



## WALK LIKE A MAN

*oh my daddy died and left me when I was just a kid  
last thing he said before they slammed that coffin lid was  
walk like a man  
talk like a man  
don't be afraid to stand tall like a man  
and son  
whatever you done  
don't run  
yeah  
and don't say you can't when you know  
you damn well can*

‘Oooeeh!’

I heard a shrill cry from behind me as I pitched off up the road heading for the station. ‘Hey, wait!’ It was Kate, waving as she waddled towards me.

‘I’m sorry about that,’ I said. ‘He got too personal. Anyway, Arthur doesn’t know what he’s talking about.’

‘No,’ she smiled. ‘But do you? Really? Look...’ She handed me a slip of paper with a number scrawled on it. ‘Give us a ring later and let him explain. I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised.’

With that she turned back, leaving me not a little bewildered. Stuffing the note into a pocket I too wheeled around and set off; then suddenly remembered some shopping which, though not essential, might offer a welcome diversion. Within minutes I was negotiating a warren of brightly lit retail outlets, the busker’s shabby world feeling redundant amongst the bustling mall. At a supermarket checkout I glanced towards the cigarette counter and was reminded of the lyrical problem that’d been on my mind earlier. In ‘Jacob’ I had originally rhymed ‘bag’ and ‘rag’ with ‘fag’, but had then changed the last word to ‘tab’, which didn’t strictly work. The reason, obviously, was the American connotation of ‘fag’ which had become a source of humour here. On the other hand ‘tab’, a Northern expression, wasn’t generally understood. Though it was really quite an academic point because, as I said, it wasn’t a song I did often, but it was just something that occasionally bugged me <sup>(1)</sup>.

Then Arthur’s reedy voice came back to me, ‘Love or death man? Love or death?’ What was he asking?

- Was there something else in that song?
- It wasn’t about a real person, I knew that. Allegorical maybe?
- My father?
- He hadn’t killed me, nor tried to. But did I, subliminally, feel he’d tried?
- Or maybe I’d wanted to kill him?
- A kind of Oedipus thing? <sup>(2)</sup>

In fact, I’d barely known my father. Though I occasionally thought about him, like one might ponder over clues in an unsolved mystery thriller, emotionally I felt little. Sometimes it bothered me that even at the time of his death I don’t recall being affected much. Maybe too many other things had been happening then; or perhaps we were kept in the dark, as children were in those days, and his passing was just another mystery – a dark shadow, barely acknowledged and never discussed.

And yet? I still wondered if there was something important about him – something I was missing. He died when I was eight years old, prior to which he'd made the briefest of appearances - the first being possibly the most traumatic. It was also an incident I'd only recently learned the truth about when it surfaced by chance in a conversation with my mother. Nearly ninety, her usually bright and intelligent mind now unreliable, yet she sometimes had flashes of insight which came to her unbidden from those distant yesterdays.



When I was about four <sup>(3)</sup>, on the way back from a day's outing, I'd fallen asleep slumped on the back seat of the family car - or so I recalled. Bumping along a country lane, my father, Fredrik, at the wheel, the door came unlatched and I crashed out onto the road. But that was not all; a bus, trundling a short distance behind, just managed to screech to a halt, narrowly avoiding my bloodied little body.

However, what really happened, I have since discovered, was that my younger brother Peter and I had been standing on the front passenger seat jumping about. Fredrik, despite warnings from Christine, our mother, was indulging us on our mini trampoline and when the car spun round a bend the inevitable happened - us little kids went hurtling against the door which crashed open. How Peter did not fall out as well I don't know. The car was an old banger and the country road narrow so I doubt if it was going at great speed, but I was lucky to survive with no more than severe cuts and bruises. Nevertheless, I was rushed to hospital and spent a month or so recuperating, smothered in bandages and plasters. One scar, slicing my left eyebrow in half, is even visible to this day. I never blamed anyone for the accident, least of all my father (not being aware of the true circumstances till recently), but who knows what deeper scars were inflicted?

Perhaps, because Fredrik figured so little in my young life, his brief appearances have assumed greater significance than are warranted. A little later, when I was about six or seven and the family then living in Blackpool, he took Pete and I to the pictures to see what turned out to be a very inappropriate film, not due to scenes of sex and violence, but something much worse - family death and break-up. He'd only brought us to avoid the local Bonfire Night celebrations, held on the bombsite behind our house (Blackpool was spared heavy bombing during WWII, possibly because Hitler was saving it as a resort for German troops after their victory, but one large explosion destroyed most of the nearby street) and promising to be hazardous. The movie (its title escapes me) told the traumatic story of a family losing a young daughter by drowning. One emotional scene I'll never forget showed the father on his way home from work just before Christmas, who, seeing a beautiful doll in a toyshop window and forgetting his child is dead, goes in and buys it. Outside, as he's crossing the street clutching the present, the poor sod is nearly run down by a bus when he pauses in mid flight, the awful truth dawning. Of course, it's easy to laugh at this kind of melodrama now, but then, as an impressionable youngster also inexplicably deprived of an exciting firework party by this stranger, my father, the film left a bleak mark.

To add further confusion, on our way home, a short walk of about twenty minutes, Fredrik kept restraining Pete and me from running. No doubt he was worried about us getting

lost at night in the city, the traffic dangers, or the many raging bonfires and uncontrolled fireworks everywhere, but as little kids we didn't understand that. 'Don't run,' he said. 'You won't get home any quicker.' That bit of irrational advice stuck in my mind and has niggled for years (see the song lyrics).

Strangely enough, his warning turned out to be prophetic. A few weeks later, running back alone from school (always having made my own way around town in daylight), I crossed a road without looking and was knocked down by a car - fortunate to escape with just a few bruises. Admittedly, my vision was obscured at the time by a cardboard mask cut from the back of a cornflakes packet, but had I listened to my father's words the accident wouldn't have occurred.

As it happened, turning down our alley that 5<sup>th</sup> of November, we were confronted with a scene out of Dante's Inferno - the bombsite behind our house was ablaze and encircled by swarms of yelling demons. Not only was the huge junk-heap bonfire flaring up above the rooftops, but kids were gleefully hurling fire bombs at anyone reckless enough to get within range. These missiles turned out to be stolen cans of highly flammable paint, set alight and thrown with abandon. To make matters worse, and just so we might get that authentic battle zone experience; bangers and jumping-jacks were also being hurled into the crowd like confetti.

Fredrik hurried us indoors, the scene thus also reaffirming my mother's intense dislike of Larkhill Street <sup>(4)</sup> and our shabby little terraced house in particular. Whether due to this incident or many other similarly dodgy ones (the stone-throwing gang fights, the roof climbing and attendant broken limbs, the unruly tribe next door, or the time our little posse ran away to the Golden Mile amusement park with the police hot on our trail) we didn't stay much longer in Blackpool.

According to my Mum, she and Fredrik changed address a dozen or more times during the few years they were married. Although he was well qualified, employed as a teacher in various prestigious schools and worked during the war as an aeronautical engineer (also writing specialist books on the subject), it seemed he was never content and forever on the move.

- Was he on the run from someone or something?
- Or did he keep changing jobs for professional reasons?
- Perhaps, as has been intimated to me, he found working for others frustrating?
- Or could there have been another, hidden, reason he couldn't settle down?
- A romantic search for some illusory philosopher's stone or missing secret that maybe even he could not have explained?
- Or, like me, he was just easily bored?

Since I never had the opportunity to question him, and no one in the family was able or willing to illuminate, I've been left alone to speculate about his motives. As to his life, I know little except a few bare facts. Born in 1900, five years after his brother Ronald, and well educated in progressive independent schools, he graduated with a BA in Mathematics from Cambridge where his father, Hector, was an eminent lecturer (also Maths) and then took up teaching posts in schools similar to those he had attended as a pupil. Though this might seem a fairly comfortable middle-class life, not everything was as it appeared. Just two years after Fredrik's birth, his mother died of consumption leaving the family bereft. Their father, the Professor, immersed himself in work, leaving the boys to be cared for by a housekeeper. Ronald, according to recently obtained family records <sup>(5)</sup> 'was a greatly disturbed child who needed help with eating, did not know how to play, was shy and withdrawn with a stammer, a loner who made no friends at school and was probably teased and bullied by his peers.' At

the age of ten Ronald was sent away to boarding school, as was Fredrik a little later, which can hardly have helped the motherless boys, especially the hyper-sensitive eldest. In 1916 Ronald was arrested for refusing military service having become a conscientious objector. His father, no doubt concerned about how it would reflect on his own position (the family had been sent white feathers), wrote a strong letter to the authorities condemning his own son's action.

As stated in these documents <sup>(6)</sup>, 'Ronald was arrested in April 1916 (aged 21) and imprisoned for refusing military service for which he was immediately branded a deserter under the Military Service Act of 1916.' Having been imprisoned he was later court marshalled when he again refused military service and sentenced to 112 days in a military gaol. During this time he served 14 days detention fed only bread and water, following which he, '...went on hunger strike and was sent to a civil prison in Edinburgh. After three months he began to get delusions that he was being hypnotised and was moved to the prison infirmary.'

Despite entreaties from family and friends, Ronald's father refused to intervene in his son's treatment and simply hoped that he 'bore his punishment manfully'. In 1917 Ronald was admitted to hospital suffering from schizophrenia and, following moves to other institutions, by 1921 was described as, 'silent, morose, depressed, staring into space, easily upset, at times agitated, talking to himself and occasionally violent' <sup>(7)</sup>. Although his father, the eminent don, who by now had become more sympathetic towards his eldest son, along with brother Frederik, came to visit and take him out for walks when possible, Ronald's condition deteriorated to 'primary dementia' with petit mal attacks - he also became more schizophrenic. He spent the remainder of his life in hospital care, never recovering, and died in 1965. Details of Ronald's life were not divulged to the wider family and Fredrik seldom mentioned his brother (as far as I can ascertain) but his fate must have affected him deeply.

Although my father escaped the same pressures as his older brother (being too young to fight in WWI, but too old and in a reserved occupation during WWII) it seems he was still a troubled man. His erratic movements around the country from one brief post to another have never been fully explained, but suspicions remain - especially with regards financial irregularities. In any case, he married in 1929 and had a daughter <sup>(8)</sup> soon after. Unfortunately, the marriage had only endured a few years when Fredrik became enamoured with a much younger woman and he asked for a divorce. However, soon after this, in 1940, Fredrik's wife died following a bout of severe asthma aggravated by many years of poor health, especially lung problems. It's also more than likely that Fredrik's extra-marital affair, coupled with his many debts and money problems, erratic movements and unexplained absences, put great stress on their relationship. My father's attitude towards his young daughter at this time is also highly questionable as, for whatever reason, he felt unable to cope with caring for her and attempted to have her adopted. In the event this did not happen but she was still fostered out - luckily to a loving and secure family.

On the plus side, my father, in addition to his vocational gifts (it's on record that fellow staff and pupils admired him as a teacher), had aspirations in the arts, having not only written many short stories and plays but had also been involved as a director in amateur dramatics. Indeed, it was in one of these drama societies during the war that he met Christine, my mother, and despite the twenty year age gap, was soon married. They produced four children in quick succession (three boys and a girl), me being the eldest. Then, aged just fifty three, Fredrik died of TB, contracted whilst working for a spell in Baghdad. In fact, the reasons for his being there are also shrouded in mystery. It seems that during the war he was employed designing experimental aircraft and continued in this field afterwards, but whether this trip was connected with that work we do not know. However, following his death in 1953, 'Two unexpected visitors arrived in smart dark suits, explaining they came from The

Ministry of Defence & Supply and were anxious to locate documents of 'a strictly secret nature' that were missing from Fredrik's office.<sup>(9)</sup> Had he been involved in some clandestine operation, or was this a case of further 'financial irregularities'? We shall never know.

My last memory of him was, typically, not a good one. Since he must have been seriously ill and hadn't long to live this seems, in retrospect, sadly unfortunate. Appearing as if out of the blue one evening and asking me to read to him, I had stubbornly refused and, after a row, was sent upstairs to my room. Maybe he was being a genuinely concerned father, but I mistook the attention for needless interference. This gaunt stranger had no right gate-crashing our little family circle which I, as surrogate head, felt it was my job to defend. Not that Mum ever intimated this to be my role in any way, nor did I act all that responsibly as the eldest. Of course there may have been other more pleasant times with my father and only the painful ones stuck, lodged like splinters amongst otherwise mostly happy childhood memories, but I don't recall them despite the evidence of one or two conventional looking family photos on beaches and other unknown locations. Mind you, given the unsettled life our family led up till then it's not surprising I recall so little. Having said that, my father's death was only the start of a very difficult period for us all.

Following Fredrik's demise, my mother became gravely ill with pneumonia - presumably aggravated by almost constant childbearing, dire living conditions, little money (Fredrik left only numerous debts) and the heavy workload - and we kids were placed in foster care. Pete and I ended up with strangers on a notorious council estate which, though not as bad as it might have been, felt very alien. Possibly the worst aspect of all being that nothing was explained to us; no doubt typical of those days but still bewildering and traumatic. In my stepsister's account (she attended the funeral and came to help out for a while) she says, poignantly; 'After his (Fredrik's) death, the children were placed in temporary foster homes until their mother was well enough to return home but not before outgrown shoes, with their toes cut off and underclothes in rags, were replaced.'<sup>(10)</sup>

Eventually we were all reunited, little the worse for wear or so it seemed. The shabby rented house where my father passed away was probably the best for a big rowdy family to grow up in out of all the many previous places we lived. It was a detached three bedroom property called Stonebroke Lodge, not far from the village of Thames Ditton, Surrey, built during the Nineteenth Century to house workers constructing the railway lines which ran just a few yards from the back door up a steep embankment.



Steam locomotives still occasionally chugged along, rattling the old windows, as well as smoother running electric commuter trains and intercity diesels - though all made the aged pile vibrate as they passed our back door. Maybe this is why train songs have always seemed so haunting to me and railroad blues such as 'Midnight Special', 'Railroad Bill', 'Casey Jones' and many others were among the earliest ones I learnt. My favourite, however, when

young and listening to ‘Children’s Favourites’ on Saturday mornings was ‘The Runaway Train’ recorded by Michael Holliday <sup>(11)</sup>.

*twas in the year of '89 on that old Chicago line  
when the winter wind was blowing shrill  
the rails were froze the wheels were cold  
then the air brakes wouldn't hold  
and Number 9 came roaring down the hill – oh  
the runaway train came down the track and she blew  
the runaway train came down the track and she blew  
the runaway train came down the track  
her whistle wide and her throttle back  
and she blew blew blew blew blew <sup>(12)</sup>*

There were many others too as I got older; Skiffle songs in particular, much influenced by Lonnie Donegan (‘Gambling Man’), but also Johnny Duncan (‘Last Train to San Fernando’) and Elizabeth Cotton (‘Freight Train’) which were big hits in the late Fifties <sup>(13)</sup>. Woody Guthrie’s ‘Nine Hundred Miles’ had a particular resonance with me and was the first song I dared sing in public.

*I am walking down this track there are tears in my eyes  
trying to read a letter from my home  
if this train runs me right I'll be home tomorrow night  
coz I'm nine hundred miles from my home  
and I hate to hear that lonesome whistle blow  
it's that long low train a-whistling down*

Trains, of course, have been subjects for many artists in other musical traditions too, but these American folk and blues <sup>(14)</sup> were my principal influences growing up and probably remain so. Today I still write and play songs with train connotations - one might find all kinds of reasons apart from those stated above, e.g. psychological stuff such as repressed sexual feelings or fears of being ‘sidelined’ or ‘railroaded’. But I don’t know; I just like train imagery, even if I seldom use the real things for transport these days. <sup>(15)</sup>

In front of the house was a small garden where we sometimes played, until chased off for flattening the flowers and turning the lawn into a mud bath, surrounded by a high unkempt privet hedge. Running besides this and in front of all the neighbour’s gardens was a shallow brook where, in summer, we would fish for newts, tadpoles and minnows. Beyond ran the London to Portsmouth road, not so busy since the Kingston Bypass was built a few years previously, but still a main highway and constant hazard for us to cross.

Once over this danger, however, we were like animals released back into the wild; free to roam the woods and fields of Western Green Common unhindered, with no safety-conscious adults to impose restrictions. The Common, a wild sort of place then, rarely frequented by anyone except kids and occasional dog walkers, was like an alternative universe where anything we imagined could take place. We played all the usual tag, or hide and seek games; football, cricket, tennis, hockey and golf (with sticks for clubs); climbed trees and dug tunnels; made camps in the undergrowth; raced bikes and box carts; fired home-made weapons (catapults, slingshots or bows and arrows) at rival gangs, rabbits or squirrels, without much success, but mainly at each other; and generally messed about unfettered as youngsters generally did in those days.

We invented games too, which usually involved us emulating characters seen at Saturday morning pictures such as Batman and Robin, King Arthur and Sir Galahad along with the other Knights of the Round Table, Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Flash Gordon, Hopalong Cassidy, and Superman. There were, of course, the Japs and Jerries as all purpose baddies; also wild and dangerous Red Indians <sup>(16)</sup> who we secretly admired, not only for their tracking, hunting and survival skills but also their sneaky underdog status which, like Bash Street kids everywhere, was something we could easily relate to. Roaming all over the Common, and often way beyond (crossing just a few roads it was possible to walk many miles through unmanaged woodland, almost the length of Surrey) we seemed to live charmed lives, only reverting back into normal dustbin lids when tea time came.

The house itself was homely, if not very smart or comfortable by today's standards, with worn and peeling paint, mismatched and run down furniture (we kids used the beds and sofa as trampolines as soon as Mum left the room) with faded lino or threadbare carpets throughout. There was no central heating, of course; the only warmth in winter came from a big black stove in the kitchen which needed regular feeding with coke hauled from a shed in the back yard. On really cold mornings, when frost made swirling patterns on the insides of bedroom windows, we tore downstairs and dressed in front of these glowing coals, provided the fire could be got going in time.

We then sat around a big worn wooden table and ate bowls of porridge with milk and sugar or, as a treat, golden syrup. At weekends we had toast, best made on the end of a fork in front of the fire, with margarine and marmalade or Marmite; or, our favourite, eggy bread (white bread dipped in whisked egg and fried – great with tomato ketchup) and, if lucky, some grilled bacon. All food was cooked by Mum from scratch, mostly with fresh ingredients and often using wartime recipes - there were no takeaways or ready meals then. Cooked desserts covered in custard accompanied almost every main meal and included jam or treacle tart; roly-poly and spotted dick puddings (or some other suet based dish); stewed fruit from the garden such as apples, plums, rhubarb or gooseberries, either alone, in pies or crumbles; bread and butter pudding; queen's pudding crowned with sticky meringue; creamy rice or semolina with a spoon of sugar or jam on top; and many different home made cakes, biscuits, toffee or other sweets. It amazes me that I can remember all this stuff so vividly, I guess the old fashioned recipes weren't so bad after all despite Mum's self-deprecating attitude towards them in later years - at least we all grew up fit and healthy with no flab. <sup>(17)</sup>

Despite the financial difficulties, my mother receiving just a small widow's pension supplemented by some freelance hairdressing, we seldom felt deprived. Many other families were also hard up then, even in suburban Surrey, and the majority of friends and neighbours were not privileged. Few people had cars, phones, TVs, or luxuries like fridges, toasters and dishwashers. To make ends meet, one of our front rooms was rented to a lodger, a sweet old chap (at least in his seventies if not more) called Mr Barrington, who worked as an upholsterer and had chair frames hung up around the walls. He fascinated us with stories of the 'olden days' which, with his waxed moustache and immaculate waistcoats, surrounded by woven textiles and carved timber, came vividly to life in his eloquent anecdotes. His beautiful copperplate handwriting seemed remarkable, done painstakingly with a fountain pen, and only added to the quiet dignity of this true gentleman from a bygone age. Sometimes we watched him work, deftly sewing ribbons and other trimmings along a seam or shaping horsehair into an elegantly rounded chair seat. But the most amazing thing to us children was watching him fill his mouth with sharp little tacks, then quickly retrieve them one by one with a slender magnet-tipped hammer and tap them neatly into place – bang, bang, bang – all in a perfect row.

Later, when I was about fifteen, I was given Mr Barrington's room - no longer having to share with my two younger brothers. To my shame, and Mum's mystified indulgence, the

first thing I did was paint the walls black, daub a giant spider's web across the ceiling and spray the window panes red. I threw out all the furniture and made my own rickety bed and stools from logs found in a wood yard, as well as building dark-stained panels to go around the fireplace and window frame. The room was decorated with my own gloomy paintings of prison cells, churchyards and bats in belfries beneath apocalyptic skies, along with nihilistic slogans and surreal collages using pictures cut from magazines. I guess it was a kind of Goth thing, long before the term had been invented. CND posters were also stuck on the walls, reflecting what many of us felt then, that the bastard older generation was about to destroy us all with their nuclear bombs. Let's face it, we had good reason to feel angry; only a few years previously they'd damned near succeeded in annihilating themselves along with every other living thing on the planet.

Ronald, a sensitive and idealistic man, was only one of many conscientious objectors whose lives were destroyed by unforgiving authorities - though maybe society was crazier than him. Had he foreseen that the Twentieth Century would be the most violent and self-destructive in humanity's history? Was he, perhaps, saner than all the millions who flocked like sheep to the slaughter? In his shoes, even though I might have had doubts about the wisdom of war, would I have dared resist joining the hordes racing to the brink? In the Sixties, along with many other protestors, we chanted anti-war slogans and sang peace songs, but how many of us would have had the guts to stand up and be counted when the recruitment drive began? Mass military movements are hard to resist, as we've seen during revolutionary times in Germany, Russia, China, the Middle East, etc. Ronald did, and I am proud to say he was my uncle - though I'm less certain about my father.

In the Fifties, though politicians and most people in England wanted to forget the carnage and desolation of war and get on with building the future, it remained a preoccupation for many. War films came out regularly and we kids lapped them up, fascinated. I also read comics and novels of war stories which seldom betrayed any ethical doubts. I collected model Spitfire and Hurricane fighters, Wellington and Lancaster bombers, also various German and Japanese aircraft and hung them on strings above tabletop battle scenes constructed from papier-mâché and balsa wood. My father had left books illustrated with grainy black and white photographs, mostly WWII planes, and I poured over them, sketching them avidly on the covers of school exercise books.

To this day I go back to that house by the Common in my dreams and recall many happy times despite the difficulties and poverty. In fact, once Fredrik had gone and we were re-settled with our mother, a new era of relative stability dawned for the family. We attended nearby schools, made friends with local kids, and soon felt at home. We raced everywhere on old bikes or cobbled-together box carts, and in winter pulled ramshackle sledges; claimed the Common as our territory, even gave some trees and other landmarks their own special names; scrumped for apples in orchards or played 'knock-down-ginger' on grumpy neighbour's doors; planned and executed all manner of crazy adventures, often resulting in torn clothing or cut skin and the odd broken bone; and went off on ad-hoc camping trips to far flung forests, hills, lakes and even the coast. Christine sometimes organised music and drama review shows with us kids performing comedy sketches, which friends were encouraged to come and watch; and lastly, I found a talent for woodwork, constructing models, games, pet cages, and many other things, all with a minimum of tools and materials.

I loved designing and making things myself and, as I had no father to show me and school discouraged enterprise of this sort, I taught myself basic carpentry and engineering skills. I begged, borrowed or stole tools and materials and discovered by trial and error how to assemble and repair bikes, toys, kitchen equipment and furniture, etc. It was the heyday of Meccano, Airfix and other similar kits, so I saved up pocket money to buy them bit by bit. Rationing was not long over and though people were beginning to look for and expect better

things, many still had an attitude of make-do-and-mend. In our family's case it was just how things were. Unable to afford new stuff, we put up with second-hand or made our own. As it happens, these privations offered opportunities for creativity and self-reliance which have served me well ever since – probably also what prompted me to start writing songs come to think of it. The hundreds of Skiffle bands started up around then, the late Fifties, and which produced many of the best musicians of the Sixties and Seventies began with this DIY attitude. A cheap guitar, tea chest bass and washboard percussion, plus loads of enthusiasm, and you'd got yourself a band.

If my father had survived TB, everything would have been different - but who knows how? It seems likely he'd have continued his somewhat erratic ways, dragging the family around the country, and things could only have got worse. From my point of view, Fredrik's death released me from what would have been a much narrower and more difficult path. As it was I went my own way, left school as soon as possible, rambled, gambled, tried all sorts of pleasures and poisons at least once, inevitably made numerous mistakes and went down many blind alleys upon a journey of discovery which, it seems, I'm still travelling.

Mind you, this journey could have been very different without the unlikely intervention of my grandfather only a year or two before his death in 1956 (aged ninety). Apparently, going by information recently obtained <sup>(18)</sup>, it was mooted that I be sent to Australia under the Child Migrant Scheme to help alleviate my mother's burden following Fredrik's death. According to the Guardian <sup>(19)</sup>, 'More than 150,000 child migrants, with an average age of eight or nine, were shipped from Britain in a programme which was organised by the voluntary church societies.' Most of these children came from poor families or those whose parents had died or were seriously ill, and I would have fitted that bill perfectly. Somehow Hector got wind of this proposal and asked to see my mother to discuss it. He managed to dissuade Christine from sending her troublesome eldest son abroad - which must have seemed like an attractive proposal at the time considering Australia was seen as a golden land of opportunity. All I can say is I am eternally grateful to him now for his timely intervention for, as revelations about the many abuses children suffered under this scheme have come to light, it's unlikely I'd have fared well or ever seen my family again <sup>(20)</sup>.

As for Fredrik, his departure was probably propitious for all concerned – even if that sounds callous. He was an intelligent, well intentioned, man with many good qualities - but there was a darker, somewhat troubled, soul beneath. Nevertheless, Dad, thanks anyway for leaving us when you did - I hope you found peace. And thanks too, Arthur, for hitting a nerve and jogging my rusty old memory. Digging up old bones isn't always such a ghoulish thing to do, and sometimes we need to face the past however painful.

- But hang on a minute. Maybe my life could have been better!
- With a little fatherly help and guidance I might not have wasted so many years pissing into the wind.
- Also, I may have avoided meeting crazy characters like Arthur Grimsby who did little but encourage more pissing.
- And now the old scrounger was back, trying to pimp his way into my affections. He'd be lucky.
- What was he after?
- And how did he manage to escape a well deserved early death?

## FOOTNOTES - Chapter 4

(1) Worrying over exact rhymes and word meanings might seem pointlessly pedantic. Songs, like poems, don't have to make literal sense, especially on close inspection. The overall impression or feeling is what's most important, especially when sung. Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, for example, repeats a few words over and over again till they become like a mantra. But that's really a listener's point of view; the writer, if they've any integrity (which I'm sure Handel had in spades) and especially if they have to perform the number in public themselves, will care endlessly about their lyrics just as any kind of artist will worry about their chosen medium.

(2) Freud's Oedipus complex, in psychoanalytic theory, is a group of largely unconscious ideas and feelings centring on the desire to possess the parent of the opposite sex and eliminate the one of the same sex. This complex appears during the 'oedipal phase' of libidinal development, i.e. between the ages of three and five, though may be detected later. The complex is named after the Greek mythical character Oedipus who unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother.

(3) The family was living briefly in Thorpeness, Suffolk, at the time, in a cottage beside a very picturesque lake called The Mere. A few months later we moved a mile up the road to Aldebrough, home of celebrated composer Benjamin Britten, where we stayed for about a year before moving to Blackpool.

(4) Many years later I returned to Blackpool intent on finding Larkhill Street. It had been demolished and replaced by a car park. When I told my mother she just smiled and said, 'Good - best thing for it.'

(5) From private family history records – made available to me Oct. 2010 (see below).

(6) (7) Ibid.

(8) It is to this daughter, my stepsister and Fredrik's eldest, that I am indebted for the family history records noted above. She remains anonymous in order to preserve her privacy, but I am nevertheless very grateful for all her help and encouragement. It should be noted that most of what she discovered about my father and his family has not been disclosed here, only information pertinent to my story. Nevertheless, I'm still pretty much in the dark regarding Fredrik and don't feel I know him much better now than I did previously.

(9) (10) Ibid.

(11) Michael Holliday (26 November 1924 – 29 October 1963) was a very popular British crooner who had a string of hits in the UK including two number one singles. He was born in Liverpool and began his career by winning talent contests in his home town and New York (which he visited whilst in the Merchant Navy). After a spell as a band vocalist working in Butlin's he joined the Eric Winston Band. This led to BBC Radio broadcasts and then TV shows and a very successful recording career. Holliday had an ongoing problem with stage fright and had a mental breakdown in 1961. He committed suicide two years later, dying from a suspected drugs overdose in Croydon, Surrey.  
Ken Crossland – 'The Man Who Would Be Bing' (2004)

(12) 'The Runaway Train' by Robert E. Massey / Harry Warren / Carson Robison and first recorded by Vernon Dalhart in 1925. Recorded in 1956 by Michael Holliday.

(13) In 1997, Tom Fleming wrote: 'Blues music belongs to the railroad; the swaying of the train and the clickerty-clack of the rails. Jazz composer, W.C. Handy (1873 – 1958), claims to have discovered the blues while waiting at a railway station in Tutwiler, Mississippi. He noted that while waiting, "A lean, loose-jointed Negro had commenced plunking a guitar beside me while I slept. The effect was unforgettable." The blues and trains had an auspicious union right from the beginning of the century... a link never really broken.' Fleming goes on: 'The period between 1890-1939 saw the mass migration of Afro-Americans from the south to the industrial north – the most notable being a newly found freedom from slavery and available employment in such as Detroit and Chicago.' He adds, 'During slavery the attraction to the railroad was both real and symbolic.' Many slaves were owned by rail companies and '...work songs were sung to the rhythm of the swinging hammer as spikes were driven into the rails.' Also, 'Trains passing by plantation fields represented freedom.' After abolition, 'It was common for musicians to jump on and off freight trains to visit neighbouring towns and farms.' Some also, 'joined the army of wanderers drifting across the country.' Many stories were told about those who both drove and travelled by train and, 'The variety in which the theme of the railroad or train is placed within each blues song is as numerous as the songs themselves. [www.phlegm.mnsi.net/index.html](http://www.phlegm.mnsi.net/index.html)

(14) Trains have been noted as important sources of inspiration to American blues players by many authors. In 'Life', Keith Richards says, 'The train, apart from getting them from the Delta to Detroit, became very important to blues players because of the rhythm of the machine, the rhythm of the tracks, and then when you cross onto another track, the beat moves. It echoes something in the human body. So then when you have machinery involved, like trains, and drones, all of that is still built in as music inside us. The human body will feel rhythms even when there's not one.' Richards explains how important discovering open tuning was to him and that many blues musicians used the drone effect which enabled train-like rhythms.

(15) Craig Hamilton-Parker (The Hidden Meaning of Dreams) writes about train dreams: 'Your future is 'on track'. As trains follow a fixed route, this dream may suggest that you are being helped with your journey through life. If you dream of missing a train or passing your destination, it may indicate that you feel that you have missed an opportunity. Also, are you a conformist? Jung believed that to dream of taking a public vehicle often means that the dreamer is not finding their own way forward and is behaving like everyone else. (Freud believed that to dream of missing a train meant missing death. He also was convinced that all dreams involving motion represented disguised wish fulfilments for sexual intercourse. In particular he claimed that a train represents a penis and when it goes into a tunnel this indicates sexual intercourse.) Dreamers of long ago believed that to dream of travelling indicates a change in your fortunes. It is particularly fortunate if the destination is towards high hills or mountains. And, if the journey is in a straight line, your good fortune comes swiftly.

(16) It goes without saying that political correctness was a long way off and Red Indians were never called Native Americans, Amerindians or any other name. Not only that but our little world was generally very white, middle class, and pervaded with a barely concealed attitude of national arrogance. School atlases were still predominantly coloured pink and,

despite growing evidence to the contrary, the implication was that we British still held the moral high ground, even if not the actual ground any more.

(17) The most memorable of these treats was an accident: some home made rhubarb and ginger jam which set so hard it was more like toffee. My mother abandoned it with disgust but we kids attacked the jam jars with knives to extract the yummy rock hard sweet stuff like miners extracting gold. Thereafter we often asked her to repeat the recipe but she would always refuse.

(18) Private family records – as above.

(19) The Guardian, Sunday 15 November, 2009 – Alan Travis

(20) Ibid. 'New evidence that there was serious unease in Whitehall over the policy of sending thousands of child migrants to Australia, Canada and other British dominions from 1929 to 1967 has emerged in official files released by the National Archives in Kew, West London. It was only eight years ago that the Roman Catholic Church in Australia made a formal apology for abuse, including rape, whippings and slave labour, that British children had experienced at its homes and farms. The real motivation behind the scheme was revealed in a report of a speech by Sir John Norris, the representative of the governor of Tasmania, to the annual meeting of the Big Brother migrant movement in Hobart in 1951. He said: "We must realise that in this vast country of ours we must populate or face the possibility of losing it to some of the millions of Asiatics that menace us. Reason tells us we must include in our scheme migrants from European countries but, as far as possible, we want migrants of British stock with whom we share a common culture and way of life."

The files contain many instances of cruelty at farms and other institutions. They also show how children were not only deprived of proper care but refused access to the outside world, lied to about their origins and therefore unable to make contact with families or relatives. In many cases, children sent abroad under this scheme lost all contact with their homeland and never saw it again.