

**Dr Gordon Jackson Rees in interview with Dr Max Blythe
Oxford, 28 August 1996, Interview I, Parts One and Two**

Part One

MB Dr Gordon Jackson Rees, you were born in 1918, a post-war baby?

GR Yes, that's right.

MB Was this in Oswestry?

GR In Oswestry, yes. That was a small market town in the north end of Shropshire, and that's where I grew up.

MB Yes. Tell me a little bit about that family of yours. It's a fascinating family background – quite agricultural but also engineering?

GR Yes, rather a mixture. My, well both maternal and paternal families had been engaged in farming in, part of them in Shropshire and the paternal ones in Montgomeryshire, just across the border. And my father and some of his brothers had escaped from the mould as it were and had done other things. But...

MB Was he one of a large family?

GR He was one of a large family, yes. There were six brothers, two of whom remained in farming. The others did various things. One was an agricultural engineer in, in the Cotswolds. And another, two of them including my father were marine engineers, my father having ... been an apprentice to the Cambrian Railway locomotive works in Oswestry in, well the end of the last century of course.

MB Heroic engineering days?

GR Yes indeed.

MB Wonderful.

GR And fascinating actually because if you were apprenticed to the locomotive works in those days, you had to do all the operations which would result in a complete locomotive, not necessarily on the same locomotive, but you did, did everything.

MB Really? That was massive, wasn't it?

GR Massive, yes.

MB And the Cambrian Railway – you went on holidays on the Cambrian Railway

to Aberystwyth, I think you once said?

GR Yes, that's right.

MB It must have been a great experience, but that's cutting the story far too far down the line – sorry about the railway pun – but we'll stay with father. What was his full name?

GR Archibald Thomas.

MB Right. And by the time you were born in 1918, he'd had a fairly fraught and distinguished war in the Royal Navy?

GR Well, I don't know about distinguished, but certainly fraught because he served in the Royal Navy having been RNR [Royal Navy Reserves] in the pre-war days and, and was sunk – twice I think in the First World War and twice in the Second World War, when he was sixty of course at that time.

MB Just looking at the family, let's take mother in now. Tell me a little bit about mother who came from an even more illustrious kind of agricultural background. Is that right?

GR Well, I wouldn't say it was illustrious, but they were rather successful breeders of animals and they were certainly great horse lovers. And they bred a few successful horses including the one that won the Grand National in 1883, interestingly enough ridden by Count Kinsky. I don't know if you remember Kinsky – the Kinsky story that he was a very close friend, and perhaps that's putting it rather mildly, of Winston Churchill's ... mother, Lady Randolph. And...

MB Right. He was a great horseman though, wasn't he? A great horseman.

GR Kinsky?

MB Yes.

GR Oh indeed he was, yes, yes. He rode in three Grand Nationals. He rode in the, in the 1883 on this horse, Zoedone, which my great-grandfather had bred, and he rode the same horse in the preceding year when I think he was third. And the following year he rode it again, and was the great favourite, but it is said that the horse was nobbled on this occasion, and...

MB So it didn't make the trip?

GR ...and was given something and didn't in fact make the trip, and I think didn't survive very long afterwards.

MB Right. But, a distinguished horse and a distinguished rider, and a distinguished family background in horse breeding?

GR Well, I don't know about that. It was a one-off job!

MB Did you inherit anything of this? Did you, were you a horseman as a young man? Or did you...

GR No. I was put on a horse of course, but I never gained very great enthusiasm for it. But, my grandfather was, and his brothers, they were all, rode in point-to-point races and did a little bit of hunting.

MB So, you were drafted into seeing these things as part of your early life?

GR Yes, oh yes.

MB So, there was a lot of family fun?

GR Yes, oh yes, yes. One of my grandfather's, maternal grandfather's brothers went to St George's as a medical student and was a general practitioner in Kirkbymoorside in, in Yorkshire for very many years, until he died in 1927, I think.

MB Were you close to him? I mean, did he have an influence on you? Or not really?

GR No, not really, not really.

MB But one of the first medical branches of the family?

GR Yes, yes, but that was the only medical connection at all in the family really.

MB We were going to talk about mum, but we've over-run it. Let's come back and talk about her. What was her family name, and what was her name?

GR Well, she was Mary Ethel and ... her name was Jackson, of course. Hence, I was given that Jackson name, I think because they liked the idea of breeding or something perhaps, I don't know.

MB Jackson, just taking, just taking that mother. She was a great family lady. Father was away a lot because he was a marine engineer doing a lot of surveying of ships?

GR Well, yes, and at sea quite substantially.

MB So, you didn't see all that much of him for part of your life?

GR Well, no. He, he would be home I suppose every six weeks or so for the odd weekend, and so on.

MB Right. But, mother, she was a great homemaker. She was the continuity of it all?

GR Oh yes. She was the continuity of it.

MB You were very close to her?

GR Well, yes indeed.

MB Was she a strict lady, or was she a...

GR Oh yes, yes.

MB Was she? Was she tough?

GR Well, I wouldn't know about tough, but there was a sort of a fairly strong religious belief around, and a sense of propriety as it were and...

MB So you had to mind your manners and everything?

GR Well, yes, and indeed, you know, observing Sundays somewhat.

MB Just looking at the family now. You had a pre-war born brother...

GR Yes.

MB ...who was 5, I think.

GR Yes, he was born in 1913, yes.

MB Yes. We'd better put him on the map as well, his name and a little bit about him because...

GR Well, his name was Reg – Reginald, also Jackson, Rees and he had quite different interests from mine.

MB He didn't figure much in your early life, did he? He was just there, but a bit above?

GR Yes, that's right. Well, there was a fair gap in ages, and his fascinations were with the arts and music.

MB He was a very scholarly chap?

GR He was really. He, he went up to Cambridge in 1930, I suppose, yes, and read, read English, and ... taught a little, until the war started in '39, in various places. And then he served in the RAF as an intelligence officer, and at the end of the war did various things – teaching jobs – and ultimately he and his wife together started a school in Shropshire which, which thrived really. It was a boarding school in a house he'd acquired, and they had about two hundred odd boys there. And a rather nice, not a very ancient house, dating from about the 1880s I think, but built by one of the architects who – and his name I can't remember now, but he was quite distinguished for building replicas of the classical styles. And this was a timbered house and although it was built in the 1880s, it had a timber frame. A vast place. And very sadly, only last year, it was... Workmen were working on the painting I think using a

blowlamp and they set fire to the roof and the thing was virtually razed to the ground. Happily, it's being rebuilt in its previous...

MB Original form?

GR Yes, yes, which I gather is a very expensive process because the materials which are used are large amounts of wood.

MB Jackson, coming back... We've got that family in place now ... coming back to your early days, you once, I think, told me that your earliest memory was of being in a chicken coop? Is that right?

GR Oh! Well it is right, yes. You see, I was born in '18, 1918, and when I was one and two the poor chaps who'd suffered terribly in the First World War were coming back. There were two brothers called Robinson who came back and these fellows, you see, they came back totally untrained and almost I think untrainable after the traumas they'd experienced. And these two brothers wanted to start ... a poultry farm and they rented a field from grandfather, well, they might have bought it actually. But anyway, it was one of my grandfather's fields just opposite the house where he lived. And they constructed this poultry farm, and not like a poultry farm is today with batteries of course, but with hen houses and hatches for the hens to walk in and out of the thing. Now, I remember playing around with these brothers to whom I was rather attached as a small boy because they seemed to have time, and I can remember them building this thing and being small enough to go through the little hatch that the chickens went in...

MB So, you and the chickens were looking out?

GR That's right. Well, they were not there of course; the thing was under construction. But, I went through this hatch which they were able to let down of course to keep the foxes out at night.

MB Just taking you now through those early years – a comfortable family existence, relatively prosperous, in a town of ten/twelve thousand people, I guess?

GR Well, ten thousand, yes, in those days.

MB Very comfortable.

GR Yes, not great affluence at all, but...

MB But very comfortable?

GR Yes.

MB Where did you go to school? When was that? Was that early on or was it delayed or...

GR No, no. I went to, I went to school... Well I suppose I went to a little preparatory school when I was 7 actually. And then I went to – Oswestry has a very

ancient grammar school founded 1407, I might say.

MB We'll keep you from there though, Jackson, because wasn't there some kind of kindergarten Froebelist that had a, had an influence on you?

GR Oh, yes indeed. It was what came to be known, I think, today as progressive teaching methods. That is to say I was not exposed to learning things by rote, as indeed by elder brother had been, and I'm quite sure that he gained more from his non-progressive early education than I did from my progressive education.

MB But you had Mrs Bull(?)?

GR Miss Bull(?), Miss Bull, yes.

MB She was quite a lady because you told me...

GR Oh yes, oh she was rather terrifying.

MB ...she was quite an incredible character?

GR A terrifying figure, yes. And oddly enough, she was the aunt of a man called Max Bull, and Max Bull lectured in anatomy at Cambridge virtually all his life. He, he graduated from, well he did his first degree at Cambridge, and then went I think to Guy's, went back to Cambridge after the war and remained there all his life teaching anatomy.

MB A man of remarkable talent?

GR Extraordinary chap, Max Bull. Yes, he had the ability to draw ambidextrously. So, and I think... I was never taught by him of course, but people who were taught, were taught anatomy by him remember him doing anatomical diagrams where he could do the two halves of the body at the same time using both hands.

MB A kind of Michelangelo style?

GR Well, Michelangelo style I think perhaps is probably going...

MB But this was how he worked, didn't he?

GR He did, yes, yes.

MB A kind of mirror writing?

GR Yes, that's right.

MB Amazing. So, that's Max Bull.

GR That's Max Bull.

MB And so the formidable Miss Bull guided you through the early footsteps of education?

GR Yes, that's right, that's it.

MB This great freedom of learning and doing?

GR Yes, yes.

MB Froebel kind of, kind of stuff?

GR That's right. Yes, that's it.

MB And then you went to a primary school. You didn't seem to register very strongly with me that that primary school gave you much because you quickly moved to Oswestry...

GR I went straight from this school.

MB Oh, that was the, that was the one?

GR Yes, yes, that's right.

MB So, the formidable, from the formidable kind of school dame to the rather distinguished school founded in the fifteenth century, early fifteenth century?

GR That's right, yes, yes.

MB Very proud school?

GR Oh, extremely so.

MB Smart uniforms and things?

GR Oh yes, yes. Even suits on Sundays, and stiff collars and so on. Morning jackets when you grew older.

MB Oh really? So... But as a young man you, in this gear, you cut quite a dash and you went to this fashionable school?

GR Well, I wouldn't say it was fashionable, but... In fact, I, I always felt terribly embarrassed...

MB Really? Wearing the gear?

GR ...wearing the gear, yes, yes. But it was a pretty churchy sort of place, chapel twice a day on Sundays, chapel every morning and so on.

MB Really? So, the great tradition of, of kind of Christian education?

GR That's right, yes.

MB What was the teaching like? Very early ... did you get really sparkling teaching? Did you...? I think very early you found you were cut out for science.

GR Yes, the mathematics was, was very well taught because the headmaster in my day was a mathematician. He was, he had been a...

MB Who was he?

GR His name was Williamson, Ralph Williamson. And, yes, the science was all right, but I think the humanities were better taught than the sciences there.

MB I just wanted to push a little bit backwards because I think your father also played a significant part in your, in your scientific background. I think we've got to acknowledge that.

GR Well, he did really because...

MB He took you in the ship's engines and...

GR ...because I was interested of course in ... more in engineering things than I was in literary things, and I was taken down to see engines being tested and run, and...

MB Ships' engines?

GR Ship's engines.

MB In Liverpool?

GR Yes, that's right.

MB You mean in his day working on vessels being built by Cammell Laird?

GR Well sometimes... Well no, mainly it was Bristol that this, in my experiences... But he did, he did spend time at Cammell Laird's when ships were being built for his company.

MB But, as a young man, I mean as a boy in the twenties, you were travelling – fairly widely – to see father in interesting places?

GR Oh yes, yes. I, when you're testing steam engines, you have a device which measures the pressure in the various cylinders with time as it were so that with every revolution a recording device oscillates and the pressure changes during time are recorded. And I used to be shown this being done. And then I would be put to sit in the chief engineer's cabin with a pencil and a piece of paper and given a bit of guidance and told how to calculate the horsepower output of each individual cylinder of this multi-cylinder engine and, to get the total. This, of course, bit of information proved very useful to me later on because in my very early days in anaesthesia, people began to think of lung mechanics in terms of pressure volume diagrams which did

mystify some of my colleagues early on.

MB But you were on home ground.

GR But I was able to say 'Well, you know, I know all about this! I learnt this when I was 14.' Yes, yes.

MB Was there a thought at any time... I mean, there was the Cambrian Railway every summer – you got interested in railways anyway, ship's engines... Was there any thought you might be an engineer?

GR Oh, not in my mind, but I think there was in the...

MB Family's?

GR ...family's mind. And in fact I had an uncle who had this agricultural engineering business in, in Cirencester, Cirencester – whichever you like to call it – and it was thought that I might perhaps join him. But...

MB But, it weren't going to be?

GR No. I spent a lot of time with him, and I spent a lot of time in the workshops there.

MB You went on holidays and things like that...

GR I went on holidays there.

MB ...helping?

GR Well, I don't know if it was helping, but it was... I used to be given components to dismantle and reassemble.

MB Were you a man of handy skills? I mean, was that...? When you got a job like that, was that naturally you? You were a hands-on man?

GR Oh, I loved it. I loved it, yes, yes.

MB Right. But medicine, medicine became the story quite early?

GR Yes.

MB What was the real influence that turned you to think of medicine, because there wasn't a massive family background in it?

GR No, no. And indeed there was some surprise in the family when I made my announcement as it were. I had a friend ... who qualified at the same time as I did actually in Liverpool, and his father was a dermatologist in Birmingham, and... But they lived in Oswestry – he commuted, an early days' commuter. And they lived in an extremely affluent style. The lifestyle seemed very appealing, it seemed to be a

very pleasant life to be a doctor, and he seemed to spend a lot of time at home and potter off, do a few consultations in Birmingham and come back again. And I thought well now, I'd quite like to lead that sort of life – that's rather appealing. There was nothing altruistic about my decision I have to say.

MB You thought this is good news. What was that family? Shall we put them on the record in terms of their, the family name?

GR Yes, they're Rowlands(?). Rowlands, yes. And the son was a GP in, in Auckland – or was, I mean he's retired now. He's the same age as I am obviously.

MB Sure. So, we've got somewhere in the early days of that high school period, a decision that wasn't quite expected that you would...

GR Wanted...

MB That you wanted to do medicine?

GR Yes.

MB That must have pushed you even harder towards the sciences. Was the science teaching good at Oswestry High School? You were saying that it may have been better?

GR No, it wasn't Oswestry High School, that was... I tell you who was at Oswestry High School, I believe – Lord Phillips.

MB Right, so we're...

GR We were, I think we, I think you told me this. But no, this was the, the independent ancient grammar school that I was at.

MB Which was, which was called specifically?

GR It was specifically called Oswestry School.

MB Oswestry School, yes. I'd forgotten this.

GR And, oh yes, a lot of quite interesting people they've turned, they've turned out, including Parry Thomas, who killed himself on Pendeen Sands trying to break the land-speed record, and many in more distinguished fields too. But I didn't think the science teaching was terribly good, but there was a chemistry master there who was pretty inspiring and he fired me a lot.

MB Was that at about sixth form level? We're talking about, or by the sixth form level?

GR Yes, fifth and sixth form.

MB He was called...

GR Holman(?), and he went as the senior science master to the public school in the Channel, in the Channel Islands.

MB Jersey?

GR Jersey, yes.

MB Queen Elizabeth College?

GR Queen... That's right, yes, yes. He went there as senior science master when he left Oswestry and he was, he was very good with people. He, he used to do interesting things with you, you know, and he used to take a few of us caving and getting geological specimens, and taking them back and doing some chemical analyses and that sort of thing, that... Which was rather appealing.

MB So, he was a practical man, hands-on stuff, of the kind you liked? Quite a bit of bench work in that chemistry, so it wasn't just a boring slog of periodic table, it was exciting?

GR Yes, yes.

MB Physics not so good?

GR Mediocre I think. But of course it was, it was not the new physics, it was pure Newtonian stuff in, in those days, but enough to get, you know, not A-levels, Higher School Certificate we called it in those days, and enough to get me admitted to university.

MB Was it, was it like many schools of that ilk at that time not doing any biological sciences?

GR It wasn't doing any biological sciences at all, but I was sent to the local technical school...

MB In Oswestry?

GR Yes, for classes, by the school. I mean...

MB So, you picked up some biology?

GR Picked up a bit of biology that way, yes, in exactly the same way as Max Bull had just before me! Yes, yes.

MB Keeping to that school, Oswestry School – what about the, the sporting life, the kind of leisure side, the more leisurely side of school-life if I can call cross-country running leisurely. You were a runner, I think?

GR I, I was a runner, yes.

MB That was one of your areas?

GR Yes, that was one of my, that was my main area, really.

MB Your brother and yourself, you cleared up quite a few prizes, I think? I know you are not going to enjoy owning up to that, but I'm pushing it.

GR No, no. Well, we – there was the Victor Ludorum thing and we both had it a couple of times, yes. He had it three times, I think.

MB So, he just, just topped the scales a bit?

GR A little bit, yes.

MB He was just... And you really ran quite significantly. You ran for the school team and I think at one time you said 'I went out on the triangle every day.' Does that make sense? I mean, I have that in mind that when we talked one lunchtime, you said 'I went out on the triangle every day.' Was that a kind of running track?

GR No, no, no. It was a series of country lanes. We had a triangular configuration. We went up one and then across the base of the triangle and then downhill back down the other lane. And this was a compulsory thing actually – it was, there was nothing remarkable about this.

MB But, you took to it, you took to it? I mean, this you really went for?

GR I always enjoyed it, but everybody did it, everybody did it.

MB Right. What about other sports? Were you into ball games as well?

GR I played a little football, but I wasn't, I wasn't very keen on ball games I must say.

MB And the other side of the school – looking at the kind of strong religious profile it had, you didn't come out of there feeling strongly religious or anything?

GR No, certainly not.

MB You didn't?

GR No, no. Terrible sinner! I felt it, that sort of, you get imbued with terrible feelings of guilt when you have this sort of background, I must say.

MB What was it like being a, being a teenager in that period, kind of early thirties as it were, in Oswestry? What was it like? I mean, was it pretty family based and not much outside the family?

GR No, not really, there were...

MB Was it groups of friends, or...

GR There were groups of friends and ... there was always something going on, as there always is in small communities. You imagine there is always something going on of course because everybody participates in everything, so that it appears to be a lot going on.

MB So, you had a good balance of being tuned into lots of things there?

GR Oh, yes.

MB And mum was, was quite an active person in local activities?

GR Oh yes, yes.

MB And I think she was something of an artist? Was that, was that by this time?

GR Well, this was the... Yes, this was about this time. She and an aunt of mine were rather enthusiastic about beaten copper work, you know, and creating bowls and that sort of thing. I've still got some trays of hers at home.

MB Right, a fascinating period. Girls haven't come over the horizon at that stage?

GR No.

MB That wasn't the scene, was it?

GR No, no.

MB So, you hadn't had any kind of teenage romances or anything?

GR Not really. Not until I left school. The attitudes to this sort of activity were totally different I have to say in that, in that era.

MB So, you were on a fairly tight, tight family rein?

GR Yes.

MB Tuned into local activities and well, well kind of mixed with groups of colleagues at school and in the community? We're going to take you...

GR Yes. There were a lot of interesting people about. One of the boys who used to come to our, spend a lot of time with us was a great friend of my brothers actually because he was a little older than I was and I think a little younger than my brother. This was, his name was Ivor Roberts-Jones. And he became, he died quite a short time ago and became quite a distinguished sculptor. He was responsible for the Churchill in Parliament Square. I don't know if you know that particular work?

MB Yes, indeed, yes. Dramatic.

GR And a lot of other things including a marvellous one at Harlech Castle in Wales,

it's called, the 'Two Kings' it is called, and...

MB I shall have to look out for it when I'm that way. Another powerful work? Is it another...

GR Yes, it is. I like it very much indeed and shortly before he died, I was talking to him and I said that of all the things I'd seen of his, it was the Harlech one I liked best, and he said 'I think that's the best thing I ever did.' So, he thought well of it anyway.

MB You decided to go to medical school some while ago. The choice, the choice of medical school was to be Liverpool. I'm trying to work out why. That was pretty local. I mean, it was the nearer one...

GR Well, it was pretty local, yes, yes. I hadn't done very well at Latin – as I indicated, my interests didn't lie in that direction – which rather excluded Cambridge because in those days Latin was essential. It came before anything.

MB Otherwise you might have done...

GR And the same applied to Bristol at that time which was also another possibility.

MB They might have been one and two in your choices?

GR They might have been, yes, yes. But, the other one, Liverpool one was the local school.

MB Was there a link with Liverpool at all? I mean, apart from going and seeing father there on occasions, was there a link?

GR Oh, well, it was the local big city of course. You, you went to Liverpool if you wanted to do some special shopping from Oswestry. It was only forty miles away, you see, and...

MB So, it was pretty logical, Jackson, that that was the choice?

GR Yes. You also went there, you also went there if you had any medical condition which required a specialist opinion. So, there was, it was the local place as it were.

MB And you just went there and you, you could sign in on the Higher School Cert that you'd got?

GR Oh yes, yes. I was exempt from the first year as it were.

MB You were?

GR Yes, you know, the biology, biology and chemistry bit.

MB So, you moved straight into, to second year?

GR Yes.

MB And how, how did that translation to university life fit you? I mean, you know, you'd been a home boy?

GR Oh, oh very well indeed actually.

MB You threw away all kinds of shackles and went out? Is that right?

GR Yes, yes. And I, I made some lifelong friends there I see regularly, on a regular basis.

MB What was the teaching like? Was that something you got into easily? Was the teaching good at Liverpool? Or a bit mixed?

GR Well, one didn't have any standard for comparison, but I think it was good. I think it turned out a pretty fair product.

MB We're talking of pre-clinical studies now, to Second MB. Who were the people you would single out? Were, I mean, was Wood¹ there? Were there...

GR Wood was the anatomist, and he was a superb teacher. He made the structures live as it were.

MB Really? I mean, in terms of his drawings or his vocal kind of eulogising?

GR Vocal, vocal and gesticulations and so on. He, he could paint a picture, a verbal picture really of things.

MB So, anatomy wasn't the stale subject that it can sometimes deteriorate into?

GR No, no, I didn't think so. No, I quite enjoyed it. And I enjoyed the physiology. But I regret to say that – the practical classes were great fun – that we didn't enjoy the privileges of listening to a terribly lucid professor.

MB Are you going to put him on the record?

GR No.

MB You're not! But, that was an age of the kymograph, the smoke drum in physiology practicals, looking at twitches and responses in muscle...

GR That's right, yes.

MB ...heart/lung preparations. Was this...

GR No heart and lung preparations as undergraduates.

MB Not at that level?

¹ WH Wood.

GR No, no.

MB But you were doing the muscle and you were doing early, early preparations?

GR Yes, yes.

MB And that suited you?

GR Yes, I liked that.

MB So, you get through this Second MB, it's not too arduous?

GR No.

MB You say, I think you once told me you never worked all that hard?

GR No, I never did. Well, I never have done, before or after this period because I'm inherently rather lazy I think!

MB You do a well measured enough, and then get on with it and keep up with other things?

GR Yes, that's it.

MB While you were there, you, you did form a relationship with a young lady for the first... Was that for the first time?

GR Oh, I think there had been the odd one, but...

MB Right, okay. But you did form a fairly important relationship quite early on?

GR Yes. Well, she was in the year below me, and it was when I was in the second year of anatomy. And...

MB Right, and she had just moved into first year and you were, were you helping a bit?

GR She moved into the dissecting room, and... The first time I remember sort of noticing this girl particularly was when she was sharpening a scalpel on an oil stone which we had lying around.

MB Really? Sparks flew!

GR Well, well not from the oil stone of course! But yes, and then we got together a little bit and this worked very well, and...

MB You started walking out?

GR Yes, and that went on throughout the rest of our undergraduate career, and... I

had qualified in 1942. She, although she was in the year below, had qualified also in 1942 but six months later, because in wartime they introduced long vac terms to accelerate the, the qualification. And a couple of weeks after she qualified – I had by that time been called up to the services – and we got married, and...

MB Was it a 1942 wedding we're talking about, is it?

GR Well, January '43 actually, the 5th of January '43. And we've remained married actually which is an unlikely thing to happen, isn't it, in this day and age?

MB Yes. That was a, that was a partnership that was going to last.

GR Yes.

MB We'd better talk about this lady and give her a name, and where she came, the kind of family...

GR Well, she was Betty Schofield(?), and she...

MB She was a Liverpool woman?

GR Oh yes. And, had been I think ... she was a great sportswoman and she'd been to one of the Girls Public Schools Trust's, I forget the order of the letters, schools in Liverpool, Belvedere School. GPDST [Girls' Public Day School Trust], isn't it?

MB Yes, that's right.

GR Yes, and she'd played lacrosse, tennis and cricket and distinguished herself as a cricketer, continued to play cricket at university and ultimately played cricket for the Lancashire ladies team. She didn't pursue this for very long afterwards I have to say, but I think enjoyed her cricket.

MB She was going to be a, a mother very soon after your marriage. Not immediately afterwards, but she was going to be very much involved in family activities for a few years.

GR Yes, and always did...

MB But eventually, was going to have a very distinguished medical career?

GR Yes indeed. Well, she never completely gave up medicine even in the sort of peak of the family burden, if that's the right word for it.

MB Also, I think you once told me you had four children...

GR Under five.

MB Under five, yes.

GR That's right. And... But, our daughter was born in the, in the... We married in

'43, and my daughter was born in June of '44, by which time I'd gone overseas. I was away.

MB Right, I'm going to hold us and bring us right back because that's been nice, but I'll just say that your, before we leave your wife, your wife did eventually have a distinguished international career as a venereologist.

GR Yes indeed. Well, she was called a venereologist in the early days of her career, and then it became a specialist in sexually transmitted diseases, and now its called genitourinary medicine, and in her latter days it was genitourinary medicine, GUM for short.

MB I've still got you though, whilst we're looking ahead and seeing down that road, I've still got you at medical school in clinical years. I wanted not to lose sight of the fact that you brought there some of the sporting activities from Oswestry School and you continued to run in the first few years, two or three years, pre-clinically.

GR Yes, the first two years, yes.

MB In the university eight?

GR Yes, yes.

MB And got a purple(?) there?

GR Well, I don't think we had purples. I don't think we called them purples, but, but I did run for the cross-country, for the team.

MB The clinical years – memorable?

GR Oh yes, yes. Very memorable.

MB Just share one or two memories of that particular phase of life with me. Busy years on the wards?

GR Yes, it was.

MB Just doing enough still to...

GR Yes. You see, my clinical years started in 1939.

MB The war years?

GR Yes.

MB But parallel with the first three years of the war?

GR Yes, that's right. And this was the period of the great air raids, period of austerity, great restriction in social life, blackout and all the other unpleasantnesses of, of life then.

MB A veil did come down then, did it? A veil did come down on the kind of...

GR Oh, it did, yes, yes. Well, we did have, we did have student functions and so on, student balls but – dances and so on – but I think it was, we had a harder, a duller time perhaps I should say than our predecessors who'd enjoyed the, the clinical years in pre-war time.

MB Although you were not in the war, did the war impinge upon you and your feelings a good deal? I mean, your father went into the services again?

GR Yes, yes, he was...

MB Were there concerns that weighed on you?

GR I don't think so, no, I don't think so.

MB You battled on with the clinical stuff?

GR Yes. I remember Dunkirk very well and that was a very depressing time. And I was still an undergraduate then of course and then when... So, life was, I think, a little bit restricted, but we enjoyed it.

MB Were you ambitious for a fighting role?

GR I did have, I had... I was always very keen on flying actually. I did think that it would be rather nice to ... get a flying role in the RAF, but we were, anyway we were kept at it. They didn't want us to leave medical school and I...

MB There was a good pressure on you to finish?

GR Yes, and I went into the RAF medical service, six months after I qualified.

MB I think you once told me that you might also have been tempted to go into the Royal Navy, if that had been a possibility, because of family background and interests?

GR Yes.

MB That's true, is it?

GR Yes. One of the four great friends of mine went in to the Navy – a chap who ultimately became a surgeon in Barts, Schofield.² And yes, I would have, I would have quite liked that.

MB But anyway, just in these clinical years, who, who were the great influences?

GR Yes, the great influences.

² TT Schofield.

MB Of the clinical years.

GR A physician, Welsh physician called Emyr Wyn Jones who conducted outpatients. And he had the most marvellous way of talking to people and winking information out of them, and a very gentle sort of man, and a superb physician I think, a splendid teacher.

MB You had feelings of, this might be the way I'd like to be, or... There was an admiration effect?

GR Yes, that's right, that's right, yes. And of course the, the lectures from Henry Cohen³ were absolutely superb. I think most of us took meticulous notes during his lectures.

MB He was professor of medicine?

GR He was the professor of medicine, and...

MB He was a great national figure already, wasn't he? I mean...

GR Yes, he, this was, he was not knighted by this time. I think he, he hadn't become ... I think it was just the beginning of his national fame and so on, and he was still then Professor Cohen not, not Sir Henry.

MB If you had to encapsulate a picture of Cohen as a good teacher, what would be the points that you would get across to me?

GR Oh, an extraordinarily clear way of classifying things.

MB He was a great clinical taxonomist?

GR That's right, and most of us as undergraduates never read a textbook of medicine because we took these meticulous notes from Henry Cohen's lectures, and it seemed to us to be rather better and more fruitful to read these than it was to read someone else's text.

MB His notes provided a, a comprehensive medical text?

GR Absolutely, yes.

MB Was he easy to get close to? Or was he a distant figure?

GR I think he, for me he was a distant figure.

MB At that time.

GR At this time.

³ Later Lord Cohen of Birkenhead.

MB But, you'd know him later?

GR Yes, he, but he was very, very highly respected, certainly as a teacher. And ... I think his great quality was this clarity of separation, of classification if you like, of different aspects.

MB Any other figures you recall from that clinical period who ought not to be forgotten, left off the record of your life?

GR Yes. Well, there was another physician, Cunningham(?), who was a ... again a splendid physician, and had this quiet approach to people which winkled out their story.

MB And this you admired, this communicating, this drawing out skill?

GR Yes, yes. I loved that.

MB He had this great means of conveying and drawing information.

GR That's right, yes.

MB But, I have a, an impression at the back of my mind that although physicians have figured in what you have been telling me – three physicians we've had on the record, I talked about characters of influence... But you came out with a sneaking wish to be a surgeon, more than, more than a...

GR Well, there was a surgeon who featured later in my story, Cosbie Ross,⁴ with whom I was...

MB Right. He was a young surgeon at that time?

GR Oh, very young, yes. Just sort of embarking on his career as a consultant.

MB But, you saw him in that clinical period?

GR That's right, yes.

MB In that pre-, in that clinical period of training?

GR Yes, yes.

MB A good pair of hands? I'm trying to work out what impressed you, what moved you towards surgery?

GR I don't... Yes, I wouldn't have said that as an operator his surgical technique was as impeccable as some of the others that one saw, but what was impressive was his judgement and his cases did very, very much better.

⁴ James Cosbie Ross.

MB You're saying not very spectacular, but magnificently effective?

GR That's right. Whereas you'd have other people who were really spectacularly competent operators, but perhaps not always doing just the right operation on the right patient, you know.

MB Strategic judgement?

GR That's right.

MB So, you had a feel, you had a feel for that?

GR Yes, yes. I thought he was good.

MB When you come towards the end of that clinical course you just qualified without any problems and went out in the normal way to do a house job, is that how it worked?

GR Yes.

MB Or were you in a hurry to get into the Forces?

GR Well, we had to do a six months house job, and whether you were in a hurry or not you were in anyway, so after six months that was it.

MB Yes. Where did you go for this house job?

GR I went to... Well, I came across Cosbie Ross again there, actually.

MB You went to his firm for part of that time?

GR Well, yes. I had, there is another aspect of the clinical training in wartime which was that the hospitals of course were terribly short of junior staff as housemen had normally done at least a year, you see, beforehand, whereas they were all whipped away after six months, so that there were half the, half the posts were really unfilled at the most junior level and we were given, as students, were employed as student housemen at, I think £1 a week we got, something like that.

MB This gave you a very early taste of responsibility that wouldn't have come in the normal, in the normal training?

GR That's right, yes, yes. And...

MB But you say Cosbie Ross' work was part of the, part of the scene of that six months?

GR Yes.

MB You worked closely with him?

GR Oh yes, yes, and...

MB And it was all surgical – was that six months... Or did you do some...

GR No, no, I did some medical work.

MB Yes. Was there anybody of any importance or of influence?

GR Yes, a physician called Chamberlain who was the author of a book, of 'Chamberlain's Clinical Signs'⁵ ... what was the name of the book? It was one which is, was, maybe still is, very widely read by, by the undergraduates.

MB So, he was quite, quite an established figure?

GR Oh, he was an established figure all right, yes.

MB Your memory of that textbook is pretty good actually, all that time back.

GR Yes. ... Yes, I can't remember the precise title though, my memory is not as good as that.

MB Chamberlain's textbook?

GR Yes.

MB We now probably should take you into, into war service, and just briefly take me through the events of that, Jackson. We've had a longish session, but perhaps you could do that for us?

GR Well, I can. I can do that quite briefly really. It was in no way very distinguished, one has to say. I was sent first of all, having just got married, down to Sidmouth, on the south coast, where I and a lot of other rookie doctors were put through a square bashing thing and told how to salute and that sort of thing and how to accept, how to return salutes. And then...

MB Your obedience training at Oswestry School must have come in handy?

GR Oh, it was handy, that. Yes, it was really. And then I was sent on a, a two-week course of tropical medicine, and...

MB Where was this? In Liverpool?

GR No, no. No, it was a service establishment at Holton.

MB RAF Holton?

GR RAF Holton, yes, and the mess was in one of the Rothschild houses there. Very,

⁵ E. Noble Chamberlain, *Symptoms and signs in clinical medicine: an introduction to medical diagnosis*, Bristol: J. Wright, 1936. 12 editions.

very sumptuous.

MB You were very well set up?

GR Yes, yes.

MB Shades of the good life beginning to arise?

GR Yes indeed.

MB I've got a feeling that you took to Forces life very quickly and well?

GR Oh I did, yes. I enjoyed it.

MB You liked the RAF?

GR Yes, I very nearly stayed in ... permanently. I think the only thing which drove me out was that some of the informality of wartime service began to disappear and it became a more bureaucratic peacetime organisation. Of course, it's much better again now. I think the services are marvellous now, but...

MB You got some stripes?

GR The tropical medicine was, the course... Then I was sent out as station medical officer, usually the second one, the junior one, various aerodromes...

MB As a kind of flight lieutenant at this stage?

GR Yes, that's right, yes, yes.

MB In this country?

GR In this country for, oh about six months.

MB Like a GP to airmen?

GR A GP to airmen, and indeed a casualty officer for anything which might happen. During this period, I was on flying training stations and I took the opportunity, every possible opportunity to get into the air there and I used to hope that every day I would fly with one of the instructors and the instructors always were willing to let...

MB There was some kind of a sortie day by day?

GR Day by day, yes.

MB You didn't qualify as a flyer?

GR No, I never did.

MB You just were naturally committed to getting in a lot of flying hours?

GR Well, I was, I enjoyed it.

MB You liked planes and... But the engineering of them, was it the engineering?

GR Well yes, I enjoyed the engineering of them, but I did very much enjoy, I've always rather regretted that I didn't pursue this and get a licence.

MB Flying could have got to you?

GR Yes.

MB Did you go overseas?

GR Well yes. Then I was ... posted overseas and I was sent to West Africa with the Flying Boat Squadron, Sunderland Squadron, and... Which was based in Freetown, a newsy place at the moment isn't it? And there's a marvellous natural harbour there, ideal, a vast harbour, ideal for landing flying boats. And it also happens to be one side of the narrowest part of the Atlantic, so that flying boats with their enormous range could cover this gap in the, in the, between the two land masses and prevent submarines from hopefully, from getting into the Indian Ocean. That was the purpose there.

MB So, by this time you really were into the war?

GR Well, yes. There wasn't a great deal of action there, but I used to quite enjoy going out on the Sunderlands too, which were a most remarkable aircraft, and I would take every opportunity of, of going out on one of these long distance planes.

MB The RAF, they encouraged medical officers to really become involved in the flying side?

GR They encouraged medical officers to get stuck in, yes, yes.

MB So, you really integrated with the squadrons you were with?

GR Oh yes, yes, one tried to. I mean, it was a recognised part of the job, as it were.

MB And was the medical role, was that a tough one? Did you see action with fairly severely damaged aircrew?

GR No, no. It was, that was...

MB It just remained general practice for the Forces?

GR That's right. Largely, yes.

MB And was that the overseas practice that you had in Africa before the war ended or were there other trips?

GR No, I was there for 18 months, and that was the standard tour of duty in West Africa because, well it was still thought of as the 'white man's grave' and so the period for which people were sent there was, was restricted to 18 months. It seemed to be very kind of the War Office to treat us so benevolently really.

MB And then you came back to British soil?

GR I came back to British soil. And after a tour of duty overseas, one was invited to say what one would like to do. Well I was...

MB I'm taking that this is towards, this is the end of the war by then, just about? Yes, I mean, you were back pretty well on the end of the war, counting the months.

GR Yes, it was after VE but before VJ, so that sort of marks it.

MB And you were asked what you would like to do? They gave you the opportunity to specialise in whatever training?

GR Well, they gave you the opportunity to say what you would like to do. They didn't always pay very much, they didn't always pay very much attention to what you said you would like to do, but if you said you'd like to do something which they needed people to do, you were much more likely to have your wishes met. And I wanted to get out of this general practice role which was not really very arduous general practice.

MB And it wasn't going to be your future?

GR It wasn't going to be my future anyway, and so I wanted to get into a hospital. Now, there were two specialities in which they were very, very short of, of people. One was psychiatry and the other was anaesthesia, and...

MB Take your pick.

GR Well, there was no choice. So I, with what I thought was great cunning in those days, said I really wanted to be an anaesthetist and I'd be very grateful if they would post me to some hospital where I could get some training.

MB Jackson, I'm reading into this that you weren't desperate to be an anaesthetist, but this was a good way forward?

GR Not a bit, no, no.

MB There was still that piece of the surgeon inside of you wanting to get out?

GR No, no, not a bit. I didn't... But surgeons were two a penny, I might say.

MB So, there was no way forward there?

GR And indeed the same was true in the post-war years too.

MB So, you read the wind and went off and did anaesthetics?

GR That's right, yes.

MB Where did this happen? Were you sent especially to train or did you do it on, on general duty kind of thing?

GR Well first of all, I was sent to, back to Holton where of course, where there was, the major hospital was and where the senior RAF anaesthetist – a fellow called Group Captain Soper⁶ – was and I got a little indoctrination from him. And then I was, Robert Macintosh of course, the man in Oxford...

MB The greatest of the greatest.

GR ...was the anaesthetic adviser to the RAF with, I might say, the rank of air commodore. And he arranged for newcomers to anaesthesia in the service to go to Oxford for a spell, where I went for two or three months and, and got my first sort of proper introduction to anaesthesia there.

MB Was that impressive? I mean, was Macintosh's, was his outfit an impressive outfit?

GR Oh, very impressive, yes, yes. Mind you, he was travelling around a lot, he was. Mind you, we saw quite a little bit of him. But it was his then called first assistant and now I suppose would be called his senior lecturer, was Mushin⁷ at that time, and it was Mushin from whom we got most of our teaching.

MB Was he, was he impressive?

GR A good teacher, yes, a good teacher.

MB Discuss lots of technique and the kind of physiological associations with anaesthesia?

GR Yes indeed. That's right, yes, yes.

MB And so you, that was a critical period coming to Oxford? I mean, that really was a helpful...

GR Yes, it didn't last all that long, but...

MB But you picked up a lot of groundwork?

GR Well, yes indeed. And then one was sent off to various hospitals ... to do locums largely, as a first sort of step in service hospitals. I mean, small service hospitals there were called station hospitals which were sort of...

MB Cottage hospitals for the RAF?

⁶ RL Soper.

⁷ WW Mushin.

GR Cottage hospitals for the RAF. Yes, that's right. And then eventually I was sent to Cosford which was, which was...

MB A bigger centre? I mean, that was a really big centre, wasn't it?

GR Well, a proper hospital, yes.

MB And was that where you completed your preparations for the Diploma in Anaesthetics?

GR Yes indeed. Now, there was a fellow there, and I think he joined me, it could be that I joined him, I don't know, whose, who was Douglas Howat, who subsequently became a consultant at St George's. And he had, a little bit younger than I, but with this shortage of anaesthetists, by this time people were able to defer their...

MB Forces experience.

GR ...call-up...

MB Yes, and he'd already...

GR ...to complete a junior anaesthetic post, and he had done this, and in the course...

MB He'd got a DA already, had he?

GR Yes.

MB So, he was a bit ahead?

GR So, he was ahead, yes, oh yes indeed. However, we were good friends, and I was struggling away in this not highly academic background I must say of a service hospital in those days to...

MB Kind of walking round with the books were you?

GR And so we used to, I used to give him the book to read and we would walk through the fields around Cosford and he'd ask me the questions and I would try to provide the answers. And if I didn't provide them, he'd tell me what they were by reading the book, and this sort of association...

MB Sharpened you, honed for the DA in this way, with his help. So, he was a key figure in that?

GR Oh yes, he was, yes, yes.

MB And you took the Diploma when - in '46?

GR ... Just before I came out of the service, which was... In fact, I took it while I

was in the service, but I was on demobilisation leave when the result came, which was about some time in December. We had quite generous demobilisation leave when we came, and...

MB I'm just going to pinpoint that, Jackson. That was at the end of '46?

GR That was the end of '46.

MB When you were to go back to Liverpool, and I'm going to leave that return to Liverpool, that next chapter, because a lot was to happen. I'm going to leave that until next time.

GR Good, good, yes.

MB For today, thank you very much.

GR Thank you very much indeed.

Part Two

MB Jackson, you returned to Liverpool at the end of '46 from the RAF. By that time thoughts of specialising in surgery must have seemed impractical, you'd got a young and fast expanding family and the pressures, the economic pressures to stay in anaesthetics must have been quite great?

GR There was a tremendous economic pressure. We were really absolutely impoverished. Betty had got a job at this time and, very much part-time because there were all these children, we did have some, some nanny help but it wasn't full-time by any means. And the Sister in the department where she was then working had been very good to us, good to her, helping out here and there. And at Christmas in this year that we are speaking of, that's Christmas in '46, she wanted to send her some flowers for Christmas, though money was so tight that we had to defer payment for these flowers until after Christmas. It was as short as that.

MB At that time.

GR Literally penniless, yes. So, one had to do something.

MB So, what job did you seek out?

GR Well, I'd got this DA which I regarded as some sort of capital, and that I ought to put it to work to provide income and... So, without very much enthusiasm I decided that I would have to continue to do what I was already semi-trained for really, and...

MB Did you start applying for jobs?

GR No. One didn't have to apply for jobs because, not for specific jobs, because provision was made for those of us who'd come out of the services to have rehabilitation appointments. Now, these were supernumerary appointments, additional to the staff, so they could therefore be created in any speciality in any place actually to enable you to be brought back up to date into civilian practice in whatever field you were engaged in. And it was the dean of the faculty of medicine who had the, these appointments in his gift, so you went to see him and said you wanted to do this, and he would see that you were placed somewhere. And I think you had these initially for three months and then you got another three months at a slightly enhanced salary which I might tell you was not munificent in either the first or the second period of three months.

MB Where did you get put down on these jobs?

GR Well, I can't... I think it was Liverpool Royal Infirmary that I was initially put down for. And then my wife and I were pushing a pram along a street in, in Liverpool, not far from where we had a flat at the time, and a chap stopped in a car. And this was Cosbie Ross who'd been one of the honoraries. You asked me about important fellows – he played a big part actually in my undergraduate teaching, and although as I say the registrars did most of that, this, but ... he was nice, we got on well with him, and he comes into it a bit later too, the story. But he's driving past in

his car and he stopped and he said 'Oh, you're back, are you?' And I said 'Yes, I'm back.' 'What are you going to do?' And I said 'Well, I'm afraid that I've got to do anaesthesia.' And he said 'Where are you going to go?' So, I said 'I'm going to the Royal Infirmary.' And he said 'Oh, are you? Why don't you come to us? There's a young fellow, Gray, there. Perhaps you've heard of him?' you see. 'We'll fix that. We'll have a word with Davie'⁸ – that was the dean who was allocating these posts. And the fact was that I did in fact go to the Southern Hospital where Cosbie Ross was, not the senior surgeon then, but moving up towards that, and where Cecil Gray did about half his work, not all of it, because it was the custom then for people to work in several hospitals.

MB He was already beginning to be a leading figure in anaesthetics in Liverpool?

GR Oh yes indeed, yes. This had all, this had followed the milestone paper...

MB On curare.

GR ...at the Royal Society of Medicine on curare.

MB Was that 1946?

GR Yes, that's right. But the, entitled the milestone, [was] not received by the senior members of the specialty uniformly with great joy and acclamation! In fact some were heard on departing from the lecture which they'd given under this title of 'A Milestone in Anaesthesia'⁹ saying 'Milestone indeed, more like a gravestone!' However...

MB What happened when you met this man, Cecil Gray? How did that meeting take place?

GR Oh well, I had a day on which I was to start these new responsibilities, and I appeared nice and early in the anaesthetic room and soon after ... a fellow with a little military moustache thing came in. And he said 'Are you Rees?' you see, and I said 'Yes, I am.' And he said 'Oh well, I'm Gray.' And then he looked at me and he said 'Are you married?' And I said 'Yes, I am.' He said 'Have you got any children?' 'Yes, I've got three,' I said – I think it was three at that time – and he said 'Good gracious me. You started early, didn't you?' Well now the fact was, and I didn't know this until much later, that he had had both his children when he was far younger than I was at that time. So it was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, I think!

MB You didn't quite take to him, did you?

GR Didn't take to him at all. No, no. I thought he was a bit on the arrogant side, really.

MB Did you see him, in action? Did you see him in action?

⁸ Thomas Benjamin Davie.

⁹ T Cecil Gray, 'The use of d-tubocurarine chloride in anaesthesia: lecture delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons of England on 17th April, 1947, *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 1, 1947, 191-203.

GR Yes, I did.

MB Quite early on?

GR Yes, yes.

MB Did that change the picture? Was there a...

GR Not entirely, no, no. I wasn't...

MB You weren't fussed?

GR I wasn't fussed, but he was, he was very knowledgeable about these new drugs. And indeed you see at that time, they were not being used for abdominal surgery in quite the same way that they were being used later on. There was a certain amount of allowing spontaneous breathing to occur. Which we know now, and didn't perhaps know in those extremely early days, is that it's absolutely essential to have some sort of artificial ventilation of the lungs if you're going to expose patients to relaxant drugs, otherwise you get into trouble.

MB It must have been a curious time in anaesthetics actually – new drugs coming in? Talking of these new drugs...

GR Yes, it is an interesting time. I've often thought that with the far greater restrictions that there are now on the introduction of new practices and new drugs into medicine, if we hadn't already had relaxant drugs for however many years, fifty years...

MB It wouldn't happen.

GR ...I just wonder if they would be thought things which it was permissible to use on patients, had we not, as I say, had fifty years experience of them to tell us that it is the right thing to do.

MB Was this your first experience of the kind of curare field?

GR No, not quite because... I would say it was very nearly so, but this man, Howat, who'd been my mentor for the DA, and I, had managed to acquire a few ampoules of this drug and we gave it to a patient in Cosford in the RAF hospital.

MB So, you had a, an introduction to it before the Cecil Gray field came into view?

GR Yes, that's right. But, we did have grave difficulties in ... managing it and managing the patient after we'd given it I might say, because we were not aware of the absolute necessity to reverse these drugs, however small a dose one gave. It was a very small dose we gave I might say compared with what Cecil was doing at the time when I came back again.

MB I've got a picture now, Jackson, of you, working alongside Cecil Gray a bit in

the same hospital, not quite fussed about him greatly, but aware of his reputation which was growing.

GR That's right, yes, yes.

MB I'm just trying to wonder how all of a sudden that cautious early phase of knowing each other actually blossomed into the relationship that went on for forty, thirty or forty years?

GR Well, later in '47, the full-time university department under a Reader was established and it was established at the beginning of the academic year '47/8 you see, in October '47. And ... this was the era of the cocktail party, you're probably too young to remember cocktail parties...

MB No, I remember cocktail parties.

GR ...as I remember them, where everybody gathered in somebody's house making a tremendous noise of conversation and sloshing drink down and then climbing into their cars and driving away in a most irresponsible way, but that was social behaviour of the time. And Cosbie Ross had a cocktail party, the surgeon I spoke of who was suggesting that I might go to the... Betty and I were invited and Cecil was there with his wife Margot. And he sort of sidled up in the middle of this and said did, had I heard that he'd been appointed and I said 'Yes, I had heard, very pleased, congratulations', and so on. And he said 'I'd like you to join me.' Well, I was very surprised and extremely flattered I might say that this had occurred. He offered me the best job that he had to offer. But I have to say it wasn't really much of a job because there was no establishment for the department, this newly established department, other than the Reader in charge and a demonstrator with some very nominal salary for part-time work, I think it was two half days a week or something. So, that was how the association began really.

MB What job did you go to? A demonstratorship?

GR It was a demonstratorship – it was part-time. By this time, I had been appointed to a number of hospitals, a session here and a session there.

MB So, you could live?

GR So I could live, yes.

MB Who paid for the demonstratorship?

GR I think that that was included in the departmental budget because that was a post which had existed before the full-time department was established, it was a sort of hangover I think from, from the previous...

MB But I gather from what you told me before that there was no demonstrating involved, it was straight into the research bench kind of arena?

GR Well, part of that, yes. And the other thing was that Charles Wells,¹⁰ who was the professor of surgery at that time, was embarking on a great deal of ... heroic surgery I think it was called at that time. Vast operations most of which now would be regarded as obsolete, but which certainly called for a pretty high level of anaesthetic practice, which Cecil had done them all. Now, he had these new responsibilities for administering the department, so... And I had been appointed to – that's in addition to the demonstrating thing – to one or two sessions in the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool with, with Charles Wells. And Cecil's idea was that it would be very nice to have somebody else trained up to take over these rather taxing procedures, anaesthetic procedures now that he had these additional administrative responsibilities and so on and it wasn't all left to him. And that was partly how it began too, you see, so that this was, the association was duelled, it was in the department but also...

MB Taking over some of his high-pressure work?

GR Well yes, and, you know, doing it with him as it were, side by side very often.

MB Were you friendly by that time?

GR Oh yes, yes.

MB It had begun to, to work?

GR Yes, it had begun to work, yes.

MB The bench work, the bench work – animal experiments?

GR Yes, a few but mainly gas analysis things that we were doing, and...

MB Could you give me a summary of that a bit because I'm not quite sure where that was at? Probably a bit more technical.

GR Oh well, you see this department had no real expertise in any of the techniques, laboratory techniques which were necessary to look at anaesthesia. So we acquired things like the Van Slyke machine – do you remember it – which...

MB I know of this machine.

GR ...which spews mercury all over the floor, if you're not very careful how you use it. And Haldane's machine, Haldane's analytical equipment. And so, we were really learning the techniques which were necessary to acquire, in order to pursue things in greater depth. And that was really the... Now, Cecil was also pursuing these pharmacological things and we did some of these things together, looking at, at ... the cardiac effects, still in dogs. Now the other big...

MB This was atropine and stigmine, kind of the two?

¹⁰ Charles Alexander Wells OBE.

GR Yes. Now, the other big unanswered question of the time – well yes, there were several unanswered questions to which we attempted to provide answers... Now, it wasn't known whether these relaxant drugs had any narcotic effect on the central nervous system. And one of the series of things we did at this period was to attempt to answer this question. It sounds like a silly question now because questions always sound silly once you know the answer. It wasn't all that silly in those days. And we did this on ourselves. Every Sunday morning for a period of months, he or I would be given a dose of thiopentone, and on alternate occasions for each volunteer, he would be given curare and the sleeping time for the combination would be compared to the sleeping time with the thiopentone alone. And of course, there was no difference. So, I think that established... This was the, this resulted in the odd paper or two I think. Now, there was another very big question which needed answering. And that was whether there was a selective action of d-tubocurarine chloride on certain specific muscles or muscle groups. And we set about doing this by doing electromyography, pretty infant days of electromyography I might say, using an electroencephalogram for the purpose, and seeing whether we could see any greater depression of electromyographic activity in the abdominal muscles than we could in the, in the intercostal muscles and so on. Well, I don't think a great deal came of this and in any case we know that, now, perhaps we were looking at the wrong thing anyway when we were doing this. Then we proposed – which Cecil wrote up somewhere or other – a model for the mechanics of respiration, a theoretical model I'm speaking of, which in fact said that... The model demonstrated, this theoretical model, that you didn't really need to have selective sparing of the diaphragm for the diaphragm to continue to provide some respiratory movement in the presence of pretty great muscle relaxation. And so, that was, those were the things, the sort of things that we were interested in at the time.

MB Jackson, we're just coming to the end of our time and our filming today – that's taken me deeply into a feel of what was happening in that Liverpool department in those early days of your collaboration with, with Cecil Gray. I think one of the next great events was the arrival in your life of Isabella Forshall.

GR Yes, it was.

MB And it is at that point, sorry, it was at that point that I was going to close today and start with your meeting with her next time.

GR Yes. Well, this is what set in motion my – that part of my career which was the greater part, which...

MB Paediatric anaesthetics?

GR Paediatric anaesthesia, yes.

MB We'll come back to that next time we meet.

GR Good, yes. Thank you very much indeed.

MB Thank you.

GR Good. I wonder how that came...