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LIVES AND TIMES

My mother, Teresa Duffy, and father, John Baldwinson, met in London in the 1950s. They were married in Harwich on 4 May 1957. John's uncle Jack Wallace was his best man. Teresa's bridesmaid was her best friend Brenda Ling.

Teresa, who is now retired, was a journalist and laboratory scientist, stopping work to raise a family and freelancing from home when time allowed. A stay-at-home mother, she was proud to be the first to have her own bank account for her earnings. At her school there were a number of girls all named Teresa so she was given the nickname Teddy, which has stayed with her for life.

The 'Duffy' side

My mother's parents, Jack Duffy and Minnie Higgins were married in the 1920s in their home town of Accrington in the church where Minnie played the organ. Jack was one of eleven children, Minnie the youngest living of seven, her mother and the eighth child both dying in childbirth. Minnie's aunt Lil, her father's sister, brought up Minnie and her brothers and sisters following the early death of Minnie's mother.

Jack left school aged thirteen to start work. His parents couldn't afford to let him take up a scholarship he was offered by Manchester Grammar School because it only paid for a school place, but not the travel, uniform or books.

He was fascinated by the railways; wanted to work there - a plum job then - but couldn't apply at his young age. Later when he could apply, he was accepted to start to train as a signalman at Preston. A senior signalman was the equivalent of a stationmaster. By this time he was married and Cecilia, their first child, had been born. He gave in his week's notice to quit his old job on a Monday. But, on

the Friday the 1926 General Strike was called, so he never got to work on the railways.

Minnie had been working in a textile mill until she had Cecilia. Now that her husband Jack was in and out of odd jobs Minnie went back to work and Cecilia was looked after by her great-aunt Lil, who had continued to live with Minnie after bringing her up earlier.

In 1930 when Bernard was born, Minnie's second child, there was a ruling that gave nursing mothers with babies free milk if the father was out of work. When Bernard was a few days old Minnie was told it didn't apply in her case; her job was still open for her. So she had to go back to work ten days after giving birth.

In 1932, Teresa was born 29 months after Bernard; Jack was still in and out of odd jobs; and Teresa said she wasn't her mother's favourite child. Minnie's aunt Lil, usually a very kind woman, didn't help in family harmony; for example telling Jack when he was unemployed, "you cannot poke the fire, you haven't paid for the coal."

Jack had a cut-throat razor which Minnie hated. She ordered some new linoleum for the kitchen floor and used the razor to cut it to fit, ruining the edge and ensuring Jack could never again shave with it.

Minnie's sister, Linda, was a very good cook but with a sharp tongue. She worked at Colchester Hospital and lived in Dovercourt, Essex. Around 1934, Linda wrote to Minnie in Accrington to say there was a job for a postman in Dovercourt. Jack applied, went to an interview and was accepted. So he sent for Minnie and the children to join him but Minnie's aunt Lil elected to stay where she had friends, in Accrington. Teresa was two at the time.

They rented a house in Upper Dovercourt and it cost rather more than was easy to afford. They later moved to another house, still pricey but slightly less than

before. Aunt Linda had a house on Empire Road and when the one opposite was up for rent at a more reasonable price the family moved again.

They stayed there, Jack working at first as a postman and later promoted as a supervisor, there until 1939. In May that year, Jack's sister Maggie in Chorley wrote to say that de Havilland, where both her husband and brother-in-law were working, had stepped up the work for the oncoming war and were recruiting.

So the family moved again to a rented house at 74 Pilling Lane, Chorley. Four years later they moved two doors along to 78 Pilling Lane, also a house. Linda with her son Arthur, moved from Dovercourt to live with the family in Chorley because she had taken work in Leyland Motor Works as a cook. Linda underplayed her skills in catering by saying, 'when it's brown it's cooked, when it's black it's buggered.' Linda Louise Higgins had been married (Linda Young) but soon afterwards got a divorce while she was still pregnant with Arthur. Her husband had been violent, coming home drunk and pushing her out of the bed. Arthur traced his father some years later, and met with him though he was dying. Neither of them knew what to say. Arthur has two daughters who live in Norwich.

After a while Linda and her sister Minnie parted 'brass rags'; Linda had extra food and chocolates which she fed only to Arthur and not also to Minnie's children. Cecilia objected, Bernard didn't bother and - without a really sweet tooth - Teresa said she didn't care. But Cecilia's protests were heard and Linda moved out of the house to go to live in Leyland nearer to her work.

Minnie's father was William Higgins, known as Bill. Teresa recalls the family story of the time he was in the army and on a ship to India. He would sometimes be promoted to Sargent but soon afterwards he would be busted back to Private for gambling. On the ship Bill joined a card game with the officers. He noticed one of the officers was cheating, but Bill could cheat better. However, this officer knew he had been out-cheated and Bill spent the rest of the voyage in the hold in irons.

Bill was born in Dublin army barracks, into an army family. They had followed the regiment around the world and he had one sister born in India and another born in Canada. Bill was in the army most of his adult life, including the Boer War - he tried a spell as a prison officer in Dartmoor but his wife hated it. He was retired in his 70s when World War Two started and he went to the local Post Office to fill in a form to join the Home Guard. The clerk at the counter told him he could not join "*our*" Home Guard because he had been born in Dublin. Bill went home, made a list of his army service record and medals, and wrote to various authorities. He got a letter back signed by Winston Churchill saying he would be "delighted" for Bill to join up. Bill returned to the Post Office and waited for the same clerk to be at the window. The clerk read the letter and told Bill, "Of course you can join". Bill said to him, "I wouldn't join *your* Home Guard even if I was the last man in England and the Hun was at the door." This reply became a repeated family refrain.

Minnie had some bothers: Harry who emigrated to Australia, and Jack. It was probably Jack Higgins who was working on at sea fishing on trawlers, and who saw his best friend beside him die at sea. Jack's wife had previously died, shortly after giving birth to their fifth child, and the wife of his best friend was looking after his children as well as her own. They soon married. Teresa recalls that her sister Cecilia and Arthur had visited Jack and his large family once and came back amazed. The couple had started with two houses, side by side and knocked through. As the many children had grown up this had expanded to include more houses on each side, all knocked through and with a massive communal kitchen cum dining room. Only one couple in the extended family lived apart, and they visited on good terms. Jack's wife saw to the money and cooking only, dividing out all the other jobs. The extended family were thought to be a very astute network, for example - by marriage - covering all their needs and buying all their food and goods wholesale.

Teresa's next move was around 1944 when she was aged twelve years. Jack had taken work as a baker. The firm had won gold awards for their bread and the competition for the job that Jack gained was very tough. The bakery was in

Whittle-le-woods, a few miles from Chorley on the A6 Preston Road. The two brothers running it wanted to open a shop in Chorley and asked Minnie to run it. So the family moved again to live behind the shop with a wash-room, lavatory and small garden at the back, bedrooms and bathroom upstairs. Minnie allowed people who had ordered bread to call at the back door to collect it in the evening even if they had been at home all day while the shop was open. These late collections stopped when her son Bernard took to answering the door to tell them the shop was now closed and to come back tomorrow.

After the war, bread units (BUs) were introduced. These units cut the amount of bread or cakes any one person could get. The bread then was all made with strong plain flour from Canada, but the UK was bankrupt after the cost of the war and all shipping still faced unexploded mines floating out in the Atlantic Ocean. Previously in 1940, when she was aged eight, Teresa and a friend had won a prize from the Bakers' Association, writing an essay, *Why We Should Eat Wholemeal Bread*.

She argued that, not only is the whole grain better for you than the refined flour, but she had been to the library to find out how many ships were being lost at sea, the number of seamen in danger, and then, if all the whole grain were used, how many fewer ships would be needed to transport the reduced amount of imported flour. She and a friend, her teacher's son, had thought up this idea and together wrote the essay, and the teacher was said to be very pleased. Teresa and the boy shared the prize. Jack, who loved writing, was over the moon and when he took work as a baker the two brothers, hearing about it, were said to have looked on him almost as an extra brother. When Teresa was aged fourteen her Guide Patrol was having its 25th birthday and they offered to cook a cake for her, BUs notwithstanding she recalls.

In 1948, aged fifteen and just before her 16th birthday, Teresa had left school. As she says: "Winning two scholarships at nine years old, I joined the school a week after my 10th birthday. At 14 I had taken my School Certificate (it was the last year before the O Level system of separate exams for each subject was introduced) and, of nine subjects I had eight distinctions and a credit in art."

“The headmistress remarked that she hadn’t realised I was so brainy. I didn’t say it then - we were more mannerly in those days - but she wouldn’t; I was a *scholarship brat* not a paying pupil and I wasn’t a boarder and that’s where they really made their money. I hated that school, couldn’t wait to leave. I thought them - with some extremely good exceptions - shocking snobs. Foolish too. When a question was asked and I put up my hand I was often told I was ‘seeking attention’. No, I just probably knew the answer. But, in those days, schools hadn’t the real power over careers they have today. Most youngsters taking a job were given one day a week off, paid for by firms, to attend day-release classes.

Teresa left school at first to work at Preston Library. Loving literature, she was disillusioned to find she was not expected to read, just to stamp books out, put them back in racks and generally just do as she was told, even if it sounded stupid to her.

Teresa was aged around 18 when she moved to Harwich, Essex, and started work as a laboratory scientist, first for *BX Plastics* in Manningtree around 1950. She also signed up for evening classes, and studied for her Inter BSc at Colchester. This company made resins, and one of her work colleagues there was Margaret Thatcher; Roberts at the time, who later retrained as a lawyer and married Dennis. My mother was none too complimentary about Maggie’s skills as a research chemist. Teresa recalls, “She had an excellent mind for received knowledge but none for research, where the first thing you have to accept is that there is no such thing as a fact. In research we accept and work with some ‘facts’ now, but tomorrow we might find there are inaccurate.”

Teresa’s next job was as a reporter on the local paper, *The Harwich and Dovercourt Newsman*, where the pay was very low and she supplemented her income by being a stringer for the nationals. She was offered a training post in Fleet Street but her family needed her wage because they could not otherwise continue to support her older sister at teacher training college. While she was working the Newsman, her sub-editor advised her when she was their film critic on how to write reviews so they would not annoy the cinema owners who

bought advertising space, He told her: if you liked the film, then you can say so. If not, just tell part of the story.

Her job after the *Newsman* was back to chemistry, this time for a firm making explosives. The *Chemical & Explosive Plant* was at Great Oakley on an isolated site on Bamble Island in Essex (CO12 5JW). The firm had started as a munitions company, but after the Second World War its products were mostly used in the coal mines to blast new seams. The quality control of each batch of explosives had to be tested to ensure the mixture was neither too strong nor too weak, as both errors could cause deaths. This quality control was part of her job. Because the work was dangerous, no more than four people could work together in a team. Four people did die, and some buildings were destroyed, in an explosion there on 7 November 1950. She worked there for five years.

One of her colleagues there was Gupta. He was planning to return to newly-independent India to set up his own explosives factory. He had finally paid for his ticket when he had an accident testing guncotton. It took him three days to die.

“In the 1950s, when I went on to *Chemical & Explosive Plant* in Great Oakley [Bramble Island] I continued for my BSc with an Oxford college which was probably the forerunner of the Open University. In many ways it was easier then for anyone interested in the work they were doing. Accountants and solicitors, for instance, didn’t go to university, instead they became chartered clerks learning the profession from their seniors. When they took their final exams they were immediately employable. Today’s would-be solicitor has to find a job as para-legal for sometimes three years before he or she is accepted at the bar.”

Teresa was unable to complete her BSc because the laboratory where she worked did not have the equipment for one of the practical modules. Working full-time while studying she could not get time to visit another laboratory. However, her boss agreed to pay her extra, as if she had qualified. Even so, with

the extra pay she was getting around £7 a week whereas the men in the same job around her got £11 a week.

The work was dangerous. “Especially in chemistry, the theorist can be a dangerous maniac until he has done enough practical work. I worked with one such; he closed the factory down for three days. When we resumed we asked where he was and the boss said, ‘He is sweeping up the salt in the salt store until he learns which end is the head of the broom’.”

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Previously, in 1949 the family had moved back to Dovercourt (Essex) from Chorley (Lancashire). Teresa was aged seventeen and she joined the Sea Rangers in Dovercourt. She had a range of proficiency badges from Guides including, child care, home nursing and first aid. Minnie similarly joined the *Red Cross* and did Nursing Reserve at the local hospital.

Minnie was a keen volunteer in the *Red Cross* before the NHS existed, and continued after 1948. After the family moved to Essex she and others helped in the relief efforts following the North Sea Flood which struck on the night of 31 January 1953 with over 300 people killed in England and a further 30,000 people saved but evacuated. As well, more than 200 died at sea. Linda and her son Arthur were flooded out and went to live with Teresa and her parents until the place was habitable again.

Teresa continues. “The boss’s wife happened to run the *Red Cross* locally. Minnie had said I had taken those particular proficiency badges and between them I was coaxed, cajoled, ordered to take the *Red Cross* Cadets through training. It was because of that training that, later when I was living in London, I was asked in 1956 to go to the Austrian side of the Hungarian border. I had met Johnny and we were engaged. So, I don’t know if he didn’t trust me out of his sight, but he came too.”

This assignment by the *Red Cross* was in working as young volunteers in the Austrian refugee camps following the Hungarian uprising in October 1956 and the subsequent Soviet invasion and crackdown. However, dissatisfied by the way the Red Cross was directed there, a breakaway group was formed, headed by a doctor who had served in many emergency areas. Teresa and John joined this group, *Voluntary BATH* - British Aid To Hungary. The reason for the breakaway was a row about soap.

The breakaway group had heard that a senior *Red Cross* director in Vienna had dictated a letter to a soap manufacturer in Britain who had sent a consignment of soap bars for the refugees to use. The reply had said, 'thank you, but your shipment of soap has got in the way of another one of much-needed plasma.'

Teresa continues, "The *Red Cross* camps were allowed in Austria f or first aid only, and Austria had fine hospitals and we had no wish to make an international incident, taking over their role in plasma. Moreover, the flu had killed more people in 1918 that World War I had done and was thought to be possibly caused by animal fleas attacking soldiers in the trenches, displaced from their animal hosts. So soap was essential!"

"Also, when we were in Austria the World Health Organisation sent a directive that refugees arriving must strip, take a shower and be given fresh clean clothes to wear. We ignored it. We had no running water in our makeshift kitchen there, just a water well outside. Nor did we have an endless supply of clean clothes. And, if we'd told the refugees to strip for any shower so soon after the war years, they would have turned round to take their chances again, going back through the mine fields. But we did watch carefully for any undue scratching."

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While Teresa was living in London, her older sister Cecilia came to visit her. Teresa liked dancing and took her sister out to a dance hall, where Cecilia met her future husband, a Polish man, Peter Wozny.

Minnie had a strong faith in the Catholic church, and was awarded a Papal Medal for a lifetime of service, often playing the church organ while her husband Jack served the priest at the altar. In her later years, Teresa often visited to help her mother Minnie, moving between hospital and her home.

“When I was looking after Minnie of late she told me stories of her earlier years, it was like an oral history lesson. One woman in Accrington, during World War 1, she lost her husband and seven sons in just one day at the Somme. It was all the family she had and, under the recruitment rule saying, ‘If you join together you stay together’ which created *The Accrington Pals*, they all were killed together. She took her shawl and a stool and sat outside looking down the hill, never speaking to anyone. She died soon after too. So who won World War One? That family didn’t.”

“And one Friday evening in 1918 Minnie was playing the piano and three of her friends were singing along with her. By Sunday she was the only one still alive. That was the flu. Minnie said ‘You could see someone walking towards you normally, start to stagger then fall down. By the time you reached him he was dead. It was so fast.’ The girls took longer to die, she told me, because their father kept them sitting up in bed. Flat, their lungs filled with fluid and they drowned very quickly. But even sitting up, they still died. The flu was thought at the time to originate from fleas in the trenches.” As seen above, this belief was still strongly held even in the 1950s all across Europe.

Later on, living in London Teresa had articles published in *The Guardian* newspaper and *Punch* magazine. Teresa recalls that she often had to chase her payments. At the time, although men and women writers were paid the same amount, men were paid on acceptance and women were paid on inclusion, that is, on printing. She would often have to send telegrams to chase a payment. An example of her messages she remembers was, “Man does not live by bread alone, but man it helps.” One man, George Smedley, who was a features editor at *The Observer* and a gardening book writer who had previously been a farmer, told her he very much liked getting her witty telegrams. She wonders sometimes if, with a little less wit she would have been paid sooner.

In her retirement Teresa is the secretary of the Westminster Diocese branch of the Catholic Women's League, which covers thirteen local sections of the league including one in Mill Hill. In 2013, aged 81, Teresa parachuted from a plane to fundraise for new housing for people with Alzheimer's disease.

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The 'Baldwinson' side

My father's father, Fred Baldwinson, died from his work in 1959 in Tynemouth. He was an engineer who tested the strength of metal welds by using X-rays. He got throat cancer from radiation poisoning after the lead surrounding his X-ray source was stolen and he had to drive the uncovered material to a safe place. He placed it in the boot of the car, as far away as possible but his neck was still the most exposed part of him.

Fred's father, Thomas, was employed, along with half a dozen or so others by Kier Hardy to travel around to various mines, mills and factories to negotiate worker's rights. His wife, Frances, had three pregnancies that we know of, all twins of a particular variety where both embryos were conceived about a month apart, which caused problems when one was full term ahead of the other. Five babies died before Fred's survival. Thomas dealt with all of this until baby Fred arrived, which illustrated to him exactly what he had lost and he had some kind of a breakdown. Kier Hardy then pensioned him off.

My father's mother, Edith Wallace married Fred when she was 22 and he was 18 years old. She was pregnant at the time, but never spoke of it later. She was an enthusiastic member of the local Liberal Party in Newcastle. In the 1980s she campaigned against American nuclear Cruise missiles, and was said to have coined the phrase *Not on Our Soil* while writing a motion for an annual party conference. She enjoyed going on the ferry with her friend Madge to drive their camper van around the continent of Europe. One story has the ferry heaving one morning in a terrible storm at sea, and the only two passengers at all who came

for breakfast were Edith and Madge, insisting on having their usual greasy fried eggs.

Edith's mother was Sarah Rachel Humphreys, known to everyone as "Momma", and was possibly Jewish (enquiries continue). One family anecdote is where Momma, her daughter Edith and her grandson John were walking down the road together when John was still very young. He wanted to walk along the top of a wall, as children will, but Edith was reluctant because of his frailty and medical history. Momma insisted that he must be allowed to, persuading Edith to hold back her own anxiety.

The early years of Momma were always a bit of a family mystery. Recent research starts with her marriage to John Wallace in the autumn of 1905 at Tynemouth. Before she was married, Sarah was living with her older sister Eliza and brother-in-law, Charles Brown, at 3 Burn Terrace in Willington in 1901. John, her first husband, died in World War 1 in 1917 possibly at the Somme. Her second husband died in World War 2.

By 1911 the Census has Sarah and John living together at 69 Grey Street in North Shields, John being 31 and Sarah is 28 years old, with three children: Winifred, 6 years, Edith, 2 years, and John, 9 months.

Sarah (Momma) was born in Willington, Tynemouth, and in the 1891 Census she is eight years old and living with her family at 16 Palmers Terrace, Willington Quay. Her father is John Humphreys, 46 years, and mother Susan, 44 years. Both her father and her mother were born in Essex, in Asheldham and Tillingham respectively. Sarah is the youngest of six children living in the house in 1891. Two years' before Sarah was born, 1881, there were three older children, all born in Essex, also living in the house but who had left ten years later.

Twelve years before Sarah was born, in 1871 her family were living in End Way, Asheldham, Maldon, Essex, with the three older children and a lodger. It

seems that her parents - John Humphreys and Susan Cottiss – married between April and June 1867 at Maldon. John is himself the son of (yet another!) John Humphreys and Sarah Ann Wills, married in 1843 also in Maldon. Susan lived previously with her parents (Momma's grandparents): William Cottiss and Rachel Saville at Tillingham. William's father was Isaac Cottiss, a labourer, and Rachel's father was Thomas Saville, a carpenter. In 1851 the Census has Isaac Cottiss (maybe William's father or possibly his brother) living at Jews Houses, Back Place, in Tillingham, Essex.

Our cousin Richard adds: "Momma died in December 1961. I know... because I was actually there at the time! My family were living with Momma at her house in North Shields at the time (65, Cleveland Road) and my mother had gone out shopping one morning leaving me (in my pre-school days) and Momma in the house when she suffered a sudden, fatal heart attack, albeit quite peacefully. Although I was only four and a half at the time, it is a memory that has always stayed with me."

Momma's husband was John Wallace, a Methodist, despite which he seems to have had a colourful army record, at least for the first four years, as follows:

Army Service Corps - Attested - Private - 2 Feb 1900
Imprisoned by commanding officer - 12 Nov 1900
Returned to duty - Private - 27 Nov 1900
In custody Civil power (drunk) - 26 June 1903
Returned to duty - Private - 27 July 1903
Imprisoned by commanding officer - 17 Aug 1903
Returned to duty - Private - 21 Aug 1903
Reserve Army Service Corps - Transferred - Private - 27 Jan 1904
Discharged - 1 Feb 1917

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John, *Johnny*, my father was at his working peak in the 1960s and 1970s, winning national and international awards for his work as an advertising copywriter. It was London, the swinging sixties, it was *Mad Men*.

He caught the polio virus as a young child. It mainly affected his spine and one leg which made his walking difficult, and gave him more pain in later years. It was never a topic for family conversation. When he was around seven years old a boy threw a brick at him, leaving a scar above his eye for life. He lost the tip of one finger as a child when someone was undertaking a mechanical repair and Johnny asked, "What is that bit, what does that do?" by pointing with the finger.

When John was 15 years old he returned to England with his parents and brother Stewart from a stay in Singapore, arriving in London on the P&O ship *Canton* on 26 November 1951. His older sister Joan had met Geoff Morton and they had stayed on in Singapore and became married. His uncle, John Wallace, who was a journalist at Reuters and who lived in a flat near to Fleet Street, is known to have taken an interest in John's development as a young man, as well as being his best man at his wedding.

As Teresa explains: "Johnny trained originally as a sub-editor with the *Hulton Press* which produced *The Eagle*. That was when we were back from Austria. He'd been working somewhere else before that as a clerk - and hating it - but left when he got the chance to go to *Hulton Press*. While there he was writing stories for magazines as well. From reading one of his tales an advertising boss looked him up to ask him to go to work for him. That was the year Judy was born, 1961. He was to be given there £1,000 a year. We thought we had it made! It was very good money then."

A copy has been found by his granddaughter Sophie of a later science fiction short story he wrote. It is titled *Mary, Mary* and was published in March 1965 in the *Fantastic* SF magazine, based in Chicago (vol 13, no 3, pp22-29).

As an engagement present, Teresa had given John an expensive acoustic guitar, a Gretsch New Yorker non-blonde. As well as writing John was a singer and guitar player, a member of a skiffle group (enquiries continue). He was mixing with the likes of Tommy Steele, who wanted to buy John's guitar and made him an offer, which was turned down.

The Baldwinson's faith was Methodist, and John had to undergo various meetings and obligations before he could marry Teresa, his Catholic fiancé and my mother. During his talks with a Catholic priest John asked him, "Must I become a Catholic to marry her?" The priest, horrified, said, "No. We have enough bad Catholics of our own, thank you."

His first award, in the early 1960s, was for a cinema commercial for *The Laughing Man*, made for the National Provincial Bank, very probably while working at CDP - *Colette Dickinson Pearce*. As Teresa said: "The ad was being cheered, standing ovations even, in the cinemas. I'm not sure exactly which award was given for it. I do know the award bore John's name on it, but that didn't stop lots of other people putting the ad on their showreels and claiming it was written by them. It was, I was told, the most widely-claimed commercial of all time," which is itself a bit of a compliment.

"Frank Lowe was an account director at CDP with Johnny as his copywriter and another whose name escapes me at the moment as artist. Frank left CDP to set up his own agency which was said to have grown like Topsy and was eventually floated on the [Stock] Exchange." Teresa did some work herself for a sub-agency of his with Texaco as the client. She wrote about where to go and what to see, ideas for family days out. It paid her well though, she recalls, as well as a story that someone tried to shake Frank down and he knew what they were planning, so he taped the phone call. "End of trouble." Teresa and Johnny both liked him. They would say he had his feet on the ground, a rarity in any advertising firm at the time.

One of John's ads was for the *Lyons Cream Cakes* account. As usual he was the copywriter, with an art director and an account executive, and between them they created the slogan, *Naughty, but nice*.

John worked for a number of advertising agencies, including *McCann Erickson*. However, he never worked for the *J Walter Thompson* agency because, "he was about to do so when he found out that someone he loathed was there and had no wish to inhabit the same room as him. The planet, he thought, was only just big enough," according to Teresa. The advertising agency he was working with when he died in 1981 was *Charles Barker.*

We had the first colour television in our street, courtesy of his employers who paid for these new TVs so that their staff could watch the competition's ads in colour in the evening. In 1974 he wrote a weekly column for the London *Evening Standard* newspaper on affordable wine, and in 1975 this column moved to *The Observer Colour Magazine*. He summarised this work in a book, also in 1975, *Plonk and Super-Plonk* (ISBN 0718114078). He spent some time away from home in a hotel to finish writing it on time. The book is 26,000 words and has been scanned by the family as a computer file.

His advertising copywriting included working on the *Oxfam* charity account; and his design of their logo - the top half of a stick person with raised arms - was used for many years. He said the raised arms meant both 'help me' and 'I'm happy'. It was inspired by the design of a pendant John wore at the time, an almost Celtic shape of a cross with the top section replaced by an egg-shaped circle. A copy of this pendant design was used on the headstone of baby Michael.

One of the people John worked with in advertising at *Charles Barker* was James Herbert, an art director who became a very successful author of horror books. As Teresa recalls, "they worked together and he was quite a gentle sort of guy. When he told people of his weird dream, Johnny told him to write it down and send it to an agent. That was the first of his books, *The Rats*. When he'd done

two or three he had enough money coming in from them so he quit the advertising world and went his own way from there." Our cousin Rich Morton was told that Johnny had inspired James to write one of his later books, *Others*, published in 1999. The End Note in the book says some more, but gives no names. Rich discovered this connection just by chance, chatting with James about advertising in the 1960s while preparing to record a radio interview with him about his writing. Rich tells that James' face turned very pale at the coincidence when Rich casually mentioned Johnny had been his uncle.

John won what were probably his best regarded awards for his work for *Bassett's* and for the *Irish Tourist Board* during the time of The Troubles in the north of the island.

He had a showreel, a 35mm cine film reel with around a dozen of his film and TV commercials. It was used like a CV by his firms to impress potential new clients. Ads included Ritter chocolates and Cinzano drinks. The family has donated his showreel to the History of Advertising Trust, based in Norfolk. He liked the words *ad* and *advertisement*, but winced if anyone said *advert*.

John had a series of strokes from May 1981 onwards and died on 4th August aged 45, tobacco, alcohol and maybe more having brought him down. If there was a pleasure in life he felt obliged to test it to destruction.

He was a gifted writer, but almost totally innumerate and did not manage money well. He had written a semi-humorous article, but also a *cris-de-coeur*, on the need for a national numeracy campaign to go alongside the existing literacy schemes. He had been trying to pay off a large tax debt when he died, a debt Teresa did not know about. There were three mortgages on the house. His life policy only paid for two of the mortgages, and left the main one plus the tax debts for Teresa to deal with as best as she could.

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From getting married in 1957 to around late 1958 our parents rented a flat in Notting Hill, London, and were there during the race riots of 1958. Apparently one evening my father thought the rioting was at our front door from all the noise they could hear, but it was just the neighbours having a child's birthday party. The family moved to Mill Hill in the suburbs six weeks before the second child - Mary Lou - was born, renting a ground-floor two-bedroom flat at 45 Hammers Lane. The flat had lino floors, cold in the winter, and the only heating was a coal fire in the living room. A charred doll, *Burnt Louisa*, was kept by the fire as a reminder to the children to take care.

Around the mid 1960s they moved a second time, this time to buy a three-bedroom house two streets away on Highwood Hill. They named the house *Stet*, Latin for— *let it stand*. It is used by writers when some text has been crossed out but is then wanted again. All the children went to St Vincent's RC Primary School, a short bus ride on the 240, and later to various secondary schools in Finchley and Barnet.

The first family car we had in the 1960s was a six-seater 633cc Fiat Multipla, with a top speed of 57mph, which Teresa could drive. For a while John had a moped for commuting, and he later changed this to being driven to and collected from the Underground station at Mill Hill East. Teresa did the driving during most of the 1960s with all the family inside, including a trip between London to Newcastle to see our Gran, Edith. The same car also made frequent family trips to our Nanny and Grandad in Dovercourt Bay, Essex. It was a family story how it often broke down midway at the Marks Tey roundabout when the fan belt would finally give up and snap.

The little Fiat was later replaced with a Mini Traveller for Teresa and the Citroen for John. John's favourite car was the smooth wedge-shaped Citroen DS, and in the late 1960s this was his opportunity to get himself an automatic version which he could drive with one strong leg. Both these cars were later replaced with one family car, an automatic Ford Cortina Estate, which both of them could drive. The Mini Traveller was old and had failed its MOT so Tony

was given it to work on and learn about cars. After a few months of tinkering he sold it to his school and bought a record player instead.

We were seen as a down-to-earth, some would say middle class, family during the time we were growing up, and quite trendy or bohemian for the time. One sister recalls she was seriously discouraged or craftily pointed in other directions when friends of hers did ballet or horse riding and she wanted to go also. At home, it was always *Mummy* and *Daddy*, never Mum or Dad. Our parents' families were both working class, or skilled working class as their parents would have emphasised.

John smoked very strong French cigarettes all his adult life, while Teresa stopped smoking her milder brand in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The music we all heard at home and enjoyed was mostly from American rhythm and blues singers plus some British singers: Leadbelly, Billie Holiday, Mahalia Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Lightnin' Hopkins, Muddy Waters, Peggy Lee, but above all, John Lee Hooker and Ray Charles.

I am the eldest child (Tony) with three younger sisters (Mary Lou, Judy, Lucy), a baby brother who died (Michael), and later another younger brother (Matthew, "Maff").

* * *

John Baldwinson's Awards (an incomplete list):

- The Laughing Man -

1960s - One or more awards for *The Laughing Man* cinema ad for the National Provincial Bank.

[1970 - BFI National Archive, record 555525 - National Provincial Bank – *The Laughing Man*, Television Commercial, produced by Lintas. Note: TV, not cinema.]

- Ireland -

1976-77 - A *Golden Postcard* presented to him for the Irish Tourist Board commercials from the *Travel Industry Marketing Group* and the *Travel Trade Gazette.*

- Kaleidoscope -

1977 - Two *Clio Awards*, both in the advertising excellence worldwide category, the first for Liquorice Allsorts, and the second for the *Kaleidoscope* Dolly Mixtures commercial both for Bassett's.

1977 - *Bronze Arrow* award (previously *British Television Advertising Awards*) for the *Kaleidoscope* Dolly Mixtures commercial.

1977 - A *Diplome* at the 24th *Festival International du Film Publiciaire* in Cannes for the *Kaleidoscope* Dolly Mixture commercial for Bassett's.

- Ireland -

1978 - Two *Clio Awards*, the first in the international television and cinema advertisement category for Peter Ustinov in Ireland, and the second in the international print advertisement category for the *Welcome to Ireland '78*, both for the Irish Tourist Board.

* * *

Family tree (draft)**:**

BALDWINSON

Thomas Baldwinson (30.5.1794-1.1872) m. Elizabeth Harrison
-> David etc

James Howson m. ?
-> Hannah etc

David Baldwinson (25.3.1828-14.6.1873) m. Hannah Howson (c.1852-14.6.1873)
-> Thomas etc

Thomas Baldwinson (1.1874-1951) m. Francis Hall (26.11.1878-1969)
-> Fred etc

Isaac* Cottiss m. ?
-> William (c.1815-?), Isaac* (c.1818-?), etc
[*1851, an Isaac Cottiss lived at Jews Houses, Back Place, Tillingham, Essex?]

William Cottiss m. (1839) m. (1839) Rachel Saville (c.1810-?)
-> William, Charles, Lucy, Elijah, Susan

John Humpreys [sic] (c.1845-?) m. (1867) Susan Cottiss (c.1847-?)
-> Mary Ann, Henry, Eliza Ann / Annie, George, William, Charles, Lucy, Sarah Rachel

Thomas Wallace m. ?
-> William etc.

William Wallace (c.1843 Scotland-?) m. (15.12.1866 England) Mary Ann Smith (c.1845-?)
-> John etc

John Wallace (5.1878-?) m.(x.x.1905) Sarah Rachel Humphries (“Momma”) (4.1882-x.12.1961)
-> Edith, John etc

Edith Wallace (2[4?].2.1909-16.8.1998) m. (11.7.1931) Fred Charles Baldwinson (11.6.1913-1959) [christened as “Fred”]
-> Joan (b. 4.9.1931), John (1936-1981), Stewart (27.3.1941-x.6.1998)

DUFFY

William Higgins m. ?
-> Minnie etc

Minnie Higgins m. Jack Duffy (b. 31.3.1902)
-> Cecelia (20.11.1928-19.11.2006), Bernard (1930-?), Teresa, Colin Johnson (fostered)

Teresa Duffy (26.8.1932 -) m. (4.5.1957) John David Baldwinson (31.5.1936 - 4.8.1981)
-> Tony, Mary Lou, Judy, Lucy, Michael, Matthew (“Maff”)

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