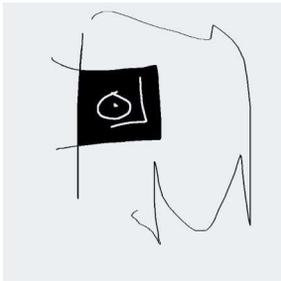


George and Margaret Hagan

by Janet Barnes





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Front cover image: George and Margaret in the back yard of 127
Broomspring Lane, mid 1950's

George and Margaret Hagan

a brief account of their lives

Janet Barnes

Preface

This is a brief account of my mother's and father's lives, Frederick George Hagan (1917-1998) and Margaret Wilson (1925 - 2004). The account is based on a conversation with my father a couple of years before he died on 25 April 1998 and a short written account of my mother's early life that she wrote a few months before she died on 24 November 2004. The conversation with George took place at my parents home at 23 Richmond Park Road, Sheffield and was largely about his time in the war. Margaret's account was about her childhood to her meeting of George during the latter part of the war.

This book is for their children, grandchildren and great grandchild and those who remember them.

I am grateful to the Ministry of Defence, the Air Historical Branch for providing me with Georges service records, especially Alan Thomas for replying to my queries. Reading James Holland book *Together We Stand : North Africa 1942-43: Turning The Tide In The West* helped me greatly to appreciate the complexity of the situation that George was

living through as well as the dangers of war he experienced.

Thanks also to Shelagh Mitchell, my sister, for some of the photos and help with remembering; Maurice and Jessie Palmer (Margaret's twin sister) for the photo of the Arundel Castle Mail Steamer and Picture Sheffield (Sheffield City Libraries) for the images of Broomspring Lane.

Grateful thanks to Philip Barnes, my husband, for helping me with the photographs, some of which were badly damaged and needed his digital skills to make them usable.

Any mistakes in the text are mine.

Janet Barnes



Margaret and George in 23 Richmond Park Road in the 1990's.

Family life in Ireland

Born in Ireland, Frederick George Hagan was the youngest son of Emily Twibles (1891-1920) and James Hagan (1878-1944). He was always known to us as George or Paddy, never Frederick. Margaret invariably called him Paddy. George called her, affectionately, Maggie.

Emily and James had four children: Martha was the oldest born in 1911, Robert William was born on 7 December 1913 (known as Bob) and John James Hagan in 1915 (known as Jimmy). George was born at Ballybay, Co Monaghan on 18 March 1917 and the birth was registered at nearby Castleblaney. The family lived in Ballybay, Co Monaghan. When George was three years of age his mother died aged 28 years, of what, we do not know though tuberculosis was rife in Ireland at the time.

Opposite from the left: Bob, Jimmy, Martha and George





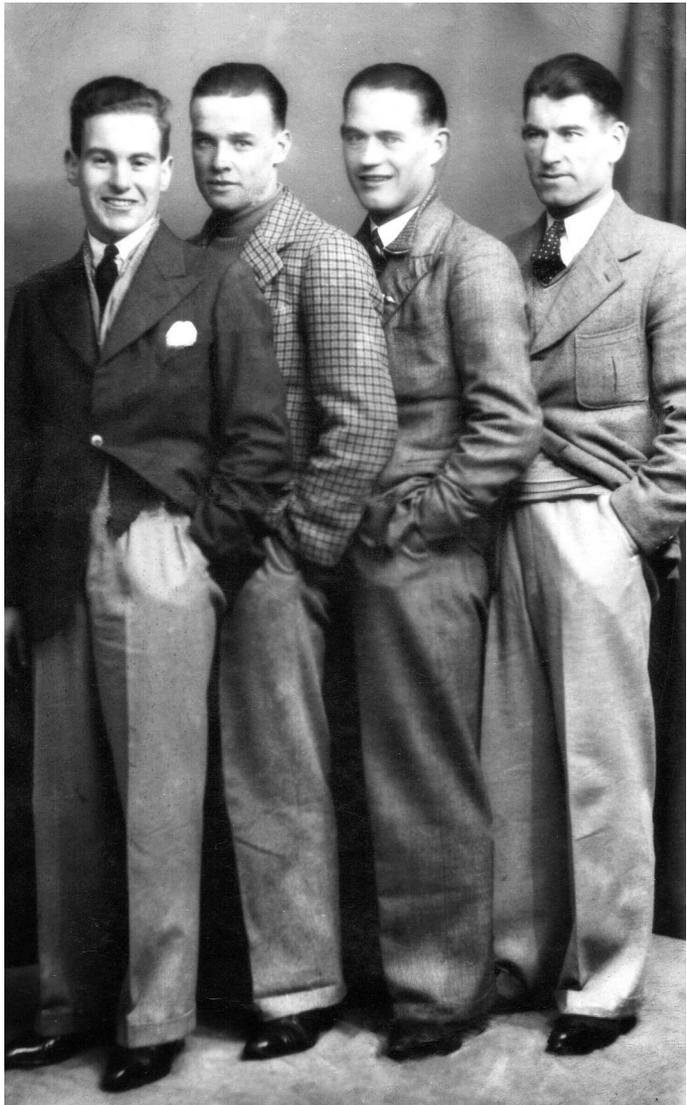
James Hagan (1878 - 1944)



James Hagan passport photo

After the death of Emily in 1920 the four children went to live with Isabel, Emily's unmarried sister in Aughnamullen, Co Monaghan in a house situated between Newbliss and Swans Cross Roads. Losing your mother aged three couldn't have been easy for George. James, his father, was by trade a carpenter who worked at the Shipyards in Belfast including working on the furniture fit-out of the famous Titanic that had sank in 1913.

James had been a keen member of the Carsons Army, the 50,000 Ulster Volunteers, who were a unionist militia group founded in 1912 and based in Ulster. James was involved in acquiring rifles from Germany for the army. Many Ulster protestants feared being governed by a catholic majority parliament in Dublin and losing their local governance and strong links with Great Britain. After the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921, James had to leave the country, along with many others, because of the IRA. He went to New York where he worked for a company making small yachts. He also went to Baltimore, but not for long.



George third from left

James sent money back to support his family. In New York he lived on Amsterdam Avenue also known as 10th Avenue. James returned home to Ireland in 1936 and George met him in London. They were supposed to meet at Kings Cross station, but missed each other eventually meeting up at Epping Forest where James was staying. George only knew him from photographs as his father had left Ireland when he was only 3 or 4 years of age. George would have been 19 years old at that time. We have in the family two photographs taken by a street photographer and the two images catch George and his father walking down a city street in London. We had previously believed that the photos had been taken in Belfast.

Once back in the UK, James stayed in London for about 6 months and then moved to Dundonald, Co Down, living at 13 Park Avenue with his second wife, Harriet, an Englishwoman, who had been a cook for a millionaire in New York. During the war, James worked for the Americans, though we are not sure what he did, and he died in Belfast, in 1944 aged 75 years.

George's older brother, Bob, followed his father when he was 16 years old to New York with his cousin Fergus. Bob worked as a salesman at Wanamaker Department Store. He became an American citizen and was called up to the American Army in 1942. Bob was a Staff Sergeant in the Infantry. After the war Bob worked in security at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and met his future wife at church, Eleanor, who was a cashier in a store. Bob died on 6 July 1991 and is buried at the Calverton National Cemetery (section 69 Site 2463) in New York.

Jimmy joined the RAF for 2 years, encouraged by George, and was stationed at Peterborough. Jimmy had been kicked by a horse when he was 10 years old which had changed his personality. The RAF didn't suit him. He subsequently lived with Martha, their older sister, in Helen's Bay and then at Greyabbey at the The Greyabbey Arms, a pub that Martha's husband, Bertie Crawford bought in the 1960's. Martha and Bertie had five children: Elizabeth, Bobby, Rosie, Jim and Isabel.



George aged 19 years with James, his father in London 1936;
taken by a street photographer



George had attended school at Ballybay until he was 13 years old. The level of schooling was good, and there were 15 pupils in the school. He mentioned to me about being taught Euclid and Algebra.

After leaving school he worked as a labourer at Downey's Model Poultry Farm at Helen's Bay, Co Down. George's RAF service records state that he had worked there from June 1935 until August 1936 so he may well have been employed elsewhere before going to Downey's. He joined the RAF on 12 August 1936 as a General Duties (service number 533859) as a way of getting away from such work. There were few opportunities in Ireland at that time other than farm labouring. On joining the RAF in August 1936, he went straight to the Air Depot Squadron at RAF North Coates Fitties, near Cleethorpes in Lincolnshire for three months.

His records describe him as being 5' 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " in height with dark brown hair, a 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " chest, blue eyes and fresh complexion. He had had no vaccinations.

Opposite: George in 1936



According to his service records George was due to go to the Technical Training Depot but it was cancelled due to illness. He spent nine months in hospital in Malton, North Yorkshire being discharged in August 1937, but he was readmitted for another month before being discharged again in October 1937. Throughout his time in the RAF George was in hospital five times but we do not know what for and the RAF doesn't give access to medical records for family history research.

By the end of 1937, George was posted to RAF North Coates Fitties as a No 2 Air Observer and Gunneries School. The Air Observers' School was set up in 1936 and served as a training facility up until the beginning of the war for observers and the teaching of the disciplines of bomb aiming and air gunnery.

His first job was in the Watch Office where he kept an eye on the aircraft, took down weather forecasts and checked the aircraft going and returning.

George, second
from the left, with
friends in RAF
c1936





Above: George aged 19 years in RAF in 1936

Opposite: George on ground far left with a Blackburn Baffin biplane torpedo bomber. These planes were withdrawn before the outbreak of war dating the photo c1938/9





Above: George on far right; written verso: *L.R. McKee, James, J Bower, George, Nicholson, G.Pattison.*

Opposite: George, at front, in Middle East.

He applied to go on a gunnery course as he wanted to be a fitter. His educational level had been assessed on joining up as Elementary but his level was deemed to be higher after tests and he was consequently sent to Manston (in Kent), then Henlow (outside Hitchin) and was then posted to Upper Hayford, Bister below the Cotswolds. Finally he was posted to St Athan (in South Wales) where he took his final exams and passed out as a Flight Rigger - a mechanic who specialised in maintaining and repairing aircraft structures. His job also involved looking after instruments, tyres, rudders and elevators.





George trained on many different types of aircraft including the following: Fairey Gordon, a 2 seater light bomber bi-plane; Avro Tutor, a 2 seater bi-plane trainer; Vickers Vincent, a 2 to 3 seater single engine biplane used as a light bomber/torpedo bomber; Percival Procter, a 3 to 4 seater single engine monoplane radio trainer and communications aircraft and Hawker Hart aircraft, a 2 seater biplane light bomber. By November 1938 he had been posted to Grantham 12 Flying Training School and he volunteered to go overseas before the outbreak of war. He was given Embarkation Leave from 28 January to 24 February 1939 and by March, George was in the Middle East.

When he first went to Ramleh in March 1939 he was involved in the transporting of important people such as Generals and Padres by plane all over the Middle East in anticipation of the declaration of war which finally happened on 3 September 1939. George remembered that day well. He was at Lydda when he arrested a German pilot flying a Junkes and who was working for KLM Dutch Airway. The German pilot had been unaware of the declaration of war.

Opposite: George in Palestine c1939.
The archway features in several photos.



Above: George in Palestine in 1939 (fourth from left on back row) stamped verso
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Benjamin St/Tel-Aviv.

Opposite: George, on right.







Opposite: George second from left; photo inscribed verso: *Donkey racing Xmas 1939.*
Above: Donkey racing





Opposite: George, on far right

Above: George, second on left, taken in Palestine. Stamped verso:

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Street/ Tel-Aviv

His health was still a concern so he was sent to hospital almost immediately on arrival in Ramleh where he stayed for a month. By August he was again back in hospital and we next hear of him in February 1942 being posted to RAF Helwan and in July, to Ismailia with the 108 Maintenance Unit where he went on several training courses for various aircraft including American aircraft.

On 1 October 1941, No.108 M.U. relocated to Kilo 17 in the desert where George spent the next two years repairing aircraft. This site is on the Fayoum Road which lies some 25 miles southwest of the Egyptian capital Cairo.

During our conversation, George spoke of also going to Alexandria in Egypt, Amman and Trans Jordan during his time in the Middle East. He also used to talk about visiting Cairo presumably when he was on leave. James Holland writes in his book: *“But what everyone looked forward to was leave in Cairo. Drawing on some of their saved-up pay, they tumbled into the many restaurants and bars, bought souvenirs to send back home, watched films and dancing girls, and let their hair down for a few days.”* (*Together We Stand* page 306).

George had been in the Middle East for 4 years and had been part of the battle for North Africa but by 1943 the battle against the Axis powers had changed considerably. The desert had been won and the battle ground had moved from the desert into the hilly and mountainous terrain of Tunisia and most of the 'old-timers' had been wounded, died or sent home.

In 1943, George's name came up to go on Embarkation Leave at the same time as his third stripe came through but he would have had to have stayed another 6 months to get the promotion and go to Sicily. He decided to forgo it and go home.

He left on 18 April 1943, but it took him 5 months to get back to Ireland. The first month was taken up by the build-up of the convoy at Port Tewfik (near Port Said) and once underway, three ships were lost to the Japanese submarines around Mombassa. When they got to Durban in South Africa, George stayed on board on boat duties whilst the rest went to Cape Town.



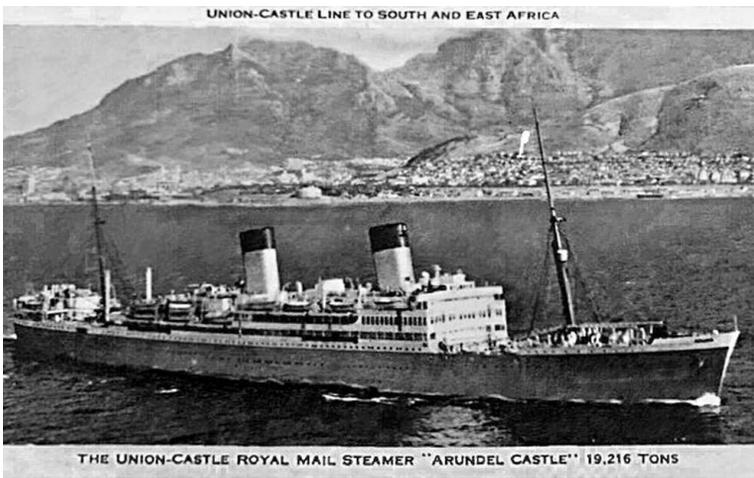
Above: George, third from left, in Palestine

Opposite: George, far right, in Palestine c1939/40

Stamped verso R.CROSS/Tel. Aviv/Nah. Benjamin



George's ship, the Arundel Castle, decided to go it alone and got 800 miles south of Ireland when they were attacked by Condors (German Aircraft). Johnny Buchanan (who George was to keep in contact with for many years after the war) and George were on deck at 5am when the German Aircraft flew overhead, and started to drop marker bombs for the submarines. The Captain turned round and headed back to America and then doubled back and headed for Liverpool. The journey from Cape Town took three weeks. When George arrived in Liverpool there was an air raid and he was told to leave everything and get off the boat and head for the RAF



Postcard of the
Arundel Castle

camp. (I remember that he told us that all his stuff was stolen which still obviously upset him very much years later as he lost all his mementos of his time in the Middle East). He then went on holiday to Dundonald for about ten days, probably staying at his father's and step mother's house at 13 Park Avenue.

George then joined 120 Squadron on 17 October 1944 and on 1 December 1944 was posted to RAF Lindholme near Doncaster with Johnny Buchanan, to work at the 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit, which converted aircraft from twin to four engines. The unit was formed in June 1943 and disbanded on 10 November 1945, and was based at RAF Lindholme, Faldingworth and Sandtoft over the two years. This reflected the change in the strategy of using bombers such as Halifax and training pilots to fly bombers rather than fighters at this point in the war.

George worked at RAF Faldingworth, and then RAF Sandtoft in 1944-45 and RAF Hemswell where he helped to form a Bomber Squadron of Lancasters to support the bombing of Germany.

Whilst he was at RAF Lindholme he and two of his mates were asked if they would consider training to be pilots. He had been interested in learning to fly at the beginning of the war but at that point it was only the upper classes who got the chance to learn. At this time the RAF was losing many aircraft and men so they needed to widen out the opportunity. Over 60% of flight crews didn't survive the war. George remembered that in one night they lost five aircraft and 30 men. About this time George got in trouble with the police and was up before the magistrate. The magistrate said that 'he could do what he liked flying over Germany', and fined him. He just got mad to think that he could be flying over Germany "for a bitch like this". This decided him not to train. He stayed in Hemswell, until demobbed. However he again spent some time in hospital from February 1945 being finally released from the RAF on 1 November 1945.

During his RAF career, George was awarded the following: the General Service Medal with Clasp for Palestine (awarded for service in the British Mandate of Palestine between 19 April 1936 and 3 September 1939 during the Arab Revolt); the Africa Star (North Africa 1942 - 43); the 1939 - 1945 Star (Bomber Command); the Defence Medal and the War Medal 1939 - 1945.



George in 1946 stamped verso: CASTLE HILL STUDIO/4
Castle Hill/ Market Entrance/SHEFFIELD 1



Margaret on holiday in Northern Ireland in the 1950's

Margaret Hagan

George met Margaret Wilson whilst he was at Hemswell. Margaret was the daughter of Ruth Clark (1889-1985) and John Edgar Wilson, who was a master plumber. Margaret was one of ten children: Kath, Vera, Ruth, Bob, Joyce, Margaret and Jessie (twins), June, Geoff and Peter.

Following this introduction is a short account of her life until the end of the war when she was 20. Margaret wrote it because Katharine, her grand daughter, asked her to do it. Margaret enjoyed writing it and the memories it brought back. The village she writes about is Kirton in Lindsey, in Lincolnshire, about 8 miles from Gainsborough.

Margaret was born on the 14 June 1925 along with her twin, Jessie, and died on 24 November 2004, aged 79 years.

1925: After one son and four daughters what a shock for Mother to produce twin girls, the first in the village I think. My first recollection was starting school. I remember crying once my elder sister left us. The school was very near our house so what a relief to go home for dinner at 12 o'clock. We lived in a house on the hill at the side was a lane and a well and a pump. The surrounding farmers would come with the horses and huge wooden barrels on wheels to collect water. We used the well and sometimes the water would come up the stepseven in dry weather I don't think it ever dried up.

Our house was very old. At some point there had been a shop at the front, which we children found was a wonderful place to play (with) deep cupboards and a counter. Also the kitchen had a pantry 2 or 3 steps down and stone shelves to keep food cool. Outside we used to set up makeshift shops and make mud pies, in those days you could disappear for hours. You wouldn't come to any harm - no cars, only horse and carts and bicycles.



Margaret and
Jessie

When my sister and I were 10 years old, we had to move out into a council house to make room for a row of houses to be built.

1939: Finishing school at 14, my twin sister and I were looking forward to a long lazy summer. No such luck. Mother had arranged jobs for us. I was to work in the local shoe shop. My sister was in the chemists, just a few doors from me. The shoe shop was owned by two maiden ladies (the Rawson sisters). One kept house and the other was my boss. I remember my wage was just over 5 shillings a week which I duly handed over to mother who gave me a small amount back. I was taught to sell. My boss was a hard task master. I daren't let a customer get away without offering shoe polish, bootlaces or suggesting she look at the bargains displayed in the shop.

The small town we lived in was a close community. Mother was a dressmaker and worked hard, cooking and cleaning. War was declared 2 months after we left school. We were soon experiencing shortages.



From left: Vera, Margaret, Kath, Ruth - Mother, Jessie, Ruth, June
outside 57 Jubilee Crescent



Margaret
aged 16
years



Margaret aged
17 years, outside
57 Jubilee
Crescent

Mother was called on more and more for her dress making skills. She was a member of the WI and soon they were having competitions for making new out of old. One was making a dress out of two old ones. Mother won and I was allowed to wear the dress at the dance in the town hall.

They were held each week and of course attracted the service men from the camp much to the local girls delight. Many romances were started at those weekly dances. My friends and I didn't make dates to be taken to the dance as that would have meant we had to stay with our date all evening. We liked to see what was on offer and flirt around.

Things were changing rapidly. Two of my older sisters were nurses and they were the first to leave. My eldest brother was in the Eighth Army. My eldest sister was married to a man in the RAF and living away. Then my twin sister moved with her job.

A year or so before the war, a camp had been built above the town and now it had become operational, and of course provided quite a lot of work for the town. A friend and myself heard there was a Canteen and needed staff. It was called the Red Shield Club so we walked up to the camp and managed to get a job starting straight away.

The Canteen was run by Captain and Mrs Bolmer. They belonged to the Salvation Army. The Canteen did very good work providing a social outlet for the lads away from home. We weren't obliged to attend any of the meetings that were held, the couple were lovely to us and really looked after us. By that time we were six staff - all village girls.

We had lots of fun. Three to each bedroom, but we had to work hard, cleaning the Canteen each morning and preparing sandwiches, cakes and big urns of tea which had to be manhandled on to the counters.



Margaret and
Jessie aged 17
years outside 57
Jubilee Crescent

Joyce and
Margaret outside
57 Jubilee
Crescent



The job we hated most was the lighting of the field boilers for the hot water, but that was on a rota so we all took a turn. At 11am. we opened the doors and soon we had a queue of lads for their elevenses. Of course we all had our favourites plus the bar cowboys, as we called them, trying to chat us all up. We also had a games room - table tennis and billiards and a quiet room for writing letters and reading. During the time I was at the Canteen we had all nationalities Poles, Free French and American. So you can see it made for an exciting life.

I was almost 17 and it was suggested that I learn to drive because we also had a mobile service. Each morning we loaded up with tea and goodies and went to the outlying airfields to serve the boys who were working on the aircraft.

At that time you only needed a provisional licence so anyone who was brave enough to give me a lesson was roped in. I enjoyed the freedom very much and eventually got proficient enough to go out on my own with one assistant. We were always very welcome and as soon as we drew up two lads would come and lift the urns up.

We always tried to go alternate ways each day. But of course that didn't suit everyone. One day we got news that the American Red Shield Club had donated a new mobile canteen - a left hand drive Chevrolet- fully equipped.

What a dream.

After a while, as I became more proficient at driving, I was asked if I would like to move to another camp. I was sent to Scampton near Lincoln, most of the girls were from Yorkshire so that was a new experience for me, never having been away from the village. At that time all the talk was about the Dam Buster raids - all very hush hush.

I made some good friends and enjoyed my stay there with lots of outings to Lincoln and Nottingham on my time off. We had celebrated VE Day and I felt like a change. So I applied for a job with the NAAFI and was sent to Hemswell - much more organised. Most of the girls were from Newcastle but I was accepted and again made some good friends, so I was put on the Net Bar which was cigarettes, choc and supper.



Margaret in the NAAFI, (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes)

It was there that this mad Irish man came in and my fate was sealed. He never did propose marriage just told every one of his friends that I was the girl he was going to marry. He had been in the RAF since 1936 so he was one of the first to be demobbed. I worked on for a while. Well you couldn't just leave in those days.

Anyone aged 14 when the war broke out lost their teenage years. I count myself one of the lucky ones, as living in a village, the only job one could have got would have been as servants in one of the big houses. My sister and I had seen it with our older sisters. Mother getting the uniforms ready, white caps and aprons for afternoon and big ugly aprons and dresses for doing the scrubbing. Talking to our sisters in later life they were really bitter about it. So the class system had to change - pity it had to take a war to do it.



George, seated far left on second row from the front.

Inscribed verso : 'B' Flight 1667 C.U Sandtoft

September 1944. Sidney Trevor Jones/ James Baker/ Robert Charles Ballard/
J Murphy (Spud)



George in Weston Park, Sheffield 1947

After the War

When George was demobbed in November 1945, he went over to Ireland and stayed with Harriet Hagan, his step-mother at 13 Park Avenue, Dundonald. He was offered a job as a postman, but we are not sure if he took this up. He did mention, though, that he dismantled old guns.

Margaret came over to see him, travelling overnight on the ferry on 17 December 1945 arriving at Larne where George met her. The journey was terrible with a Force 9 Gale. She talked about how awful the journey had been and how ill she had been, for years after.

Margaret also stayed with Harriet Hagan. George's father had died the year before. The visit was a success and George notes in his letters to Margaret that his step-mother said how much she was missing the company of Margaret now that she was back in Kirton.



George in Ireland. In the distance are the Mourne mountains.

By January 1946, George was living in Sheffield staying at lodgings at 18 Havelock Street in Broomhall. (George told us that the lodging house was owned by an Irish woman). It was the era of the notice *No Blacks No Dogs No Irish* in windows so being Irish probably complicated things.

The plan was for Margaret to finish her work at the NAAFI in RAF Hemswell and come over to live and work in Sheffield as there were plenty of jobs. George was actively looking for somewhere for her to lodge, which was proving difficult, so Margaret stayed at home in Kirton living with her mother and father at 57 Jubilee Crescent.

Post-war Sheffield was a grim and grimey place. Industrial production was again in full swing in the steel furnaces in the east end of the city resulting in smog enveloping the whole of the city. The city centre shopping area was being rebuilt after the bombing, but it wasn't an attractive place to live.

Although George was offered a job at Fords Factory at Dagenham via his cousin, he decided not to take up the offer and was luckily offered a job on 9 January 1946 at the Art Metal Work Place in Sheffield.

“I went for an interview this morning and start to-morrow at 8 o’clock. I have to organise a perspex place this fellow has just started & he hasn’t any idea about perspex so he is leaving it to me. £5 per week to start with every chance to get promotion as the firm expands so you see Margaret with a bit of luck we will be ok.” (Letter from George to Margaret dated 10 January 1946).

A man called Fletcher owned it who lived at Hathersage. George made display units, and did lathe work and welding. He worked at the Art Metal Work Place for 18 months and was married by then with his twin daughters.

I remember him talking about how much he enjoyed this skilled work. He designed and made perspex display units for shoes etc. He had a row with the man in charge and left despite being offered more money to stay.

The letters written by George to Margaret during January to April 1946 tell us about the frustration of trying to find somewhere to live so that they could get married.

Margaret stayed at home in Kirton until they married on 20 April 1946. We know that George was still living at 18 Havelock Street as Margaret kept the receipt for George's new two piece suit which he bought from Brian Wade (of London) at 131, The Moor, Sheffield costing £9 plus 21 Coupons.

George managed to find two rooms a few weeks before the wedding at 65 Upper Hanover Street (now demolished due to the road widening scheme in the 1960's) and this was to be their home for the next 3-4 years.

They were married at St Andrews Church in Kirton in Lindsey on 20th April 1946. Jessie, Margaret's twin, was maid of honour and Johnny Buchanan was best man. Johnny was to be a good friend after the war, with his wife Sybil and their daughter Patricia being regular visitors for a number of years.



Left to right: Johnny Buchanan, as best man; Jessie, Margaret's twin sister as maid of honour; George and Margaret; Edgar and Ruth Wilson, Margaret's parents



Left to right: Johnny Buchanan and the Wilson family: June; Vera; Geoff; Kath; Jessie; Peter; George; Ruth; Margaret and parents, Edgar and Ruth Wilson



George with Harriet Hagan, his step-mother who had been widowed in 1944. Ruth Wilson, Margaret's mother is seated behind George. They were on holiday in Ireland with Ruth Wilson, we think, after marrying in 1946



Margaret on holiday in Ireland 1946

Family Life

The twins Shelagh and Susan were born at the nearby Jessops Hospital for Women on 31 January 1947. Margaret told us about how cold the weather was in the winter of 1947 with the warmer weather not coming until well into summer and how George had to chop up old Victorian furniture to provide fuel for their open fire. There was a nice story of one of the lodgers in the house, who was Indian or Pakistani, who made a memorable sardine curry and shared it with them.

George moved on to work at Samuel Osborn & Company, (the steelmaker and engineering tool manufacturer based at Rutland Works at Neepsend) as a semi-skilled machine moulder for 18 months.

A new shop was being built at that time and George said that he hoped it wasn't going to be laid out as the other shops were with the machines in the wrong place. He went on holiday and on his return George debated the new layout with the Director.





Above and Opposite: Margaret and George with the twins in Weston Park, Sheffield spring 1947

One month later, during the Christmas holidays the machines were moved in accordance with George's ideas and production doubled. George was then put in charge of the shop despite being semi-skilled. The Unions objected but he remained in his new post as charge-hand and became the Foreman for 20 years.

Samuel Osborn & Company became Osborn Hadfields Steel Founders, moving to Vulcan Road in the east end of Sheffield around 1972.

Osborn Hadfields were good employers and organised lots of social events for the workers such as annual dinner dances and summer sports events. These took place at the social club at Wood Lane, Malin Bridge and were highlights of the year as children were sometimes invited to the evening events. There was also an annual sports day and fair. All very exciting for us children.



Les Murray and his wife, Margaret and George at the annual works dinner dance



Susan and Shelagh, probably taken in Broomhall, Sheffield c1950

Living on the top floor of the house with two babies had become difficult, especially dragging the large pram up to the top floor so George had to find another place for them to live.

Whilst he had lived at Havelock Street, before he was married, he had been registered for rations at Gytes shop on the corner of Broomspring Lane and Gloucester Street. The Gytes owned the terraced house next door to the shop. Presumably this was how he came to rent 127 Broomspring Lane, a late Georgian style house dating from the 1830's. It was very convenient being located just a ten minute walk away from their lodgings.

The house had two rooms downstairs, a hall, two bedrooms, an attic (unused), a cellar and an off-shot kitchen and coal cellar. There was a garden, with a lilac and a laburnum tree at the back shared with the next door neighbours, and a front garden with a laurel bush. There was a Georgian elegance to the house but it only had a cold water tap and an outside toilet, no heating beyond a big range which was soon to be replaced with an electric fire because of the Clean Air Act of 1956. Margaret brought up four children in these circumstances.

I was born in the front room of 127 Broomspring Lane on 23 April 1952 so I presume they must have moved from Upper Hanover Street lodgings sometime before around 1951. George and Margaret rented it from the Gytes until November 1970. I continued to live in the house renting it from the Gytes with my husband, Philip Barnes, until the house was demolished as part of the slum clearance by the Sheffield City Council in 1979. The new houses that were built copied the design of the original front door, but that is the only similarity to the old house.

My sisters have very fond memories of living in Broomspring Lane. At the end of the garden there was a bombed area strewn with bricks and half destroyed walls. I never knew what had happened there but it was a useful place to hold the bonfire on Guy Fawkes night. Gytes saved up all the cardboard boxes from the shop and then chucked them over the wall, filling the garden completely. The bonfire was built and lit that evening and friends invited to the party. It was very exciting. Margaret made toffee and toffee apples and we had



127 Broomspring Lane, next to Gytes Corner Shop (the white building on right)
taken mid 1970's

potatoes baked in the bonfire and George took control of the fireworks that we had bought by saving up weekly at Wards, a funny old local shop, on Gloucester Street.

Life was very social, largely around the 'Top', the Springfield pub at the top of Broomspring Lane. George usually went for a pint after work every working day and sometimes for a last drink at night often accompanied by Margaret as the children got older.

Weekends were fun as people were invited back to the house after the pubs closed for something to eat and a bit of dancing. Mr and Mrs Lees who ran the garage from across the road were special friends and their children Ann, John and Stephen were our friends too.

Sunday afternoons usually included a run out into the country for a walk, usually to Wyming Brook or Fox House and once a month or so back to Kirton to see Grandma and Grandad. It was a happy time.



Shelagh, George, Janet, Margaret and Susan c1959

It was an interesting neighbourhood to grow up in. The Broomhall area was home to a diverse mix of white working class families, Pakistan families and the Afro Caribbean community plus students and lecturers from the nearby university. It was also the red light district during the 1960's and 1970's.

Being an immigrant himself, George had no problems getting on with everyone and anyone and he was known and respected by the Afro Caribbean communities who ran 'shebeens'. These were illicit late night drinking places held in the cellars in houses in nearby Havelock Street and Havelock Square which he went to sometimes (and occasionally taking his daughters too).

The daily routine of the household was structured around work. My memory is that George did 12 hour shifts, 6am - 6pm Monday to Friday and then 6am - 12pm on Saturdays, resulting in a 72 hour working week. Later in the 1970's the shift pattern was changed to three shifts 6am - 2 pm, 2pm - 10pm 10pm - 6 am.



Postcard of Broomspring Lane, pre dating the war, showing Hanover Methodist Church in the distance on the right (demolished in the 1970's).
127 Broomspring Lane is on the corner of Gloucester Street behind the second tree on the right



Broomspring Lane showing the 'Top', Springfield Tavern
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We were rather different to other families, or construed as being so by my friends, as we didn't eat until 7pm due to George going to the pub for a pint after work. We had 'dinner' rather than 'tea'.

It was only when I was in my 60's that an old friend said that we were always thought of as being 'bohemian' compared to the rest of the street and that mum and dad were thought to be a very handsome and stylish couple who stood out from the crowd - which indeed was true.

We always had a car and we went on holiday to Ireland every year to stay at Martha and Bertie Crawford's farm 'Ballywoolly' and then in later years, at their pub in Greyabbey in Co Down. We travelled up to Stranraer by car and then to Larne by boat. The car journey took 12 hours. We left home at 4.00am. I told my school mates that we went abroad for our holidays.



Margaret and George
at the annual works
dinner dance c1960's



From left: Shelagh, Margaret, Janet and Susan in Bangor, Northern Ireland in 1961



Top row left to right: Shelagh, Isabel Crawford, Susan, unknown person. Bottom row left to right: Elizabeth Crawford, Martha Crawford, Janet and George c1960



Margaret, Bertie and Martha Crawford on a day out in Dublin 1961



Margaret in Trafalgar Square, London

Whilst in Ireland we always went for a day trip to the free state across the ferry to Omeath. The Calvary at Omeath has been a place of pilgrimage for many years. When we arrived there were many stalls selling lighters, souvenirs etc which we bought for friends back home and then it was onto Calvary in a horse drawn cart or 'jarvey'. Not being a catholic I wasn't too sure what it was all about. All part of the mystery of Ireland.

The connection with Ireland and George's sister Martha and her family was close. As well as holidaying with them for two weeks each year Bertie and Martha would come over to stay at Broomspring Lane, separately, because of the requirements of running the pub. Bertie would also send a very large turkey over through the post each Christmas which then had to be plucked and gutted for Christmas dinner. Part of this Christmas ritual was George chasing us round the garden with a handful of giblets. Shelagh went to stay at Greyabbey in Ireland to work in uncle's pub and cafe when she was a teenager and was married in 1968, settling in nearby Newtownards.



George in Omeath in August 1961

Rosie, daughter of Martha and Bertie, met her husband Ron through George and Margaret and they settled in Sheffield. So we always maintained a close relationship with George's side of the family.

Margaret continued to work as best she could whilst bringing up the three children. I remember her having a Saturday job at C&A's in town, and household cleaning jobs for a couple of nice ladies. When I was at secondary school she worked at Davy's, a famous company in Sheffield who ran a bakery, restaurant and cafe on Fargate in the town centre. She also worked for a long time at the sweet shop, Lavells, next door to Davy's, both memorable for us because of the sweets and cakes she brought home.

So it was no surprise that Margaret decided to open a sandwich shop when we were old enough to look after ourselves after school. 'Margarets' as the shop was called, was rented and comprised the front room of a house on Staniforth Road in the east end of the city where the steel industry was located.

Susan, Janet and
Shelagh taken in the
newly furnished front
room of 127
Broomspring Lane:
grey two-tone settee,
plain lime green wool
carpet and purple and
green abstract design
full length curtains
Photographed by Ron
Linsky c1968





Susan, Ron Linsky and Shelagh at Simon's christening at St Silas Church, Broomhall in 1968

This was in 1966-7, but she became pregnant, much to everyone's surprise, including Margaret, and Simon was born on 21 March 1968. George was delighted that he had a son after three girls.

Simon was practically brought up sleeping and playing beneath the counter whilst Margaret made sandwiches. However, Margaret was a very good business woman and the business thrived. Her BEST sandwiches were very popular - bacon, egg, sausage and tomato were a best seller and over the years Margaret and George saved enough to buy a house, 455 Staniforth Road over the road, which accommodated both the shop and living space.

Due to ill-health, George moved to another job for the last couple of years of work, based in the offices at Osborn Hadfields Founders. The job had something to do with sorting out the large number of moulds that had accumulated over many years in the moulding shop. George had to identify them and make an inventory. He did this for around two years.

He never said very much about the work, only commented that if you had a piece of paper in your hand then no-one questioned what you were doing. He was 63 years old when he finally retired after being made redundant in 1980.

When George retired he was persuaded by Margaret to help out with the cooking in the shop. He was reluctant at first and agreed only if he could cook behind a screen but soon he was enjoying meeting the customers and the screen was removed.

The shop was a good business that enabled them to move, in October 1987, to 23 Richmond Park Road when they sold the business. Their retirement was relaxed, going to the pub, growing a few vegetables and making wine and Margaret going to yoga.

George liked to visit the local pubs especially the ones with interesting characters like the ones in Attercliffe - though The Cocked Hat was a favourite with Margaret. He liked to argue about politics and, being a labour voter all his life, there was a lot to discuss.



George and Margaret in the shop at 455 Staniforth Road



Above: George and Simon in the back garden at 23 Richmond Park Road
July 1996

Opposite: Margaret and George on their wedding day 20 April 1946 at St
Andrews Church, Kirton in Lindsey and 50 years later in 1996.

George's health gradually declined and he died in the Royal Hallamshire Hospital on 25 April 1998 aged 81 years. Margaret stayed at the house for a few years but finally moved to a small flat in Broomhill and lived there happily until she died aged 79 years, after a short illness in Weston Park Hospital on 24 November 2004.



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