RECOGNISABLY HIMSELF

Giles Cartwright, Jeremy Cartwright

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JEREMY CARTWRIGHT — A Life Done Properly

by Giles and Jeremy

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For the family

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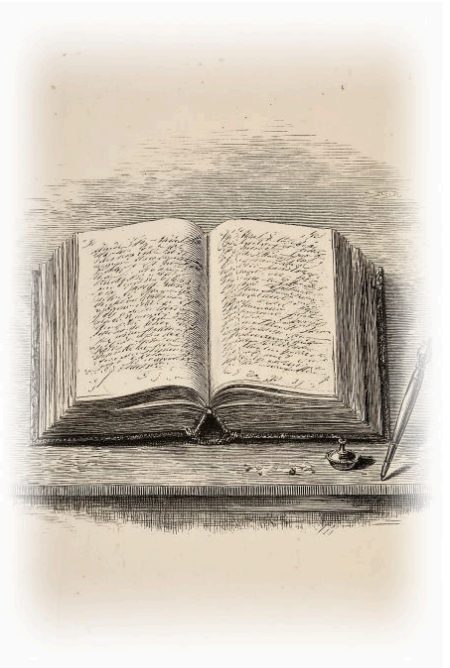
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Prologue

During the quietness of lockdown, my father started making notes: stories from his life, anecdotes, people who had shaped him, things that had amused him — written down in the evenings. When the notes ran ahead of his writing, he started using a dictaphone. He took to it immediately, and began to hand me the cassettes.

I would listen, transcribe what he had said, and show him the transcriptions. He would correct the spellings of names — this mattered to him — and answer the questions the transcriptions raised. In time, whenever we met, he would have something new to talk about. I would press record, he would talk, and I would listen and question. He did not announce a project — he just wanted things

written down while he was able, and so he simply started talking, in the way he has always done things: practically, without ceremony, on his own terms.

Over time, the listening deepened. He began to pass other things to me: cassettes from decades of performances — concerts, shows, rehearsals, hundreds of hours of singing that I worked through slowly; programmes from productions he had appeared in across forty years; correspondence he had kept; documents from a business life that had mostly preceded my own memory of him; postcards; maps; sheet music with annotations in his own hand.

What had begun as a record of stories became something larger. The archive he had assembled across a lifetime turned out to be remarkably thorough — not complete, but thorough in the way that counted. He had kept almost everything about certain facets of his life, and the keeping itself turned out to be part of the portrait.

Then came the collision. Within a week the hospital visits had returned to the same practice — I would press record, he would talk — but with an urgency that had not been there before: more he wanted to add, more he wanted to be sure was said.

He wanted it all noted down. He wanted a record kept, for when he was gone. This is my attempt to do that: for his great-grandchildren, Jesse and Bláithín, who will know him only as a very old man; and for anyone who knew him in one part of his life and was curious about the rest.

His own words, where they appear in this book, are set in italics — so the reader always knows when it is him speaking.

Because the striking thing, in all of it, is how consistent he has been. Across eighty-eight years, in business and on stage and among friends and in silence, he has been *recognisably himself*.

Giles Cartwright

ACT ONE

Beautiful Dreamer



1938 – 1960

Chapter One



Timothy Tightbritches

1938–1950

"My name is Jeremy John Cartwright. I was born on Jan 11th 1938 in Southwark. My parents were Joseph Osmond Cartwright & Winifred Maud Shephard. They lived at that time in West Drive."

Those are the first words he wrote when he sat down to write his own life.

He was eighteen months old when the war began and seven when it ended, and his earliest memories sit inside it.

The first address was 1, West Drive, Streatham Park. After that there was 100, King's Avenue in Clapham, and Streatham High Road, and Robins Grove at Oxted, and a wartime move out to Addington in Surrey that survives only on a registration card. Jeremy set the moves down as a list, in one line, the way a man lists things he has stopped counting.

His earliest memory is the war.

"My earliest memory is of the war — the shelter, and being taken out to see the searchlights."

And from Oxted, in a note to himself, eleven words and two dashes:

"Robins Grove Oxted — / Fly down stairs — see bombs falling on London"



His father was Joseph Osmond Cartwright. Jeremy wrote him down as JOC, and to his grandchildren, later, he was Guppy. To Jeremy he was Dad.

He smoked Passing Cloud and Three Castles — the pink packet and the green. He built the blocks of flats by the Oval.

And in December 1944, with the war still on, JOC filed three patents jointly with Richard Livett, who was Director of Housing for the city of Leeds and had built Quarry Hill — nine hundred and thirty-eight flats over twenty-nine acres, steel frame and concrete slab, the biggest council housing scheme in the country. What the three describe between them is a way of building a house out of those same materials: a wall of reinforced concrete slabs hung on a steel frame and latched to it, the weight carried straight down through the slabs to the plinth; a way of holding the slabs up over a window; and the window itself, with a pressed-steel pelmet box rebated to take the ceiling. They were granted in the spring and summer of 1947.

JOC's own father was Joseph Henry Cartwright, of Wolverhampton, and his father before him was Joseph Cartwright, also of Wolverhampton, who died there in 1899.

Jeremy's grandfather appears in three censuses and gives a different answer each time — a shopkeeper in 1911, a clerk and tobacconist in 1921, a commercial clerk in 1939. What Jeremy knew about him was the tobacconist shop in North Street, Wolverhampton, by the Molineux football ground, with Camp coffee kept up a vertical ladder on the roof, big pictures on the walls advertising Craven A at *"a shilling for 20,"* and men coming in to ask for chewing tobacco. It was not his living. His living was the Water Board. The shop was his hobby.

Of the man himself, Jeremy kept one thing, and wrote it out twice:
"My paternal grandfather used to say, 'Dear, dear, dear.'"



His mother's father was Philip Edward Shephard, and the Shephards had come up through the railways in three generations. First a track ganger on the London Chatham & Dover Railway at Adisham, foreman of a gang of eight men responsible for a single length of line, out on it daily with detonators in a tin on his belt to lay across the rails and stop a train in an emergency. Then a station master — Rainham, then Gravesend, then Sittingbourne — living in the station house and running the porters and the booking clerks and the telegraph. And then Philip Edward himself, who started on the railways like his father and his grandfather, rose to Station Master at Euston, and left the railways altogether.

Jeremy wrote him down like this:

"My grandfather, Philip Edward Shephard, was a self-made man. Started an insurance brokerage in Bromley — RD & PE Shephard Ltd — was once Stationmaster at Euston Station and was a speculative house developer in the Sidcup and Bromley area."

There was a story about the houses that Jeremy had heard as a boy and still told as an old man: that the builder could put up a brick house — plastered, carpeted, furnished as a show house — in fourteen days.

By the time Jeremy knew him there was a farm at Robertsbridge, a house in Chelsea, and an estate in Jamaica.



His mother was Winifred Maud Shephard before she married, and Winifred Maud Cartwright after. To her grandchildren she became Nanna, and that is what Jeremy calls her on every page he wrote about her.

She had worn an artificial leg since she was twelve, and she went everywhere on it.

Before she married she had been to South Africa by sea, and what she brought back from the voyage was a chandelier that changed colour.

She married JOC in Wandsworth, in the spring of 1936. There followed the birth of their son.

His name was Jeremy John. She called him Timothy Tightbritches.

Asked, in his eighties, what it was about: *"No idea. Just a name, I suppose."* Asked whether it was to do with anything: *"No, I don't think so. It's just one of those things."*

Her friends came into the house and stayed in his memory for eighty years. There was Dossie Ralph of Folkestone, who had mauve hair. There was Auntie Ruth Vickery over at Hastings, and her husband Will, a master at a school — *"either blind or deaf, I can't remember which"* — and the coal merchant Alf Huxford, who was said to be a faith healer, and who came to the house when Ruth's arthritis was bad and afterwards she could run upstairs. Jeremy did not altogether believe in Alf Huxford. He noticed, and remembered, that Alf Huxford never took any money for it, and that the other healer in the district, Harry Edwards, charged a fee.

And there was Mrs St Clair, of Tonbridge Lane, who said one thing to Nanna that her son wrote down three separate times, in three separate years, across his eighties:

"Flowers while alive. Not at my funeral."



On his father's side there were two great-aunts, Higgs girls out of Wolverhampton: Auntie May, who married Fred Booth, and Auntie Elsie, who married Bill Haywood — and an aunt properly, JOC's sister Sylvia. On his mother's side there was a great-aunt too, Helen, Philip Edward's sister, at a house in Kent called Gilsted Court; an uncle, David, the youngest of the three Shephard children;

and a cousin called Alexander, whom he did not meet until they were both twenty-eight, and about that he wrote one sentence and no explanation: *"Owing to family problems I did not meet my cousin Alexander until he was 28 years old."*

There was a Mr McKinley who worked for JOC, and who died, and it was only then that anyone discovered he had two wives.

There were dogs — Dougal the Scottie, Banshee the Kerry Blue, Julie, and Charlie.

And every Christmas of the war a cake arrived from Canada:

"Wartime Xmas Cake every year from Mrs Buck in Canada. 99% fruit and a thin Layer of icing no marzipan. Delicious + Moist"

And there was Tessa Stephens, who was born three months after him and whom he met at school when they were both four. They were friends for the next eighty years.

Another Shephard cousin, David's son Alan, was there from the start too — in the family photographs at Saxon Hill with Jeremy and Tessa, from when they were all small.



The place that mattered most was Saxon Hill, in Battle — fifty-four acres on a southern slope with a long frontage to the North Trade Road, and a house, and a farm below it.

It had been an outlying portion of the Battle Abbey estate, and it was sold out of that estate at auction at the George Hotel in Battle in June 1926, in a sale of forty-five lots. Saxon Hill was Lot 17. The family kept the auction catalogue afterwards and used it as the deed file, with pencil crosses in the margins and "Contract for 17" inked on the brown paper it was wrapped in.

It came to his grandfather's company in 1937, and in 1946, when Jeremy was eight, it was conveyed into his mother's name.

At the weekends JOC came down to Saxon Hill on the Friday night and went back on the Sunday night. Wet grass would not cut, so when it was wet he went

over it with a broom. *"You just brush the grass, and the water would come off and drop down onto the ground."* The grass dried quicker, and could be cut. Jeremy told that story in his eighties, and put something in front of it: *"I don't think anybody knows this."*

He bred rabbits there, at about ten or a little younger. JOC made him hay-box cages, and he borrowed a buck for a pound from a man on the road to Eastbourne. He went out rabbiting with the Rogers, who were the tenants, and they let him pull the ferrets out of the holes himself. His own explanation for the privilege is not flattering to him and he gave it anyway: Jeremy was *"stupid"*, and he never got bitten.

And once, at about ten, he camped in a tent on the farm below the house. He wrote the whole episode down in three lines, and it is the earliest surviving example of a habit that ran to the end of his life — the build, and then the fall:

"Saxon Hill Farm. Tent on farm below House / — age 10 ish — lump of soil hit tent — / — went home"



His grandfather had a farm at Robertsbridge, called Hackwood, and his mother took him there often. The farm manager was Leonard Hunt, a retired soldier, and his wife was Eileen. Seventy-five years later Jeremy was still giving their names.

His other early memory is from that farm. He was three or four, crossing a field with his mother — she on the artificial leg — and a bull came at them.

"Bloody frightening that was."

And he gave one more thing about Hackwood, in a single flat sentence, and did not elaborate:

"At one stage, I understood my grandfather had left me the farm, but anyway, it didn't happen that way, so that was that."

Vinehall

At seven and a half he was sent away from home.

He went as a boarder to Vinehall, at John's Cross near Robertsbridge, in 1945, and stayed about five years.

Asked about it out loud, in his eighties:

"Horrible, horrible. Suddenly torn away from home into an alien experience at the age of bloody seven and a half."

And asked about boarding in general, nearer the end: *"Boarding school is not a proper environment."*

On paper, at the same age, setting his life down as a connected account, he wrote it differently:

"I went to Vinehall as a boarder at about seven and a half... I was happy enough there."



What he did there was pay attention, and the people who stayed with him were not the ones a school would have chosen for him.

There were two senior boys, Tommy Lane and John Muggeridge — John was the eldest son of Malcolm Muggeridge — who were kind to him in his first year, when he was seven and new and a long way from Saxon Hill. They are the first people outside his own family that he named.

There was the French master, Mr Hymans, known as Pinky, who lived in the lodge at the bottom of the drive and afterwards turned up on Radio Luxembourg. There was Miss Weeks, who taught the music. There were the headmasters — Mr Jacoby, then Major Tom Stuart-Menteath, who was a war hero, then Major Stuart-Menteath's stepson Richard Taylor, who had been a fighter pilot.

And there was Mrs Dinniman, who was the school secretary. Nanna made friends with her. She thought it would get Jeremy better treatment.

Jeremy got pneumonia there. Nanna came, and brought Dossie Ralph with the mauve hair to visit.

France

In 1946 Nanna took him to France, by train, to see her friends at 11, Boulevard Michelet in Toulouse — Françoise, Lily, and Henri, and Henri's boys Michel, Marc, and Paul. He was eight.



The train did an English breakfast, bacon and eggs and toast and marmalade, which the French passengers watched with interest. The carriages were so full that when Jeremy needed the lavatory he was passed over the heads of the standing passengers to reach it and passed back again afterwards.

In Paris a taxi took them to the Gare du Nord. The fare was 810 francs. Somebody handed over a thousand and had to ask for the change, and then had to ask for it in francs, and Jeremy was still indignant about it eighty years later, on a page of notes, with three exclamation marks.

Henri's son grew up to be a chartered architect, and then spent forty years in a monastery, and then came out of it and made pottery. Jeremy has some of the pottery still. It is green.

Jamaica

In November 1948, at ten, he was taken out of school for several months and sailed to Jamaica with his mother.

They went out on the *Stella Polaris*, a Norwegian ship that had spent part of the war at the bottom of a fjord. They stopped at Madeira, and the boats came out to meet them as the ship anchored — men selling things, men asking for things,

boys diving for the coins thrown down from the deck. Jeremy watched the diving closely enough to work out the rule, and he had it right: *"They would only dive for silver, because copper coins did not sparkle in the water, and they could not see them."*

Ashore there were bullock carts and a mountain, and from the top of it you could look back across the bay at the ship standing at anchor against a blue sky. On St Andrew's Day the Norwegian crew wanted a flag flown and a flag was made and flown. Jeremy's verdict on the festivities, aged ten: *"Whether they enjoyed it or not, I didn't."*

They landed on the seventh of December and spent two hours in a boiling customs shed.



His grandfather's house was called Orchard, at Hopewell, outside Montego Bay: a sugar and banana plantation, with fruit trees and coconuts, and a beach of their own where they swam before breakfast almost every morning. There was an old horse called Banqueter, and Jeremy rode him round the estate.

The people who worked there were kind to him, and one of them, Victor, became a friend.

He had Christmas there, and his eleventh birthday.

And a letter reached him there from his father, on the office letterhead — 100, King's Avenue, London S.W.4, Telephone Tulse Hill 2491-2 — written on both sides of a single folded sheet.

JOC thanked him for his letter and his Christmas wishes, and gave the top of the page to the dogs:

"I passed on your message to Dougal & Charlie. Dougal sends you a wag, — but poor Charlie only sends a wobble — he is too fat to wag."

He was glad Jeremy was having such a nice time, and expected that by the time he came back he would be able to dive, and ride a horse, and sail a boat.

Jeremy had sent him a picture of women at a market. JOC studied it and reported his findings:

"as she has no nose I suppose the natives breathe — like a leaf — through their pores & as she has no mouth I suppose they feed through a tube in their tummies — funny people."

And Charlie had been under the floorboards at Battle while the workmen were in, and had nearly got left under them.

Then:

"Look after Mummy on the way back. See you in London early February."

"lots of love / Dad."

He kept it.

And when it was time to go, the person he was most reluctant to leave was his grandfather. He watched the launch carry the old man back to the jetty, and watched Earl the chauffeur open the door of the Dodge, and in a few minutes the car disappeared behind the Casablanca Hotel.



They came home on the *Eros*, a banana boat of about five thousand tons with a wartime gun mounting still in her bows and twenty-one passengers aboard, and the weather was foul most of the way.

Sardines and ham at lunch made him seasick — and sardines and ham were all there was.

The barman was called George, and George rattled his false teeth to entertain Jeremy — *"I being at an age when that sort of thing delighted rather than revolted."*

The ship rolled hard enough to send a plate of fishcakes across the dining-room floor with the steward flat on his face behind them. Mrs Taylor's chair came away from the chain that held it to the deck and put her over backwards onto her head. A boy called Alan ran himself a bath and then went along to his father's cabin, his father being a parson, for a short evening service; the bath ran the whole time and the cabins took about three inches of water.

And there was a passenger named Davidson, who was agreed on all sides to be mad.

Mr Davidson threatened several times to throw Jeremy over the side. He had a reason. Jeremy had taken to whistling "The Woody Woodpecker Song" up and down the ship, for the passengers, and Mr Davidson could not get away from it.

Jeremy went on whistling it.



They docked at Tilbury two days late. The ship came in listing towards the quay, which brought her rail down to within about three feet of the dockside, and Mr Davidson — meaning to be first ashore — climbed down onto the dock.

Then the ship righted herself, and took her deck back up with her, and left him standing thirty feet below it on the quay with no way back aboard.

The sailors put a rope ladder over the side and ordered him up it. There was trouble about it afterwards. Jeremy, at ten, wrote the verdict:

"He got into trouble, of course, but as he was believed to be slightly mad it was only to be expected that he would do something stupid."

His father was on the dock. They went through the customs shed and drove home to Streatham.

"I was longing, now that I was back, to get down to our house at Battle where I was really at home."

"After that I had to go back to school."



In March a letter reached him at Vinehall, on Pan American notepaper, headed *Orchard, Hopewell*, and posted airmail from Jamaica.

His grandfather had given Victor the letter and the photographs Jeremy had sent out, and Victor had been pleased with them. There were kittens at Orchard, which they saw every day. They were coming into the house now, disappearing

the moment anybody looked at them, and getting tamer. The *Eros* had sailed for England the day before, and he and Margaret would be on her next voyage, and would soon be home.

There was an instruction, and an offer with it:

"You must work hard to make up for lost time, — if you do your daddy might allow you to come out to me here again."

And there was this:

"We all miss you here especially your mount. — He never gallops now."

He signed it *Your affectionate — Grampa.*



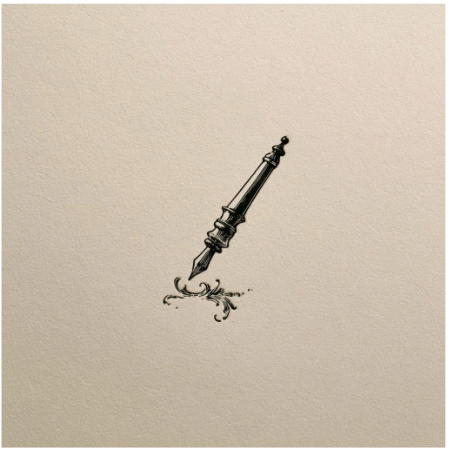
The next thing to arrive was a postcard, in July, with a Norwegian stamp on it and a photograph of the Nærøyfjord on the front. It had been posted in Oslo on the eleventh.

"Oslo. Home next week — hope to see you very soon."

Philip Edward Shephard died nine days later, on the twentieth of July 1949.

Jeremy kept the card.

Chapter Two



Write It Yourself

1950–1955

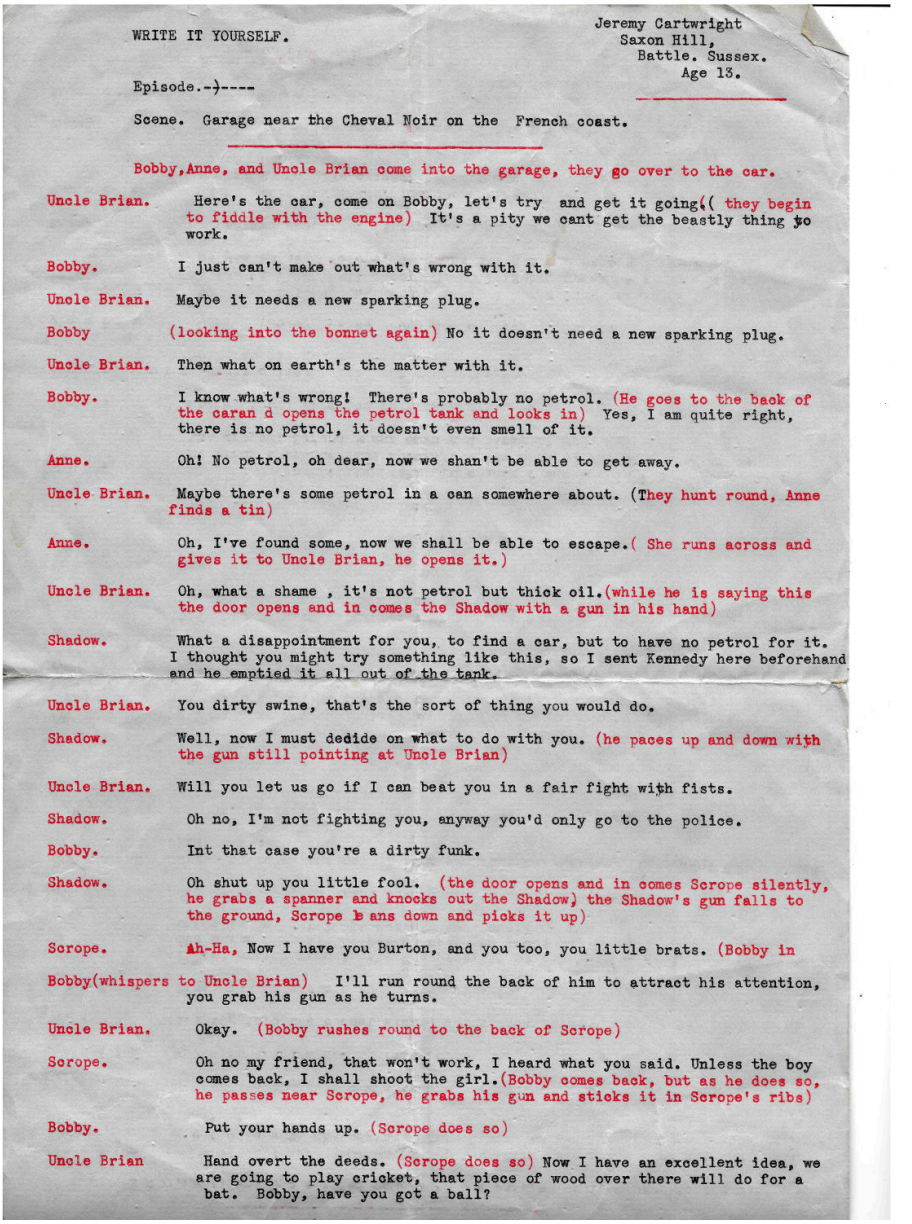
Among the other things Jeremy kept was a two-page typescript. Stage directions in red; dialogue in black. In the top right corner, in the same typeface as the rest, the author's details: *Jeremy Cartwright, Saxon Hill, Battle, Sussex. Age 13.*

He had written a children's adventure serial — one episode of it, at least — set at a garage near the Cheval Noir on the French coast. The villain was the Shadow; the Shadow's henchman was called Scrope. Bobby, Anne, and Uncle Brian were in danger throughout, and the episode resolved, as these things should, with the children having disarmed both villains and deciding to play cricket. *"That piece of wood over there will do for a bat. Bobby, have you got a ball?"*

He wrote it for a BBC programme run by a producer named Frank Coven, and the heading he typed on it is the programme's name as he knew it: *Write It Yourself.* He sent things in more than once, and what came of that he set down on the typescript itself, decades later, in blue ink: *"A BBC production by Frank Coven.*

I was mentioned several times as the best in my age group — had telegram from my Nurse & Clark."

He kept the typescript for seventy years.



WRITE IT YOURSELF.

Jeremy Cartwright
Saxon Hill,
Battle. Sussex.
Age 13.

Episode.-)----

Scene. Garage near the Cheval Noir on the French coast.

Bobby,Anne, and Uncle Brian come into the garage, they go over to the car.

Uncle Brian. Here's the car, come on Bobby, let's try and get it going,(they begin to fiddle with the engine) It's a pity we cant get the beastly thing to work.

Bobby. I just can't make out what's wrong with it.

Uncle Brian. Maybe it needs a new sparking plug.

Bobby (looking into the bonnet again) No it doesn't need a new sparking plug.

Uncle Brian. Then what on earth's the matter with it.

Bobby. I know what's wrong! There's probably no petrol. (He goes to the back of the caran d opens the petrol tank and looks in) Yes, I am quite right, there is no petrol, it doesn't even smell of it.

Anne. Oh! No petrol, oh dear, now we shan't be able to get away.

Uncle Brian. Maybe there's some petrol in a can somewhere about. (They hunt round, Anne finds a tin)

Anne. Oh, I've found some, now we shall be able to escape.(She runs across and gives it to Uncle Brian, he opens it.)

Uncle Brian. Oh, what a shame , it's not petrol but thick oil.(while he is saying this the door opens and in comes the Shadow with a gun in his hand)

Shadow. What a disappointment for you, to find a car, but to have no petrol for it. I thought you might try something like this, so I sent Kennedy here beforehand and he emptied it all out of the tank.

Uncle Brian. You dirty swine, that's the sort of thing you would do.

Shadow. Well, now I must decide on what to do with you. (he paces up and down with the gun still pointing at Uncle Brian)

Uncle Brian. Will you let us go if I can beat you in a fair fight with fists.

Shadow. Oh no, I'm not fighting you, anyway you'd only go to the police.

Bobby. Int that case you're a dirty funk.

Shadow. Oh shut up you little fool. (the door opens and in comes Scrope silently, he grabs a spanner and knocks out the Shadow, the Shadow's gun falls to the ground, Scrope runs down and picks it up)

Scrope. Ah-Ha, Now I have you Burton, and you too, you little brats. (Bobby in

Bobby(whispers to Uncle Brian) I'll run round the back of him to attract his attention, you grab his gun as he turns.

Uncle Brian. Okay. (Bobby rushes round to the back of Scrope)

Scrope. Oh no my friend, that won't work, I heard what you said. Unless the boy comes back, I shall shoot the girl.(Bobby comes back, but as he does so, he passes near Scrope, he grabs his gun and sticks it in Scrope's ribs)

Bobby. Put your hands up. (Scrope does so)

Uncle Brian Hand overt the deeds. (Scrope does so) Now I have an excellent idea, we are going to play cricket, that piece of wood over there will do for a bat. Bobby, have you got a ball?



He arrived at Eastbourne College around 1950, to Blackwater House. His own account of the change is one sentence: *"I did not enjoy boarding school; however, it improved when I boarded at Eastbourne College."*

The housemaster of Blackwater was John Underhill — geographer, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Cambridge — *"a great man,"* in Jeremy's account, and a man he would remember all his life for one sentence. "Lend money to a friend," John Underhill told his boys, "and you lose both."

The prospectus set out what the College offered a boy: a Boat Club, a school orchestra, a choral society, a Director of Music.

He wrote constantly. He kept two exercise books during the school years, and continued filling one of them long after leaving. The Eastbourne College book had a soft blue card cover, the college arms on the front, the motto *Ex Oriente Salus,* and the name line filled in, in capitals: J. J. CARTWRIGHT.

He headed and dated his own pieces, and the earliest date in either book is 1949: *"Snow, snow, that is so white, / Snow, snow, that is so bright, / Snow, snow, it isn't right, / To play with it on a summer's night."*

What he put inside was various enough to seem, on first reading, like the work of several different boys. There were nature compositions — the bank vole studied as a dandy, something of the Beau Brummell of the hedgerow, exquisite in his coat and particular about his grooming. There were farming verses. A poem in the earlier notebook, in a rounder schoolroom hand, breaks off at the foot of its page:

"Farming is a life; / A life for you and I, / If you like fresh air / Animals and things."

And then, in a completely different key, there was *Codfish.* Two stanzas, each built on a single principle: Codfish are silly fish. Codfish are stupid fish. Codfish are soppy fish. Codfish are sausage fish. Codfish are smelly fish. The second stanza dropped the adjectives altogether and ran entirely on rhyme — codfish are not

fish, hot fish, clot fish, knot fish, pot fish — the sound the only object, the sense cheerfully abandoned, the list the joke. There was a second one in the same book, *To Gain from a Bat,* built the same way.

There was the voyage to Jamaica, which he wrote up not once but four times. The fourth telling was cast as a serialised magazine article, with its own titled instalments, a reader addressed directly, and a sign-off at the end of the first instalment: *"Several other interesting things happened during the journey, and these I will recount to you in next week's article."* The magazine did not exist. The readership was invented.



The holidays were another matter.

From about the age of twelve, what Jeremy wanted to be was a professional jockey. The holidays were spent on horses — riding at Battle with Joan Eaton, whose stable was out at Beauharrow, on the road to Hastings, on a pony called Lucky Chance — and the job he took on by choice was mucking out, not for its own sake but for the time it bought him with the horses. *"One of my favourite occupations,"* he said. He competed too, at show jumping, and won rosettes, which he kept. He went on riding through his Eastbourne years. It was not his first time in a saddle — he had ridden Banqueter round his grandfather's Jamaica estate a few years before.

He was also, at twelve, on a farm. Harold Pitcher at Beech Mill Farm in Battle wanted a door for his hens' nest boxes — something that would stay shut against a hen and open to a hand. Jeremy suggested a used basic slag bag: hessian, lined with paper, an inch of sand in the bottom, folded over and fixed at the top, to hang as a door. The sand held it in place. The hens could not shift it. A hand could.

Half a lifetime later he headed a page of his own *Innovation*, and began the list there:

Over my life I have innovated. The first was at Beech Mill Farm — aged 12 ish

There was France again: the frontier stamps in his passport read Paris Nord, April 1952. He was fourteen.



The writing continued. The pub-bar playlet in his notebook ran to six pages. Two farmers and a barman: Gregg, Bill and Sam. The dialogue was written in broad phonetic dialect — *"yer"*, *"'ere"*, *"te-morrer"* — and turned on two running gags, the wrong door and an escalating pantomime over who had paid whom, that resolved with all three men walking out by the same wrong door they had come in. The farmers argued about which cows to sell — Daisy, Jane, Mary and Susan were named, with views taken on each. Sam the barman had the exit line: *"Go out the proper way tomorrow night or else."*

There was a play about music too. He called it *Music Means Mirth* — though the manuscript shows that he had reached first for a different word. *Music Means Murder* is what he wrote, and then struck through, and replaced with *Mirth.* The play opened not on a stage but in the dressing room beforehand, musicians squabbling over ties and shoes and music stands before going on. The first thing he chose to dramatise about a concert was the logistics of getting the show on.

And in the earlier of the two books there was romance, of the kind a boy writes. A long Spanish adventure story runs to eight pages and puts a stowaway called Saternina ashore on a Caribbean island, where he falls for a girl named Zambi and smuggles her back aboard the ship. Elsewhere a song starts up and gets two lines, which is all of it there is: *"Honeymoon, Honeymoon, / We'll be on our honeymoon."* The love songs came later, and in the same book.

Seventy years on, he could still give the argument of one school essay, a piece from near the end of his time there called *The Value of Art. "And I do remember one of the things I was saying was that it need not be in pounds, shillings and pence, but the value will be in the parents' eyes seeing their child's art."*

All of it was written for someone. The compositions were handed in; the plays wanted actors; the serial signed itself off to a reader who did not exist yet. And laid

side by side, the pieces sort into three: a boy who meant to farm, a boy who loved a silly rhyme, and a boy who, given music to write about, wrote about getting the show on. The notebooks had all three down before he was seventeen.



A rugby game, when he was about fourteen, loosened one of his front teeth. *"It lasted another 60 years."*

As a schoolboy he had gone to watch cricket at Hastings, and a one-armed umpire walked out onto the pitch. The umpire threw the ball to him. Jeremy threw it back. It was Frank Chester, who had lost his arm in the First World War.



The thing he took to was the rowing. The River Cuckmere ran east of the town and was so narrow that the school's coxless boats had to race single file, one behind the other, rather than side by side. It was not a pastime — a College Four went up to Marlow Regatta to row for the Public Schools Cup.

"It was a sport I enjoyed (and excelled at), as I was heavy & sitting in a boat with legs & arms to 'propel' the boat was excellent."

He sat in the bow. He won things.



In the summer of 1954 he was working the harvest for Harold Pitcher at Beech Mill again, and his mind was made up. *"I always wanted to be a farmer and at age 16 I gave notice to quit Eastbourne."*

Harold Pitcher listened, and then told him to eat humble pie.

He withdrew the notice and returned to Eastbourne College. On his return he found he had been made a prefect — *"a great boost to my morale."* The head of house by then was Christopher Leaver, a boy two months older than Jeremy.

He sat the General Certificate across 1954 and 1955 and passed six subjects. Three of them were English Language, English Literature and English History.



In December 1954 the House of Lords found for his mother against her own father's estate. Her husband was one of the executors defending it. The case is reported as *Shephard v. Cartwright.* Jeremy was sixteen.

There was a farm in it too, though not in the case. Philip Edward Shephard's will, made in December 1946, left Hackwood Farm and the cottage beside it, Sunnybank, to his grandson Jeremy Cartwright. Jeremy was eight. The will directed the executors to keep the farm going, at the estate's expense, until he was twenty-one.

The estate could not do it. Gross, it came to ninety-four thousand pounds; net, it came to nothing. There were annuities to be paid out for the rest of several lifetimes and houses to keep up, and the farm was the one large asset being held for somebody who would not need it for thirteen years. It went in pieces. The contents of the farmhouse were auctioned at Rye in 1951, when Jeremy was thirteen; the bungalow in 1958; and by 1959, the year he turned twenty-one and it should have come to him, another man was working it.

He never wrote any of that down. What he wrote down, seventy years on, was that he had understood the farm was to be his and that it never came to him — one flat sentence, with nothing after it.

The case outlived all of them. *Shephard v. Cartwright* is still in the law books — the leading authority on when a father's gift to his children is a gift, and when a court will let him say afterwards that it was not.

He had been in the building once already. His father, JOC, used a solicitor called Francis Douglas, who had been the Member for Battersea North through

the war and then Governor of Malta, and who in April 1950 was made a peer — Baron Douglas of Barloch, of Maxfield in the County of Sussex, a few miles from Saxon Hill. He arranged for Nanna, Jeremy's mother, to bring him up to see the place. The admission slip is still in the box, printed "Below the Bar".



At weekends there was Martin Miller, a Blackwater friend, whose aunt, Mrs Humphrey Davis, went out in her car with Martin driving. Martin drove very fast. "You will not go over 30 mph, will you, Martin?" she would say. "No. All happy."



At some point in those years Jeremy went for his driving test, at 64, London Road, St Leonards-on-Sea. Two examiners were working that afternoon. One *"looked a very nice man,"* and passed his learner; the other *"did not look a very nice man, and he failed his passenger."* It was the latter who came out to test Jeremy. The hill start bounced forward in a series of bumps — *"but at least I did not run backwards"* — and then came the verdict, delivered *"in a gruff bad-tempered voice"*: he had overtaken two cyclists and forced an oncoming bus to slow down and stop. There followed a lecture on what the parents of the cyclists would have had to say. He had failed. He wrote the whole thing up for school, and ended it: *"That was the end of my driving test."*



A football match got into the exercise book twice. First, before the day, as a supporters' chant, headed *"Hastings v Sheffield. — 1954"*:

It's Hastings v Sheffield On Saturday next, I'm off from the weald On no other pretext, By train we will go there 500 men strong

— and it ends: *"Sussex by the Sea's our song, / We sing it loud and clear, / At every town we beat our gong, / And drink a lot more beer."*

On Saturday the eighth of January 1955 — three days before his seventeenth birthday — his alarm went off at half past five in the morning. He got dressed in his warmest clothes, met his friend Richard Stephens, who had been at Vine Hall with him and kept goal for the Charterhouse first eleven, and they caught the six-fifteen British Railways excursion to Wadsley Bridge.

Hastings United were in the third round of the FA Cup, playing Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough. At six-fifteen the train drew out to the accompaniment of rattles and bells and cries of *"Up the U's."*

They were confident. Sheffield, Jeremy wrote, were *"by far the worst of the First Division clubs."* A draw seemed likely; at worst a narrow defeat.

Hastings scored after twenty minutes — Parks down the left wing, a beautiful centre, Asher headed it in. At half time it was one–nil. A Hastings supporter in a dress suit of blue and claret, carrying a bell and balloons, was chased off the pitch by the police. Sheffield supporters around Jeremy said they were fed up with their club and hoped Hastings would win. The winning goal, when it came, was a muddle: the ball *"just dribbled over the line"* in the goalmouth, the linesman signalled wildly, and the referee took no notice. Sheffield won.

They played pontoon on the way home. Jeremy went to the restaurant car and bought four bottles of beer. Just behind them, four men had come aboard carrying a large crate of beer, and when they had finished it they entertained the rest of the company with their snores.

They arrived at Warrior Square at ten past one. His father had been waiting for over an hour.

He wrote it all up as a school piece. The British Railways excursion handbill — *Third Class Return Fare 27/6* — was tucked into the exercise book, where it still is.



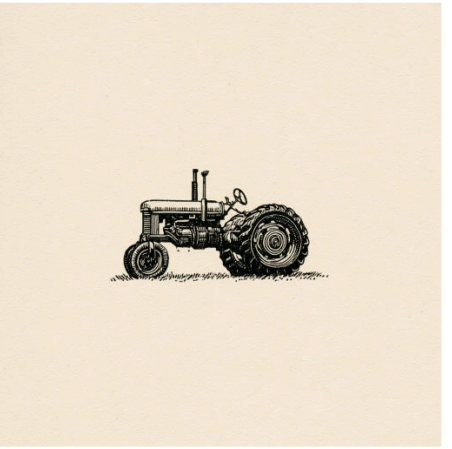
At seventeen or so — the dating is his own — there was a family holiday on the Norfolk Broads: JOC and Nanna, Tessa, and Edna and Bean, friends from Slough. JOC had never driven a boat in his life. *"He couldn't understand why the brakes didn't work."*

The boat had a history. Going under the bridge at Potter Heigham at high tide, the whole of its top had been knocked off; it had been refitted, and it leaked whenever it rained. It rained all week. Jeremy and Bean had the cabin underneath. *"So we got wet."*



That summer he left Eastbourne. The notebook went with him.

Chapter Three



Rocking and Rolling and Yodelling

1955–1960

One of the men who shaped Jeremy's working life was Donald Oates. He farmed at Rigton Carr, East Keswick, near Wetherby — a Yorkshire friend of Jeremy's father, JOC, and a man Jeremy had known most of his life. From the age of about fourteen to seventeen, Jeremy worked on that farm in the school summer holidays. Donald Oates drove a Bentley with the gear lever fitted in an unusual place, between the seat and the door, and he drove it, mostly, on the wrong side of the road, moving across only when he saw something coming. In those days there wasn't much traffic.

Jeremy had just turned seventeen, and had passed his driving test at a second attempt, when Donald Oates threw him the keys to that Bentley across the

farmyard and told him to take it to the petrol station and fill it up. No ceremony. No instruction.

"Talk about trying to frighten someone to death," Jeremy said of it — and, of the same moment, *"A huge trust."*



At a hotel dinner one evening, with JOC and Donald Oates both there, they ordered the Kona coffee — the expensive Hawaiian one. The Kona was meant to take a single pinch of salt to bring out the taste. It arrived tasting of the sea. The head waiter was summoned. "Impossible, impossible, impossible," he said. Donald Oates said: "Well, Charlie, bring over a bloody chair. Sit down and bloody well have a cup." The waiter sat down and tasted it, and scrunched up his face. It transpired that three waiters, working separately, had each put a pinch of salt in.

Donald Oates also had a Hotchkiss, a French make. At the Old Swan in Harrogate he found another one parked next to it, the key still in the door. He got in, drove it round to a different spot, and left it there, just to see what would happen. On the back seat were several bottles of brandy. Later, inside the hotel, they tracked down the car's owner, who turned out to be a brandy salesman. "It's quite okay," he told them. "They're all fakes." Knowing that, Donald Oates sent Jeremy out over dinner to steal one of the bottles. A sixpence fell at his feet on the way to the car. He kept the sixpence. He kept one of the bottles too — a glass one — and has kept that for nearly seventy years.

At a pub near Donald Oates's farm, a shelf behind the bar was lined with miniature bottles of liqueur and brandy. On these evenings Jeremy's own drink was a Pussyfoot — *"something with grenadine in it"* — orange juice, lemon, grenadine, and no alcohol in it at all. One night, both men drunk, they worked through every bottle on the shelf, refilled the empties with black coffee, and put them back where they had found them. *"And to the best of my knowledge,"* Jeremy said, *"that's where they stayed."*

When Donald Oates's wife came through a heart operation, the surgeon's bill ran into the thousands, and JOC had a suggestion. "Why don't you offer him a case of whisky?" he said. "Nobody will know. He won't be paying any tax either." *"Whether he did or not,"* Jeremy said, *"I don't know."*

Donald Oates had a view on farming education, too: no need for college, spend five years on five different farms instead and learn the trade from the land up. *"That really was an idiotic concept,"* Jeremy said. He applied to Harper Adams College anyway. But it was Donald Oates who introduced him to the Hendersons at West Woodhay, where Jeremy did a year's farming apprenticeship, and so set the whole working life in motion.



West Woodhay Estate sits in the far west of Berkshire, close to the Hampshire border — a Grade I house attributed to Inigo Jones, owned by the Henderson family since 1920. It was here that Jeremy began work as a farm pupil, aged seventeen. Major John Henderson had been aide-de-camp to Field Marshal Montgomery and was later Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire. His farm manager was Harry Chandler, and Jeremy watched him closely.

Harry Chandler smoked a pipe. The pipe produced actual flames, with some regularity — not the gentle glow of a pipe contentedly smouldering, but actual flames. This did not give Harry Chandler pause. He smoked it in the barn. He smoked it in the grain store. He even smoked it while pumping petrol from the tank. Nothing terrible happened, and so he continued to do it, and Jeremy continued to watch him do it, and nothing was said, because there seemed nothing useful to say.



Harry Chandler tied a broom handle to the front bumper of his car, so that when he drove he could knock over traffic cones as he went. It was a huge farm, and there were four combine harvesters. He left all four in the field where they had finished the harvest, from October to the following August, with nothing serviced over the winter, and started them again the day before the next harvest began. A market trip with him turned out to be pub to pub, and at a clothes shop the salesman wrote up the bill, parcelled the shirts and trousers in brown paper, and was tying the string when Harry Chandler asked for a discount. Jeremy observed this. *"Very subtle,"* he noted.

Harry Chandler kept a herd of Red Poll cattle — a beef breed, used here as dairy animals. *"So totally erroneous,"* Jeremy said of it. *"Idiotic."* The udders were not washed before milking: *"Quite unusual,"* he said, and then, *"quite wrong, very serious."* One day the cooling water overflowed into the milk. It happened on Jeremy's watch. Nobody said a word.

He was the worst farm manager Jeremy ever came across. Jeremy learned more from him about what not to do than from almost anyone else he ever met.

Jeremy's first lodgings were with Gwen Broughton, the late vicar's widow, at the vicarage. Her son was a vicar, her daughter a nun. When she had to leave the vicarage Jeremy helped her move to Froxfield — *"three miles,"* he said, *"from Berkshire through Hampshire into Wiltshire." "A very fine lady."* After that he lodged at the pub in Faccombe, with Mr and Mrs Davis, four miles away and uphill, a ride he had made most Fridays before he ever moved in. Petrol was rationed — the Suez rationing, the winter of 1956 into '57 — and his principal transport was his bicycle. For a while, later, he lodged with Harry Chandler himself.

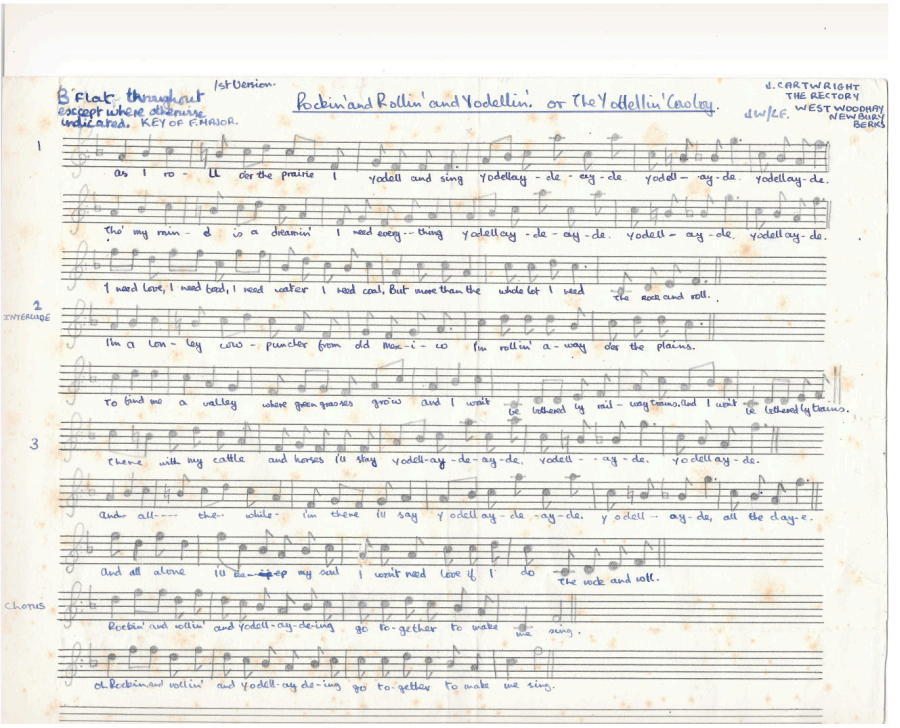
Most of what he learned that year he learned in the pub. Gerald Froome drove the tractor and took good care of it; Percy Mackrell ran the grain-drying

at Faccombe — all the grain in, dried, and put away ready — and was a friend *"for years and years"*; there was Gordon Stacey, and Harry Bowler and his brother Tom. There was the keeper, too, who kept the pheasants. Jeremy did his shopping for him every week: *"one loaf of bread and four bottles of whisky."* They told him farmers grew weeds on purpose, so that the men who invented pesticides would have something to test their sprays on. Seventy years on, the verdict had not moved: *"tremendous people... really wonderful, wonderful, wonderful men... just friendly and kind and positive."* They had taken him under their wing — *"absolutely,"* he said. *"Supportive, absolutely." "All were very kind to me, a young inexperienced man,"* he wrote, and then: *"I kept in touch with all for years."*



The Eastbourne College exercise book came with him. In the evenings, in the vicarage or the pub, he wrote. A cluster of love songs accumulated through 1956 — *Where the Rainbow Ends, Why, Ode to an Autumn Love.* A long cycling poem named the actual lanes he rode during the petrol rationing: the Faccombe road, Highwood, Woodcote, the Keeper's house, the county boundary. *"The Faccombe road is long and dark, / And sometimes very wet, / Once or twice a week I start, / Upon my bicyclette."*

The rock and roll went into a song of his own the same year: *Rockin' and Rollin' and Yodelling* — laid out on the page as if for performance, numbered verses, a marked Interlude, a Chorus, and dated 1956 in his own hand. He had learned to yodel from Brian Eastwood, a worker on Donald Oates's farm in Yorkshire, over a fence in a farmyard, and the song spliced the yodelling with the rock and roll. *"I need love, I need food, I need water, I need coal, / But more than the whole lot I need the rock and roll."*



Bill Haley and the Comets played the Davis Theatre in Croydon on the fourth of March 1957, near the end of a British tour that had already produced one fracas after another — seats slashed, a mob of fans at Waterloo Station the newspapers called the Second Battle of Waterloo. Jeremy went along and watched. *"There was a lot of dancing in the aisles,"* he said, *"but not from me."*

That same year he wrote a comic fantasy he called *Funny. Peculiar.* — a dream, walking past Downing Street, of meeting the ghost of the Duke of Marlborough, of diamonds and a letter to deliver, of being arrested as a poison-pen writer. It ends on the alarm clock: *"The time was five-thirty, and I had to go out milking."*

He spent time with Fred Angel, the shepherd, and Fred's son, also named Fred, and in lambing season he wrote about it — five sides of a pencilled narrative on loose foolscap, unfinished, set at *"a large farm in Berkshire where I was to be a pupil."* He arrived in a snow storm with a nose bleed. He and the shepherd had to construct the lambing pen: stakes driven into the still-frozen ground, sheep

wire stretched between them, two bales stacked for a windbreak, a roof of rabbit wire and straw. Gale force eight blew it over. They rebuilt it. *"We left it as it was, because in the strong wind we could do nothing with the loose straw on the roof."* The ewes lambed early, before the pen was finished, and the watch ran round the clock: morning, evening, midnight, dawn. The shepherd slept in a caravan with a bunk and a bed made of sacks. One cold morning a ewe was found dead in the centre of the pen, and they believed she had died of pneumonia.

He did not write about what he thought of any of this. He wrote about what happened.

Fred Angel castrated lambs and kept the testicles in a bucket. Jeremy asked why. "For my supper," he said. No further comment was recorded.



In the summer of 1956, Jeremy copied out a love song in block capitals on a sheet of lined paper and sent it to Associated-Rediffusion, the new television company, for a programme called *Melody Cruise.* He added his name and address at the top: Jeremy Cartwright, The Rectory, West Woodhay, Newbury, Berks.

The reply came on the thirteenth of August. It had not been possible to use the lyric. The returned copy was enclosed.

It was signed by the Assistant Script Editor, Light Entertainment: David Croft. Croft was thirty-three. He would later co-create *Dad's Army, Are You Being Served?, Hi-de-Hi!* and *'Allo 'Allo!*, and receive the OBE. In August 1956 he had a polite form of words.

Jeremy kept the letter. He kept the returned lyric sheet with it. He has kept both ever since.



One morning Jeremy was helping load sugar beet into railway wagons at Kintbury station — shackling beet by hand, throwing it up into wagons with high wooden

sides. The London train came into the station. Passengers boarded. The guard blew his whistle. The stationmaster rushed out. "No, you can't go yet," he said. "Mr Henderson isn't here."

The train waited until Major Henderson, the estate's owner, arrived in his Jaguar, parked, and got out. It was only then that the train departed.

Jeremy recalled the story several times over the years. *"How unfair for it to hold the train for the local bigwig,"* he said once. *"I thought that extraordinary,"* he said another time.

In his last fortnight at West Woodhay, the Major and his wife Sarah had him to dinner at the house — the correct thing to do, he said. His landlady had told him beforehand that he ought to call the Major "Sir". Jeremy thought that ridiculous. Major Henderson's view, offered somewhere in the evening's conversation, was that people wash too often — that there ought to be at least one day a week without soap. *"And I think I put that into effect,"* Jeremy said.



After West Woodhay, Jeremy worked briefly for a small farmer nearby, George Diamond, whose teapot never seemed to run dry and who introduced him to lardy cake. It was through that job that he was deferred from National Service, as an agricultural worker; at Newbury the officials hesitated, and *"my father could speak to the Minister,"* Jeremy told them. The deferment came through.



He moved on next to Moat Farm, a hop farm near Leigh Sinton in Worcestershire, to work for Charlie Lewis, and he lodged in the farmhouse with the family. The farm took its name from the medieval moat that still bordered the farmyard, and a calf, seven days old, walked off the bank one day and drowned in it. The sale of the calf would have been worth twenty-seven pounds.

Charlie Lewis hid the Land Rover keys so that Jeremy could not use it to do his work. He liked to boast, too, about a two-hundred-and-fifty-seven-pound cheque he said he'd won from his bookmaker, and when Jeremy asked to see the cheque-book stub he refused. *"He wasn't very amused."*

Each morning during hop-training — the young hop shoots being wound up their strings — Jeremy drove the lorry into Worcester to collect the women who worked the fields, and back again in the afternoon. The last drop-off was a woman named Mrs Annett, who invited him in for tea one day. There was a bath in her kitchen, with a cover over it. "I must just put some coal on the fire," she said, and lifted the lid. The bath was full of coal. It had never been used for washing. *"I will never forget that,"* Jeremy said.

Jim Lewis and Jeremy would collect the empty bottles from the hop-pickers' huts after harvest and spend the proceeds on a night out. On one such evening they fell in with a man called PK Matthews, who had a reluctance to buy a round. Jeremy let this pass for as long as seemed reasonable, and then announced to the table: *"Let's all have some more again — and PK is paying!!!"* PK Matthews was not pleased.

Charlie Lewis had a daughter, Elizabeth — Liz — and before long Jeremy had more reason than work to be at Moat Farm. They married in October 1957, at Martley, when Jeremy was nineteen.



In 1958 Jeremy and Liz moved into a large one-bedroom caravanette — bought for them by JOC — in a field owned by Jack and Margaret Mansell at Edgmond, on the edge of Newport in Shropshire. Harper Adams Agricultural College was a mile away. Davenports delivered a case of beer to the farm every week and collected the empties. *"It was just all so easy somehow,"* Jeremy said.

He worked, as he put it, *"like hell."* Up at four in the morning to cram for exams. *"Never worked so hard in my life."* The one crack in it came at a timber yard, where he had asked for three-foot lengths of wood and they came only in

three-foot-six. He loaded them onto the car anyway, and then lost his temper when he was charged for the three-foot-six he had taken rather than the three-foot he had asked for. *"My misbehaviour, I feel,"* he said of it, years later.

There was money to be found as well as exams to pass. For close to two years he scraped bristles off pigs for a butcher near the Halfpenny Arms, and summers he spent on the pea-viner at Bird's Eye. He got into turkeys through Jim Lewis and Brian Dale, who had married Liz's sister Margaret; Brian Dale went on to build a turkey-breeding operation of his own.

He made up his mind about the men he met at college as he met them. On a college farm tour he met a farmer whose philosophy stayed with him — *"I think he was a very good farmer,"* he said. The farmer had switched to organic methods after his cattle developed persistent foul-in-the-foot; he ran a milk round, sold his surplus to the Milk Marketing Board at a premium, and practised proper crop rotations. His own account of himself: "I'm not an idiot. If I get virus yellows on my sugar beet and I've got to save the crop, I will spray it. But basically, I endeavour to be as organic as I possibly can."

On the poultry course he met a man called Ray Wills, and they became friends straight away. They planned a duck-rearing enterprise together, budgeted it carefully, and secured an interview with a director of Sainsbury's in London — a Mr Justin, charming — who told them he would buy every duck they produced, and then told them they would lose money on every one. *"Our journey back to Kent was depressing,"* Jeremy wrote. *"All our elaborate plans were in tatters."* They would be friends for the rest of Ray's life. Ray went on to become a poultry adviser for two of the big feed companies, and when they offered him a car for it, *"Ray actually thought about refusing it, as he was so fond of his own old banger, but he did in fact accept their offer."*

There were other fellow students too. There was John Bond, who did not work at all, had a photographic memory, and passed with the same grade as Jeremy. *"If he'd worked, he'd have had a distinction."* There was Mike Turnbull, who gave Jeremy a book containing samples of every grass there is. Jeremy still has it. Mike Turnbull died in an accident not long after they left college.

In one exam Jeremy was asked to state whether sugar is a polysaccharide or a disaccharide. *"I had a fifty per cent chance of being right,"* he noted, *"and I was."*



Jane was born in June 1958, into a life in the caravanette. Penny was born in September 1959. The National Diploma followed in July 1960.



The Eastbourne College exercise book had come all this way with him — across the school boundary, across four counties, through a vicarage, a pub, a farmhouse and a caravanette field. But the writing had stopped somewhere in the Harper Adams years. A man cramming at four in the morning, with two babies in the house and a living to earn, had not been writing songs. The notebook went quiet. The energy it had carried did not disappear — but where it went belongs to the next act of Jeremy's life.

ACT TWO

Heart and Soul



1959 – 1999

Chapter Four



“The Boat’s In!”

1959–1967

Before he bought the farm, Jeremy was advised not to.

The advice came from a man farming down on Romney Marsh — the son-in-law of J. H. MacDonnell, the family’s solicitor, of 38, Maiden Lane, off the Strand. “I wouldn’t,” he said. “What you want to do is to come down here and get a farm down here on the marsh, where the land is so much better.”

Jeremy bought Tilsden Farm.

“And he was right, actually,” Jeremy said long afterwards. *“The land at Tilsden was harsh.”*

It was two farms rather than one — Tilsden and Hancocks, on the High Weald above the three-hundred-foot contour, on the edge of Cranbrook in Kent. There was a wood called Toll Wood and another called Hagues Gill. There were cottages at a place called Sinkertweazel. There was an oasthouse on each farm, a single kiln at Hancocks and a single roundel at Tilsden. The fields had names: Alder Field, Rabbit Shaw, Horse Meadow, Crow Field and Little Field. Someone had drawn the whole of it on a piece of linen, by hand, and Jeremy kept it.

In April 1959 the estate went to auction at Maidstone. Around that time he bought it from Colonel Cheeseman, lock, stock and barrel: the land, the buildings, a flock of Kent sheep and a pedigree herd of Sussex beef cattle. The sheep and the cattle came with the place. In due course he held a farm sale and they went.

He was twenty-one.

He could not buy the farmhouse. So Jeremy and Liz brought the caravanette from the Harper Adams field onto their own land, with Jane, who was a year old, and Penny, who was born that September, and lived in it for nine months while his father, JOC, built a bungalow for them a short way off. They called it Bramleys. A caravan had gone onto a field and a bungalow had gone up beside it, and, in Jeremy's words, *"nobody checked, nobody said anything."*

At the bottom of the garden at Bramleys there was a hop-pole ditch, where the poles were stood in tar and boiled. In the shed beside it stood some kind of machine that Jeremy never identified.

Once Bramleys was up, the caravanette went to auction. Somebody had approached him beforehand: "for a few quid, I'll push the prices up." On the day the bidding climbed, bid after bid, and Jeremy stood and watched a man he could not see drive the price of his own caravan up in front of him. *"I thought he was quite good,"* he said. In the end it went unsold. Afterwards he asked the auctioneer who the other bidder had been, and the auctioneer told him there had not been one. He had been calling the bids himself.



The next house along Tilsden Lane, going towards Benenden, was Pippins, and Denis Bex lived there. He was an oil man who had gone out to Persia in 1929 and retired at about forty-four. He used to come and find Jeremy on the farm, and they became, in Jeremy's words, *"very, very firm friends indeed."*

"He was like a father to me for years," Jeremy said. It was Denis who told him, *"Jeremy, you've really got to grasp the nettle."*

Denis later moved away, and for years afterwards the two of them met for dinner every few weeks, halfway between. He died in October 1976. *"The vast quantity of my nuts and bolts and screws and things in my workshop came from him when he died."*



Sixty years later, in his eighties, Jeremy could still name all the men who had worked for him: Peter Potter; Albert Bishop; George Manktelow; Charlie Mobey; Ernie Daws; John Walters, who became a sub-manager; Fred Larkin; Ray and Lionel Larkin, who drove the lorries; and Tommy Adams, another driver, a traveller, who was *"very good."* Eight cottages went with the two farms — Hancocks Villas, Tilsden Cottages, Sinkertweazel Cottages — and several of the men lived in them rent free.



At West Woodhay and at Moat Farm, what Jeremy made of a man stayed in his own head. Here, what he decided had consequences.

The farm had come with a manager. After a year Jeremy demoted John Sims to apple man, and John Sims resigned. Eddie Osborne had managed Charlie Lewis's farm in Herefordshire, and Jeremy gave him a job, and he was not up to it; Jeremy asked him to resign rather than have to sack him.

George Harmer was an excellent worker. His wife was excellent too: hop-training, apple-packing, cleaning out the turkey brooders. One day Jeremy asked George to carry on clearing a ditch that Albert Bishop had started, and he was not pleased about it. What happened next Jeremy wrote down twice, in the same words both times.

"He climbed onto the drawbar of my Land Rover and tried to kill me with a brush hook."

"I had to sack him."

Old Fred Penfold was a Traveller and a blacksmith who lodged at the farm for more than ten years and made costermonger barrows and small caravans. His son, also Fred, was a painting contractor until Jeremy caught him taking diesel out of the farm tank — three thousand gallons of it, sunk in the ground by the workshop, with a pump on the top. Jeremy sacked him as well. Harry the decorator lodged at Tilsden with Mrs Payne, and borrowed a pair of glasses that he never gave back.

Tommy Clark, another traveller, spent an afternoon pitching bales up onto a trailer faster than the man on top could stack them. The man on top was Jeremy, and he could not keep pace.

"Very funny," he said.



Albert Bishop dried Jeremy's hops, and lived in the cottages at Sinkertweazel. *"Someone needs to physically watch them all day until they get dried."*

One year the drying had to go somewhere else. Jeremy rang a local farmer and asked whether he could borrow his oast for a few weeks, and the farmer said he could, and that was the whole of the arrangement. *"In those days things were done in what I call a genteel fashion. Shake hands. That's it."*

A fortnight later a case of Blue Nun arrived on his doorstep — German, white, and *"slightly not dry enough." "In those days, it was popular with the farming community."*

Every August, Bill Lewis and Jack Froggett came down from Worcestershire to look at Percy Henley's hops, and afterwards there was what Jeremy called *"a very alcoholic lunch."* One year the lunch ran on so long that instead of going home they took a day-trip ferry to France.

And every fifth of November there were fireworks at Tilsden, for the family and for friends and for their children.



The farm he had bought was not the farm he wanted, and over the next eight years he changed it. The sheep went and the cattle went. Heavy hogs went to Walls. After them came hops, apples, turkeys and corn, in that order and over some years, the hedges coming out to make bigger fields as they did. The turkeys got a building two hundred feet long, divided into ten pens. The hops did well. Not much else did. *"We grew grain just to fill in the fields,"* Jeremy said.

He was asked about it in his eighties.

"You start off with a day-old chick, and six months later you kill it to eat. You know that really you don't want to do that."

The second-grade strawberries went into a large tub with formalin in it, which turned them green. At the jam factory the formalin was washed off, water was added, and they turned red again.

Where the work was done badly, he built something to do it better. Apple prunings had to be got out of the orchards and burned, so he built a trailer to burn them on — metal, welded, on metal wheels, with a long drawbar, so a fire could be lit on the bed of it and kept going while it was towed down the rows. Bales had to be lifted onto a trailer by hand, so he built a ramp from the baler up to the trailer, and they went up it themselves. *"Saved a lot of work,"* he wrote, and then, of the same thing: *"That, I think, was one of my most interesting little experiments."* The hens pushed the doors of the nest boxes open, so he made doors out of fertiliser bags, weighted with sand, folded over and fixed, that the hens could not shift. He had proposed the same thing, in hessian, to a farmer at Battle when he was twelve.

The wire for the hop fencing came from Spencer Wire. The oil rams for the tipping trailers came from Spembrough Engineering.



When Jeremy put up a warning notice on a field with a bull in it, Mr MacDonnell, the family solicitor, in his office in Maiden Lane, told him that was the wrong way to go about it: "Oh, no, no, no. What you do is you put up a big sign that says 'Bull and cows grazing in field.' Then people must use their own conclusions, but you're not actually admitting there's any danger." And when a man fell off a ladder on the farm, Mr MacDonnell wrote back by return: "Dear Mr Cartwright, there's no doubt this man clearly fell off a ladder on purpose so that he could have a claim against you."

JOC gave his son two very old tractors, and Jeremy took them in to Haynes of Maidstone and traded them against a new Ford. Some months later he asked the salesman, Mike Kentish, whether the firm had made anything reselling the two old ones. Mike Kentish would not say — his reasoning being that if Jeremy knew there was a margin in it, he would haggle harder the next time. Jeremy told him he had it the wrong way round. He wanted Haynes to do well out of him, so that Haynes would still be there the next time.

They were firm friends after that.



"Did I tell you that they used to call my farm the Ponderosa?"

He kept a horse at Tilsden called Irish Mist, and most mornings he rode out on it — round the hop gardens, along the orchard rows, over the fields with their names, the whole three hundred and twenty acres of it — looking the farm over from the saddle before the day's work began.

There was a programme on the television at the time called *Bonanza*, about a family called Cartwright who owned a cattle ranch in Nevada. The ranch was called the Ponderosa.

It was the neighbourhood that started calling it the Ponderosa. It stuck.

"You can't make these things up. They either happen or they don't."



The Eastbourne exercise book had gone quiet somewhere in the college years. What came next came through a neighbour. Susan Foster knew Jeremy in Cranbrook, was involved in the operatic society, and asked him to take a role in a play.

"No," he wrote.

He joined the society anyway.

In the last week of November 1963 the Cranbrook Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society put on *Patience* at the Vestry Hall, with the dragoons' costumes hired from B. J. Simmons of London. Jeremy was in the Chorus of Officers of Dragoon Guards. He was twenty-five, and it was the first time he had ever been on a stage, and he was at the back of it, in a line.

It was a society of about forty people who did everything — produced, played the leads, painted the sets, worked the lights, and turned out again the following year in different parts. Jeremy learned them all. The following September he played Snout in the Mechanicals' scene of an evening of Shakespeare, and one of Two Servants in the Falstaff scenes; he wrote the date on the programme and kept it.

On the thirtieth of January 1965 the society put on *Free As Air*, a musical set on an invented Channel Island. Somebody had drawn the cover of the programme by hand — a flagpole, a small sailboat, two rocky islets, a gull — and initialled it D.C. in the corner: Dinah Chamberlin, who was also in the cast.

Across the same cover Jeremy wrote, in ink, who had come: *"30th Jan 1965. Evening Performance with Liz. Jane + Penny, Tessa + Hugh."* Liz, and the two girls, aged six and five. Tessa Fawcett, who had been Tessa Stephens, and whom Jeremy had known since they were both four years old; and her husband Hugh, whom she had married in Kensington three years before. When the two of them moved house, Jeremy moved them, with their furniture on a trailer behind his tractor.

It was the first solo line he had ever sung, and he wrote that on the cover too: *"JJC first singing role 'The Boat's In'."* And again, elsewhere: *"My first solo part at C.O.D.S. — show Free as Air — my lone solo, 'The Boat's In'!!!"* Three exclamation marks.

He was billed twice, as 1st Reporter and as Tom Ferrier, a boatman, and Ferrier's one job in the show is to announce the arrival of the boat.

"The boat's in!"

That was the whole of the part he sang. Three words.

He kept the programme.

That November he sang Counsel for the Plaintiff in *Trial by Jury* and stood in the sailors' chorus of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and went on with a bad throat, and Dr Hooper gave him penicillin and he found out he was allergic to it. In April 1966 he played Captain Lee in *A Letter from the General*, which was a play, and on the cover he wrote: *"With Tessa & Hugh, 27th April 1966."*



The marriage ended around this time. Jane and Penny went to live with their mother. He had them in the holidays.



In July 1966 Jeremy went over to Hastings and joined a second society. The Hastleons — the Hastleon Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, its name made from the HAST of Hastings and the LEON of St Leonards — were doing *Rose Marie* at the White Rock Pavilion that November, and he went into the Gentlemen's Chorus, between Fred Bailey and Donald Cload on the cast list. It was a chorus, in another town, and he had gone and found it himself. Also in it was a man called Charles Eldridge, whom everybody called Charlie. They would be friends for the rest of Charlie's life.

In February 1967 he sang in the Chorus of Nobles in *The Mikado*, at the Stables Theatre in Hastings, for the Theatre Guild. That was three societies: Cranbrook, the Hastleons, the Theatre Guild.

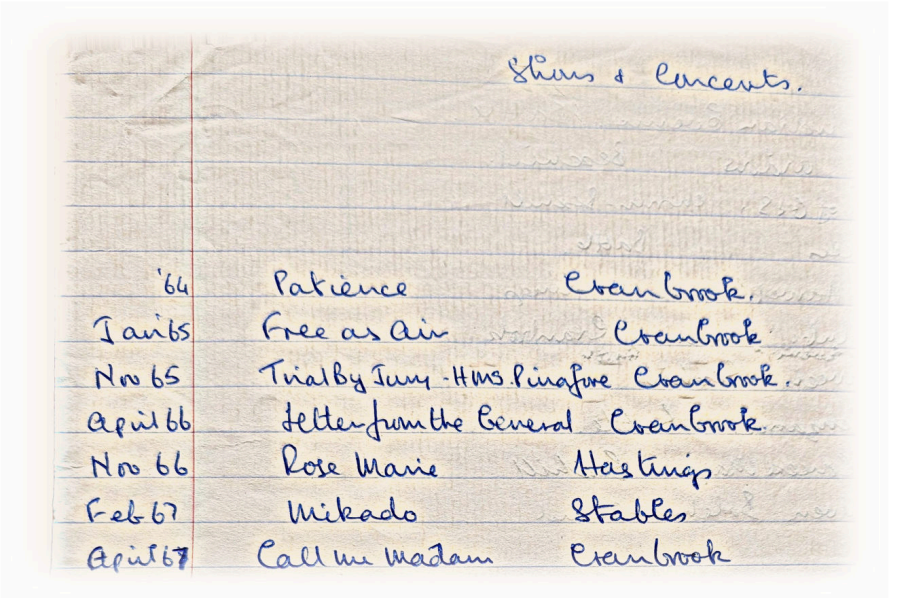
Call Me Madam came to him by a series of refusals. He auditioned for the juvenile lead and did not get it. He was offered a part with no singing in it and turned that down. Then, a month before the show, the leading man — an American exchange teacher at the grammar school — dropped out, and the society rang and asked Jeremy to take it. He took it. The leading lady then went away for four nights with a fortnight of rehearsal left.

It ran at the Vestry Hall from the twenty-fifth to the twenty-ninth of April 1967. Jeremy played Cosmo Constantine, the male lead, opposite Margaret Pickett as Mrs Sally Adams. He sang *Lichtenburg* with the chorus and *Marrying for Love* with Miss Pickett. On the production-team page of the same brochure, five lines under the Stage Carpenter, it says: Business Manager, Jerry Cartwright.

Both local papers singled him out. One of them wrote that his performance "as the politician with one eye on politics and the other on his lady was smooth and delightful." The other put him among "two confident players with good voices" who were "outstanding." A photograph of him in costume, mid-song, ran under the caption "COSMO CONSTANTINE (Jeremy Cartwright) sings about his home country, Lichtenburg."



Among the papers, on lined A4 in blue ballpoint and headed *Shows & Concerts*, is his own account of these years, one line each.



Shows & Concerts.

'64	Patience	Cranbrook.
Jan 65	Free as Air	Cranbrook
Nov 65	Trial By Jury - HMS Pinafore	Cranbrook.
April 66	Letter from the General	Cranbrook.
Nov 66	Rose Marie	Hastings
Feb 67	Mikado	Stables
April 67	Call me Madam	Cranbrook

Harold Pitcher farmed at Little Ridge Farm, Baldslow, on the high ground above Hastings, twenty-odd miles from Cranbrook. Jeremy had known him since he was a boy: Harold Pitcher had given him work in the school holidays, and when Jeremy tried to leave Eastbourne at sixteen it was Harold Pitcher who told him to eat humble pie and go back.

Harold Pitcher had booked front seats for *Call Me Madam* on the Thursday and had to give them up at the last minute, so he drove over on the Saturday instead and watched from the back of the hall. On the Sunday morning, the day after the last performance, he sat down and wrote four sides.

Harold had not liked the show, and he said so first.

"Now for this critic's impressions, strictly honest, if not popular:— The show as a whole, I did not like, & wouldn't have done if performed by pros."

Too much time on the principals, he thought, and not enough on the chorus, who were most amateurish. Then he went through the leads one at a time. Mrs

Sally Adams: good acting of a difficult part, but poor voice. Kenneth: good acting, poor voice.

"Cosmos. An outstanding performance, with acting & voice excellent. Which, if I hadn't truly thought so, should not have bothered writing about."

And then, from a man who had known him since boyhood, and had watched him come up through the chorus:

"you were far more at ease, & gave a better performance in this leading role, than when I have seen you in the chorus, when you have given me the impression of watching to see the others' timing etc. I realize now that this was due to you being worried by their possible lack of ability; however, as in future you should only appear as principal actor, this trouble will not occur again."

"Best wishes for your continued successes, Harold."

He drove it over himself and put the letter into Jeremy's hand.

Jeremy kept it.

Chapter Five



A Mews with Two Peacocks

1967–1976

Twelve months after he walked into the Hastleons' chorus and stood in *Rose Marie*, the society gave him the lead. He sang Camille, Count de Rosillon, in *The Merry Widow*, at the White Rock Pavilion in Hastings, in the first week of November 1967. He was twenty-nine. He had been on a stage for four years.

The dress rehearsal produced difficulties.

A scene required Camille and Anna, the leading lady, to step into a summer house and come out of it a moment later, and when he turned the handle to come out, the handle came off in his hand. *"We were locked in,"* he wrote. *"Fortunately it was the dress rehearsal!!!"*

The other was Jeremy himself. He had gone on with his own head.

The trouble was that he was bald.

The next morning the makeup lady, Lilian Akhurst, told him that a juvenile lead could not appear in front of an audience with no hair, and got him a toupee, and he wore it on the first night.

A telegram came for him that evening from Brian Rose, a chorister from the year before who had moved away to Hemel Hempstead — "Good luck for tonight." When he came off stage he found CURLY CARTWRIGHT written across his dressing-room mirror in lipstick, and a violinist in the orchestra went home that night and told his son they had changed one of the cast since the dress rehearsal.

He wrote down how the Hastleons ran a rehearsal, too. The men started at half past seven. At half past eight the women arrived and the men walked to the pub. At half past nine everybody rehearsed together, and once they began moving people about, the stage manager kept order. *"The principal rehearsals were organised by the hour — so no one was wasted."*

He had written almost the same sentence about the baler ramp at Tilsden.

In the chorus of Embassy Guests was a woman called Sally Field.

"It was during The Merry Widow that I met Sally."

They started going out. Sally's mother came to the performances, and afterwards told him what he had been doing wrong. He swayed. He should walk in a more measured fashion.

He stopped swaying.



The following year he sang for four societies, and in April he entered a singing competition. It was the first he had ever entered. Class 62, Tenor Vocal Solo, at the Hastings Musical Festival, on the second of the month: the test piece was Quilter's *The Wild Cherry*, and Gordon Clinton adjudicated.

Jeremy won.

The Festival programme prints the entrants underneath each class. Underneath Class 62 there is one line.

1. Jeremy Cartwright, Benenden

"And I won it. Of course I won it. I was the only entrant."

He entered the same class again the following year, and won that as well. There is one line underneath Class 62 in that programme too.



Later that April he sang the tenor lead in *Ruddigore* for the Cranbrook Operatic and Dramatic Society, CODS, and appeared five lines down the production page of the same programme as Hon. Business Manager, and in December he was in Battle's own *Ruddigore* — two *Ruddigores* in one year, in different parts, for different societies. That was also the year the CODS committee chose two plays and no musical, so he spent more of it in Hastings than he had meant to.

He was the society's business manager for some years, and he watched the plays too. *"I used to get very irritated by the fact that they cast things badly."* His friend Alan Pickett once had a leading part and did not know his lines, so he had written them all out, in ink. In the middle of the performance the telephone on the stage rang. Alan went to pick it up, and as he picked it up he knocked his glass of wine over. *"And, of course, it was proper ink, not biro. So it ran. It all ran, and he was in an absolute bugger's muddle."*



Jeremy and Sally saw *Big Bad Mouse* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. Eric Sykes and Jimmy Edwards played it as much off the script as on, so that no two nights were the same; in the interval the cast came out into the bar still in character. Jeremy and Sally enjoyed it so much that they booked again for the week after, and this time took Nanna, Jeremy's mother, and her brother David, and Winnie Johnston, who worked for Jeremy's father. The second evening went differently. Five minutes in, a latecomer was shown to his seat — number 2, past twenty-two people. Jimmy Edwards stopped the show, announced that the man had ruined it — and they *"started again — in double time."*



When he proposed to Sally, he did it in song — *Marrying for Love*, one of Cosmo Constantine's numbers from *Call Me Madam*.

They married at Catsfield in January 1969; the Reverend Allen took the service.

They honeymooned in Cyprus — three weeks at the Dome Hotel at Kyrenia, the grand old hotel of British Cyprus, where the manager of Barclays Bank greeted them on the first morning, and there was halloumi at breakfast, which neither of them had eaten before. They went up to St Hilarion, the mountain castle that had been the Turkish-Cypriot enclave's headquarters since 1964, and a Turkish officer they met there showed them around for the rest of the three weeks.



They bought the Mews before the year was out — Angley Park, Cranbrook, from H M Borrisow, who owned the golf course. It had been stables once, and it still had a paddock, and by the time they moved in Irish Mist was standing in it. It was Jeremy's home for the next twenty-five years.

That May the programmes began to carry both of their names. A Battle concert bill had Jeremy and Sally in print together for the first time, and a reviewer called him "the new male lead," who "sings with a robustness that completely holds the house." By the autumn, when he sang Luiz in the Hastleons' *Gondoliers*, the Ladies' Chorus on the cast list included a Sally Cartwright. For the next three years they were billed as duettists over and over — the *Merry Widow* numbers, *Charming Weather* in *An Edwardian Evening*, item after item. Of one of those evenings he kept a single line: *"Sally + I came on — applause before we sang."*

In September 1970 they carried principal parts in the same production for the first time. The Battle group put on *Patience*, and Jeremy played Archibald Grosvenor and Sally played Lady Angela.

The following May the Bexhill society gave him Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, with Sally as the Ambassador's wife. The *Bexhill Observer* ran a long review of the opening night, named the triumphs the town would remember — *Bless the Bride*, and *The New Moon* the year before — and finished on him: "a notable production from which Jeremy Cartwright obviously derives as much pleasure as he gives."



Sally wanted peafowl. They got a peacock and a peahen, and called them Grosvenor and Patience. There was a dog as well — a Bedlington terrier who had been at the Mews as long as they had, called Seamus ("called shame us, because he did").

One afternoon Seamus lay down in the garden with a bone, and one of the peacocks walked in circles around him. When Jeremy came out an hour later the peacock had the bone, and Seamus was doing the circling.

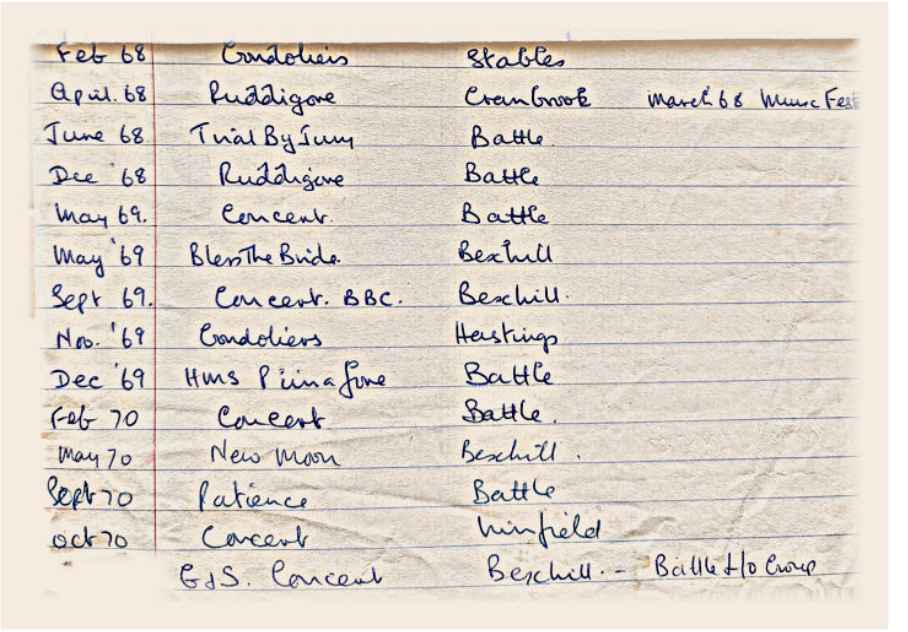
Sunday lunch, every week, was with Sally's parents, Bob and Esme Field. Esme, who had once told him he swayed, told him what came with it: "Of course, we have a glass of home-made red wine for lunch every Sunday." Jeremy told her, *"Well, you'll get used to anything in time, even arsenic."* And, telling it at eighty-eight: *"How popular I was!"*

The Mews got the same treatment the farm had. He gave the gardener, Jack Staines, a large bag of daffodil bulbs and told him to throw them and plant them where they fell — and Jack Staines, being a nurseryman by trade, planted every one of them in straight lines. Clay flower pots became wall lights, and so did pieces of oak root. Crossing the paddock one day he found an old concrete roller, looked at it properly, and worked out that it was not a roller at all but the concrete a gatepost had been set in, with the post long rotted out of it. He bought a bench from a yard, and a piece of oak for a table top. The man at the yard loaded both with a forklift and put them straight onto the roof of the car, and the roof bowed

under the weight; when the wood came off, it sprang back. *"I loved it. It was exciting."* The bench and the table moved with him, and are still in his house.

He wanted a swimming pool built in the garden. The garden was walled — brick, ten feet or so of it, round three sides — and the only way through from the paddock was an arched gateway. Purley Pools, the best-known firm in the county, could build the pool but could not get its machinery through the arch. A second firm offered to knock the wall down, but declined to put it back. Sussex Pools brought a small digger called Tiny through the archway, spread the spoil where it came out, and built him a pool eight feet deep at one end, for four thousand pounds.

"Superb."



Feb 68	Condoliers	Stables	
April 68	Ruddigore	Cranbrook	March 68 Music Fest
June 68	Trial By Jury	Battle	
Dec 68	Ruddigore	Battle	
May 69.	Concert	Battle	
May '69	Bless The Bride.	Bexhill	
Sept 69.	Concert. BBC.	Bexhill.	
Nov. '69	Condoliers	Hastings	
Dec '69	HMS Pinafore	Battle	
Feb 70	Concert	Battle.	
May 70	New Moon	Bexhill.	
Sept 70	Patience	Battle	
Oct 70	Concert	Winfield	
	G & S. Concert	Bexhill. -	Battle H/o Choir

The programmes are how these years survive. The farm had gone into the record almost without dates; the stage went in dated to the day.

The leading roles kept on coming, and after a while they stopped being remarkable. In 1972 he was Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance* at Battle with Sally as Edith, and the next year Hilarion in *Princess Ida* with Sally in the title part. By the middle of the decade five societies had him on their books.

He had sung the Defendant in *Trial by Jury* at the Battle Memorial Hall in June 1968, and he sang it again in the same hall on the *Princess Ida* bill five years later. The same reviewer covered both nights. In 1968, signing himself P.R.A., he wrote of "the excellent performances of Jeremy Cartwright as the rakish but amiable defendant." In 1973 he wrote that Jeremy's "splendid voice seems to improve every time he takes to the stage."

The 1968 notice is the earliest anybody wrote about his singing.



Other kinds of evening had begun to appear among the programmes he kept, and they were not societies putting on a show.

Alan Bourlet was a Kent policeman. Jeremy kept a list in his notebook headed *People who changed my life*, and Alan Bourlet's name is first on it. What he did was take him into the Victorian music hall.

The form was fixed, and it was portable. A chairman with a gavel, who took control of the proceedings; a string of singers billed under comic titles; a melodrama in the middle — a villain, a heroine, and a pianist to hurry them along; the audience singing the choruses off a printed sheet, *Daisy Daisy* and *Lily of Laguna* and *Let's all go down the Strand*; and supper. It needed no stage machinery and no theatre. The production could be presented in a school hall, a village hall, or somebody's dining room.

In the autumn of 1970 Jeremy and Sally were both on the bill of one of these music hall evenings, put on for the Kent Children's House Society and the Police Seaside Home. He sang *Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair*; they sang *Trot Here and There* together; the melodrama was *Maria Marten, or Murder in*

the Red Barn. In the chair, undertaking in print "to remain reasonably coherent throughout the evening," was Alan Bourlet.

There were others after it — an evening for the Cranbrook blind club, a mayor's charity concert at the De La Warr — evenings assembled for a cause, with Jeremy the tenor soloist and Sally the mezzo.



Not everything on a stage went to plan.

He and Sally had an accompanist called Jack Willis. The three of them drove over to Angley School to sing after an annual general meeting, and they arrived late, and by the time they went on, the meeting was long finished and the audience were waiting to be fed. Jack Willis played the full hour.

"The audience were desperate for their food."

There was an operetta where he came on singing, alone, and the orchestra came in behind him a few bars later. It worked through every rehearsal. On the first night they had moved the pistol shot from the far side of the stage to right beside him, and fired it while he was holding the note with nothing to tune to.

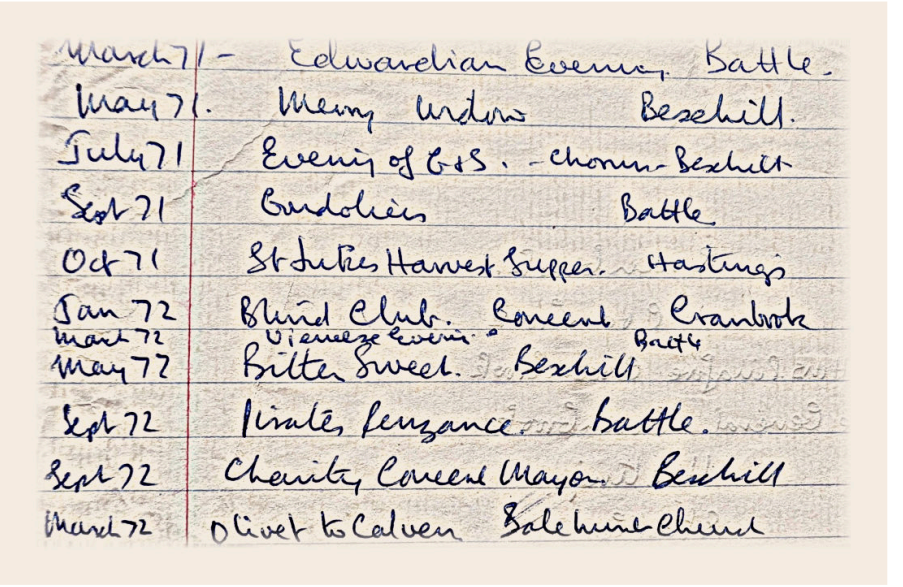
"I was singing out of key."

He got back on key eventually.



In May 1972 he played Carl Linden in Noël Coward's *Bitter Sweet* at the De La Warr Pavilion, with Sally as Gussi. Carl is killed with a rapier at the end of the second act, and in the stabbing the tip of the blade broke off.

Jeremy kept it.


March 71 – Edwardian Evening. Battle.
May 71. Merry Widow Bexhill.
July 71 Evening of G+S. – chorus – Bexhill
Sept 71 Gondoliers Battle
Oct 71 St Lukes Harvest Supper. Hastings
Jan 72 Blind Club. Convent Cranbrook
March 72 Viennese Evening. Battle
May 72 Bitter Sweet. Bexhill
Sept 72 Pirates Penzance. Battle.
Sept 72 Charity Convent Mayor Bexhill
March 72 Oliver to Calvert Bakehouse Chord

That year the family went up to London and queued for Tutankhamun at the British Museum — Jeremy, Sally, Nanna, Jane and Penny. The queue took five hours. Nanna could have gone in at the front, because she was in a wheelchair, and they queued instead. Inside they were moved through the rooms so briskly that they saw next to nothing, and at the far end of it Jeremy found the manager, who was a retired police sergeant, and told him they had queued five hours and seen *"f— all."*

The sergeant stopped everybody where they stood, for five minutes, and gave the three of them the exhibition to themselves.



When Giles was born, Jeremy was in Leeds. Sally's message reached him at his father's office and he caught a train back to London, and the train stood at the platform, because the railwaymen were working to rule and the staff had to check the wicks on the oil lamps before it could leave. The train had no oil lamps.

He missed the birth.

Jeremy and Sally took singing lessons through those years, first from Ena Partridge and then from Llewelyn John of Tunbridge Wells, a little Welsh tenor who made his students keep their fingers in their mouths for the first ten lessons to be sure the mouth stayed open. Two years in, Sally came out of a lesson and said, "Well, I'm back to fingers." Giles came to the lessons in a carrycot, and Llewelyn looked at him and said that at that age they talk in scribbles.

"He wasn't brilliant, but he was a lovely little man. We had fun together."



Jeremy bought an old tractor for ninety pounds, with a mower — a diesel, on big wheels. He called it Alfred and bolted a wooden gin box to the side, and Giles sat in the gin box while he mowed.

Trixie was born. At bedtime there were stories about two little worms called Wiggles and Woggles, and a police sergeant called Reg Jupp used to bring his car into the courtyard and play the siren for the children.



Jeremy was a member of both the Hastleons and CODS, so he arranged a cricket match between them. The Hastleons came over from Hastings for a friendly

afternoon, the match ended up at the Mews, in the pool, and his note on it is in capitals.

"SWIMMING AND BEER. V GOOD."



Jeremy took a blowtorch to a set of wine glasses. He put a bend in the stem of each one — the first so slight it barely showed, the next a little more, the last bent right over — four or five of them, graded. A guest started the evening on an ordinary glass. At the first refill, Jeremy took it away and brought the drink back in the glass with the slight bend. With every drink after that, the glass came back bent a little further. His father drank out of them. His fathers-in-law drank out of them. Friends drank out of them, at party after party, for years. The more a man drank, the more his glass leaned.

The glasses were not the only thing he made for a party. When Jeremy and Sally gave a Chinese dinner party, it was early in the evening, before any of the guests had arrived, that he saw to the chopsticks.

"We wanted chopsticks. I went out and built eight sets of chopsticks."



Two things in the house came back from America. The first is a passport with a fortnight of stamps in it from the summer of 1967: into New York on the fourteenth of July, Niagara Falls a week later, Canada at Montreal, home by the end of the month.

The second is a small enamelled plate, navy, gold and red. It came off a guest-room door at the Palmer House in Chicago, one of the grand American hotels. It is the nameplate of a Servidor, which was a hatch built into the door and openable from both sides, so that a guest could hang his clothes on one side of it and a valet could collect them from the corridor without either of them having to see the other. Jeremy unscrewed it. The note on the back is in his own

hand: *"Removed from the door of the Palmer House Hotel, Chicago — 1970s !!!!"* Somewhere among the American trips a security man looked Jeremy over and said, "Sonny, you ever been frisked?"

Jamaica came round again. He had been there at ten, out on the *Stella Polaris* to his grandfather's estate at Hopewell; this time he went with Sally, and with Nanna's brother David and his wife Else. They stopped for a picnic in the hills and were surrounded within a few minutes by twenty or thirty small children. They came home by way of Miami, and a few days at the DuPont Plaza.



France they did differently: they bought into it. Jeremy and Sally took a flat at Port Grimaud — number 4 — in the canal town built out into the Gulf of Saint-Tropez, and they furnished it from England, which meant loading up the camper van. The van went down to Dover so overloaded that the wheel rubbed on the chassis the whole way. On the French side of the Channel the camber of the roads reversed, and the rubbing stopped.

At the town's car park the van was refused entry. Jeremy's account of what he did about it: *"I said to your mum, well, it's very simple. We just sit here until somebody lets us in."* The traffic backed up behind him until a supervisor arrived and gave the ruling: "we hoped everybody would be driving a little 2CV, but we're realists... you own the property... you can park here."

It became the family's summer place. There was water-skiing — Jeremy took the beginners into the water himself and taught them by the rules: *"heels down, arms straight, and under no circumstances bend your arms... I was really proud when I got over the wake. I'll tell you that. And got back again."* Dinner some nights was at the Giraglia — *"very nice food"* — and there was cribbage in the evenings.



In December 1975 the Cranbrook society did *The Wizard of Oz* at the Vestry Hall. At the dress rehearsal everything worked — *"it was absolutely first class,"* he said. The effect was that the lights went out, and there was a flash, and the wizard was there. On the first night the lights went out. That was all that happened. There was no flash and there was no wizard.

They held a post-mortem later that evening and worked out what had been done. The flash was a tray of powder set off by a wire that glowed when the current reached it, and it ran off the same supply as the stage lights. At the dress rehearsal the lights had been faded down at the board, which darkens the lanterns and leaves the circuit live, so the wire glowed and the powder went up on its cue. On the first night the electricians, who were all qualified electricians, took the lights out the way an electrician does, at the switch. The stage went dark and the flash box went dead with it.

"Extraordinary. Absolutely extraordinary."



Brian Couch sang baritone with the Hastleons and was the society's Vice-Chairman, and he and Jeremy became friends. There was a song: *Au fond du temple saint*, the long duet in the first act of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, written for a tenor and a baritone. Brian had told him he would love to sing it with him.

Then Brian got lung cancer, and by the time it was clear how it would end he could hardly sing at all.

"Plug — make it happen." Jeremy put a record on at home and taped the orchestral part off it, and took the tape in to the hospital, to Brian's bedside.

"Right, Brian, we're going to bloody sing it."

They got through it together.

He called it a wrench.

Afterwards he sent Brian's widow a single rose in a box. *"Just in memory of him."*



He sang more in 1976 than in any year of his life. Colonel Fairfax in *The Yeomen of the Guard* at Battle in the spring, and Wilfred Shadbolt in the same opera at the Cranbrook summer festival in July. In September he was in the *Showtime* revue at Battle, where he and Charlie Eldridge sang the Bunthorne duet; they had met in a chorus ten years before. The concerts went on alongside all of it.

That year his back went.

He decided to sell the farm, and sold it — all of it but one piece, an acre or so with a lake on it, where the fireworks were let off every fifth of November. His father was retiring, and there was a place in the firm to take.

"I enjoyed my farming life until I hurt my back lifting wet straw bales onto a trailer. When the physical side was no longer easy it was not such fun."

Chapter Six



Bitter Sweet

1976–1988

The firm he went into at thirty-eight was his father's, in Leeds. Joseph Cartwright Limited was the parent, registered at Cartwright House in Weybridge; the working end was G. Cartwright Limited, ironmongery and builders' hardware, run from a warehouse and showrooms at 30, Springwell Road, Holbeck.

JOC, his father, had been going up to Leeds for years, and the going up had a shape. He got on at King's Cross, and the waiter in the dining car said, "Good morning, sir"; at the other end a man from the Great Northern Hotel met the train and took his bag, so that he could walk straight to the office. Jeremy walked the same way, along by the canal. One morning his hat blew off into the water. It was one of his grandfather's. He walked that way to the office for years afterwards, and every time he looked into the water for it.

The Great Northern was part of the inheritance too. Its manager was a friend of JOC's, and had once taken them down into the hotel's cellar: hundreds of bottles of champagne, and not a bubble left in any of them — champagne keeps for eleven years, and the stock had outlasted it. They tasted bottle after bottle to see if any were any good. None were. *"It was all scrap."*

The bank in that world was Barclays, and Barclays meant Bobby Roberts — "Fatty" — the Metropolitan Manager, *"the highest position in the bank,"* and a great friend of JOC's. Going up to Leeds one day with the two of them, Jeremy watched the liqueurs come round at the end of the meal and saw that Bobby's cost thirteen shillings and sixpence, more than anybody else's, and teased him about it — and went on teasing him for years as the money changed: *"in time it was only twenty pence or something. Just a bit of fun."* The biggest cheque Bobby ever saw was for six million pounds, and he always wished he had taken a copy and put it in a frame. When Jeremy took up carving, Bobby gave him a set of swan-necked gouges — *"completely useless"* for what he was doing, which was making spoons. They are still in the garage.



There was a place for Jeremy in the firm because his father was going. A managing director was brought in, and the retirement was arranged so that it could be done with dignity, in his son's favour: Jeremy became chairman of the parent company. *"All I was was a social chairman... non-executive chairman for Guppy's peace of mind."* On a Leeds site an agent shook his hand and said, "I've been here twenty-five years, and it's the first time I've met the boss." JOC never told Nanna, his wife, he had retired. He put his suit on every morning and went out. Where, Jeremy never knew.

JOC's management had always had its methods. At Wandle Way, in Mitcham, he had a huge desk, and each night before he went home he scattered the contents of his ashtray across the carpet — so that the cleaner would have to clean.

"Extraordinary."

JOC's people had methods of their own. Hector Wakeley was his mechanic, at the yard in Mitcham where the machinery engines were reconditioned. Sent up once to Mr MacDonnell, their solicitor, at his offices in Maiden Lane, he was left in the waiting room; when Mr MacDonnell came through, Hector Wakeley was

on his knees in front of the fireplace, going through the hearth. Mr MacDonnell asked him what he was doing.

"Actually, I'm looking for a cigarette I left here last time I was here."

The Springwell Road warehouse had a landlord, and the landlord was family: the freehold belonged to the Winifred Cartwright Settlement, a trust for Jeremy's mother, so the rent the firm paid in Leeds arrived, at the other end, as Nanna's income. In March 1977 the Settlement's solicitors wrote to Jeremy at Tilsden Farm to say the five-yearly rent review had fallen due, and he drafted his answer in biro on the face of their letter: *"I am making arrangements for an informal valuation of the premises, and at the same time will ascertain the open market rental. When these are to hand I will contact you again. Yours sincerely, Jeremy."* Six weeks later the valuation was on the file.

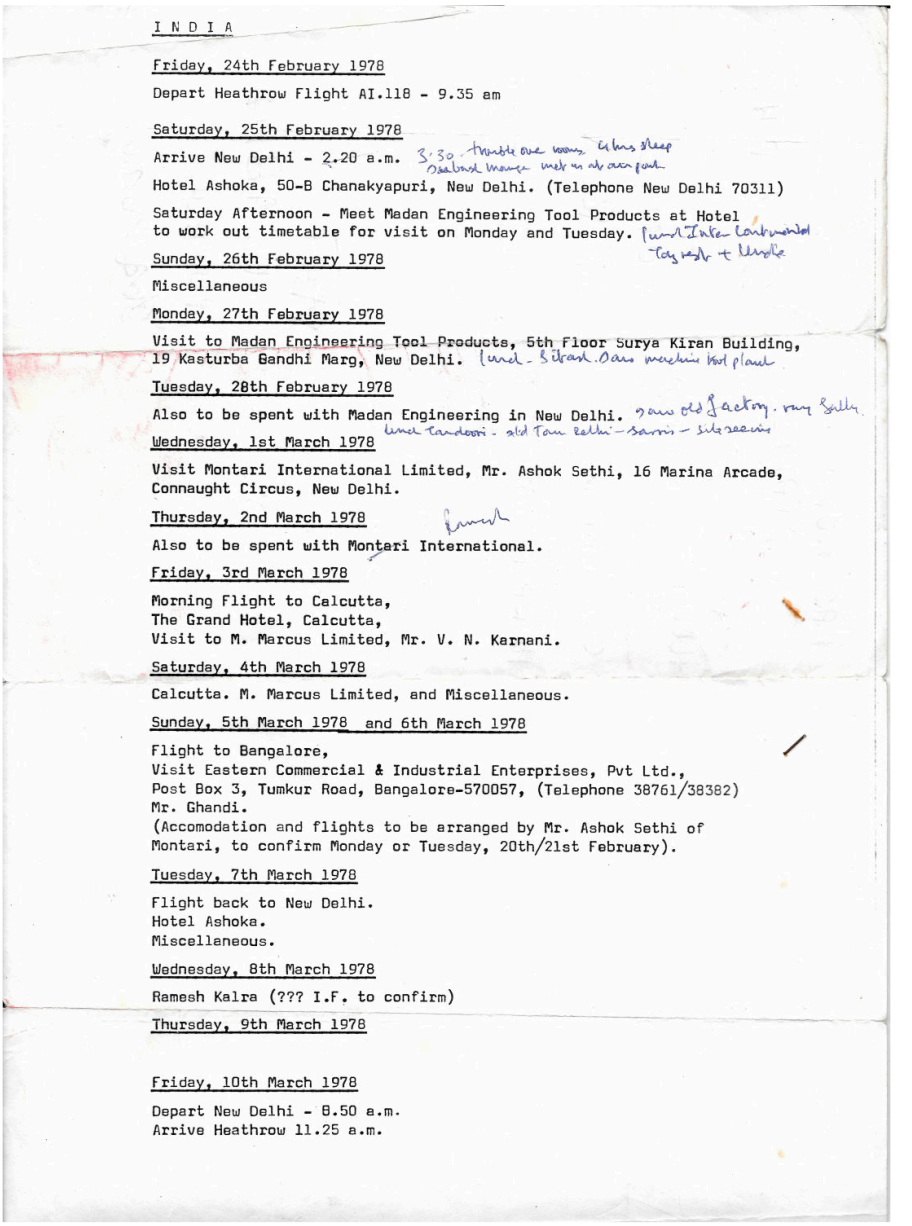


The family's doctor in Cranbrook was David Hindmarsh, who put Jeremy on a diet and an exercise regime. That May a local paper had him third in a sponsored slimming contest at the George Hotel, sixteen and a half pounds down, in aid of the town's majorettes. It called him "Cranbrook farmer Mr Jerry Cartwright". The farm had been sold for a year. Years afterwards, writing out the short list of people who had changed his life, Jeremy put the doctor on it.



The hardware came from a long way off. Jeremy went east with Ian Firth, the managing director on the hardware side — India in the early spring of 1978, the Far East the following year, India again after that — sourcing brass and aluminium fittings, carbide and engineering tools. The typed itinerary for the May 1979 trip opens *"Leeds to Kings Cross train — 5.00 p.m. Depart"* and runs for three weeks: the Building and Hardware Show at Taipei, the Mandarin at Hong

Kong, the tool-makers at Delhi, the Oberoi Grand at Calcutta, Bangalore, home on the twenty-fifth.



INDIA

Friday, 24th February 1978

Depart Heathrow Flight AI.118 - 9.35 am

Saturday, 25th February 1978

Arrive New Delhi - 2.20 a.m. 3:30. trouble over visas. 6 hrs sleep
Seaboard Manager met us at airport

Hotel Ashoka, 50-B Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. (Telephone New Delhi 70311)

Saturday Afternoon - Meet Madan Engineering Tool Products at Hotel to work out timetable for visit on Monday and Tuesday. lunch Indian Continental Taj Mahal + Lifestyle

Sunday, 26th February 1978

Miscellaneous

Monday, 27th February 1978

Visit to Madan Engineering Tool Products, 5th Floor Surya Kiran Building, 19 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi. lunch - Sitaram. Saw machine tool plant

Tuesday, 28th February 1978

Also to be spent with Madan Engineering in New Delhi. saw old factory. very Delhi

Wednesday, 1st March 1978 lunch tandoori - old Town Delhi - Sarnis - sightseeing

Visit Montari International Limited, Mr. Ashok Sethi, 16 Marina Arcade, Connaught Circus, New Delhi.

Thursday, 2nd March 1978 lunch

Also to be spent with Montari International.

Friday, 3rd March 1978

Morning Flight to Calcutta,
The Grand Hotel, Calcutta,
Visit to M. Marcus Limited, Mr. V. N. Karnani.

Saturday, 4th March 1978

Calcutta. M. Marcus Limited, and Miscellaneous.

Sunday, 5th March 1978 and 6th March 1978

Flight to Bangalore,
Visit Eastern Commercial & Industrial Enterprises, Pvt Ltd.,
Post Box 3, Tumkur Road, Bangalore-570057, (Telephone 38761/38382)
Mr. Ghandi.
(Accomodation and flights to be arranged by Mr. Ashok Sethi of Montari, to confirm Monday or Tuesday, 20th/21st February).

Tuesday, 7th March 1978

Flight back to New Delhi.
Hotel Ashoka.
Miscellaneous.

Wednesday, 8th March 1978

Ramesh Kalra (??? I.F. to confirm)

Thursday, 9th March 1978

Friday, 10th March 1978

Depart New Delhi - 8.50 a.m.
Arrive Heathrow 11.25 a.m.

One morning he looked out of his hotel bedroom window at the grass being cut below. The mower going up and down the lawn was a Dennis — a cylinder

mower of the make his father kept for the lawn at home, manufactured in Leeds. *"It hadn't got an engine,"* he said. *"It had a camel attached to it."*

Leeds showed him other things. He was taken once to a plant where the city's rubbish came in on conveyor belts and was sorted, and the burnable part was burnt to heat thousands of houses. He thought it brilliant, and he has never understood why it did not become standard.



The Tesco co-operative had come out of the farm years. Tommy Baker was a buyer for Tesco, and he had been buying Jeremy's apples and pears in the London markets until the day he came out to the farm and asked to buy them direct instead. He put the same question to other growers, and seven or eight of them ended up supplying Tesco — a guaranteed market for the Cox's, the Worcesters and the Bramleys: *"in years of glut, we had a market and other people didn't."* The growers formed a company of their own to do it, called it Topfruit, and had Tony Richardson run it. Henleys hauled the fruit, and when Tesco asked for one extra pallet to be sent on its own, Jack Henley wanted to know who was paying for a whole lorry to carry it; it should, he said, be a bloody taxi. Every Friday afternoon the growers met the Tesco director in a dingy office, and one of them was Sir William Garthwaite, a Lloyd's underwriter who had flown in the first carrier strike against the *Bismarck*. He would light a long cheroot with a bit of straw at the end of it, then fill five or six pipes from a two-ounce tin of John Cotton and smoke them, one after another, through the meeting. Sir William Garthwaite and his wife Pat had the growers and their wives to dinner at Matfield House — a 1728 house of pink and red brick facing the green, a clock turret over the stables. It was the only time in his life, he said, that he was *"served by a butler in a private house."* The ladies withdrew after dinner, the brandy came in huge goblets — *"absolutely marvellous"* — and Sir William smoked his way through the evening, a cigar going and a pipe in either pocket.

The firm's world kept opening rooms like that. His head of house from Eastbourne, Christopher Leaver, had gone into the City and kept rising: Sheriff of London, and then, in 1981, Lord Mayor of London. As Sheriff he lunched at the Old Bailey with the judges, and Jeremy joined him there, and heard a judge sum up a murder that had begun over a parking space. In November Jeremy, Sally, Giles and Trixie went up for the Show and for lunch at the Mansion House. At Glyndebourne once he saw Sam Silkin and Michael Foot drinking champagne. And at Royal Ascot, some seasons on, Jeremy was put next to a man called Simon Baldwin-Purry. They got on at once. Simon gave him a card that said "Mr Simon Baldwin-Purry" and nothing else, and wrote his telephone number on the back — with one digit wrong. Jeremy went through the numbers *"again and again and again"* until he tracked him down, and he kept the card. *"A friendship that continues to this day."*

Twice, in successive Decembers late in the decade, he was a guest at the Pickwick Bicycle Club's Annual Garden Party — held, despite the name, at the Connaught Rooms. The club had run since 1870 and ran on the novel: its officers took the *Pickwick Papers* names, the menu was captioned throughout with quotations from the novel, and the back of the programme carried the comic choruses. After the loyal toast, "Gentlemen, the Queen," came the order the club gives its guests, "Gentlemen, you must smoke," and every guest was handed a clay churchwarden pipe, a tin of tobacco and matches. Jeremy kept his, and it is in his living room still. Between the courses, men in Dickensian clothes rode penny-farthings round the tables. He had played Mr Pickwick himself, for CODS, in 1978. The first year Jeremy was put at the top table beside the guest speaker, Peter Woods, the BBC newscaster, who had been a war correspondent, and who spoke for forty minutes without notes. The second year Brian Johnston proposed the toast. He kept both programmes, the seat beside Peter Woods recorded in pencil on the first.

The speech he rated above all the others came at a bankers' dinner. In January 1983 he was a guest of the National Westminster Bank Golfing Society at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, at table fifty-nine in a room of several hundred, with Robin Leigh-Pemberton — that winter named the next Governor of the Bank of

England — as President. Three of the bankers spoke briefly. Then the reply for the visitors came from the Very Reverend Lawrence Jackson, Provost of Blackburn, and he spoke for forty minutes. *"The jokes just flowed off his tongue. It was the most brilliant speech I have ever heard."* He kept the programme.



In June 1979 his cousin Alexander's stepfather took Jeremy and Sally to Lord's for the World Cup final, England against the West Indies. He was a member and sat in the members' stand; they sat elsewhere, behind a man called Roy who *"never stopped shouting the whole bloody match."* At lunch he told them he would meet them at the bottom of the steps, and did not say which steps. *"Well, of course, it was Lord's."* The ground has hundreds of steps, up into every stand, and it took them a long time to find him. The West Indies made a big score, and Boycott and Brearley went out to open for England. *"England needed something like four an over to win. And when Boycott and Brearley had got to about a hundred, England needed eight an over. That was typical of Boycott and Brearley."*



In 1977 the Cranbrook society made him chairman. The society was moving that year, after fifty-seven years in the Vestry Hall, into the new Queen's Hall at Cranbrook School, and the committee had a show in mind for the opening that Jeremy thought *"totally unsuitable."* He and Sally campaigned against it and won. The first CODS production at the Queen's Hall was *The Merry Widow*, with Jeremy singing Camille — the part he had sung at Hastings ten years before — and a lead brought in for the occasion: Alan Bourlet, the policeman with the gavel, singing Danilo. Sally was down among the grisettes, as Jou-Jou. The press that week:

"The most outstanding voice of the evening... belonged to Jeremy Cartwright, a former Cranbrook farmer... His voice had a professionalism rarely met on the amateur circuit."

That was also the autumn Bing Crosby played H M Borrisow's golf course in Cranbrook, the week before he died.



John Tapper became treasurer in the same year the chairmanship began. *"We had no money... Thirteen years later, we had fifteen thousand pounds in the bank. And that was because we did things better. We didn't allow people just to spend money."* The committee was fourteen people, *"all wanting to tell you how they think you should do things."* The exception was Jack Parsons, a retired bank manager: "Mr Chairman, I undertake to investigate, to make it happen, and to put a report in to you." He did.

The society bought the old cricket pavilion at Cranbrook School — sixty feet by twenty — to re-erect as a costume store, and Jeremy ran the weekend work parties that dug the foundations out. For the concreting he got a mixer, cement, pallets and wheelbarrows, and contacted everybody: nine o'clock start on the Saturday. Fourteen people said they would come. It rained. Fourteen people came.

"They were frightened of me."

Nobody was let off — George said, "I can't do anything, I've got a bad back," and was sat down with a pair of pliers, cutting squares of reinforcing — and the society's prime dodger, Jim Dixon, was heard to say, down his own telephone: "If that's Jeremy, I'm not in."

"It was wonderful. It really was. It all came together in the end."



He ran rehearsals on the Hastleons' hour-by-hour schedule. When Bill Marshall, the secretary, found the society a new musical director and one rehearsal was enough — the cast could not work with him — Jeremy rang him, and then went down to his house. *"Generally, you try and make an excuse. No excuses... I've thought about this a lot... I'm just gonna tell you straight out: I'm sorry, we can't put up with you."*

Frank Ray went the other way. He had been the society's musical director for ten years when he rang Jeremy one day, in about 1984: "Jeremy, I'm feeling it's too much now for me." Jeremy bought a tankard and had it engraved with the names of all the shows Frank had conducted for the society, *"and made a big thing, and he was thrilled to bits."* So when Battle Opera rang him to say that their own musical director, Ernest Harman, had been in the post twenty-five years and they wanted rid of him, Jeremy told them what he had done for Frank. *"Why they rang me and asked me, I do not know, because they took no bloody notice."* At the end of the show, somebody from the committee went up to Ernest and said, "Oh, goodbye, Ernest. We don't want you any more."

"And I will never forget that, because Ernest and I were friends."

Ernest had a little choir at Hastings, and had written solos, and Jeremy sang all of them. *"We had fun."*



The lead roles ran on through all of it. Colonel Pickering in the diamond-jubilee *My Fair Lady*, with Sally as Eliza, and in November 1983, Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* one week and Emile de Becque in *South Pacific* the next, with Giles, who was ten, as his son Jerome. At the society's Diamond Jubilee dinner, five days before Christmas 1980, Alan Bourlet proposed the toast to "Sixty Glorious Years" and Jeremy, following him, proposed "The Next Sixty Glorious Years". His

twenty handwritten cue-cards for it survive. For *The King and I* in 1982 the whole household was on the cast list — Sally as Tuptim, Giles a royal prince, Trixie a royal princess — and Jeremy in the chorus. Jane married Paul Bailey that July.



There were journeys. In New Orleans, Jeremy and Sally walked down Canal Street to the Mississippi to catch the riverboat, and got there a couple of minutes late. The boats that work that stretch are sternwheelers, paddle steamers built in the manner of the last century, and theirs was off the wharf already and out in the middle of the river, under way. Boo, the Harbour Master, raised it on his radio.

"They came back & collected us !!!"



The Dulwich College prep school at Cranbrook took its carol services to Staplehurst Church, and Jeremy sang the solos. One year, at the end, in the dark of the church, a small girl came up to him: "Do you remember me? I was one of your bridesmaids in *Bless the Bride*." *"It meant so much to these kids."* The same school economised one year and cut the wine at parents' evenings. Almost nobody came. The wine returned.

There was a second Christmas job, and there was no singing in it. When Trixie left the playgroup at Benenden, Jeremy took on the role of Father Christmas, and then went on doing it — *"for years and years and years."*

One year he had no notice. It had been down to Tony and Laurie, who were in hospital after *"a very unpleasant car crash"*, and *"Muggins was cooperative."* The house was a manor. He got there on time, and somebody met him at the door and said, "Just come with me," and walked him down a dark corridor to a sack of presents big enough for every child in the building. Then they set a flat ladder up in the middle of the corridor floor, going up into the ceiling, and that was the way

in: up the ladder, across the roof, down into the room at the far end, and hand them out.

"Honestly, people get such a wrong bloody idea, they really do. It all went off okay, but I just don't enjoy it."

He sang off the society's stage as much as on it. At a Burns Night in Cranbrook in January 1982 he sang *Scotland the Brave* and *My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose*; he kept the ticket, and his note on the evening reads *"made over £600 for hospital."* In June 1984 he sang in Rochester Cathedral — *The Holy City*, and the anthem Ernest Harman had written himself, *The Holy Church*, and, with Alan Bourlet, *Panis Angelicus* as a duet, with the Kent Police Choir Quartet on the same bill. The evening before, he had been the soloist at the society's Viennese evening at Cranbrook.

Ernest Harman had given him permission to sing anything he had written, any time he liked, and had given it verbally. *"It's not written in paper. They're not valuable."*

In November 1985 he played Marco Palmieri, the tenor lead in *The Gondoliers*. He had the society's chair, the male leads, and the music-hall evenings in between. He was forty-seven.

The chair came with decisions. For *The Gondoliers* CODS had engaged Peter Currie as musical director. He had been musical director for *South Pacific*, *"and he was brilliant."* Eight or ten weeks before the show, Jeremy discovered *"that he never came to any rehearsals at all."* CODS rehearsed on Mondays and Thursdays, and Peter Currie was busy with other societies. *"So I sacked him,"* Jeremy said. *"I took a unilateral decision."* That upset the committee. *"I said, well, you know, I have to make decisions. I can't piss about."* Then he went to Susan Hutton, who ran the music at Angley School and whom he knew well — CODS had helped the school buy three new grand pianos — and asked her. She said yes.



The unwinding of the firm took seven years, and it is dated in the *London Gazette*. On one day in October 1981, three of the subsidiaries were wound up together at Cartwright House. The trouble, as Jeremy tells it, had two ends. The firm had bought land at Fetcham, in Surrey, to build ten speculative houses; the first *"sold like a flash of lightning,"* so the other nine were built at once — and didn't sell. *"You're buggered."* And the money that should have come the other way never came: a twenty-two-million-pound contract for a flyover across Cardiff, where the ground was not what the tender had said — *"hundreds of thousands of pounds of claim that we would have got... not only would we have been liquid, you'd have been well off."* Jimmy Jimson, the internal accountant, *"brilliant,"* had a heart attack and dropped dead one day, *"and that left a hole."* When the pension fund was finally counted it was three-quarters of a million pounds over-funded. *"We were not bankrupt at all... It was all complete fallacy."* The operating companies were given away, to save the jobs.

In May 1983 the *Yorkshire Evening Post* photographed the men of Cartwright Construction, Leeds; Jeremy was their chairman. Two years later the same paper had the firm on its front page: receivers in at six of the Cartwright companies at once, about a hundred jobs at Pudsey, and talks under way to sell the assets and save them.



Donald Oates — JOC's friend from Yorkshire, who had thrown Jeremy the Bentley keys thirty years before — was still farming in his mid-eighties. Jeremy had dinner with him, later on in life; Donald Oates spent it ogling the young waitresses; three or four months later he was dead. *"I always remember thinking that was really wonderful, really, because he would never have made a good patient,*

and it was wonderful that he was enjoying his life, and bang, gone. That, for him, was brilliant."

The car Jeremy was running in those years was a Jensen Interceptor — Italian body, American engine, built at West Bromwich. The number plate read JJC 98.



At home JOC had become difficult, and Jeremy took him to a consultant, who asked him who the Prime Minister was. "Stanley Baldwin," he said. Baldwin had left office in 1937. He went into a nursing home, and there, after sixty a day for a lifetime, he stopped smoking. He died at Maidstone Hospital on the ninth of July 1986, at seventy-eight. Bronchopneumonia.

"JOC never heard me sing."

By the time Jane's son was born, at the end of that August, JOC was gone. They named the boy Joseph. Jeremy gave Penny and Jane a eucalyptus tree in memory of his father.



The singing had not stopped for any of it. That year a Hastings opera club, Il Boccalino, staged a season at the newly opened Market Hall — *Falstaff* first, with Sir Geraint Evans in the house for the gala — and Jeremy was in the chorus; in *Don Pasquale* he sang the Notary, and the programme credits him with organising the chorus. Nothing else in the record is grand opera.

Alan Bourlet had run the old-time music halls for sixteen years. In the autumn of 1986 the troupe went out of England for the only documented time, to Cowbridge in the Vale of Glamorgan, Cranbrook's twin town, with Alan Bourlet in the chair; Jeremy kept the song-sheet with the Welsh anthem written out phonetically. It is the last programme on the record with Alan Bourlet's name on it. He was appointed Assistant Chief Constable of the South Wales Constabulary. *"When Alan went... I took over the running and I changed everything, because we'd*

been standing on the bloody stage with our books open. I said, we don't do that any more. We're going to learn it. It's all going to be done professionally." The troupe got the same treatment the farm had, and the Mews.



His own record as a prompter, across a lifetime of it, is two prompts — and one of those, he maintains, was wrong. The other had come years before, in *The Wizard of Oz* at the Vestry Hall, the night *"dear old Ivor Foster cut four pages of dialogue. They left us stranded."* There were three of them on the stage — Ivor Foster the Tin Man, Peter Smith the Scarecrow, and Jeremy the Cowardly Lion — and they stood there looking at one another, working out what on earth to do next.

He was fifty. In the autumn of 1988 the troupe was out again, a village hall in October and a cancer-relief night in November, with Jeremy running the evenings; and by then the bookings had spread past the singing — in March 1987 the Great Northern Lodge had him down to reply to the toast to the guests, and in May Tunbridge Wells booked the society as the cabaret at its civic dinner. Paul Clark did a turn on his walking trips, one of them to Baden-Baden, and Jeremy and Doreen Hulm did *Mozart at his Worst*.

It is *Là ci darem la mano* with the words taken out. Mozart's seduction duet — the one he sang straight, in English, as *You'll Lay Your Hand* — becomes a husband at the breakfast table, opening, opera-style, in sung speech:

"Pass me the butter, dearest, Butter for my toast! Come, if for me thou carest, Some butter for my toast."

His wife's heart is all a-flutter. There is no butter. Where Zerlina frets about Masetto, the wife sings "My husband sure will chide me"; where Don Giovanni and Zerlina walk off arm in arm at the end of it, these two settle for love and margarine. The directions are in made-up Italian throughout — *con tremolo*, *poco agitato*, *disgustimento* — and the whole thing survives on the two of them keeping their faces straight. They kept it after that. *"We put it into every musical."*

In October 1987 Jeremy had sung the Tailor in *Merrie England*, a named principal, with Giles, fourteen, as a Herald; at Christmas he was Captain Perkins in the pantomime; and in 1988, at Lamberhurst, Captain Perkins again, in *Robinson Crusoe*, with Giles in the chorus.



One cassette survives from these years, labelled *Dad's Army*, and the label describes only the first few minutes of it. The rest is Jeremy alone in a room with a tape recorder, reading a part aloud — his own lines and everybody else's, the ones he was learning repeated twice and three times over, and the page numbers spoken into the machine as he went: *"We'll continue at the top of page ninety-nine."* *"Now the bottom of 115."* The sketch that gives the tape its name is a platoon piece set in Walmington-on-Sea, and it is not one of the broadcast episodes. After it comes Lazar Wolf in *Fiddler on the Roof*, the butcher's lines repeated and the others read once as cues, for a production that appears in none of the programmes he kept. And after that, the Tailor: the men of Windsor town, the witch chorus, and Bessie Throckmorton's name, over and over.



On the first of June 1988, Joseph Cartwright Limited went into creditors' voluntary liquidation. The firm had outlived its founder by two years. The marriage

to Sally ended the same year. Father and son appeared on the same stage, and in August the society's annual general meeting elected Jeremy chairman for the twelfth year running.

Chapter Seven



The Caruso of Cranbrook

1986–1999

The last of the businesses came to him through Sally. She was working for Inventorlink, a firm that existed to put money behind British inventions, and through it Jeremy met Philip Wilson Haffenden, of Deal, who knew how to make roofing out of glass fibre. They went into it together, Philip Wilson Haffenden as chairman and Jeremy as managing director, and traded as Roof Grip, and as Super Roof, depending on which panel you were buying.

The factory was a yard off Eastry Road in Deal. He rented it from a woman he calls Mrs Wash. It had an asbestos roof, eight people in it, and it made fibreglass roofing panels for British Gas, for the Central Electricity Generating Board, for Shell, for Southern Water and for Dartford Borough Council. The secretary was Mrs Benny, who did not work in Deal at all. She worked in a shed in the paddock at the Mews, at the other end of the county. And the man working the glass fibre was John Walters, who had been his farm manager: Jeremy took him off the land, had him retrained in the method, and put him in the factory, and John Walters ended up in Hampshire years later teaching it to other people.

The glass-fibre boxes the electrical contractors used to join their cables in were all ordered by one man, and the man was religious. Jeremy had the manager at Deal take him over to meet him, and talked to him about religious songs. *"A bit of psychology."*



The trade brought its own kind of complaint. He was called back to a house once after laying a flat roof — a leak, the customer said, water coming in, water on the kitchen floor — and he drove over braced to find fault with his own work. The roof had a low wall all the way round it, so the water could only leave through the holes cut for the gutters. They blocked the holes and flooded the roof deliberately, and stood and watched it, and it held. The roof was perfect.

Then the hosepipe they had filled it with slipped down and landed by the front door, still running, and stiffened and reared up and sprayed the letterbox, and the water ran in across the floor. That was the leak.



It brought its own kind of customer too. A contract came in for a garage roof at Sissinghurst, at a property belonging to Judge John Streeter, and when Jeremy went up the ladder the judge climbed up after him. Something in the way he moved looked strange, and the judge told him later what it was: both legs were artificial, blown off below the knee in the war. Every afternoon while the work ran, Jeremy called round to see how the men were getting on, and he and the judge had a cup of tea. One afternoon he told him about *"a Dinka that worked for me"* in the apple-picking years, a man known as Snobby Rossiter, who at the end of

every season made the same announcement: "I'm going to Maidstone Prison for the winter, governor — three free good meals a day, central heating, television. The wife and kids all go into care."

"Oh yes," the judge said. "I remember him well. I used to send him down every year."



The works burned twice inside three weeks.

The first fire was in November 1988. Engines came from Deal and from Eastry, the firemen wore protective clothing, and part of the asbestos roof went. The second was on a Tuesday evening in December, and it was much worse. Engines came from further afield: Dover, Canterbury and Ashford, and the men who went in wore breathing apparatus, because of the asbestos. They were on it for three hours. It was close enough to the houses that College Road and Links Road were considered for evacuation, and the only reason nobody was moved out was that there was no wind that night. "The smell of the fire was awful," one of the locals said.

The police treated both fires as suspicious. The *East Kent Mercury* carried it on the front page under the headline "Fire-raiser hunted".

As Jeremy tells it, it was the landlady. *"It all packed up when she was arrested,"* he says, *"because she'd been burning all her properties down to collect the insurance money."* The police came to Cranbrook to see him about it, and what they told him was that this was not the first time. *"And it's very interesting that the police were here. She's done this again and again."* On a sheet of his own notes, against her name, he put the number of premises at six.

The Deal factory closed on the thirtieth of November 1989, with five employees left of the eight, and the works moved into an old poultry building at Ringwould, a few miles up the road.

What finished the business proper came afterwards, and it was not fire. The poll tax arrived. Dartford Borough Council went back to felt roofing. Southern

Water put the work out to tender. The suppliers of the electrical boxes would not take a price increase although the cost of the raw material had gone up. *"So I decided to close the business."*



Home changed shape in the same years. In 1990 Jeremy married again — Wendy Haig-Smith, at Tunbridge Wells — and on the honeymoon they crossed to Jersey, to visit Shirley Graham and her husband John. The grandchildren were arriving: Joseph had come in the summer his great-grandfather died, and Jane's second son, Josh, was born on the first of April 1989. Jeremy was a grandfather twice over at fifty-one. The marriage brought three stepdaughters with it — Charlotte, Ali and Ruth.

The Father Christmas engagements were still running, and the three of them worked out who he was. They did it off his wrist — the bracelet he had worn since 1966, when a bad throat and one of Dr Hooper's prescriptions had told him he was allergic to penicillin.

He was in the audience too, in these years. At Greenwich, with Wendy, he saw *Don Giovanni* done with no opera singers in it; the Don was a pop singer, *"perfectly adequate, but he wasn't an opera singer."* The curtain went up on him on a balcony above the stage with a girl, on the run from her husband, and his servant Leporello waiting below. *"Don Giovanni leapt over the bloody balcony straight into his trousers that the manservant was holding."* He had seen something like it before, with Sally, at *Me and My Girl* in London: Gary Wilmot in a top hat, crossing the whole stage in one go and landing on the lamp-post. *"I've been incredibly fortunate in some of these odd things that I've seen over the years."*



The troupe he had taken over ran on, and on paper it now had a name. From the Welsh tour onwards the programmes said Victorian Productions, and by

the autumn of 1988 the cover said it plainly: "Victorian Productions present." The formula never varied, because it never needed to. A Chairman at a table with a gavel — Paul Clark now in the chair, introduced on the programme as a man who "will undertake to remain relatively sober" — a string of artistes under comic billings, a Victorian melodrama in the middle, the choruses printed on a song-sheet so the audience could not escape them, supper, a raffle, and carriages at half past eleven. Peter Smith was the Rumbustious Raconteur; his wife Patricia the Silver-voiced Songstress; Tony Mansi the Scintillating Sicilian; Geoffrey King, by his own billing, the poor man's Tony Hancock. Doreen Hulm sang as Mellifluous Melodies, and her husband Les shifted the scenery. They played private houses, village halls, tennis-club fundraisers, cancer-relief nights — whatever could seat an audience and serve a supper.

Paul Clark's own turn was *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God*, the 1911 monologue about the one-eyed idol and the man who stole its eye, delivered straight and seriously. It did not stay straight for long. Another of the company would come out and object that he was not putting enough feeling into it, get in behind him, push both arms through under his, and do the gestures for him — turning his head by the chin to face the right way, and slapping him when the emphasis was wrong. Jeremy kept the sheet it was printed on, and wrote on it who had performed it.

The pianist got it too. Jeremy made Kevin Deacon go on and play the whole thing wrong, and Kevin, who was a real pianist, went *"very uptight"* about it. Jeremy came on in the middle of the number with his shirt hanging out of his trousers, stopped the evening, and told the room they had paid the man a hundred guineas to be there that night and he was going to play all the wrong bloody notes. Arran Keith got the same on a first night, and was given half a glass of wine before she went on, on the grounds that the wrong notes would then arrive by themselves.

And on those programmes Jeremy Cartwright was billed as the Caruso of Cranbrook.

Enrico Caruso was the most famous tenor in the world. Cranbrook is a market town in the Weald. The billing put the two side by side — a joke that only worked because the voice could carry it. In January 1990 a reporter from the *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, sent to cover a charity night, was taken with the style of the thing: "They bill themselves under such exaggerated titles as: Jeremy Cartwright 'the Caruso of Cranbrook', Miss Joey Ingleton 'the tantalising titillating trouper' and 'the rumbustious raconteur.'" The last documented outing of the company is 1991; he and Doreen went on singing concerts together for years after the troupe's record goes quiet.



He was singing serious music in the same years, and mostly at Bexhill. On Good Friday 1990 he was the tenor soloist in *The Sound of Easter Music* at the De La Warr Pavilion — a stage he had first sung on in 1969. Two years later the Bexhill Choral Society staged *Merrie England* as a concert version, with Sir Colin Davis as the production's patron, and Jeremy sang Sir Walter Raleigh — "Dan Cupid hath a Garden", "The English Rose" — a part he had sung at Battle ten years before. Of the four named soloists on the programme, two had trained with the Royal Opera House. The third was an amateur tenor from Cranbrook, aged fifty-four.

At Salehurst, near Robertsbridge — where he had sung *Olivet to Calvary* twenty years before — the church had him every Easter for the tenor solos, *The Crucifixion* and *Olivet to Calvary* again, and in the choir stalls a small tin of Fisherman's Friends refilled itself between his visits. *"There were only six left... and the next time, there are now 20 of them. Bloody miracle."*

The concert work is in the local papers all through the decade, and the papers show its range. An October afternoon in 1992 at Edenbridge: "Jeremy Cartwright tenor, Doreen Hulm soprano and Kevin Deacon pianist". By the middle of the nineties the billing was "Jeremy Cartwright and Friends", and the

circuit was whatever asked: Cancer Research in Tunbridge Wells, the Staplehurst Brownies, the National Trust at Tenterden three years running.



His last full musical was in 1996. He was fifty-eight. Nothing in the record after it is a musical: what goes on from there is concerts — the church solos, the charity bills, Doreen and a pianist and a printed running order — the voice working as hard as ever, in rooms of every size. The cast lists, after thirty years of carrying his name, go on without it.

INTERMEZZO





The Horners Are Best

1972–1999

Before Jeremy Cartwright ever sat down among the Horners, his father had already been a guest.

On 18 October 1972, a Livery Dinner at the Institute of Chartered Accountants; the printed programme inscribed, in the hand of the day, to "Mr. J. O. Cartwright." A year later, another dinner, this time at the Mansion House, and the same inscription again.

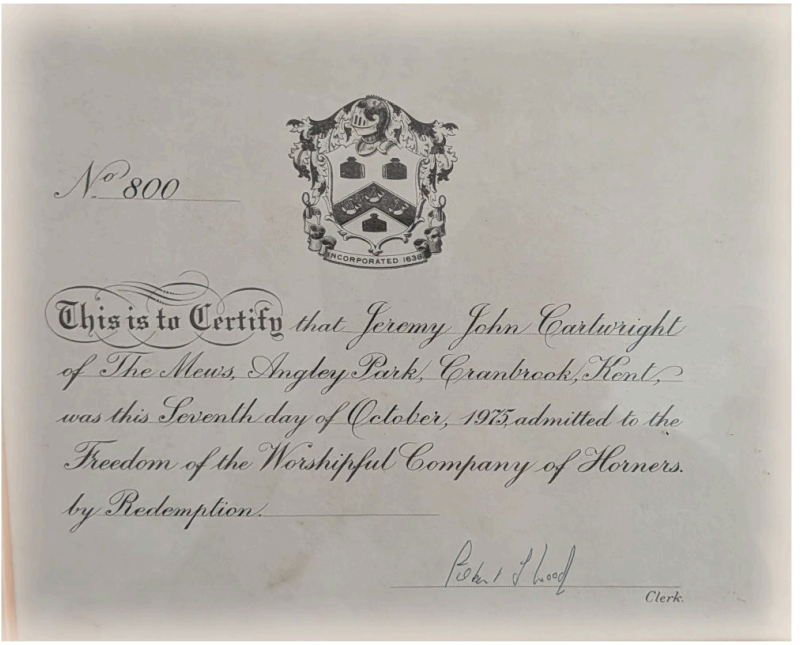
JOC, Jeremy's father, was never a Horner himself. Both times he came as the guest of his brother-in-law, David Shephard — the youngest brother of Jeremy's mother, Nanna — who was climbing the Company's ladder of his own: Renter Warden that first year, Upper Warden the next, and on the last day of September 1974, presiding as Master of the Worshipful Company of Horners at a dinner at the Mansion House. The menu card from that dinner survives, signed by husband and wife together: "Els & David Shephard, Sept 30, 1974."

The Company itself is one of the ancient livery companies of the City of London, founded — its own records say — in 1284, by the craftsmen who worked horn:

the combs, the lantern-panes, the powder-flasks of an earlier England. By the time the family came anywhere near it, seven hundred years on, the craft had long since given way to plastics, and the Company's business had become the fellowship of the people in it and the funding of scholarships. There are more than a hundred livery companies in the City. The Horners rank fifty-fourth among them.

Jeremy was thirty-eight when he became a Liveryman in his own right — Candlemas Day, 2 February 1976, two weeks after his Freedom of the City had come through. Asked, years later, by the Master of the day, Newton Grant, to set down why he had joined, he gave a frank answer: *"My uncle, David Shephard (Past Master), used to invite me to Horners functions. When my son, Giles, was about 2 years old, I thought I should join the Livery in order 'to maintain the connection', in case he wished to be a Liveryman in the future. I joined for all the wrong reasons, in the days when there was no interview."*

The climb from there took twenty-two years — Freedom, then the Livery, then a place on the Court of Assistants, then Renter Warden, then Upper Warden, then the Chair of Master itself. Each was a rung on a ladder liverymen had been climbing, more or less unchanged, since the thirteenth century, and Jeremy went up it the way he went up everything: keeping the paperwork, noting the dates, filing the cards.


No 800

INCORPORATED 1638

This is to Certify that Jeremy John Cartwright of The Mews, Angley Park, Cranbrook, Kent, was this Seventh day of October, 1975 admitted to the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Horners by Redemption

Clerk.

Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Horners, No. 800 — 7 October 1975.

"Four young Horners met on a train and clicked."

He was, in the Company as everywhere else, a convener — a man who could not be in a place for long without starting something in it and gathering people around it. The year 1983 alone produced four of his structures. With a fellow Horner, Michael Hart, he started an evening at the Bleeding Heart, a pub near Newton Grant's office, at six pounds a head, and called it the Noggin and Natter. With another, David Rogers, he proposed a Horners' tie — until then there had only ever been the Golf tie. In December, after the Company's Carol Service, he laid on a supper at Fan Makers' Hall — wine and sandwiches, arranged through Eric and Mary Hunt, at three pounds fifty a head; he would still be arranging the December supper decades later. And on a train home from a visit to a plastics

factory, four young Horners who had fallen into conversation over lunch — Jeremy, Iain McColl, Andrew Lawrence and Paul Price — decided, with a few drinks in them, that they had enjoyed each other's company enough to keep it going. They agreed to meet four times a year, in rotation, wherever the member "in the chair" chose to take them. They called themselves the Splinter of Horn. Andrew designed their headed paper and dared to put the Company's crest on it, which *"caused consternation with the Horners' Hierarchy"* — a consternation that lasted, Jeremy noted, *"until those involved had joined us for lunch."* They lunched in London, and in time in Spain, France and Belgium too; every Master from Bernard Schaverien's year in 1989 onward received, by Jeremy's arrangement, his own commemorative Splinter of Horn, engraved with his initials and his year in office. Paul Price, one of the four, eventually moved to the Isle of Mull, and was replaced by Simon Baldwin-Purry. Over the decades the others drifted too — some moving away, some simply stopping — and new men were found to take their places, Denis Cruse among them, until Jeremy and Andrew Lawrence were the last of the four founders still meeting.



The singing came in 1984, almost by accident. At a Carol Service supper that winter, Jeremy happened to mention to the Upper Warden, Michael Spofforth, that he would like to sing to the Livery sometime. Michael Spofforth offered him a slot there and then — his own election service, the following February. Jeremy sang "The Holy City" from the organ loft of St James Garlickhythe, with Andrew Parmley at the organ — the loft set behind the congregation, so that for the length of the anthem he sang to the backs of their heads, unseen. *"It was the first time I had sung to the back of an audience!!!"* he wrote, decades later, the exclamation marks his own. Out of that single performance the Horners' choir was born. Wives and friends joined it; Andrew Parmley kept turning up to rehearsals with bottles of wine from the Vintners. From then on Jeremy was, by degrees, the Company's music — and its organiser of music.

In November 1987 the Upper Warden, Reg Gill, wrote to him to settle the hymns for the Candlemas service, deferring to him on the anthem, and signing off with a postscript scribbled underneath: "Any chance of doing without a sermon?"

He had not known Reg Gill especially well before that. The acquaintance had begun by pure chance — Jeremy and Sally seated one evening at a small table beside Reg and his wife Anne — and the friendship grew from the seating plan.



In February 1988 Reg Gill took the Chair himself, and in his year the court was entertained on a boat on the Thames. Jeremy came home late from it, missed the last connection at Ashford, and was shown into a waiting room: dark, thick with smoke, ashtrays everywhere. About ten minutes later a young man with blond hair put his head round the door. "Sir, where do you want to go?" "Staplehurst," said Jeremy. "Tunbridge Wells," said the only other man in the room. "Come with me, gentlemen." The driver walked the pair of them the full length of the platform to the engine, opened a door just behind it, sat them down, and said to Jeremy, "When we get to Staplehurst, I'll wake you up." And that is exactly what happened. The other fellow turned out to have a bottle of brandy on him, *"and we were very wicked with that as well."* After a couple more drinks Jeremy duly fell asleep, and at Staplehurst the driver woke him up and set him down. What Jeremy worked out only later was that the railway positions its trains overnight, ready for the morning; the driver was going that way anyway. *"But it was just a story I just couldn't believe,"* he was still saying at eighty-eight. *"Wonderful."*



Reg's daughter Alison had herself been clothed in the Livery that winter, in the run-up to her father's year. Long afterwards it was Jeremy who put her forward for the Court — *"I looked at people who were really good being there,"* he said. *"She*

was one." — and the postscript about the sermon became a standing joke between them: *"I've been reminded by Alison about it time and time again."*

When Jeremy sang for the Guild of Freemen in 1989, the programme ran to a mixture of songs — one of them a version of Flanders and Swann's "A Song of Patriotic Prejudice," aimed that night at the Scots. It landed. Donald du Parc Braham wrote to thank him, and to report, with evident pleasure: "you really upset the Scotsmen at the table!"

He ran the choir for well over a decade before handing it on, and he remained proud of it by not mentioning it unless asked. *"I find it hard to thank the Horners Choir publicly,"* he wrote, decades on, *"as I have always been a part of it."*

Around 1992, John Hann — Wendy's father, which made him Jeremy's father-in-law, and by then a friend in his own right — wrote different lyrics to the same Flanders and Swann number, calling it "The Horners Are Best," and Jeremy made it his. The chorus repeats the name, so that the audience can join in:

"The Horners, the Horners, the Horners are best; / I wouldn't give tuppence for all of the rest."

He would sing it for the Company after dinners and at carol suppers, and went on singing it for more than thirty years; in time it became the thing the Horners asked him for by name. What it grew into belongs later in his story. For now it is enough that the anthem and the man had found each other.



"I sat for 3 years not understanding the Court workings before I dared to voice my opinions."

It was as Renter Warden, from 1996, that Jeremy's organising mind showed itself most clearly. The Company had fallen into a quiet constitutional row about how it renewed itself. New men were being brought onto the Court, but the Court was ageing, and the rule that governed its size had become a tangle nobody had troubled to unpick. Jeremy unpicked it. He sat down with the Ordinances and found the flaw at the centre of the whole dispute: the Court was capped at

thirty-seven Assistants "excluding Past Masters Emeritus," but no one had ever actually been made a Past Master Emeritus, so the fourteen living Past Masters were all being counted inside the cap, leaving far less room than the figure suggested. He ran the arithmetic, and ran it again. He worked out exactly which men would lose their vote if the rule were ever applied, and named them on the page — his own uncle, David Shephard, among them, and Rupert Nicholson too. He concluded that the whole business was, in his own words, *"all very confusing, and very ~~titillating~~ emotive."* He chose the second word with care. Then he proposed a way through: stop arguing about the cap, decide instead how many working Assistants the Company actually needed for its future, and do away with the unpopular rank of Honorary Assistant altogether.

And in pencil, on the same pages, he made the case against simply clearing the elders out. As Past Masters grew old and stopped attending, he wrote, their place on the Court still gave them *"a purpose to continue to attend their beloved livery Company"* and to meet their old friends a few times a year, and the Company *"should not lightly seek to change this situation."* It was the farmer who services the combine, turned loose on a six-hundred-year-old constitution: read the rules, run the numbers, find the fault no one else had spotted, and fix it — without ever losing sight of the men inside the machine. *"Any decision taken on the above may lead to the ordinances being altered,"* he wrote, closing the file. *"So be it."*



The following year he was installed as Upper Warden, and that same year proposed the Civic Toast to the Lord Mayor, Roger Cork — the son, as it happened, of another Past Master of the Horners. Jeremy built the speech on a piece of recognition, and closed it on the only rule of public speaking he truly believed in: *"a good speech is measured by the speed with which it gets the audience on its feet."*

Leaning on the rail of his balcony at Port Grimaud, the canal town on the Gulf of Saint-Tropez where he kept an apartment, he had once noticed an elderly man on the next jetty, dressed for the heat in shorts and a panama hat, knobbly knees

on display. They passed the time of day. It was only a day or two later that he placed the voice: Sir Kenneth Cork — Roger's father — Past Master of the Horners and, in 1978, Lord Mayor of London, the seventh Horner to hold the office. He told it to the room straight — the balcony, the shorts, the slow dawning of recognition — and the story did the rest.



On Candlemas Day, 2 February 1998, Jeremy — the nephew of a Past Master — was himself installed as Master, three weeks past his sixtieth birthday, having very nearly missed his own installation: the trains ran late, and the Chaplain, stuck in traffic, arrived only halfway through the service. There had been, the Clerk had reminded him by letter, a Fine of Honour of four hundred pounds to be paid on election — the Company charging a man for the privilege of leading it. It was twenty-two years to the month since he had first been clothed in the Company's Livery.

He opened his address with a joke built from the Company's own run of Masters — John Webb, David Rogers, Charles Howe — recast as royal succession: *"During the reign of King John I was informed that I would be Renter Warden. I was duly elected Renter Warden in the reign of King David. A year later, in the reign of King Charles, I was elected Upper Warden."* Then, before he went any further, he named the man who had brought him there: *"I take great personal pleasure in the fact that my uncle, Senior Past Master David Shephard, my sponsor all those years ago, is here today."*

Reg Gill was there, and made the same joke he had made eleven years before, almost word for word: "Any chance of doing away with the sermon?" He died before the year was out. Jeremy was still telling the story of it decades later — a small, exact memory, carried the rest of his life. Even in old age, urging brevity on a new chaplain, *"5 minutes,"* he wrote, was *"still too long."*



Three weeks before his installation as Master, he had given an after-lunch talk to the Cranbrook PROBUS club: the entire history of the Worshipful Company of Horners, researched and written by himself and delivered to an audience of his Kent neighbours. *"Good afternoon, gentlemen,"* he began. *"Well, that will probably be the best part of my talk. So I may as well repeat it — Good afternoon, gentlemen."* With "Show horn" noted in the margin, he held up an old drinking horn — the kind, he told them, from which the Master traditionally drinks with his Wardens. Then came the Company's Royal Charter, granted in 1638. With the timing of a man who had been working rooms for thirty years, he added that it had been granted by Charles I *"just before he was beheaded."*



His year as Master he ran like a production, planned well before he ever took the Chair. Three weeks in, he staged a musical evening at St Paul's Cathedral — the making good of a vow. Years before, a guest at just such an evening, he had resolved that if he ever held the office, he would put one on himself, and by the summer of 1996 — eighteen months before his installation — he had already written to book the man who would run it, Tom Cameron. *"And here we all are,"* he told the Livery.

He had a new Clerk for it. When John Holt handed in his notice, it fell to Jeremy, as Upper Warden, and the Master, Charles Howe, to find another, and on the first of April Raymond Layard took over. *"Raymond and I tried to learn the job together,"* Jeremy said, when Raymond retired. *"Whether we succeeded or not, I leave to you to decide. Despite this we have been firm friends ever since."* Raymond stayed as Clerk for some fifteen years, joined the Livery himself, and was Master in 2015.

In June he was invited to lunch with the judges at the Old Bailey, hosted by the Sheriffs, Alderman David Howard and Michael Oliver — one of the many invitations that came with the office, and, as he put it himself, *"one is invited as a guest to many functions, and meets a whole host of interesting and friendly people."* By a small comedy of timing the invitation went first to the previous Master's address, and Charles Howe forwarded it on with a note: "Jeremy, I have accepted on your behalf, and apologised on my behalf." The judges wanted five or six lines about him in advance, so they could read up on their guest before he arrived. Jeremy sent them, went, and was seated next to a Judge Hardy. There was champagne first, in the Sheriffs' office; at five past one a glass of sherry with the judges; at ten past, lunch, *"and the judges all dine in their wigs and gowns."* They told him why they did it: *"lunching with ordinary people five days a week keeps them sane."*

One of those functions put him across a table from a hangman's family. Tony Clarke, a Past Master, had him as Guest of Honour at a dinner at Cutlers' Hall, and when Jeremy looked at the seating plan, the man opposite was called Pierrepoint. He called across to ask, and the answer was yes: he was *"either the brother or the cousin"* of Albert Pierrepoint, the hangman. *"He hanged 640 people,"* Jeremy said. *"That was his bloody job."*



The Banquet was held at the Mansion House on 1 October 1998 — a hundred and seventy-nine paying guests and twenty-six guests of the Company. His toast to the guests that night ran to twelve handwritten pages, worked over in three colours of ink. He recalled that at the first Horners Banquet he had ever attended there had been no lady guests at all, and wondered aloud how they had ever managed without them. He spotted Judge Hardy in the room and worked him straight into the speech: *"At a lunch with the Judges at the Old Bailey I sat next to Judge Hardy, who is here tonight. Delighted to see you again, Judge."* Then, winding

toward a close: *"You will be relieved to know I don't tell jokes — as I generally forget the punch line."*

His children were there, watching their father propose the toast.



The following evening, Els Shephard died. She was the wife of David, the uncle who had first brought JOC, and then Jeremy, into the room. Jeremy wrote and delivered her funeral address himself.

The year went on. In his Christmas letter to the Livery, written weeks after the Banquet, Jeremy set out the entire cost of the evening line by line, down to the printing and the flowers, and gave the bottom line without a flinch: the Banquet had run at a loss of £1,226.70. Of the two hundred-odd people present, he noted, only forty-seven were Horners. His charity for the year, Sightsavers, had raised some six thousand pounds. The Salters-Horners A-level, funded from Ralph Anderson's bequest and costing the Company a hundred and fifty thousand, now had more than a thousand students sitting it. Ralph Anderson had been on the Charity Committee back in 1983, when Jeremy was newly drafted onto it — *"probably because David Shephard was on it as well,"* as he put it — and one of the many Horners he'd asked for money. Ralph Anderson's answer became one Jeremy would go on repeating for the rest of his life: *"Well, my boy — a bit now, or a lot later."* Jeremy chose later. The committee's target that year had been a hundred thousand pounds; Ralph Anderson's eventual bequest came to nearly a million. The same letter set down, among the year's other business, that *"our revered Senior Past Master's wife Els Shephard lost her long fight for life."* It found room too to congratulate Basil Leverton on fifty years a Horner, to wish Honorary Assistant Peter Wilson a swift recovery, to note that two of the Company's officers could be found on Saturday mornings playing real tennis together at Hampton Court, and to report — arriving early one evening for a choir rehearsal at St James Garlickhythe — the patter of tiny feet: *"lots of tiny mice*

can be seen running hither and thither!" It was written, as all his letters were, to be read for pleasure.



At the Carol Service that December, the choir he had founded sang — the largest they had ever mustered, with new members signing up before the evening was even over — and the things people carried away from the evening found their way into his post afterwards. Rupert Nicholson, eighty-eight and a former Master — the accountant who, in 1971, had been called in as receiver when Rolls-Royce collapsed — had said Jeremy's way of admitting the new liverymen was the best he had ever seen: "he has the voice for it." Basil Leverton wrote too, naming a different moment as his favourite: "Jeremy reclaiming his beloved at the end, and walking out hand in hand. That, to me, was something beautiful — and moving."



The year closed not on the Banquet but on a thank-you. On 9 May 1999 Jeremy, by then styled Deputy Master, laid on a lunch with Wendy at the Mews for the fellow Horners, the Clerk, and all the helpers who had carried him through his year. The invitation, in his own hand, promised the day *"will be a GREAT DAY"* and asked them simply to *"join Wendy and me for a simple lunch at 12.30."* They came, and they stayed. Two days later, the Assistant Clerk, Ray Anstis, wrote to him: *"Although your time as Master finished in February I felt that Sunday's event was really a fitting climax to what was a very successful year."*



That same year, Jeremy wrote to David — the uncle who had brought JOC, and then him, into the room. His letter thanked David plainly: for the introduction,

and for *"guiding and supporting me through the years of advancement."* David's reply came back on paper that ran out before he had finished: "Now I must congratulate you, Jeremy Cartwright, for having become one of our most eminent Past Masters... Your uncle is very proud of you."

ACT THREE

Now Is the Hour



1999 – 2026

Chapter Eight



Au Revoir

1999–2004

David Shephard married again in June 1999. He was Nanna's youngest brother, the uncle who had taken Jeremy to the Horners as his guest, and he was eighty-six; his second wife had died the previous autumn. He asked Jeremy to be best man.

Jeremy did the speech in song. The courtship was told across a sequence of numbers — Irving Berlin's *It's a Lovely Day Today*, and *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* — and he wrote the whole thing out on cards, hole-punched them, and threaded them on green wool so they could not get out of order. The bride's family had come from Holland, so the first card carries a welcome written the way it sounds: *"Vreenden en fahmeelee oot Holland. Welkom."* Every card is headed, in his hand, *"Slowly."* He introduced himself as *"David's nephew."* The last card has the maxim he built the speech to: *"a good speaker should stand up, speak up, and then shut up."*

His mother died on the thirtieth of that month, at Tunbridge Wells, aged ninety-two. It was the day of the wedding. *"I had to go in and see Nanna's body early in the morning,"* he said, and then he went and was best man.



He went through her papers the way he went through everything. The paintings were distributed as the will directed. Bramleys was dealt with. A valuation was arranged. And he wrote to her circle one person at a time, telling each of them himself, so that nobody heard it second-hand — a note to himself in the estate file reminds him to send Shirley Graham a photograph of *"Nanna."*

The letters came back. Kath, in Southampton, took issue with something he had written:

"You said in your letter 'You were so supportive of my mother.' No, Jeremy, SHE did all the supporting; without your mother and my Nan, Stan and I would never have got anywhere; your mother was our rock, always there when we needed her..."

And she put down, in one line, a thing the archive holds no other record of — that he called on his mother every morning:

"I don't ever recall phoning her when you had not been in that morning to make sure she was alright, and she used to say, you always did."

And she wrote about the concerts: "I can't help thinking of Winifred's joy when she used to go to your musical evenings, she was so immensely proud of your singing..."

He put it in his own hand, in the notebook: *"My mother was my number one fan. She came to all my shows and very many concerts."*



On the twenty-third of October he sang at Staplehurst Manor Nursing Home. It was *A Highland Evening*, a fundraiser for the Parkinson's Disease Society, with Doreen Hulm and Arran Keith.

Nothing in the record shows him on a stage again.

The life that closed there had opened in 1965 with three sung words in a Cranbrook chorus, and it had run for thirty-four years. Five societies had had him on their books, and he was chairman of one of them for thirteen years. The programmes he kept record more than forty productions, and a named part in nearly all of them — some twenty of those the lead.

The music halls had stopped some years before that. Of the troupe — the one he took over from Alan Bourlet and made learn its lines — he said one thing afterwards.

"The big, big sadness — we never recorded it."



He left the Mews around the turn of the century. The brochure that survives offers a converted coach house with five bedrooms, walled gardens, a heated pool and three acres.

He moved to Bramleys, in Tilsden Lane. It was his mother's house, and before that his father's, and before that it was the bungalow JOC had built on the farm in 1959 for Jeremy and Liz to move into out of the caravanette. He had been twenty-one when he first lived there. He was sixty-two when he came back.

He was still in the Cranbrook orbit and he went on working it. The Cranbrook Gentlemen's Lunch met. The care homes and the day centres had him, as they had for years, and almost none of it is documented, because nobody writes down an ordinary afternoon — the evidence for those concerts exists entirely in the letters people wrote later, when he told them he was leaving for Cornwall.

In 2002, the Queen's Golden Jubilee year, he wrote a show. The ring-binder is labelled in his capitals, *"QUEENS JUBILEE / SINGER + PIANO / PATRIOTIC CONCERT,"* and the running order is dated September 2002. The script opens: *"This evening we continue to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. In our inimitable fashion we have put together the story of her life interspersed with Patriotic songs and a little irreverence."* After that come the links between the songs, several of them a single line on a page of their own — *"She fell in love with a sailor." "She*

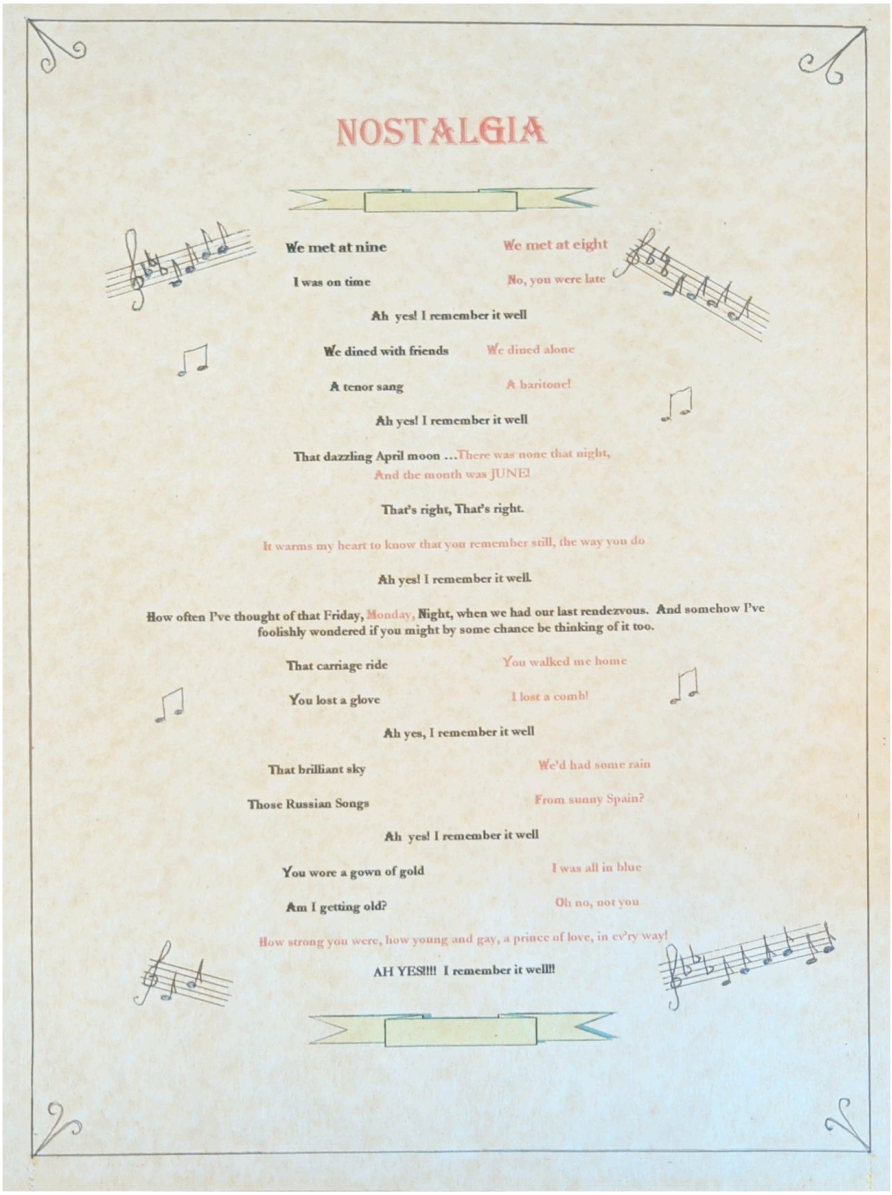
was Crowned." "Back to London and Home." — and the songs in the folder run from *Land of Hope and Glory* to *Bless 'Em All*. On the page headed *Red White & Blue* he wrote: *"The British flag, the Union Jack, was omnipresent throughout the world." The Golden Song*, from *Lilac Time*, is on the running order, and on the front of his copy there is a Post-it in his hand:

"Those were Golden Days."



In March 2003 he went into a studio with Doreen Hulm, Arran Keith and Kevin Deacon and recorded a CD called *Favourite Duets*. Track sixteen, with Kevin at the piano, was *I Remember It Well*.

The song comes from *Gigi*, the 1958 film by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, where Maurice Chevalier and Hermione Gingold sing it as two old lovers going back over the night they met — he gets every detail wrong, and she puts him right. *"It was the signature tune that Doreen and I did,"* Jeremy said. When he left for Cornwall, Doreen, Arran and Kevin had the words done up for him as a keepsake, his lines in black and hers in red.



On the twenty-fifth of April the Cranbrook Gentlemen's Lunch met at the Red Cross Hall for the last time with him in it, and signed a card. Bernard wrote: "The end of an Era, Jeremy." Somebody else wrote that it had been "a privilege to be in shows with CODS." And Jack P. wrote: "When is the next lunch in Sennen?"

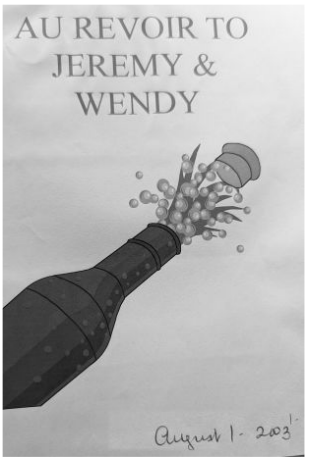
Then the institutions began. Staplehurst Manor sent "a big thank you for all the entertainment over the years." A patients' club wrote in July of "all the years of pleasure you have given to so many of our patients." Betty and all the club members said they would miss his visits so much. The Kent Association for the Blind had him on the eighth and ninth of July, and recorded it as his last before leaving Cranbrook. He gave them a copy of the CD. One of them wrote back that it was "a lovely surprise ... I will really treasure this."

In the same season the Vestry Hall had the eighth of his themed travelogue concerts, with Doreen singing coloratura. George Hudson wrote it up for the newsletter under the heading *We Toured Europe in Song*, and ended with the society's best wishes to him and Wendy for their retirement to Sennen.

Bramleys was sold on the twenty-fifth of July for four hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds. He left Kent three weeks later.

The party was on the first of August. Alan and Rita organised it, and the poster carried two words of Jeremy's own French.

Au revoir.



The card that went round it is the size of the room. Somebody wrote: "You were the first to look after us when we came to Cranbrook." Somebody else wrote:

"Do Cornwall know what a treat they have in store?" A couple sent apologies for being away that Friday — they were at Sennen Cove, where Jeremy and Wendy were moving to. One inscription is addressed to "dear 'Mr Pickwick' & Wendy," which was a part he had played twenty-five years before and had apparently never stopped being. And Rita and Alan wrote: "Good luck down with the 'Pirates'."

He drove west. The house at Sennen Cove was called TII — This Is It.



David Shephard had said his own goodbye to the Horners in the July, and Jeremy had sung at it. He died later that year, at ninety.

On the twenty-third of January 2004 Jeremy stood up in front of the Company and read out what he had written about David. It is mostly dates and offices, in the order a man's service would be entered in a book. David had become a liveryman in February 1937 and had been one for more than sixty-five years. He was Master in 1974. He invented the committee that puts business before the Court, and then sat on it by right for twenty-five years, until he gave up the right so that others could have the place. Two years before he died he declared himself Emeritus, to make room on the Court for somebody new — *"once again leading the way."* Then the rest of him: the travelling, the house in Jamaica, the years as a Special Commissioner for Income Tax, the British Legion, the garden.

Then four words.

"I will miss him."

Chapter Nine



Another Opening, Another Show

2003–2018

"We're delighted to be with you again this afternoon."

That is how they all began. For fifteen years in the far west of Cornwall there was nearly always an afternoon: a residents' lounge at Gulval, the day centre at Hayle, a chapel out at Carleen, a Women's Institute at Long Rock. The greeting was the same in every room, and it was accurate — he had nearly always been there before, and he would nearly always be back.

He had come west in August 2003, and in the first years he walked: out from Sennen to Land's End each morning, where he met the same three friends on the path and the same cyclist, John. The opera and the musicals had ended in Kent. What began in Cornwall was smaller and far more frequent, and Cornwall had fifteen years of it.



The first long drive back came in October 2004. Charles Eldridge had been his concert baritone partner since *Rose Marie* with the Hastleons, nearly forty years of duets, and he died the year after Jeremy left Kent. The memorial concert was at St Luke's, Silverhill, and raised five hundred pounds for the building fund; Jeremy drove up from the end of the country to sing in it. Charles's widow wrote afterwards: "Only friends would travel as far as you did to take part." And, of the two of them: "Their voices blended perfectly."



In the first Cornwall years the act was a duo with a pianist called Mary, working the day rooms around Penzance. By 2004 the piano had become a guitar. Larry Douglas was introduced from the stage as *"the Grandfather Guitarist and aficionado of the Django Reinhardt club here in Penzance,"* and on one of the first tapes they made together the exchange arrives that would outlast everything else in the act. Larry, mid-set: "Have I got time to blow my nose?" Jeremy: *"No, let it drip like you usually do."* It was, on his own account, *"included in every concert thereafter."*

The rooms they played were day centres and residential homes: Menwinnion at Lamorna, Trevaylor at Gulval, Pengarth in Penzance, the Blind Club at Hayle, Poldhu out at Mullion; Parkinson's groups, Breathe Easy meetings, over-sixties clubs, the Women's Institutes. There is not a concert hall among them. He drove to all of them — five in one December week, on the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and the fifteenth.

One Wednesday, coming along Chapel Street in Penzance from his Zumba class, he heard the organ playing in St Mary's — the big church with the tall, narrow tower that you can see from the seafront — and went in. The organist was Eddie Perry. Jeremy introduced himself and said he was looking for somebody to

play the piano for him, and from then on the two of them rehearsed together in the church: Eddie at the big Walker organ, or at the grand piano when it was wanted, with a harpsichord standing by. Eddie could never play for the concerts. They managed one together, at the church's own Thursday concerts, with Larry on the guitar as well. *"It was just a bit of fun."*



The ledger is a book he kept from 2008, each line a date and a venue, with running tallies part-way through the year and a clean total ruled off at the end of it. Sixty-seven concerts in 2009. Seventy-one in 2010 — the peak year, counted twice over, because the total is also broken down in colour: 29 green, 19 pink, 23 yellow. Long afterwards he put the figure at *"often 75 concerts a year."*

He gave more than his time. In May 2015 the manager of the Hayle day centre, Lesley Channell, wrote: "I could hardly believe my eyes when I opened your letter and saw your cheque ... You are truly a most generous benefactor."



The act got funnier as it went. The last Kent tapes carry almost no stand-alone jokes; the first Larry tape has fourteen; a Christmas afternoon at Chypons has more than twenty. Between songs he ran the game he had brought from Kent — sing the forgotten introductory verse, let the room guess the famous chorus — and kept up a patter that gave as warmly as it took: *"You're the best Thursday afternoon audience I've had this week."* When a punchline underperformed he would assess it for them, on the spot: *"Quite clever, actually, if you think about it."* A telephone rang once in the middle of an afternoon. He stopped, picked it up, and turned to the room. *"I'm awfully sorry, we have to stop the concert. There's a complaint about the noise from next door."*

Off stage, the comedy was worked like everything else he ever worked. He kept a library of it: trade gag-books off the club circuit, cuttings snipped from

newspapers, and thousands of loose scraps bundled on bulldog clips, each graded in his own hand — *Good*, *Poorish*, *Not Good*. In Cornwall he went through the printed books with a pencil, crossing out the names the jokes had been printed with and writing *Larry* in above them. On one page a stock gag about marriage and drink has "Ted" struck through and *Larry* written over it three times. The jokes did not always need Larry there to work. There are afternoons on the tapes — a residents' meeting, a chest infection — where Larry had not come, and the Larry jokes ran anyway.



Two poems went into the act as party pieces, marked up in pencil the way the joke-books were. *You Are Old, Father William* he had counted off, eight verses down the margin, and beside it a Post-it weighing whether to risk it without a piano: *"No Piano / ? No 2013 / Possible."* The other survives only in the patter — dropped in whole between songs, and caught complete on one of the tapes, run straight into "Caramia":

"I went to the pictures tomorrow, I had a front seat at the back. I fell from the pit to the gallery, and broke a front bone in my back. I went round a straight crooked corner, and saw a dead donkey die. So I took out my pistol to stab him, but he punched me a kick in the eye!"



The programmes had names, and he lettered and dated them in his own code: *Bella Margarita*, *Come to the Fair*, *Beautiful Morning*, *Spanish Eyes*, *Rich Man*. *Around the World in Song* he did in hats — *"a wee Scottish hat... a straw hat, and then a bowler hat, and all sorts of different hats."* In Cornwall he also sang *"The Cornish Are Best"* — the same Flanders and Swann joke the Horners had been given in 1992, re-aimed at his new county. And one programme from 2005 is

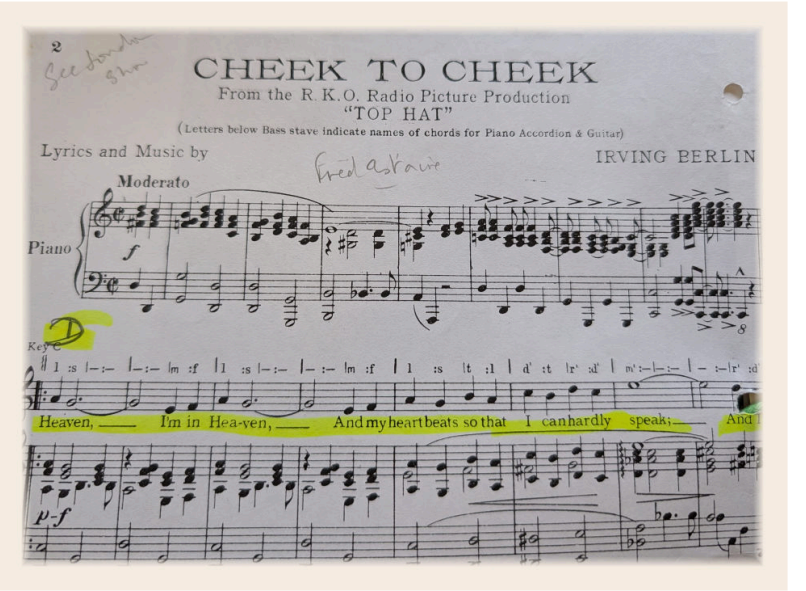
called *Another Opening, Another Show*. Larry had rung in ill that day, and Jeremy performed it alone.

"Here we are again."



Much of what stood on his music stand had been given to him. In a 2005 concert, introducing "One Day When We Were Young," he read the room the pencilled name on the front of his copy — Jill Botting — *"She was an elderly lady I knew many years ago, and she gave me all her music when she eventually retired."* Her music had reached him through Wendy's mother's side of the family. Another friend, a pianist, gave him *"miles and miles of music."* Much of what he sang in those rooms had come to him this way.

Every concert ended the same way. *Now Is the Hour* closes thirteen of the concerts that survive on tape — more than any other song he sang. And somewhere in the middle of the afternoon, on five separate tapes across the years, comes nearly the same announcement: *"if I had to choose one song from all the five, six hundred that we sing in the course of a year, to be my absolute favourite, it would be this next one."* The song was *Cheek to Cheek*. Never the opener, never the closer; always the middle of the afternoon.



From the stage, more than once, he told his audiences what he thought the whole thing was: *"It is everybody else that makes the occasion what it is. People getting together and having friendship and a good natter. And it is so much better than having a bloody television in front of you or a bloody mobile phone."*

In the Horners' Company, the year after the move, he did what David had done. He declared himself Emeritus — *"When I became Master of the Horners, I said that I would declare myself emeritus five years afterwards. That means that you no longer have a vote, so you don't count as a person on the court. But you can still physically be there and you can physically speak."* It was the rule he had untangled himself as Renter Warden, when the Ordinances assumed a step nobody had ever actually taken; now he took it. His verdict, years later: *"I think that was good. A lot of people have followed me since then because I've tried to set up a trend or an example."* And when the Company opened up the workings of the Court again in 2015, he sent his position up from Cornwall in pencil: *"I took a decision to*

declare myself emeritus after five years as a Past Master in order to leave a vacancy on the Court. That is all that needs to happen. Don't let us make everything too complicated."

The vote he gave up; the drives he kept. He went up for Court and for the Carol Service year on year, and when he drove to Kent he went by way of Sway in Hampshire, where Harold Collinson lived — HAC to the Horners, from his initials — *"and we would lunch together and put the world to rights."* The Company wrote back down to him. Iain McColl, fixing a December Splinter lunch: "all you far-away people can stay around for a couple of days." And, teasing: "Does this mean the Cartwrights are propelling themselves into the 20th Century? When we get an email from you, we might even be looking towards the 21st century!" In the margin, in Jeremy's pencil: *"no way."* When the Horners went to Malta in 2006, he went with them.

Spain he did on his own account. Simon Baldwin-Purry, a Court Assistant who had settled there and came back once a year for Court, had Jeremy out to stay in 2008. In a bar in Malaga — a long wooden bar, huge barrels behind it, sawdust on the floor — eight of them had a sherry each, and the barman wrote the cost of each drink on the bar in chalk, added it up, pressed the buttons on the till, and put the money in.

"Best adding machine ever."



The idea was his cousin Alexander's, and it came in a postscript. In January 2006 Alexander wrote to thank him for a card after a death in the family, and added at the foot of it: "Nico is now hard at work in London. Could he be considered as a young Horner — to keep the link alive?"

Jeremy answered three days later. *"What an excellent idea, to involve Nico in the Horners. We really do need some more young people to become involved, to mitigate all the old fogies!"* He named the day there and then: the Carol Service and Dinner in December, eleven months off.

In May he wrote to Nico himself, explaining the Company and putting the family in the middle of it: *"David Shephard was Master in 1974, and I became a liveryman in 1976, going on to become Master in 1998."* The money took one line and three exclamation marks: *"I know your father will assist with joining fees etc.!!!"* He finished: *"Well, I hope I've whetted your appetite."* Nico wrote back in June: "You have indeed whetted my appetite — it sounds excellent!"

At the dinner Jeremy had him on his own table with Rupert Hall — of a similar age, and the grandson of his great friend HAC Collinson. They got on. "I enjoyed talking to Rupert Hall," Nico wrote afterwards. "We had a lot of similar interests, and I look forward to meeting him again." Three days after that letter, the application form went off with Jeremy's name already on it as sponsor.

Nico came in as an Associate. David Shephard, Jeremy, Nico: three generations of one family in the same Company.



The tributes continued from Cornwall. HAC Collinson died in 2007; the last Sway lunch had been in May, and they had planned another for December — *"but … it was not to be."* Jeremy wrote him up as *"in the opinion of many the best Master the Horners never had,"* and took on the duty HAC had left him: sponsoring his grandson into the Company. The family's letter said: "He knew that you would carry on, where he left off."

Commander Douglas Hunt went the following year. Across the top of the obituary, in Jeremy's hand: *"A great friend & man in the Horners — wherever I rang him, he would call me Pavarotti."*

In 2015 the Company lost Alan Tanner, its Chaplain since 1977. Jeremy's tribute kept the sound of him: *"He always ended his telephone conversations with 'Goodbye, God bless.'"*

Newton Grant, Master in 1990, lived up the road at Truro. When Mary Grant died on the last day of 2014, it was Jeremy that Newton wrote to first: "It is with the deepest sadness that I am writing to you to let you know that Mary passed

away in the early hours of yesterday morning." After that, the two men lunched together every few weeks.



He was still campaigning, too. In February 2016: *"Andrew Parmley is to be Lord Mayor. He is a Court Assistant of the Horners ... Kenneth Cork in 1980 was the last Horner Lord Mayor ... sooner rather than later, we should approach him."* The Master thanked him for "lending your shoulder to the wheel of promoting Andrew Parmley through the Company." Andrew Parmley had been playing for Jeremy at the Company's concerts for decades — and the next concert fell inside his mayoralty, which should have been the end of it: a Lord Mayor's diary belongs to the Mansion House, and *"it was not allowed."* In Jeremy's telling, Sir Andrew's answer ran to two words: "Sod it." So at the Mansion House the serving Lord Mayor of London sat down at the piano and accompanied him. *"A fantastic occasion,"* he recorded — and then the accounting: *"What it actually meant was that in history, and probably forever, I will be the only person who has ever been accompanied by the Lord Mayor of London in a concert."*



The Wendy years had their Cornwall set-piece, and he delivered it as a lesson. Early on, they drove in for lunch at the Mexico Inn at Long Rock, *"the other side of Penzance,"* walked into the saloon bar — and there stood Michael Dibben, one of the Horners, who was Britain's High Commissioner to Fiji from 1997 to 2000. *"And you think: 'Christ — thank God I'm here with my wife. Not my girlfriend, you know.'"* The moral came with it: *"you should never ever do anything of which you would be ashamed — because somebody will bloody see you."*



On the twenty-third of August 2014 his first grandchild, Joseph — Jane's son — married Ciara Hughes in Ireland. Jeremy travelled from Cornwall and sang *Panis Angelicus* at the wedding — a duet with Maria, Ciara's sister.



Around this time the marriage to Wendy ended. Her sister had proposed a trip to India — "we must go together" — and dropped out at the last minute; Wendy went alone. *"She went down to the south of India and lived in a mud hut on the beach. Well, I wouldn't have done anything like that — I'd have been in a five-star hotel."* She came back, and told him she did not want to be married any more. *"So anyway, that was the end of our marriage."*

The settlement was done between themselves, without solicitors. Wendy kept the house, and he had the use of it until he moved back east. His own note of what happened next: *"She assumed I would go at once — I said no."* He stayed on.

What survived the marriage was her family. The three stepdaughters supported him — *"which was extraordinary to me"* — and Wendy's mother and brother stayed his friends. His own summing-up: *"What has been good about the whole Wendy situation was that she buggered off, but I'm still great friends with all her relations."*

And her father, John Hann, had written him the Horners' anthem, and four more songs besides — *The Cornish Are Best*, *The English Are Best*, *Down with the Italians*, *Spring Flowers* — and a verse called *The Two J's Are Best*. He had designed and built his own house, and Jeremy had been there to help: *"I remember lifting up lintels for him to bed in."* When Jeremy wrote him a tribute for his eightieth, two years after the marriage ended, what he chose to put first was the bathroom at Sidcup where they had met: *"I remember well the vivid purple sanitary ware."* A good deal of the rest of it is about the lighting. John had wired the house so

that the lamps came on by themselves, and Jeremy had never got the better of them. *"Wherever I sit, one shines down on my bald head, so I am constantly on the move."* And once, at dinner: *"The automatic light didn't come on so I switched the bathroom light on. In full flow it turned itself off."*

They had collected the large wooden tree roots for his garden together, and one of them was standing in the Cornwall garden as he wrote. What he put at the end was not about the house at all: *"I continue to be grateful for his continuing friendship which is great, and you never need to worry about conversation!!!"*



The ledger kept the shape of the last years. After the 2010 peak the totals came down — fifty-five, thirty-seven, twenty — and by 2013 the circuit had narrowed to two rooms, Hayle and Carleen, taken in turn; then it steadied, in the twenties and low thirties, for five more years. In the middle of the decade Larry could no longer play live. His guitar went onto tape, and Jeremy performed live to the recording of him. The jokes stayed in.



He read a book in those last Cornwall years about keeping the brain active, and the method it gave was to move things. So he moved things. The kettle went somewhere else. At Flint Cottage he took the paper towels from the far side of the kitchen and put them beside the sink, and then repeatedly found himself walking the length of the room to where they had been. Then he took the method out of the house. He had stood in the same place in the Wednesday Zumba class at Penzance for fifteen years; one Wednesday he told them *"it's going to be different today,"* and stood somewhere else. The following week, somewhere else again, and again the week after that. *"And all the women then, their brains were going mad. 'Well, what's he going to do today?'"*

In August 2018, at eighty, he moved back east — to Beech View, on Netherfield Hill at Battle. A divider page in the concert book carries the total of the Cornwall years in his own hand: *"536 Concerts."* It works out at about thirty-six concerts a year. The last of them was at Carleen chapel, and he marked it himself, in the book, the way he had marked all the others:

"Aug 15 — Carleen — Last Cornwall Concert."

Chapter Ten



My Treasures on Display

2018–2025

Battle was not new to him. At ten he was breeding rabbits at Saxon Hill; at sixteen he spent a summer down the hill at Beech Mill Farm. The Saxon Hill house went, in time, but the family never let go of the ground. And sixty-four years after that farm summer, at eighty, he came back: to a house on Netherfield Hill called Beech View, next door to Jane.

He set the house up for the years he could see coming. The downstairs cloakroom became a shower room; the walls went white; the carpets went grey; everything he needed was arranged on one floor — a man of eighty thinking ahead to eighty-five. His books went onto shelves built from wine boxes, and he had a name for what they held: *"my treasures on display."*

The morning walks began that first August and never stopped: a mile with Jane, out of the door between five to and six each morning, in the dark half the year. And at the front door he hung a bronze bell, green with age, rung by a rope. Visitors announced themselves by pulling it — and stepped in past a hallway of horn, the first thing the house showed anyone.



"No concerts for 6 months — then it snowballed."

That is his own note on the move. The Cornwall circuit was three hundred miles behind him; he started again from nothing. The new booking notebook opens with Tenterden in December 2018, and within months the diary runs to a dozen venues — day centres, blind clubs, care homes, stroke clubs — with the Eastbourne Day Centre as the anchor, a live concert a week. The notebook keeps the same tallies the Cornwall book kept, programmes lettered and counted, and in hundreds of bare entries it carries exactly one review, written in June 2019 beside *Another Opening, Another Show*: *"v good."*



The Banqueting Room

In the dining room hung the certificate that made him a Horner — the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Horners, No. 800, dated the seventh of October 1975, made out to Jeremy John Cartwright of The Mews, Angley Park, Cranbrook. Near it, the photograph collage the family made for his eightieth, and the glasses that say who their owner is: a wine set labelled "Old Git," a deliberately leaning glass named "Le Verre de Pisa." This was the room his guests were fed in.

The lunches began about a year after the move, and he told the story of them himself: *"about four years ago, I invited ... four couples to come for a simple lunch. Soup, bread, cheese, a glass of wine. ... they arrived about half past twelve and were still there at four ... Incredibly popular. ... We've been doing that ever since."* He cooked it himself, laid the table himself, and sat down at it. And four or five times a year the table belonged to the Cranbrook Operatic Society — his old society, kept at his table forty years on — for which there was a standing order at the Battle

baker, placed every Thursday on his way to Zumba: four French sticks, for seven o'clock the next morning.

When some of the Horners came to him — October 2022, a Company lunch at Beech View — he had the guests collected from Tunbridge Wells station, and cooked. Hugh Moss, the past Master, wrote afterwards: "You arranged for us to be picked up at Tunbridge Wells station and be transported to Beech View ... a superb lunch which you had prepared yourself!" — and he had noticed, too, "the way you had organised your living arrangements ... essentially on one floor." Another guest, Barry Maunders, after a lunch in March 2024: "You make a really excellent chilli ... Your horn collection is very interesting and I'm still intrigued by your collection of rulers." Every gathering went into the record, in the same book that had counted the Cornwall concerts, filed under three headings: Guests, Horners, Friends.



At the baker's counter the girls had decided he was famous. His own account of what the fame amounted to: *"Fame, for French sticks. Yes, five times a year."* Years later one of the bakery women sought him out specially to tell him she was retiring — *"because she was so used to me ... it was just lovely."* He had a theory about how these things worked, and it was not about being famous. The special friendship of these years was with Juliet Gledhill, who kept a shop on Battle High Street called Mini Mouthfuls; he called in on his way to Zumba, twice a week, and it turned out Jane had taught her son Will. *"When you see somebody twice a week, somehow you do become friends. I am incredibly lucky, because she'd do anything for me."* At the end of 2024 Juliet gave up the shop — successful, and too time-consuming — and took the baking to weekend markets and food fairs instead. They stayed in touch.



The telephone worked the same way, and the proof of it was Steve. At a Horners lunch at the Plaisterers' Hall, years after his Mastership, Jeremy ran his eye down the table and did a quick count: fourteen people, one salt and pepper at one end, one at the other. He found the banqueting manager, a Polish man named Steve, and delivered his verdict: *"Steve, you know there are fourteen people sitting on this bloody table, there's one salt and pepper at one end and one at the other end. That's not bloody good enough. I want salt and pepper between every four people at the most."* Steve took the note. At the next function, standing at Jeremy's place, was a single salt cellar a foot tall — Steve's reply.

From that the friendship grew, because Jeremy made it grow. He tracked Steve down, kept in touch, took to bringing him little packets of Cornish salt and sea salt from a shop in Cranbrook every time he came up to town. They stayed in touch through the caterers going under and Steve's move to a new firm. Steve answered the telephone "Hello, Mr Cartwright" — *"How the hell do you know it's me?"* — "I recognise your number." Jeremy spent years trying to get him onto first names, without success: *"Always, always Mr Cartwright."* And Steve, for his part, looked after him: "Even on the long tables," he said, "if the wine was running out, he'd put his hand up in the air. And I'd come."



In March 2020 the diary stops, the way diaries stopped everywhere that spring. The day centres closed, the halls closed, and a performing life that had run without interruption since the 1960s went quiet. What he did with it was the telephone: concerts down the line — to Beryl, to Sheila — half an hour at a time. The family set up his mobile with a folded sheet of instructions kept in the case, and Trixie coached him in using it.

In June 2021 the diary starts again — *"Horam, Black & White Minstrels"* — and in September 2021, at a Horners dinner, he was on his feet after eighteen months away: *"It is so good to be back together."* The same autumn, in a letter, he filed the other half of it, flat, without self-pity: *"There is nothing so past as a Past Master."*



Every morning through the last years of the era he sang to Beryl — his friend Mick's wife, who had dementia. By then much of the world had stopped reaching her. The song still did — it went in past everything else and found her, morning after morning, and what it found came out as tears. The crying meant it was working; the crying was also why it had to stop. Mick asked him to end the concerts, and he ended them. Jeremy thought it was the wrong call, and said so in his own way: *"He could have said, 'Do it only once a week.'"* The sentence trails off there. He did as his friend asked.



The Master's Study

Upstairs, the office held the working life: the long Guildhall certificate of the Freedom of the City of London; the concert documents filed show by show in labelled bags — *Fairings*, *White Minstrels*, *Christmas*; the booking notebook.

On the desk were his letters to politicians, kept with their replies. He had been writing them for years — to Theresa May from Flint Cottage in December 2017; to the Chancellor from Beech View in January 2020, congratulating him on the election and enclosing a page of suggestions; to the next Prime Minister in September 2024; and again in March 2025, at eighty-seven. The suggestions were all mechanism. Motorways should carry tolls, collected in advance, so that those

who used them paid. VAT could go up one per cent *"to be used for dementia care — after a couple of months it would not be noticed."* A dog licence — thirteen and a half million dogs in the country — *"could be run by the car tax people."* Doctors' appointments should carry a twenty-pound charge, *"to concentrate the mind — to be refunded if the appointment is attended. Payment by card only."* And for the companies polluting the waterways, one warning, and then: *"the Directors should be fined. Not the Company's. You could also make them supply the NHS with water free!!!"* Downing Street wrote back — Mrs May *"very much appreciates the time you have taken to write"* — and the Treasury wrote back, and the replies were filed with the letters. The September 2024 one he signed *"OAP Jeremy Cartwright."*

Standing for anything himself was never the idea. Local government? *"Not for me."* He had done the same thing in the CODS and the Horners — *"I got involved in the machinery, so to speak."* And about what the letters would change he had no illusions — *"It's not going to make much difference"* — and wrote them anyway.



Also on the wall in his office, a wooden plaque: "Family Cribbage Champion 1938–2018." Underneath it, on a Post-it, in his own hand: *"ONCE."*

The plaque was a joke about the one thing the family never joked about. Cribbage ran the whole length of the life: by candlelight through a great storm's week-long power cut, when the cards came out every night; on holiday at Port Grimaud; and now, back in Battle, at every family visit — Penny, Jane, Josh, sometimes four-handed in partnerships. The board had its own language, and he relished all of it: *"fifteen two, fifteen four — and the rest won't score"*; *"level pegging"*; *"top notch"*; and, for beating a man by a full lap of the board, *"left in the lurch"* — a standing source of teasing. The smallest scores got their own saying, *"Little fish*

are sweet" — a phrase he believed had come down to him from his own father, and which he now handed on across the board to the grandchildren. The hands went round the family by photograph. Josh, March 2019: his highest hand ever — "Grandad said the highest hand he's seen." Josh again, June 2022: "Grandad beat me by 1 point!!!!" By January 2024 the scoring of the play was being disputed three ways on the family WhatsApp.



The Great Hall

The hallway was horn: horn upon horn, the collection of fifty years, ranged on shelving he had built from wine crates, with the Company's illuminated Grant of Arms framed above. And beside the horns hung a framed handwritten letter from a fellow Horner, Clive Thompson, written after a lunch at the house: "All of us enjoy sharing in our formal events, but a gentle lunch in the Weald was a brilliant contrast ... it all needed 'putting together' and creating the occasion, and that was all down to you and your basic need to bring people together." Jeremy had it framed and hung it by the door.

The Company has a title for its eldest: Father of the Company. It is not earned by climbing; it comes to whoever has been a Liveryman longest and is still living. *"There have only been three previously,"* Jeremy said — Basil Leverton, Jeremy Spofforth and John Webb, *"all great friends of mine."* One of them was the other Jeremy. Jeremy Spofforth was Jeremy one; *"I became Jeremy two,"* he said. *"Now I'm Jeremy one."* When the man who held the title died, it made its slow way down the seniority list, and by the Court minutes of the second of February 2022 the Father of the Company was Jeremy Cartwright. His own note of it: *"I was particularly delighted to be appointed as 'Father of the Company'."*

And the Father of the Company was, by then, the Company's music. *The Horners Are Best* — the song John Hann had written in 1992, which Jeremy had

long since made his own — was the thing the Company asked him for by name, year on year. A Carol Service supper programme billed it in full: the Father of the Company would sing the hugely popular *The Horners Are Best*, and the audience were invited to join in "with enthusiasm and volume." There is a photograph of him doing it, arms raised, conducting the room into the chorus. A birthday card sent to him one year did not merely mention the song; the card itself played it. And he kept writing new verses — one for Andrew Parmley as Lord Mayor, a farewell set for Raymond Layard, the retiring Clerk — each new Company occasion pinned to the old chorus.

What the hallway held, he was handing on. Josh — Jane's son — became a Horner in 2023, drove his grandfather up to the Mansion House dinners, and sat beside him there. Simon Hurrell was trained to sing *The Horners Are Best* after him; at the Christmas supper of 2024 the programme lists the two of them singing it together on one bill. Of the Splinter lunches he wrote that Denis Cruse *"will continue to add new Splinters as the rest of us drop off the perch."* And at the cribbage board, the sayings were already travelling into their fourth generation. With Josh in the livery, so was the family's place in the Company.



The Withdrawing Room

In the lounge stood a seven-tier pine bookcase holding not a single book. It held jars — big lidded sweet-shop jars, each one a category: beach pebbles in one, shells and coral in another, tumbled stones in a third, corked.

The family was widening at both ends in these years. Jesse was born in July 2019, Bláithín in April 2022 — great-grandchildren. And there was one more mending, the oldest. When Liz — his first wife — moved near Jane and Penny, Jeremy ended an estrangement that had run more than half a century. *"Wipe my slate clean,"* he said.

The family was on the shelves, in photographs. In among the jars and the driftwood sat a black-and-white photograph of Jane and Penny as girls, laughing, at the top of the case; Joseph and Ciara with Jesse further down. And on the low table by the clock, at exactly the height of a seated man's eye, a row of folding frames: his mother; Jane and Penny; Ray Wills; Tessa and Hugh.



The friends went one by one, and he wrote the words for them. Newton Grant died at the end of 2021, and Jeremy delivered the eulogy: *"For as long as I can remember, Newton and I have sat side by side, in the front row on the left-hand side of St James Church … The services will never be the same again for me. I started by saying we were friends. I finish by saying, when I next go to Cornwall, I will not see my great friend, who I miss greatly."* Bernard Schaverien died the following year — the man who had managed his children's money, and whose friendship had begun with Bernard reciting, unprompted, the whole menu he was planning for his fiftieth birthday party. Jeremy's tribute kept the comedy alive inside the grief — the menu story, and then, in his own stage direction: *"(Pause) I regret to say I was not invited!!!"* — and when he came to Bernard and Adele's emigration to Australia, he set down something he did not often commit to paper: *"I shed real tears at the thought of losing my good friends."* When a Splinter member resigned over the cost of the lunches, Jeremy wrote to him: *"Please don't sever a fantastic friendship for a few quid."* Iain McColl's letters from a long illness were kept among Jeremy's papers, and answered — the man who had once been kept in the circle from Cornwall now keeping an ailing friend company by post. Iain died in 2025, on a Thursday. And when his cousin Alexander died that January, Jeremy was asked to sing at the memorial. *"No rehearsals. I just gave the pianist the music — and we bloody did it, and it was brilliant."* Forty people came up to him afterwards. The song was *Panis Angelicus* — the one he had sung at Joseph and Ciara's wedding, eleven years before — and his accounting of the day was this: *"Biggest audience I've ever had — 350 people."*



Twice, at a funeral, he did not recognise someone he knew.

The first was John Macey's, in October 2018. The two of them had been seated next to each other in the Horners years before and had become great friends, and when John Macey died Jeremy was asked to give the eulogy. A few days before the service the Clerk of the Company rang to tell him that another Horner would be coming. Josh drove him down to the church at Sullington, in West Sussex, and they were there half an hour early, *"because I like to be early."* A Horners' tie came towards him, and Jeremy introduced himself: *"I don't think we've met before. I'm Jeremy."* The man said that they had: they had had dinner together in Spain a few days earlier, on the Monday night. Jeremy had been out there that week with the Company's golfers, about twenty-five of them in a very nice restaurant. *"And this is true, amazing."* The man's name was Alan.

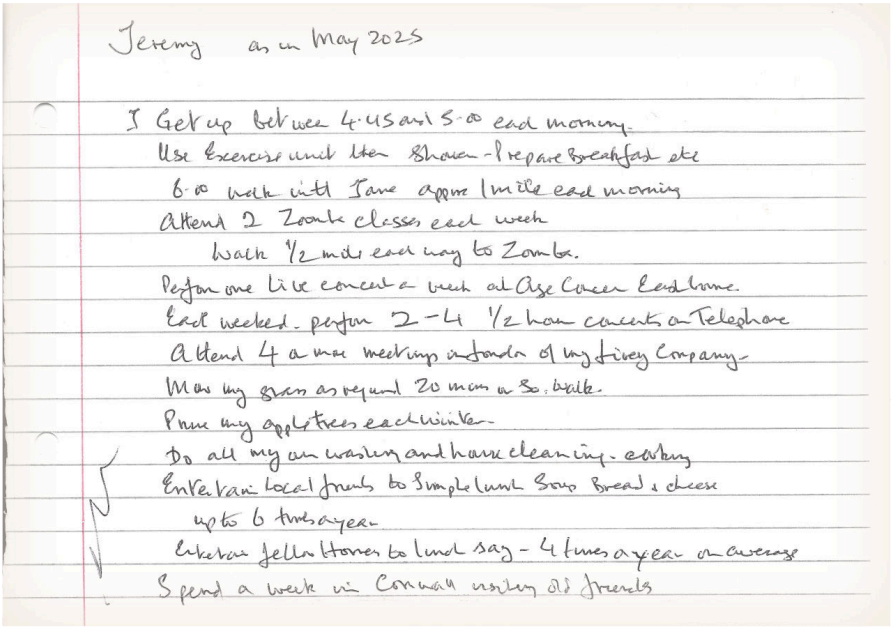
The second was George Hudson's, in April 2024. George had sung beside him in the Cranbrook society since *Patience*, in 1963, and John Williams, for years its musical director, rang to ask whether Jeremy would sing the tenor in a quartet from *The Mikado* at the service. He said he would, and learned it. The other three were to be a bass he had met but did not know; Annie Butler, the soprano, whom he knew very well; and Sue Wightman, the contralto. He and Sue had played opposite each other in *South Pacific* in 1983 — she was Nellie Forbush to his Emile de Becque — and she had played the piano for his music halls. *"We knew each other very, very well indeed."* The four of them met in St Dunstan's an hour before the service to rehearse. There was Annie, and there was the bass, and there was a grey-haired woman he did not recognise at all. *"Obviously something's gone wrong, and they've had to change the cast."* It turned out to be Sue.

"Very embarrassing, really."

His five-word verdict on the whole strand: *"I hate losing my friends."* His answer to it was to go on laying the table. The lunches did not stop; *"we've been doing that ever since"* was still true.



In May 2025, at eighty-seven, he wrote out his own week, in his own hand, like an operations manual: *"I get up between 4.45 and 5.00 each morning... 6.00 — walk with Jane, approx 1 mile each morning. Attend 2 Zumba classes each week... Perform one Live concert a week at Age Concern... Each weekend — perform 2–4 half-hour concerts on the Telephone... Do all my own washing and house cleaning — cooking... Spend a week in Cornwall visiting old friends."*


Jeremy as on May 2025

I Get up between 4.45 and 5.00 each morning.
Use Exercise unit then Shower - Prepare Breakfast etc
6.00 walk with Jane approx 1 mile each morning
Attend 2 Zumba classes each week
Walk ½ mile each way to Zumba.
Perform one Live concert a week at Age Concern Each home.
Each weekend - perform 2-4 ½ hour concerts on Telephone
Attend 4 or more meetings on behalf of my livery Company -
Mow my grass as required 20 mins or so. Daily.
Prune my apple trees each winter -
Do all my own washing and house cleaning - cooking
Entertain local friends to Simple lunch Soup Bread & cheese
up to 6 times a year
Entertain fellow Horners to lunch say - 4 times a year on average
Spend a week in Cornwall visiting old friends

On the second of July 2025, at the Master's Summer Dinner, he stood up and sang *The Horners Are Best*. The diary kept the note the way it kept everything, in a line. His verdict on all of it, recorded around the same time: *"I'm so fortunate. I've had such a fantastic life."*

The concert diary runs on into November.



On the thirteenth of November there was a concert in the book and a morning walk before it. He got up before five, as he did every day. High-vis on, out of the door between five to and six, into the dark, up the hill with Jane.

Jane said, "Car! Lights!"



Chapter Eleven



High-Vis

November – December 2025

Jane said, “Car! Lights!”

It was ten past six in the morning on the thirteenth of November 2025, and they were where they were every morning: on Netherfield Road, in the dark, a mile out from the house. He had his high-vis jacket on, and a headlamp, and a red light on his back. When a car came they did what they always did — stopped on the verge, turned to face it.

The car hit them both.

“I am no expert on speeds,” he told the police afterwards, *“but he was in my terms going bloody fast as he was on top of us so quickly.”* Jane, walking beside him, was hurt far more gravely.



He was eighty-seven, and he had walked a mile before dawn every morning for years.

The trauma unit at Brighton wrote his injuries down as a list, and the list runs to eleven lines. A bleed on the brain and a fractured skull. Fractures through his face and the socket of his left eye. His left shoulder out of its joint. His sternum broken and five of his left ribs. Two vertebrae, at the middle of his back and at its base. A broken bone in his left foot. And both legs broken — tibia and fibula on both sides, and the plateau of both knees.

His eyelid had been so badly damaged that it was taken away at the roadside.

On the twenty-fifth of November they operated on both knees on the same day: the left one plated and screwed, the right one opened to find the nerve that runs round the top of the calf. They found it and closed the wound. The nerve did not recover. He has not been able to lift the front of his right foot since, and eight months later he was still writing in his own notebook, in capitals, *R ANKLE STILL NO MOVEMENT.*

On the first of December they stitched his left eye shut to protect it, which is a temporary measure and lasted him, in one form or another, six months.



Some weeks later, talking about the operation on his legs, he stopped and noticed something nobody had said.

"...and nobody's mentioned the word pain," he said. *"I'll tell you what, Giles — I have never experienced pain like it, when I came out of the anaesthetic after my legs were done. Jesus, it was unbelievable. They had to give me — I don't know what they do — something to keep the pain at bay. It was really... well, it was what it was, I'll tell you that."*



Four doctors arrived at the foot of the bed one morning and began discussing him with each other.

He stopped them. *"Who are you?"* he said. *"I need to be introduced to people."*



He started a notebook.

He had counted concerts in Cornwall and lunches at Battle, and now, flat on his back with both legs in braces, he counted this. The first page is headed **THURSDAY NOV 13 STARTED**, and after that it is dated entries in block capitals: his weight, in kilos and in stones and pounds, taken again and again through the winter; the day he first sat in a chair, and how long for; the day he sat in it twice; Fortisip Protein, when they put him on it; the first full shower; the first long walk; the day he dressed himself.

He also wrote down the nurses. Page after page of them, ward by ward, first names in capitals — Leonni, Tia, Jimsha, Shruthi, Fidelis, Bismark, Bisola, Alice, Christine — and then, on its own page, this:

COUNTRIES ROMANIA VENEZUELA ARGENTINA INDIA MALAYSIA NIGERIA PHILIPPINES NEPAL



Six days after the collision there is an entry that is not about him at all.

SAW JANE WED NOV 19, HELD HAND. EYES FLICKERED.

After that she is in the log wherever he could get news of her: the day he was moved to a ward and saw her on the way; the twenty-ninth of November, when they put her in the next room; the third of December, when she was in a

wheelchair. He was following his daughter's recovery from his own bed, in the same notebook and the same capitals he was using to follow his own.



There was a carer at Brighton called Mick.

One evening he came over to the bed. *"Jeremy, he says, it's snowing. Would you like me to turn your bed round so you can see it?"* Two nights later, at ten o'clock at night, he came over again. *"Jeremy, it's all peaceful. Would you like me to wheel you through into the other ward where your daughter is so you can see her?"*

"She was in a coma," Jeremy said. *"I could hold her hand."*



The staff who were with him wrote to him too.

Intensive care keeps a diary at the bedside, and the nurses write in it — addressed to the patient, in the second person, for the patient to read afterwards when he is able to. Mick wrote on the eighteenth of November, the night before both legs were operated on, and told him what had been happening while he was not there to see it. Karen wrote on her night shifts. One of them, on a day when he had come off the oxygen and been lifted into a chair, wrote: "I will pray for you and your daughter to get well soon."

And within a fortnight he was on the telephone.

He worked his way through his own address book from the ward, and the evidence for it is the answers: well over a hundred get-well cards and letters arrived over that winter, most of them replies to calls he had placed himself. What the senders say, over and over, is not that he was ill. It is that he rang, and that he sounded *chirpy*, and *cheerful*, and *so strong*, and that he had rung at whatever hour suited him — one of them teasing him for "ignoring the time of day when answering." That was not something the hospital had brought on. It was fifty years of the same habit, running on inside a broken body, out of a bed he could

not get out of, through a fractured sternum, with one eye stitched shut. A number of them took it entirely for granted that he would be singing to the staff before long, and said so, and said they would miss his dulcet tones at Christmas.

Richard wrote on the first of December: "You are truly indomitable, unfailingly cheerful — and an all-round good chap! I'm privileged to know you." Andy and Colin wrote to both of them: "To the sunshine of our company, our wonderful Jeremy. We wish you and your lovely daughter Jane a speedy recovery."



"The cards you are receiving just show what a lovely man you are and a very popular one." — Margaret Thompson, Mullion.

He had also gone back to work on the book.

For two years he had been sitting down with Giles and recording his life, a session at a time, and the accident stopped it for about a fortnight. Then it started again, in the ward, from the notebook: lists of what he wanted to tell him, written up between visits and worked through when he arrived — the farm names, the men who had worked for him, who had sung what and in which year.



On the seventh of December they moved him out of Brighton. The word in his notes is *repatriated*, and he had been there three and a half weeks.

The Conquest Hospital had him for a fortnight, on the Benson and Egerton trauma unit, fifteen minutes from his own front door. The physiotherapists got him standing up from the bed and sitting down again, eleven times, and recorded that he pushed up with his arms for the last two. On the seventeenth of December Josh sent the family a message: "Grandad has walked the furthest he's walked today...progress with grandad. He has walked 5 metres this morning with the help of his walker!"

On the twentieth they sent him to Bexhill, to the Irvine Unit, and on Christmas Eve they admitted Jane to the same unit for rehabilitation.



So they were all in one room for Christmas.

Jeremy in a chair with his legs braced and a patch over one eye, his daughter beside him, and the family round the two of them. It was six weeks since the morning on Netherfield Road, and it was the first time since then that the family had been in the same place at the same time.

And it was there that Josh gave him the horn — a piece of polished horn, marking fifty years a Horner, handed over in a rehabilitation unit in Bexhill by his grandson, who was by then a Horner himself.

Chapter Twelve



Forward Is My Category

January – June 2026

Some time in the new year, the claim for compensation required Jeremy to say what it had cost him.

He and Jane were both at Bexhill by then, in the same rehabilitation unit. Two solicitors came down to it, and they met in the meeting room there. The question was what the collision had taken away from him, in terms that could be written down. It is the only place in the whole record where he answers it.

"I have never told my solicitors what it would cost me, this accident — not in financial terms but in personal terms. ... But every four weeks I'm losing nine hours of singing. Every four weeks I'm losing eight Zumba classes. I'm losing endless lunches at home and away. I've already lost three important meetings with my Livery company in London. I'm missing coffee mornings... Per year, I estimate that I attend at least 75 lunches — at Jane's or Penny's, or in London or a local friend's, or I'm organising them myself, which I do. I've been organising lunches for my friends in my own home ever since the end of Covid, and all these things have gone. Because I'm old and probably quite close to the end of my useful life... to me, these are incredibly important."

The solicitor told him the truth, which was that the law has a heading for it — general damages, for pain, suffering and loss of amenity — and that the heading would not do the job. "It will never reflect the loss that you feel personally and the impact of your life, because there is no other way that we can quantify it."

He had just listed the singing, the exercise, the lunches and the Company. He spent the next six months getting all four of them back.



At the Horners' carol service in December, his friend Simon Hurrell stood up in front of the room, and before he sang he told them that Jeremy had walked five metres.

Jeremy was not there to hear it.

He heard about it afterwards, and what he did with that is the whole of the rest of this chapter. He decided he would be in the room the next time — that he would get himself to London in the summer, and that what would be announced then would not be five metres — it would be twenty metres, and two hundred, and a quarter of a mile. It would be that he had walked from the station to the hall on his own legs.

He had no medical reason to believe any of it.

He turned eighty-eight on the eleventh of January, in a hospital bed.



The Irvine Unit at Bexhill had him from before Christmas until the beginning of March, and he ran it the way he had run everything else.

Pressed to drink eight glasses of water a day, for his blood pressure and for the circulation in his legs, he said that he preferred fizzy drinks. The ward food killed his appetite, so he asked for Brussels sprouts and Stilton to be brought in. He agreed to take Fortisip twice a day on terms — provided there was savoury soup

at supper and a dessert with lunch — which is a negotiated settlement rather than a prescription.

He was walking the corridors on the Zimmer frame, the physiotherapist behind him with the empty wheelchair, when he came to a set of double doors that were shut, with two men standing beside them. He asked them, *"as we come through the door, will you please open the double door — and stand to attention and salute me?"* They opened the doors and saluted him through them.

He kept going. At the next set of double doors there were two more men, and he asked exactly the same thing. They did it too.

After that it spread. Other staff had seen it done and started doing it themselves, and by the end of his weeks there he was being saluted through doorways by porters and cleaners who had never been asked.

One of the second pair of nurses went further. He came to attention every time he saw Jeremy, anywhere on the ward, and went on doing it for at least another eight weeks. Jeremy stopped him one time and introduced himself, and they became friends.



At the end of one of the speech-and-language assessments the therapist asked whether there was anything else he wanted to raise. He looked at her seriously, in the manner of a man about to disclose a symptom.

"All my life I've been a tenor," he said. *"After this accident, I feel half the man I was. Now, I'm only a fiver."*



But what he mostly did on that ward was what he had done everywhere else for eighty-eight years, which was to pay attention to the people in it.

There were two cleaners who shared a name. *"I christened them Sarah 1 and Sarah 2,"* he said. *"They loved it. You know, they absolutely adored it."* There

was Martin, a carer who qualified while Jeremy was there. There was Rosie the physiotherapist. There was Akash, a young man with jet-black hair and a black beard, striking to look at, who came in at weekends to clean the toilets, whom nobody had any particular reason to speak to, and whom Jeremy noticed for weeks, and learned about.

He had a standard about it, and it came out as a complaint: *"the cleaners and the people that supply the tea — nobody says thank you or please."* He was still saying it at eighty-eight. *"Ninety per cent of it's common bloody courtesy."* And of one cleaner, who said good morning to him every morning because she knew he would say it back: *"It means that they are somebody."*

Months later, long out of the unit, he was at the Conquest at Hastings for an appointment — a different hospital, in a different town, several miles away — sitting in the foyer while the car was fetched. And Akash came across the floor towards him, and knew him at once.

"As he saw me, his face lit up," Jeremy said. *"I couldn't believe that he was so pleased to see me."*

He had news of his own. He had a full-time job here now, he said, rather than just weekends at the other hospital.



And one afternoon at Bexhill, asleep in the middle of the day, he woke up and there was a girl standing at the end of the bed, dressed in green, which meant she was a carer in training. She asked him whether he had sung at Age Concern.

He had. She had been seventeen, and he had sung Happy Birthday to her.

"I was ecstatic. I thought anybody wouldn't even remember... It was wonderful, actually, for me that somebody actually remembered who I was."



The first thing on his list had been the singing, and the singing was the first thing he got back.

He had done it before. Through the lockdowns he had sung down the telephone to people who could not be visited, and now he did it again, from a bed in Bexhill, for Doreen and for Sheila. The Battle booking diary — the one that had counted every concert of the Cornwall years and every concert since — has its last two entries in that spring, written up in the ordinary way, as though they were engagements like any other. *Good Old Days. Ta-Ra-Ra Boom-de-ay.* March and April 2026. For Doreen and Sheila.

"I'm back doing my weekend concerts," he reported. *"I've done four Saturdays now and one Sunday."*



Getting home took some arranging, and he did the arranging.

He declined the offers to go into respite care. *"It's my decision,"* he said. *"I do not want to go there."* He was determined to go home and get back to his old life, and he fixed the day of his own discharge himself, describing what he was doing as serving *"notice to quit this establishment."* On the morning he left they offered him a wheelchair to go out in and he said he didn't need one.



At home he took back the running of his own life, one decision at a time.

He set the times of the carers who came in after his discharge — seven in the morning to shower and dress, midday for lunch, six for supper and bed. Then he cancelled the four o'clock as a *"complete waste of time"*, reduced the evening

visit to a telephone call, and reinstated the evening visit the following morning, having thought about it. He took the eight o'clock tablets himself, by name. When a carer suggested he sit on a chair and use a trolley to unload the dishwasher, he considered it and delivered his verdict, which was that it was *"a significant practical aid."* When a carer arrived and addressed him formally, he settled the terms of the acquaintance in four words: *"You're Tracy. I'm Jeremy."*

He also began showering standing up, alone, rather than on the stool they had prescribed — and when the family reprimanded him for it, he did not stop. He only stopped telling them. They found out weeks later.

The therapy he set himself. He stood at the bottom of the stairs on one crutch, practising, and reported the finding: *"Going upstairs is quite easy. Coming downstairs is much less easy."* In the middle of April he took himself off the frame and onto two sticks, which was nobody's decision but his. And in May, at an appointment at the Conquest, he walked further than he had walked since November, and counted it. *"I walked a long way to get to where I had to go, and I walked like that, and then I walked a different one,"* he said.

"It was fifty paces, no stick, like a gun."

By the twelfth of May he had written his own verdict on the whole business: *"Confidence is back."*

Before the collision he had been going to a Zumba class in Battle — fifteen or twenty women and Jeremy, and an instructor called Becky. A few weeks after Easter, Becky rang him: "Oh, Jeremy, I've got your Easter egg here." She would send it up with her father, who was a friend of his, and a couple of days later her father arrived with a great box: biscuits, a card, and an Easter egg half a metre tall. The card was not in Becky's writing. The class had made a collection for him. *"I don't know their names, most of them, but it's extraordinary, and I was really, really touched."*

Becky had already been to see him. He had woken in his hospital bed to find her sitting beside it. *"I said, 'But I'm just one of your bloody customers.'"* And she said, "Oh, no, you're not."

A couple of months after they were both discharged, Jeremy and Jane went back to the Irvine Unit to thank the staff. He embraced several of them. Martin got *"a bloody cuddle,"* and *"he was tickled pink to see me."*



He was also writing letters. The word he had corrected in November — *Accident* to COLLISION, capitals, every instance — grew up over the spring into formal correspondence: to his solicitors, and to the police, about how the matter was being handled. He was eighty-eight, on two sticks, with one eye that would not clear, and he was insisting, in writing, that it be done properly.



On the twenty-first of May, Trixie loaded the car.

She collected him at half past five the next morning and drove him to Cornwall. It is three hundred and seventy miles. He had been out of hospital for a couple of months, he could not lift the front of his right foot, and it was six months and nine days since a car had broken both his legs on Netherfield Road.

They stopped at Hayle for lunch, and got to the house at half past four in the afternoon: eleven hours after she had picked him up. And then he stayed a week, and did what he had gone for, which was to see every one of them — the friends of the fifteen Cornish years, the ones he had gone on writing to and ringing after he moved back east.

It had been on the record as a goal since the winter. His case manager had it written down as a clinical objective: *Cornwall, reinstated.* His daughter made it happen.



And there was one he had gone down for particularly, and had to find first.

Roger was not a friend from the Company or the concerts. He was a gardener at a place out towards Land's End — a man Jeremy used to pass and talk to on the walks, in the Cornwall years, and for whom he had never had a telephone number. On an earlier visit he had gone out there to find him, and been told he had left. Nobody had a forwarding address or number. It had upset him.

So on this trip he went back for him.

He asked at the place where Roger had worked whether they had an address. They said they did. They were not keen to hand it over, and he insisted until they did. He went to the address and knocked, and nobody answered. He talked to the neighbours, and one of them said that Roger's cousin lived just up the road. He went and found the cousin, and the cousin told him that Roger was in hospital and very ill, and told him which hospital.

He telephoned the hospital, found out which ward he was on, went in, and sat with him. For the first few seconds Roger did not know who he was.

"This word friendship is interesting," he said afterwards, *"because we could just say we're acquaintances, but acquaintances who knew each other, who commune with each other happily. It was bloody special actually. Really was."*



By June the things he had lost were coming back, one by one.

On the first of June he went up to London for the Past Masters' meeting at Ironmongers' Hall. On the fourth of June he gave a concert at Eastbourne — standing in front of a room and singing to it, for the first time since the thirteenth of November. His note of both is a date and a line:

June 1 2026 Past Masters Ironmongers Hall June 4 2026 1st concert Eastbourne

On the eighth of June he hosted a lunch — one long table, and a great many guests. His verdict: *"tremendous... I couldn't fault it at all."*

Somewhere in the middle of it he gave the whole thing its summary, and it was not about the accident at all: *"I am so fortunate. I've had such a fantastic life... and it all comes back now when I think what I haven't been able to do for the last six months."*



The last thing on the list was the room in London, and he had been arranging it since the winter.

He had fixed the date — the twenty-third of June — from a hospital bed, at a point when there was no medical reason to believe he would be standing up by then, let alone singing. He wanted the place cards handwritten and folded: *"pretty would be really nice."* He rehearsed what he was going to say, and the shape of it was the announcement he had missed in January, turned around:

"I thought you'd like to know that Jeremy did five metres in January... and I've walked a bloody three-quarters of a bloody mile this morning."

He invited his family: his children, his grandchildren, his former step-family, and two of his former wives. He invited the former Lord Mayor of London, who had accompanied him at the piano for years.



On the twenty-third of June 2026 the Worshipful Company of Horners gave him a certificate for fifty years.

It is made out to the Father of the Company, Jeremy John Cartwright, who joined the Livery on the second of February 1976, and it is signed by the Master and the Clerk. He had held the senior title for six years by then. The fifty years was the new thing.


The Worshipful Company of Horners

Long service certificate

This certificate is presented this day, 23rd June 2026
in the 4th year of the reign of his Majesty King Charles III to:

Father of the Company

Jeremy John Cartwright

Who joined the Livery on 2nd February 1976

To commemorate the event of their 50 years as a Liveryman of:

The Worshipful Company of Horners

The Master, Upper Warden, Renter Warden, Deputy Master,
Court Assistants, Liverymen, Honorary Freemen, Freemen,
Associates & Apprentices of the Company look forward to
very many more years of your fellowship, friendship and company.

Signed for and on behalf of the company by:

The Master:
Dr Michael Gerad O'Brien

The Clerk:
Mrs. Jovita Amanda Williams

Then he sang.

His eye was still clouding over, seven months on, and he told them so — he could not read the words because *"it keeps bloody clouding over."* He warned the visitors from the other livery companies, with great formality, to *"please desist from throwing anything. It really does upset my incredibly talented pianist. And*

if you'll pardon that, it upsets me as well." He offered the room an exit: *"for all lovers of good music, now would be a very good time to leave. But if you are foolish enough to stay, please join in with all the songs whenever you feel like it."* He told them what Henry VIII had said to each of his wives: *"I won't keep you long."*

He sang *Get Me to the Church on Time*, and *Memory*, and *Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'*, and the one about the hippopotamus. Halfway through something he lost his place and announced it — *"I can't read the bloody words"* — and carried on.

And, of course, he sang *The Horners Are Best* — the song that goes through the livery companies one by one, puts each of them down, and leaves the Horners standing at the top of the pile.

When he finished, the room stood up. And went on standing, for a long time.

His verdict, given to his son that evening, was two words long. *"Bloody brilliant. Marvellous."*

And on the injuries, asked about them afterwards, he had already given his own account, which was that there was *"nothing to speak of at all"* and that he had been *"extraordinarily fortunate."*



"Forward is my category for everything, you know."

CODA

We'll Meet Again





The Curtain Call

After the applause, the performer comes back out.

He was eleven years old, and the ship was some way out of Kingston. His audience was the passengers on a banana boat, and he whistled *Woody Woodpecker* up and down the deck for them until one of them threatened to throw him over the side. He went on whistling it. Then he wrote it down.

Seventy-seven years later he sang down a telephone from a bed in Bexhill, to a woman who could not get out to hear him any other way. He wrote that down too — in the Battle booking diary, as an engagement like any other, in the same hand and the same column as the concerts he had been entering there since 2008.

Everything else happened in between.



The lines he used in the livery hall in June 2026 were at least twenty-seven years old, every one of them.

The exit line is on a tape from a French supper evening in Kent in June 1999 — *"for all lovers of France, the French, or good music, now would be a good time to leave"* — and on the Cornish tapes of 2004 and 2005 it is the tail of a joke about his guitarist. By 2026 he was aiming it at himself. The invitation to join in opens a concert from the same month of the same year. Three of the songs he sang in the hall that day were in the Cornish day-centre sets too.

He did not have one act for the City and another for the day centres. He had one, and everybody got the whole of it.



There was a saying he kept in the same pencil hand as the jokes, never claimed as his own — Robert Owen's, or a paraphrase of it.

"All the world's a little odd, save thee and me — and even thee is a little odd."



Among the pages he wrote in his eighties there is Mrs St Clair's line again, the one he had carried since childhood.

Flowers while alive. Not at my funeral.

He spent about seventy years doing what that sentence says.

When Iain McColl was ill he sent him whisky — a twenty-year-old Macduff, one of three hundred and ninety-four bottles from a single cask. Iain wrote back to say what had become of it: "It currently sits in pride of place on my shelf. The

temptation will not be to drink it, but to proudly display it to the envy of my other whisky-drinking associates."

The whisky was specified, like everything else he ordered.

And when Frank Ray stood down after ten years as the society's musical director, Jeremy had a pewter tankard engraved with every show Frank had conducted for him and gave it to him in front of everybody.

And it was not only ceremony. When the family companies were failing he gave them away to save the jobs. He took a chairman's title with no job attached to it so that his father could retire with his standing intact. He asked a man called Eddie Osborne to resign rather than sacking him. Three decisions, in three different decades, each of them costing him something so that the other man kept his standing.



He did it over and over, and almost none of it is in his own papers.

He wrote eulogies for his friends across twenty years and delivered them himself. Each one carried the dead man's own catchphrase, so the room got to hear it one last time — *Goodbye, God bless* — and the rest of it he made funny. At the top of one, in pencil, to himself: *This is a very sad day as I lose a friend.*

He called in on his mother every single morning of her old age.

He drove to Bexhill once a month for years to sit half an hour with an old Past Master who could no longer come to anything.

Three weeks after the collision, from a hospital bed in the trauma ward, with multiple fractures, both legs broken and one eye stitched shut, he posted a sympathy card to somebody else.



He learned the names of the people who served him — beadles, clerks, stewards, the banqueting manager, the cleaner — and thanked them by name, in writing,

for forty years. His own Beadle, in print, twice: *"a priceless man"*, and then, at his retirement, *"He will be sorely missed."*

At the foot of a formal City toast, among the notes for what he was about to say to a room of liverymen: *"Please remember Sharon."* Sharon was the waitress.

When he was eighty-seven and could not walk, he made lists of the nurses in four different hospitals, and of the countries they had come from, and told the surgeons that he needed to be introduced to people.

He had been doing that since he was eleven. Writing up the voyage home from Jamaica, he recorded that the stewardess had a temper — and then excused it, on the grounds of how much work she had.

He forced first names downwards all his life — *"You're Tracy. I'm Jeremy"* — and there was one man who would never let him. Steve, the banqueting manager, called him Mr Cartwright for years and would not be moved.



For something like fifteen years he ran a comic double act with a guitarist called Larry, in which Larry was a career criminal. Larry had done community service. Larry had been refused bail. Larry had been sacked as a Tesco Father Christmas. Larry sat beside him through all of it, on a stool, playing the guitar and saying nothing.

When Larry's hands got too bad to play, Jeremy taped the guitar and went on performing live to a recording of his friend, with the jokes about him still in. Larry rang after every concert to ask how it had gone. *"Was it all right? Did they behave themselves?"*

Fifteen years of insults, and the friendship was the thing underneath them. He said so out loud, mid-act: *"not every story I tell about him is unkind."*



He tracked people down. That is the plainest way to put it: when somebody went out of his life he went and found them again, and the evidence is mostly in other people's handwriting rather than his.

He found his friend Roger through a knock on the door, a neighbour, a cousin's telephone number and a hospital ward.

He kept a singing teacher alive inside the repertoire. Introducing a particular song, more than fifty years on: *"I inherited it from my singing teacher... and so when I sing this, I remember him with great affection."*

He went back to St Dunstan's in Cranbrook to sing — in May 2009, with Doreen Hulm and Mary Barnes, the old trio reassembled, and again in July 2019, at eighty-one, with Arran Keith at the piano. Neither was arranged as an anniversary. He was still going back, and the people he had sung with were still coming.

What he left behind him, in the places he left, was a shape. The Wednesday class at Penzance kept his spot empty for a year: months after he had left Cornwall for good, somebody wrote to tell him that nobody had had the bravado to stand in his place.



Many of the things he started are still running, and may go on running after him.

A choir began in 1985, half by accident, out of one performance sung from an organ loft to the backs of people's heads. It is still going.

Alone at a piano, he recorded every voice part in turn, four times over, so that an amateur choir could learn its lines — with a spoken apology to the basses for having changed their notes.

He founded the Splinter of Horn on a train, and stocked it deliberately with younger men so the thing would keep going as the rest of them dropped off the perch. He trained a successor to sing the Company's anthem after him.

In February 2026, holding a pressed leaf he had picked twenty-five years before: *"It's the old, old adage: don't throw anything away. And I don't think I have."*

Corks went down as doorstops and old gate hinges went up as hooks.

His flyer, which he printed himself, put the terms plainly: *"I do not charge any fee... Singing is my hobby and I like to give something back to the community."* The free act kept full expense ledgers all the same — *Petrol. Guitar Strings. Postage. Damage to Car.*

He ran the music the same way he ran the books. Songs marked up in the margins of his own sheet music the way he had once assessed tractors. Running orders timed to the second.



And there is one more thing in the record, which is not a story. He recorded the concerts himself. For fifty years, before going on, he wound a machine up and set it going — and on one of the tapes you can hear him doing it. Every joke and every running order and every verdict in his own voice survives because of a small mechanical act he performed alone, in a side room, before walking out to sing.

"You get all this information down because one of these days it'll all disappear."



There were two things he did not get.

His father never heard him sing. Not once, in the twenty-odd years his father was alive to do it. It is the fact he returned to most often, written in his own hand with two exclamation marks, and no explanation for it was ever offered.

The farm he had been raised to expect did not come to him. He had understood that his grandfather had left it to him. It went elsewhere, and he never found out where. His verdict was four words long — *"So that was that"* — and he did not raise it again.



He worked out early that the old songs have verses nobody remembers, and he built a game out of it. He would sing the strange verse — the one that comes before the chorus everybody knows — and let the room guess where it was going. He played it in day centres and dementia wards, with audiences who were losing the words to their own lives, and the shape of it was always the same. He held the part they had forgotten. They supplied the part they still had.

When a room got it right, he told them so. *"Made my day, you have, you know. You've made my day."*

His own father had gone that way at the end.



Au fond du temple saint, the duet from Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, is where two men promise each other that their friendship will outlast everything else. Brian Couch wanted to sing it with him. The cancer took his voice before it took him. They sang it anyway, at the bedside, to a tape.

He was still turning it over more than forty years later, and what he said about it then was not about the singing.

"He will be looking down now and saying that was really nice. It's not acceptable not to do it. We bloody make it work, which we did."



And there it was again, years later, at the Eastbourne day centre.

"There's a friend of mine called John who's got dementia. But we greet each other with great, great friendship every week. Music kind of goes beyond that, doesn't it?"



He was eighty-eight, and he was counting again.

He had two regrets he was willing to name. One was that he never joined the rowing club at Maidstone at nineteen, and so let go the only sport he was ever excellent at. The other was a lunch he did not go to, for a friend he did not see again.



In June 2026 he sat down with his son and spread decades of the programmes out across a table. What came of it was a sentence with some surprise in it:

"It's been a revelation actually... I hadn't realised to what extent singing has been such a huge part of my life."

For years he had ended his concerts the same way, with the coats already going on and the tea things being cleared.

"Never mind, I've had fun. Have you had fun? Good, excellent. That's all that really matters. A bit of fun."


THE END