for a few weeks until my life calms down.

Chester wants to accept but Chester is afraid I will be cross.

"Are you and the boys happy with the idea?"

"Yes."

“Then do it. Thank both of them. And love to both of them.”

My mother was born in Cardiff.

I happened to be in Cardiff one Sunday so I attended the Mormon Church in Cardiff.

In every ward we have people who take it in turns to greet the congregation and particularly to greet newcomers. The newcomers may be Investigators or visiting Mormons or whatever.

The Greeter came towards me and he stopped suddenly. He had a very odd expression on his face.

“I am so sorry!

“You look just like a young woman I knew a long time ago.

“You look just like her!”

Older members of the Tryton ward have commented on how much I look like my mother as a young woman.

“Rebecca Thomas?”

“Yes.

“That was her name.

“Rebecca Thomas!”

“I am Rebecca Thomas’ daughter.”

I was dragged into a corner. A number of the older congregation members said nice things about my mother. When I told them my mother had died about five years ago they all expressed sorrow.

My father was not well known. He had come to Cardiff for some kind of course. He had come to this building one Sunday and he had met my mother. They were married inside three months!

“Then he took her off to England and we never saw her again.”

There were perfunctory enquiries about my father and ritual commiserations about his death.

“Have you met your mother’s cousin?”

What!

“I thought I had no family.”

“Well you do.

“Sister Sally Cuddy does not get out much, but I am sure she would wish to meet you.

“I will take you to her house after the service.”

I sat through the service impatiently.

My mind was churning!

The Bishop made a nice comment about me as the daughter of Sister Rebecca Thomas. He also announced for those who did not know that Rebecca Thomas had sadly died about five years ago. And Rebecca's English husband Brother Mark Johnson had died a few years before that.

The congregation made appropriate noises.

I had condolences from everyone who had known my mother.

Then we could go to meet Sister Sally Cuddy.

Sally Cuddy does have a family resemblance. She looks very much like my brother Andrew.

Sally is feisty! I can imagine Sally and my mother as young women!

Sally has mobility issues but otherwise she is in good spirits. She was five years younger than my mother. Sally is the age now that my mother was when my mother passed away.

We had a good long chat.

The reason my parents married so quickly was that they were madly in love.

They could not afford to travel backward and forward between Cardiff and Yorkshire. Long distance telephone calls were very expensive in those days. Mobile telephones had not been invented.

They could not afford hotel or boarding house fees, and of course they could not sleep under the same roof while unmarried.

Marriage was the only practical option.

Dad had a job in Yorkshire and so Rebecca moved to Yorkshire.

Some years later Sally married.

The two women drifted apart.

Sally is widowed and frankly Sally is bored.

Sally watches "Terrible Tykes" for the music.

Sally had no idea that Sally Johnson and Andrew Johnson and Michael Johnson are kin.

Nor that the famous Charlotte Johnson is kin.

I explained that my life at the moment is hectic, but we agreed I would visit Sally in January with some of my family.

Mark will still be away in China or in Nevada on missionary service.

Sally looks forward to meeting her famous relatives in January.

I went back to my hotel.

I carried on sorting out the Cardiff factory canteen.

Turning around four large factory canteens in three weeks was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life.

The canteens were run by the factories instead of by outside caterers, so all the staff stayed.

I gave each canteen new uniforms, new menus, new recipes, new schedules, new prices, and new procedures.

A factory canteen that should feed eight hundred people is so different from a factory that feeds fewer than three hundred people. The sheer hard work involved in getting it working right has to be seen to be believed.

Even more challenging is that once you improve the quality of the food you increase the number of diners and you increase their average spend.

I felt like the sorcerer's apprentice at times.

With two canteens I more than trebled turnover inside three exhausting weeks. With the other two I nearly trebled turnover.

Closing down the executive and managerial restaurants and similar luxuries liberated staff to help in the canteens.

I barely increased the workforce. I increased the working hours on offer to the current catering staff. They were almost all happy to accept the additional hours.

Improving the raw materials and generating excellent food increased trade hugely.

I widened the range of sundries available from the canteens.

By the end of the second week all the factories were selling hot sandwiches and drinks first thing and taking orders for mid morning hot sandwiches and drinks to be delivered to work locations.

In the third week the chilli omelettes and the croissants were onstream.

My new regime is popular with the factory workers and also with the canteen staff.

The catering profits have rocketed of course.

The factory managers confirm that I have increased manufacturing productivity at each ammunition factory by between three per cent and eight per cent inside four weeks. They are very impressed.

Cecil Byram has doubled my pay and Cecil has thrown ridiculously good bonuses at me.

Cecil says that I amuse him because I am looking at my own little furrow rather than at the big picture.

I now make nearly two million pounds a year profit on the catering provision in the four new factories that before I arrived was loss making or was not very profitable. Well done! That is a significant achievement in my furrow.

By improving morale with my food I have improved timekeeping, absenteeism, and sickness across the factories.

Altogether I have improved manufacturing productivity by an average of five per cent across the four factories. That translates to one hundred million pounds of additional profit a year in the four new factories.

My bonuses relate much more to the increase in productivity than to the increase in catering profit.

I have an assured future at Byram Group!

I never expected this level of income. Even after income tax and tithing I will have repaid Charlotte's loan within three years easily.

I feed five thousand five hundred people.

I switched suppliers for every factory save Neverthorpe in the three months between September and December.

I spend on average six pounds and fifty pence per person per week on food. That is just short of one point eight million pounds of food purchases in a full year. Byram Group is a significant customer for our suppliers.

Approaching Christmas my "little gifts" from our catering suppliers have been ridiculous.

So much whisky and brandy and wine and champagne was delivered to my house that I could have bathed in it for a week if I had wished. As a Mormon I had no use for it.

The booze all went into the Christmas raffles.

I discussed with Bob how many turkeys and meat joints our Tryton Mormon community needs. I kept a turkey and a few joints back for our Johnson household. The other turkeys and the rest of the meat went into the raffles.

Chester was based at my house during November and December. Chester accepted delivery of all the "little gifts".

Chester sent the sides of meat by taxi to Neverthorpe for butchering and storage. He also sent the unwanted birds to Neverthorpe by taxi. I took the booze to Willerton in the mornings.

I discussed with the Muslim workers at the Bradford factory the problem that they would not wish to buy lottery tickets where non-halal meat or booze were the prizes. All the chocolates and hampers and vegetables and fruit are being raffled at Bradford.

Strictly speaking Muslims should not gamble, but a raffle ticket for charity is not a big issue for most of them.

The alcoholic chocolates went to the raffles not held at Bradford.

CHAPTER 20: Tohur Miah

Ali and Shakoora are safely married.

It was a good do!

I like Mina Daar as a person. Mina is pretty. Mina is very bright. I have always respected Mina Daar.

I have no thoughts about marriage yet. I am far too young.

David Wilkins is humping like a bunny with Annette Edwards. They see each other maybe once or twice a week, go to bed straight away, and I usually don't see them again.

In the morning I am up early, do my exercises, and I often go for a run.

At weekends I am usually fighting or practicing so I am out all day.

During the week I have college and training.

With preparing my TV programs and my books I have no spare time.

On top of all this I have to fit in regular visits to my family in Tryton.

The Bahrain Royal family is very pleased with Ali still for rescuing their princess. Ali has a Medal now for "Services to Bahrain".

The little princess gave Shakoora a diamond pendant for a wedding present that Shakoora thinks is worth a huge amount of money. Shakoora has locked the pendant in a box in a bank vault in Beijing.

Ali had a two hour meeting with the Crown Prince of Bahrain. The Royal Family has decided that air traffic is the way of the future. They intend building not another air terminal but a second major airport on piles over the sea. They will create an artificial island large enough to build an airport!

Ali mentioned the research he is going to do about starch in mortar. Ali will do tests to see how starch enhanced mortar copes with sea water.

Shakoora had three weeks in Beijing before she put her foot down.

Shakoora was bored and lonely and neglected despite having Kitty to show her around.

Shakoora told Ali that Ali has a deputy and Ali has a staff. Ali does not have to meet every plane as it lands.

Ali is rationed to forty hours a week at the airport. The rest of the time Ali must be with Shakoora.

Ali is permanently on call but Ali is never telephoned.

Tommy Sherson apparently told Ali that because Ali is such a good manager everyone knows what to do. There so far has been no need to telephone Ali, but everyone knows that Ali can be contacted if there is need.

Well done, Shakoora!

Ali tells me there is a certain amount of amusement at the airport that Genghis has met his match!

Shakoora and Ali toured the factories that the Daar clothing cooperative purchases dresses from. The workers were impressed that Shakoora cares enough about their working conditions to visit their factories.

Shakoora is getting stuck into the fashion industry in Beijing. She is meeting designers and marketers and manufacturers and material producers and all sorts.

Shakoora is learning Putonghua and Chinese ways from Kitty.

Shakoora is likely to start a fashion degree at a university in Beijing next September if her Putonghua is good enough by then.

Amina and Abdul are still trying to work out what kind of relationship they will have. Doncaster or California is the big question.

Abdullah is happy at University. Abdullah is now in his second year. He enjoyed representing Great Britain at the dance competition in Monaco. The teams came in sixth and eighth. For their first international outing that is fantastic.

Amal and Olivia came fourth in their competition. They are very pleased.

Dennis has started his first year at Meldon University. Don has arranged tutors for him.

I have started my third and final year at the Cordon Bleu College. I am among the top three students in my year.

My cookery TV program has about as many viewers as David's program. I am writing my autobiography to publish next May.

Max Hewson is making noises about coming to live with me and David in a year or so.

Bluntly, neither of us has the time to mind a youngster.

Max is a nice kid.

We would not turn Max away but we would prefer it if Max went to the Donkins. I hope the Donkin family can take Max.

Sally Johnson is a fine chef and a fine performer.

Of course Sally's stuff for the TV cooking segment is simple. The whole idea is to produce dishes that any child could cook.

David and Robert and I help Sally. She needs a lot less help than Robert did at the beginning. Sally Johnson is a very capable young lady.

Robert has another operation in February or so. That might be Robert's last operation. I have given Robert the course books and work for the first two years of my Cordon Bleu course. Robert is reading them.

I was surprised to learn that Emma and Don are thinking of reducing the fees for their theatre school.

The time will come when either Tykes goes off the air or most of the children in Tykes have no link to Don Hewson. The income that Dower Productions pays to Emma's school is the financial backbone of the school.

The school is monstrously profitable at the moment. Were the school to say halve its fees it would attract more students. The school would be less profitable but it would be more secure because it would not depend on income from Dower Productions.

I have no idea what they should do.

CHAPTER 21: Mark Johnson

Seymour Bland and I are assigned to a relatively poor area of Las Vegas.

Virtually all the properties are rented. Almost everyone living there works in the hotels and the casinos.

There is a lot of population turnover. There are a lot of shared houses.

If people are working until maybe four or five in the morning they may not surface until two or three in the afternoon.

One sunny afternoon Seymour and I canvassed a house.

The door was opened by a beautiful young lady wearing only a smile.

“Mark!

“You have come for me!

“What took you so long?

“Come in!”

I do not know many American young women.

Most of the American young women I know are very unlikely to answer the door while nude.

They are even more unlikely to invite me into their house while they are nude.

The significant bust was my clue. I had met a Las Vegas dancer called Annie on an aeroplane. I had given Annie my Book of Mormon. I told Annie that if I was assigned to Las Vegas I would look for her to discuss the Book of Mormon after she had read it.

I recognised Annie’s face as well.

“Annie!

“It is lovely to see you!”

It was lovely to see Annie.

The Lord has created Annie. Annie is beautiful.

I have spent a week with Karen Byram wearing not much more than a smile, so I am not shocked or surprised or embarrassed by seeing a bare lady.

In the back garden there were three more bare ladies, all with significant breasts.

Karen Byram has breasts the size of medium cooking apples. Karen and I were happy enough with Karen’s breasts at the time.

These ladies are blessed with breasts the size of cantaloupes or small melons. So far as I can see without examining closely The Lord is entirely responsible for their bounty.

As dancers the ladies wish to avoid displaying tan lines. They tend to sunbathe wearing nothing.

I was fine with the ladies.

It is unseemly for a male Mormon missionary to enter a house where there is a naked lady or ladies. On the other hand Annie is someone who has met me, she has accepted the Book of Mormon from me, and she knows I am a Mormon missionary.

Annie invited me in to discuss the Book of Mormon.

Given her occupation Annie is comfortable with nudity.

Annie knows she is perfectly safe with me. I am safe with Annie.

Poor Seymour I think had never seen a bare breast in his life, let alone four completely naked adult women.

Seymour was goggling and Seymour did not know where to look.

As Seymour was having difficulty concentrating I started into our standard introduction that we are missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

“Do you find our work sinful?”

“I think those who come to look at you dance and to see you take your clothes off may well be sinful.”

“You are earning a lot more money as dancers than you would as waitresses.

“I would prefer that you were not dancing, but I understand why you do.

“You are The Lord’s creations.

“In the right context your bodies would be absolutely fine.

“I would not like my sister to be dancing naked or close to naked in front of men. My sister has other career paths open to her.”

(None of my sisters have significantly large breasts that would open this career for them, but to say that would distract or detract from the main discussion. I certainly was not going to talk about my sisters’ breasts in front of Seymour Bland.)

“I do not know if you have drifted into this work or whether you made a rational decision to spend a few years dancing before doing something else.

“I expect that as you find God, and as you feel the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will decide to move to other work.”

Seymour Bland was all over the place. The eighteen year old unworldly Mormon boy did not know whether to look away, to look at, or to peek.

“I think you should discuss these issues with our female missionaries. They are common sense people who understand the problems of being a young woman in this society.

“They can give you sustenance and understanding in a way that Seymour and I cannot.”

The young ladies are used to males goggling at them. They were politely dismissive of Seymour rather than being offended.

I took Annie’s telephone number to give to my female colleagues, and we left.

Annie hugged me of course, but no-one hugged Seymour.

I decided that I had to give Seymour a bollocking.

It is not seemly for two Mormon missionaries to have a row in the street but I was so angry that I just blew.

“You useless disgraceful little shit!”

Seymour’s mouth opened but no sound came out.

“How can you treat those women like that!”

Seymour was defensive.

“They are only strippers!”

“Only strippers?”

“Did you look beyond their chests into their eyes?”

“Imagine you come from a background so spiritually poor and so economically poor that you have to dance naked in front of strangers!”

“Did you think about their distressed souls?”

“They so desperately want the spiritual sustenance of The Lord Jesus Christ and all Elder Seymour Bland can do is to goggle at their titties!”

Seymour’s mouth opened and closed again but again no sound came out.

“Are you really so lacking in human understanding that you cannot empathise with these poor girls?”

“These are our sisters!”

“But you have no respect for them!”

“These girls are victims of economic poverty and spiritual poverty and you just look at them like lumps of meat!”

“You dare to criticise President Henderson and President Sexton and President Barrett!”

“You can’t even do our missionary job without disgracing yourself!”

“You do realise that all four of those women are fitter than you because they dance for six to ten hours every night!”

“But you were not looking at their muscle tone, were you?”

“Not that anyone would pay to see your body.”

“You do the absolute minimum in exercises!”

“Don’t talk to me!”

“You pray tonight and we will talk again in the morning.”

A few times that evening Seymour tried to talk to me but I glared at him and he shut up.

The other missionaries in our hostel could tell that we were in a major disagreement.

No-one likes Seymour so there was no rush to comfort him.

People kept away from me, too. I was still in a rage and it showed.

I wanted to thump the little squirt!

How can any human being have so little regard for other human beings?

Neither Seymour nor I was talking about our dispute. The fact that we were in dispute was glaringly obvious..

I was interested that our Mission President did not intervene in our row. He appeared not to notice our dispute, but he could not have not noticed it.

I thought I caught a glimpse of our Mission President smiling but that may have been my mistake.

I have to share a bedroom with Seymour.

In the night I heard Seymour crying at intervals. If Seymour was coming to terms with his inadequacy as a human being it was long overdue.

I had no wish to give comfort to Seymour.

In the morning we did our exercises. Seymour did his usual flapdoodle of an exercise regime while I did the full Hewson regime of stomach crunches, pressups, one arm press ups and one arm balances. I was still angry and I used my anger while exercising.

“We will talk after breakfast.”

Seymour disappeared during breakfast. We are supposed to be in each other's sight all the time. Except when using the toilet of course.

I had an extra slice of toast while I thought out what line to take with Seymour.

If Seymour wanted to hide in the toilet I did not give a damn.

Eventually I will break in and share my thoughts!

Then the Mission President came into the breakfast room and the Mission President asked me to come with him.

In the Mission President's office Seymour was sat in floods of tears.

“Seymour has told me what happened yesterday.

“Seymour is bitterly ashamed. He has asked me to let him give up being a missionary and to let him go home.

“Or at least to let him change partners.”

I should not have interrupted, but I did.

“You pathetic mummy's boy!

“Did someone rub your nose in it that you are a mortal human?”

“Did nasty Mark point out that you are capable of error?”

“Did that hurt?”

“Well sorry sunshine you do not give up like this!”

“Now that you have some humility you might be a better person!”

“How can you go back to Salt Lake City where everyone will know for the whole of your life that you are a failed missionary?”

“You are not going to fail as a missionary. You are going to recover from this!”

“With your permission, sir, Seymour and I have a lot to discuss.”

The Mission President nodded.

“We want to take the day off for physical exercise and for spiritual reflection.”

The Supervisor nodded.

“Before it gets too hot we are going on a ten mile run. Then we will talk.”

The Mission President smiled slightly.

Seymour was in no fit state to argue.

We changed into running kit and we set off.

“You set the pace. Whatever speed you are comfortable with. But it is a run not an amble.”

Seymour could not do ten miles. We ran eight miles because I made Seymour keep going.

I probably oozed aggression and an inclination towards physical violence.

With hindsight I was a bit of a bastard.

All I can say is that I was still very angry with Seymour.

While Seymour lay panting on a pavement I balanced on one hand for a bit. Then I changed hands.

I pulled Seymour up.

“Do you want to run for a bit more or do you want to talk?”

“Talk.”

“So talk.”

We sat on a bench.

We talked for more than an hour.

I pulled many punches.

I could not simply tell Seymour off.

I had to get Seymour Bland to see the error of Seymour's approach to life and to the Mormon religion and to the Church itself without destroying Seymour. These questions are so central to a person's very being that I had to tread delicately but firmly.

I probably erred towards firmly.

I have had no training for straightening out a fellow Mormon who has got himself into a terrible tangle.

I had to get Seymour to see these things and to say these things for himself.

It took a long time.

We prayed.

We both cried.

Seymour sees now that his mother's well intentioned life long conditioning of Seymour has been very harmful to Seymour's development as an independent adult. Seymour recognises that Seymour has a lot to live down in Salt Lake City given his behaviour over the last few years.

Seymour accepts that his future in the Mormon Church is ceilinged at ordinary member of the congregation.

Seymour is good with that.

Seymour will not attempt to live out his mother's fantasies.

Seymour will lead his life for himself.

Seymour's conversation with me was life changing for both of us.

For Seymour it was life changing because we were changing his life.

For me it was life changing because I found that I could do what The Lord needs.

We walked back to the hostel.

We showered. We changed into our missionary clothing.

We went to see the Mission President.

Seymour said,

"I have learned a lot yesterday and today.

"I have changed.

"Mark has helped me greatly.

"I think Mark has saved my soul.

"I am ready to serve the Lord.

"Now we want to go out and knock on doors and find people who need to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ."

“Good.

“Off you go!”

We went to bed early that night.

In the morning Seymour did two stomach crunches with me.

Seymour Bland is a new man now.

Seymour Bland is at last his own man rather than his mummy’s boy. It is an almost overnight personality change.

The inner Seymour is not a bad bloke. He has just never seen daylight before.

People are beginning to like Seymour.

Seymour is beginning to like himself.

We say in the Mormon Church that the missionaries go out as boys and they come back as men. It is certainly true for Seymour Bland.

The Mission President spoke to me privately.

The Mission President recognises that he had asked me to do what I could with Seymour Bland.

The Mission President had had no idea that I would play so rough!

The President could have sent me home for what I did, but after the President had told me to do what I could with Seymour the President felt that he could not in conscience send me home.

But the next time a naked young lady invites me to enter her house I must decline.

The Mission President has noticed that both here in Las Vegas and previously at Dry Gulch I seem to regard Mormon missionary rules as guidelines.

They are rules!

The Lord knows what I got up to in China where I was not properly supervised!

And, by the way, the Mission President did not suggest that I should stay away from naked young ladies.

That was an order, not a suggestion!

Well done with Seymour!

I broke Mormon missionary rules to get there but I have achieved a good result.

From now on I must stick strictly to our Missionary rules.

“Yes, sir.

“May I ask something, sir?”

“Yes.”

“Sorting out Seymour was really difficult for me.

“Isn’t a tough job like that more suited to you as Mission President than for me as a humble missionary?”

“I would not use the word “humble” to describe you, Mark Johnson.”

Smack!

“You will learn, Mark, to use the tools at hand.

“If I had had the confrontation that you suggest, which I did think about, then either I use my authority to crush Seymour, or I treat him as an equal, which he isn’t.

“Either way is bad.

“This way, you have built your confidence to deal with difficult people.

“Seymour cannot complain because an equal has put him right.

“As Mission President I have allowed Seymour to be helped by his equals.

“I will make sure Seymour has strong partners from now until he finishes his time as a missionary.

“The Lord has sent you to help Seymour Bland.

“And the Lord has helped you to build your strengths.

“So thank you, Mark Johnson, for helping me with The Lord’s work.”

CHAPTER 22: Georgina Arron

Cecil Byram is so mild and nice and reasoned that you do not realise what a shrewd and ruthless guy Cecil can be.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has to pay Byram Group for eighteen months salaries for the workforce at the four factories Cecil has taken on. That is worth about thirtyfive million pounds to Cecil.

Maintenance on the factory buildings has been neglected for years so the MOD had to pay Byram nearly five million pounds for Byrams to fettle the sites.

Cecil took the factory metal and chemical stockpiles as a free gift, and then Cecil required more money for enlarging and walling and roofing all the stockpile areas before he buys in more materials.

Cecil had negotiated “flexibility to restructure management” with the MOD. Really the negotiation was with the Treasury, but notionally it was with the MOD. The MOD were no more than messenger boys.

Cecil had Garth undertake wholesale slaughter.

Within days Garth had sent home virtually all the managers and virtually all the administrative staff at the four factories.

Finance is administered centrally under David Taylor.

David added five accounts staff at Willerton and Garth made about thirty accounts and payroll staff redundant. There is only one accounts and payroll query clerk left at each site, who answers to David.

There is one personnel person at each site instead of the three or four there were before. They answer to Rose Howarth.

There is a Production Manager at each site.

All the previous Managing Directors, Finance Directors, HR Directors, Purchasing Managers, Sales Managers, Stores Managers, Training Managers, Transport Managers, and Maintenance Managers have just gone, along with all their Deputies and assistants and secretaries and support staffs.

Even the cleaners for the management offices went!

Garth kept about three competent managers at each site. The rest of the managers above charge hand Garth made redundant.

Garth has kept a clerical worker at each plant to answer the telephone and to support the few managers who are left.

The redundancies all have to be paid for by the Ministry of Defence.

Under the "flexibility" agreement Cecil keeps on receiving the salaries for the managers and for the support workers whom Garth has fired.

For eighteen months!

By the end of the first morning every production worker in each factory had been put to work on machines they know, now making components for Byrams.

About four hundred machines broke down that first day despite supposedly being in readiness for immediate use. Given that the factories were supposed to be in a state of instant readiness for wartime production all these breakdowns were completely unexpected!

Garth stripped our established factories of fitters, leaving routine maintenance to the apprentices. On the second day there were eight experienced maintenance fitters at each new factory. They tore into the broken down machines. Then they worked through all the other machines. Only when every machine was fettled did the fitters return to their home factories.

Cecil claimed their wages and hotel bills and transport from the MOD but the Treasury said that the Treasury was sticking to the contract and that there is no provision in the contract for this compensation.

Hadn't Cecil read the contract before signing it?

Cecil was cross!

The dispute has gone to arbitration.

The factories are happy and hopping.

All the workers at the new factories had a week's pay "lying on".

A week "lying on" is customary with many employers. The idea is that it forces a worker to give a week's notice instead of just walking off the job. Byrams has never had a problem of workers walking off the job, partly because bonuses are always paid in the following week.

Byram does not operate a week "lying on". The money "lying on" was refunded in the workers' first Byrams wage payment.

Cecil reclaimed that money from the MOD.

The first bonuses will be paid in the second wage packet.

There is still no overtime, but the workers are on Byrams pay rates which are better than they had earned previously.

Once bonuses are included every productive worker sees significantly increased pay.

When the workers saw their top managers leaving the factories carrying their sad cardboard boxes and bin bags the workers were at first amused. As the scale of the management and support departures became clear there was a sense of shock and awe.

Byrams is ruthless to the nonproductive!

The entire management function at each factory is now exercised from one open plan office formerly the executive dining room, and one interview room.

The rest of the management happens at Willerton.

The speed of change has shocked the workers.

In workplaces where nothing much ever happened they saw every production worker put to proper work in a morning, virtually every manager disappear inside two days, and the whole work environment transform.

Rebecca Johnson improved their food beyond belief in no time at all.

The workers had understandably feared leaving their government employment to enter the cut-throat world of the private sector. To see their managers wiped away, to be in full employment and earning increased pay, to be provided with good food and a different managerial approach was not just a breath of fresh air.

It was a revolution in itself!

For years the workers had known that their factories were losing money. They have always feared that their jobs were insecure.

For the first time ever these workers know that their jobs are safe.

The Byrams trusts that pay for free secondary and tertiary education for workers and which even provide opportunities for the workers' children and grandchildren took a little accepting.

Never in their lives have these workforces been given these opportunities.

They were looking for the catch!

Cecil explained the catch to me.

“Creating these opportunities for my workers and for their children and grandchildren will cost me maybe two hundred thousand pounds in a full year. Spread across five thousand workers that is forty pounds per worker per year. The increase in morale is worth much more than that.

“If the cost doubles to four hundred thousand a year eventually that is still buttons for the benefit I gain.

“It is also the right thing to do.”

When Cecil, Garth, and the Group Officers visit the factories they take their trays at lunchtime and they sit down with ordinary workers. They introduce themselves and they pick the brains of the workers. In most cases the workers have never before been asked what they think about anything.

Our Group Officers are an impressive bunch.

No-one minds guys who work fourteen hour days having company cars and reserved parking places.

The resentment of these perks comes when the workers feel that the managers are not pulling their weight.

At one factory the workers came outside and they stood and they clapped as three car transporters left the factory taking away all the company cars for auction.

We have machine tools at Byrams where the settings on the machine tools have not been changed in years.

To prevent the operators becoming bored out of their skulls the operators are rotated between different machines every day. As management this is not rocket science, but it was unheard of at the new factories.

The workforces love it!

The rotation is managed from Willerton, not organised locally.

The production schedules relate to each numbered machine and to each named worker. The worker's National Insurance number is listed so there is no uncertainty about which John Smith or which Mohammed Ali is meant.

Each man rotates around three or sometimes four machines doing a slightly different task on each machine.

The long-term plan is that these munitions factories will be fitted out to manufacture the solar harvesting "fabric".

Cecil's thinking is that in a war situation solar energy harvesting will not be an urgent priority whereas manufacturing many components will still be essential.

It will be straightforward to move the workforce from one building to another in time of need.

Given that the factory sites have no unused space for a "fabric" factory Garth is having to be inventive.

Garth is going to demolish all the management offices!

Garth will build the new factories over the empty managerial car parks and the sites where the managerial offices previously stood.

Garth is also moving the storage facilities around to create space.

Although Cecil took money from the Ministry of Defence to renovate the buildings he is now demolishing, Cecil is keeping that money.

Cecil says that he did not have any capital contribution from the Ministry of Defence for remodeling his operation so he is keeping this money as that capital contribution.

Groups of workers have been taken by coach to see solar harvesting "fabric" being manufactured at Heckmondwyke 2. They see what they will be doing next year.

Then they visited Heckmondwyke 1 to see the production machinery being built, currently for China. They visited Herr Direktor at Cleckheaton to see the training facilities.

They went to Willerton where they saw the components sales force and they met the Group Officers except Rebecca who is always out on site somewhere.

Everyone has seen Rebecca Johnson!

They saw Neverthorpe our oldest factory.

Then they went home.

The Engineering Union shop stewards at the new factories are feeling their way.

Normally the shop stewards had to bargain for hours and months and years to extract even a small concession from management.

Now there are clear Byrams policies that everyone has to follow. That's it!

Instead of the hostility towards the shop stewards that there has been for years Byram Group has an open door for suggestions and for improvements.

Most of the managers the shop stewards had a hard time with have gone.

Garth Stead is no softie but Garth is intelligent, polite, courteous, and reasoned. It is like a Revelation for the shop stewards and the workforce to have our management team.

How can these factories operate with virtually no managers?

The whole of Production planning is run by Garth and Barney and a small team at Willerton. Production is planned down to the individual machine and the individual worker. Garth and Barney's team know what each machine should produce in a day and Byrams expects that. There is a small bonus for hitting target and larger bonuses if workers exceed targets. Failure to hit an individual target leads to an overnight email to the factory production manager requiring him to investigate and to report back within two hours of the new day beginning.

The planning of production is easier because we have long term contracts instead of short term contracts.

The new Cardiff factory supplies our components contracts in South Wales and in the South and West of England. Our Walsall factory supplies London and the South East and East Anglia and the Midlands. Newcastle Upon Tyne and Ellesmere Port supply the customers nearest them. Where our new plants do not have the necessary machinery or the necessary capacity they are supplemented by our smaller factories.

Normally Garth and Barney can work it that each of our customer factories is supplied by only one or two of our factories and from Ming City.

The metal that each factory needs arrives from Ming's twice daily. Buffer stocks on site are currently only half a day's supply. The spare stocks were taken away to create space or to create opportunities to make space. Where appropriate the stocks were used and run down.

Our factories do not need individual production planning, or purchasing, or sales.

The finance and payroll is all done from Willerton.

Even the payroll is simple.

The basic pay comes weekly.

The bonuses are worked out at Willerton.

Payslips are emailed on Wednesday. The bonuses from last week together with this week's pay hit the workers' bank accounts on Thursday.

For workers who have not been paid bonuses in decades the impact has been astonishing.

They are busy, adequately paid, and well fed.

They had never in their wildest dreams expected privatisation to be like this!

Apart from our training programs we are not hiring at the moment.

We are advertising for apprentice fitters for the new factories.

The apprentices will spend three months training at Cleckheaton before joining their factories. It is just possible for the apprentices to commute by minibus.

Garth says that half the apprentices will be female in line with Group policy.

The Engineering Union is on board with that.

The Production Managers have let it be known that they have permission to dismiss up to ten workers in each factory for sexist behavior. The Engineering Union shop stewards are being sent on equal opportunities courses run by their union but paid for by Byrams.

The Engineering Union and Byrams are running a coordinated equalities and respect education campaign in the factories well in advance of the female apprentices arriving.

Gwen Sykes will be given the task of Apprentice support when apprentices arrive at a factory from Clickworth. This is a Union post alongside Gwen's union role as Women's Officer.

Gwen would lose pay when she is doing this work so Garth has agreed with Dexter White that Gwen will be paid the same as an apprentice in Gwen's cohort called Alex. Alex usually earns good bonuses.

Gwen may also claim expenses.

Gwen of course is not a Group Officer but she is in her Union post with Garth's blessing.

The managers at each factory understand the importance of Gwen's role and the significance of Garth's blessing.

Training is organized from Willerton.

Stores is not a big issue because there are virtually no stores. The components produced are shipped out three or four times a day.

Transport is organized from Willerton. Apart from the forklift trucks and the dollies every vehicle has gone from every factory.

Garth concentrates on sorting out the new factories. Barney Stoker was promoted to Assistant Group Production Manager under Garth, working with the established factories. I now run Neverthorpe under Barney.

From being stretched for manufacturing capacity we now have spare capacity.

Garth and Cecil are currently stockpiling completed components because each large factory will lose components production during the week when it has to produce ammunition.

Cecil is a sneaky negotiator! The new factories are paying their workers at Byram's wages and bonuses instead of their previous MOD pay rates. The way Cecil worded that clause in the contract the MOD has to reimburse whatever Byrams pay.

If Cecil had workers at the factories working overtime or working nights the MOD would have to reimburse Byrams.

There is an arbitration clause that Cecil negotiated.

The arbitration clause is what Cecil calls "either/or". The arbitrator cannot fudge by agreeing half way. The arbitrator has to find for one party in full or for the other party in full.

The arbitrator ruled that four hundred machines breaking down on the first day was not to be expected and so all the additional expense that Byrams incurred is refundable.

Cecil says that the Treasury is in a difficult situation because whatever they might concede to Byrams then becomes a precedent for every other transaction. So the Treasury keeps adopting "principles".

In most arbitrations the arbitrator comes down in the middle. With "either/or" arbitration the Treasury gets hammered by the arbitrator.

Mike's sales team is trying to sell our spare production capacity. That is going very well.

Sahid Daar and Carol have a greatly increased budget to increase the Internet sales. Cecil loves our Internet sales because our Internet sales have a much higher unit profit than other sales.

We make maybe six per cent to ten per cent gross profit on production normally.

With Internet sales we cut out the wholesaler's profit and the retailer's profit, two sets of transport costs, two sets of premises costs, and two sets of staffing costs. We sell at seventy per cent of the retail price and we make well over one hundred per cent profit.

We even have a little extra profit generated from what we charge for postage and packing.

We also pick up long-term and volume customers who first meet us through the Internet.

Rebecca's young man Chester Wilson now has a student visa for his doctorate. Cecil pays Chester a consultancy retainer to advise on all kinds of things.

Cecil is now advertising that he will invest money in units of half a million pounds to established companies for increasing or improving production capacity. The catch is that Cecil wants equity rather than interest. One can apply online. There is no negotiating. Cecil accepts your offer or he doesn't. Further applications are prohibited for four years.

Chester Wilson is screening the applications.

Cecil is also interested in startups that expect to gross one million pounds in turnover inside five years. Chester screens those applications.

Chester does not have many applications to screen because entrepreneurs hate to part with equity.

Apparently Chester warned Cecil that this would happen.

Cecil wanted to try it this way first.

The next plan was to make loans secured on assets which will be cheaper for borrowers than the banks but which will still pay Cecil a good return. Or alternatively Byrams takes loan capital in the form of Preference shares.

One of the first takers was the transport company that delivers and transports everything for the Byrams Group including Ming's. They were paying fifteen per cent on their overdraft and twelve per cent on their capital borrowings to purchase vehicles. They issued Byrams with Preference shares and replaced all their borrowings.

In good years the Preference shares earn the same as all the other shares. In bad years Byrams is guaranteed a ten per cent return.

Should the transport firm go under, the Preference shares have priority over the other shareholders.

In return the Preference shares have no votes at company meetings.

The transport company is now freed from idiot bank managers, and it has access to as much capital as it needs. Cecil has a better return on his capital than any bank would give him.

Word is spreading. There are eight companies now where Byram has put in between ten million and one hundred and fifty million pounds.

Chester is preparing a press release to publicise the successes of the first eight borrowers.

One of the Byrams new factories had a lavatory that was installed and painted for a visit by the late Queen Mother before her husband became King George The Sixth. It has not been used since.

Garth went to see the lavatory on his next visit to that factory. It is rather sumptuous. It has been cleaned regularly and sometimes it has been redecorated.

Garth reached into his pocket and he brought out a stick on toilet symbol indicating that this lavatory was for women only.

Garth had the newest female member of staff affix the symbol.

Garth invited her to ceremoniously close the door and flush the toilet. There was a lot of merriment!

My prospective father in law, Tom Trail, came to visit us. He is finding running the family factory very hard work. He wants Douglas to come back.

“Sell it, Dad. Or close it.

“If you can find someone to run it and you retire that is fine by me, too.

“I am not going to work for you and mum again.

“I work hard for Byrams but I am my own man.

“I would be a fool to give that up.

“You can tell Mum that if she does not come to the wedding or she makes a scene at the wedding she will never see me or her grandchildren.

“It is Mum’s call.”

I was so proud of Douglas.

Chapter 23: Shakoor Daar

A few days before our wedding I went to Meldon to meet the famous Mrs Shah.

Mrs Shah is clearly close to death.

Mrs Shah gave me her blessing.

We had a hug.

Our wedding plans were fairly straightforward.

I have never been at a wedding where the bride and groom walked under a sword arch. That was fun!

Your wedding day is special. I cannot think of any way that my wedding could have been better.

I knew that Ali Miah is strong and fit but I had no idea how strong and fit Ali is. We were both new to sex, but we found out how things worked. Ali being an engineer Ali tested the systems almost to destruction!

I was fine with that.

Ali is so fit!

Ali has so much stamina!

I was exhausted by the time we got to Bahrain. I was very happy, but I was exhausted.

I have never ridden in a Rolls Royce before. The Bahraini Royal family really pushed the boat out.

We went on a slight excursion to see some great views around Bahrain.

By the time we arrived at our hotel our luggage was already unpacked and put away. We have been given a huge penthouse apartment with tremendous views. We have our own chef, and guards, and a housekeeper. There are two shifts of helpers, so we are never without support.

The Rolls Royce is ours to use whenever we wish. There are two shifts of chauffeurs. There is what they call a chase car that holds our bodyguards cum escorts.

We found that the Quranic Arabic we have both learned is very similar to modern Arabic as spoken in Bahrain!

We were presented to the little princess whom Ali had rescued.

The princess gave me a necklace and pendant that looks fabulously expensive. No wonder we have guards!

The little girl's mother, who is a close relation of the King, took me through fashion shops in Bahrain.

I was really surprised that the shops were closed for us to visit them.

I selected three dresses at fantastic expense that the Royal Family paid for. The sheer quality of these dresses is an education for me.

While I was doing this Ali was in conversations with the Crown Prince and some other Ministers. They were discussing a new airport that the Royal Family intend to build.

We were taken on a boat to see where the new airport will be built. It is an expanse of water at the moment.

We were presented to the King of Bahrain. The King gave Ali a medal for “services to Bahrain”. Ali was dressed in one of his pilot uniforms.

The King gave me an ornate and heavy gold bangle.

The food our chefs cooked was out of this world!

We went to the Royal Camel Farm. We rode camels!

I really do not mind if I never see another camel in my life! They are not comfortable to ride.

I have seen Abdullah doing his exercises.

I did not know that Ali does the same exercises every morning.

What gets to me was that after Ali has thoroughly exhausted me each morning then Ali gets up and he does his exercises!

Then Ali showers, Ali comes back to bed, and then Ali exhausts me again.

Ali exhausts me repeatedly each night. Then twice in the morning. And most afternoons.

I am enjoying married life.

So is Ali.

Ali is a gentleman and a gentle man.

I am still working on Ali to reassure him that I will not break however vigorous he is.

Ali and I had not discussed contraception very much before the wedding.

Ali said that he trusts me to make the right decisions and to take the precautions.

Idle sod!

The broad plan is that I will obtain a fashion degree from Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, so I will be about twenty-three before I graduate.

Then whenever it suits me we will start a family.

We are thinking we will have three children eventually. Given the China “One Child” policy we will have to make sure we do not fall foul of the Chinese law. Of course by then we may not be living in China.

Kitty is a nice person. She has good English. At one point Kitty was a fashion student but Kitty ran out of money and she had to drop out of her course.

It would seem logical to me that if the airline terminal at Beijing managed without Ali for almost a month, it does not need for Ali to be there for seventy hours a week. After a few weeks we had a bit of a row. I have rationed Ali to forty hours a week at the airport.

The terminal has not collapsed yet!

I do not mind Ali working on his Masters degree provided that he does it at home. Ali uses the kitchen in Arthur's old flat for his experiments.

I use one of Arthur's spare bedrooms as a sewing room.

Kitty and I are having a great time exploring the fashion industry of China.

I am looking for products that we Daars can sell in England. My Putonghua is improving but I find it hard work.

Ali and I were invited for a meal with some people Ali knows, a General Lee and his really nice wife.

Mrs Lee said that there is cachet in wearing clothing designed by European designers. When I am ready to set up my business Mrs Lee will find customers for me.

We also had a meal with a Mr and Mrs Fan. They have a son at Cambridge University who is a friend of Ali and who came to our wedding. The son is working on his Masters degree now.

Ali and I have entertained all kinds of people. Some work at the airport. Some of them are Chinese Army or Air Force people. The British and Bahraini Air Attaches and their wives came one evening.

There was even a woman foundry manager from Shanghai who knows Karen Byram and Mark Johnson! She stayed with the Byram family in Meldon for about five weeks.

I attended a madressa in Doncaster. I had religious education at the Hewsons' house.

I visit Ali's madressa with Ali twice a month just to confirm that everything there is fine.

Christmas was quiet. We sent a message on Skype to the Hewson reunion.

Ali's masters degree thesis is going well. Ali seems very happy.

Ali has quantified how much stronger mortar is if you put starch from rice into the water before you add water to the mix. Ali has generated a formula and lots of graphs.

Ali will also test his mortar against its ability to withstand sea water. We are going to spend a week by the coast where Ali will play in the sea!

I did not change my name on marriage. The English do it, but it is forbidden for Muslims. I always carry photocopies of my Islamic marriage certificate and of my British marriage certificate in my handbag just in case there is ever a question.

CHAPTER 24: Don Hewson

I sat down with Kali Daar, Gerald Butler, Peter Wilkins, Colin Donkin, Robert Graham, and our Max to talk about money. To avoid interruption I used a room at the theatre school on a Saturday morning.

Colin Donkin had come up from London on Friday evening. Colin is staying with his friend Eric.

I had David Wilkins and Sahid Daar sit in on the discussions because they are both sharp with money.

I deliberately keep the children ignorant about money until they are aged about fourteen because I wish for the children to enjoy their childhoods.

At around fourteen I explain to them that they are multimillionaires.

The idea is that they will have four years to grow into the idea that they have significant wealth. Hopefully by the time they get their hands on their money they will have a mature attitude towards it.

The children need to understand the scale of their wealth.

First I had to create a scale of values against which to position their total financial worth.

We discussed wage levels, starting at minimum wage and going through to supermarket manager and to Head Teacher.

We discussed what it costs to run a household, including rent.

One of the children commented that two people on minimum wage living together would still find life pretty tough.

We discussed how much money a house costs, ranging from the little house that Emma owns through to the house in London that Tohur Miah and David Wilkins own.

We covered outright purchase, borrowing on mortgage, and renting.

Then I gave each child an envelope containing an explanation of the sources of their wealth. They then have an explanation of how their money is currently invested, the current values, and how much income is generated annually.

Robert Graham is the wealthiest of this group of children, followed by Sally, Gerald and Max.

It is very hard for any person to jump from a child's pocket money to the knowledge that they are a multimillionaire.

I took the exercise slowly.

They all grasped that even after deducting £300,000 to buy a good house in Tryton outright they will each have an income from investments better than the income a head teacher earns, but with no rent or mortgage to pay.

Robert is significantly wealthier even than that.

Sahid shared his investment strategy with the group. Sahid is the major financial supporter of his family.

The children understood the wisdom of buying houses for siblings to live in after marriage. Renting the houses out in the meantime makes sense.

Sahid owns the warehouse and factory that Daar Fashions uses.

Sahid says that if the business continues to grow Daar Fashions may need to move to larger premises. Sahid will rent out the warehouse and factory to someone else.

The rest of Sahid's money is spread across twenty public companies. Sahid is trying to achieve high liquidity so Sahid may invest in some new business when Sahid knows what it will be.

David shared his finances, including that his books are owned overseas and so they attract virtually no tax.

David explained his investment strategy. David's strategy is very different.

David needs a "smallish" income to live on and to support the Wilkins family.

Smallish by David's standards!

David has a "modest" stash of cash set aside for emergencies. Some other money is out on short term loans.

Most of David's money is in what David regards as "permanent" investments that may not generate huge income now but where the capital value will increase significantly over time. Companies that do not pay dividends for example should grow by compound growth. If dividends are not paid there is no tax to pay either, so David saves again.

There were discussions about the morality of David Wilkins avoiding paying income tax by having so much income squirrelled abroad. David explained that should he bring any of that wealth to England he will have to pay income tax on it.

David explained that if Wilkins Books (Cayman Islands) Ltd was to lend money to David Wilkins, that would not trigger a tax bill. There was outrage when David explained that if David paid interest on that loan then that interest would reduce David's UK tax bill!

I took the children through the statements of account. In every case the supermarket sponsorship was far and away the largest source of income. Robert's cookery books and Christmas goods were next.

The Tykes' Christmas goods were next.

Gerald's piano playing for Charlotte and Sally Johnson was next.

Then there were the sums from the CD/DVDs some children had made, download fees, and Sahid's web site money.

Then the acting and performance fees. The child actors who appear on leading television programs are paid pretty well. Each child actor (except now Kali Daar) currently earns more than a High School Head Teacher.

The acting incomes only seem relatively small because the children have all this extra income.

Max's earnings from his long ago film part were relatively speaking buttons.

Tom Driburg earns a lot of money from the children but Tom has generated much more money for these children than any other child actors on television earn.

The children in care had had deductions made for their board. All the children have paid income tax.

I discussed the normal range of investments.

I explained how if they could avoid using their wealth their wealth would roughly double in real terms each ten years.

I made them do the calculations to show how wealthy they could be at age sixtyfour.

That was a shocker! Two million pounds at 7% compound interest over fifty years becomes thirty-two million pounds. Then the income alone grows to more than two million pounds a year.

The investment for the children has been in equities because over the long term equities generally perform better than any other investment.

All the children have the maximum possible investment in pension funds because pension funds are a tax shelter. If they need the cash they can borrow against their pension funds or they can even sell their pension funds to other investors.

I explained that their investments are in a portfolio of twentyfive leading shares.

I explained how the shares had been selected.

I said that each child would now share with me the decisions about their investments.

A four year apprenticeship is long enough.

From their eighteenth birthdays the children will control their own money.

I scheduled individual meetings in a month's time with each child to discuss their individual portfolios.

The children agreed not to talk to the younger children about this information, because the information would end the childhood innocence of the younger children. An important issue for Emma and myself, which I did not discuss with the children, is our theatre school.

When the day comes that "Tykes" ends or our children are no longer involved there is a danger that our school could be undersubscribed, leading to a vicious spiral of decline. If we expand now, then we can take the eventual loss of "Tykes" in our stride.

The theatre schools in London charge a lot of money. We charge twenty thousand pounds per year, which is less than the London theatre schools but a lot more than the local prep schools which charge between nine thousand and twelve thousand pounds a year. With twenty children we grossed four hundred thousand pounds. We now gross just over half a million pounds a year. Total wage costs are under two hundred thousand pounds a year. Our capital costs are already repaid to me. We could drop our fees to say twelve thousand pounds a year which would bring in three hundred and twelve thousand pounds a year. The school would still be profitable.

Given the opportunity of a theatre school at prep school prices we are confident that a significant number of parents would prefer a theatre school. Our premises and facilities could take five times the number of children without strain. We would increase the teaching staff where this is needed.

Of course, sixty children at twelve thousand a year brings in more money than our current twenty-six children at twenty thousand a year. We cut our prices and we make more profit.

We have decided to open an infant to young junior section. The thinking is that parents would prefer not to disrupt the education of their children. We will not charge twelve thousand pounds for nursery, of course.

Emma and I decided to go for it.

We decided to recruit the staff we need and then to start quietly with our own children and with the siblings of children already in the school.

Then we will advertise the change.

In that way intending parents can visit a going concern and they can meet the people who will teach their children.

We also decided to offer two more years of education so children may take their GCSEs at our school.

We are a private school so we have complete flexibility in what we may offer. English language, Maths, and Information Technology are in practice compulsory everywhere because one cannot function well without them.

We already have provision for French, Spanish, and German. We discussed with the specialist language teachers who said that if languages are given enough time on the timetable the children could take and pass GCSE languages at the end of Year 10. That time would then be available for other subjects in Year 11.

Each child should take one language but a child may take three languages if desired.

We do a lot of Drama and Dance and Music and Art anyway so those could also transmute to GCSEs.

We can offer History and Geography and English Literature and Religious Studies. Our Science teacher can offer Biology and Chemistry and Physics as distinct subjects, or General Science for those who prefer.

In Year 11 we will offer Accountancy and Statistics and Critical Thinking and Technical Drawing.

Each child's timetable is organised individually. No child is going to take fifteen GCSEs!

Some subjects may have no takers.

We are profitable enough that a class of only one child is not an issue. Educationally though it is probably better to have at least three children if possible.

A through school from nursery to GCSEs meets the needs of many families.

We have the space.

This is not just to keep Max living at home! It is very hard for a child to go from the striving and supportive atmosphere of our school to a typical High School. This way the child can continue to learn and enjoy in a secure environment.

My father in law Arthur's comment was not welcome.

“Congratulations!

“You have reinvented the Grammar School.”

We have no Engineering or Design Technology or Cooking or Domestic Science or Woodwork. Or other languages. We have the space and the capital. We have to make it clear that the child or parents have only to ask!

CHAPTER 25: David Wilkins

Tohur is working so tremendously hard. Tohur is a national judo athlete virtually certain to fight in the Olympics. Tohur is a TV chef generating two books a year. Tohur is a student in the final year of a degree course. Tohur takes the Donkins to Mosque once a week. He spent a lot of time on Ali’s wedding.

Tohur sees his family in Tryton regularly. Tohur is working on his autobiography to publish next May.

The poor sod has no time to relax.

I felt so bad when I had to chew Tohur out.

Tohur has not made a new investment in six months! Tohur has over two million pounds of earnings and investment income from the last six months sitting in his bank account earning nothing!

I gave Tohur a list of what I think are twelve reasonable investments and I told him to put £175,000 into each unless he had better investments in mind.

Tohur telephoned his broker and he placed the orders.

“When did you last have a week off?”

Tohur thought for a bit.

“April. Six days.”

“August. In Beijing.”

“You are not going to go on holiday unless I take you.”

“Maybe.”

“Tunisia?”

“OK.”

I went on the Internet and I booked a week for both of us in Tunisia to begin on Saturday.

“What about Annette?”

“Annette is not invited. This is just you and me.”

“What about classes?”

“It is half term next week. There are no classes.”

“Oh.”

That is the state that Tohur was in!

So we went to Tunisia.

No-one knew us.

We had no telephones or internet.

We just had a quiet holiday where we sunbathed and we swam and we slept and we ate.

I think the Tunisians may have thought that we were a gay couple because we were not trying to pick up young women.

Tohur has been so wound up that the holiday was terrific for him.

It was good for me, too.

I was supposed to spend a week with Mr Porteous but Mr Porteous was fine about my postponing my week with him.

My autobiography is selling well. It was serialised in the Sunday Scandal shortly after Charlotte’s autobiography.

There is a knock on effect for my cookery books. The cookery books are all selling well because of the publicity for my autobiography.

The bookshops like it that Charlotte and I attract non-traditional customers into the bookshops.

I had mentioned in my autobiography that when I was a child TV chef adult ladies who should have known better sent nude and semi nude photos to me.

A senior manager at the television company, Mr Vincent, quite properly held onto the photos and Mr Vincent did not let me see them.

Mr Vincent never gave me the photos.

I never asked for them.

When I commented that Mr Vincent never gave me the photos that stirred a lot of publicity!

We had a ceremony publicised on TV where Mr Vincent ceremoniously handed over the file of rude photos.

Mr Vincent was amused.

Apparently Mr Vincent just stuck the file in his safe. He forgot about the file. I never asked for it.

Suddenly there was a storm of publicity!

When I opened the file I pretended that I was shocked at the photos!

I hammed it up for the cameras.

My autobiography is selling about half as well as Dennis's, which is still very good.

Mine is one of the biggest selling autobiographies in Britain this year.

Charlotte Johnson's autobiography is the biggest selling book of this year. Charlotte Johnson's autobiography sold better in England than Dennis's autobiography did last year. In the United States Charlotte sold about five million copies of her autobiography in the first month of publication. Charlotte made over sixteen million pounds before tax from American book sales alone – in the first month!.

Charlotte's third CD/DVD sold well. Her first and second CD/DVDs also sold well again because of the publicity around Charlotte's autobiography.

The Engineering Union is not sponsoring Charlie Kent to be a Labour parliamentary candidate. They don't dislike Charlie Kent, but Charlie was never on the union's panel of approved candidates.

The Engineering Union shop stewards held a whip round in all the Byram factory canteens that raised twenty thousand pounds for Charlie's campaign.

More than fifty staff at Neverthorpe have booked unpaid leave on Election Day to help Charlie's campaign.

Once I was eighteen I bobbed into the Labour Campaign office at Clickworth and I gave Molly my cheque.

With fifty thousand pounds from us Wilkins brothers and twenty-five thousand pounds from Cecil Byram and the twenty thousand pounds from the Byram workers the election campaign for Charlie Kent is awash with money. They can even afford to pay for leaflet delivery and for postage.

Byram's operate three factories in Heckmondwike and a training centre in Cleckheaton. These are all in the same Parliamentary Constituency. Charlie Kent introduced the Labour Candidate for that constituency to Cecil.

Cecil is not giving her any money but she is welcome to visit the Byrams premises and to speak to the workers and students.

Cecil has given orders that Labour MPs and Parliamentary candidates are welcome to visit any Byram's factory. Charlie Kent is making sure his fellow candidates know that they are welcome to visit Byrams.

Annette's father Gerald Edwards has had a heart attack.

Gerald is alive and Gerald is getting the best of care, but the experience has been traumatic for him.

Gerald's confidence is so shaken that Gerald was almost straight with me.

Gerald owns a stockjobber business. Gerald has managers. Gerald supervises the business from home mainly. The business turns over tens of thousands of millions of pounds a year.

Gerald's razor thin margins generate a little over a hundred million pounds a year in profit. The profit all comes to Gerald.

Gerald's business also trades and speculates in shares.

Gerald's heart attack has forced Gerald to recognise that he has a succession problem.

Gerald's eldest son Chris is a great young man. Chris is too honest for the City of London, and Chris is not really sharp enough. Chris already has a good career in the Army.

Gerald's younger son John is only sixteen and John is pretty wild at the moment.

Gerald knows that John uses drugs, which is not good.

John is on course to fail his GCSEs at the moment because John currently has no interest in studying. John is not a credible successor.

The managers Gerald employs are very good managers, but none of them is a credible successor. If they were enterprising enough they would already be running their own businesses!

Annette is not interested in money. Annette is not numerate.

Annette has no interest in stockjobbing.

Gerald does not really believe that a woman can be competent at anything financial.

Gerald could sell out, but he really does not wish to.

Gerald is looking urgently for someone who can be trained up to succeed Gerald.

Gerald recognises that Annette and I are young yet. This proposal is independent of what may happen between us.

Would I like to join Gerald's company with a view to succeeding Gerald in say ten years time?

Gerald envisages a starting salary of three million pounds a year!

I smiled.

"I earn about four million pounds a year from my TV chef filming, the supermarket sponsorship, and my investments. I earn about the same again offshore from my cookery books and from my offshore investments."

"I thought you were only a decamillionaire."

"Are you worth more than that?"

Only Gerald Edwards could say "only a decamillionaire"!

"My UK wealth makes me a bit better than a decamillionaire. My seven cookery books and my autobiography are owned offshore. They do not pay British tax."

"Damn. My researcher missed that."

"So if I offered you say seven million pounds a year salary plus profit share, would you come in?"

"How much profit share?"

"Half a per cent initially, rising by half a per cent each year you are with me. Capped at twenty per cent after forty years."

"I would like to take advice on that. It means throwing up my current career to go into a totally new career that I know little about."

"If I took the job and you fired me, I would have lost my first career and blown my second career."

"I will take some advice and I will get back to you."

I went to see Paul Thornton and Mr Porteous. They both said that they had been thinking of making me similar offers, but neither is going to offer me a seven figure starting salary.

I should take Gerald's offer.

Gerald Edwards is very respected in the City.

As Gerald's protege I would have immediate respect added to the respect that the City has for any self made millionaire. Go for it!

Without disclosing details I spoke to my tutor at the Cordon Bleu College.

My tutor said that I have no chance whatever of making that kind of money in cheffing. A few very gifted individuals do make that kind of money. Having observed me closely for more than a year my tutor does not think I have that "star quality".

Take the money!

The tutor said that I could complete the degree as a part time student if I wish. All of the modules are also taught as short courses so I could use my holiday entitlements whatever they are.

Don Hewson said that I am “ceilinged” in cheffing, particularly if I do not wish to open my own restaurant. Go for this opportunity to go into Finance, where there is literally no ceiling.

Helen said it was up to me.

Mr Driburg said that I should take the money. As Mr Driburg stands to lose money from the decision I think very highly of Mr Driburg for giving that advice.

Annette said that she is worried that Gerald is trying to buy me, so I feel forced to marry Annette.

That thought had not occurred to me.

We have never discussed marriage. We are two ambitious striving young people who are both too busy for marriage. I am barely eighteen. We like each other a lot but marriage is years away for both of us.

Annette discussed her concerns with Gerald.

Gerald said that most people who survive a heart attack usually have another.

Should Gerald’s next heart attack be fatal whom can Gerald’s family trust to run the business competently and honestly?

Gerald said that his problem is that he needs a flyboy with a market trader mentality who can be trusted not to steal.

David Wilkins can be trusted not to steal.

Annette has her own money. Annette does not need to marry money. The same for David Wilkins.

If we marry or we live together that is fine, but if we don’t that is also fine by Gerald.

Gerald has met me through Annette but this offer is all to do with the family business and wealth. Annette does not enter into it.

Annette was not pleased with that!

I am not over chuffed that Gerald Edwards thinks that I am “a flyboy with a market trader mentality”.

For the money I will earn with Gerald I do not need Gerald to like me, too.

Of course, Gerald Edwards might think that description is praise.

Dennis is enjoying University. Dennis is jogging along with Grace Adams at the moment.

For a few weeks Dennis took in the three younger Johnson children, but as soon as Charlotte was back from the United States they returned home.

CHAPTER 26: Cecil Byram

I despise banks and bankers. I might one day meet a banker worthy of respect. I am pretty close to setting up my own investment bank because I am so frustrated by banks!

The civil servants I have met have impressed me. Apparently it took eight years of nagging politicians before the politicians accepted that they had to do something about the four loss making factories.

The Government could not close the factories because it would cause unemployment in six marginal constituencies. They did not think it wise to destroy this essential industry. They needed the capacity to expand production in time of crisis or war.

The politicians dithered.

All these years the losses have piled up!

Eventually there was the rare combination of a Defence Minister and a Treasury Minister at the same time who could both see sense. The civil servants were given permission to go ahead!

The civil servants tried out on me the story that there are other buyers for the four factories. As the civil servants have excluded public companies and foreigners there are very few possible players.

My industrial research company made discreet enquiries and none of the other possible purchasers are in a position to make this purchase just at the moment.

I had no need to do a deal.

The civil servants were desperate to do a deal because the next Ministerial reshuffle might take away one of the two Ministers. Then they might have to wait another eight years and lose many more millions of pounds.

I enquired of the civil servants how many hours of fighting could the British Army do before the British Army runs out of ammunition?

They looked embarrassed.

Not many hours, it seems.

The Treasury will not authorise the purchase of a reserve of ammunition that is not going to be needed in the foreseeable future.

The Treasury and the Foreign Office agree that Britain will not be in a significant shooting war for at least three years. I expect they said the same in 1911 and 1936 and 1947.

All the countries we export ammunition to have adequate stocks of ammunition.

There are no obvious sales opportunities.

The Treasury was fully supportive of the MOD sloughing off these loss making factories.

I played tough and I negotiated a reasonable deal.

The first step was to reduce overheads. There were great rafts of unnecessary managers and paper pushers. Paper in these times!

There were dozens of company cars to sell.

We inherited and we sold some very expensive antique boardroom furniture and antique desks.

The funniest find was a store of fine wines in one factory that brought in nearly half a million pounds at a fine wines auction.

The next step was to sweat the assets. The machine tools needed using. The staff were capable of operating the machines. They just needed products to produce.

I had them churn out components and generate profits from Day One.

Less than a week after purchasing the factories I was making very acceptable manufacturing profits from each factory. As everyone settled down my manufacturing profit improved.

In the first eighteen months all wages are paid by the MOD.

There is no capital cost.

I pay only for raw materials, for premises costs, and for power.

The civil servants had agreed that I do not have to close all four factories simultaneously.

Four months after the purchase we took it in turns to produce ammunition at each factory for a week. The Ministry representatives said that manufacturing productivity from each factory was more than 30% up from what it had been in previous years.

The MOD and the Treasury had contracted to take five days' production so they had to buy all we produced.

I had quietly negotiated a clause that Byram were to "use our best efforts" to generate as much ammunition as possible during the five day period to replicate a wartime or crisis situation.

It was important to establish for planning purposes how much ammunition each factory could produce in an emergency situation.

What upset the Ministry was that instead of the production one would expect from the five eight hour day shifts they had to buy all the production from 24 hour working for five days and four nights!

Volunteers from our established factories worked 4pm-12pm and 12pm to 8am, with some of the existing day staff moving to supervise and to help the evening and night shifts.

Each large munitions factory has about seven hundred productive workers. To operate three shifts requires one thousand four hundred additional workers. Over the four five day periods involved roughly two thousand Byram staff volunteered to take part, earning double time and bonuses for their efforts.

Under the terms of the contract with the MOD all the wages and hotel costs were chargeable to the MOD!

Instead of a year's supply of ammunition the MOD ended up with a buffer stock of more than five years' supply of ammunition at normal rates of use.

All the MOD people wrote concerned memos to the Treasury asking how a Treasury approved contract could have turned out so badly.

All I saw was broad smiling faces from people telling me that I was abusing the terms of the contract.

I was "a disgrace", they said happily.

One MOD civil servant commented with a smile that unless the Treasury buys out my contract the MOD will be forced to take another bumper supply of ammunition next year and every year thereafter!

The Armed Forces are very happy to hold larger stocks of ammunition. They would like even more.

An Army logistics general enquired whether we had the capacity to make rifles and submachine guns. I said that we are essentially a components business but we are beginning to make entire products. How many of what does he want?

I also said that we have the capacity to reverse engineer anything from a pin to a heavy tank.

If there is captured foreign kit that he would like manufactured in quantity, we can do it. He looked at me oddly.

I dragged him over to our web site and I spent twenty minutes showing him everything that we currently produce. By the time we finished he understood that we can supply almost anything he can imagine.

He asked me about plastic products and components. I told him that I am looking for a plastic components business to purchase.

A Treasury civil servant tried to persuade me not to stick to the letter of the contract. I should cut down to eight hour production.

I said that it was not my fault that the Treasury had signed the contract.

Hadn't they read the contract before they signed it?

The civil servant warned me that my strict adherence to the terms of the contract might lead to me giving evidence before the Public Accounts Committee.

I said that would be an enjoyable experience.

I have a lot to say and I will really enjoy saying it.

Suddenly he went off that idea.

My MOD contacts are pretty happy. As the deal was to privatise these factories to end perpetual losses all the costs are borne by the Treasury rather than by the MOD.

The Treasury is spitting tacks.

The contracts were approved by Treasury civil servants so the MOD civil servants are safe.

Robbing the other factories of workers to run three shifts at the ammunition factories was very profitable. Garth had built up stocks of components in readiness. We cleared all those. We met our obligations to customers.

The Cleckheaton training facility is in full operation.

Herr Direktor was telephoned by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP had required many unemployed people to apply to Byrams, so could DWP have a list of all applicants, please?

"All eighteen thousand?"

"Yes, please."

"No."

"All applications are confidential."

"Sorry!"

Choosing from eighteen thousand applicants was easier than it sounds, because of Herr Direktor's transparent assessment system. It took the computer maybe three minutes to rank the applicants by points score.

Herr Direktor runs a variety of courses and modules at Cleckheaton. Some are simply for how to operate a particular machine tool. Setting the tool and simple

maintenance are part of the module. He has a range of students from school leaver to post engineering degree courses, all designed to give me the workers I need.

Herr Direktor is getting ready for the second wave of internal management trainees when they begin next year.

I decided that I had to do something about management retention before I started to lose good people.

I have set up an investment fund for the managers whom I wish to keep. They may only draw from the fund at age sixtyfive unless I agree otherwise. An amount

equivalent to twenty per cent of their pre tax wage and bonuses goes into the fund.

I have backdated this to when the managers started working for me.

David Taylor and Rose Howarth have been with me for more than a decade so their individual accounts are already significant.

I bumped up salaries for the folk whom I need to keep including Kevin Hanson and Karl Styles and Martin Jenkins.

I really cannot afford to lose Rebecca Johnson. Rebecca Johnson is my secret weapon for extra profitability. I doubled Rebecca's salary again to keep Rebecca sweet and to make Rebecca too expensive to poach.

Rebecca Johnson is one of my most highly paid managers.

Rebecca earns her pay and her bonuses many times over. The catering section generates more than enough profit to pay Rebecca her high earnings.

Rebecca costs me nothing but she generates over a hundred million pounds in profit each year.

Without criticising any of my inner team, I cannot identify another manager who has increased profit by over hundred million pounds without any capital or revenue cost.

If I could I would reward them appropriately.

I pay Sahid Daar even more than I pay Rebecca Johnson, because Sahid earns me hundreds of millions of pounds through his marketing. Byram Group must not lose Sahid Daar.

I hope the pension scheme for managers helps me to keep the other good people.

Some of Kevin Hanson's second batch of recruits are training to erect the fields of fabric in Wales. Others have started their training as builders.

We are waiting on planning permissions to demolish buildings and to build others.

I will use my tame builders for building storage facilities and new “fabric” factories. From my point of view building the “fabric” factories is more urgent than building onsite storage facilities.

I have the fifty million pounds worth of chemicals and the more than a hundred millions pounds worth of the necessary metals bought already.

Most of the metals I actually had in stock before I had any idea that this opportunity would arise. The metals are in covered outdoor stockpiles at Mings.

The chemicals are stored in huge storage sheds at the Byram’s Engineering depot next to Mings.

I have not told MOD yet. They do not need to know everything.

The MOD has not asked.

The civil servants probably think that I will buy the raw materials when the onsite storage facilities are built.

I am under a time limit to purchase the raw materials but that has not expired yet.

The storage sheds the chemicals are in were actually built for my proposed stockpile of Chinese goods. I will build more sheds for a Chinese stockpile once planning permission comes through.

I have a significantly larger pool of competent managers than I used to have, but now the business is more than ten times as large.

I still have my succession problem. There is no obvious answer.

The last time I thought about the problem the best I could come up with was to press my mother into service with Mark Johnson as her workhorse and gofer. At the moment that is still the best option.

Andy Mallinson came round to my house to see me. Andy is a Conservative activist in Meldon. He visits me every year to collect a cheque for the Conservative Party.

My father used to pay, and I have just carried on.

Back in 1985 four hundred pounds was a significant annual contribution. I have never increased it.

Andy commented that I appear to be supporting Charlie Kent and the Labour Party nowadays.

“Yes. Charlie Kent is a straight guy. I have known him for thirty years.

“Charlie will make a good MP.”

Andy asked if I still support the Conservative Party.

“Do you know, I don’t think I do.

"You hate the minimum wage.

"You cut the schools.

"You cut the Health Service.

"You are no bloody good to Industry.

"No. I don't think I do."

Things got a bit heated. Andy said that I should not give money to the Communists, by which Andy meant the Labour Party.

Andy left.

I thought on my row with Andy a bit longer.

Nobody tells me that I can't give money where I wish to give it!

Bloody socialist!

I rang Charlie Kent.

"Charlie, I want to give a lot of money to the Labour Party. How do I do that?"

"You write out a cheque, Cecil.

"Meldon South CLP"

"Thanks."

I bobbed over to the Clickworth site where Charlie is running his election operation.

A very smart woman who looks just like a recently retired Head Teacher was there.

"I am Cecil Byram.

"I own Byrams."

She smiled at me.

"A Conservative has just got me cross.

"I am here to give you a cheque."

"Thank you."

I gave her the envelope and I left.

CHAPTER 27: Kevin Hanson

The Prison Service identified sixty former soldiers to join Byrams. They seem as good as the first bunch. Some of them want to erect fabric and then move into engineering. Others wish to obtain qualifications and experience in the building trade.

Georgina Arron has negotiated significant contributions towards training costs and building materials from the Prison Service and from the Department of Work and Pensions.

The guys began with completing the three metre high wall around Mings.

They are now building the next two sheltered housing developments and installing energy harvesting fabric in a disused quarry in Wales.

Molly Deakin the Secretary of Meldon South Constituency Labour Party telephoned me.

“Is Cecil Byram right in the head?”

I laughed.

“Cecil is a hard headed benevolent capitalist.

“Cecil Byram is bloody clever.

“What has Cecil done now?”

When Molly told me I burst out laughing.

“He intended to give it to the national Labour Party.

“We will have to pass it on. But an amount as large as this has to be approved by the Constituency Party.”

Constituency Labour Parties in marginal constituencies receive financial help from the national Labour Party. It is very unusual for money to flow the other way.

Never in the history of the Labour Party has any Constituency Labour Party donated half a million pounds to the national Labour Party!

We made an event of it.

Cecil Byram did not wish to appear, so Charlie Kent handed over the cheque to our Party Leader. It made the 6pm news nationally.

Cecil started appearing on some of the political shows and quiz shows.

Cecil has a good mind and a wicked sense of humour.

Cecil said on television that he has just made millions in buying some factories from the Government.

“It is not just that Government cannot organise a piss up in a brewery. They can’t even give good beer away after they have made it!

“It has come to a bad situation where a Tory industrialist like me sees more hope from the Labour Party than from the Conservative Party.”

“Do you have hope from the Labour Party?”

“Yes. They will raise the minimum wage.

“They will improve and fund engineering training.

“They will improve the schools and the Health Service.

“They will make people like me pay more tax to pay for it.

“I don’t want to pay more tax, but I can afford to pay more tax more easily than someone who is struggling to raise a family.

“Even if I pay more income tax I will still be able to afford a holiday in Cleethorpes!”

I have been on holiday to Cleethorpes but I very much doubt that Cecil Byram ever has. Maybe Cecil went to Cleethorpes as a child.

“Do you have any criticisms of the Labour Party?”

“Labour is incompetent but it has its heart in the right place.

“The Tories are just wrong in the head!

“We can’t compete with the Chinese and the Indians by lowering our wage rates.

“We need to upskill our workers, upskill our machinery, and upskill our management.

“Labour understands this and the Tories don’t.

“That is why I now support Labour.

“I have known Charlie Kent for thirty years. I am happy to support Charlie as an MP – even if he is a socialist!”

“Aren’t you afraid that the socialists will take all your wealth?”

“Not this bunch.

“They are in a competition with the Tories about who can run capitalism better.

“I have to say that Labour is ahead just because Labour understands how industry works!”

The Tories were predictably furious.

The National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee were urged to investigate the sale of the factories to Cecil.

Cecil immediately announced that he would open his books to both organisations.

Cecil said that he wishes to give evidence to any enquiry.

The Defence Minister was fighting to keep his job.

The Defence Minister was stupid enough to say that Cecil had cheated the Government because Cecil has not yet bought the promised stockpiles of metals and chemicals.

That was a mistake!

Cecil invited the television news to a press conference at Ming’s.

Cecil walked the newsmen to some cherrypicker lorries that Martin Jenkins had hired for the day. The television cameramen and photographers and journalists and Cecil were all lifted in the cherrypicker platforms to a height above the three metre high brick wall.

The longterm reserves of metal are stacked in lines that are as wide as a train, are as high as a train and are a quarter of a mile long. The lines, called "trains", run parallel to one other.

Cecil gave directions over his mobile telephone, following a script.

One by one the covers were pulled off tall stacks of metal and Cecil explained what metal was in each stack. A train of brass stretching for a quarter of a mile sparkling and glinting in the sun is an impressive sight. The trains of nickel and copper and brass showed that Cecil had bought the necessary metals.

Sometimes the full train was not exposed, but only enough to show that Cecil had met his obligations. One just assumes that the uncovered part of each train is the same metal.

One has no idea what metal is in the completely covered trains.

"Ming's Metals" is printed on the tarpaulin covers on every covered stack in Ming's yard so the whole exercise was free advertising for Ming's metal stockist business. What was also impressive was that the stacks uncovered were less than a thirtieth of the covered stacks in Ming's long term storage area.

Cecil apologised for boring the journalists but as the Defence Minister had called Cecil a cheat Cecil needed to prove that Cecil had carried out his end of the bargain. Once Cecil had displayed well over a hundred million pounds worth of metal Cecil ordered the cherry pickers lowered.

The journalists were given a spreadsheet calculation based on the current retail prices of the metals Cecil holds for the four factories.

A journalist asked,

"Do you have a billion pounds worth of metal behind that wall?"

"No.

"More than that."

"How much?"

"That is commercially confidential.

"Lets just say "Some"."

Then Cecil took the journalists and cameramen to huge storage buildings. Six of the buildings contained all the chemicals that Cecil had contracted to purchase.

Those calculations, at retail prices, were on a different spreadsheet.

The other eighteen buildings kept their doors locked.

All the buildings had "Byram" signs painted on them.

Cecil said that he was wounded that the Defence Minister had called Cecil a cheat. "All he had to do was to pick up the telephone and ask me if I had bought these materials yet.

"I keep my promises!"

The Defence Minister had to resign.

This in the run up to a General Election!

Cecil wrote a piece that Cecil published on the Byram web site cum magazine. The piece was in turns both funny and tragic. The cartoons published with it had almost everyone creased up with laughter or spitting with rage or sometimes both.

Cecil originally ran eight manufacturing plants employing nearly three thousand people. Fewer than thirty people above charge hand could be described as "management".

By contrast each of the four factories Cecil bought from the Government employed twenty to thirty managers to manage fewer than eight hundred people. And they still could not make a profit.

Except on the wine!

Cecil lovingly listed the wines that were being sold to managers at £9.99 and the prices Cecil had obtained for these wines at auction. Then Cecil analysed the profit that the factory made on the wine at £9.99 and the larger profit the factory would have made had the factory sold the wine at market prices.

Cecil's conclusion was that these factory managers were better at buying wine than at manufacturing ammunition.

The cartoon of soldiers loading wine bottles into artillery gun barrels for want of shells was nasty.

Cecil also listed the better items of furniture sold at auction, with photographs.

At each factory between ten and fourteen managers had company cars. The cars were all sold at auction.

At Byram Group there are six company cars in total, for Group Officers. The factory based managers at Byram have to buy their own vehicles. They may claim mileage allowances if they use their personal cars on business, which they rarely do.

Cecil's Bentley belongs to Cecil but the Bentley is run on the firm because almost all its mileage is on behalf of the firm.

Cecil also described how nearly a fifth of the machines in the four new factories broke down on the first day.

Cecil's view is that civil servants are simply not good at running a business. Cecil pointed out that Cecil is required to hold a year's supply of metals and chemicals. Cecil stated that this expense is more than a hundred and fifty million pounds of "dead" money.

The formula for recompense is based upon Bank Rate over the relevant period and current prices at the time of use.

The Government has cut a reasonable deal for itself. The recompense deal would not be acceptable for a business that has to use money borrowed from a bank. It is only acceptable for Byrams because Byrams generates cash surpluses that Byrams needs to invest in longterm investments.

Cecil commented that he has invested over a hundred and fifty million pounds to buy four factories each of which was losing millions of pounds a year.

Cecil deserves a peerage!

The cartoon of Cecil Byram in a highwayman's mask wearing a peer's ermine gown and a coronet was very appropriate.

The "Left" social media copied the cartoon widely with the comment "He wouldn't be the first!"

Cecil is not interested in baubles I know.

Our brass band is doing well. Tryton High School and Willerton Junior School now have as much free brass band instrument tuition as they can use. The Byram Willerton Brass Band Academy lends the musical instruments to the children.

Karl Styles is having a great time in China.

Karl has now placed orders for the China stockpile at extremely keen prices.

The first containers are at sea. They will be arriving every week for the next two years. The storage plan is simply to stack the containers in Ming's long term storage yard until storage buildings can be built.

Karen Byram has been accepted for University to read Production Engineering with Spanish. Karen has to pass her Science A Levels reasonably well which Karen says she will do.

Byram Housing is working on two sheltered housing developments. The Clickworth site has planning permission, but work will not begin until after the General Election. Applications for planning permissions for three more developments will be lodged shortly.

With more than a billion pounds worth of metal lying around on the ground at Ming's it makes sense to have "adequate" security.

The first line of security is two hedges of Leylandi trees around the perimeter. There is open space with motion sensors that trigger lighting and sirens and cameras.

Then there is the three metre high brick wall.

Once over the wall there are more motion sensors that trigger sirens and lighting, and cameras, and infra red cameras. There are guard dogs that wander free, and guards with crossbows.

Our guards are convicted killers who have served their time. They once served in a Regiment where the men are very highly trained killers and where they are trained to think for themselves.

The guards can be trusted not to kill trespassing teenagers.

There are other countermeasures but I am not allowed to discuss them.

In the daytime we also have normal day staff. They only enter the ready use areas and they almost never enter the long term storage areas. In the longterm areas the guard dogs still wander loose during the day and the guards are there.

The area outside the longterm storage depot is also well protected.

We have a gang putting up the solar harvesting fabric in Wales, but they have nearly finished the Welsh quarry. They will move on to a disused clay pit in Cornwall next.

The eight guys reckon to cover and connect half an acre a day on flat or gently sloping land.

Daniel Mason has obtained planning permissions in seven countries to install over four thousand acres of fabric. The China factory is operating now, with permission to cover six hundred square miles.

Georgina Arron is negotiating an interesting deal with the Prison Service about the low life unskilled petty offenders who wash in and out of the Prison Service doors.

These guys cost forty thousand pounds a year to contain.

When they are out they go onto benefits, and then they wash back into prison within months. Nobody will employ them because of what they are.

Honest people who will work can't get jobs, so why give jobs to the unskilled dishonest scum?

The Prison Service is prepared to invest sixty thousand pounds per prisoner. The Prison Service proviso is that the prisoners do not return to prison for five years after release. It is "win win" for the Prison Service.

We all reckon that if we can identify the right prisoners it can be “win win” for Byrams as well.

Byrams quietly purchased a very large empty factory in Birmingham.

Herr Direktor will replicate his training facility at Birmingham.

Birmingham Council has sold a decayed block of flats to Byram Housing.

Cecil is having the block of flats renovated to Irene’s specifications. The block will be Disability Discrimination Act compliant as well, because that is a legal necessity.

Assuming the deal goes ahead, petty offenders close to their release dates will be permitted to undergo aptitude tests online. There will also be online personality assessments. Those who succeed will progress to practical tests at the Birmingham factory.

Byrams will cherry pick those individuals whom we believe could turn themselves around with a bit of help.

Irene Bytam has hired a consultant psychiatrist to help with assessing the candidates. The consultant is also involved in structuring the proposition offered and the regime that will apply.

The Prison Service is perfectly happy for us to cherry pick winners. The Prison Service would love it if every scummy candidate whom we select never troubles the Prison Service again.

We accept that we will have higher training costs than usual. We will need more supervisors than usual.

Georgina has again persuaded the Department of Work and Pensions to chip in. The Department for Education is also contributing.

What we have to offer is honest regular work with ascending levels of skill and ascending levels of pay. We will give these guys qualifications for as long as they wish to learn.

The plan is that Byrams’ recently purchased factory in Walsall will train up more charge hands than it currently needs. The more experienced and competent charge hands will be reclassified as Training Supervisors and they will move to work as supervisors at Birmingham.

Birmingham is a huge city with lots of accommodation.

The intention is to start the prisoners working at the Birmingham factory while they are still in prison. Those who have homes to go to in the Birmingham area will go to their homes on release. The likely drifters will be housed in Irene’s apartments

instead of the “bottom of the heap” rooms and hostels and back alleys where they usually go.

The whole plan is to give the men something to lose should they misbehave and a road into a decent life if they conform.

We plan to take only ten men a month for the first year.

After a year’s experience we may increase numbers or we may stay at ten a month.

The police and the Probation Service are very enthusiastic about the deal. Every time one of these lowlifes is arrested the police and prosecution and accommodation expenses are in the order of two thousand pounds before the prisoners move on to the prison service. Probation costs while the guys are in prison and then out again and then in again run at about a thousand pounds for each release.

After the Defence Minister resigned the Home Secretary wanted to block this proposed agreement with Byram Group because the Tories hate Cecil Byram so much.

Apparently the Prisons Minister said that after Byrams has done so well with the former soldiers there is no justification for blocking this agreement about the lowlife scum.

If Cecil Byram can make money from these criminals then what is wrong with that?

How can Tories object to a guy making a profit from recycling society’s refuse?

The Prisons Minister threatened that he would resign and that he would make a public fuss. As far as the Prison Minister is concerned if Cecil Byram can make a go of this project he deserves his peerage!

The email from the Prisons Minister to the Home Secretary was leaked. Everyone assumes it was the Prisons Minister who leaked it.

Cecil does not want a peerage.

Cecil loves it that almost everyone he negotiates with does not know Cecil’s real motives.

Why did Cecil buy such a large factory?

“A thousand former prisoners at sixty thousand pounds dowry each would bring in sixty million pounds.

“It is a good punt!”

At the moment though no prisoners are being put to us for assessment.

We will see what happens after the General Election.

CHAPTER 28: Carlo Stewart

I love these children. They are so young but they are so totally professional.

I have been trying to think of words to describe the “Terrible Tykes”. I think the first word is “wholesome”.

The next word is “joyous”. They are a very happy bunch of children. This comes over in the series.

And these children are workers. They learn on average two pieces a week to perform at broadcast standard.

They all sight read music.

These children could earn livings as session musicians if they needed to.

The three new children, Michael Johnson, Ahmed Daar, and Alice Hewson just slotted in as if they have been with “Terrible Tykes” forever. I suppose that in a sense they have.

Each child brings his or her own personality to the mix.

Ahmed Daar is a sweetie, and Ahmed is pretty.

Michael Johnson has a bit of edge to him and Michael is much less pretty.

Alice Hewson takes after her mother. Alice is very intelligent and grounded and beautiful. She is also a nice kid.

One of the script writers was surprised one day to find Ahmed and Michael and Alice doing stomach crunches together. Then the three youngsters showed that they could do press ups.

Exploring this exercise theme a bit further the script writer was very surprised to see how much more Peter Wilkins and Max Hewson can do. Both lads can do one handed press ups and one handed balancing. They can do handstands, cartwheels, and forward and backward flips.

Peter and Max may look like pretty boys.

I was shown holiday snaps from the camping holiday all the children went on.

Peter and Max are very muscular. When wearing swimming trunks both lads look like athletes.

It is not appropriate to generate scripts that require the children to wear swimming clothing or revealing clothing so we will not do it.

All the children are physically fit.

The children play a game in the Tryton theatre school gym where they climb up a rope and then they chase each other around the wall bars. I could not work out the

rules. It has elements of “tag”, but some players appear to be blockers rather than chasers.

The teacher has set an alarm that the children cannot see. If you are to catch your opponent you have to do it before the alarm goes off. The game is fast and furious and rough! The children all enjoy it.

The filming of the Christmas Special in November was tremendous fun. Candice Gumm embarrassed Colin Donkin and Max Hewson by kissing them.

Peter Wilkins was not embarrassed.

They are three beautiful boys.

Kali and Fulesa and Georgina sang with Candice.

Andrew Johnson played “Amazing Grace” on the bagpipes and Candice sang to accompany Andrew.

The show was splendid!

Candice told me afterwards that she has not laughed so much in years!

Candice thinks that the Tykes are a great bunch of kids.

Candice will see whom she can interest in appearing with us next Christmas.

Tom Driburg negotiated with the Meadowhall complex at Sheffield that the “Terrible Tykes” Christmas carol sing along would take place on the first Saturday in December. On the second Saturday in December the children would be at the Trafford Centre near Manchester. These are huge shopping centres with plenty of parking and plenty of space and good public transport links.

Sahid Daar decided to monitor likely attendance by permitting each child to enter their name online in a free raffle to be photographed with the cast of “Terrible Tykes” on the day. Each child had to indicate whether they wanted the Meadowhall venue or the Trafford venue.

On 24th November Sahid notified Mr Driburg and myself that at least ten thousand children intend to come to the Meadowhall and nearly fifteen thousand intend to go to the Trafford Centre.

It is one thing to know intellectually that a million people mainly children watch your television program. It is quite another to recognize that in a week’s time you will be personally responsible for the safety of more than ten thousand children.

The Meadowhall people were entirely happy. One of their car parks will be kept empty just for this event. They will see to a stage and seating and toilets and police

and so forth. Trafford are going to send a manager to Meadowhall to see how Meadowhall gets on.

“Our” children never see their television audience.

I tried to prepare the children for what is going to be the greatest event so far in their lives. The children were excited and slightly frightened by the thought of this huge audience. The children were all right with it.

The Meadowhall event was due to run from eleven until one. Traffic was only at snail pace from ten! The performers travelled to the venue on police horses sat in front of the police riders. The children could wave to their fans.

The fifteen thousand seats set out were all full, with probably another ten thousand people standing. There had been a huge sale of song books printed specially for the event.

At eleven prompt Dan Wilbey emerged onstage to a huge roar of approval and sat behind the drums. Dan did a drum roll.

Peter Wilkins came out to another roar of approval and sat behind the piano. Peter tinkled the piano keys.

Max Hewson came out with an accordion.

Sally Johnson and Colin Donkin came out with guitars.

Sally said,

“This is a sing along.

“Sing along!”

The musicians played “The Lord Loves Us”.

Sally and Max and Colin started to sing.

Twenty thousand people were singing with them!

Although the children had known this would happen the children were rocked by the experience.

After that song the rest of the Tykes came out. Kali had the microphone.

“As everyone knows, I am the bossy “Tyke”.”

There was applause and cheering.

“Over on my right, so on your left, you should see a smiling police lady waving her hand. Can you all see her?”

“Yes!”

“You can stop waving your hand now!”

“Behind the police lady are a hundred portable toilets! When you need to go, you go there! Her job is to make sure that no grown ups go into the toilets without a child to take care of them!”

“The toilets have all been checked to make sure they all have toilet paper and that there are no bogeymen or spiders hiding there.”

Cheers!

“With so many people here some of the grown ups are going to get lost!”

Laughter!

“We kids don’t get lost.

“We know where we are!

“We are at the Meadowhall!”

Cheers!

“It is the grown ups who get lost! You look round and suddenly your grown ups are not there!”

Laughter again.

“Over on this side we have an enclosure for lost adults.”

Cheers!

“And we have a waiting area right next to the stage for kids to wait for their lost adults!

“Some of the adults may sneak into the Meadowhall to buy Christmas presents for you kids while you are not looking. If you need your adult you come to the waiting children area.

“We will put out an announcement over the whole of the Meadowhall to tell your adults that they are lost and that they must come to the lost adults area.

“At the end we have a clever way to reunite families so wait to the end and I will explain how we are going to do it.

“OK kids, take it away!”

“Remember this is a sing along!”

“Jingle Bells” was followed by “Silent Night” and “God Rest You Merry Gentlemen”.

Georgina Donkin gave a little speech about the Save the Children Fund and explaining that the official collectors are wearing ID cards and are carrying orange or yellow buckets.

“Give them lots of money because the starving poor children that they help need the money a lot more than you do.”

Applause.

“Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer” gave way to another carol and so for about an hour longer.

Kali came forward.

“Now I want some hush!”

“Is there an Amy Walker in the audience?”

“If you are not Amy Walker hush for a minute. If you are Amy Walker stand up Amy and shout “Hello!”

Two little girls stood up and shouted.

“OK Amy and Amy. Bring your families to the stage because one of you won the raffle and you are going to be photographed with all the current cast. I am glad there are only two of you. Imagine if “Mary Smith” had won!”

Laughter!

“Now all of us Tykes are going to pose for photos with Amy and Amy.

“Our good friend who used to be with the series, Tad Fish, is going to play now.”

Gerald Butler emerged on stage to a huge roar of approval.

“It’s nice to be Tad Fish again!”

Applause!

Gerald started with “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas”. Then Gerald led “The Twelve Days of Christmas”.

By then the photography was over and the Tykes were back on stage.

After a few more numbers Kali took the microphone.

“OK. Listen carefully!

“Hello Meadowhall.

“The Terrible Tykes Christmas carol sing along has ended.

“If you have left your children singing carols it is time to come back and collect them.

“The name and shame starts in ten minutes!

“If you are sixteen years old or older and you have no grown ups to look for, just get up with your children and leave the area.

“If you are fourteen or fifteen years old and you have no grownups to look for, just get up with your children and leave the area.

“If you are eleven or twelve or thirteen years old and you have no grownups to look for, just get up with your children and leave the area.”

This cleared a lot of people away.

“Now if you are ten or under and you have no adults with you today, off you go!

“If you have some grownups to look for I want you to look for them now. You are allowed to stand on the chairs!

“But be careful!

“Tad Fish is going to play for you while we are waiting.”

Gerald played some fifteen minutes of “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy”. Lots of families reunited during this time.

“OK. Any children eight or under whose adults have not come, please come to the children waiting area and we will read out the parents names. Family groups stay together please, so if you are over eight years old come with your little ones.

“Oh dear, Meadowhall!

“We have some grownups who have been really good about buying Christmas presents but very bad about collecting your children. If you have a child under eight years old please go to the lost grownups area next to the children’s waiting area.

“Your children are waiting for you.

“In about three minutes we will start reading out the names of the naughty lost grownups.”

Gerald played the “William Tell” overture which lasts twelve minutes.

Within thirty minutes of the end of the show there were only three children left. By forty minutes they were all collected.

The Police Commander said that when Kali is a little older he would like Kali to help with football matches. Kali did a terrific job!

The Meadowhall managers do very careful estimates about customer members.

They reckon we attracted fifteen thousand additional people, so they are pleased.

There was good TV publicity for Meadowhall, for Terrible Tykes, for South Yorkshire Police, and for the Save The Children Fund.

The Save The Children Fund was pleased to take away fifty-eight thousand pounds, most of it in coins! A bank on the Meadowhall site stayed open specially to help the Fund to count and bank its money.

The Tykes had enjoyed the event.

The Trafford Centre had an audience of thirty-five thousand people so that event was even more terrific.

We would have liked Derek Donkin to come, too. Derek’s TV company did not wish Derek to participate in a “Terrible Tykes” event.

The children would like to do something similar next year.

The “Terrible Tykes” Christmas Special had huge viewing figures. It was very well received.

CHAPTER 29: Emma Hewson

The teenagers who were guided by Don about their wealth were in a state of shock for the whole of that weekend.

They had known that they must be earning good money, but they had had no idea how much money they were earning.

It took Max a week before Max had internalised the information enough to discuss it with me.

“Mum, what am I supposed to do with all this money?”

“What do you think you should do?”

“Should I give some of this money to you and Dad?”

“If we were poor, that would be very nice and loving.

“Don is a millionaire.

“I earn a very good income.

“We don’t need it, Max.”

“What about Joy and Arthur?”

“You are so loving, Max.

“Joy and Arthur are fine. They do not need money.

“If they did need money Don and I would help them, but they don’t.”

Max was silent.

“Darling, money is for using sensibly.

“If you are not sure what to do with it, hold on to it until you need it.

“If you do not spend any money, Max, how much will you have when you are Don’s age?”

“A bit over a hundred million pounds, Mum.

“That is just silly.”

“Max. You do not need to work. If you do work then that gives your money a chance to build up.

“You can study whatever you want, wherever you want.

“You can set up any business you like.

“Money gives you freedom. You can live sensibly on part of it and let the rest build up.

“But what are you going to do with your life?”

“I don’t know.”

“That is normal for your age. You are a child. Why should you have any idea what you will do?”

“Enjoy life. Try not to do harm.

“Do some good when you can.”

Christmas rolls round again.

This year Don intends to give the children their reasonable requests.

We have more construction toys and books and musical instruments and sheet music and computer games than any sane family can need. We have so much art materials you would think that we run an art school!

Alice wants a double bass! Alice says that she will grow into it!

Alice already plays the violin fairly well, so we decided not to refuse a double bass.

Robert Graham has eased off on his gym activities down to maybe two hours a day.

Robert now practises the violin and the saxophone in the gym. Robert is just waiting for his operation.

Freda Graham and Jacob Grundy are currently apart. They are on and off. They could be back together tomorrow!

Max still has a tendresse for Michelle in Staines. His current girlfriend is Emily Allen, a very pretty Tryton girl. Emily adores Max.

Max is not using Emily. I watch for that.

Peter Wilkins goes round with Daisy Upton, one of the other pupils at the theatre school. I think Daisy is the driving force in that relationship. Peter has an easy relationship with a few girls.

The Johnsons have discovered they have a distant relation in Cardiff. She is a widow. Sister Sally Cuddy is to spend Christmas with the Johnsons. The plan is that the day after the Hewson Reunion the Johnsons will take Sally back to Cardiff.

The Johnsons will stay in a hotel overnight.

The following day, a Sunday, the Johnson family will put on a private concert just for Mormons at the Cardiff Mormon Church.

It seems that so many Mormons from South Wales have indicated an interest in attending that the Mormons have actually had to check their hall's permitted capacity under the fire regulations.

It will all be free of course.

Robert Graham is extremely good on the violin. Robert and Gerald Butler have agreed in principle that the two of them should form a band together. Robert just loves Grappelli type jazz. Kali Daar and Abdullah Daar have been roped in as singers.

The whole exercise has Tom Driburg's blessing. When they reckon they are good enough Tom will launch them as a jazz group and possibly as a pop band.

The launch will be delayed until Robert has had his operation in February and Robert has recovered from it.

David Wilkins has had a job offer from his girlfriend's father that is too good to refuse. David has negotiated what sounds like a terrific deal for his future.

David is bound by contract to produce his cookery programs until the end of July.

David will have his programs all finished filming by the end of Easter.

David will finish off his second year at the Cordon Bleu cookery school and then David will go to work in finance.

CHAPTER 30: Mark Johnson

The worst part of the missionary experience is to be so cut off from my family. I receive a letter a month, and even that is restricted to two sides.

Rebecca told me that the Johnson family has moved away from Don and Emma Hewson.

Rebecca is the catering manager for thousands of people across twelve factories.

Rebecca says that Cecil is tearing his hair out for managers. There will be a management job for me when I return.

Three members of the Beijing congregation told me that their companies are always looking for good managers. When I am ready I should contact them, and they will put a word in for me with their employers.

We had Christmas in Las Vegas. It really was fun!

In the hostel we drew names out of a hat. We had to buy a small present for that person.

One of the American TV programs has a former Special Forces sergeant who comes over initially as a musclebound tyrant. The sergeant takes unruly lads into the forest for a fortnight. The lads come back as pleasant docile sweet natured youngsters who have returned to the straight and narrow. The sergeant is so popular that the toy shops even sell dolls in his image.

That doll was my Christmas present!

After Christmas I was moved to serve in Reno with a newbie missionary.

Seymour Bland and I parted not as friends but as comrades who have served together in challenging circumstances.

My new partner Jesus Montales is a great bloke.

Jesus is a Mexican.

Jesus has excellent English and his mother tongue is Spanish. Jesus is better working in English than I am.

An unpleasant person we canvassed called Jesus a "wetback".

"Senor," he said.

"My family was in America thirty years before the Mayflower landed. What year did your family arrive?"

The guy did not know.

I asked Jesus,

"Has your family been here so long?"

"Of course not.

"Only two and fifty hundred years."

"Although some of my ancestors were already here when the Spanish first arrived."

I am not totally sure that Jesus was truthful with me.

But which way?

Up until now I have always cooked and my missionary partner washed up.

Jesus Montales is a truly wonderful cook.

I am learning like crazy from Jesus because I want to upstage David Wilkins and Tohur Miah the next time we meet.

Jesus teaches not only Mexican cuisine but Portuguese and Spanish and North African cuisines as well.

Many men (and some women) think that polygamy has its merits. As part of the deal by which Utah Territory became a State the Mormons had to give up polygamy.

There are various groups of people in the United States who claim to be Mormons but who operate polygamy.

Some Mormons moved to Mexico so they could continue with polygamy there.

Jesus' parents met some Mormons who resettled in Mexico, and Jesus' parents converted to Mormonism. They are now within the proper Church.

Jesus is a first generation missionary, like me.

Like many young men, I could be persuaded on the polygamy question.

I think I like the idea!

I have a problem though with guys in their forties and fifties marrying girls who are too young to have sex lawfully, or who are only just old enough to have lawful sex. However you dress it up, that is child abuse.

Finding the right woman will be a challenge.

Finding two or more right women who can live with me and with each other would be extremely difficult.

Jesus told me that sometimes in polygamous relationships the wife or wives choose new wives with whom they think they will get on. Once the wife or wives are decided they arrange for the husband to meet their preferred new wife.

I am not sure what I think about that.

It isn't going to happen, anyway. Polygamy is not allowed for Mormons.

Jesus is teaching me the guitar.

I am so enjoying the missionary experience.

I liked my first partner Mark Walker once he got used to getting his hands dirty.

Paul Winfield and Alec Windsor were OK guys.

Seymour Bland was OK by the time I had finished with him.

Jesus Montales is just a terrific guy who I really like.

Jesus is undecided what to do after his missionary service. His family cannot afford for Jesus to go to college.

Where Jesus lives in Mexico there is high unemployment. All the jobs are unskilled.

The best option for Jesus is to attend Brigham Young University and to work his way through college.

Jesus does not wish to leave Mexico.

I am not counting down the days until I finish as a missionary.

I love what we are doing, bringing hope and the love of Jesus Christ to people who are in need.

If we make converts that is great, but what we are doing is showing doors to people. It is their decision then as to whether and when they walk through the doors.

I have heard that two of the dancers whom Seymour and I met in Las Vegas have become Investigators. I do not know which two young ladies it is.

I am happy for them.

I have read in our Mormon magazines that Charlotte is going to undertake a major musical tour next year.

There are talent contests being arranged now for our Mormon community here in Nevada. A lot of the youngsters are excited about it.

Apparently there is a woman of 93 who has registered to compete!

Fortunately no-one knows that I am related to Charlotte. I would not deny it, but I have not been asked.

The Mormons at Dry Gulch have repaid my small loan. I knew they would.

I am looking forward to being back in Tryton but I am very happy to be here in Reno, Nevada. We are serving the Lord and that is great!

Chapter 31: Don Hewson

Max thinks that Emma and I have added two full years at the top of the theatre school just to meet his needs!

Max is very happy with us.

The school librarian at Tryton High School is advising us on improving our school library. Particularly for English there should be a wide range of books available.

She gave us a core list of about a hundred books we should have, and a list of two hundred other books we should buy if we can afford them. She accepted that at twenty pounds a book that is a lot of money for a small school as ours to invest.

She was a bit shocked when Emma pointed out that these are all fiction books.

Surely there should be non-fiction books as well?

“Yes. But how big is your budget?”

Emma explained that the decision to expand the school is made. Increasing the library this year to prepare for the expansion is a capital expense rather than a revenue expense. Our budget is whatever we need.

The librarian came up with a list of eighty non-fiction books averaging thirty pounds each.

On top of that we bought forty textbooks.

We spent nine thousand pounds plus on books and nine thousand pounds plus on Information Technology for the library.

Tryton High School has one thousand five hundred pupils. It spends four pounds per child on books and improvements each year.

For currently thirty pupils we have spent more than eighteen thousand pounds, more than six hundred pounds a head!

I kept explaining that this is a capital spend, not revenue.

“Mr Hewson, can you imagine what I could do with a library if I had six hundred pounds per pupil? I am making do with four pounds per child!”

With the librarian’s agreement one of the librarian’s unqualified assistants visits us once a week to keep our school library in order. We pay her of course.

Emma ran Nursery and has taught Reception and Infant and Junior. She knew what to purchase for those ages.

The new Deputy Head, Ethel Hinds, has acted in small parts on stage and screen but she never quite made it as an actress. Fortunately Ethel qualified as a drama teacher, and Ethel has taught.

Ethel has decided that a regular income as a Deputy Head in Yorkshire is a better life for her than her current life in London. She says that after supply teaching in the worst parts of East London teaching our children is bliss.

Ethel will produce two school concerts each year.

We are beefing up our roster of part time teachers in readiness for next September.

We have not found a “rock” to replace Rebecca Johnson.

We have a reliable school secretary cum Bursar, and we have a cook. We have a “resting” actress who is available to be driver and chaperon as needed. Through Rebecca we have contact with Mormons who are available “as and when” for driving and chaperoning.

Everyone is CRB’d of course. The initials now are DBS but it is the same thing.

Christmas went well.

None of our children are working at the Tryton Hotel this year.

Freda Graham is the eldest child at home.

Paul Thornton came for Christmas.

Freda, Robert, Max, Sally Thornton and Margaret Graham cooked. As there are only five chefs I helped with Christmas Day and the Reunion.

The Reunion was terrific as always. With Shakoora Daar and Ali Miah attending by Skype we had a complete gathering except for Mark Johnson. Next year we should have Mark again but we will not have Charlotte Johnson.

The Sachs children are growing and blooming. Lionel has his Barmitzvah next year. Lionel's mother may be well enough to attend.

Mrs Sachs is lucky to be alive. Her recovery is very slow.

To be honest I think I would rather die quickly than live as Mrs Sachs is living.

The Johnsons have found a relation they never knew existed. Sister Cuddy is delighted to have found this lovely lively family.

Robert Graham gave his wheelchair to Sister Cuddy.

The Wilkins are blooming. David brought Annette Edwards from London to meet the gang, a sign that Annette is a significant part of David's life. Everyone approves of Annette.

Both Helen and Andria are proudly pregnant, due in April and May.

Mr and Mrs Wilkins are still affected by their lifetimes of poverty and their experiences of prison. They still fear that their family's wealth will somehow blow away overnight.

Mr Wilkins is in fragile health but he was fine at the Reunion.

Sharon Haines (previously Kellner) is due to have a baby in February.

Jalil Daar is still affected by his horrific injuries. Jalil cannot be fifty yet, but he moves and he speaks like a man in his seventies.

Amina and Sahid run the Daar household.

Amina and Mina run the fashion business.

Sahid helps with marketing and Abdullah has an input.

I gather Shakoora is involved with their suppliers in China.

Linda Donkin is an attractive young woman. She is enjoying her catering course. She is looking forward to starting at the Cordon Bleu College in September.

Derek Donkin is the star of his television program.

Derek cannot travel by public transport any more.

Apparently Derek has to watch for young women throwing themselves at him and trying to take a "selfie" at the same time.

I wish I had had that problem at his age!

Although I accept that it is a serious problem for the lad.

Derek says that some of the "selfie" women are old enough to be his mother!

Derek says that being a Muslim he has to treat women with respect even when they are not treating themselves with respect.

Derek has no girlfriend yet.

Colin Donkin is still a bit wild.

Colin climbed onto the roof of his drama school for a dare. He was up there for so long that his friends got worried and they told a teacher.

Colin was using his time up there to clean out a blocked gutter and Colin just forgot about his waiting friends!

The school has made Colin promise not to go on the roof again.

Colin's adventure somehow got into the newspapers. Fortunately Colin's character in "Terrible Tykes" is a bit wild and unthinking so there were no dissonances between Colin's behavior and Colin's screen character.

Rebecca Johnson had us all in stitches over her experiences with coffee.

All Rebecca's factory canteens used to use instant coffee.

A lathe operator in Newcastle asked Rebecca if Rebecca could supply real coffee in the Newcastle canteen.

Rebecca is responsive to her customers.

Being a Mormon, Rebecca has no idea how real coffee should taste. It is like asking a partially sighted person to judge between Goya and Turner.

One of the kitchen staff at Newcastle used to make real coffee for the Newcastle factory management restaurant, so that woman was asked to take the lead.

Daphne took Rebecca to a shop outside Newcastle where there were about twenty kinds of coffee and about twenty kinds of tea on display.

They bought the machinery they needed, and four kinds of coffee bean.

Daphne organised a blind tasting of the four coffees at the canteen.

The voting was fortyeight per cent for one coffee and forty per cent for another coffee. So Rebecca ended up with two machines at Newcastle dispensing "Garth" and "Cecil" real coffee.

Daphne has now introduced real coffee across the whole of the Byram Group. The hardness or softness of the tap water is important, so some factories have "Irene" and "Karen" instead of "Garth" and "Cecil".

Rebecca has explained to the company that supplies the coffee that she personally is a Mormon. The supplier now sends Rebecca a monthly supply of beverages that Rebecca is permitted to drink.

Rebecca gives most of it away at her Church.

Rebecca says that her canteens now make much more money selling real coffee than they did when they were only selling instant coffee.

The workers across the Byram Group are very appreciative of good real coffee.

Scott Wilson is good fun. He is a good mate for Rebecca.

Scott is intelligent enough and striving enough that Rebecca can respect him. For all his gentle manner Scott is a man and not a wimp.

Scott came back disturbed after he took Sally to visit some paraplegic soldiers in a centre.

The facilities that were there were fairly good.

A major problem though is that the men get to the point where they want to have jobs.

Jobs are hard to find in the current recession for the able bodied. Disabled people have real trouble finding work.

A further problem is that the injured men usually have few qualifications and usually they have no marketable skills.

After repeated rejections the men become despondent.

After Christmas Scott is going to see if Cecil can be persuaded to employ these patriotic paraplegics. Or at least let them train for jobs in industry at Cleckheaton or Birmingham.

Scott is also going to find out how American combat veterans with similar injuries are treated.

The food was excellent as ever. The house was alive with music of course. We all had a really good time.

Sahid took photographs as usual.

CHAPTER 32: Georgina Arron

I don't know if Cecil Byram has set this up deliberately, but Byrams could carry on for months if Cecil were to be ill or were to go abroad.

Each of the businesses stands alone.

Byram Investments is the holding company, and it holds all the money. The Finance and bookkeeping teams of every company are all employees of Byram Investments under David Taylor. Their services are charged to the subsidiaries.

Rose Howarth similarly runs HR as a service charged to the subsidiaries.

All the managers above charge hand are paid by Byram Investments and are charged to the subsidiaries.

We may work at one business but we work for the holding company. So when I moved from Byram Engineering to Byram Housing and then to Byram Energy and then back to Byram Engineering there was no danger of disruption to my pay or to my career.

All the Catering workers come under Rebecca Johnson. Rebecca's profits come straight into Byram's Investments.

There isn't officially a Byram's Catering – the workers wear the uniforms of the factories where they work.

Rebecca receives daily spreadsheets for each location.

All the Byram Engineering production workers come under Garth Stead and Barney Stoker.

Byram Energy comes under Daniel Mason.

Byram Housing is under Kevin Hanson.

Ming's Metals is under Tony Hart but because Tony is setting up a business in Belgium Martin Jenkins runs Ming's Metals and the Chinese imports end of Byram Engineering.

Martin Jenkins has two bosses in Tony Hart and Garth Stead but it causes Martin no grief.

Mike Appleyard is Sales Manager to Byram Engineering only.

Chester Wilson works to Cecil Byram, paid out of Byram Investments.

The management core is a tight group who work well together.

Information is not totally shared. We each receive a monthly summary of how each operating unit is performing, but we have no idea how the investments are performing or even how the money is invested.

We have no idea how much money there is in the Group accounts, except for Cecil's three hundred million pound fund for buying bargain companies. So far as I know Cecil has never used this money.

The first I knew that there was a Byram (China) Ltd was when it appeared as an entry within Byram Energy on the monthly report.

We have the information we need to know to function in our jobs.

We know virtually nothing of Cecil's offshore money.

We know that Cecil owns most of two foundries in China through his offshore trusts. What else Cecil may own we have no idea.

One thing I am proud of is that at my grade I have authority to spend one hundred thousand pounds without needing prior permission.

I would never do it, but I have the authority.

I was surprised one morning to have a telephone call from David Taylor our Finance Manager. Apart from sometimes being at the same meetings I never have contact with David.

David told me to drop what I am doing and to get over to Willerton straight away for a briefing.

David told me to bring Dexter White the Engineering Union Convenor with me.

Fortunately Dexter was in his room at Neverthorpe and Dexter agreed to come with me.

When we arrived at Willerton there was a production manager from Byram Energy there. Tony Dacre did not know why he had been summoned, either.

David explained that Cecil is currently in China, so David is briefing us. For this new project David will be my line manager, at least until Cecil returns.

“What new project?” I thought.

“Have you been following the dispute at Merseyside Plastics?”

Tony and I looked blank.

Dexter said

“Merseyside Plastics are on strike because they sacked their Chief Steward.

“He said something rude about the management and they sacked him.

“The lads have been out two weeks now.

“If it is a typical Merseyside Plastics strike it could go on for months. The management there are incredibly stupid.”

“Cecil has wanted to purchase a large plastics components company for more than a year.

“Byrams bought Merseyside Plastics an hour ago.

“Georgina, you are now the leader of Merseyside Plastics. Tony Dacre has worked in a plastics components factory before so Tony will be your production manager.

“Mr White, I would appreciate it if you would go with Ms Arron and Mr Dacre to Liverpool and reassure the workers that Byrams is a reasonable employer.

“Georgina, get the factory working.

“You will have to concede reinstatement of the shop steward and probably paying the workers what they have lost from going on strike.

“The management there has been terrible.

“Identify the good managers and send the others on gardening leave.

“Take a look at the shop steward. He may be an idiot or he may be management material.

“Pick his brains.”

All three of us were given a written briefing to read. It took me twenty minutes to read it.

“Dire” would be polite!

The only thing that made me smile was the quip for which the chief shop steward Dick Shepherd had been sacked.

There is a Lancashire saying “Clogs to clogs in three generations”, referring to the common pattern that one generation builds a business, the second generation cannot manage their inheritance, and the third generation end up wearing cheap wooden footwear again.

Apparently Dick Shepherd had said that the family managing the company, the Ellises, are so inadequate as managers that it would be clogs to plastic flipflops in two generations!

None of us have a company car. I have the best car of the three of us, so we went in my car.

When we arrived in Liverpool it was shortly after lunchtime.

There were about twenty men picketing the factory gate.

There were two police officers in a police car watching the picket.

Absolutely nothing was happening.

Other than the police car there were no cars parked in the street outside the factory.

I pulled up about thirty feet from the gate, and we all got out.

I am an attractive young woman who dresses well.

The picketers were bored witless.

There were some wolf whistles and some unfortunate sexist comments. There were a couple of appreciative references to my dark skin.

As we approached the picketers they realised that something was up.

Dexter took the lead.

Dexter was wearing his Engineering Union badge.

“Hi. I am Dexter White.

“I am the Engineering Union Convenor of the Byram Group.”

This did not excite or interest the men particularly.

“Have you come to show solidarity?”

I spoke.

“Has nobody told you?”

“Told us what?”

They didn’t know!

“My name is Georgina Arron.

“I am a manager with the Byram Group.

“Byrams bought Merseyside Plastics a few hours ago.

“I am your new manager.”

There was a sudden silence. Then some of the men started swearing at the Ellis family who had just sold Merseyside Plastics.

“Are any of you Dick Shepherd?”

There was a silence.

“I am Dick Shepherd.”

“Are you the shop steward who was dismissed?”

“Yes I am.”

“Mr Shepherd, you are reinstated. Your reinstatement dates back to the moment you were dismissed so you have an unbroken record of service.

“You will be wanting some back pay, I expect.”

“Yes.”

“The other workers who went out on strike – have you been dismissed?”

“Not yet.”

“OK, so you do not need reinstating.

“I assume you will want your back pay, too?”

“Yes.”

“OK, well as I am paying you for today, I would like your help.”

The men had mentally geared for a long strike. They were still surprised that their dispute had collapsed just like that.

Their pleasure at winning the dispute very much took second place to the fact that they now had a new and unknown employer.

“Mr Shepherd, you and the other stewards are to meet please with Mr White. He will I hope reassure you that Byrams is not against trade unions.

“Mr White will make a list of all your current outstanding grievances which we will discuss later.

“I would like please two people. One person to show Mr Dacre around the production area, and one person to show me around the entire factory.

“We will meet here at the gate at four o’clock.”

“The gate is locked.”

“Who has the key?”

“Mr Tom Ellis.”

“Where is Mr Ellis?”

“Probably in the Bahamas by now!”

Mr Ellis is one of the family who sold the business to Byram.

“OK”

I walked across to the police car.

I explained the situation.

They named a competent locksmith.

I telephoned the locksmith.

With half an hour we had the gate unlocked and a new lock was being fitted. Dexter White and the shop stewards had retired to a nearby cafe to discuss grievances. I gave Dexter some money to buy teas, etcetera.

In that area it would have been easier to find a pub open than a café but Byrams has a very strong policy against mixing booze and work.

Tony and I were escorted around the factory. The man escorting me had a very thick Liverpool accent which I found a challenge.

Just inside the gate was a security hut that had lots of keys. The men accompanying us took the keys we needed.

I made a mental note to change all the locks, anyway.

The first thing that struck me was how grubby everything was.

“The Ellises don’t believe in wasting money on cleaners.”

“When was the last time these offices were properly cleaned?”

“No idea Miss Arron. Not in ten years, to my knowledge.”

The delivery vehicles looked fairly clean. Their garage looked clean. It seems that the Ellises wanted their external face to look good. Their garage mechanic keeps the

garage clean. He only has four vehicles to maintain so some days he has nothing to do but to clean.

The kitchen and dining area were a nightmare. Grease was thick everywhere.

“How many people eat here?”

“About sixty.”

“How many people work here?”

“About two hundred and eighty”

“Where do the others eat?”

“In the park. In the bicycle shed. On the loading bay. Where we can.”

I telephoned Rebecca Johnson.

“Ms Johnson, this is Georgina Arron.”

Becky and I have worked together. We have shared a bedroom. It would be obvious to Rebecca that I am not alone.

“Yes, Ms Arron?”

“Have you heard that we have bought a plastics factory?”

“Yes.

“Are you phoning me about the canteen?”

“The canteen is a disaster area. You will not be serving food let alone cooking food here tomorrow.”

“As good as that?”

“Rebecca, the canteen is a disgrace to humanity.

“I personally would chuck everything out and start again.”

“OK. What time do you want me there tomorrow? I am in Walsall at the moment.”

“Can you do seven?”

“I will be there.”

My guide, Dirk, looked at me.

“Is the kitchen that bad?”

“Look at that griddle.

“It is supposed to be cleaned every night.

“When do you think it was last cleaned?”

Dirk studied it.

“Not recently.”

I opened a cupboard.

A mouse ran out. Then some more mice.

From the amount of mice droppings inside the cupboard the mice have been in the cupboard for a while.

We had seen enough in the catering area.

We moved on.

The loading bay is covered and fairly big and fairly clean. The warehouse behind it is grubby.

“Why do you men put up with this filth?”

“The Ellises are mean bastards. The union is fighting them, all the time. You can’t fight every fight every day.”

It was time to meet up at the factory gate.

Tony’s tour had been much the same as mine. Tony said that the working conditions were not fit for human beings.

Dexter White and the union guys came towards us.

Dexter gave me a pad of paper.

I read the top sheets quickly.

Almost all of the grievances are out of date. This factory is Byrams now.

I said to the union men that Dexter has shown me the list of grievances. I said that I expect to concede most of them. There are just a few points I need to clear with my boss first.

“Will there be redundancies?”

“Probably.”

I think the guys were surprised to have an honest answer.

“We do not make Production people redundant.

“If there are redundancies they will be in other areas.”

The engineering union membership is almost entirely in Production, so the union guys were relieved.

“I can tell you that we took over four factories eight months ago. They all employ more people today than they did on the day we took them over.”

That went down well.

By now television cameras and journalists were outside the gate. We went out to them.

“Hello, everyone.

“I am Georgina Arron. I am the new manager here at Merseyside Plastics.

“The Byram Group bought this business this morning.

“We are going to run Merseyside Plastics like a modern factory.

“We will upgrade machinery where needed.

“I hope a year from now we will be producing at least twice as many plastic components as we do today. And then we will need more workers or more space or both.”

“Dick Shepherd is reinstated.

“Everyone will be paid wages for this strike.

“I want everyone here back at work tomorrow.

“This is a new future for Merseyside Plastics!”

Normally when there is an industrial dispute what you see on TV is two middle aged balding guys being angry with each other.

A smiling attractive young woman manager and smiling workers is very unusual.

We even made the national news!

As soon as I could I telephoned Rebecca again. We decided that some of her canteen staff from Ellesmere Port would serve food in the loading bay. If the weather is fine the men will eat in the yard. If the weather is wet the men can eat under cover in the warehouse. Using paper plates and plastic cutlery Rebecca will put on a free meal for 280 people. The Merseyside Plastics kitchen staff will be on cleaning and painting all day.

CHAPTER 33: Ali Miah

Shakoora and I were feeling quite pleased with ourselves.

Shakoora's written and spoken Putonghua is pretty good.

Shakoora has been accepted to read for a degree in Fashion at the prestigious Beijing Institute of Clothing Technology.

Shakoora has been designing clothing for her family business in Doncaster.

Shakoora also monitors the factories that produce clothing for the Daar family business.

The Air Terminal runs very well. I make a point of popping in at odd hours just to see how it is going.

Shakoora is often with me because we are generally coming back from dinner or from the theatre or from a fashion show.

There is usually nothing to find fault with.

Arthur Miller has been appointed as Consultant to help with building the huge new airport in Bahrain. It is going to double as a barrier to try to protect Bahrain from a tsunami should one occur.

My Masters Degree Thesis is completed.

My researcher found an ancient jetty that survived the Chinese tsunami. I obtained permission to analyse a very small piece of mortar from it.

I replicated the mortar and then I tested it. The starch in the mortar seems to help the mortar to resist sea water very well.

I sent a copy of the Thesis to Arthur Miller as a courtesy.

I have since heard that Arthur showed a copy of my Thesis to the Crown Prince of Bahrain!

Tohur's autobiography is selling very well. The photo of Tohur's bare chest on the cover has not hurt sales.

Tohur is combining cookery and judo very well.

The Cordon Bleu Institute found a way to give Tohur a degree even though he did not study Wine. They created another module that Tohur could study instead. So Tohur now has a degree!

Tohur has been first or second in every module. Tohur has earned a First Class Honours Degree!

I am so proud of Tohur!

Mrs Shah would have been so proud!

Mrs Shah sadly died a month after our wedding.

Fulesa is thriving. She will be "too old" for Terrible Tykes soon. Fulesa is studying Quranic Arabic at the Theatre School, and also Islamic studies. Fulesa is very happy.

The twins are great!

Tohur pays for the twins to attend the theatre school.

There is no plan for the twins to become actors. The small classes and the good facilities are the draw. And the convenience of having all three younger Miahs attend the same school.

Max Hewson and Peter Wilkins have had to leave "Terrible Tykes". Colin Donkin must be on his last series before his voice breaks.

Robert Graham has had what he hopes is the last operation. Robert has taken up ballroom dancing because he can.

The film about Robert improving his mobility will go out on Boxing Day.

They had a General Election in Britain.

The Conservatives held on, but they lost a few seats. Meldon South, where the Hewson family live, was one of the few marginal seats that Labour won.

I didn't vote.

Sharon Kellner (now Haines), and Andria Wilkins and Helen Jenkins have all had their babies successfully.

Amina Daar and her Abdul have had huge trouble agreeing what to do. They almost broke up over it.

Abdul is going to read for a Masters Degree at Oxford University, which the Daar family will pay for. The travel time is only two and a half hours by car. It is the same by train so Abdul will travel by train which gives Abdul five hours reading time each day. Abdul does not need to travel to Oxford every day.

Sahid goes to California this summer to have a geek tour of Silicon Valley that Abdul has organised for him. Sahid will stay with Abdul's family of course.

Abdul has sisters and cousins of Sahid's age who will give Sahid a good time.

Sahid has been accepted to read for a degree at the London School of Economics.

Sahid will live with Tohur in termtime.

The duty manager at the Beijing terminal telephoned me at home quite early one morning on a day off. We were still in bed!

Shakoora and I were busy at the time so it was a while before I could answer the telephone. Some things just can't be interrupted!

Shakoora certainly felt that she had been short changed but Shakoora accepted that I must answer a telephone call from work.

Work never telephones, so it had to be something important.

It was not a plane crash.

It was not a hijack.

It was not any air disaster at all.

Frankly, it could have waited.

Steve, the Chief Executive of the airline, needs to speak to me urgently. Would I please turn on Skype and contact Steve within the next half hour?

I said that I would.

I then gave Shakoora a satisfactory resumption of our earlier activity. Entirely for her pleasure of course.

Fortunately I still do not need to shave. As this was the Chief Executive I put on a shirt and tie and I half dressed in shorts and bare feet.

I must admit I was more than half thinking of another satisfactory activity with Shakoora. We are young, still newly married, and it was one of my days off. We both enjoy making love with each other.

Neither of us had suggested anything else that we would prefer to do before breakfast.

“This is a rare pleasure, sir?”

If I speak to Steve three times a year that is as much. Any Hub Manager who has to speak to Steve a lot is in trouble, or his Hub is.

The last time I spoke to Steve was to be told that the Beijing Terminal had been reported on by a Mystery Shopper. Of all the Terminals the airline runs Beijing had scored the most highly.

That conversation was pleasant.

“Ali, do you know that Arthur Miller is in hospital?”

“No, sir?”

“He is in a private hospital in Bahrain.”

“Yes, sir?”

“He has liver cancer. He will be dead in a few weeks.”

“That’s terrible!”

There is absolutely no way that Steve would be Skyping with me about that.

An email would have been enough.

“Ali, I have been leaned on!”

Not many people have the clout to lean on the Chief Executive of the airline. I know that the Bahraini Royal Family are significant shareholders in the airline.

“You know we are going to have a terminal at the new Bahrain airport when it is built?”

“Yes, sir.”

“The Crown Prince visited Arthur in hospital yesterday.

“They spoke about the airport project. The real question was who to assign the contract to after Arthur dies.”

“Yes, sir?”

“I have been leaned on to release you to the Bahraini Royal Family to take over the project from Arthur.”

I was speechless.

I am far too young.

I am far too inexperienced.

This is way way above what I can do.

I am not humble about my abilities, but I know I am about twenty years too young to take over an airport contract from Arthur Miller.

Ten years too young, anyway.

“The Crown Prince says that of all the candidates you are the only one with the specialist expertise he needs.”

“Which is?”

“How to build an island that can withstand a tsunami.”

The Crown Prince had said that one part of the project was to use the airfield island as a barrier to protect Bahrain itself from a tsunami.

My study of ancient Chinese building techniques has landed me in an astonishing plum position. I have been headhunted for a job that I did not know existed and for which I would not have applied.

I was still speechless.

“Ali. The Bahraini Royal Family are significant shareholders.

“They are business partners in an important project.

“I cannot refuse.

“You can refuse but I would have to fire you.

“You will hire dozens of engineers for the project. You are not doing everything yourself.

“Take the money!”

“How much money, sir?”

“Ali, as Project Manager you are looking at a lot more money than I pay you. On top of that there are bonuses for early completion and for keeping to budget.

“You do the maths!

“Of course if you are domiciled in Bahrain there will be no income tax to pay.

“There is a plane to Bahrain at two o’clock this afternoon Beijing time.

“I have booked two seats in First Class for you.

“Congratulations!”

I just looked at Steve silently.

I could not speak.

Steve laughed, and he turned Skype off.

CHAPTER 34: Cecil Byram

After the General Election I had a word with Charlie Kent MP.

The Labour Party has brought in some silly rule prohibiting Labour MPs from accepting consultancies.

We agreed I would fund Charlie to employ a research assistant, because that is not forbidden. I have set up the standing order.

I made it clear to Charlie that I have no interest in what Charlie uses the money to do.

The new Government is interesting.

The Defence Minister who had to resign after my press conference at Ming's is a surprise appointment as Home Secretary.

The Prisons Minister who threatened to resign if I was not given the contract for rehabilitating "lowlife" prisoners has been demoted to a Whip.

The prisoner rehabilitation project is dead in the water.

I called together Garth Stead, Kevin Hanson, Chester Wilson, Irene, and Karen. Georgina Arron attended by conference call from Liverpool.

I explained that the prisoner rehabilitation project is on a back burner probably for a year or two.

They all agreed.

I have a large factory and a training facility standing idle.

I have a block of flats standing idle.

I have spare supervisors at Walsall.

"Chester, you were saying that these maimed soldiers are often wanting to do a real job, but they can't get one."

"Yes."

"Karen, if women living in hostels were offered a decent home and a decent job close together you say they would bite my hand off."

"Yes."

"Can you see what I am thinking?"

If these men and these women are sharing a block of flats and working together there is bound to be what the Americans call "fraternisation".

What people do in their off time is largely not my business.

If two groups of people who have each had a bloody awful time can find happiness with each other that is fine by me.

Garth was interesting.

“These recruits at the moment are totally unskilled?”

“Yes.”

“This could work quite well for me.

“Your policy Cecil of not taking short term contracts was devised a long time ago.”

“Yes.”

“Since then we have developed computers and computer scheduling.”

Garth was not being sarcastic.

Garth was literally correct.

“If I were to give these low skilled workers the incredibly simple and boring work, that would free up our experienced workers for short run manufacturing.

“I could accept short term contracts and do the scheduling on our computer systems.”

“Yes”, I said slowly.

“As your recruits become more skilled, I can release more complex work to them, and transfer the simple work to new recruits such as more soldiers, more battered women, or your lowlife scum – sorry “rehabilitation candidates” – should the Government change its mind.

“So as soon as you are up and running with this project I will be able to take short run component manufacturing.

“I see this as “win win”.”

“So who is going to run this project?”, asked David.

Once again the shortage of managers has jiggered me.

Garth said,

“I was thinking about Douglas Trail. But I am not sure he and Georgina would be happy about one partner working in Liverpool and the other working in Birmingham.”

“If we put Douglas into Ming City, that would free up Martin Jenkins to run Birmingham.

“We could ask Tony to employ someone local in Belgium?”

So we agreed to do that.

There are good junior managers on the Chinese depot of Byram Engineering and at Ming’s. Running the two operations is a good experience for Douglas Trail.

Martin Jenkins will have spare capacity in this new Birmingham job.

I expect I will find some way to use Martin.

Merseyside Plastics is an interesting example of how Byrams successfully takes over a business.

You start with an outgoing management that is despised or not particularly respected by its workforce.

The workers judge your new management by comparison with the outgoing management. You don't have to be that good as managers to be seen as a significant improvement.

Rebecca Johnson's catering is my secret weapon for improving morale, productivity, and profit.

Merseyside Plastics was a family business where the Ellis family hated each other. Neither faction could buy out the other.

Productivity and sales and profits spiralled downwards until the business was not far off being a basket case.

Add a strike to that mixture and you had a business that had become a basket case.

The offer I made was essentially for the site and the machinery. No goodwill, in the circumstances!

The Ellises bit my hand off.

Merseyside Plastics had no company pension scheme, which is always my area of concern because of potential pension liabilities.

Once the strike had stopped the business immediately increased in value.

The business is earning very good money in relation to my investment in it, and now I have a business to grow.

I intend within five years to have plastic components production on a par with metal components production. As the metal components side is increasing this puts even more pressure on Georgina Arron and Tony Dacre.

That troublesome chief shop steward Dick Shepherd has been told that we need a larger site for expansion. He has six months to find a suitable site in Liverpool before we look further afield.

Dick asked Georgina why we need such a huge site?

Georgina said that the Byram Group has about five thousand people making metal components and only two hundred and eighty making plastic components. A little unbalanced, she suggested.

Dick said he was the leader of the workers, not a management skivvy.

Georgina said that is Byrams policy to promote from within.

In Georgina's eyes Dick is the most analytical and competent of the Liverpool workforce. Whom would Dick suggest that Georgina put in charge of the project?

"You can't buy me!"

"Look, Dick.

"You do it, you suggest someone better than you to do it, or I have to ask Cecil Byram to send me someone from somewhere else to do it.

"Tell me tomorrow!"

The other factor weighing on Dick Shepherd is that the workforce like Georgina and Tony's management.

Of the twenty-two disputes the shop stewards listed on that first day Georgina conceded twenty in the first week. One other relates to short time, which currently is not an issue. The last issue was a demand to reinstate people whom the previous Ellis management had fired.

Investigation showed that there were only two such people who are currently unemployed.

Georgina said they could apply for jobs at Merseyside Plastics when they become available. Georgina's priority currently is to try to reduce redundancies rather than to take on extra staff.

The tension between union and management at Merseyside Plastics is more or less gone, faster than anyone would have believed possible.

You treat people right, you pay them better, and you make sure they have good food.

Problems evaporate.

Amazing!

Herr Direktor came up with an idea of striking genius.

The last Labour government used to support people from poor families taking A levels and vocational qualifications. The Conservative government ended that financial support.

Since this government came in university tuition fees have risen. A person from a poor family is looking at taking on more than thirty thousand pounds in student debt.

A lot of people cannot afford an education.

Herr Direktor and Byram Group now advertise Cadetships in Engineering.

People with good GCSEs (General Certificate of Education) who are accepted for a Cadetship earn the adult minimum wage instantly. This is about three pounds an hour more than the youngster minimum wage and about six pounds an hour more than the normal apprentice minimum wage.

The Cadets are apprentice trained, coming to Cleckheaton for bursts of ten days tuition every two months.

This is the equivalent of the one day a week they would have at college normally, plus about twentyfive extra days of learning over a year. During this extra twentyfive days they have extra maths, extra science, study skills, and everything they need to prepare them for university.

When they have completed their apprenticeship they move to Engineering Union wage rates and they study at Cleckheaton for a degree in Engineering, awarded by Meldon University. The teaching is at Cleckheaton but the exams are sat at Meldon. All exams and essays are marked by Meldon University lecturers.

This degree takes five years because it is a part time degree and because they studied towards the degree whilst still apprentices.

A child with no money comes out as an apprentice trained fitter and earns a Degree in Engineering with no student debt.

They will have earned reasonable wages during their Cadetships.

They have seven years of experience in industry.

The world is their oyster.

What I get out of it is a very high quality of entrant who will stay for at least seven years. Even counting the costs of their education I am getting very good workers for what I pay out.

After the training, if I wish to keep the cream I will have to pay them very good wages.

For very good people I am very happy to pay very good wages.

The profile of Byrams and the profile of Engineering in the schools has lifted hugely. People who two years ago had never heard of Byrams are fighting for a Cadetship here.

What I like is that the degree exams are the normal Meldon University Engineering Degree examinations. Our students will compete in the exams against traditional students. There is no suggestion that ours is a mickey mouse degree.

A Byrams Cadetship is a real road upward for a bright youngster from a poor family. Or for any bright youngster.

We decided to take eighty cadets in Year One.

Once again our selection system is a points based and transparent system. We want equal numbers of male and female cadets. Candidates must live within twenty miles of a Byrams plant or be willing to relocate.

One aspect I like is that we make provision for good candidates from poor schools, in recognition that they may have been held back by social factors.

After the GCSE results came out we had fifteen thousand applications!

Many applications are from real star quality applicants.

With the computer we could allocate the 80 places.

There are no interviews and so no unconscious bias is possible. The process is as fair as we can make it.

I was surprised to receive a telephone call from Charlie Kent, MP.

I have barely seen Charlie since he was elected to Parliament.

“Cecil, can we organise a quiet meeting with some people who need to meet you, but who do not wish to be seen talking to you?”

I trust Charlie Kent’s integrity.

“How many people?”

“Three plus me.”

“My house, ten o’clock on Sunday. Stay for lunch and for as long as the meeting takes?”

“Thank you.”

Charlie’s people turned out to be the General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), his Deputy, and a NUM Research Officer.

The NUM has learned that the Tory Government intends to close a large colliery out of political spite. The Groatpie colliery will be declared to be unprofitable, the pension black hole unspeakable, and for there to be no way forward.

“There is enough coal down there to serve the entire United Kingdom for eight hundred years!”

Apart from the two thousand coal miners involved, there are all the supply chain jobs involved.

Once the pit is closed, the pumping stops, and within days the mine is flooded. Then realistically the mine is lost forever.

The Government will play clever, and it will offer the mine for sale at a hopeless price.

Not many people with money are interested in helping the NUM. The NUM does not have access to the amounts of money needed.

They are looking for a White Knight to buy the business.

“If there were no political issues, what is the mine worth as a going concern?”

We went into a long analysis that the Research Officer had prepared.

For instance, many of the people in the pension plan had never worked at this colliery. They had worked at pits in Yorkshire which were all in the Yorkshire Group Pension Plan. When this last pit in Yorkshire closes there will be no money to pay any of the pensioners. The debt will fall on the Government.

Once you clear out those people, the pension arrangements for retired miners from this pit are satisfactory.

Similarly, a lot of the “investment” in the Government calculations was never invested in this pit but in pits that have since closed.

If that was all cut out the pit is worth about five hundred million pounds as a going concern. If these things are not cut out the pit has a negative value of two thousand million pounds. But this is silly because the investment has been spent and the pensions will still fall on the Government to pay.

“So why are the Government doing this?”

“They hate us miners.”

“Charlie, you are sometimes accused of being “Byram’s MP”.”

The miners smiled.

“There are enough mining MPs to make the political noises that need making. I don’t want you to be accused of working in my financial interest.”

“So it would probably be best if you took a back seat on this one.”

“In fact, Charlie, go into the kitchen now and have a cup of tea with Irene. We will call you back when we need you.”

After Charlie had left us I said,

“In principle, gentlemen, in principle I am prepared to become involved.”

The miners looked happy.

“My concern though is that you are asking me to invest maybe five hundred million pounds in a hole in the ground.

“Once I have bought it you can hold me to ransom any time you like by going on strike.

“I would need an agreement that you will not go on strike, ever.

“What would I have to give you to achieve that?”

We came to an understanding quite quickly.

I was surprised.

The Mineworkers Union has a reputation for being unreasonable. That is not my experience.

I have to concede that my pay and working conditions will be as good as any other UK coal mine, that there will be never be short time, and there will be a binding arbitration system to resolve disputes.

When we brought Charlie back in he was pleased that we had reached a deal. He did not need to know what it was.

“Keep out of it Charlie, for your sake and for my sake.”

The miners nodded.

We agreed that on Wednesday the Research Officer will spend a day briefing me about all aspects of the coal industry.

CHAPTER 35: Mark Johnson

I am now on a plane going home. I have my certificate of discharge confirming that I have served satisfactorily as a Mormon missionary.

I am now in everyone’s eyes an adult.

I have learned a lot in these last two years.

I have learned about people.

I have learned about myself.

I will go back to work as an apprentice at Byrams, and probably as a manager for Cecil Byram.

I will meet this relation Sister Sally Cuddy.

I will meet Chester Wilson.

Everyone will be older and bigger.

My life as an adult begins.

I see Charlotte for about ten weeks and then Charlotte is off to Provo and her unusual missionary service.

I have barely thought about Karen Byram in these last two years.

I will not be in a loving relationship with Karen Byram.

Hopefully by now Karen has also got over me.

Assuming that Rebecca has not blown my savings in extravagance I will have enough savings that I can fund myself through a degree if I wish.

If I take Cecil's money to do a degree it would be very hard to then just walk away.

I might have a month at home before there is a Call. What it will be I do not know.

Dennis Wilkins met me at the airport.

Dennis began filling me in on the events of the last two years. What Dennis told me usually made me happy. Not the death of Mrs Shah, of course. That was sad but it was not a surprise. Dennis and Abdullah and the four Miahs in England went to the funeral.

At last we came to Tryton.

There is a large old house on the same street as the Mormon Church. It used to be lived in by a grumpy old woman. Now it is lived in by the Johnsons.

Rebecca must have had the house painted. It looks quite nice, now.

When we arrived at the house we were greeted by Charlotte, Sally, Andrew and Michael.

Rebecca was at work somewhere and Chester was at Meldon University.

Dennis pushed off to give us privacy.

We had a long session loving and praying and hugging and exchanging information.

I was not allowed to cook. Charlotte had dinner under control.

I could not get over how much all of the children have grown.

The family are thinking about inviting Sister Sarah Cuddy to live with us permanently.

They have delayed making a decision until I return.

The next person to appear was Chester Wilson. He seems a nice enough guy. He is obviously intelligent.

Chester says that Cecil wants to see me on Monday morning but not before.

We sat down to eat because Rebecca may appear any time in the next six hours.

Over dinner Chester and I spoke about our experiences as missionaries.

We all three spoke about Charlotte's missionary adventure, which starts soon.

The younger three, who will all be missionaries one day, were drinking it in. The younger three had big eyes and completely captivated expressions.

The boys and Sally and Charlotte had gone to bed when Rebecca poled in.

We hugged of course. Chester said that he had to push off home now.

Rebecca and I had a good long chat.

Rebecca is working long hours, but she knows that she is being successful. Rebecca says that really she has no stress. Every canteen is working well.

Cecil is very happy with her.

Mind you, Cecil is quite capable of buying another factory tomorrow!

We were both of us tired so we went to bed.

In the morning I went to the Church and I spoke to a few members. I will be in Church on Sunday.

I walked round to the Hewsons' house and I had a lovely chat with Don. We had lunch.

Then I walked home and I had a sleep.

By the time I woke Sally had the dinner organised.

We had a family dinner together.

I note that Chester does not preside because Chester is not yet part of the family. Chester always sits in the honoured guest position, to the right of whoever presides. The senior male family member should preside, but Andrew is too young to preside over Rebecca and Charlotte.

The senior Johnson present presides, even if it is Sally.

Should I preside? I don't particularly want to but I suppose I should.

I must admit I had never thought about this etiquette problem.

If Chester and Rebecca marry, then Chester will preside.

Charlotte and I popped round to see the Wilkins family, leaving Rebecca and Chester to have some private time together after the younger ones have gone to bed.

The next day I visited Bishop Ted Singleton.

He looks older.

Bishop Singleton is delighted to see me.

Bishop Singleton has had complimentary e-mails from Chuck Warrenner about my service in Beijing and from the Mission President in Nevada about my service in Nevada. Both men say that I am very capable and that I should be Called for tasks that will stretch me.

Both of them sent similar emails to our Stake President David Swift.

I have very mixed feelings about being put forward for Calls that will stretch me.

Cecil Byram usually stretches me enough!

Bishop Singleton said that I will have a month to resume normal life before any Calls come. The most likely Call is to be Counsellor to the President of the Youth section of the Stake and as part of that role to organise the male Youth Camp next August. I cannot attend the female camp the week after, but I will be expected to support the young woman who is organising the female camp.

Enjoy my month of leisure!

There was a great "Welcome Back" when we Johnsons went to Church on Sunday. Everyone seemed pleased to see me.

When I saw Cecil Byram on Monday Cecil was in good spirits.

Cecil recognises that I have to complete my apprenticeship. I start day release at College later this week.

I will mainly be used as Cecil's small investment gofer.

I am to visit each of the businesses that Byrams or the Byram family own. I will read through all the accounts for a business first and then I will visit the business. It is a good way to train me in how to assess future purchases of businesses.

My visits will also just remind the little businesses that they are majority owned by the Byrams Group or the Byram family.

CHAPTER 36: Kevin Hanson

Cecil could have had some good publicity for this Birmingham project, but Cecil chose to set it off very low key.

In groups of ten some battered women were trained first, then some soldiers, then women then soldiers until there were sixty people working there. A few women are running a creche at Irene Towers, and there are concierges, so more than sixty jobs were created.

The men are sharing their apartments. The women are generally living with families. Some women choose to double up.

The concierge role is filled by some pretty tough looking women who control admission to the block.

The people are all doing pretty simple stuff.

All of the people are happy to be earning their own money rather than to be living entirely off the state. They have begun earning bonuses.

I followed the story of the Tories and the Groatpie coal mine. It really was vindictiveness by the Tories.

The Tories asked for a ridiculous impossible price for the pit.

I was totally surprised when Byrams bid three hundred million pounds for the Groatpie pit, stripped of its liabilities.

Cecil publicly gave a reasoned valuation for his three hundred million pound bid.

The Tories sold the Groatpie pit stripped of its liabilities to a Chinese consortium for two hundred and ten million pounds!

The Tories said that Cecil Byram was not a person they wished to do business with, so they had sold to this Chinese consortium instead.

“The Chinese consortium are competent capitalists.”

I would have thought myself that Cecil Byram is a pretty competent capitalist, but the Tories hate Cecil.

As you can imagine there was huge outrage at this politically motivated sale. The miners' MPs were jumping up and down in the House of Commons.

The Tories said that Cecil Byram was not someone whom they could trust. Whereas the Chinese consortium are responsible capitalists who will run the business properly.

The NUM said it was a black day for the coal industry.

The NUM is deeply concerned at any suggestion to bring down wages and working conditions to Chinese levels.

The Tory Industry Minister is a smug shit who looked very happy with the deal when interviewed on television.

Cecil put out a statement that regretted the decision.

“If the Tories wish to express their dislike of me by losing ninety million pounds of their own money that is unfortunate.

“For the Tories to lose ninety million pounds of taxpayers' money out of political spite is a criminal waste of public money.”

The Labour shadow Industry Minister reported the deal to the Public Accounts Committee.

After about a week a representative of the Chinese owners arrived at Heathrow.

There was a Press Conference at a hotel in London.

The Chinese consortium representative, Wen Dei Wong, explained that the new owners are a consortium of the Blessed Peace Foundry, the Clever Eunuch

Foundry, and some tax haven trust funds. Each foundry has put in five million pounds and the rest comes from the trust funds.

So who owns the trust funds?

Wen Dei said that the ownership of the trust funds is confidential. Wen Die herself does not know exactly.

The trust funds are also majority owners of the two foundries.

As the Chinese consortium has no experience of running a coal mine or running a business in England the Chinese consortium has hired an English company to run the Groatpie coal mine for them.

Fair enough.

The company selected is Byram Coal Limited, part of the Byrams Group.

This was sensational!

The journalists were amazed!

Why has Byrams been chosen?

Wen Dei said that Cecil Byram is a very honourable man who has created jobs in China and who has helped to bring prosperity to China after the tsunami.

The Wong family and the Byram family are great friends.

The Wong family run some of Cecil's businesses in China.

Who better than Cecil Byram should the Wongs trust to run their first business in England?

Once it was realised what Cecil has done there was a great belly laugh all around the Left!

We don't have much to laugh at these days, but Cecil Byram has made the Tories look like idiots again.

There was utter fury in the Tory Party.

Some Tories were furious at Cecil Byram for tricking them.

Other Tories were furious at the Industry Minister for depriving the UK of ninety million pounds and lots of future tax revenue.

Although civil servants had checked out the ownership and the directors of the two foundries, the word "Byram" does not appear anywhere on the Chinese public records for the two foundries.

The Byrams Group does not own these foundries. The two foundries are owned by the Wongs and by anonymous trust funds that we now know to be Byram off-shore family trust funds.

The miners' MPs queued up to thank the Industry Minister for his efforts in ensuring that the Groatpie coal mine is to be run by a responsible capitalist. Now the profits can go to tax havens abroad rather than having to pay British taxes!

There will be taxes paid to the Chinese government instead of to the British Government!

The Minister should be proud of his success in not selling the Groatpie mine to Cecil Byram!

One of the mining MPs has a bridge in his constituency that he would like to sell to the Minister!

The bridge crosses Cecil Road, but the road was named after Lord Cecil. Not after Cecil Byram! (Laughter!)

Eventually, Cecil gave a press conference at the Groatpie colliery.

Cecil wore a miner's helmet.

Cecil said that he is greatly honoured to be given the management contract to run the Groatpie coal mine.

Cecil is pleased to have helped to save two thousand jobs.

Cecil said that he personally has no knowledge or experience in managing a coal mine. Cecil has taken advice from the National Union of Mineworkers and Cecil has appointed a qualified colliery manager for the day to day management of the colliery. Cecil told the nation that "the Chinese consortium" has purchased a five hundred million pound asset for two hundred and ten million pounds. The return on capital from that investment will be terrific – and virtually all tax free!

Cecil had a huge wide grin!

The Chinese consortium (Cecil grinned widely) is to build a state of the art clean coal power station to supply electricity to the national grid. It will be built right beside the coal mine so there will be no transport costs.

Cecil said that the Tories don't like Cecil.

But Cecil likes this Tory Government.

"They are wonderful people to do business with!

"So predictable!"

That was the final blow.

The Tory Industry Minister resigned.

I could not help noticing that roughly two hundred million pounds of the money that Cecil always keeps available is suddenly not available.

Clever bastard!

The first cadre of trainee managers have completed their common training. Byrams is much bigger than it was when that cadre first started training.

The second cadre of trainee managers trains at Cleckheaton although people from Cardiff, Walsall and Birmingham train at the Birmingham training facility. There is video conferencing each training day so the two groups may interact.

The Birmingham management trainees are three maimed former sergeants, a corporal, and four women who have held managerial or supervisory positions before. Gwen Sykes again refused the offer to begin management training with the Byram Group.

Several people tried to persuade Gwen to change her mind, but Gwen was adamant. One of Cecil Byram's trust funds had quietly bought eight square miles of land alongside the Groatpie Colliery long before Cecil bought the Groatpie colliery. Cecil's plan is astonishing.

The clean power plant that Cecil has already announced is to be built North of the colliery on colliery land. North of that, on Cecil's land, is to be a huge plant that converts coal into gases, and the gases into plastics. North of that is to be a series of Byram factories making plastic components. North of that will be a generic industrial estate which abuts onto an A road. Cecil is going to build a service road that runs from the colliery to the A road.

The railway siding that currently takes the coal to distant power stations will allow the loading of plastic or of plastic components or anything else produced on the industrial estates.

Cecil says that more than a thousand manufacturing jobs will be created on his land. There will be another four hundred coal mining jobs created at the Groatpie pit when the plastic manufacturing plant opens.

By having an integrated network of coal as fuel, coal as raw material, and very short delivery distances from plastic manufacturer to plastic components factory the savings in transport costs will be immense.

The value of the coal in the Groatpie coal mine is increased by this investment because there will be uses for the coal right on the colliery doorstep. There will be a significant saving on transport costs.

Martin Jenkins is negotiating with the local authority for planning permissions, with architects, with the colliery manager about practical issues at the colliery, with the

National Grid, and with a German manufacturer of the equipment to turn coal into plastic.

There is a possibility of European Union grants.

The Tory Government will be asked for financial help but no-one is holding their breath on the answer to that!

This is together one heck of an investment.

Cecil reckons he should be able to fund the investment out of income, but Cecil will put capital in if he must.

So who is running the colliery?

The colliery manager suggested by the NUM runs the operations.

Cecil and David and Martin visit the colliery once a month to discuss strategy and tactics and issues.

David runs the financial side from Willerton. The colliery has its own HR team that reports to the colliery manager.

Everyone maintains the fiction that the Groatpie Colliery and the land alongside it is owned by a Chinese consortium but everyone knows the truth.

The miners are happy. The future of Groatpie Colliery is secure.

Their colliery has a sane and very clever owner.

There will soon be more jobs at the colliery.

When Cecil visits Groatpie the miners are pleased to see him.

After shaking hands with Cecil the miners always ostentatiously count their fingers as a tribute to Cecil's personal qualities.

One man who had lost a finger in a mining accident some years ago raised a great laugh when he waggled his stump!

Rebecca Johnson is a determined woman.

Rebecca went underground to see the conditions in which the men work, and in which they eat.

Rebecca asked the men what they would like to eat if Rebecca could work miracles.

Rebecca worked with a small group of men at the coal face until Rebecca had perfected the appropriate technology.

Rebecca went underground herself a few times more.

Each man now takes below with him a temperature retaining box with his pit lamp number clearly labelled on the outside.

At the top of the box are two hot wet napkins wrapped in plastic like one has in a good chinese restaurant after the meal. This is so the miner can wash his hands and face before eating.

Next is a hot meal or hot sandwiches as the miner has ordered, together with appropriate cutlery. Also in the box is an insulated flask of real coffee with milk and sugar as ordered.

Rebecca also provides flasks of cold water that were part filled with ice chips shortly before the shift began.

Each miner can have a good hot meal down in the pit, miles from the surface. He can follow it with good coffee and then cold water.

The men have grown to like the chili omelettes and the croissants available at the beginning of each shift and the hot meals available as workers go on or come off shift. Very few people choose to eat three hot meals in the same shift but three hot meals are available.

The men have never been looked after like this!

Rebecca Johnson is seen as a star!

Groatpie has twentyfour hour seven day working so Rebecca runs four shifts of catering workers in one kitchen.

Wage rates at Groatpie are tied to wage rates at other UK coal mines. If the other mines obtain a pay increase Groatpie follows suit.

There was a suggestion that Groatpie could perhaps lead the way in pay negotiations.

Cecil said the fringe benefits the Groatpie men have from Byram Group mean that the Groatpie miners are already ahead of their colleagues.

If Groatpie miners will be able to move to surface work at a Byrams plastics factory up the road if they become physically unfit that is to the advantage of everyone. How does one quantify that in pay negotiations?

The opportunities for education and training, and the support to children and grandchildren – how does one quantify that in pay negotiations?

Byram's catering is way above the normal catering for coal miners. How should that be quantified?

These are real benefits that the Groatpie miners have that the miners working at other locations do not have.

The demand for Groatpie coal will soon be much higher soon because of Cecil's investments.

It would be wrong for Cecil's investments to cause Groatpie wages to rise.

It would also be unfair on the other mines that may well not be as profitable as Groatpie Colliery.

So the suggestion fizzled.

Feeding now more than eight thousand people Rebecca Johnson is busier than ever.

Rebecca shares a personal assistant with Daniel Mason.

Warwick University has quite a large Management School which is well thought of. One of their students analysed all the component makers over a certain size. The student did calculations on the ratio of employees to turnover and employees to profit, and came out with Byrams Group as having the highest turnover per worker and the highest profit per worker. We are the most successful employer in the components industry.

The Tories had some fun with Charlie Kent because Charlie had been the Engineering Union Convenor at the most exploitative employer in his industry. Charlie said that Byrams has very high capital investment per worker and very high training costs per worker.

If other employers got behind British workers the way Byrams does its workers the other employers would be more profitable, too.

The Byram Willerton Brass Band is doing well. We have the adult band we have always had. We now have a Youth band.

At holiday times the Band Academy runs one week ensemble training where children and youngsters learn to play together in small groups.

Alf said that there is such local enthusiasm that Alf needs more funding.

Cecil just authorised the extra spending.

Cecil asked Alf to look at our much larger pools of musical talent around the country. Cecil is prepared to support brass bands based upon each of his four large factories and upon the three factories in Heckmondwike, and at Groatpie Colliery. Is this something Alf should take charge of or should Cecil just employ six more Alfs?

It is time for the annual "Help the MOD month" where people from all over Byrams volunteer to work for a week at each of the four munitions factories.

It is an opportunity to earn really good overtime and bonuses, taste regional beers, stay in pleasant hotels and boarding houses, and to be seen to be patriotic. Some people just do one or two weeks but some men work at all four factories in turn. There isn't much overtime at Byrams so many workers are grateful to earn really good money for a few weeks as Christmas appears on the horizon. At the end of the month everyone who took part in "Help The MOD month" goes to Doncaster Races for a free day of horse racing. Cecil makes a shed load of money out of the "Help The MOD" exercise so Cecil pays for the first two drinks.

Chapter 37: David Wilkins

Tohur is so pleased with the world.

Tohur never imagined that he could earn a First Class Honours Degree at anything. Tohur has been selected to represent the United Kingdom in the Olympics next year. Tohur's autobiography sells very well. Tohur has the knock on benefit that his cookbooks are all selling well.

Tohur's cookery program now has more viewers than mine.

I will be off the air soon as I begin my new career.

Tohur is happy that Ali has this new opportunity in Bahrain. Ali will be happier living in a Muslim country than in China.

Ali expects to live in Bahrain or in the Middle East for the foreseeable future.

Ali has formally abandoned UK domicile, closed down his UK bank account, and Ali owns nothing in the UK.

Ali will pay no income tax!

Shakoora has decided that there can only be one high pressure career in their marriage. Shakoora is going to settle down to having babies. With a chef, a cleaner, and a driver cum guard Shakoora has virtually nothing to do.

Once children come Shakoora will employ nannies.

Shakoora will design clothes for the Daar collective in her spare time.

Shakoora has made Ali agree to always taking Fridays off so they can have quality time together.

Ali is working like a dog, but at that level of responsibility it is inevitable.

Helen is really happy with her baby boy. Apparently the move to Belgium is now unlikely to happen. Her husband Martin is running a small project for Byram's in Birmingham instead

Martin talks to his chief charge hand once a day on the telephone, and Martin visits Birmingham once a week. As the project grows Martin will have to get more involved, but at the moment there is no need for Martin to spend lots of time in Birmingham. Martin is heavily involved in the Groatpie project. At the moment Groatpie is Martin's main job.

My next sister Andria also had a son, little Sam. Little Angela is delighted. Andria and Sam are very happy.

Our mother Angela loves having two baby grandsons.

My brother Dennis and my friend Grace Adams are drifting apart, which is sad.

Dennis is still at university, doing fairly well with a bit of tutoring. He should earn a good degree.

Amazingly these advertisements for sanitary towels are still running. The theme is still the young ladies having a good time with their eye candy rather than anything sexual.

Amy Waters is astoundingly attractive. Diane Green is attractive. Dennis and Abdullah are good looking and they are very fit.

All four represent Great Britain at Ballroom Dancing.

Amal Daar and Olivia Hudson are national champions for their age group.

When Don Hewson explained Peter's finances to Peter we had expected some reaction from Peter.

Peter said nothing to anyone.

Eventually Helen asked Peter what his thoughts are.

"It is good that I don't have to work at a shitty job if I don't want to.

"It is good that I can do what I like.

"But that is my life now.

"I do what I like.

"I have a good life and I am very happy with it.

"It looks like I will always have a happy life!"

Janine is happy.

My parents will never recover from a lifetime of poverty. They will never recover from their experience of prison.

They are well housed, warm, and well fed. For so many years they could never afford to buy clothes. Helen takes them out every so often and Helen buys clothes for them. They look smarter now.

Annette and I are still together. We live at Annette's flat.

I go to Turnham Green about twice a week to collect my mail.

I have stopped filming and I have stopped writing, so as soon as this academic term finishes that part of my life will be over.

On to the next adventure!

Chapter 38: Georgina Arron

Merseyside Plastics has a terrible history of industrial relations. It will take a long time before the workers fully trust the management.

The briefing document said that the difficulties within the Ellis family had created rival camps within the management structure.

Dick Shepherd did not know why I was asking but when I asked him Dick gave me characteristically pungent character sketches of all the individuals within the Merseyside Plastics management structure. They are all bastards who spend their time licking arses upwards. Most of them piss downwards!

I asked Dick which are the competent bastards?

Dick's list was very short.

I got the three competent bastards together. They were not all from the same camp, which was helpful.

I put it to them that I was under orders from my bosses to double production within a year. Within five years our production will increase at least a hundredfold.

What suggestions did they have?

Half an hour into the discussion the three competent managers had demonstrated that they could work together.

Then I asked them who else was necessary to the operation of the business? They named one of the secretaries because she has kept the place running despite the infighting among the Ellises.

Anyone else?

Silence.

Apart from the three competent bastards and the secretary Ruth Gilbert I sent everyone else in the management area home on gardening leave.

On the morning of that first day Tony Dacre had trouble with the production workers who said that cleaning the factory was not their job.

"Fine!

“Sit on your arses!

“I am not prepared to let human beings work in this shit heap.

“The excuse you gave me yesterday was that the Ellises were bastards.

“Do you like these conditions?

“Do you want to work in this filth?

“I will clean this place.

“Production does not begin until the factory is clean enough for human beings to work in. Until production has been running a week there ain't no bonuses.”

After ninety minutes of watching Tony working on cleaning alone the guys suddenly all got off their arses and they pitched in.

In the meantime I had begun sending managers and other people home on gardening leave. I explained to some of them that their function was not necessary, or that it was to be run centrally from Willerton.

All the people going on gardening leave carried their boxes and black sacks through the yard. They were seen by Tony Dacre's production staff who had not yet agreed to clean.

As they saw how many people I was sacking the men decided that they would clean the factory after all!

Rebecca Johnson had reduced her cleaning difficulties by piling all the catering equipment in the yard. She even ripped out cupboards and partitions. Two of the company lorries took it all away.

By lunch time most of the cleaning was complete. Our Ellesmere Port canteen had catered for two hundred and eighty people, but by lunch time there were only two hundred and forty people present.

The stack of unused paper plates was a mute statement.

I had the locksmith from yesterday replacing the locks. We reduced the numbers of keys needed from thirty to five. I told the locksmith not to bother with the keys to the transport section because the building is likely to be demolished.

The four lorry drivers and their mechanic were really decent men.

I explained that Byrams uses a transport company instead of having our own transport.

I told them what company we use. I asked them if they would be willing to work for that company if it were possible.

I will pay them their redundancy money obviously but I wanted them to land on their feet afterwards.

After six telephone calls by me the five of them were invited to job interviews at the transport company the following morning. They never came back.

We see them sometimes when they deliver here or they uplift from here. They are happy enough.

The transport company did not want the lorries.

The lorries were sent for auction.

Clearing out the transport workshop and the lorry parking area liberated a lot of space.

I get no joy from making people redundant.

The people whose jobs are being transferred to Willerton probably will not wish to travel to Willerton. These are the HR people, the entire finance and pay side, sales and marketing, purchasing, and stores. This all comes under Rose Howarth or David Taylor.

I kept a HR person and a pay clerk locally, who work under Rose or David.

Rebecca took on two minimum wage kitchen staff and Tony Dacre took on three full time cleaners, rescuing a few people from redundancy.

Dick Shepherd is still coming to terms with the idea that management is not the enemy.

Dick's day job as shop steward cum Convenor has reduced its time needs immensely because there is very little to argue about.

Dick is seconded for two days a week to look for a large site for the proposed plastic components factory.

The Byram Group now employs an Information Systems manager. Gerry Hanson came to Liverpool to integrate the Merseyside Plastics systems with those of the Byram Group.

Gerry cracked up laughing at the antiquated equipment.

Gerry just junked it and installed brand new equipment and linked the equipment to Byram Group.

Sahid Daar and his brother Jabril and one of the competent bastards (Jack Daw – I kid you not!) worked over a weekend to put the Merseyside Plastics inventory on the Byram web site.

For large buyers the discount we give for purchases from our group is a huge incentive to buy as much as possible from us.

Sales doubled in three months.

Many of the production staff now work overtime, and are glad of the opportunity to do it.

When Cecil Johnson announced his intention to build a huge plastics production complex at Groatpie Colliery Dick Shepherd came to see me full of anger and outrage. So much for my promises to build a large plastics factory at Liverpool!

Dick was very surprised to see my angry face. I am normally so reasonable.

“First, Mr Shepherd, you do not ever call me a liar!

“I was given six months to find a location for the large plastics factory. After three months you have still not found anywhere suitable.

“And you blame me for letting you down!”

Dick Shepherd did not expect this from me.

“If you have not noticed, we have doubled production here in three months.

“We are likely to double production again in another three months. How do you expect that to happen?

“We do not have the space, so we are looking at a night shift!

“But what happens three months after that?

“On top of that I am being asked to provide other plastic components but I have nowhere to install the manufacturing equipment.

“You are getting your arse in the air about a factory complex that will open in five years time or so. I am tearing my hair out to open a factory here in Liverpool in five months time and we don’t even have a bloody site!”

I should not have sworn, I agree.

Dick Shepherd did not wilt.

“I have been given a month now to identify and purchase a site for our factory.

“After that I will get “help” from Head Office to find a site that might be anywhere in the country.

“You complain that Liverpool has unemployment. There are four thousand potential jobs in Liverpool waiting on Dick Shepherd finding a bloody site in the next month.

“Get your arse into gear or I will be handed my own arse!”

Dick was taken aback to have the problem land back on his lap!

My wedding to Douglas Trail is in three weeks time, so I am more stressed than I usually am.

My mother is more or less living with us seeing to everything.

My future mother in law Alison has not replied to the wedding invitation.

I don't care.

CHAPTER 39: Emma Hewson

Max and Peter knew that they were in their last season of "Terrible Tykes", so they were not upset at being dropped.

Colin Donkin is younger than the other two. Colin had a medical examination and Colin will probably last out the current series before his voice breaks.

Max is really relishing the fact that he has two extra days in the week now that he has stopped filming. And Max is not continuously learning and rehearsing new music for Tykes!

In our small and very flexible school Max is pressing on with French and Spanish and Max has resumed studying Latin. According to the language teachers Max is on course for sitting those three GCSEs a year early.

Max wants to study Extra Maths and Statistics in his GCSE year. With Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Maths, Information Technology, Music, English Language, and History, Max reckons that he will have a full load.

Peter is sticking with German. Maths, English Language, Music, Information Technology and General Science is enough for Peter. Peter says that six GCSEs at A and B grades is good enough.

Mark Johnson looks so well and happy. The time away from home has really matured Mark.

Mark's job requires him to travel all over Britain and Europe as a kind of inspector general for Cecil Byram, looking at businesses where Cecil has invested money.

Mark is taking piano lessons!

Mark wants to get up to about Grade 6 level so he can play at Mormon services if required. Mark played piano at some Mormon services in Beijing.

Mark bought a piano for the Johnson house.

Mark is going to Mormon social events all over West Yorkshire. He seems to be enjoying life!

Good!

One evening I was passing in the corridor outside the study when I heard Alice's double bass being played very well.

Alice is not tall enough to play the double bass.

Looking through the study door I saw Alice bowing the strings. Looking further up I saw Ahmed sitting on top of the piano fingering the strings. The two of them looked so happy and triumphant that all I could do was to smile.

I will tell Carlo Stewart when I next see him.

Carlo will use this in a "Terrible Tykes" Christmas Special I am sure.

The famous actor lined up for this Christmas is a friend of Candice Gumm. Diogenes Arturo is a former child actor, so he has been in films for thirty years. He is enormously well known and well liked.

Damien is playing the guitar well and Damien has a lovely singing voice. Max has been coaching him.

Damien sounds terrific playing and singing "Puff The Magic Dragon". "Puff" sounds odd in a Yorkshire accent when I have always previously heard the song sung in a Welsh accent.

Damien may join the next season of Tykes, but really that is up to Carlo Stewart.

Max and Peter say that they enjoyed "Terrible Tykes" but they are also pleased to be released from it. They were children when they started but now they are teenagers!

Max and Peter still choose to have long hair.

The two very attractive boys go to the parties and the barbecues that the Wilkins hold every weekend. They play piano and guitar and sing and drink cider and kiss girls.

They are performing well at their school work so I have no grounds for complaint.

I have concern, of course.

Andria tells me that from what she sees the worst that is going on is snogging and petting. Of course if there was more going on I assume it would be happening in private.

Freda Graham is happy to be paid to babysit at our house, so Don and I are going out a lot more. Freda is not in a relationship at the moment, and Freda is happy with it.

Moklisur Miah still does judo with Damien and Rupert Thornton and Simeon Graham. Moklisur often spends the night here.

Moklisur has a very dry sense of humour. He is a lovely lad.

Monika comes sometimes to play with Heinz and Alice.

Arthur and Kate are bouncing and happy.

Don and I are good. I never thought that as a Head Teacher I would be so relaxed, but I am.

Gerald Butler wrote a Grapelli type jazz instrumental piece that Gerald and Robert Graham recorded.

They sent it to Mr Driburg.

Their instrumental piece has become the sound track for a car advertisement for a major car manufacturer. The car is advertised over most of the world so the soundtrack is heard over most of the world.

Both lads have received a million pounds in initial royalties. They look set to receive more millions this year and millions more for the next few years.

Gerald earns more than Robert because Gerald wrote the music.

Robert had his last operation. It went very well.

Robert Graham goes to the Wilkins parties and barbecues. Robert is just enjoying being a physically active handsome teenager. I know that Robert is kissing girls and drinking cider. I am so pleased for him.

I gave Robert my little talk about how to behave with girls.

And why to stay off spirits.

Robert does ballroom dancing, but he does not do lifts yet. Janet Addy says that if Robert wishes he could go far, but at the moment Robert is just enjoying the social side.

Robert gets on well with Sally Thornton and Kali and Fosia Daar.

Robert is invited to the odd social event at Bradford Girls Grammar School. Max and Peter are sometimes also invited.

Mr Driburg is having conversations with the supermarket and the company that produces David Wilkins' cookery programs. The suggestion is that Robert Graham should have a program to replace David's program.

At the bottom end of "Terrible Tykes" are some new recruits who are not linked to our family. They started after Easter.

Malc Dow and Carlo Stuart decided to prepare for the point when Colin Donkin, Fulesa Miah, Georgina Donkin, Margaret Graham, Janine Wilkins and Sally Johnson will all leave the show within a relatively short time frame. The number of "Tykes" has temporarily increased.

A young boy from Bradford comes to Tryton Theatre School. The other young boy and two young girls live in London and they attend theatre schools in London.

Originally these children all had their own agents.

Dower Productions negotiated pay for the child actors in line with the pay that our children receive. As “Terrible Tykes” is such a popular program the child actors’ pay is good.

On top of that Dower Productions pays the children’s theatre school fees.

Dower Productions requires the child actors to wear the clothing provided by the supermarket because Dower Productions is still on twenty per cent of the supermarket sponsorship payments.

The children also have to cooperate with Sahid Daar’s web site because Dower Productions has income from the web site.

The children and their agents knew nothing about the supermarket sponsorship. The supermarket sponsorship was originally negotiated by Tom Driburg. The deal is that the supermarket pays Tom and Tom allocates the sponsorship among the child actors as Tom thinks fit.

Children not represented by Tom naturally get nothing.

In a long car journey from London to Manchester Georgina Donkin told the three new London children that Georgina and Colin have income from the supermarket sponsorship worth more than the children are paid as actors.

Naturally the children told their parents and the Bradford child.

When approached, Dower Productions told the parents and the agents that the deal negotiated for the new children is all that Dower Productions will pay.

Dower Productions has no influence over the supermarket or over Tom Driburg.

The supermarket said that it has a number of sponsorship deals with Mr Driburg and his clients that are working satisfactorily. The division of the sponsorship money amongst Mr Driburg’s clients is not an issue for the supermarket.

Tom Driburg said that he is comfortable with the present arrangements.

Within two months Tom Driburg was representing all the new actors! Tom also gives the new children a share of the money from Sahid’s web site.

CHAPTER 40: Ali Miah

I now understand why Arthur Miller drank. A large construction job carries incredible pressures.

My pressures are so immense I am glad that I do not drink.

I visited Arthur Miller in hospital. I could not stay long because Arthur found conversation painful and stressful.

Arthur was on pain killers and he had difficulty making coherent sentences.

I brought Shakoora to meet Arthur.

Arthur was pleased to meet an attractive young woman.

I visited Arthur twice a week until he died.

Arthur had nothing much to say.

I normally just sat with Arthur and I held his hand.

Arthur's last words to me sounded like "Enjoy Minnesota".

I didn't know what that meant.

I have no intention of visiting Minnesota.

I am not totally sure where Minnesota is.

The Crown Prince of Bahrain is concerned that a tsunami could wipe out his Kingdom. The Crown Prince had a committee of tsunami experts design for him a series of barriers that will help to reduce the effect of a tsunami.

Arthur Miller had commissioned a detailed maritime survey of the area to see what the underground terrain is like. That has not been completed yet.

When I looked at the detailed plans I suggested to the Crown Prince that he should broaden the protective islands. The increased breadth of each island must help to reduce the power of the tsunami.

I also suggested that the islands should still be crescent shaped, but facing outward to combat and contain the tsunami rather than the crescents facing Bahrain and expecting the water to flow past the islands. It does not matter if the islands are destroyed by the tsunami provided that Bahrain is protected.

The sheer volume of water and the power of water and the height of water involved in a tsunami means that you cannot really build against it.

All you can do is to try to break the force of the tsunami before it arrives.

The outer island could have a marina along the outer edge.

Between islands six and five one could have a salt water fish farm providing protein to the people. If the fish farm were shallow enough for prawns and mussels it would be almost as effective in disrupting a tsunami as if islands six and five were one large island.

I suggested that Bahrain could build warehouses on the remaining protective islands. Leaving the West end of each gap open would allow freighters to unload and load well out of Bahrain City, reducing pressure on facilities in Bahrain. Roads logically should be at the East end of each island.

If a tsunami hits before the project is complete the loss of life and property will be catastrophic. So one might as well start with building the airport island and work outwards.

Arthur Miller was originally appointed to build the first island and on it a new major airport on a par with Schipol Airport.

I came to Bahrain to succeed Arthur.

The Crown Prince likes my ideas.

I have had a promotion!

I am now building not one island but I am to build all six islands simultaneously! The five other islands are each almost as long as the airport island. I have to build them really strong because their sole job is to break up the power of the tsunami. Each island is a mile from the next, so an incoming tsunami will have five barriers and five single miles of sea in which to dissipate its strength.

I am in charge of a job that is one of the largest Engineering projects in the world. In terms of volume my task is comparable with building more than two hundred Great Pyramids of Giza!

Shakoora has told me that her role is to support me.

I come first.

Shakoora has registered for a degree in Business Studies with the Open University. It is really a correspondence course.

Shakoora can fit in her studies around my sixty hour week.

Most important, we have started a family!

We had actually started the family in Beijing but before Shakoora was sure she was pregnant we had moved to Bahrain.

That is the most important news of this year!

Bahrain has excellent hospitals. My health care insurance plan is part of my remuneration, so Shakoora's pregnancy will cost me nothing in medical bills.

Shakoora will ask Amina to stay with her for two weeks before the baby is due and for a week or two after. That is fine by me.

It certainly will make it easier for me to work.

Tohur tells me that he is very happy with the world.

Tohur's book sales are excellent.

Tohur's autobiography attracts "non-traditional" readers.

Given that Tohur rarely reads himself I find that fitting!

Tohur is looking forward to competing in the Olympics.

The little Miahs are fine!

I am assembling a team of experienced civil engineers. Arthur had started the recruitment process but recruitment was put on hold when Arthur fell ill.

"Prof" from Cambridge is helping me with the recruitment process because I do not know anyone else who could help.

I am paying "Prof" what Prof thinks is a generous consultancy fee.

My first hire is a guy who knows about building docks and jetties and building in water generally. He has just published a book on the subject.

He has not written about tsunamis or starch, otherwise he might have been appointed to my job.

My friend Fan is on the payroll. Fan is currently in China delving deeper into ancient Chinese building techniques for me.

I meet with the Crown Prince fortnightly.

I have referred to the Crown Prince a religious question which is beyond my competence.

For a period of eight to ten years I will need to produce huge quantities of cooked rice so I may use the water that the rice was cooked in as an additive to the mortar.

Obviously the Crown Prince will pay for the rice.

It seems wicked to throw away the cooked rice.

Dumping large quantities of cooked rice on the market will have terrible effects on the local economy. What am I to do?

The Crown Prince has sent the question to seven leading Muslim religious leaders. He is waiting for a reply.

I am waiting on the undersea survey before we can draw up the detailed plans.

I am preparing ballpark estimates of the extra costs that my proposals will entail, to help the Crown Prince with his decision.

Bahrain is not a democracy.

Bahrain is not a public company.

If the Crown Prince chooses to hire a very young man to put in charge of this utterly huge project that is absolutely the Crown Prince's decision.

If at any time the Crown Prince loses confidence in me he will fire me.

Some months later I learned that Arthur had made a will in Minnesota after his return from Beijing.

Arthur has left me his cabin beside a lake in Minnesota!

Arthur's American lawyers wrote to me at my old apartment in Beijing. Eventually the lawyers tracked me down to my apartment in Bahrain.

Shakoora and I will visit the cabin sometime.

The letter from the American lawyers said that the cabin is worth about three million dollars. The cruiser tied to the dock is worth half a million dollars. What are my intentions?

I spoke to the Crown Prince who said I could go now. The undersea survey is to be delivered in three weeks time. I must be back for that.

CHAPTER 41: Rebecca Johnson

I so love Chester Wilson. He is a wonderful man.

Mark and I work long and silly hours and Charlotte is away for the next eighteen months.

Chester is so good at sitting in my house and minding the younger children.

Chester works hard on his doctorate, and he works hard for Cecil Byram. Chester does much of the work for Cecil Byram in my house on his laptop.

We are still as a family discussing whether Sister Sally Cuddy should be invited to join us at Tryton. We could install a stair lift so Sister Sally may have an upstairs bedroom.

To find a bedroom we would need to put Sister Sally in Charlotte's bedroom for now.

Chester would have to sleep with Mark or sleep downstairs.

Although with Sister Sally in residence it should never be necessary for Chester to sleep at my house.

But what happens when Charlotte returns?

I don't think Charlotte and Sally will wish to share a bedroom.

Either Charlotte or Mark would need to move out.

Mark can afford to buy a house now if he wishes.

Mark says that when his apprenticeship finishes he may wish to study for a degree without being beholden to Cecil Byram. In which case Mark may not be living in this area. So why buy a house?

The trouble with taking in Sister Sally is that I am probably stuck with her for the next thirty or forty years. If Sister Sally gives up her home in Cardiff then where can she live other than with one of us?

I expect that Chester will wish to return to the United States one day. Assuming I go with Chester, that dumps Sister Sally on whoever has not yet moved out!

Mark has not met Sister Sally yet.

Mark has been Called to help with the youth provision across our Stake. Mark is Counsellor to the Youth President.

Mark is going to and supporting almost all the events for young people around the Stake, getting to know lots of people.

Mark is organising the summer camp for teenage Mormon boys and Mark is giving a lot of help to the young woman who is organising the camp the following week for Mormon girls. Mark is also organising the Hewson megacamp where many Hewson kids and friends camp together.

Our Stake President David Smith has also Called Mark to help with preparing young people across the Stake for missionary service. Apparently Mark did so well as a missionary that Mark is to be a role model and a mentor for prospective missionaries.

Mark says that he has no idea what he did to deserve this honour.

On Monday Mark goes somewhere between Preston and Prague to visit a business in Cecil Byram's empire. Mark gets back on Wednesdays.

On Thursday Mark goes to his day release course for his apprenticeship and then Mark visits Cecil at Willerton. On Friday Mark has his piano lesson, writes up his report on his visit, and prepares for next week's visit. On Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday and Sunday Mark is usually out on Mormon activities of some description.

Sally was giving me a running commentary on which perfumes predominate in Mark's car.

Eventually I told Sally to stop that. We will wait until Mark chooses to tell us something.

As long as it is perfumes that predominate rather than aftershaves I am happy!

We go to Church as a family. It feels so good to walk to Church on Sunday between Chester and Mark.

Work is fine.

For four days of each week I am on site visits.

I currently have sixteen sites including Willerton. I have to work hard to visit each site once a month. I visit Groatpie Colliery at least once a week because of the size of the catering effort and because I have four kitchen shifts working.

I have a day a week at Willerton attending meetings and guiding my personal assistant.

David Taylor has assigned me a whizz kid costs accountant called Mary Ingham.

Mary presents me each week with the catering results from each of the sixteen sites updated to last night's returns. Mary has analysed the information in a way that I never could.

Mary tells me about the profitability of the bacon sandwiches on each site, the sales per catering staff hour employed, which sundries are the most profitable, and so forth. This analysis is a tremendously powerful tool for detecting fraud, waste, and laziness because exceptions stand out.

Then when we have gone through the catering information we go through the manufacturing profitability on each site.

I earn less catering profit per miner at Groatpie Colliery than I do for any of our other employees. My catering has increased productivity at Groatpie by six per cent, which earns Cecil the equivalent of the entire output of one hundred and twenty miners.

Cecil is more than happy with me.

Mary often makes suggestions on what I should prioritise.

I take Mary's observations into my thinking. I am aware though that Mary knows nothing about catering.

My Open University management degree work is done in motel bedrooms. At home I have Chester and the children who all want my attention.

Bishop Singleton recognises that I do not have time for a significant Call. I have a family to lead. My life is subject to upset at any moment should Cecil Byram take it into his head to buy another factory!

Now that things have quietened I am back to playing at Church every second Sunday, subject to the excitements generated by work.

Bishop Singleton and I had our annual meeting about tithing. Like Mark and Charlotte I tithe more than many people can earn.

We are blessed by The Lord. We are happy to tithe.

Sally's money is still held by Don Hewson. Don's "Sally B" account holds Sally's tithes until Sally is old enough to make a reasoned decision about tithing. There is now an "Andrew B" account and a "Michael B" account as well because Don also holds their earnings.

Gerald Butler and Sally are a little closer than I would like to see. I have to agree that Gerald is a talented musician and they have to practice together. I just wonder if Gerald Butler was not so good looking would Sally feel the need to rehearse with Gerald quite so much?

Sally told me not to worry. There is nothing romantic between them.

That is what Sally says, anyway!

I now purchase well over three million pounds worth of food and sundries each year. The "little gifts" this Christmas will be awesome!

With Cecil's bonuses I have been able to repay Charlotte early. I am now saving against the day when Chester and I move to America – if that is still what Chester wishes to do when Chester has finished his doctorate.

CHAPTER 42: Cecil Byram

Irene is so energised by the housing projects and the Birmingham project! They all make a profit but I would willingly pay for Irene to be so happy!

The Byram Group now pays out nearly a million pounds a year in grants for education and opportunities for our workers, their children, and their grandchildren. This sounds like a lot of money until you realise this works out at £2.50 per worker per week. My repayment in morale has to be worth more than that.

Irene and my mother Marjorie conduct all the interviews. This involves them travelling to all our various sites to meet the applicants. They even visited China to see applicants from the energy project.

I was amused to learn that the energy project in China all takes place about three feet off the ground! Underneath the solar fabric the Chinese raise chickens, pigs, mushrooms, and rhubarb! Apparently Daniel Mason approved this.

Our Blessed Peace foundry provides the metal framework that keeps everything off the ground. The food the workers eat generates clean waste to feed to the chickens

and to the pigs. The chickens produce fertiliser for the mushrooms and for the rhubarb. The food production side is almost as profitable as the electricity generation, and it gives employment to the families of our workers!

Irene and Marjorie have beefed up the education and health provision for the local community – who are virtually all our workers anyway!

Karen has finished her second set of A levels. Karen is confident of her results.

Karen is now off to Avila near Madrid to work in a Spanish factory.

I am really impressed that Karen negotiated this without needing my help.

After a summer working in the Spanish factory Karen starts a degree in Production Engineering with Spanish.

Karen will not be able to live at home during her degree, but Karen will be close enough to visit at weekends if she has nothing better to do.

Karen has asked Irene to take over Karen's involvement in the battered women's hostel in Meldon that Byrams supports. Karen is still very interested in the housing project at Clickworth.

Building begins at Clickworth shortly. It will be secure housing for women and their families.

My parents in law are much as ever. Still fit and well!

All is well on the family front!

I was not surprised when my personal tax inspector said that she and a team are going to dig into my tax affairs.

I told the tax inspector that her investigation is politically motivated.

I told her that because her investigation is politically motivated all cooperation has ended.

I will fight her all the way.

I have hired in a savage forensic accountant whose sole job is to fight my tax inspector. His nickname is "Rottie" after a breed of savage dog called Rottweiler. "Rottie" is expensive but he comes recommended by Mr Porteous.

Then I had a telephone call from a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence. He would like to visit me.

It is the senior civil servant who sold me the four munitions factories.

I was surprised that he came on his own.

My experience so far is that there are always two civil servants together.

Either these two events are complete coincidence or they are linked.

Is the tax investigation to soften me up for something?

“Well, Mr Byram, I have drawn the short straw!”

That was a surprising opening.

“How so?”

“So far two Government Ministers who dealt with you have had to resign, and one has been demoted.”

“Yes.”

“The careers of some of the civil servants involved with them have been knocked off course.”

“I will take your word on that.”

“I am so close to retirement now that I am fire proof. So I have been sent to see you!”

“Go on.”

“I have come on my own because what we are going to talk about is extremely sensitive.”

I raised my eyebrows and I said nothing.

“You will know that all the Conservative Governments since 1951 have had difficulties with the miners.”

“Yes.”

I had it from the NUM Research Officer that the miners’ perception is that they have had trouble with the Tory Governments!

“One of the reasons for privatising Groatpie Colliery was to begin the next round of cuts and redundancies.

“You somewhat scuppered the Government plans.”

What a shame!

“So?”

“So a group of politicians and civil servants were discussing what to do next.

“Someone said that they should sell the entire coal industry to Cecil Byram and let Cecil Byram fight the bloody miners!”

I am surprised that I am discussed in these high circles.

“The more the ministers and high civil servants thought about that idea the better it sounded.

“It dawned on the Conservative politicians that getting into fights with the miners all the time just confirmed perceptions that the Conservatives are “the nasty party”.

“Most of the experienced mining businesses that might wish to buy the British coal mines have a history of conflict with their employees. If the Government sells to them the companies will have conflict with the miners. Then the Government cannot help being drawn into the dispute.”

“If cuddly Mr Cecil Byram can deal with the miners then let him.”

“So I have come to see you to see if I can sell you an entire industry!”

I looked at the man.

I make components!

I had not expected this approach.

Do I want to do this?

“British Coal has a legal monopoly on coal mining.”

I know that.

“The Government does not like you.”

I know that, too.

“If the Government can unload one of their political problems onto you then it saves the Government huge amounts of grief.

“You seem to have a knack for turning unprofitable businesses into profitable businesses.

“If you can make the coal industry disappear as a political problem then good for you.”

I think I see what is in it for the Conservative Government.

I am sure that for the miners they would rather work for me than for the Government.

But what is in this for me?

Mining is a very different industry to components.

According to the NUM research officer the mines would run better if they were not subject to political interference.

Foreign competition is a problem.

Carbon Dioxide emissions is a problem.

The inevitability of mine closures is a problem.

It does make sense though that the United Kingdom would be more secure if a higher proportion of our energy were to be produced in the UK. As a country we are becoming more at risk by the growing reliance on imported fuel.

How would this be funded?

“Will you lend me the money to buy the coal mines?”

“If you or Byrams make the purchase and it all stays onshore and it all pays tax then we will lend the money. We suggest complete repayment within twenty years and eight per cent interest on the outstanding balance.”

“It had never occurred to me that you would make this suggestion.

“I will have to think very hard about it.

“Would you mind if I had a chat with the National Union of Mineworkers?”

“Go ahead. Ask them to keep it quiet for now.”

“Have you any idea why HMRC are suddenly gunning for me?

“I have nothing to fear but dealing with HMRC issues is taking up more management time than I would like.

“I think it is politically motivated.”

“I know nothing about that.

“I will make enquiries.”

“We had agreed a project with the Prisons Department of the Home Office to help to rehabilitate petty offenders. The previous Home Secretary put a block on it at the last minute. The current Home Secretary doesn't like me. Could this be looked at again?”

“I will make enquiries.”

We left it at that.

I sat alone for twenty minutes.

Then I asked David Taylor to pop through.

I told David what had been suggested.

“David, if we do this I am going to need someone very good to run six extra coal mines, three of them the same size as Groatpie.

“Any suggestions?”

David ran through the roll of our current managers. What it comes down to is that the only possible person is Garth Stead.

“What about you?”

David looked surprised.

“I am not an engineer.”

“Whoever runs Byram Coal is not going to spend his time underground.

It is a finance and paper job. You have to monitor the pits, not run them. Technical knowledge is really not needed.

“You could hire a Byram Group Finance Officer easily enough. The mines would be a stand alone division larger than the current Byram Group.

“David, the time has come for you to appoint someone who can do your present job. If the mines project comes off that will be a huge job for you to move to.”

“The negotiating team will be you and Martin Johnson.

“I was quite impressed by the NUM Research Officer I had dealings with. I will ask if he can be seconded to you.”

I rang the NUM President and I asked for a meeting. He and his Deputy could be free on Wednesday but they can't get up to Yorkshire.

Can we meet in Brighton where they will be attending a conference? I said that was fine.

Alf from the Byram Willerton brass band has responded to my query on funding brass bands. A few weeks ago Alf placed a message on every pay slip sent out by the Byrams Group.

Alf has now collated the responses.

Alf says that there is significant interest in forming brass bands in Heckmondwike, Swansea and Ellesmere Port.

At Groatpie Colliery the workers want a full orchestra instead.

I am prepared to fund these.

I told Alf to get on with forming committees and working out budgets.

Daniel Mason is run ragged.

Daniel and I discussed Daniel's situation.

The factory and energy project in China (not to mention chickens, pigs, mushrooms, and rhubarb) is a stand alone project. The managers Mr Wong appointed are very capable people. So let us call that a division that reports to Daniel but which Daniel visits maybe once a year instead of once a month.

Daniel sighed with relief.

Heckmondwike One factory makes the machinery to manufacture the energy gathering fabric. It runs smoothly. It does not need a monthly visit. Does it need visiting at all?

Heckmondwike Two factory makes the energy gathering fabric. It runs smoothly. It does not need a monthly visit.

The building of the new factories in Newcastle, Walsall, Cardiff and Ellesmere Port should not be supervised by Daniel. The Assistant Managers at Heckmondwike One can see to the building and setting up of each factory.

Then production managers from Heckmondwike Two can see to getting production running.

Daniel should hire extra production managers now in readiness.

The gangs erecting the fields of energy gathering fabric work for Kevin Hanson.

Daniel needs reports, but Daniel does not need to visit the sites.

So if Daniel is relieved of all these visits Daniel can concentrate on obtaining permissions for more energy sites and purchasing more land in Europe.

Daniel was very pleased with me.

My partners in Europe and the small companies that the Byram family own are all commenting favourably on Mark Johnson.

Mark asks intelligent questions!

Mark has already caught a fraud in one business.

Mark identified an opportunity for fraud in another business, so that opportunity was closed before there was any fraud.

My meeting with the National Union of Mineworkers leaders was interesting. Like me, they smelled a rat or two!

Russia and Argentina produce coal more cheaply than can England. The reason is that their deposits of coal are relatively near the surface and are very thick. Their miners do open cast coal mining and quite literally they dig out the coal with excavators and they load it onto trains or lorries.

In England our coal is a long way down. Our coal has to be conveyed literally miles underground. Then it all comes up to ground level on conveyors or hoists. Our coal seams are not as thick.

There is also a continuing need to support the ceiling which is expensive in materials and in workers' time. Sometimes the miners have to blast rock or coal apart. Much of the time the coal cutters work along the edge of a seam scraping the exposed coal off.

Even with the cost of sea transport coal imports are cheaper than coal produced in Britain.

Many of the British pits have been established a long time. The easiest seams have been worked out. The surviving mines are diminishing in profitability.

Only thirty per cent of Britain's coal needs are met by British coal mines. This creates a huge vulnerability. The British Government uses half the home mined coal to build stockpiles against any interruption of supply.

The NUM reading of the situation is that coal mining in Britain continues to be unprofitable. The Government is subsidising the coal industry for strategic reasons and for political reasons.

If the coal mines could be landed on Cecil Byram, Cecil Byram would be lumbered with subsidising the coal industry. The Government would not care very much if the pits did close provided their hands were seen to be clean.

As soon as I own the coal mines the electricity industry will reduce the price it pays for coal.

There is a finite limit to how much plastic is needed in Britain. The plastics industry cannot use enough coal to use all the coal that Britain currently produces.

The NUM advice is not to take up the offer.

The catering that Rebecca Johnson leads is terrific. Would Byram Catering be willing to organise the catering at all the coal pits owned by the Government? If Byrams would cater the NUM would try to negotiate this change.

I said that I would consult and get back to them.

They confirmed that if I can find a way to make this purchase work then the NUM will not object.

Karen was at home one weekend. She showed me how on the Daar Fashions site there is a facility for entering your own measurements onto templates and ordering exactly the dress that you wish. Could we do something similar at Byram Engineering where clients could specify in detail exactly what component they needed making and Byram Engineering could quote for manufacturing it?

Garth now has Sahid Daar working on this project.

CHAPTER 43: Charlotte Johnson

My preparation for missionary service and for the concert tour underlined how important it is to be physically fit.

Freda Graham and Dennis Wilkins ran with me twice a week each.

Robert Graham spent a few months with me improving my fitness. Robert gave me half an hour in his gym five nights a week. Robert taught me to balance one handed and to do one handed press ups. Then Robert had me singing whilst doing that!

Robert had me doing handstands and flips and cartwheels for when I am on-stage performing.

By the time I arrived at Provo I had nothing to fear on the fitness front.

When I arrived at Provo I was expecting to be an ordinary entrant.

The American Mormons are so hyped up about my tour that I could not just be “ordinary”.

Mercy my room mate and partner has been a Gospel singer since she was nine years old. Mercy has appeared on television quite often.

Mercy is really excited to be teamed with me.

Ali Miah told me once that “The Lord Loves Us” had become a protest song in the Middle East.

Mercy told me that “The Lord Loves Us” is now a protest song here in the United States, too!

Groups who feel the American police are unfair or are misbehaving now hold hands circling a dead body or a police station and sing “The Lord Loves Us”. They often sit on the ground singing it. It is difficult for the American police to attack people sitting on the ground singing hymns.

The protestors alternate “The Lord Loves Us” with the American National Anthem “The Star-Spangled Banner”.

Mercy says that the police still attack protestors.

There is so much photography on mobile telephones that the police attacks get huge publicity on the social media and then on television.

I have never expressed any political views. I am not sure that I have any.

I must keep out of politics!

It was strange when Mercy and I walked into the dining hall at breakfast. There was applause and people stood up to look at us.

I had to insist on waiting in line at the serving counters. I think I could have walked to the front of the queue and no-one would have objected. I am not big headed like that.

Next week I will meet Al Way and George Smith for detailed discussions on my itinerary.

My group starting this week seem to be good people.

The first problem was when we met the physical fitness instructors. They had an assessment scheme to see what we could already do.

Mercy is carrying more weight than she should, and Mercy found the assessments hard going.

For the concert tour I have been practicing several stage routines. I showed off my flips, my handstands, my cartwheels, my one handed press ups, and my ability to leap high in the air.

The instructors were not impressed.

“You have a lot of work to do!” they said.

My issue is not flexibility and suppleness but stamina.

The instructors gave me an exercise regime to follow. So when Mercy has to do ten press-ups and two stomach crunches in the morning before breakfast I have to cram forty minutes of exercises into the same thirty minutes – with no slacking!

After a week of exercises Mercy could do her exercises. Mercy was given a more demanding target.

My targets became more demanding, too.

The physical fitness instructors said that performing during an entire concert while under arc lights is physically exhausting.

I will be challenged to build my stamina in time.

On that first morning I ran five miles easily. So the instructors gave me a series of time targets in which to run first five miles and then ten miles.

The instructors were right.

I have to be in peak physical condition for my first concert, which is only months away.

I went through the normal Provo course except that sometimes I had special classes in television and radio and press interviews. Sometimes Al Way and George Smith visited me and we worked on my itinerary together.

I think if I had realised exactly what I was getting into I might have been less enthusiastic!

A huge amount of work has been done to build activities over the next eighteen months.

Once Provo is finished I have six weeks of more or less continuous rehearsals.

Alternate weeks I am rehearsing with youth groups, choirs and talent show winners, and the other week with professional musicians.

Then I have a publicity push in California, meet lots of people in California, and we have the California concert.

I have a day with the media afterwards and then I have a whole week off.

Until then I have Tuesdays off!

Apart from the Daar clothing portfolio the fashion students at Brigham Young University have prepared a clothing portfolio for me. I will be meeting with them as soon as I leave Provo.

It's all go!

George Smith works for a multinational company.

George is supposed to be helping to supervise about fifty car hire outlets in New Jersey to give him "hands on" experience of managing.

When George asked for leave of absence to work on my project his employers said that the twenty months George will spend on my project will make George as a manager, so George has his employer's blessing.

George was always a big bear of a man.

I think George is cute.

I am not looking for romance at the moment.

George said that he is still recovering from a broken heart, so George is not looking for romance either.

Al Way is older than he looks. Al dresses like a man in his early thirties, but unless Al was a professional musician playing in bands at the age of ten Al has to be in his forties. In some lights, or when he is tired, I could believe that Al is in his fifties.

Al explained that he and I are looking at this tour in different ways.

For me, the tour is everything. I am completely absorbed in the tour. I am not thinking more than eighteen months away.

Al has been in music for more than twenty years. Al once toured for four years with only a one week break.

Al will be in the music business probably for the next thirty years.

The Charlotte Johnson tour is important to Al, but the Charlotte Johnson tour is not all there is in the world.

Al is looking forward to the fun, but Al's role is technical, musical, and organisational perfection.

George's role is to interface with the Mormon Church.

CHAPTER 44: Dennis Wilkins

Grace Adams chucked me.

Grace walked into my bedroom without knocking and she caught me consoling Diana Green.

Grace misread the situation and Grace left our house immediately.

What I was consoling Diana about is that Diana has been dropped from the next series of advertisements.

The sanitary towel company has decided to reduce the story line down to Amy Waters and myself.

Abdullah comes in at the end of the series to create a love rivalry, but Diana is simply not needed.

Diana is at Oxford University now. The travelling every weekend to dancing venues is beginning to get Diana down.

Diana has decided to give up competitive dancing.

I am Diana's dancing partner. Diana feels bad about letting me down.

Diana Green, Amy Waters, Abdullah Daar and I have been through a lot together.

We have spent huge amounts of time together.

We have worked and danced and rehearsed until we were in tears, but we kept going.

Diana needed a lot of consoling.

I assured Diana that I am easy with Diana giving up competitive dancing.

Either I will give up, too, or I will find a new partner. For males there are always plenty of female dancing partners.

We are committed to competing in Paris at Easter. Then we stop!

If Diana is dropping out at Easter I have time to think out what I want to do.

Diana says she will speak to our dance teacher Mrs Freeman. Diana wants to tell Amy Waters and Abdullah Daar.

Diana had to tell me first.

The news was an amazing blow.

Diana had to get back to Leeds so I walked her to her car.

When I came back to the house Janine told me that Grace Adams had come down the stairs crying. What had I done to Grace?

Grace had embraced Janine, still in tears.

Then Grace had walked out.

I had not even seen Grace.

I vaguely remembered the bedroom door opening and closing, but at the time I was looking at Diana. Presumably that had been Grace.

Maybe I should have jumped on the telephone and called Grace.

I was so shaken by Diana's news that Grace walking out seemed not particularly important.

I like Grace Adams.

If Grace wants to break up I do not particularly mind.

I can always find another girlfriend.

Compared with the break up with Diana Green, Grace Adams misreading the situation and stomping out does not really matter.

Either Grace comes back or she does not.

Janine wanted my advice.

Janine has seen Sally Johnson and Gerald Butler kissing.

Sally is not supposed to kiss any boys until she is sixteen years old, because Sally is a Mormon. Rebecca Johnson would go through the roof if she learned that Sally was kissing Gerald.

So should Sally tell Rebecca?

"Janine, would you like to kiss Gerald Butler?"

Janine went red and white and Janine said "Yes" and "No".

"Look at me."

"When Gerald Butler wants to kiss you instead of kissing Sally Johnson he will.

"When that happens do you want me to tell Gerald how many times you have been in Max Hewson's bed?"

Janine looked horrified.

"That was ages ago."

"Sit with me."

We cuddled on a couch.

"Janine, people are ever so odd about sex. Between now and you turning sixteen you will kiss lots of boys.

"You will fall in love and you will fall out of love dozens of times.

"That is happening to all you kids. That is normal development.

"What is abnormal is this stupid idea that boys and girls should not kiss until they are sixteen. Or eighteen. Or until marriage.

"Do you know there are some societies where the boy and the girl do not even see each other until after they are married?"

"If Sally Johnson is kissing Gerald, so what?"

“Next month Sally might be kissing Michael Kellner, or Max Hewson, or even our Peter.

“A month from now you might be kissing Gerald Butler. If you are lucky!”

Janine was embarrassed.

“Or you might be kissing some other lad.

“So don’t cause trouble for Sally Johnson just because she is kissing a boy you like.

“Boys come and go.

“Good friends are for ever.

“Sally is a good friend. Don’t make trouble for her.”

“All right.”

We had a long cuddle.

Janine had a bit of a weep. Girls do.

CHAPTER 45: Georgina Arron

Alison Trail did come to our wedding. She smiled nicely to my mother and my cousins.

Alison left as soon as she decently could, which was fine.

We went to Lisbon for our honeymoon. That was great!

When I returned to work I discovered that Mark Johnson has been assigned to “help” me find a factory site.

Dick Shepherd knew nothing about Mark Johnson.

When Dick Shepherd heard that Mark was coming to help find a site in Liverpool Dick telephoned the Engineering Union Convenor Dexter White for a briefing about Mark.

“You have heard about the manager who fired Cecil Byram’s daughter and who got immediate promotion for doing that?”

“Yes.”

“That was Mark Johnson.”

“Shit!”

“Mark is bloody good at what he does.

“Mark took a foundry apart, moved it to China, learned Chinese, rebuilt the foundry in China, taught the workers to operate the foundry – and all before he was eighteen years old.”

“Mark won Apprentice of the Year as an apprentice fitter.

“Mark is hard, but Mark is fair.

“Mark is highly religious.

“He doesn’t drink. He does not even drink tea and coffee.

“If you are Mark Johnson’s sidekick you will work harder than you have ever worked before in your life.

“Expect fourteen hour days as routine.”

“Whatever you do, don’t tell him jokes.

“Mark Johnson has no sense of humour.”

I told Dick that Mark used to be my boss. Mark brought me into Byrams.

I confirmed to Mark that Dexter’s briefing is spot on.

I have not seen Mark myself for more than two years.

The briefing meeting between myself, Mark, and Dick was both frightening and funny.

Mark’s role as Cecil’s business gofer requires Mark to wear tailor fitted suits. Mark has his suits made at a place in London that Ali Miah and Tohur Miah use.

They are the most expensive looking suits that I have ever seen.

Mark is a good looking smooth young man with biceps that are very visible through his shirt.

Mark is younger than me but Mark has a bullish inner self confidence that comes from Mark’s past successes.

Mark looks a bit like a cross between a male model and an intelligent nightclub bouncer.

“On my calculations you have had thirty working days to find a site in a city with high unemployment.

“You are not stupid, so what is the problem?”

“The problem is that all the sites are too small. There are lots of sites, but no huge sites.”

“Do you have a map of Liverpool?”

Dick brought out a map book.

Mark cleared my desk and spread on it a very large map he had brought.

The map had markings on it showing every property currently on sale in Liverpool.

“Here and here and here are three large sites.

“What is this site that they all touch?”

“I don’t know.”

“Lets go and see it. If we can buy that and knock all four sites together that would solve the problem.”

By the end of the day Mark had agreed to buy a rather run down builder’s merchant business.

Mark is in charge of getting the factory built.

Dick Shepherd as Mark’s assistant is gaining an education in management that many people would envy.

Mark rang David Taylor.

The lawyers Byrams use for this kind of work are the lawyers Mr Porteous uses.

They are fast workers, and highly competent. The lawyers will run round like weasels for us to purchase all the properties.

On his second morning Mark telephoned the Chief Executive of Liverpool Council.

“Good morning.

“I am creating four thousand jobs in Liverpool over the next year.

“I would like someone in the Council who I can liaise with who will be my point of contact.”

“No.

“I won’t be in Liverpool tomorrow. I need to meet with someone today.

“Two o’clock is fine.”

The Council’s chief of planning said that there were no listed buildings on the combined site, so all the buildings can be taken down. We have to apply for planning permission but demolition can begin as soon as the application is lodged.

A particular local architect has a good relationship with the Council, and has a good reputation for his work.

The architect says that an estate of large one story or two story buildings with special energy producing roofs causes him no difficulty. Road access is a bit of an issue but if Byrams could give up a little bit of space Byrams could have its own access road leading straight onto a junction with traffic lights.

The architect will lodge plans with the council for demolition within forty-eight hours.

The architect was going to apply for demolition permission next week, but he agreed with Mark that for three thousand pounds extra the application could be lodged on Thursday afternoon.

In front of the architect Mark telephoned his Council contact to say that the demolition application would be lodged on Thursday afternoon. Was there any technical reason why demolition could not begin on Friday?

Dick found a site that afternoon for the builders merchant business to relocate to. The site is larger than the old site because the builder's merchant is now going to sell metal and plastic components more cheaply than any builders' merchant in Liverpool. The builders' merchant is also going to have a link to Ming's Metals who will deliver in Liverpool daily.

Mark rang David Taylor again. The weasels will buy the site for the builder's merchant to relocate to.

Mark took Dick to dinner that night.

Mark disregarded the menu and ordered for both of them, in Putonghua of course.

When the waiter offered beer Mark said to Dick,

"You have been working for twelve hours.

"You look like a man who could use a beer.

"I don't drink but really don't let that stop you having a beer!"

Dick was happy to accept a beer.

"Now, Dick, we have a few managerial problems. How do you suggest we proceed?"

"Am I right in thinking that you have spent nearly five million pounds in the last two days, without referring back to your boss at all?"

"Yes.

"I have a budget. I am within budget.

"My job is to get on with the job.

"Unless I have problems that need immediate answers I report to my boss once a week.

"So what problems do you see ahead of us?"

Shaken, Dick listed everything he could think of.

The food began to arrive. Conversation stopped because the food was so good.

There were eight courses, each of them excellent. Dick had a second beer during the meal.

After the food,

"Problem one is to move the builder's merchant. I hope to do that on Monday. Maybe Tuesday.

“There are enough buildings on the site you found that we can transfer the existing business easily.

“We will build a long retail building along the back of the site. When that is finished we will decant the business into the retail building and demolish the original buildings for parking.

“I have to check with the boss but my idea is to build a chain of builder’s merchants as an outlet for goods that Byrams Group produces.

“On Friday we begin demolition on the large site.

“Tomorrow you will phone round for demolition contractors.

“I want the site cleared in five working days – or seven if it can’t be done that fast. I am minded to leave the walls up around the edge of the site to maintain security.

“But, Dick, I need you to hire a security firm tomorrow.

“Next week we draw our plans for how we intend to lay out the new factory. I am going to be away until Monday now so I am going to delegate the first draft to you.

“Obviously consult with Georgina and with Tony Dacre. We will all meet on Monday at eight to see how far you have got.

“Rome wasn’t built in a week but I wasn’t on that job.

“I would like you to draft a press release to issue on Tuesday. Georgina Arron is fronting on Merseyside Plastics. I am only helping here until the plastics estate is built. So the Press Release features Georgina.

“I want you to consult with the staff at the builders merchant about how they would like to use the space we are giving them.

In two stages.

“Now, and when the new building is built.

“What publicity do they want for the relocation?

“If I am given permission to build a chain of builder’s merchants what suggestions do the staff have?

Mark ran Dick home at about eleven.

At eight the next morning Mark told me where he and Dick had got to, and what Dick will be doing between now and Monday.

Mark announced that he was going to Yorkshire now. Mark is organising three camping holidays for youngsters next summer so Mark has to inspect three camp sites today and book one of them. Then Mark has to write his report for Cecil Byram because Mark is seeing Cecil tomorrow.

I should be signing documents to purchase six properties this week so Dick is to keep chasing the weasels.

Could Dick send Mark daily emails to keep Mark up to date with progress, please.

Dick is to visit the adjoining properties that are not obviously for sale to enquire whether any of those properties are or might be for sale, and at what prices. Today, please.

I am to telephone David Taylor to instruct the weasels if Dick can agree a price.

“See you Monday!”

Dick looked at me after Mark had gone.

“I thought you were a tough boss, but straight.

“Mark Johnson is something different!

“Mark is like a bulldozer on steroids!

“If Mark is that hard, what the hell is Cecil Byram like?”

“Cecil Byram can be a nice guy because he employs people like Mark Johnson to get things done.

“Mark Johnson is a nice guy when you get to know him.

“Mark has a job to do.

“Mark does the job. That’s it!”

“If you think I am a tough boss, wait until Mark Johnson is unhappy with you.

“You won’t like that experience at all.

“Having said that, Mark is the best boss I have ever worked for.”

“Is Mark any relation to Rebecca Johnson the Group Catering Manager?”

“Rebecca is Mark’s elder sister.”

Dick nodded.

“Rebecca is a tough bunny, too.

“It must run in the family.”

CHAPTER 46: Cecil Byram

I have had to make some difficult decisions. Once I had reached the decisions I had a family meeting. We discussed the decisions I have reached.

All the family agree.

I spoke to each of David Taylor, Garth Stead, Rose Howarth, and Mark Johnson privately. All four are good with my proposals.

At the next management awayday everyone spelled out the potential senior managers they have working under them. I knew most of this information but I paid very careful attention.

In my head I made a few small changes.

“Most of you will know that my father died when I was twenty-two, leaving me to step up to lead Byrams Bearings.

“One of my recurring nightmares is that something happens to me, leaving Karen in charge of an organisation twenty-five times the size that Byrams was when I took over.

“I was not up to my role at twenty-two years of age.

“Karen is currently only twenty.

“I love Karen, but Karen is not up to that task.

“Karen today is not up to leading the Byram Group.”

Everyone nodded.

“I am going to remain Chairman of the Board, but I am going to stand down from also being Managing Director.

“It seems to me that I can do one job well, but not both.

“Also, it makes the organisation too dependent upon one person.

“We have an unnecessary vulnerability.

“For Managing Director David Taylor would normally be the logical successor.”

Everyone nodded.

“David has been with Byrams much longer than Garth. As Finance Manager David has an overview of all the Byram operations.

“And David has cleared the decks by appointing a Group Finance Manager last week.

“But there is a huge job coming David’s way shortly.

“I have agreed terms for a major purchase that will more than double the size of the Byram Group.”

Everyone was even more interested!

“We have a very good central team. Each member of the team is competent, and all of the team trust each other.

“As we all trust each other, I will tell you now that next month we are buying what is left of the British coal industry.

“There are three more deep pits each the size of Groatpie, and two smaller pits.

“The Government as you know hates me, but they are lending me the money to buy the coal industry.

Everyone smiled.

“David has a huge job ahead of him!

“David is made a Director of the Byram Group with responsibility for Energy and Energy Products.”

There was applause for David for his promotion to the Group Board.

“David keeps Groatpie Colliery and gains Heckmondwyke factories One and Two, and Byram (China) Limited.”

“David will need support, so I am assigning Martin Jenkins to help him. Martin keeps his present workload but he loses the Birmingham project.

“Daniel Mason is now under David.

“I am going to advertise for a Managing Director to look after all operations except the collieries and the energy business.

“Garth Stead is also appointed to be a Group Director, in charge of Component Production, both metals and plastics.”

There was applause for Garth for his promotion.

“Barney Stoker is in charge of Byram Engineering Limited including the Birmingham factory.”

Applause for Barney’s promotion.

Barney had not known this was coming, so Barney was pleased.

“Georgina Arron remains in charge of Merseyside Plastics as it multiples twentyfold over the next eighteen months.

“Including Tony Dacre, Georgina has five competent managers under her, all of whom have years of working in the plastics industry behind them.

“Kevin Hanson keeps Byram Housing. Kevin keeps the installation of energy materials, and Kevin runs the plantations of energy materials that we have and Kevin gains more as we build them.

“The prisoner project has just had the go-ahead from the Home Office, so Kevin will be setting that up in a disused factory in Liverpool.

“The factory is not empty yet, but it will be when Merseyside Plastics moves out.

“Kevin will work under David for Energy and under Barney Stoker for the prisoner project.

“Kevin will work under Barney for the brass band we have and the three new brass bands we are forming.

“The Groatpie Philharmonic Orchestra will report to David Taylor.

“As you know, I think a lot of Mark Johnson.

“Mark is appointed to the Group Board as Exports and Expansion Director.”

There was applause for Mark for his promotion.

“Mark will work with Georgina and Garth to get Merseyside Plastics up and running in its new site.

“Mark is also in charge of developing a business he bought, which is going to become a chain of builders’ merchants.

“I am promoting Mike Appleyard from Marketing in Byram Engineering to Managing Director of the new builders merchant chain, answering to Mark.”

Applause for Mike for his promotion.

“Carol steps up to replace Mike.”

Carol was also applauded. This is the first management awayday that Carol has attended.

“Should anything happen to me, one of the family will take the Chair, to ensure continuity of family control and involvement.”

Everyone nodded.

“If things had gone differently Mark might by now have become a member of the Byram family.”

Most of us nodded.

“Mark has the trust and confidence of the Byram family.

“Mark will be Vice Chair of Byram Group.

“This puts Mark notionally above the new Managing Director, above David Taylor, and above Garth Stead.

“Mark has more sense than to throw his weight around in the company of three heavyweight Directors!

“Just to reinforce that, Mark will be paid less than the other three, and less than the new Finance Manager Steve Collins.

“Mark will advise the new Chair.

“Mark is not a contender to lead Byrams today. By the time David and Garth retire or are near retirement Mark would be a credible successor to me, if Karen does not wish that role.

“Rose Howarth rises from HR to be Group Director of central services excluding Finance.

There was applause for Rose’s promotion.

“Rebecca Johnson comes under Rose.”

CHAPTER 47: Kevin Hanson

My son John landed a Cadetship with Byram Group. I am so pleased for John. And so proud!

Under the transparent admissions system I could not swing a Cadetship for John. John got points for having a family member working at Byrams but that was all. John did it himself.

John starts at Byrams after the summer holidays.

Young Sahid Daar is as well paid as many young professional footballers.

For some reason Sahid has always been a consultant rather than a Byram’s employee. I think perhaps because Sahid is still in education.

Sahid helped me to build the web site for the Byram Willerton Brass Band.

Sahid’s latest trick is built on a suggestion from Karen Byram.

All the big companies use Computer Assisted Design and Computer Assisted Manufacturing.

Sahid is trialling a sales feature with our twenty biggest customers.

The customers can feed their electronic designs into Sahid’s system and come out with quotations for each of the components involved. They can have quotations for sub-assembly, painting, plastic covering, engraving, polishing or whatever.

The quotations come “raw” as the price Joe Public would pay, and again incorporating the discounts that their company currently earns. The assumed order quantity is ten thousand, but that can be adjusted by the customer.

The customer has the convenience of obtaining instant quotations to help with their ballpark calculations.

It means of course that Byrams has the opportunity to quote for all the components of all the new products that these customers create. Once one factors in the discount for quantity that we give to existing customers it is difficult for our competitors to compete.

It is even more difficult for competitors to compete if we have got in first!

The well known huge metal stocks at Ming's Metals mean that come Hell or high water Byrns will always be able to supply. That is a practical factor that is highly important in customer decision making.

We know from our statistics that eighty per cent of the quotations we make lead to orders.

We investigate the orders we did not gain.

The answer usually is that the customer is not proceeding yet.

We have a tweak that alerts customers to components that we already produce that are very close to a component the customer has specified. Adding or deducting a few millimetres on a component can save the customer a lot of money.

Some customers choose to be non-standard so they may make good money supplying spare parts.

We are already earning tens of millions of pounds from Sahid's work.

After this feature has been running smoothly for a few months longer we will offer it to our hundred largest customers.

Chester Wilson is doing very well. Chester screens the applications for loan capital and for Preference shares. Once Chester has approved the investment in principle, Cecil's industrial research company investigates the company thoroughly.

Only after both barriers are passed is the loan offer made.

Nearly a billion pounds is out now on these investments. At a minimum of ten per cent return Cecil would do well. The normal rate of return is between thirteen per cent and sixteen per cent, so Cecil does even better.

Cecil is awash with cash at the moment because Cecil has lots of money coming in from investments but all his investment plans are delayed.

Cecil is frustrated at these delays.

Birmingham Council sold Cecil six blocks of "hard to let" apartments. Cecil's wife Irene is having the blocks renovated for occupancy by injured former soldiers and former battered women. The factory at Birmingham needs more workers because Garth is transferring the simple work there.

The workers at Birmingham requested that the ex prisoner project should be based somewhere else, because they do not wish to become known as the "tealeaf" (thief) factory.

The tealeaf factory is now going to be in Liverpool in the factory that Merseyside Plastics is relocating from.

Mark Johnson is in Liverpool sorting out a new factory for Merseyside Plastics.

Mark was sixteen when I worked for him.

Mark Johnson gave me my start in management at Byrams.

Mark is just twenty-one now.

I spoke to Mark at Willerton a few weeks ago.

Mark looks really well!

Mark is mentally and physically much harder than he was.

I served in the REME, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. If I was a sergeant again, building a gun emplacement while under fire, Mark Johnson is the young officer I would wish to serve under.

I cannot say anything higher than that.

I telephoned Dick Shepherd at Merseyside Plastics

I told Dick that I used to work as Mark Johnson's assistant.

"How is it going?"

"I have not met anyone like Mark Johnson before.

"Is he like this all the time?"

"Like what?"

"Hard driving.

"He drives himself harder than any manager I have ever known.

"Can he keep it up?"

"Yes.

"With Mark what you see is what you get.

"Have you been warned not to waste his time with jokes?"

"Yes."

"Good.

"If you want help or advice at any time you have my number now.

"It gets better.

"Once he fully trusts you Mark is a pleasure to work for.

"Until then it can be a bit challenging."

"It is challenging now.

"I am glad to know that it will get easier.

"And thank you for your support.

"It is good to know that someone can work for Mark Johnson and survive the experience."

“Working for Mark Johnson is the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“You are the second person to say that!”

The MP whose constituency covers the Groatpie Colliery unexpectedly died of his first ever heart attack, which he had on the train going down to London.

There has to be a byelection to succeed him.

Under the Labour Party rules the next candidate for this safe Labour seat has to be female.

One used to have to be a Labour Party member for two years before being selected as a Member of Parliament candidate.

As part of Labour’s attempt to cast its web widely, a person may join the Labour Party on Monday and be selected as an MP candidate on Tuesday. You do not even have to be a member of a trade union these days!

Before the poor bugger was buried dozens of female lecturers and barristers and teachers from London descended upon Groatpie claiming to be the children or grandchildren of coal miners and trying to obtain the Labour nomination.

The selection decision lies with the local Constituency Labour Party and with the National Executive of the Labour Party.

The Groatpie miners are totally pissed off with all these trendy Wendies who are newly interested in their “well being”.

““Well being” is bloody poncey!

“A week ago they didn’t know where Groatpie is and now suddenly they love us!”

CHAPTER 48: Rebecca Johnson

I heard that the MP for Groatpie had died of a heart attack while still quite young. My own father died young of a heart attack so I felt for the family.

Sad.

I got on with my life, which is busy enough.

Kate Alcock is a shift leader at Groatpie Colliery canteen.

Kate telephoned me to tell me something surprising.

Dozens of women from London are trying to become selected for the safe Labour seat of Groatpie. None of the women are making any impression on the hard-bitten slightly misogynist coal miners of Groatpie Colliery.

Kate told me that in the canteen at Groatpie colliery there was a heated discussion about the problem of finding a good woman candidate for the Labour Party.

One of the miners said quite loudly,

“Rebecca Johnson has done more for my bloody well being than all these smarmy women from London put together.

“Rebecca Johnson has been underground five times at Groatpie, which is more than any of these fucking southerners has done.

“Rebecca Johnson visits Groatpie every week to improve our food.

“If we have to have a bloody woman Rebecca Johnson will do for me!”

The canteen erupted with shouts and chanting of “Re-be-ca”.

So far two of the four shifts of workers are fully in favour of “Re-be-ca”!

Kate thought I ought to know!

I did not know what to say.

Becoming a Labour MP is not something that I have ever given any thought to.

I was staying at a motel outside Newcastle upon Tyne. Before Kate’s telephone call I had been working on my Open University degree.

I needed to speak to Chester.

To Mark.

Maybe to Charlie Kent. To Cecil? To Bishop Singleton?

I vote Labour, really because Dennis and David Wilkins are Labour supporters. So is Emma Hewson. I don’t know how Don Hewson votes. I think my late mother voted Labour but I don’t know.

I was happy to vote for Charlie Kent because Charlie is a good guy.

Dennis Wilkins even persuaded me to join the Labour Party to support Charlie.

I pay my monthly subscription but I am too busy to do anything else.

I know that Kevin is a Labour Party member.

Kevin Hanson is a sound guy.

I telephoned Kevin Hanson for advice.

“Congratulations!”

“What? What for?”

“It is on the news tonight.

“The National Union of Mineworkers branch executive at Groatpie Colliery has voted to nominate you for the Groatpie Constituency vacancy. It was a unanimous vote.

“Of the four hundred members of Groatpie Labour Party two hundred and eighty are miners, and forty are their wives.

“Unless the National Executive can find a reason to turn you down, that’s it.”

"It is nailed on for you!"

This was another shock!

"Kevin, I was phoning you for advice!"

"OK. What do you want to know?"

"Kevin, I don't know what I don't know. I barely know who the Party leaders are!"

"I don't know any policies!"

"You want an adviser?"

"Yes.

"The first advice is to keep your mouth shut.

"Smile and say nothing.

"I will phone Charlie Kent and ask him to give you help. May I give him your telephone number?"

"Yes."

"Do not leave your hotel room or your house without looking attractive because of photographers.

"And keep your mouth shut."

Charlie Kent rang me within twenty minutes.

"Well, Rebecca!

"Congratulations!

"Where are you?"

"Near Newcastle upon Tyne."

"OK.

"Do you know Jenny Hallam?"

"I think she is the MP for ... Rotherham?"

"Yes. Jenny will meet with you tomorrow at ten at her constituency office.

Jenny was already assigned by the Party to be the minder for the successful candidate. It is obviously you, so Jenny will be with you now until after the election."

"From now and until you meet Jenny, say nothing.

Just smile.

"If you are pressed say that you will not make any statement today."

I rang Chester.

"How did you do that, darling?"

"What?"

"I didn't know that you are a member of the Labour Party.

“Now you have been chosen to be a Member of Parliament for Labour to replace an MP who died?”

“In America there would have to be an election to replace him.”

I explained what is going on.

“OK.

“You must follow your star.

“I love you.

“Cecil Byram has given you leave of absence with pay until after the election.

“Cecil asks how much money do you want? Cecil has sent some money to be getting on with.

“David Wilkins says he is sending a donation. I gave him your bank account number.

“Dennis Wilkins has given me an envelope for you that I think has a cheque in it.

“Sally has given you five pounds that she had saved towards Christmas presents.

“Tohur says that you can stay with him in London after you are elected.

“Tohur is sending a donation.

“What music do you want the Byram Willerton Brass Band to learn? They want to play in your campaign.

“Tom Driburg says that Charlotte says that if you need money just draw it. Tom has sent you some money from Charlotte.

“The Daar girls are designing clothing for you to wear.

“I gave Sahid Daar your bank details because Sahid wishes to send you some money.

“When will I see you?”

“Chester, I don't know!

“This is all happening too fast!”

CHAPTER 49:Ali Miah

The Crown Prince gave my passport and Shakoora's passport to the American Ambassador the following day, which was the American Ambassador's weekly visit to the Palace.

The day after that I had a telephone call asking me to come to the American Embassy to discuss a small query on my visa.

As soon as I arrived I was ushered into a back room.

“Well Ali Miah, how are you?”

It was Hank, whom I had last seen at Cambridge University.

“So it is Doctor Hank now?”

“Yes. I wrote my PhD thesis on relations between the USA and the Islamic World.

“You have come up in the world!”

“Yes. I am still not quite sure how.”

“Okay. Here are your passport and your wife’s passport.

“Written in pencil here is a telephone number to call should you have any difficulties in the USA at all. The number is manned – sorry staffed - twentyfour seven. Just give your name and we will give you all the help we can.

“It does not matter what the problem is, we will be there for you.”

“You are very kind. What have we done to deserve this?”

“You have helped to build a rapprochement between the United States military and the Peoples’ Liberation Army.

“We look after our friends.”

The Crown Prince loaned us an airliner to fly us to Minneapolis- Saint Paul International Airport.

I noticed the American Immigration officer looked at our passports very carefully.

“Mr Miah. You have arrived here from Bahrain?”

“Yes.”

The Immigration officer asked,

“Are you Muslims?”

“Yes.”

He looked troubled.

“Why have you come to Minnesota?”

I gave him the letter from the lawyer.

“I have inherited property here so I have come to look at it.”

“Do you see that on both the passports there is a pencilled telephone number?”

“Yes.”

“If you have any doubts about us I suggest you telephone that number.”

“Whose number is this?”

“I don’t know.

“I was told that if I had any difficulty in the USA I should telephone this number.”

He dialled the number.

He gave his name and he explained who he was.

He gave my name and Shakoora's name.

After about ten "Yes sirs" and "No sirs" he put the telephone down.

"Mr Miah, you are free to go.

"Welcome to America."

As he was escorting us out of the room an Army major wearing a sidearm rushed up to us, along with two soldiers carrying submachine guns.

"Mr Miah? Mrs Miah?"

"Yes."

"I am ordered to apologise to you for this man.

"There is some paranoia here in the United States about foreign Muslims.

"I am ordered to escort you here in Minnesota just to make sure there is no more difficulty."

I showed him the letter from the lawyer.

"I have inherited some property here.

"We are going to look at it before deciding what to do."

We took a plane taxi to near where we needed to be.

An Army car met us, and with the National Guard sergeant driver we drove to see my inheritance.

Both the soldiers happened to be black.

This is America so I thought nothing of it.

I am so pleased that we had a local driver.

Together with the satellite navigation system it took only two hours to find the cabin.

Arthur Miller had talked about a wooden cabin beside the lake.

From Arthur's description I had not expected a four bedroom bungalow with varnished inner and outer walls, three bathrooms, and a kitchen large enough to prepare a banquet.

One refrigerator was completely filled with beer!

The "boat" was an impressive cabin cruiser that had incredibly low mileage.

As we came back from the boat a voice came over a loudspeaker.

"Freeze!

"Put your hands in the air slowly!"

We turned slowly.

There was a police car.

One police officer held a rifle and the other held a shotgun.

I decided to let my uniformed Army escort deal with this.

The loudspeaker was left on.

"I see four niggers here. If you are in stolen uniforms I don't know, but leave your guns where they are!"

I decided to stand very still and to let the uniform boys sort themselves out.

The two Army guys were handcuffed.

I decided to intervene.

I put on my best Standard English accent

"Officer, may I help you?"

The shotgun swung in my direction.

"Officer, in my inner pocket is my passport.

"In the passport is a telephone number that I was told to telephone should I run into difficulties in the United States.

"I really suggest you telephone the number.

"You should be able to verify my identity."

So that is what happened eventually.

The police officer explained what had happened. I could hear everything over the loudspeaker.

He had had a report of four niggers prowling around a white owned property. He had investigated. He had found us.

Two of the niggers had guns and were wearing Army uniforms so he had handcuffed them.

The other two had British passports with American visas in them. The officer was not sure what to do with them.

Over the speaker I heard a voice say,

"Officer, have you been in a shitstorm international incident before?"

"No, sir."

"Well you are now.

"Release the two Army personnel immediately and put the Major on to speak to me."

The Major took the telephone away from the police car, so I could not hear the conversation.

It seemed to go on a long time.

The Major sat on a tree stump, and he spoke to the police officers.

"Put your guns in your car before you make the situation any worse than it is."

They did that, and they came back to him.

“Mr Miah, here, is a civilian.

“He does not look very old, does he?”

“No.”

“When Mr Miah was a student he served in the British equivalent of the Air National Guard. When he was twenty, which was only three years ago, he earned two medals for courage. He put his life on the line and he saved a Royal princess from drowning.

“Then he repaired the engines on an oil tanker to prevent the oil tanker crashing onto rocks and spilling its load.

“Mr Miah is worthy of respect.

“Isn't he?”

The two police officers hesitated and then nodded.

“The man who owned this property, Arthur Miller, thought so much of Mr Miah that he left Mr Miah this property in his will.

“Mr Miah owns this property.

“You two dorks have created an international incident.

“Mr Miah is involved in a very important Engineering project in Bahrain.

“Mr Miah works very closely with the Royal Family of Bahrain.

“How would you like to see the American Ambassador sent home from an important Middle East country because you Minnesota numb nuts were so incredibly stupid?

“How would you like to see American contractors banned from the largest engineering project in the world because you two representatives of Minnesota insulted Mr Miah?

The police officers were looking significantly less happy.

“How did we insult him?”

“You called all four of us “niggers”. Us two, Mr Miah, and his wife.”

We could hear helicopters coming.

Four helicopters appeared over us and armed men in full combat gear descended down ropes. They surrounded us, still holding their weapons.

Then the helicopters took it in turns to set themselves down.

The senior police officer spoke.

“Mr Miah.

“We had no wish to insult you.

“We are law officers

“We were responding to a report of suspicious behavior near this property.

“The information was wrong.”

“I am very sorry.”

“You called my wife a nigger.”

“Mrs Miah. I am very sorry for my language. I meant it as description rather than as an insult.

“I am very sorry.”

“And these two men wearing the uniform of your country?”

“Major. And sergeant. I agree our language was unacceptable.

“I can only apologise.”

“OK honkey. We will let it go this time!”

The two Army guys left in their car. We had a lift in a helicopter all the way to Minneapolis St Paul airport.

We took the Bahraini plane to England.

Enjoy Minnesota!

I doubt I will ever go to Minnesota again.

CHAPTER 50: Charlotte Johnson

All this rehearsing is hard work. I have to fit it in around visits to choirs and churches and schools.

Al Way and George Smith have decided who does what.

I am the front person.

George is usually at the venue when I arrive. The TV cameras are often there, because we are building publicity for the tour.

Al travels with Mercy and I in the car. The driver is usually a young Mormon.

I gradually realised that George and Al must have visited every single venue at least once. They have plotted every ladies toilet along our route, and every toilet in every Mormon building.

There is always a bottle of cold water for each of us in the car.

On each visit I have a guidance sheet telling me where I am going, who I will meet, and what we are doing. And with notes of any important information.

Mercy helps me a lot by leading the first run through. It saves my voice.

Everyone wants to touch me as if I am a talisman.

Al and George told me not to worry about that. The people would do the same for the Pope, and he is not even a Mormon!

I could get big headed about this.

Really though I am just the figurehead for a wave of excitement that is sweeping the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints across North America.

The mainstream media is excited that I am performing for free for the eighteen months of my missionary service. If I were making the tour as a commercial proposition I would earn hundreds of millions of dollars.

When asked about that I said,

“I am very happy to sing for The Lord.

“I cannot do anything better than this!”

I hear from George that he reports twice a day to President Sexton.

The Mormon hierarchy is happy with how things are going.

I realise that I have had incredibly good coaching from the Mormon media team.

Sometimes there is a photoshoot with myself and Mercy, just to let the media have what they need.

On Tuesdays I have an easy day. I often just sleep for much of it. Then I exercise.

I cannot go out because there is so much media interest.

There was a nice surprise. A beautiful young woman with a really lovely singing voice, and one of the largest busts I have ever seen, told me that Mark had given her her first Book of Mormon.

Annie wishes to be remembered to Mark.

Annie is now married to another adult convert.

Annie is performing in the first concert.

I have to say that I am really enjoying all this interaction with people who are so pleased to see me. I am autographing copies of my autobiography many times a day. And copies of my CDs and DVDs.

I had a weird message that my sister Rebecca is standing to be a Labour MP in a very safe Labour seat. I sent a nice message. I told Tom Driburg to send Rebecca some money on my behalf.

It all seems a bit odd.

I wasn't much bothered with English politics when I was in England. It is all a distant blur, now.

American politics is definitely odd.

I keep out of politics.

As things build to the first concert I have all the nerves and excitement I expected.

I am doing this for The Lord!

We are all doing this for The Lord!

CHAPTER 51: David Wilkins

Mr Driburg advised me not to say that I was giving up cheffing. The sales of my cookbooks will continue for a while.

I should try to maintain a public presence just in case I have to come back to cheffing.

There is also the possibility of cookbooks around posh cooking, fine dining and so forth.

Gerald Edwards suggested that I should use a Saville Row tailor for my suits, so I do. Each suit sets me back well over a thousand pounds, but I do look good! Tohur Miah suggested the same tailor.

The senior managers at Gerald's business know that I am there to be trained.

Some of the senior managers know that I am in a relationship with Gerald's daughter Annette.

Have I been given a job as an act of charity?

None of the managers know what I am being paid.

If asked, I say that I am earning fifty thousand pounds a year.

Fifty thousand pounds is what I am paid by Wilkins Financial Services (Cayman Islands) Limited. What payment Gerald makes to Wilkins Financial Services is Gerald's business.

By City standards, fifty thousand pounds a year is believable for an entry level job for the boss's daughter's boyfriend.

For the first three months I am just on the normal induction training for a new recruit, spending a few weeks in each section.

The other recruits are all Oxford or Cambridge Firsts, whereas I do not have a degree.

I find it interesting to watch these bright people competing with each other and trying to impress their bosses who are all the same as them.

I must be working class. Most of these people do not impress me at all.

Some of them couldn't fight their way out of a wet paper bag.

Gerald Edwards has filled his business with people like this, and then Gerald is surprised that he has a succession problem!

I have good reports from each placement. I am in on time, I do not go to the pub, and I am usually the last person to leave the section at night.

Gerald receives regular reports on my progress.

Gerald and I have agreed that I will wait six months before telling Gerald anything.

After three months induction I will have a month on a shadow trading floor.

During this month I will notionally buy and sell shares hourly or minute by minute. My target is to see how much I can grow my initial notional twenty million pounds to.

If I lose notional money overall then I will be moved to research or PR or HR or to customer relations.

If I make money then I will move to the real trading floor. I will be given twenty million pounds of Gerald's money, and I will speculate.

To avoid the stupidity of workers speculating against each other I will be given a sector like "Stores" or "Industrials A-B" in which only I will speculate.

I will be supervised closely to avoid disaster, but I make real money or I lose real money.

The first month I lose money I am out.

I am on fifteen per cent of profit. There is no upper limit on what I can earn.

Gerald's computers make money for Gerald on the very narrow margins between purchase prices and sale prices of real transactions. Computers make deals so fast that human beings cannot compete.

The main source of Gerald's wealth is the trading floor, where Gerald makes eighty-five per cent of the profits that his very bright employees make for him.

Annette is good.

Annette still has mixed feelings about me working for her father.

I am just finding it so interesting how these upper class bright guys interact. There is a hierarchy of public schools and Oxbridge Colleges where the snob value goes up and down. Some stay at the top. Some stay at the bottom. Some rise or fall in the rankings.

Tryton High School, where I went, is not in this competition at all.

People are surprised to meet someone like me who did not attend a "right" school.

I explain that Gerald has made an exception for me because he has met me.

I do not mind if everyone thinks I have been given a job out of charity or because I am shagging the boss's daughter. The truth, that I have been brought in as successor to Gerald, would make too many waves.

I get quite an interesting view from the bottom!

I have sold my half of the house in Turnham Green to Tohur. I am not living there. It is dead money.

From Tohur's point of view the house is a safe investment that will increase in value. My brother Dennis and my friend Grace Adams have fallen out.

Dennis is trying to mend fences but the relationship is over.

If Annette walked in to find me consoling another young woman I could see Annette misunderstanding the situation. I just can't see Annette slinking away quietly.

Helen is happy. Her husband Martin Jenkins has had another promotion at Byrams.

Helen's little Alan is fine. Alan is named after my dead elder brother.

Andria is happy. Little(!) Angela is fine. Andria and Angela and Sam are besotted with little Sam.

My brother Peter is grounded.

It seems Peter was staying overnight with a friend called Eric and the two of them went on a midnight walk. They did not do anything wrong while they were out but they were stopped by the police because they should not have been out at three in the morning.

Helen hit the roof!

I have been on the wrong end of Helen's fury and it is not a pleasant experience.

Poor Peter!

Janine is fine.

My parents are fine.

Chapter 52: Rebecca Johnson

I rang Chester in the morning.

Chester filled me in with messages received since we last spoke.

I also checked my bank account online to see who has sent money already.

As I left the hotel I was doorstepped by a journalist. I don't know how he knew I was there.

He took a photo of me.

“Ms Johnson, what is your comment on the Labour selection at Groatpie constituency?”

I couldn't help myself.

“When I was a child my father died of a heart attack.

“I feel so much for the family.

“I am not making any comment on anything today.”

I said nothing else, even though he asked questions.

I got in my car.

To my astonishment I realised the journalist was following me in his car.

I thought about what to do.

He is only a journalist. He is not a potential rapist or a potential abductor.

I decided that if he wished to drive to Rotherham he could.

He abandoned me a few miles South of Chester le Street.

My satellite navigation system took me to Rotherham.

I listened to the radio news as I drove.

The assumption is that my selection is certain. I am the Group Catering Manager for the Byram Group, with rehash about Cecil Byram and the purchase of the Groatpie Colliery by “the Chinese consortium”.

The report was that there seemed to be no information about me at all, except that I provide “restaurant quality food at works canteen prices”.

How does that always get out?

There are no photographs of me available.

Cecil Byram said that I have not given Cecil permission to say anything so Cecil has nothing to say.

The Labour Party said that the Labour Party had no statement to make at this stage in the process.

I am a “mystery woman”.

The Rotherham constituency Labour office looked like a shop front from the outside.

I thought the display about the Labour Party in the window was bright but sparse.

When I went in a woman welcomed me. I thought she was a secretary or receptionist at first, but she was Jenny Hallam, MP.

She was pleased to meet me.

We went into a back room and we got down to business. I did not want tea or coffee but Jenny was happy to supply tap water.

“So who is Rebecca Johnson?”

I told Jenny my life story.

Jenny nodded at intervals. Jenny listened patiently for about ten minutes.

Her only comment was,

“You have a good back story.”

Then,

“So, you have never been involved in politics, you joined the Labour Party last year, and you think you should be nominated as the Labour MP for Groatpie in three weeks time?”

“My job as a catering manager is to provide good food at reasonable prices for working people.

“I am good at that job.

“I enjoy that job.

“I earn good money at that job.

“I never thought about becoming a Labour MP.

“It was the miners of Groatpie who decided that I was the best person to become their Member of Parliament.

“I heard about that last night.

“I thought a lot.

“I prayed a lot.

“I decided that if the Lord has Called me to be the Labour MP for Groatpie I have no choice but to obey.”

Jenny looked puzzled and a bit worried.

“How do you know that The Lord has Called you to become a Labour MP?”

“Because since I heard that the miners of Groatpie wanted me there has not been a peep from The Lord to say that I should not follow this path.

“If The Lord was against the idea He would have told me by now.”

Jenny did not know what to say.

I sense that Jenny is not religious.

“With bonuses I earned over four hundred and fifty thousand pounds last year.”

Jenny looked very surprised.

“I don’t know what an MP earns but I think that an MP does not earn that kind of money.”

Jenny nodded.

“If the Labour Party does not want me, I can go back to my Catering Manager job.

“The job is being held for me.”

Jenny was alarmed.

“It is not that the Labour Party does not want you.

“Being a Labour MP is a very important job.

“We know nothing about you.

“If someone joins the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints one year can they become a Bishop the year after?”

“No.”

“How long does it take?”

I have never thought about that before. As a woman I will never become a priest or a Bishop.

Thinking about Bishops I know or I have heard of, I answered,

“It takes at least fifteen years and usually longer.”

“That is the norm in the Labour Party to become a Member of Parliament.

“We made a policy decision to spread our net wide for Parliamentary candidates.

“You are the oddest fish we have found in our net so far.

“But we are a broad church.

“Provided you are pointed in the right direction we welcome you.

“Will you accept the Labour Whip?”

This sounded odd.

It almost sounded perverted.

“What is the Labour Whip?”

Jenny’s face was a picture!

I could see Jenny thinking how to rephrase the question.

“You are going to be elected as a Labour MP.

“Will you vote with the Labour Party in Parliament or against the Labour Party?”

That seemed an odd question.

I was puzzled.

“If I am elected as a Labour MP I would expect to vote with the Labour Party.”

Jenny nodded.

“The Labour Party tells Labour MPs which way to vote in Parliament. We receive notifications telling us which way to vote, and why. For historical reasons the notifications are called “the Whip”.

“Okay.

“I will accept the Labour Whip.”

Jenny smiled.

“Finance.

“In byelections the national Labour Party pays for everything and organises everything. The local party pays for nothing.”

“What about the money that I have raised?”

Jenny looked surprised and slightly amused.

“How much have you raised?”

“Well Cecil Byram has sent twenty-five thousand pounds to be getting on with. He will send more if I need it.

“My brother Mark has given me twenty thousand pounds

“My sisters have given me fifteen thousand and five pounds.

“Tohur Miah the TV chef has sent ten thousand pounds. So also have both David Wilkins the chef and Dennis Wilkins his brother.

“My friend Sahid Miah has sent thirty thousand pounds on behalf of his family. There is more if I need it.

“Don Hewson my former foster carer and his wife have sent five thousand pounds.

“My boyfriend has put in five thousand pounds.

“I expect there will be whiprounds at the canteens, so at least five thousand pounds there.

“And of course I expect to put some money in.”

Jenny added this up.

“So you have raised a hundred and thirty thousand pounds overnight and you expect at least another five thousand pounds – and you will put some money in yourself?”

“Yes.”

I could not read Jenny’s expression.

“The total campaign spending limit is about fifty thousand pounds.

“The Labour Party has already allocated that money.

“Just hold onto your money for the moment.

“I suggest that you wait until after the election before deciding what to do with it.”

“OK.”

“UKIP.

“This is a safe Labour seat. The only candidate who might do anything here is UKIP.

“So do we take them on head on or do we duck the issue?”

“I have always opposed racism.

“If it is down to me I would say take the racists on head on.”

Jenny smiled.

“I have some friends who could help.”

“Yes?”

“Do you know the advertisements about sanitary towels that feature a pretty young woman and her attractive young men?”

“Yes.

“One of the young men sang on “Charlotte and Sally Johnson Entertain”?”

“All the actors in those advertisements are friends.

“My sisters wrote “Helmand” so we could all sing it together.

“Your sisters?”

“Yes. Charlotte and Sally.”

Jenny looked confused.

“You mean Charlotte Johnson and Sally Johnson are your sisters?”

“Didn’t you realise?”

“No.”

“My sister Charlotte wrote “The Lord Loves Us”.

Jenny I think was having to rethink very quickly.

“Do you watch “Dingley High”?”

“No.

“It is on childrens TV?”

“The chief character, the black lad, is Derek Donkin. I am sure Derek would turn out for me – and against racism.”

“This is all a lot to take in.

“Most candidates are carried by the Party. A candidate who can bring a lot to the party campaign is unusual.”

“I expect Cecil Byram would fund an anti UKIP campaign if I asked him.”

“Sorry, Rebecca.

“This conversation is not going as I had expected.

“You have given me a huge amount to think about.

“It is my turn to give you something to think about.

“Here are ten statements.

“Please tell me what you think about each statement.

“Take your time.”

Jenny gave me the ten statements on a piece of paper.

Jenny went off to make some telephone calls.

I studied the statements.

When Jenny returned I told Jenny what I thought about each of the statements.

“We will have to work on these ten statements. You are not wildly out of line with Labour Party policy but we will have to sharpen your answers.”

“You mean change them to suit?”

Jenny ignored that.

“Can you provide any photographs of yourself?”

“My friend Sahid Daar could email you what he has, or Sahid could come from Doncaster to take photographs. Fortunately I had my hair done on Saturday.”

I telephoned Sahid.

Sahid emailed Jenny his album from the last Hewson reunion. A photo from when I was explaining about my experiences with real coffee and I was laughing was the absolute winner.

Another photo where Tohur Miah, David Wilkins, my sister Sally, Robert Graham and myself were stood in a line tossing pancakes together came second. Jenny said that “we” had to obtain written releases from each person in the photograph, so we cannot use that photo immediately.

I had told Jenny about my exchange with the journalist that morning. Jenny was relaxed about the conversation.

We stopped for the lunchtime news.

My conversation with the journalist was the headline story. The photograph he took of me was used.

Jenny emailed my chosen photo to the Labour Party Press Office who would send the photo to all the media “as a courtesy”.

“OK.

“Tomorrow you are in London for media training.

“Now tell me about your boyfriend.”

There were some photos of Chester in Sahid’s reunion album.

There was a lovely photo of Chester rubbing noses with my sister Sally, but we decided not to use that.

There was a good photo of Chester.

I think that Chester is good looking.

I told Jenny about Chester.

Jenny smiled at me.

“I wish I had a camera.

“You so obviously love him.”

I was a bit embarrassed.

“Well yes I do.”

“What does Chester think about this?”

“Chester said I must follow my star.”

“That’s all?”

“And Chester has donated some money.”

“What does Chester do?”

“Chester is a PhD student and he does consultancy for Cecil Byram.

“His name is Chester. Is he an American?”

“Yes.”

“That is going to add spice to the battle against UKIP.”

“You bet it will!”

CHAPTER 53: Ali Miah

The undersea chart has arrived.

Using 3D printing one of my assistants is building a scale model of the sea bed for me.

Building on an underground ridge can save a huge amount of money over building in a deep area.

While I was working on the calculations I was struck by a strange feeling that something was missing.

It is like when you come into a room and something is different.

You may not know what it is, but there is something different.

It might be that your wife has changed the curtains or she has taken away a chair.

In my case it was an absence of bricks.

The reason for appointing me was for my expertise with mortar. On Arthur Miller’s plans, and on all the plans and estimates created so far, there are no bricks.

There is no mortar.

At my next scheduled meeting with the Crown Prince I told His Royal Highness of my discovery. I am concerned if he has employed me by mistake.

“No, Mr Miah.

“I know.

“If I employ a hundred engineers, they will all come up with roughly the same project design. What you bring to the job is a willingness to look outside the box, to think original thoughts.

“That is what I need.”

All the plans so far show the six islands being only four metres above sea level. The reasoning is that in terms of protection from a tsunami four metres is good. Fourteen metres or twenty-four metres would be better but the economic cost becomes prohibitive. Transporting materials to build an additional twenty metres high by say eighty metres wide by a mile long is eyewateringly expensive.

I have had a new thought.

Bahrain has a population of roughly 1.4 million, and uses 400 litres of water per person per day.

Bahrain has been chasing its tail in respect of water supply for a long time.

If anything were to disrupt the water supply to Bahrain, Bahrain would be in a crisis within hours, and in a disaster within a day.

Instead of a prawn farm between islands six and five I could build a number of reservoirs for fresh water. I could use solar powered stills to generate clean water. The water could be held in sealed reservoirs on the islands. After the reservoirs are filled then the clean water produced each day could be supplied to Bahrain.

I would have to transport materials to build and cover the reservoirs. If I had the bottoms of the reservoirs at under sea level, as I would, I would save on the costs of materials and labour for building the islands.

I could build the reservoirs and the solar stills within the original costs allocations.

I could have reservoirs extending to twenty-four metres above sea level.

The dead weight of the clean water in reservoirs would resist the power of the tsunami well.

Building reservoirs is cheaper than building islands.

The reason for having several reservoirs instead of one is that should there be a breach of one reservoir the others would still be effective both as barriers and as

reservoirs. With solar energy there is no cost beyond the initial build cost, which my original costs allocation will cover.

It would be politically popular in Bahrain for the Crown Prince's tsunami barrier to be used to address a pressing Bahraini problem.

"You are going to give me clean water reservoirs a mile long, two hundred metres wide, and forty metres deep - for no additional cost?"

"For less cost, Your Royal Highness.

"And a better barrier than was originally planned."

I was a bit shaken by the Crown Prince's reaction.

The Crown Prince laughed.

I have never seen the Crown Prince laugh before.

Still laughing he said,

"Steve will love this!"

Steve is the Managing Director of the airline I used to work for.

"Steve said that you are effective at what you do, but I should be prepared for you to be unorthodox.

"That is why I employ you.

"You are an unorthodox engineer!"

"If you wished, sir, I could combine islands three and four and build reservoirs there as well. It would be much more water than Bahrain needs to store, but it means you can sell or give water to any neighbouring country that needs it.

"Not island two, because it is not a good idea to build a hill right next to an airport."

The Crown Prince is happy with my proposals.

I did not tell anyone, but word has spread across Bahrain almost as quickly as if it had been broadcast on Bahrain television.

Shopkeepers will not take my money.

When I walk through the streets or in the market I can hear the cry in front of me.

"Genghis the water giver!"

My way clears as if I am royalty.

It is a bit embarrassing!

CHAPTER 54: Mark Johnson

Demolition began a week after we had purchased the properties in Liverpool.

Dick Shepherd picked up another adjoining building at a reasonable price so we are clearing five linked sites.

Dick was surprised that I had paid extra to have the application for planning permission to demolish expedited.

“Dick, you commented that I have spent five million pounds this week.”

“Yes.”

“We can usually earn ten per cent on the money we lend out, so we work on ten per cent as the cost of the capital we use in a project.

“Ten per cent of five million pounds is five hundred thousand pounds, or roughly ten thousand pounds a week.

“So the three thousand pounds I spent to save us a week was a good investment.”

“Oh.”

“But this is not a five million pound project.

“This is a sixty million pound project when all the costs are in. So making it all happen quicker is worth one hundred and twenty thousand pounds a week.”

“I have never thought about it like that.”

“The problem with big projects is that you lose a day here, two days there, and suddenly you are a month behind!

“So you have to keep pushing!”

While demolition is going on we are finalising the plans for the new factory complex. Raw materials will arrive at one end of the complex and finished goods will leave at the other end. Where goods are a combination of metal and plastic the metal components will be made at our factory at Ellesmere Port near Liverpool and then shipped to us for us to add the plastic coatings.

Herr Direktor will set up a training complex for the four thousand workers we will take on this year.

We have an online application system which has aptitude tests and is fully transparent.

At roughly one charge hand for ten production workers we need four hundred charge hands. We only have two hundred and twenty production staff!

The future shortage of charge hands is a major obstacle.

We attached a notice of charge hand vacancies to the pay slips for the entire Byram Group. So far we have had two current charge hands who wish to relocate to Liverpool and fifteen people who would move to Liverpool for promotion.

Dick Shepherd keeps looking at me oddly.

Dick seems to think I am odd because I put in three fourteen hour days at Liverpool and then I leave Dick and Georgina in charge for the rest of the week while I am away.

I don't see what is odd.

On Fridays Mike Appleyard and I work on plans for the builders' merchant chain. We can be very competitive on nails, screws, bolts and general ironmongery because we manufacture such a wide range of products.

Our problem comes with sand and cement and bricks where wholesale prices vary according to the size of the order.

We have the money to place large orders but then we would struggle for storage space.

Dick chatted up our new neighbours and he found a business that was willing to sell its premises to us provided we would also employ its six workers. No problem!

Once that building is down we will have the storage space to take half a million bags of Portland cement and tens of tons of soft sand and sharp sand.

For the bricks we had an idea. We currently stock about twenty different kinds of brick and we will observe what actually sells!

We have a leading brand of paints on sale and private own brand manufacture of similar paints. Again we are observing what sells.

Customers who buy from us automatically qualify for the Byrams and Mings and Merseyside Plastics discount scheme.

Sahid Daar spent twenty thousand pounds saturating the social media with information about our business.

Every male in Liverpool on social media aged between twenty-five and fifty years of age receives advertisements.

Sales are increasing so fast that the six extra workers we took on have arrived just in time!

We stock a wider range of tools, accessories, and spare parts than perhaps we should. The thinking is that if a builder can be sure of buying everything he needs at one shop he will use the one shop.

We are not interested to attract small DIY home owners, but they are welcome to shop with us if they wish.

We have a booth linked to Ming's metals where you can go in, order whatever you like, specify a delivery location and a delivery time frame, and pay. You can also benefit from our Byrams/Mings/Merseyside Plastics discount scheme.

My apprenticeship classes have finished. My apprenticeship as a fitter is nearly finished.

I spend Thursdays making my apprentice piece.

The "apprentice piece" is a tradition at Byrams. Virtually no employers follow the tradition now.

I have a copy of the photograph of Cecil Byram wearing a miner's helmet at Groatpie Colliery on the day that Cecil first visited.

I am making a statue of Cecil out of steel wire, and inside the statue there is a wind chime. Mercifully there is a switch at the back which allows one to turn off the wind chime.

My mentor Matt approved the project.

I have passed Grade 6 on the piano. I am now taking guitar lessons with a view to performing the guitar at the summer camps I am attending.

I am honoured that the Byram family has made me Vice Chair of the Byrams Group.

I am honoured to be on the Board at all.

"Exports and Expansion" is a pretty wide brief!

Dennis Wilkins commented that with the collapse in the building industry in Spain there are probably quarries and brickyards that have closed down or are really struggling and could be bought cheaply.

Cecil gave permission and I used Cecil's industrial research company to look at this.

I explained that I am more interested in proven raw material reserves than in anything else.

Karen Byram has good Spanish.

Karen and I toured the possible purchases during Karen's half term at university.

Karen and I like each other, but we both know that there is never going to be a relationship again.

We resumed our friendship and our mutual respect. That is important to both of us.

We found a cement works with huge reserves and a sand quarry with huge reserves.

We were offered a brickworks with huge reserves.

All three are near Spanish ports so direct export to Liverpool docks is a practical proposition.

These sales were all by banks who had repossessed the properties. They were selling failed businesses that had not had a whiff of interest in the last eight years.

I was buying raw materials.

My offers were insultingly low, as opening bids.

The banks bit my hand off!

Given the current very good exchange rate against the euro I bought eighteen hundred million kilograms weight of reserves for less than four million pounds. Each kilogram cost me buttons.

With processing costs and sea transport we can still supply our builders merchant business at substantially below UK prices.

For taxation reasons the profits will be made by the Luxembourg subsidiary originally set up for Byrams to stash profits made on selling metal between Mings and Changs. Changs is the Belgian version of Mings.

We had the problem of getting three businesses up and running.

Cecil's research company provided an excellent interpreter. I hired guys who used to run these businesses or who used to be junior managers there.

Apparently English style solid bricks are known as "donkey bricks". We had to spend money reconfiguring the production equipment at the brickworks but we can now produce donkey bricks. We will have to see if they will sell in England.

We can make and transport the bricks to England.

When we heard about Rebecca's unexpected career change Cecil was concerned.

Cecil had wanted Rebecca to bring her catering magic to the coal mines that Cecil is buying.

Cecil said that he cannot stand in Rebecca's way.

Rose Howarth is now having to plan for the catering at the new coal mines. Mary Ingham is doing most of the interim managing.

Karen Byram is running our Spanish operation, flying to Spain virtually every weekend.

The Spanish managers are happy enough to work for Karen because Karen is the daughter of the big boss. That is a concept that the Spanish managers are comfortable with.

Karen's summer on the shop floor of a Spanish factory has given Karen a vocabulary and a way of speaking that a middle class Spanish young lady would not normally

use unless provoked. Karen's approach to male managers who patronise young women is pretty forthright anyway.

The Spanish managers know that I am Karen's line manager. The managers think that with Karen and I both being young and obviously comfortable with each other there is probably something going on between us.

I am about to go on a long trip. I go to Dubai to see my friends Ali Miah and Shakoora Daar.

After a few days I fly to China to visit our businesses there.

Then I fly to Mexico to see my friend Jesus Montales. Jesus' missionary service came to a sudden end when Jesus was bitten by a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. Fortunately the hospital Jesus was taken to has experience of dealing with snake bites.

Jesus is back home trying to decide what to do. I have a job for Jesus if he wishes it as Byram's observer and researcher in North and South America.

Then I hope to catch one of Charlotte's concerts and after that come home.

CHAPTER 55: Rebecca Johnson

I have a key for Tohur's house on my keyring but I ended up staying in Jenny Hallam's flat in London.

Jenny is sticking to me like glue.

Jenny says that I am intelligent, attractive, and an instinctive socialist. How did I end up as the Byram Group Catering Manager?

I explained that my game plan had been to take a degree at the London School of Economics but I had been headhunted by Garth Stead.

Then Byrams had mushroomed in size.

"I serve more than forty thousand meals a week in sixteen locations.

"I love the job.

"But it looks as though I am Called to change my career."

"You will take a financial hit?"

"Yes. A big hit.

"But I own my own home outright.

"I have good savings.

"How much money does any one person need?"

Jenny looked at me oddly.

“So you will struggle by on an MPs wage?”

“MPs earn more money than most people.

“I have no mortgage to pay so I will be quite well off.”

“If you are elected so young, you could be an MP for fifty years.

“When you retire, what would you like people to say about you?”

I must admit that I had not given this any thought.

I thought for a bit.

“She did her best.”

“Have you heard of an MP called David Watkins?”

There are times when it is better just to admit ignorance.

“No.”

“Nor has anyone else.

“David Watkins brought in the Private Members Bill that made it compulsory to insure all employees. In that one action David improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

“David also brought in the Private Members Bill that set up the legal basis for workers cooperatives.

“And no-one has heard of him.

“If you had to choose, would you rather be a high visibility high profile MP who did nothing that anyone can point to, or an unknown who did something?”

I thought.

“A bit of both, I think.”

Jenny smiled.

“We may have a problem between your strict Mormon religion and Labour policy.

“The homosexual marriage issue is an obvious issue.”

“That is not such a problem.

“I apply the Mormon rules to my own personal life.

“I do not try to impose Mormon rules on everyone else.

“How far would I get if I tried to ban alcohol?”

Jenny smiled.

“Would you go to a homosexual wedding?”

I thought about that.

We all know that Cecil’s secretary Kelly is a lesbian. Of course I would go to Kelly’s wedding if invited.

“If it was a friend getting married I would go to their wedding, of course.”

“Even a same sex marriage?”

“Yes.

“Why not?”

“I can’t say to UKIP that they can’t tell me who I may or may not love and then turn round to other people and tell them who they may or may not love.”

“What about abortion?”

“Abortion is horrible.

“If people do it they do it because that is the least bad alternative for the situation they are in.

“The answer to abortion is partly to make contraception easy to obtain and secondly to provide better alternatives for people with unwanted pregnancies.

“Shitting on people who are already in trouble is not helpful.”

Jenny was not getting the answers from me that she expected. But she had asked the questions.

“What is your relationship with Cecil Byram?”

“I think Cecil is a really interesting person. He was born into wealth. He is a multi billionaire but he is a good guy.

“He is a good employer to work for.”

CHAPTER 56: Sahid Daar

I sat my A levels. No problem.

I have a place at the London School of Economics if I achieve three A grades at A level. I am sure I have achieved at least that.

The local mosque has been trying to have Abdullah as a member of its committee for a while.

Now that I am eighteen, and I am known to be wealthy, they want me.

I have said that it is not appropriate for me at the moment.

Abdullah and I have both increased our monthly standing orders to the mosque, so they are leaving us alone at the moment.

The company that makes the sanitary towels has told the advertising agency that it is prioritising the teens market, on the basis that if they can gain a customer while she is in her teens the customer will probably stay with the brand forever.

Abdullah and Amy and Dennis and Diana are suddenly too old!

Mr Hudson, who runs the advertising agency, has put his daughter Olivia forward to be the new female lead. American focus groups will be shown videos of Olivia with a range of lads doing dancing, running, soccer and so forth. The Americans will decide which lad or lads are to be the eye candy.

Max Hewson, Peter Wilkins, Colin Donkin, Eric Hunter, Michael Kellner, Matthew Kellner, George Butler, and my brother Amal are all in the running.

I do not spend a lot of time looking at young teenage lads, but I have to say that these are all good looking lads.

I have seen them all at the Hewson annual camp wearing just swimming trunks. They are all of them good physical specimens and they are all quite good looking. They can all of them do ballroom dancing.

Max, Peter, and Colin are all musicians, which must give them an advantage over the others.

The advertising company hired an empty warehouse in Meldon, installed a piano, and organised the filming. I had to go as chaperon for Amal because Amal is under sixteen.

Olivia Hudson worked with one boy for half a day, and then another.

I didn't really like it when Amal and Olivia were wearing swimming clothes because I am uncomfortable with such a young girl wearing a bikini. But Olivia is not a Muslim so I said nothing.

When Amal was doing the Hewson exercises and some other exercises that Amal has learned at Repton I was impressed. Climbing up a gym rope at speed was not something that I knew Amal could do.

I do the Hewson exercises myself, but not every morning like Amal does.

There was a hilarious piece of filming where everyone is playing soccer. All the lads have their shirts off. Olivia Hudson runs rings around the lads. The hilarity was in making it possible for Olivia to run rings around lads who are all two or three years older than her.

Matthew Kellner and George Butler supposedly crashed into each other because they both were looking at Olivia.

The whole idea behind these ads is that on the face of them they are totally non sexual. Olivia can do anything she wishes because she wears this brand of sanitary towels.

If any of the clips are used the lads will be paid.

Tohur Miah is my brother in law. Tohur owns a house near an Underground station that is on a direct line to the London School of Economics. Although as a millionaire I can live anywhere it makes sense to lodge with Tohur during my degree.

No-one in his right mind chooses to live in London if they can just visit there.

I have been getting ready to go to California to stay with Abdul and his family.

I have been reading up about Silicon Valley and California. I don't think I want to live in an earthquake zone.

Roll on California!

CHAPTER 57: Kevin Hanson

The media is going crazy over Rebecca Johnson.

A byelection in a safe seat is usually of little media interest.

Rebecca is undeniably an attractive young woman. The Daar clothes that Rebecca wears make Rebecca look really good, and much more attractive than most Parliamentary candidates.

Rebecca is taking a huge cut in income to become a Member of Parliament. The journalists don't know what to do with that!

Rebecca Johnson cannot be called a hypocrite.

The fact that the Groatpie miners effectively selected Rebecca when Rebecca had no thoughts of becoming a Member of Parliament adds spice.

Rebecca went to the largest branch of the Groatpie Constituency Labour Party to seek their nomination. Four other potential candidates were invited.

Rebecca made a hard hitting barnstorming speech that had people in tears and which gained a standing ovation.

Reporters outside heard the clapping and through windows saw people getting up for the standing ovation.

People applauded all Rebecca's answers.

At the end of a nomination meeting the winning candidate makes a speech in which she thanks the branch for inviting her and she says nice things about the qualities and sportsmanship of the other contenders.

I have never known a branch nomination meeting where the successful candidate leads the meeting to stand and to sing "The Red Flag".

Rebecca's voice could be heard leading the singing.

The reporters outside were beside themselves.

Quite often Rebecca's aides or drivers are famous people in their own right. Dennis Wilkins, Amy Waters, David Wilkins, Abdullah Daar and Tohur Miah are all well known faces.

Even the family photo with Mark and the three youngest Johnsons was newsworthy because of Sally, Andrew and Michael.

Charlotte Johnson of course is also famous.

There seems to be a new photo opportunity every day, leaving everyone else contesting for the selection further in the shade.

There is no law or Labour Party rule against someone seeking selection as a Labour Party candidate finding a free venue such as the Groatpie colliery canteen and issuing a general invitation to anyone who wishes to come to meet her there.

Nor is it breaking the rules that people one would pay to see perform will be performing in the colliery canteen for free.

Nor is it against any rules to advertise the event in the local newspaper

It also made the regional television news that this event would happen.

The "Rebecca Johnson young people's concert" had Sally, Andrew, and Michael Johnson of course. Derek Donkin played piano, mainly comic songs.

Robert Graham and Gerald Butler, Kali and Abdullah Daar, Peter Wilkins, and Max and Alice Hewson all performed.

Rebecca played the piano at the beginning and the end.

Virtually every child in Groatpie Constituency had persuaded their parents to come to the colliery to meet Rebecca Johnson. The colliery canteen was packed to the doors. Eventually the dining tables were taken outside to create space.

For most of the concert Rebecca was in a side room chatting with any adults who wished to meet her. Jenny Hallam was with her all the time.

Rebecca made a very short political speech during the intermission when children were queuing for free soft drinks.

All the children sang "The Lord Loves Us" at the end.

The media covered all of Rebecca's activities because Rebecca's campaign for the selection was so newsworthy.

This is the campaign for the Labour selection rather than the byelection itself, so the media can simply follow what is newsworthy rather than attempting to be even handed. Two thousand children and parents turning out for a "meet the candidate" event at a byelection made the news.

Robert Graham is still in care. It needed the permission of the local authority for Robert to become involved in politics.

Robert told Andy Haines that if the Council did not give Robert permission Robert would picket the Town Hall with his violin!

Robert is old enough to join the Labour Party, so he did.

UKIP has not selected a candidate yet.

Rebecca is laying into UKIP with a horsewhip.

Rebecca said passionately at Groatpie Working Men's Club that UKIP have no right to say who Rebecca can or cannot love or who Rebecca can or cannot marry. This was televised.

Derek Donkin came to that meeting and Derek made a non-political speech saying that he had been fostered alongside Rebecca Johnson.

Derek has lived in the same house as Rebecca Johnson.

Rebecca is not racist.

Rebecca clouts cheeky teenage boys of every colour! (Laughter)

Derek gave his wicked smile.

Derek is not afraid to tell Rebecca she cannot marry Chester Wilson because Chester is an American.

But Derek would wish for a thirty metres start! (Laughter)

Derek gave his wicked smile again.

Derek's contrinution was televised.

Derek's personal testimony is that Rebecca is a really great cook and a really good person.

Sally Johnson sang "Helmand" and "The Lord Loves Us". Derek played piano.

Rebecca was invited to nomination meetings by every Labour Party branch.

Rebecca was nominated by every branch.

The Parliamentary selection meeting was packed. Of the four hundred party members more than three hundred attended.

There were a couple of candidates nominated by trade union branches affiliated to the Groatpie Constituency Labour Party but no-one held out much hope for them.

The candidates always draw lots to see who speaks first.

Rebecca spoke first.

When Rebecca spoke it was like a revivalist meeting.

Rebecca had cheers and applause for every question she answered.

For the other candidates to follow that was daunting. They received polite applause at the end of their speeches.

No-one was surprised that Rebecca won on the first ballot.

Once selected, Rebecca made a pounding political speech that had the meeting on their feet several times.

It seems that Rebecca has had a crash course in speech making and socialism from Charlie Kent, Jenny Hallam, and the NUM Branch Secretary. Rebecca touches all the buttons when she speaks, and Rebecca speaks from the heart.

That evening Rebecca had a round of television appearances.

Someone had recorded Rebecca's speeches and so Rebecca was asked questions about what she had said.

Rebecca stormed these interviews, ending with a sweet smile after each jab. You would think Rebecca was a really experienced politico, not a youngster only new to politics.

It was put to Rebecca that UKIP have complained that UKIP has no intention of telling Rebecca who she can't marry. Rebecca is being unfair to UKIP.

"They can't pander to the racist vote and then pretend that they are not racist.

"It doesn't work like that!

"They can't say its OK because my boyfriend is a white American but it wouldn't be all right if he was Chinese American or an African American.

"I'm afraid UKIP are lying again. That is how UKIP operate – lies and stirring up hatred!"

Technically UKIP are right.

Rebecca is being unfair to UKIP.

Rebecca is taking UKIP on head on, going at their racism. Rebecca is taking on racism.

UKIP are a bit stuck because every time UKIP disavows racism they diminish their attraction to the racist vote. If UKIP does not disavow racism they concede ground to Rebecca.

Instead of Labour being on the back foot against UKIP attacks UKIP is on the back foot against Rebecca.

The national Labour Party was not sure what to do about the Rebecca Johnson phenomenon.

The normal pattern is that the candidate in a byelection is almost unimportant. The candidate is just a figurehead. The personality or history of the candidate is usually not relevant, particularly in a safe Labour seat.

The Labour Party could not direct Rebecca how to run her campaign to be selected. Rebecca had the freedom to do what she liked and Rebecca did what she liked. David Wilkins was in Groatpie quite a bit. David is a natural organiser and political operator.

By the time Rebecca was selected Rebecca was a media personality beyond the dreams of many politicians.

At the first hustings of the election UKIP tried to use the local government and policing failures in South Yorkshire around sexual predators and children in care. This issue is particularly damaging to Labour because Labour was in office locally throughout the relevant period.

Rebecca said,

“I was a girl in care!

“I was in care alongside a girl who was sexually molested – by a white man I should mention!

“UKIP want to spend less money on local government!

“UKIP want to spend less money on social services!

“UKIP want to spend less money on Child Protection!

“Don’t you try to use that issue against me.

“If you want to get into that fight then in my American boyfriend’s phrase I will rip you a new asshole!”

Rebecca was white with passion!

The room erupted with applause!

Most of the room stood to applaud.

In a television interview a journalist tried to use Rebecca’s religious strength to suggest that she must disapprove of the Labour Leader because he has had two divorces.

“How many divorces have you had?”

The journalist was a bit surprised, to put it mildly.

“None.”

“Well that’s fine.

“I believe that marriages are made by God.

“But sometimes marriages don’t work.

“If a marriage is not working you try to make it work.

“But eventually you do the decent thing and you decide it was a mistake.

“Then you have a divorce.

“It takes more courage to recognise that a marriage has failed and do something about it than to stay in a marriage where you don’t like each other.

“How can that please God? - or Man?”

In answer to another question Rebecca answered,

“You think that because I am religious I am a bigot.

“My religion requires me to obey the rules of my religion.

“My religion does not require me to enforce my religious rules on other people.

“If you wish to drink alcohol or you wish to have sex outside marriage that is between you and God.

“I have views of course.”

No doubt what Rebecca’s views are!

“I choose not to drink alcohol or to fornicate.

“If I come to your house you may drink beer in front of me, because it is your house.

“If you come to my house I have no alcohol to give you.

“I expect that means I won’t get many journalists visiting me!”

Rebecca smiled.

If you search for Rebecca Johnson on the internet you soon find yourself viewing an advertisement showing Rebecca wearing Daar dresses.

The Daars announced that in the three weeks before Rebecca Johnson was selected they have taken orders for eight thousand dresses and outfits that people have seen Rebecca wearing on TV. The Daars are flying the base dresses from China and then tweaking them to fill the individual orders.

Rebecca’s personality is powerful.

Rebecca’s back story is very strong.

Having Charlotte, Sally, Andrew and Michael as siblings just adds interest.

Rebecca’s multicultural friendships add importance in the fight against UKIP.

The boyfriend Chester Wilson is not a fiancé, but he is good looking.

Chester comes to the odd meeting as eye candy, but normally Chester stays in Tryton where Chester is minding the children.

As Chester is American a British politician may not accept a donation from him, so Rebecca returned his five thousand pounds.

Humphry the Labour Party Leader came to the byelection and he met Rebecca. Rebecca told Humphrey that the Byrams Group factory canteen collections have come in.

Thirty thousand pounds!

In front of the media Rebecca gave the thirty thousand pounds cheque to Humphrey. Afterwards they were interviewed together.

They obviously like each other. They were positive about each other.

Rebecca said that because she has been a child in care she expects a lot of casework from people in care and from people who had been in care. Rebecca is interested in industrial catering and in the welfare of industrial workforces.

Poor old UKIP tried to use the Europe issue.

Rebecca chewed them up and she spat them out.

“About a quarter of my catering workers at Byrams are not British. They come from all over the European Union.

“They work hard.

“Here at Groatpie we have a kitchen shift that begins at four in the morning. I can tell you that everyone on that shift is from the European Union because they are willing to start work at four am.

“Bluntly, you send them back, and the men going down the pit get no breakfast tomorrow!

“At the other end of the scale, the man who runs most of the training for Byrams is German!

“My brother Mark is the exports director for Byrams.

“He tells me that ninety per cent of Byrams exports are to the European Union. If we leave the EU there are two thousand jobs lost here in Britain immediately!

“Thanks very much, UKIP!

“Yes, outside the EU we can negotiate with the EU. But why should the countries still in the EU give Britain a better deal than we get already?”

“The UKIP line is that “wogs begin at Calais”.

“No-one says we have to like foreigners, or that they have to like us.

“But we are all together in this small world, and we have to get on!”

In a different television interview a journalist said that there was a story going round that Rebecca had had psychiatric counselling. Did Rebecca wish to comment?

Rebecca spoke slowly.

“Yes.

“I am not sure which is the more disgusting.

“The people who are spreading that story - or you for helping them by asking that question.

“You, I think, because I had respect for you.”

People do not talk to journalists like this! The journalist tried to interrupt.

Rebecca spoke slowly but firmly.

“Do not interrupt.

“You asked what I have to say and I am telling you.

“My father died of a heart attack when I was young.

“My mother was in and out of hospital with the cancer that eventually killed her.

“I was trying to hold the family together.

“We had huge financial problems.

“We had to accept charity.

“I hated that.

“We were desperately poor.

“We were terrified that if we children went into care the family would be split up.

“This was all happening while I was thirteen years old to sixteen years old.

“So I was under huge stress for about three years.

“As soon as we arrived in foster care my foster carer organised counselling.

“I am so glad he did.”

Smiling, Rebecca said,

“I can even cope now with disgraceful apologies for a human being like you.

“There is a stigma around mental health.

“I am sorry an intelligent person like you feels that you should pander to it.

“Next question? – or do you wish to take this opportunity to apologise?”

The journalist did not speak.

That ended the interview.

During the campaign it was made public that Byrams has bought the rest of the UK coal industry.

At the next hustings someone tried to make something of Rebecca's involvement with Byrams.

"Yes, I knew this was coming.

"I was making plans for how to feed another eight thousand people a day on top of the eight thousand people I already feed.

"I can tell you that Cecil Byram did not want me to become a Labour MP – or any kind of MP.

"Because Cecil needed me to take charge of the canteens.

"I did a good job at Groatpie Colliery ...(huge applause)

"Cecil wanted me to do the same thing at the other coal mines.

"But the people of Groatpie want me as their Member of Parliament ..(applause)

"So here I am."

CHAPTER 58: Mark Johnson

Rebecca had just started on her campaign to be selected as the Labour candidate for Groatpie when I set off for Bahrain. Ali Miah met me at Bahrain airport and he took me to his apartment.

Shakoora was pleased to see me.

We three spent probably an hour chatting and gossiping about all the people we all know.

Shakoora told me that she is pregnant.

All is going well so far.

Ali took me to his office to look at the scale model of the sea bed and where Ali proposed to build his islands.

Ali explained how the plans have changed.

Ali is now going to build a series of reservoirs on some of the islands.

"We have concrete caissons built and we float them into place.

"Then we let sea water into the caissons and in theory the caissons all drop down slowly to create a sealed concrete perimeter.

"Then we pump out the water within the perimeter of caissons.

"We build a series of reservoirs inside the perimeter.

"We fill the reservoirs with solar generated distilled water.

"It sounds simple when you say that slowly.

“Just imagining doing all that for four islands a mile long gives you a scale of the engineering nightmare.”

“Do you need any bricks?”

“I will do.

“Millions of them.”

Ali and I agreed a plan in principle.

Whatever the lowest quote Ali receives for donkey bricks delivered to Bahrain I will go two whole pence per brick cheaper. I will pay for transport to Bahrain.

The Byrams brickworks in Spain will start manufacturing the bricks in twelve months time, and we will build a stock pile for probably eighteen months. As the bricks are produced Ali's representative will inspect the bricks and authorise payment.

We will store the bricks in sealed containers on our site in Spain until Ali is ready for shipment to begin.

It means that Byrams does not have cash flow or debt issues.

Flat land is scarce in Bahrain. Ali can build his stockpile away from Bahrain but because Bahrain owns the stockpile Ali has control.

The proposal works for both of us.

Where clay for bricks has already been dug out at our brickworks in Spain I have a huge flat area ideal for stacking containers seven or eight high.

I will have to organise containers and pallets. We will have to increase production.

With a lead in time of one year all this is manageable.

Obviously Ali has to run this deal past the Crown Prince.

The following day the three of us went on a boat ride. That was fun.

I had never been to Bahrain before. It seems to be a very vibrant country.

When I got to China I visited the Clever Eunuch Foundry, where I was delighted to talk to so many people who had helped me to assemble the foundry.

At the Blessed Peace Foundry I was impressed by Wen Dei's organisation.

I had dinner with Mr Wong and Wen Dei.

I met Wen Dei's fiancé. He is an engineer working in the shipyards. I think he is a nice guy.

I had lunch with Gerald Styles and his wife, listening to Gerald's take on everything. Gerald and his wife are happy to live in China for now.

I went to see our energy empire in the West of China. I met the top managers.

Our manager from Heckmondwike is really unhappy in China.

I said I would try to get him moved back to Heckmondwike.

I exchanged emails with David Taylor.

The guy was so happy when I told him that Gerald Styles is going to supervise the energy project from Shanghai.

The manager can go back to Yorkshire as soon as he wishes.

Then to Mexico!

Jesus Montales looks well.

We discussed what Jesus could do for the Byram Group. Jesus will look at opportunities for us. Most of our communication will be by video conferencing. I have no objection to Jesus going to university and using the Byram wage to live on. I expect thirtyfive hours Byrams work a week on average.

I caught Charlotte's performance in Austin, Texas. I thought it was great!

It was good to see so many people just having a good time.

Technically Charlotte is on missionary service, so she should not meet family. In view of what happened to me when I broke that rule I decided not to trouble Charlotte with my presence.

Then on to New York where I met up with Mark Walker my first missionary partner in Nevada. Mark is studying engineering and he is in a university team trying to build a very fast sun powered car. Mark is well.

And so back to England!

CHAPTER 59: Don Hewson

When Mark returned from his lengthy trip abroad he immediately plunged into his youth camps. The first camp was Mormon boys where Mark was the Camp Organiser. A different chap was Camp Director. From what I can gather the Director sees to the spiritual side and the activities. Mark was in charge of all the supplies, the physical plant, meals, and equipment.

The Camp Director told Mark that it is likely that Mark will be Camp Director next year.

There was some hiccough on the music side so Mark and his guitar were the mainstay of the singing.

The Mormon girls camp was on the same site, so Mark stayed at the site for a couple of hours after everyone had left and welcomed the young woman who is Camp Organiser for the girls camp.

Mark had a week off, but was on call. Mark had to pop out to the camp site to deal with a blocked toilet, but otherwise Mark was free.

It was the week of Rebecca's election so Mark went to Groatpie to help.

The excitement that Rebecca has generated meant that the Labour Party had more people coming to help than it knew what to do with.

Mark found himself catering for the election workers. Local party members saw to the teas and coffees.

Mark made biscuits, cakes, cornish pasties, sausage rolls, curries, and lasagne more or less continuously.

Mark used the kitchen of a party member who lived near the election headquarters.

The party member's teenage daughter ferried the food about a hundred yards. There was a collecting tin at the headquarters for people to make donations towards the food.

That Rebecca would win was never in doubt.

Normally the vote in a byelection is less than in a General Election.

Rebecca's passion and personality and anti racist anti Tory and anti UKIP message raised the Labour vote beyond expectations.

Rebecca achieved a Labour turnout as good as the previous General Election turnout. That is very unusual for a byelection.

Given that the Tories, UKIP and the other opponents were demoralised by the Rebecca factor, their votes crumpled. Rebecca had a much larger majority than the MP she was replacing.

Rebecca goes to Westminster with the journalists predicting that she has a golden future there.

Peter Wilkins also has a golden future.

The American focus groups decided that Peter was the number one male to be Olivia Hudson's eye candy, with Max and later Amal to be Peter's rivals in due course.

The first advertisement has Olivia playing the piano and Peter coming into the room and helping Olivia. There is nothing sexual in what either of them do. They do not even touch, but the sexual excitement is outstanding. The Americans love it!

Mark's third camp was the Hewson gang. I went once to show my support but the kids were clear that I was not needed.

Rebecca is busy in London, Shakoora and Ali are in Dubai, Sahid is in California, and Charlotte is away on her Mormon activities. Apart from that there was a full turnout. Grace Adams has had a falling out with Dennis Wilkins but both of them are at the camp.

I had such mixed feelings about Damien going off to camp. Angela Wilkins went, too. I am home now just with Arthur and Kate and Guy Thornton.

Emma says that as we are so unstressed let us just chill, so we are. This week we have taken Arthur, Kate, and Guy to Chester Zoo and to Lightwater Valley. The children both loved both outings. So did we.

The theatre school will have a large intake this September because we have reduced our fees.

We are not losing any children at the top end. The way we are structured we can do well for every child.

When we took in a Deputy Head I gave Emma a pay rise. This September I am putting Emma on a higher wage still and I am giving Emma a proportion of the profits. From this September Emma will earn more than any junior school Head Teacher.

The only children we have in care at the moment are the Graham children.

Meldon Council does not move children unless a move is in the best interests of the children.

Robert Graham has turned fifteen. Robert is already a multimillionaire, so Robert can afford any education he wishes.

Robert chooses to stay at Tryton High School.

Robert says that after his GCSEs he intends to go to Meldon College for his A levels, and he will spend Saturday mornings having music tuition at the Royal Northern Music College (RNMC).

Robert is not going to take over David Wilkins' slot for a cookery program. Robert is going to stand in for Tohur Miah for three months next year to cover for Tohur over the Olympics period.

After his A levels Robert will either take a degree at the RNMC or a degree at the Cordon Bleu College in London.

Freda has sat GCSEs. Freda intends to study A levels at Meldon College.

CHAPTER 60: David Wilkins

When I told Gerald Edwards that I wished to take time off to help with Rebecca Johnson's campaign to be selected as Labour's candidate at the Groatpie by-election Gerald was fine with it.

Gerald said that the pendulum of politics swings, and sometime Labour will be in power.

It is useful for any City business to have access to MPs of both parties.

As a former manager in industry Rebecca Johnson is probably not a loony leftie.

There is also a strong chance that Rebecca will become involved in commerce and industry policy for Labour, just because Rebecca has relevant experience.

I had a bit of trouble at work over it. Not about me spending my off time helping Rebecca but because I was taking days off during my induction period.

I told my manager that Gerald had authorised my absences and then the manager shut up.

The pendulum is swinging at work, too.

When I had my month doing shadow trades I did no trades at all in the first week.

My manager started yammering at me.

I explained that I was looking for patterns in my sector.

After about ten days I started placing large notional trades. Of the twenty million pounds notional money I had at my disposal I was placing five million pound trades.

The manager yammered about those trades because I was putting all my eggs in only a few baskets. The normal behaviour of traders is to do lots of little trades.

"I can't find twenty good bets in a week", I said.

"I can see maybe five good deals, and when I do I fill my boots.

"It's working, isn't it?"

At the end of the month I had notionally made nearly two million pounds profit on my twenty million pound float.

My results were some of the best returns ever seen in "the playpen".

I am assigned to "Industrials S," so I follow just over a hundred companies on the Stock Exchange Main Market.

I am not allowed to speculate in the Stock Market Alternative Investment Market because that is reserved for the more experienced traders. I cannot speculate in companies that make up the "Footsie 100" because that also is the preserve of the more experienced traders.

Once one is doing real trading one has to fill in a raft of forms for the Compliance people. The Compliance forms are to make sure that one does not have financial interests that could cause conflict with one's day job.

I had to list all my investments.

The Compliance manager called me in.

"Mr Wilkins, are you taking the piss?"

"No, sir?"

"Do you think that Compliance is funny?"

"No, sir."

I know that Compliance is a legal necessity.

I think that Compliance is a complete waste of time and resources.

I do not think that Compliance is funny.

"You have listed twenty-six million pounds worth of investments including American shares, German shares and unlisted shares.

"Yes."

"You are what, twenty-one years old, and you have all this wealth?"

"Yes."

I was quite calm.

The Compliance manager was taken aback that I have not wilted.

"If you are this wealthy, why are you working here?"

"I thought this business would be an interesting career."

He looked at me.

Any Compliance manager worth having can tell when there is something not quite right.

This Compliance manager knew that there was something definitely not right.

"I looked to see what we are paying you.

"I cannot find any record that we are paying you.

"You appear not even to have a personnel file.

"Can you explain that?"

"As you know, sir, I am in a relationship with Annette Edwards. Gerald Edwards pays me directly.

"I assume that Gerald knows what he is doing."

"What is he paying you?"

"With respect, sir, I suggest you ask Gerald that question.

“When asked I say to people is that I am paid fifty thousand pounds a year.

“I am actually paid more than that, but really that is between me and Mr Edwards.”

“Is there something going on here that I don’t know about?”

“You are the Compliance manager, sir.

“Ask Mr Edwards.”

He stared at me for a few minutes with his mind obviously racing.

He told me to go back to work.

My manager was curious why I had been so long with the Compliance manager.

“He wanted my investment advice, sir.

“But he was not willing to pay my fee.

“So he told me to go back to work.”

A polite way of saying,

“Mind your own business!”

I must admit that I find the work a bit odd.

The underlying value of a company ought to be what determines its share values.

The underlying value of a company does not change very much from day to day.

One can expect a gentle undulation in share prices influenced by interest rates, currency movements, and the economic cycle. If one store, say, announces good profits there is an assumption that all stores of that type are good. Those prices drift upwards.

If a different store announces disappointing results then store share prices generally drift downward.

I have my personal investments. They are well chosen. If the shares were on printed paper I would keep them locked in a safe from one year to the next. I have no intention of selling any of my shares in the foreseeable future.

In most companies the vast majority of their shares are similarly locked away.

The proportion of shares actually available for trading is quite small.

The gentle undulations are a bit exaggerated because of the relatively small volume of shares available for trading.

In a major crash or a major boom the undulations are terrifying, but most of the time we are looking at gentle undulations.

I purchase a packet of shares at a price, say £1.32 each, and I sell them again that day or the next day at £1.34.

Two pence per share does not seem to be a lot of profit.

Two pence per share per day over twenty trading days in a month is quite respectable.

Ten million pounds making two pence per share per day like this over a month generates £3,030,303 in profits. My fifteen per cent is £454,454. Gerald's 85% brings him over two and a half million pounds.

I have twenty million pounds of Gerald's money at my disposal.

My mind sometimes works faster than the market. I sometimes have to hold shares for three or four days before the shares rise as I had expected.

My monthly income share is well over half a million pounds a month.

I am making more than three million pounds a month for Gerald.

If I have a month when I lose money, then I will be out.

Gerald has rooms full of traders!

Some traders make a loss. Gerald takes the hit.

Gerald also pays the cost of running the business and the cost of borrowing the money that everyone plays with.

As a relative "newbie" I am not allowed to do all the things that I will be allowed to do later.

I am paddling in the shallows.

I buy shares with money I have. I sell the shares. That's it.

I will not be sacked because I did not make a larger profit.

I will be sacked if I make a loss.

I have to be cautious whilst speculating.

I do not try to sell shares at the peak of an upward undulation but while the share price is still rising. A smallish certain profit is better for me than a hoped for much larger profit that may or may not happen.

The big traders have anywhere up to a hundred million pounds with which to play.

They are allowed to "short" stocks, selling shares that they do not have in the hope that the shares will drop in price. Apart from their managers Gerald also watches the big traders very closely.

I wanted to know about speculating. Now that I speculate every day I am gaining huge experience.

There are some companies that I will not buy shares in. Reading the accounts I believe that their shares are over-valued.

I do not wish to be caught holding those shares. So I never buy them.

How do I know when to buy and sell?

I read and I view what the financial commentators say about my companies and about their competitors.

I quite often buy shares as soon as the market opens, and I sell them again within twenty minutes. Then I do nothing all day but watch the screens and read company annual reports.

There are days when I do no deals at all.

Provided that I make a profit each month my line manager can stuff himself.

My profits are increasing each month.

My manager is backing off. He harasses other people instead.

It is a shame that my manager does not see himself as a team leader or as a coach.

He is more of a drill sergeant I am afraid.

After a while I realised that the guy is a bundle of insecurities.

He finds his job very stressful. The culture of the company is to blame.

And he is an idiot!

The combination of my being a mildly profitable trader and my being in a relationship with Annette Edwards makes it possible that I am destined for the top.

My initial nickname of "Cookie" has disappeared.

I am now "Wilco". This means "agreement or compliance".

"Wilko" with a k means something completely different!

Annette is pleased for me that I am being a success.

Annette regards her father's business as a bit like Formula One racing. It goes on for ever, and when one race finishes another race begins. People spray champagne at intervals.

Apart from money, what is the point?

Money is the point!

My sister Helen is pregnant again.

Helen says that Martin earns so much money now that there is no financial need for Helen to work. So Helen is having children and bringing up children.

Helen is happy.

Andria's daughter Angela is a good kid.

Andria is enjoying little Sam.

Andria says she may have another child, but Andria would prefer the children spaced out a bit.

I half think that lack of money is a problem, but I have to be careful how I interfere. I will ask Helen's advice.

Dennis has lost the sanitary towel advertisements income, but Dennis has made enough money from the advertisements and from his autobiography that Dennis will not ever have to work.

Dennis has started his second year at University.

Dennis is seeing a fellow student from Meldon University called Jeanne.

Dennis is seeing all of Jeanne.

Peter has the new sanitary towels modelling opportunity. We have teased Peter about that!

Peter is already rich from his time in "Terrible Tykes", but another small fortune will not hurt.

Peter has absolutely no idea what he wishes to do in life.

Peter will never have to work.

Janine says that she has spent nearly half her life in "Terrible Tykes". Janine won't mind when it ends. But Janine is generally happy.

My parents have finally accepted that they are never going to live poor again. It has taken a few years for that to sink in.