

# The Sidwell Family

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## Introduction

I started this because my children have had little chance to meet their relatives and see what they have in common with other family members. I'm delighted I did because I've now met so many nice and interesting people who I hadn't met before or hadn't seen for decades. The "Reunion/Get-Togethers" in London in March 2005 were especially fun and I've included several photos taken there. I very much hope there'll be more meetings, particularly among the younger relatives who've now met for the first time. We hope you'll all visit us in New England.

My main aim is to record what I can of lives and personalities but I've also included all the names and dates I've learned in case anyone wants to do more research, which is so much easier now there are sources like Ancestry.com, which has online versions of most birth, marriage and death certificates from the UK and US, census records and more. A look at their 1881 census records quickly made me realize the possibilities – so I stopped! I've included some questions it raised in the section about my great-great-grandparents. Some birthdates are missing and I have conflicting information for others, so please verify or correct any dates you know.

Some patterns emerge. Sidwells are intelligent, many are funny, many are left wing, and most resist being told what to do. Several are musically gifted and we tend to be good writers. 80% of Sidwells were male starting with my grandfather's generation but the latest generation is better balanced. Several Sidwells have been afflicted with depression but most are physically healthy. I've discovered no black sheep.

This version (2.1) has updates from Roy about Jack and Lizzie and from Gill about Arthur, Ethel and Richard. I included them verbatim in the appendix because I hear Gill and Roy speaking when I read their words. The previous version included pictures from the March 2005 Get-Togethers, Arthur's 1948 – 1960 diaries, Madge's notes on the first version, Leonard's first autobiography, and pictures from Arthur's suitcase. Sources for a future version include material about Rennie inherited by Jim and Sheila's son Richard, Eileen's memories of "Uncle Jim" and others as well as "*vast numbers of family photographs*" and more about my mother's family from my cousin/sister Brenda.

Thank you so much everyone who made this possible.

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## My Great-Great-Grandparents

### Benjamin Sidwell (1840? - 1896?)

Benjamin was the father of my great-grandfather, John Henry Sidwell, as well as two other sons, Benjamin and Francis (known as Frank), and five daughters, Elizabeth (known as Lizzie, married name Bell), Emma (Leonard referred to her as Emily), Sarah Anne (married name Watson), Grace Gertrude (known as Gertie), and Harriet.



I think this is Benjamin (from Arthur's suitcase)

According to Ancestry.com's version of the 1881 census records, Benjamin was born in Coventry around 1840, his son John Henry was born in about 1863 in Sheffield and his daughter Elizabeth in Coventry in about 1861, and he died in 1896. Arthur's diaries show that John Henry's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday was in 1936, however, so John Henry was in fact born in 1861. Since Lizzie was born in Coventry, perhaps she was the firstborn, or maybe the birth dates of John Henry and Lizzie are reversed in Ancestry.com's database? I've assumed that in my family tree chart and made Lizzie's birth year 1863. Emma, Gertie, Benjamin and Frank were born in Kings Norton, Worcestershire in about 1866, 1867, 1869 and 1871 respectively. Sarah and Harriet were born in Nelson in 1873 and 1879, so Benjamin must have settled his family there in 1872/3.

Leonard wrote that Benjamin moved his family from Coventry to Nelson when John Henry was seven, which would be 1868, but it must have been later, between 1871 when Frank was born in Kings Norton and 1873 when Sarah was born in Nelson, and Benjamin must first have moved from Coventry to Sheffield, from there to Kings Norton

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and finally to Nelson. Leonard wrote: *"John Henry's family came from Coventry when he was seven years of age. At that time the cotton industry was starting to grow very rapidly and there was quite an influx of people looking for work from all over England – Cornwall provided a very large number of operatives. John Henry's father hadn't been in a mill before but he got a job and became an 'oiler' – one who kept the machinery lubricated."* John Henry's wedding certificate gives Benjamin's profession as "general labourer".

Madge remembers that John Henry's sisters, Emma and Gertie had a hotel on the Isle of Man and used to send kippers every Christmas. A family tree that Leonard drew says they were spinsters and he wrote that *"Emily owned a boarding house at Douglas in the Isle of Man"*. I know nothing else about Benjamin or his other children except that John Henry's brother, Ben, lived in Nelson and Leonard "dimly remembered him". Arthur's 1915 diary mentions Aunt Harriet so she was living in Nelson when she was in her mid-thirties but there's no reference to Aunt Sarah Anne. Since my father never mentioned Harriet I assume she died before he returned from the US and had no children.



These were in Arthur's suitcase and there's a better version of the picture of the woman in Roy's album from Jim.

I think the woman is Benjamin's wife, Mary, mother of John Henry etc.

Perhaps the man is Benjamin's father?

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Other unidentified but probable Sidwells from Arthur's suitcase

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Emma, Harriet, John Henry, Sarah Anne, Gertie  
Frank, Lizzie, Ben

### **Mary Sidwell, nee Arris (1840? - ????)**

The 1881 census shows Mary as the wife of Benjamin and says she was born about 1840 in Shiffnal, Shropshire. The only reference I have to her is on the family tree that Leonard made where he says she was the mother of John Henry Sidwell etc and came from Coventry. Leonard knew nothing about her except she was known as "Grandma Arris". Perhaps Arris (or Harris) was her maiden name?

### **James Whalley (1821? - ????)**

The 1881 census shows James was born in Trawden, Lancs in about 1821, was married to Rachel and they had two children, James, born in about 1851, and Sarah Jane, born in about 1866, which is quite a gap and relatively late in Rachel's life (she would have been about 41).

According to Leonard's family tree, in addition to my great-grandmother, Sarah Jane Sidwell, James was the father of four sons, David, Joe, Robert and John, and two other

## The Sidwell Family

daughters, Mary (married name Redman), and Alice (married name Greenwood). That can't be right because James was 45 when Sarah Jane was born and 60 at the time of the 1881 census, which shows him as having only two children. More importantly, Rachel was 56 at the time of the census so she would not have had four more children after that. I think the David, Joe, Robert and John on Leonard's family tree were not siblings of Sarah Jane but children of her brother, James.

I'm uncertain about the family's situation. At one point, Leonard wrote that Sara Jane, *"came of a well-known and much-respected family from Trawden ... the family felt she had 'married beneath her' in marrying my grandfather and had little to do with her thereafter."* Elsewhere he wrote, *"Sarah Jane's family came from Trawden when she was four years old. Her father got work weaving in Nelson and until he could get a house and move his family he had to walk from Trawden to Nelson and back every day – 10 miles – and the mills ran from 6 am to 5-30 then."* If Leonard was right in thinking they moved when Sarah Jane was four, they came to Nelson in 1869 or '70. James' profession is given as "cotton weaver" on John Henry's wedding certificate fifteen years later so if the Whalleys were indeed 'much-respected' it must have been for their moral character more than their economic standing.

My guess is that the left-wing tendency of many Sidwells originated with the Whalleys. Leonard wrote that Sarah Jane *'worked from morning 'til night to bring up her sons and guide them into the acceptance of moral precepts which have served them well all their lives.'* Elsewhere he wrote that a James Whalley moved from Sabden, Lancs to Trawden to avoid religious persecution. He thought we're descended from that James. It's likely James was a Quaker and this was late in the seventeenth century. Joseph Besse's "Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers" (which I haven't read) documents their persecution from 1652, when Quakers were first established in Lancashire, to 1689 for attending meetings or refusing to pay tithes. Madge says Quakers still have regular "meetings for sufferings" as part of committees that run the society and Nelson has a very old Quaker meeting house called Marsden Meeting.

Jim made notes about a Whalley family established in Lancashire in the thirteenth century but Leonard thought it unlikely we were descended from them (see Appendix 2). Madge told me there was a Quaker Whalley on the Mayflower but records at the Religious Society of Friends don't go back that far.

### **Rachel Whalley, nee Lee (1825? - ????)**

The 1881 census shows Rachel was born in Trawden, Lancs around 1825. She was the mother of Sarah Jane Sidwell and her siblings. The only reference to Rachel in my notes is on Leonard's family tree.

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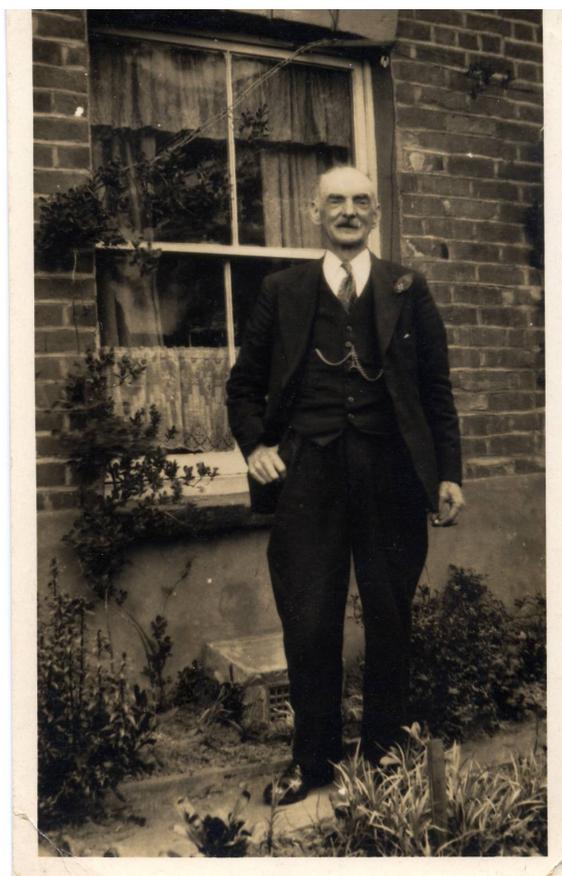
## My Great-Grandparents

### John Henry Sidwell (Oct 8, 1861 – 1938?)

John Henry was the father of my grandfather, Whalley, as well as Fred, Arthur, Rennie, Jack and Jim Sidwell (birth order). He was born in Coventry but lived most of his life in Nelson, Lancs.

John Henry and Sarah Jane were married at Brunswick Chapel, Burnley, 'according to the Rites and Cermonies of the United Methodist Free Church' on Dec 26<sup>th</sup>, 1885 and Whalley was born seven months later.

John Henry left school and went to work in the mill as a cotton weaver when he was eight and worked there until he retired. He lived with Whalley and Edith after Sarah Jane died and became very deaf in his old age, probably the result of the very noisy machines in the mill. Roy remembers how everyone had to shout so he could hear and that he was a nice and gentle man. Leonard told me he went to the club for his pint every evening and was perfectly satisfied with that and his pipe. He visited Arthur and I think also his other children for a week or so every year after he was widowed and also visited Coventry for a few days (see Arthur's diaries), presumably to visit relatives of his father who remained there.



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John Henry had a stroke and became comatose one night when he was in his late 70s and died without regaining consciousness a few days later. Whalley said John Henry had a very easy life and an easy death. Unlike his father, Whalley had a very insecure working life, was plagued with migraine and other health troubles, and was forever trying to make the world better. Life must have been especially hard for Whalley at the time John Henry died because he was bedridden with heart trouble brought on by one of his many jobs, but I think his comment was mainly because John Henry had made him leave school to work fulltime in the mill when he was 13 despite the headmaster's pleas that he was an exceptional student. Whalley believed if John Henry had made a few sacrifices he could have finished school and his whole life would have been different.

Madge commented, "*Whalley was very bitter about being made to leave school which is possibly why he was keen to give his two children a good education*". In John Henry's defense, the other boys also had to work fulltime in the mill from the time they were 13, except Jim, who was 15 years younger than Whalley, and the boys' earnings probably were essential – there were five boys to be fed when Whalley was 13. By the time Jim was 13 it wouldn't have been so hard to support the family. Given his bitterness about being made to leave school it seems inconsistent that Whalley refused to accept the Read's offer to finance Leonard's college education until he could repay it from his earnings. Presumably Whalley didn't want his son to be in debt but a degree in chemistry would have made a great difference to Leonard's life. Whalley and Edith did struggle hard so Madge could complete her education and qualify as a teacher.

John Henry, Sarah Jane and Whalley are buried in a family grave in Nelson cemetery. I have the deed to the plot.



Sarah Jane and John Henry

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### **Sarah Jane Sidwell, nee Whalley (Jul 15, 1865 – May 22, 1931)**

Sarah Jane was John Henry Sidwell's wife and mother of Whalley, Fred, Arthur, Rennie, Jack and Jim.

Madge says Sarah Jane thought none of her sons' wives were good enough for them. Anne says they were all prim women, so it wasn't that they were undesirable characters. The brothers were all devoted to their mother. She'd always done everything for them but they never took it for granted. Leonard was devoted to her, too. He lived with John Henry and Sarah Jane from when his mother died in 1913 and he was six months old until Whalley and Edith were married in 1920. When Whalley and Edith went to America about a year later Sarah Jane pleaded with them to leave Leonard with her. Richard had a very different reaction to his grandma, however. He said she was an old Tartar and he was very scared of her. Madge was 3 when they returned from America and says, *"Sarah Jane was fascinated to watch a little girl with her dolls and prams etc. She never would have believed they were so different ....after 6 sons!"*



This photograph is from near the end of Sarah Jane's life. The boy she's so happily holding is Roy.

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I think Sarah Jane must have been the one who influenced all six brothers to be pacifists. It seems likely there was a Quaker, and therefore pacifist, tradition in her family and although he was a gentle person, idealism doesn't seem consistent with what I know of John Henry's personality. There may have been a Quaker tradition in the English Sidwells because there is in America – there's the Quaker-founded Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC, for example – but I don't think John Henry can have been a Quaker because he and Sarah Jane were not buried in a Quaker cemetery, and it's clear from Arthur's diaries that the Methodist Chapel was the family's church.

The following photograph must have been taken around 1919 while Leonard was still living with his grandparents before Whalley and Edith were married.



John Henry, Rennie, Jim, Jennie (Fred's wife), Leonard, Fred, Sarah Jane

Sarah Jane was still alive when Whalley, Edith and Madge returned to England from America but she died (of cervical cancer) shortly before Leonard's return and was buried in Nelson Cemetery on May 25, 1931.

### Jim Blackburn

Jim was the father of Florrie Sidwell (Whalley's first wife and Leonard's mother), as well as three other sisters, Selina (married name Bass and lived in Nelson), Mathilda (married name Harrison and lived in Salt Lake City, Utah), and Ada (married name Singleton and lived in California). This information comes from a family tree Leonard made, I'm not sure when, but after he wrote his first autobiography in 1968.

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In that autobiography Leonard wrote that Ada *"married Harry Singleton and they subsequently emigrated to California. There they separated after begetting one daughter who in later years wrote to my father. I know nothing of her except that she was rather lonely and unhappy. My mother's older sister was, I believe, named Selina, and I have no idea what became of her. You will see these three sisters and Harry Singleton on the wedding photograph of my mother and father."* Arthur's diaries show that Ada's husband was in fact Fred Singleton, they lived in Akron and had a son, Freddy, then moved to Salt Lake City. I've labeled the wedding photo as Leonard described it, but I wonder if he was right, and I wonder whose daughter it was who wrote from California?

Jim worked as a tackler, a fitter on the cotton weaving looms. As Madge noted, *"Tacklers were the elite amongst the cotton workers and were well paid."*

Leonard wrote that Jim *"once went abroad, on his own, to New England, USA, where the cotton industry was then almost exclusively situated. He hoped to find a good life and to send for his wife and daughters but instead he had, I believe, a very hard time of it, and came home again as soon as he could save the money to pay his passage."* This must have been in the late 1890s when he was in his late 20s, about twenty years before Arthur emigrated to Ohio.

Jim would have been born in the early 1860s. Leonard wrote that he retired when he was 65, i.e., the early 1930s, and died soon after.

### **"Grandma Blackburn"**

Leonard knew no details about "Grandma Blackburn", Jim's wife and Florrie's mother, and had no memory of her, which seems surprising. It suggests there was very little contact between them because Leonard had vivid memories of his early childhood. Surely Grandma Blackburn would have wanted to see her grandson, the only child of her daughter who recently died? I wonder if Sarah Jane made her unwelcome so she stopped going to see him when he was too young to remember? Maybe Sarah Jane thought Grandma Blackburn wasn't good enough, as she did of her sons' wives? There are references to baby Leonard visiting Grandma Blackburn in Arthur's diaries but Leonard was only two when Arthur left for America in 1915 so I don't know what happened after that.

Leonard wrote that Grandma Blackburn survived her husband for "some time".

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## My Grandparents

### Benjamin Whalley Sidwell (Jul 22, 1886 – Jan 31, 1952)

Eldest son of John Henry and Sarah Jane Sidwell, always known as Whalley. Father of Leonard and Madge Sidwell. Whalley was baptized at Salem Chapel, Nelson on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1895 when he was nine. The certificate gives his address as 18 Market Square, Nelson in the Parish of Whalley, in the County of Lancaster.

Whalley's first wife was Florence Blackburn, known as Florrie. They were married in Salem Methodist Chapel on Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, 1912. The certificate says both were cotton weavers, as was John Henry Sidwell, and James Blackburn was a cotton loom overseer. Wilfred Wellock, who appears in Arthur's diaries, and was later elected a Member of Parliament, was the Minister. Fred Sidwell and Ada Singleton were the witnesses. Leonard was Whalley and Florrie's only child.



Arthur, Fred, Whalley, Florrie, Ada & Fred Singleton and Selina?

Florrie died of pneumonia six months after Leonard was born in 1913. Whalley married his second wife, Edith Kenyon, on Oct 9, 1920 in Burnley, Lancs Registry Office. Rennie and Edith's sister, Doris, were witnesses. Whalley and Edith were cotton weavers at that time. Madge was their only child. Edith and Whalley had known each other when he was first married because they both participated in the rambling club and other

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activities associated with the Salem Methodist Chapel. Madge says, *"Edith once said she never "looked at" Whalley for years as he was married AND had a son."*



Whalley and Leonard

Whalley was a conscientious objector in WW1 and was jailed for two and a half years until a few months after the war ended (Appendix 1 is a letter he wrote to his brother, Jim, from Walton Jail in Liverpool). WW1 was the first with mass conscription so there was no precedent for how to deal with objectors. Leonard wrote about the efforts to break them, *"Apart from the predictable ones of being forced to strip and then left with no clothes other than military ones and then left naked for long periods when they refused to comply, they were, as things deteriorated, led to believe that they were to be taken to France to the Front and there, if they still refused to fight, executed for 'cowardice in the face of the enemy'."*

After WW1, Whalley went back to work in the cotton mill. He began to suffer from migraine and Leonard wrote that, *"he managed to get through the working week only to be prostrate with pain most of each weekend and Mother and I had to creep quietly around the house while he tried to get some relief"*. The only treatment the doctor could recommend was a climate with plenty of sunshine. When Arthur wrote that summers in Ohio were that way and Whalley could get work there, he and Edith joined him in 1922. Winters in Ohio are brutal, however, so they jumped at the chance to work a farm in Texas for friends of Arthur's. They were there three years from 1923 to 1926 but Edith couldn't abide the heat. They returned to Akron and lived for a year on a farm caring for relatives of Arthur's neighbor because Whalley could find no other job.

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He eventually got work on the night shift at B. F. Goodrich again, which led back to a clerical job in the day. Arthur and Whalley both lost their jobs in the Great Depression two or three years later. Both returned to England in 1930.

Arthur returned to England first. When he found work in Watford he wrote Whalley that he should be able to get a job there, too. Whalley did but was *"very much surprised"* when he was soon laid off again. Leonard wrote that, *"he was dismissed for union activity."* Whalley's next job was with Firestone, which must have been in Nelson because Leonard said Whalley went back to live with his parents. Leonard was living with the Reads during this time while he finished High School. Edith stayed with friends (the Harry Varleys) in Long Island until Whalley got reestablished.

Madge says, *"Sarah Jane's illness was one reason for the return to England. Whalley had been offered a move by the firm to Boston at this time."* I was surprised to find in Arthur's diaries that Whalley and Edith originally intended only to visit Akron on their way to Australia where the rest of Edith's family had moved. I don't know why they didn't go on and Leonard never mentioned the possibility, so it must not have been discussed in his presence or when they returned from Texas to Akron.

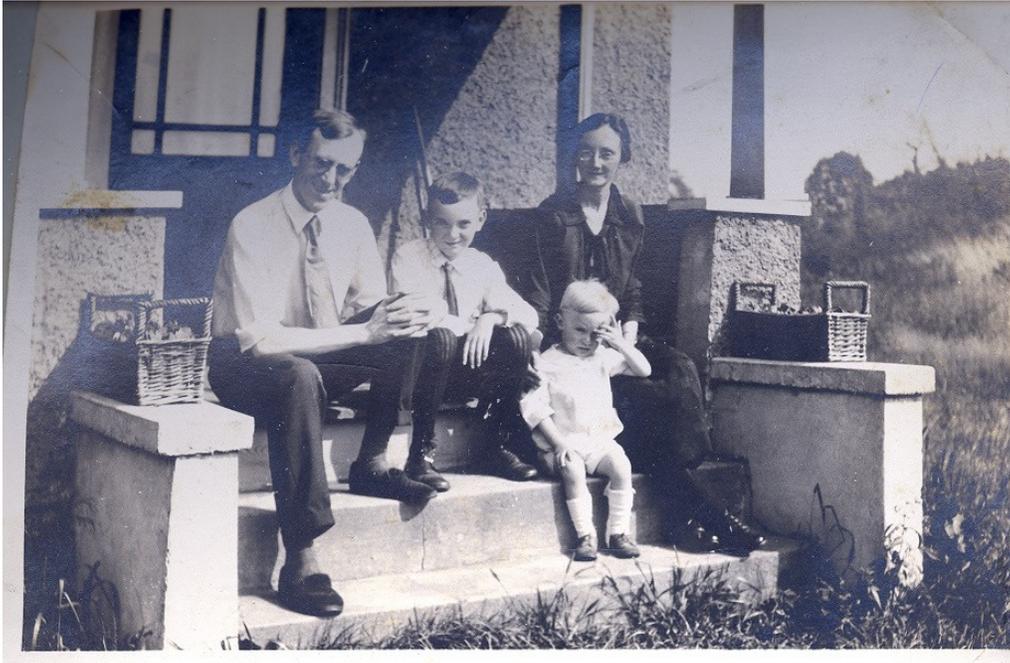
The farm in Texas was owned by Verne and Betty Read, who were close friends of Arthur's. It had been sold as a citrus farm but was in fact raw land, one half cleared and the other under impenetrable brush. Whalley and Leonard loved the pioneer life and wrote fascinating accounts of the experience but it didn't suit Edith at all. Whalley wrote Arthur in August 1925 about "quitting in Texas" and Arthur invited them back. They returned to Akron the following October.



Whalley with the mules – he loved the heat at the Texas farm

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The next picture is from before they left for the farm in Texas. The following one is from when they returned.



Whalley, Leonard, Richard & Edith in Akron 1923

Madge points out she's in the following picture, too, although she's not visible because Edith was only a few months pregnant with her at that time.



Whalley, Edith and Leonard at Niagara Falls 1927

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When Whalley retired he said he'd had 32 jobs to support his family since starting work half time in the cotton mill when he was 11 and fulltime when he was 13. Madge says his last job was a good one; he was outside organizer for the Cooperative Wholesale Society. One of his worst jobs was meter reading; he had to carry a heavy bag of coins, which Madge believes was the cause of his heart trouble in the late thirties at the time John Henry died. Whalley felt steadily weaker and the digitalis his doctor prescribed didn't help, then the osteopath told him to sleep with a stuffed sock bolster between his shoulders to open up his chest cavity because his heart was enlarged from having to work too hard. That treatment worked. He was in bed for a couple of months, including when John Henry died, but got better and was able to go back to work and gardening, which the doctor had told him he'd never do again.

Edith was the first to consult the osteopath, because of a jaw problem. He was Dr. Herbert Milne, an Englishman who was American trained as all the early best ones were. He lived in Blackpool and was regarded as the father of osteopathy in England. Madge commented that osteopathy was considered a "back alley practice" at that time and, *"although osteopaths these days are M.O. (Member of Osteopaths) and D.R.O. (Dr of the Register of Osteopaths) they are still considered "quacks" even though their qualifications take longer than a medical doctor to attain. The treatment added a good ten years to Whalley's life. The back problem was nearly the cause of my leaving the grammar school. In fact, I got a job in the local education office but Whalley and Edith had a re-think and decided they could just about keep me at school."* Madge also told me Roy went to Dr. Milne for help with flat feet but that had a positive side effect later – the feet kept him from being drafted in WW2.

Whalley suffered from periodic depression and would become very quiet. He also got bronchitis badly every winter after he returned from America. He didn't get migraine in Texas but probably did in Ohio and certainly did after returning to Nelson. Whalley used to say the two things he hated most were going to bed and getting up, because it was so cold in Nelson. Leonard and Madge always slept head under the covers because they grew up in that cold.

Whalley once told Madge that he and Edith got a lot of pleasure from watching her and Leonard grow up. She thinks watching was too much what they did do instead of parenting, but Whalley was the more participative one. He helped with homework and would always discuss anything, including his decisions that Madge didn't like and dilemmas she faced. Edith didn't. Whalley always included Leonard and Madge in his activities, taking them to meetings of the Peace Pledge Union, for example.

Whalley once asked Leonard and Madge, *"Neither of you was planned. How do you feel about being alive?"* Leonard was so taken aback that he was unable to respond, but Madge said she was pleased. Whalley was much relieved because he'd been worrying for years about what he'd done.

Leonard and Whalley used to exchange letters every week (mail was delivered faster then) and Leonard's letter was always discussed at the dinner table. Whalley was a great one for discussions and knew many people through meetings he attended.

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Leonard took the train to London one day soon after he came back from America and got chatting with the other man in the compartment about how he'd just come back from Ohio. *"I only know one person who went to America,"* the man said, *"and that's Whalley Sidwell."* It was always open house at Whalley's and Madge attributes her ease at making friends to growing up where people were always stopping by.



Edith and Whalley in Dec 1950

One of Whalley's friends was Percy Wall. I have a slim book of his poetry that includes one dedicated to Whalley. It was Percy who told Whalley there'd be no market for the book he started about life in America so he stopped after writing about their first year in Akron and life on the farm in Texas. In later years Whalley wrote editorials for the monthly "Wheatsheaf Magazine", which was distributed free at local Co-op stores (the Society has an archive of the national magazine but I haven't been able to locate one of the local part Whalley edited). The family was one of the early members of the Co-operative Society. Madge remembers adding up the "divi" each quarter and putting half of Alison's spending money into their bank. I have similar memories. My mother, Florence worked at the "Co-op" in Ware.

Whalley had no musical talent, unlike Rennie and Jim, but he was a good ballroom dancer, and a good athlete. As a young man he was a keen footballer, a good slow bowler at cricket, and NE Lancs champion at hop, step and jump. He later became a keen golfer, which he learned in America, and said his ideal job would have been a golf professional because you follow the sun. He enjoyed many sports, went to the cricket or football match every week, and organized a baseball game with a nearby American military base during WW2.

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Whalley read a lot, especially H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, detective stories and American magazines. He always said it didn't matter what you read as long as you did read. He read the Manchester Guardian newspaper for forty years and wrote them ten letters, of which seven were published. One was also published in the Readers Digest because it was interesting to American as well as English readers. His letter noted that London buses have a sign saying, "Please Lower Your Head When Leaving the Seat" while on New York buses the sign simply says, "Duck". He was also a keen vegetable gardener and grew a wide variety of crops including asparagus.

Roy remembers Whalley as, *"a pipe smoking, pacifist, left wing type."* He was a socialist and a pacifist because all men are brothers, an enthusiast for Esperanto because different languages separate people, and he would not become an American citizen because belonging to different nations separates people. In his later years he was adamant that world government was the only solution to the world's troubles and cited the federation of American states as evidence that it's feasible. He disapproved of history teaching because it was all about wars and kings, both of which he opposed, so it was quite a dilemma for Madge when she won a school prize for history. The coming of WW2 must have been devastating for him. He stopped voting in the last few years of his life. Leonard had a very profound admiration for Whalley.

Whalley was 65 when he died quite suddenly after an operation for prostate cancer. He'd delayed having the operation because he was afraid his heart wasn't strong enough. I remember him walking very slowly when he visited us a year or two before he died. I think he'd been worried about his health for some time. *"When he was 59,"* Madge said, *"He was very much in his 60<sup>th</sup> year."*

### **Florrie Sidwell, nee Blackburn (1889? – August 1913)**

Florrie was Whalley Sidwell's first wife and mother of Leonard. She died of pneumonia in August 1913 when Leonard was six months old and she was about 24. It took Whalley a long time to recover from her death and Leonard felt her loss all his life. He often said how much it upset him when he was told what a wonderful person she was because it just made it all the more painful that he'd never known her.

## The Sidwell Family



### **Edith Isabel Sidwell, nee Kenyon (Feb 21, 1892 – Jul 15, 1974)**

Edith was Whalley Sidwell's second wife and Madge's mother. I've included what I know about Edith's parents and sisters near the end of this document. My only memory of Whalley is from a visit with us shortly before he died but I remember Edith quite well. She had very definite opinions and plenty of physical and moral energy. It occurred to me that Edith and my mother Florence seemed similar in their clear mindedness and courage but Madge said she didn't see any similarity; Florence was much more feminine. I do think they were alike in their determination and decisiveness.



Edith aged about 20



Edith aged about 27

## The Sidwell Family

Edith was very orderly. Madge says she used to fill one third of her breakfast bowl with All-bran, one third with Rice Crispies and one third with Cornflakes.

Edith couldn't abide Texas. *"They should give it back to the Mexicans,"* she always said, but she loved Ohio. *"If I could walk back,"* she used to say, *"I would."*

Edith was advised by her doctor to stop eating meat when she was about 40 because she had high blood pressure. Whalley continued to eat meat because he believed our bodies need it so Edith cooked two dishes for every meal. I have vivid memories of her tasty nut roast.

Even though he always missed Florrie, whom he'd never known, Leonard came to think of Edith as his mother. On his passport application before he came to live with us for a few months after Maisie died, he wrote Edith's name as his mother and had to correct it.



Edith in 1966

## My Grandfather's Brothers & Their Wives

Whalley and Arthur are the only ones I remember and I have only general impressions of them, so what follows is based on what Madge, Roy and Gill recall supplemented by Arthur's diaries.

## The Sidwell Family

All the brothers went to the Independent Labor Party's (ILP) weekly lantern lecture and dance whenever they were in Nelson, Madge says, as well as on the Sunday ramble. Madge remembers Jack as being full of jokes and not at all introspective and Fred as being taciturn and unreflective. Perhaps they took after John Henry, she thinks, and the other four brothers after their mother.

The four older brothers (Whalley, Fred, Arthur and Rennie) immigrated to Akron, Ohio but all returned to England. Fred returned after only a few weeks but the others stayed several years. Arthur was the first to go. A family friend, Tom Varley, suggested Arthur should join him in Ohio but there were other Nelsonians there, too, including Archie Wood. Archie's sister, Hilda, remained in Nelson and he stayed with her on his frequent visits. Archie was a bachelor and traveled widely. Leonard remembered him well. Madge comments that, "*Archie was very much a family friend. I was told he carried me home in a Moses basket from hospital and he always sent presents - especially memorable were nylons and lipstick during WW2.*"



Arthur, Whalley, Jack, Fred, Rennie  
John Henry, Jim and Sarah Jane in 1906

## The Sidwell Family



Rennie, Jack, Arthur, Jim,  
Whalley, John Henry and Fred in 1936



Jim, Jack, Rennie  
Whalley, Fred

## The Sidwell Family

None of the brothers would fight in WW1. Nelson was very left-wing and had many conscientious objectors. When Whalley went to register the man said, "*Oh, not another one!*" Roy points out that this must have been a very difficult time for John Henry, who quite likely wasn't a conscientious objector. White feathers were pushed through his door because none of his sons would fight and he was likely ostracized at the Working Men's Club and lost friends. Nelson remained left wing and elected Sidney Silverman, best known for his leading role in abolishing the death penalty, as its MP from 1935 to 1968.

Madge added that, "*Nelson was also considered progressive because they had a black "pro" in the cricket team, Learie Constantine. Leonard remembered the local children following their family and looking in the windows. His daughter was at my school and quite accepted except that she was one of very few Catholics so she didn't attend morning assembly.*"

Whalley and Jim both suffered from migraine. Whalley and, I think, Rennie, suffered from depression. Arthur suffered from ulcers (Leonard did too). Sidwells seem prone to stress related illnesses but not much to physical ailments.

Roy said all the brothers were teetotal but Leonard told me Whalley used to buy a bottle of port each Christmas. He only bought one bottle all year, and not a very good one, because he was afraid he might like it too much. Madge added that, "*Whalley's bottle of port was mixed with phosphorine and always known as a 'tonic'.* (Marshall's Phosphorine was a popular patent medicine.) *Uncle Arthur bought port for my wedding. I heard that one of Grandad Sidwell's family (i.e., John Henry's siblings) was an alcoholic which is why the brothers had such strong views on drinking.*"

The following photo of the brothers and their families was taken on Nov 1, 1936 to commemorate John Henry's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday the previous month. The story of how hard it had been to get all the brothers in the same place at the same time was a favorite.

## The Sidwell Family



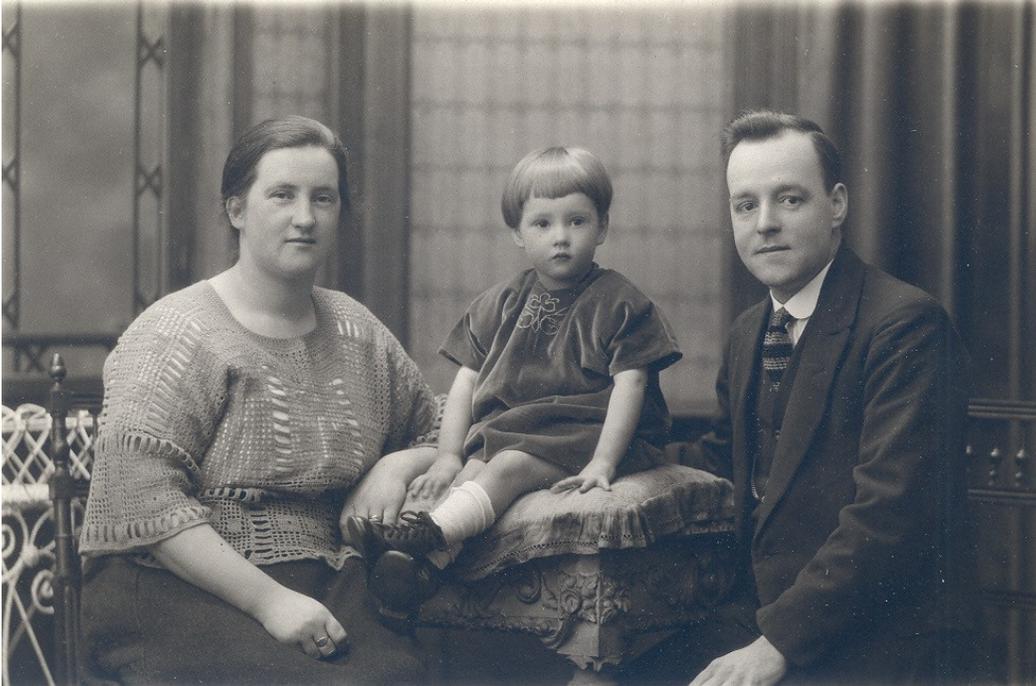
Leonard, Jack, Jim, Rennie, Whalley, Arthur,  
Fred's Thelma, Rennie's Jim, Ada, Fred, Richard  
Fanny, Lizzie, Edith, John Henry, Jennie, Ethel,  
Roy, Madge, Rennie's Bob

### **Fred Sidwell (Dec 17, 1887 - ????)**

Fred was the second son of John Henry and Sarah Jane. He married Jennie (I don't know her last name) on Mar 27<sup>th</sup> 1915 and they had one child, Thelma, in 1920.

Fred worked as a weaver his whole life, probably as a tackler. He and Jennie lived in Colne except for a few weeks in America. They didn't stay in the US because Jennie was too homesick. There's one rather inconclusive reference in Arthur's diaries that suggests they were in America in 1924 and there are a couple of photos of them with Arthur and others in what looks like Akron, so I think they came there although Madge thinks they may not have gotten further than New York.

## The Sidwell Family



Jennie, Thelma and Fred

Fred was morally opposed to war but was exempted from call-up on medical grounds because he was born with his right forefinger and middle finger joined and the Tribunal said he wouldn't be able to fire a rifle.

Madge remembers Fred and Whalley used to discuss cricket but I don't know what other interests he had.

Fred died of cancer in his late 60s.

### **Jennie Sidwell (???? - ????)**

Jennie worked as a shop assistant. Madge told me Jennie was interested in the arts, drama, music etc. and was active in her support of those activities.

### **Arthur Sidwell (Mar 16, 1891 -1961)**

Arthur was the third son of John Henry and Sarah Jane. He married Ethel Kershaw in 1919 and they had one child, Richard, the following year.

Arthur kept pocket diaries from 1914 – 1936 and 1949 – 1960. They give a good picture of his life despite their brevity. I've typed the first set and will tackle the others, too, at some point. He was 23 when the diaries begin, working days in the mill and evenings at the Nelson Palace, where there was live entertainment and films. He rarely

## The Sidwell Family

mentions the mill but greatly enjoyed the Palace. A continuing topic throughout the diaries is what he saw at the cinema two or three times a week and his opinion of it (which ranged from "mustard" to "punk"). His enjoyment of film must have planted the seed with Richard, who worked as a film editor. Arthur's famous love of ice cream is also evident from frequent diary entries.

Arthur was apprenticed as a weaver, started part-time at the mill when he was 12 and began fulltime work at 13 like his brothers. Many young people were trying for a better future than fifty years in the mills and were emigrating to America or Australia. Although Arthur enjoyed working at the Palace, the reason he took a second job was to save the boat fare to Boston. As Leonard wrote: "*He wanted to escape from weaving – a dead end job.*" At the suggestion of a friend, Tom Varley, who had already gone to Akron, Ohio, Arthur went there in 1915 and got a job at B. F. Goodrich Boot and Shoe. He worked for them most of his life, first in Akron then England.



Young Arthur



Crossing the Atlantic



August 1952

Arthur was the first of the brothers to move to America. I think it was simply chance that he was the first but in any case he was determined to make a better future and not get stuck in the mill. He worked diligently to educate himself and attended evening classes for many years both in Nelson and Akron. The first class mentioned in the diaries was a writing class (expression of ideas, not hand-writing) in 1914. He wrote a recitation, "Arsenal at Springfield", which he gave at the Cooperative Holidays Association annual event that December. In Akron he took classes in French and accountancy. He also studied Theosophy for several years and was secretary of the Society's local branch in Akron.

Arthur's diary for 1916, his first full year in America, is missing but he went to a Theosophy class in January 1917 so he must already have met the Reads, who became Richard's godparents. Verne and Betty Read were leading lights in the Society in Akron. Leonard wrote that Arthur: "*got rooms with the Reads and they took a great fancy to*

## The Sidwell Family

*him - Verne's parents nearly adopted him."* Arthur was soon elected Secretary of the Society and was very active in it for years. It didn't appeal to Ethel but she, too, became close friends with the Reads.

The central aim of Theosophy is to: "*reconcile all sects, peoples and nations under one common faith' and 'induce all men to lay aside their strifes and quarrels, and unite in purpose and thought as the children of one common mother*". It isn't based on a revelation and there's no doctrine all Theosophists must accept – you have to develop your own beliefs. It sounds perfect for people like Sarah Jane's boys. In 1926 Arthur went to a lecture by Annie Besant, one of the TS leaders, and he'd read her books. She was born in London and before getting involved in theosophy was a member of the Fabian Society (predecessor of the Labor Party) and co-edited the weekly National Reformer, which advocated trade unions, national education, women's right to vote, and birth control. Theosophy then led her to India where she got involved in Indian nationalism. She became president of the Indian National Congress in 1917 and in the late '20s traveled widely with her protégé, Krishnamurti, whom she believed to be the new Messiah and Buddha, a claim he later rejected. I haven't made a deep study but I can see the common appeal of Theosophy and socialism.

Arthur proposed marriage to Ethel on a walking holiday in the Lake District before he emigrated in 1915 but he had to get settled in America and then submarines made it unsafe to cross the Atlantic so it was May 1918 before he typed and mailed his marriage proposal. Ethel sailed at the end of the year. Arthur was struck down by the post-WW1 flu epidemic two days before she arrived in Akron on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> but was well enough for their marriage three weeks later.



## The Sidwell Family

Arthur enjoyed everything about life in America but Ethel was often homesick and sometimes "very blue". Richard wrote that Ethel was "*unhappy because she adored the sea and Akron was almost 1000 miles from the Atlantic*". She also missed her family. Fred and Ada Singleton had come to Akron in 1917 (Ada was one of the sisters of Florrie Blackburn, Whalley's first wife and Leonard's mother) and their son Freddy was born the following year a few months before Ethel arrived. She and Arthur spent a lot of time with Fred and Ada until they left for Utah in 1922 (presumably Ada's sister Mathilda was already there). Whalley and Edith came to Akron later that year and Rennie and Fanny the following year, but Ethel always missed her own family.



By the Lake



in Akron checking the news from "home"

Ethel took baby Richard back to Nelson as soon as possible "*to show him off to grandparents, aunts and uncles*" and enjoyed it so much that she saved enough from her singing engagements to go on a second trip three years later. Ethel and Richard started what looks to have been planned as a third long visit to England in mid-1929 but the Wall Street Crash came on Oct 29<sup>th</sup> and Arthur was laid off the following January. The only work he could find was at a garage and that lasted only a few weeks so he returned to England in June.

When Arthur returned they lived in Watford, Herts, where he worked for British Moulded Hose (known as "Mouldy"). In 1932 they were taken over by B. F. Goodrich and he was offered a better position in Burton-on-Trent, so they moved there. They settled in "Craigendoran", a house that backed on to a large flooded gravel pit with swans and sailboats on the outskirts of Burton. Arthur remained there until his death in 1961.

Roy writes that Arthur was, "*a little different to the other brothers in appearance; a darker complexion and I think smaller, though we are not a big family.*" Richard was also short and had a darker complexion than my Dad. Roy remembers Arthur as, "*an extremely pleasant and kind man*", just as I remember him. He often came to the rescue of Whalley and Leonard when they needed a job, a place to live, or a loan.

## The Sidwell Family

Madge says, "Uncle Jim described Uncle Arthur as "one of nature's gentleman" which was a rare compliment from him. Edith and Uncle Arthur grew very close and exchanged lots of visits. He helped me a lot when Whalley died."

Arthur died of a heart attack in 1961. Ethel died several years earlier, in 1947 I think.

### **Ethel Sidwell, nee Kershaw (Dec 24, 1888 - 1947?)**

Ethel was an excellent contralto who sang professionally, including some performances on the radio in Akron, Ohio. Ethel's first singing engagement came soon after she joined Arthur in Akron and she had earned enough to pay for a long trip home with Richard just three years later. As well as singing professionally she often sang for friends. Arthur recited poetry and epics.



Ethel & "Dicky"



May 1925

Ethel and Richard lived for almost a year with her parents in Nelson while Arthur was getting reestablished after the 1929 Wall Street Crash but she began to suffer badly from chronic bronchitis when winter approached and they spent that winter in a friend's house in St. Ives, Cornwall where it was warmer. They moved to Watford to rejoin Arthur when he came back to England and got a job there but Ethel fell sick again, was mistakenly diagnosed with TB and sent to Ware Sanatorium.

Life was much better for Ethel after they moved to Burton in 1932. Arthur had a good secure job and they were close enough for frequent car trips to visit family in Nelson.

## The Sidwell Family



Arthur and Ethel at Craigendoran, their home in Burton

Madge remembers Ethel well and says, *"she was charming and attractive (not one of the prim ones). Sadly she was a smoker and died of lung cancer."*

### **Rennie Sidwell (Nov 9, 1894 – 5 Nov, 1964)**

Rennie was the fourth of John Henry and Sarah Jane's six sons. He married Fanny Hall on Jun 2<sup>nd</sup> 1923 (the day before they sailed for America) and they had two children, Jim (whose middle name was Hall) and Bob.



Rennie and Fanny's Wedding (Jack on left)

Like all but Jim, the youngest of the brothers, Rennie left school to work at the mill when he was 13. "Uncle Jim" gave me a book about the Lancashire mill towns which,

## The Sidwell Family

he wrote, "will give you some idea of the times your Grandpa and his brothers were born into and grew up in." The book explains the rise of the world's first industrial society, how it was triggered by development of the steam engine, located in Lancashire because of its pure soft water, abundant coal, high humidity, and access to American cotton and world markets through the port of Liverpool, and was based on cheap labor, especially children: "what defeated the industry as a major world factor was, in the end, the rise in the school-leaving age." I'll include more of that background later.

Rennie always wanted a piano. He pestered John Henry and Sarah Jane until eventually they got one when he was 12. He was primarily self-taught and practiced scales in every key until he'd mastered them, then learned tunes. He could play by ear - if he heard a song he could play it - but he did learn to read music in the end by trading lessons with a neighboring kid who knew some theory and wanted to play the violin. Somehow, Bob doesn't know how, Rennie taught the other fellow fingering. Madge told me Rennie once went for lessons with a teacher but she said she couldn't teach him anything he didn't already know.

Bob told me Rennie was the pianist for silent films for six months in France (I also have a photo saying he was a cinema pianist in Nelson) and Madge said he went from Paris right to the south of France. He visited France later with his son, Jim. Madge thinks Rennie enjoyed the experience as well as the fact that he was helping to repair some of the devastation. She says he was welcome wherever he went because of his piano playing. He played on the radio and at weddings in "Dad Haskins Hicktown Band" in Akron and Bob remembers curling up by the bass drum when they practiced.



Dad Haskins Hicktown Band (Rennie rear left)

Like his brothers, Rennie refused to fight in WW1. He was unconditionally exempted by the Tribunal but went to work as a stretcher-bearer in France, for the RAMC or St. John's Ambulance, Bob thinks. He returned to France immediately the war ended for at

## The Sidwell Family

least six months helping to rebuild farmers' barns and do other reconstruction work. In a 1965 postcard to Arthur, he wrote, "*Last weekend, Friends re-union at Bristol where I met chaps I last saw in France 1919. Then week at Torquay with another couple of friends.*" The capitalization of "Friends" suggests they were Quakers so perhaps the group Rennie worked in was organized by Quakers, but the uncapitalized "friends" referred to in the next sentence sound like regular friends, so maybe not.

Rennie wrote to Arthur in 1920 about coming to Akron. He and Fanny went there in 1923. He got into dry cleaning working for the Reads after a year of making car seat covers at B. F. Goodrich. Roy told me he was a "spotter", an expert at removing spots and stains from garments using the correct chemicals for the material. Bob says he mastered silk cleaning, the top of the profession. Rennie was the last of the brothers to return to England, in 1935 when he lost his job in the Great Depression.



Rennie, Fanny and Arthur in Akron

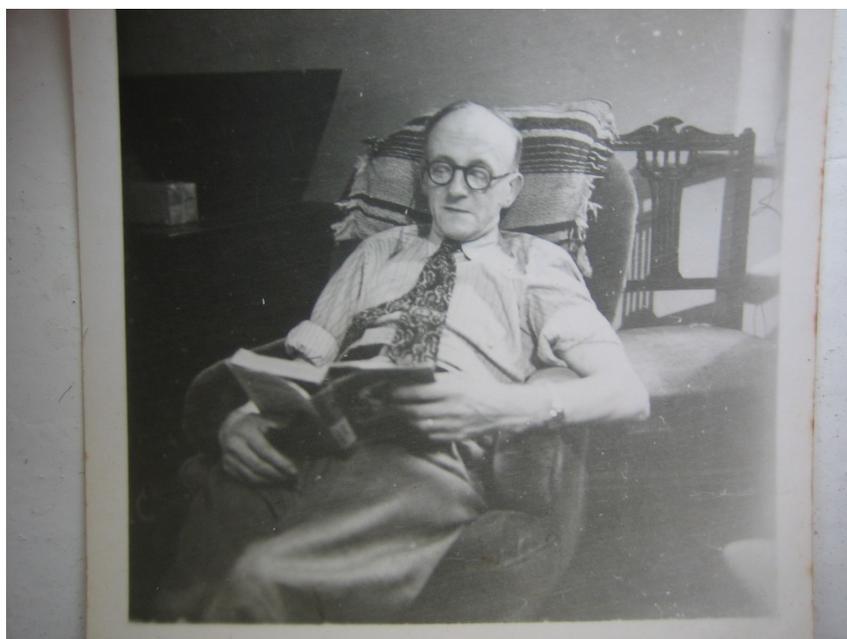
Rennie, Fanny and the boys returned to England in July 1935 and settled in Bedford (Madge remembers the boys had a boat on the river there) but when WW2 broke out, Fanny and Bob went back to Lancashire to stay with relatives. Rennie and Jim stayed in Bedford (I don't know how long the family was apart). After the war they lived in Blackburn, Lancs where Rennie and a school friend opened Pendle Cleaners, a dry cleaner. The friend had made enough money to finance the business by managing a cotton mill in India. He returned to England in 1947 when India became independent and was resented as a turncoat by some of the mill workers who'd known him as a lad.

## The Sidwell Family



Fanny, Rennie, Bob and Jim – Summer 1943

Rennie was a quiet person, a heavy smoker and a great reader of detective stories. He stayed up 'til all hours reading. A favorite story the brothers told when they got together was about a neighbor in Nelson saying, *"I saw your light on at three o'clock last night. Was someone ill?"* It was Rennie finishing a book. Madge says all Sidwells are "night rakes" who stay up until all hours (but that's not so in my case).



## The Sidwell Family

Rennie wrote poetry in Lancashire dialect and his grandson Richard may have some of them. Bob has one that I've included in an Appendix.

Roy's notes about Jack also include a story about Rennie that illustrates life when "the brothers" were young. Rennie was coming home from holidaying on the Isle of Man when he *'discovered to his horror on the boat on the way back, a halfpenny piece in the bottom of his pocket. This was terrible because you had to spend ALL your holiday money as a matter of pride, and come home broke, so he threw it over the side.'*

Rennie died of a brain tumor in his late 60s.

### **Fanny Sidwell, nee Hall (Oct 6, 1898 – Dec 2, 1980)**

Fanny was the eldest of seven sisters. She and Rennie both started working half time in the cotton mill when they were 12 and fulltime when they were 13. Her father died when Fanny was 14 and the family moved from Bacup to Nelson. Her youngest sister had a bad heart from rheumatic fever and died when she was 29. The next youngest stayed home to care for their mother and worked as a secretary in the mill. The third youngest became matron in a hospital. Four of her sisters married.



Rennie and Fanny

Anne remembers Fanny as a person of simple tastes who was very hospitable and kind. She worked as a dressmaker. Madge remembers her as always being much involved with sewing. Like Rennie, she also played the piano.

## The Sidwell Family

When Rennie died, Fanny's son Jim returned to England to look after her (Bob was living in England but had a young family) but when Bob decided to move to America, Fanny said that if he was going, she was, too. Jim decided to go as well. Fanny took several Greyhound bus tours visiting friends while she was in the US in the second half of the '60s.

### **John Willie (Jack) Sidwell (Jun 5, 1897 – 1987)**

Jack was the fifth son of John Henry and Sarah Jane. He married Elizabeth Green from Barrowford, known as Lizzie around 1923, and they had one child, Roy.



Jack attended Bradley school in Nelson until he was 12 then went to work in the cotton mill. WW1 started five years later and like his brothers, Jack was a Conscientious Objector. He said he was a working lad and wouldn't kill a German working lad because that lad's mother would feel just the same way his own mother would if he was killed. We don't know what happened at his trial but he ended up in a non-combatant corps in Ireland. Roy remembers that Jack would never let him buy a poppy on Poppy Day or join the Boy Scouts. Roy didn't want a poppy but he did feel isolated being the only one without.

When WW1 ended Jack returned to Nelson and the cotton mill. He was good at billiards and was a keen rambler like Whalley and Edith and Jim and Ada. Later in life he took up painting. He and Lizzie lived in a house Roy remembers as *"smallish with an outside toilet [and] a tin tub in front of the fire"*. (Note: It's hard to believe now, but it wasn't until the late '50s that my parents got an inside toilet, and Felicity and I had to bathe in a tin tub in the kitchen of our house in London as late as 1970.) There were musical evenings when Lizzie played piano.

Jack continued at the cotton mill and also worked evenings collecting insurance payments for a while. It was sold door to door then, especially where people needed all

## The Sidwell Family

their small income for food and shelter and had a horror of ending up destitute. They were persuaded to take out insurance to cover their funeral expenses, for which they paid a few pennies every week. Jack knew how hard it could be to set the money aside and when one lady said *"Do I have to pay this?"* he told her *"No, you don't, love."*

In 1934 or '5 Jack and Lizzie left Nelson, probably because mill work was damaging Jack's health. They moved to Morecambe where one of Lizzie's sisters lived. Her husband worked for a washing machine firm and Jack got a job working there, too. Jack and his brother-in-law also made soap powder for the machines but it didn't work out. After a couple of years Jack and Lizzie moved to Blackpool to join another of Lizzie's sisters, whose husband had stalls in the amusement arcades. This was another kind of work that didn't suit Jack but he kept at it for a couple of years.

Sometime around 1937 when Jack was 40, he and Lizzie started a home bakery. Lizzie was an excellent pastry cook. Jack set off in the early morning on his bike with the first batch while Lizzie baked more, then he'd go round with the next batch of cakes and pastries. They built a set of regular customers and added an evening route where Jack would ride round calling, *"Hot meat and potato pies."* Then WW2 started and food was rationed so they had to stop.



Jack then worked on the Blackpool trams, first as a conductor then a driver until he retired at 65. *"He just loved driving up and down the promenade,"* Anne says. Lizzie worked in the summers in her brother Harry's boarding house. This was a settled and happy time for them at the end of which, after more than 50 years of hard work, Roy says Jack *"was as happy a retired person as you would find"*. Life really was hard in

## The Sidwell Family

those days – his grandson Richard remembers Jack saying, *"We worked from 5am to 5pm, five and a half days a week, church three times on Sunday, and all for 7 shillings"*.

Jack was almost 90 when he died after a long and happy retirement, even in his last six years after Lizzie died. He'd given Lizzie a very hard time when he was in his 69<sup>th</sup> year because none of his older brothers had lived past 70. He was frantic about every health blip that year but in fact he was healthier in retirement than when he was working. He often had stomach trouble then, perhaps because shift-work meant eating at odd hours.

After Lizzie died, Roy tried to get Jack to move south and live with them. *"I told him he'd have to live separately, have his own TV and meals in his room because the boys were young and we had to have some time to ourselves,"* Roy said. *"I thought he'd enjoy the boys but he wouldn't move so we had to keep going to visit him."* Perhaps Jack was right. When Leonard came to live with us after Maisie died he was very unhappy. He and Maisie were each other's world and even though he knew it couldn't be so, it felt to him that he and I should now have a similar relationship.

### Lizzie Sidwell (???? - ????)

Elizabeth Green, always known as Lizzie, was one of eleven children. They lived in Barrowford. Her father was a cotton weaver. Lizzie also worked in the mill, as a "reacher-in" for her Dad, a dangerous job that required reaching in to the loom to tie broken cotton strands together. Roy remembers Lizzie talking about waking to the mill with her Dad at five o'clock on very cold mornings six days a week.



Lizzie at the piano

## The Sidwell Family

The noise inside those mills was so loud that lip reading was the only way to communicate. Everyone who worked there for long ended up with hearing trouble. Everyone who grew up in the mill towns remembers the clatter of the mill workers' wooden clogs on the cobbled pavements in the mornings - the old folks probably couldn't hear it any more - and it's always bitterly cold and dark in people's memories of those days. No wonder they needed a "knocker-up", a man they paid to rattle with a long pole on their bedroom window to wake them in time for work.

Lizzie was an excellent pianist and became an Associate of the Trinity College of Music. She played for the church three times a day before she was married and later gave lessons at home to supplement the family income. Although it doesn't look that way in photos she was very shy. Lizzie died of old age when she was 85 - *"There was no specific cause,"* Roy said, *"She was just worn out."*



Richard, Lizzie, Roy and Ethel

**Jim Sidwell (Jul 29, 1901 – Jul 24, 1989)**

## The Sidwell Family

Jim was the sixth and last son of John Henry and Sarah Jane. He married Ada Wilkinson and they had no children.

Jim had an excellent baritone voice, won the Rose Bowl at the prestigious Blackpool Music Festival in 1930 accompanied by Lizzie, broadcast on the BBC, again accompanied by Lizzie, and made a few records, but he said he didn't have the right handshake (he wasn't a Freemason) and he was the opposite of the right build for an operatic baritone; he was short (5' 6"), plump and fair. Madge says Ada was *"very much a Lancastrian"* and would never have moved to London, anyway, which was the only place a musician could be based. Jim continued to sing in churches at Christmas as principal baritone in "Gerontius", "The Messiah" and other such works, and competed in festivals.



Jim and Ada's Wedding (Jack on left)

Jim also set up, wrote all the material for and performed as baritone and funny man in a concert party called The Dominants with a tenor and two women (Roy has one of their 1939 programs). Jim also painted quite well, Roy says.

Jim worked for the Water Board in Nelson all his life and was the only one of the brothers to escape "the mill" altogether. Jim *"lived to retire"*, Madge says. He and Ada moved to Grange-over-Sands in the Lake District as soon as he did retire. They were very health conscious, vegetarians for many years, and teetotal. Madge says Jim became a vegetarian after a holiday job in a butcher's shop and never ate meat again. Jim was devastated when Ada died not very long after he retired. Roy wrote, *"This so upset Uncle Jim that he turned his back on whatever religious beliefs he may have had, and when we attended his funeral twelve years later, not a word was said."*

Jim was one of the first boys to get a scholarship to the Grammar School and was treated badly by the other boys because his parents were not paying. Arthur said it

## The Sidwell Family

changed him and made him sarcastic. Nelson was a one-class town with no rich and no slums; everyone was relatively equal and that was how Jim expected the rest of the world to be. My Dad remembered being teased by Jim, who was only twelve years older. That would have been when Jim was being given a hard time at school.

Jim and Ada were keen walkers and went on the Sunday ramble every week. They also traveled around Europe, which was uncommon then. Madge remembers they did their European travels mainly by bike and worked out their expenses to the penny. Roy remembers them talking about seeing many youths in uniform and saying something big was happening when they came back from Germany in the late thirties. Jim was left wing and pacifist. Roy remembers him discussing politics with Whalley and others. He was also a keen gardener, especially during WW2 when he had an allotment. He won the prize for best allotment one year.



Jim on right

Jim was almost 90 when he died. He smoked a pipe at one time but told Roy he'd tried herbal tobacco in his pipe once and that put him off smoking for good. He wore glasses from when he was 3 years old. When he was on holiday in the Mediterranean he went to sleep in the sun one afternoon, woke an hour or so later, picked up the newspaper and started reading again, then realized he'd forgotten to put his glasses back on. The benefit of the sunlight wore off after a while but he noticed there were a lot fewer people wearing glasses there than in Lancashire.

Jim lived in Grange-over-Sands after he retired. In his notes about Jack Roy says, "*We took my Dad to Grange to see Jim on a few of our Blackpool visits, and they were always pleased to see each other and it was a real nice day out. Had a trip round the*

## The Sidwell Family

*Lakes sometimes, and they enjoyed each other's company a lot."* You can see that vividly in pictures of them from that time.



Jim and Jack

Roy was exhausted by his drive up to Jim's funeral. It's long and he'd done it in an aging van that made it even more tiring. When he arrived, the Lancashire women neighbors and friends were all standing with arms crossed talking quietly and watching him get out of the van. When one stepped towards him he expected an expression of sympathy but all she said was, *"Ee lad, tha's gone reet gray."*

### **Ada Sidwell, nee Wilkinson (July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1902 – June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1977)**

Ada died of cancer. She worked as a weaver but I don't know for how long.

## The Sidwell Family



Jim, Ada and Rennie

### Lancashire Mill Town Life

To understand Whalley and his brothers, their parents, wives and children, it's helpful to understand something of cotton milling's dominance over their world.

Small scale wool weaving was well-established in Lancashire from the 16<sup>th</sup> century when many weavers came there from Flanders. The area became the world's first industrial society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the steam engine made mechanization possible. Lancashire's abundant coal fueled the engines, the port of Liverpool provided access to raw cotton and the markets for finished cloth, and the area's high humidity was perfect for cotton processing. Large engines and mills became widespread after about 1830. The railroads further accelerated growth in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Production peaked just before WW1 by which time Nelson alone had 50,000 looms and 85% of Lancashire's cotton goods were being exported.

People came to the mill towns when other areas fell on hard times, Cornish folk when the tin mines gave out, for example. More and more houses were built for the workers, two-up-and-two-down, back-to-back terraced houses, often rented, facing each other across narrow cobbled streets. Downstairs was a kitchen/living room in back and a front parlor for special occasions. Upstairs were two bedrooms for the man and wife, their many children, and often grand-parents, too. Outside was the privy.

Everyone worked at the mills or at providing the things any community must have, coal, food and so forth. Work at the mills started at 7am (sometimes 6am) and you were locked out if you were late. That's why the "knocker-up" was necessary. Often a retired mill-worker, he came round for 4 pence a week, rattled his cane on your window and made sure you were awake on time.

"Everyone" means the man and wife and their children. The 1870 Education Act made school compulsory for children aged 5 to 13 but they could still start half time work at

## The Sidwell Family

10. Most families simply had to put the kids to work. When the minimum age for half-time work was raised first to 11, then 12 in 1900 and 14 in 1921 it caused real hardship, first to the folk struggling to support themselves and then to the overall industry, which became uncompetitive because Lancashire labor costs became too high relative to other countries where child labor was (and is) still used.

After production peaked just before WW1 the trade was abruptly halted in 1914. Many mills closed and thousands were out of work. Nelson was less affected than most towns because finer cloth was produced there but it was a very hard time everywhere. There was a boom when the War ended but it didn't last long. Wages were cut 40% in April 1922 and another 10% the next year. Since Lancashire was the world's first industrial society, its people were the first to see the dark side. No surprise that Nelson elected Labor Party candidates to its council as early as 1890, had a large branch of the Communist Party in the early '20s, and had a Mayor in 1929-31 who refused to allow the National Anthem to be played. That gave Nelson the name "Little Moscow".

Cotton manufacture involves spinning, weaving and finishing, a specialized process that was done in only a few factories. The tall mills, usually five stories, were where spinning was done. They were kept humid and hot – 75 to 98F – and people worked there barefoot. Weaving was done in single-story mills, also humid, but barely heated or ventilated. These were the noisy places, the ones where our family worked. The noise came from the shuttles being flung from side to side of the looms, which were very close together and driven by belts from the central engine. The 200 foot chimneys were to create draft for the steam boilers. The gas lights gave only a low light, it was so noisy you could only communicate by lip-reading, it was dangerous - shuttles sometimes flew off looms - and above all it was cold and damp. You wore wooden clogs with leather uppers and "irons" on the soles to protect the wood from the damp stone.

The vast majority of workers were weavers who usually operated 4 to 6 looms each. Also on the factory floor were tacklers, who fixed the looms when something went wrong. We think Fred was one. In a small office were the "maister" – the mill-owner – and a clerk or two to keep the books. Children carried the tea round, lit the gas-lamps and suchlike, then became a "reacher-in" like Lizzie or did other supportive tasks, and soon began operating one or more looms themselves. They were paid a very low wage.

All the mills in town closed at the same time for one week each year. That was "Wakes Week" which every family would try to spend holidaying by the sea. Many would take their week's food with them. It was, as in Jack's story about Rennie, a point of pride to spend all your money having a good time but "all" was very little for most families. The fact that everyone went on holiday at the same time reinforced the feeling of brotherhood among mill workers.

The towns were compact masses of mills and houses surmounted by huge chimneys, but closely surrounded by open hills. After five and a half days in the deafening, cold, damp and noisy mill and one's sooty, cold and damp house, many went for a group ramble in the country on Sunday. Many men went to a pub or working man's club during the week as John Henry did, or other gathering places where they could make

## **The Sidwell Family**

their own entertainment. A piano was an expensive luxury so most people played at such places. Some learned monologs - "Albert and the Lion" was very popular – and a few, like Arthur, made up their own. Poetry in Lancashire dialect also became popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Rennie was one who made up his own verses.

Lancashire dialect had many words the weavers from Flanders introduced. Leonard told me soldiers from the mill towns in France during WW1 found they could communicate with the locals because so many of their words were the same.

Growing up in a community where everyone started fulltime work in the mill at 13 and the only realistic alternative was to emigrate had a tremendous influence on how Whalley and his brothers lived, thought and felt. The next generation was deeply affected by their parents' experiences and the Great Depression, but none worked in the mills. Especially those born later found more satisfying work.

# The Sidwell Family

## My Parents

### Leonard Irving Sidwell (Jan 18, 1913 – Apr 12, 2003)

Leonard was the only son of Whalley and Florrie. He was married four times; to Minnie Bland, Florence Katherine Stanton, Maisie Hinton nee Burrows and Ivy Gladys Whenman, nee Welch (Florence's youngest sister). Leonard's only child was Martin Leon, from his marriage to Florence.



Leonard in 1931



1939



1968

Leonard wrote an account of his childhood on the farm in Texas and three autobiographies, the first when Florence died, which covers his first fifty years, the second after Maisie died when he was in his late 70s, and the third when he was in his early 80s after he married Ivy. I've typed the accounts of Texas and his first fifty years and will tackle the others at some point. Leonard looks very cheerful in the photo below. I'm sad that I never saw him so carefree.



Leonard – Morecambe Aug 1937

## The Sidwell Family

By the time I knew him my dad felt that good things came rarely and didn't last. His mother had died when he was less than a year old, he'd lived with his beloved grandma until he was 7 then was taken to live with Whalley and Edith whom he didn't know and to America a year later. They'd moved several times there, he'd been brought back to England when he was 18 and he had great trouble finding work. The deaths of Florence, Maisie and Ivy hit him very hard and he felt badly that his marriage to Minnie had failed, but as Madge's Michael says, very few people can look back on a life with three happy marriages.

My dad was a good writer and there's little I can add to what he recorded except that he was sub-clinically depressed, at least from my mid-teens onwards. I don't think he was depressed when he lived in America because his stories about those times were happy – probably why I was predisposed to be happy here – but he seems to have become increasingly passive after Whalley had him return to England after High School. He was treated for serious clinical depression after Maisie died when he came to live with us, and again after Ivy died.

Leonard used to go to all the study groups run by the Nelson library when he first came back from America. Roy remembers him as "*quite an intellectual chap.*" Roy was very surprised when I told him Leonard had stopped reading books altogether by the time I was in my early teens.

Leonard worked for the Peace Pledge Union for a few years before WW2 driving their van all round England giving film shows. He was married to Minnie then. I believe she's the woman in the following picture.



Minnie introduced Leonard and Florence. She had found someone else and thought Leonard and Florence would make a good couple. They did but Leonard couldn't afford a divorce for several years. They were married at Wood Green, London Registry Office on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950 and Leonard is identified on the marriage certificate as "The divorced husband of Minnie Sidwell otherwise Ritter formerly Bland spinster" and Florence as

## The Sidwell Family

"Spinster". Florence's father was dead by this time. Whalley was working as "Clerk Electricity Board". Ron Tilling and Ivy Whenman were the witnesses.

Leonard was physically healthy all his life. He smoked cigarettes when he was young but stopped when he was thirty, chiefly to save money but also because he suspected it was unhealthy. He got a lot of exercise during all the time I knew him, especially when he worked as "the man from the Pru" from 1955 onwards collecting insurance premiums door to door. He had a large hilly territory that he covered by bicycle. When he retired in his late sixties he continued to go for a walk every day as well as walk to the shops for groceries. He started to "feel his age" as he said when he was in his late eighties. His balance was affected by Parkinson's Disease and he had a series of minor strokes that made him confused at times. He was able to stay at home and look after himself almost until the end of his life.

### **Florence Katherine Sidwell, nee Stanton (Mar 5, 1908 – May 14, 1967)**

Florence was Leonard's second wife and my mother. She died of leukemia.



Florence was born at 10 Tresilian Street, Plymouth to Richard Albert Stanton, a draper's traveler, and Marina Amelia Stanton nee Welch. I know almost nothing about her parents. She never talked about her family or childhood and said very little about her adult life before she married Leonard except that she had worked in children's nurseries and as nanny for Italian and English families. When Leonard died, I found Florence's training certificates, a few letters and references from her employers and her passport. I was able to reconstruct some of her life before I was born.

## The Sidwell Family



Florence trained for sixteen months at Yelverton and got her "Testimonial for Training Received in a Residential Nursery" on Oct 29, 1929, so she must have started training in June/July 1928 when she was 20. She got her "Creche Workers Elementary Certificate" in June 1929 and her "Creche Workers Advanced Certificate" in March 1930. Her passport was issued on Jul 8, 1932 and has an entry stamp for "Tanger" in August of that year. It was renewed at the British Consulate in Rome in 1937 and in Genoa in 1938. There are numerous stamps for France, Italy and Switzerland in 1935 – 1938.

There are several very affectionate letters from one of her Italian employers, Marquese Bernardo Patrizi Gernetto Lesmo, as well as the Marquese's 1936 typed letter in Italian saying her servant, Florence Stanton and Florence's friend Marjorie Fiore (see below) are authorized to visit Cadenabbia and Venice. I assume Italy had imposed travel restrictions on foreigners at that time. One of the Marquese's letters includes, "*so pleased to hear you are staying with Mrs. Sykes after all ... Please remember me to Mrs. Sykes.*" From this I assume Florence worked for Mrs Sykes both before and after her time in Italy. She stayed in touch with the Sykes and I remember visiting them. He was an inventor. The references from Florence's Italian employers show that she worked for one for six months, another for over a year and a third for two years. One says she *'can talk Italian quite well'*. Apart from the "laissez passer", the Marquese's letters are not dated. One says, "*I am not having a very fine time in London as everybody is perplexed by the political situation, and minds very low*". The reason Florence left the Marquese's family is that the husband got a diplomatic posting to Poland and Florence decided she would not go there. As it turned out, though, she would not have been able to go anyway because the diplomat was told he must take only Italian staff.

## The Sidwell Family

Later, Florence was matron at Fortis Green School, Aspley Guise, Bletchley for two years ending on Oct 7, 1941. On Aug 24, 1943 she resigned from Queens Park Nursery in the London Borough of Paddington. I was born eight months later.



SOUTH WALES PENDING  
Florence in Aug 1966

Florence had three older brothers, Albert, known as Bert, a merchant seaman who was born about 1903 and died in Jan 1985, Thomas Charles, known as Tom, who worked as a butler and I believe died in Torquay when he was in his '90s, and Leslie John, known as Les, who was born in 1906, lived in Reading, worked on the railways and who I believe also lived into his '90s, as well as two younger sisters, Amelia Louise, known as Amy, who was born in 1910 and died shortly after her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, and Ivy Gladys, known as Ivy, who was born on Sep 9, 1916. Ivy became Leonard's fourth wife in 1991.

Although Florence's birth certificate says her father was a draper's traveler, I remember being told he was in the merchant navy. I may be confused because her brother Bert was, or perhaps her father was in the navy during WW1. In any case he was away for long enough before Ivy was born that he knew she could not be his child. The family was broken up, the boys going to one orphanage and the girls to another. Florence would have been about nine years old then.

Ivy told Felicity the nuns took the children away from their "sinful" mother, but the nuns couldn't have done that by themselves. It's more likely that her husband, Mr. Stanton, stopped supporting her and she couldn't keep her family together. Sadly, Ivy felt guilty about causing the family's breakup her entire life and tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to find out what happened to her mother. There's a Marina Welch who was living in Plymouth and about 4 years old in the 1881 census and an Albert Stanton, also born about 1875, and living in Stoke Damerel, Devon, who may be the right ones.

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The orphanage where Florence grew up was run by Catholic nuns. Ivy wrote that she attended St. Teresa's Convent 1920-21 and Nazareth House 1922-33. I don't know where she or Florence and Amy were before 1920 but I believe they were always together. One of the other girls at the orphanage, Marjorie Fiore, became Florence's only lifelong friend and my godmother. Marjorie often visited us and they went to church if it was close to Christmas but Florence never talked about religion. Marjorie was headmistress at a school in North London, never married, and traveled every year to places with exotic wildlife from which she sent tantalizing postcards saying things like, "*Went to Sahara. Saw camels.*"



Florence with Marjorie's Cat in 1939



Marjorie in early 1958

## My Parents' Siblings

### **Madge Kenyon Atherton, nee Sidwell (b. Mar 28, 1928)**

Madge is the only child of Whalley and Edith, was born in Akron, Ohio, is Leonard's half sister, and is the adoptive mother of Alison Woolford (b 1962) and Michael Smith (b 1960).

## The Sidwell Family



Madge

Madge married Brian Smith in 1950 and they lived with Whalley and Edith for a year. Madge learned afterwards that Whalley said the year when Madge and Brian lived with them (Whalley's last) was one of his happiest. Madge recalls that Archie Wood visited during that time and Brian found his Lancashire/American accent quite amazing.

During WW2, Sadler's Wells and other theatrical establishments were evacuated from London to Burnley, Lancs. Madge was in school and college then and her Uncle Jim took her to see Margot Fonteyn in the ballet, to the opera and the theater.

I'll add more about Madge later.

### **Ivy Gladys Whenman**

Ivy was my mother's younger sister so she was my aunt for most of my life. For the last ten years of her life, she was my stepmother.

Ivy's first husband was Bill Whenman. They had one child, Brenda Louise. After they were divorced, Ivy married Ron Tilling, a gentle man whom I remember well because we visited each other often when I was a boy. Ivy remarried Bill after Ron died. I met him once. Ivy and my Dad were married after Bill and Maisie died. They were very happy together.

Ivy had several health troubles including cancer and a hip injury from falling downstairs but was always very cheerful and outgoing, as well as very generous. She loved to joke. One of her favorites after her sister, Amy, came to live nearby was to go shopping with Amy and ask old men if they had a father. They would look puzzled and she'd explain she was trying to help her sister find a man.

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Madge, Leonard and Ivy

## My Father's Cousins

### Thelma Willshaw (1920 - ????)

Thelma was Fred and Jennie's only child. She was born in Jan 1920, became prematurely senile and died in a nursing home. She married Charles Willshaw. They had an adopted daughter, Eileen M. Willshaw, who lives in Chester.



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### Roy Sidwell (b. Mar 15, 1927)

Roy is Jack Sidwell's only child. He married Anne in Blackpool in 1951 and they have three children, Stephen, Neil and Richard. Jack and Lizzie moved from Nelson to Morecambe in 1934 or '5 when Roy was 7 or 8 and to Blackpool in 1936 or '7 when he was 9 or 10. He and Madge went to the same school in Nelson.



Roy and Anne's Wedding - 1951

Roy worked as a professional musician. His mother, Lizzie, went to the Royal School of Music and was an excellent pianist. Roy didn't play any instrument until one day when he was 17 he heard some music on the radio that he wanted to play. He bought a clarinet the next day, took up the saxophone a few months later and turned professional when he was 21. His first job was in a bank and he didn't enjoy it. *"It was near the end of WW2,"* he said, *"and they hired us kids until the older fellows came back from the war. They kept some of us but I thought it was all very strange and they fired me. They wanted me to wind up the clocks and I wouldn't because I didn't think it was part of my job. It's a good thing they did fire me. People really valued a secure job then*

## The Sidwell Family

*and my parents probably wouldn't have been so supportive if I'd given up a bank job to be a musician."*

After the bank, Roy worked for Nutbrowns the kitchenware makers for a while. He and some friends formed a band and someone who hired them said he could get them a six-month gig for the summer season on the Isle of Man if they turned professional. They did and although his parents were concerned, they very supportive.



Stephen, Roy, Neil and Anne

Roy never wanted to fight so when he was nearly old enough to be drafted into the army he volunteered to be a "Bevin Boy" and work in the coal mines instead. He didn't want to do that either, of course, but as it turned out they rejected him on health grounds. Jack and Lizzie were very worried and took him to the doctor to see what was wrong. It was quite a relief that he just had flat feet.

Roy once stayed for several weeks with Madge and Brian when he was playing in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" in Manchester. Madge was impressed that Roy had remained a teetotaler and a vegetarian all his life despite the rackets life a musician must live. When I told Roy, he thought that very funny because he'd never been vegetarian or teetotal although he was close to being a vegetarian for a few years. He enjoyed a scotch before bed for forty years and wine and beer with friends at their house or his own, but he got pancreatitis four years ago and his doctor advised him to give up the scotch. He still enjoys wine.

## The Sidwell Family

I was intrigued to find that Buddhism is the only religion that ever attracted Roy. That's because, he said, *"you work it out for yourself"*. I commented that a lot of Sidwells don't like having a boss (that's why I worked for myself for several years). *"That's right,"* Roy said. *"A professional musician doesn't have a boss. If you don't like the show you can just leave."* But Sidwells work hard to support their families. Roy played in "Me and My Girl" for 8 years, for example, despite that he was bored with the show right from the first rehearsal.

Roy and Anne started traveling after he retired and have visited many exotic places. When they were in New Zealand Roy made a parachute jump on his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

### **Richard Arthur Sidwell (Oct 20, 1920 – Aug 1, 1990)**

Richard was Arthur and Ethel's only child, born in Akron, Ohio. He married Gill Sidwell in 1960 and they adopted two children, Amanda Jane and Jonathan Richard.



Richard lived in Akron until he was nine and had many happy memories of that time – the excitement of Halloween, playing in the abundant winter snow, watching the man deliver ice to their ice box in the kitchen every day in the hot summers, and a trip to Maine when Arthur read *Treasure Island* to him every night. He did not enjoy learning to swim and I was relieved in a way to learn that he and I share a disability – *"he had such a high specific gravity that he sank like a stone!"*

Ethel took Richard back to Nelson for three months when he was about 4. He didn't remember much but did recall how he disliked the dank, gloomy weather. He had vivid memories of his next trip to England, however, which turned out to be the final one

## The Sidwell Family

because Wall Street crashed while they were there, Arthur lost his job and they moved back to England. Gill's notes from what Richard wrote conjure up vivid pictures of the experience. There was the excitement of the journey, the heartbreak of losing his treasured model of Lindburgh's plane in which he was the first to fly solo across the Atlantic, and the shock of being back in a world without central heating, inside toilets or electric light. Like everyone else who lived in Nelson he remembered the tapping of the knocker-up's cane on the bedroom window and the clattering of the mill-workers' clogs.

The winter he and Ethel spent in Cornwall the following year was a very happy change. He greatly enjoyed their frequent walks, the weather, and the flowers. His school there, a startling change from the ones he'd attended in Akron and Nelson, sounds just like the one I went to in the 1950s in Hertfordshire, *"only three classes, all held side by side in the same large room, heated by one large coal stove."*

The next couple of years were unhappy again. Richard was pleased to have his Dad home but hated his school in Watford, they were living not in a home of their own but in furnished accommodation, Ethel was sent to the TB sanatorium, and the family was in financial difficulties. In 1932, Richard took the exam, fateful then and when my turn came 23 years later, to determine if his next school would be the good one, the Grammar School. He passed. At the same time, the firm where Arthur was working was taken over by the one he'd worked for in Akron and he was offered a much better job in Burton-on-Trent, so they were at last able to live together in some security with Arthur in a good job and Richard in a good school. The next few years were, Richard said, *"the happiest days of his life"*. Richard was interested in music but the cinema was his abiding passion and he spent more and more time watching films as the end of school neared.

It wasn't financially possible for Richard to go to Oxbridge but unlike Leonard he did win a place in the Civil Service. I can't imagine him in the job they gave him, working on a vast housing estate in a poor area of Sheffield, visiting claimants to snoop around for signs they might be co-habiting and ineligible for aid. As Gill says, *"a strange occupation for a 19 year old boy!"* The only other things we know about Richard's life then was that he had a piano and a musical girlfriend with whom he enjoyed country walks.

Richard resigned from the Civil Service in 1941, was called up and refused military service. His plea as a Conscientious Objector was denied and he was jailed for six months but his appeal was accepted and he joined a community in Apsley Guise where he worked in the glasshouses looking after tomatoes until he contracted rheumatic fever and had to quit working on the land. I assume this was the same community where Leonard was but I think they must have been there at different times. Gill writes that Richard *'was very touched by the backing he received from his father, who, with his mother, was not supportive of his pacifism – I think this was mainly on account of seeing the terrible treatment received by Whalley and others during the First World War.*

For the next two or three years Richard worked in London as a hospital porter, for a publisher and for the Save the Children Fund. He hoped they'd send him to Greece as

## The Sidwell Family

an ambulance driver but he was too useful as an accountant. He lived at Youth House in a community of idealistic left-wing pacifists many of whom were Jewish refugees, one of whom he married in 1945 to give her British citizenship.

Richard managed to get into the film industry a year or two later via an introduction from an acquaintance – the only way in then. He was assistant cameraman on a documentary about canals, which meant he was the one who carried the very heavy equipment, but it got him the all-important union membership. His entry into cutting, which became his career, was as second assistant editor on Olivier's 1948 film of "Hamlet." Gill writes that he *'always said that, from the point of view of the quality and prestige of films he worked on, it was downhill from there.'* He was bowled over by Vivien Leigh and attended the party to celebrate Olivier's 1947 knighthood.

Richard went on to work in all the major British film studios and worked his way up to Sound Editor, in which he was highly regarded. He particularly enjoyed cutting to music. His ambition was to edit feature films and he did achieve that with film series such as one about Robin Hood for TV. One of these series gave him the opportunity to work in Bermuda for a year soon after he and Gill met. After he returned to England he broke into directing on a long-running TV series. He then worked on a variety of other TV programs including current affairs, live children's shows, drama and documentaries. When moving to mainstream directing proved too difficult, he set up an editing service and worked for the BBC on language, arts and other educational programs, sociology and science series, one of which won a prize. The last stage of his career was as Head of Film Editing at the London International Film School.

Whalley, Edith and Leonard had lived with Arthur, Ethel and Richard for some time in Akron (young Richard couldn't say "Leonard" at first and called him Gammy instead). As a result Leonard thought of Richard almost as a younger brother - in fact after he began having strokes, Leonard often thought I was Richard. My own memories of him begin in the '50s when we lived in the village of Wareside and Richard visited, sometimes on his own and at least once with Trudl, who gave me a wood carving she made. I greatly admired his MGA. Richard was a great inspiration to me because although I knew none of the details I saw that he had managed to find work he really enjoyed. Perhaps I could, too!

We visited Richard and Gill occasionally after they married in 1960. I was very impressed by their excitingly re-architected house in Pimlico. They were very busy with two young children and Richard trying to establish himself as a film director, and I was increasingly obsessed with worry about where to direct my life after I left school so I have few memories of them in the '60s apart from a few happy evenings with them after Felicity and I married and moved to London.

Richard once told me Whalley was the most selfish person he'd known. I was very surprised because Leonard was always so admiring of Whalley. I think what Richard meant was that Whalley always put his beliefs first. Madge told me Whalley said he'd never been fired but Leonard used to tell me he was fired from several jobs because he was always trying to organize trade unions.

## The Sidwell Family

Madge disagrees with Richard's opinion of Whalley and writes, *"he had time and patience in his dealings with his family – an early letter he wrote showed he was very much the older brother and concerned for his relatives. He was helpful to me all through my college days. He also took great delight in Leon's progress, especially when he started to use long words at an early age!"*

Richard became very frail toward the end of his life and suffered a complete collapse when he and Gill were on holiday in Soviet Central Russia. Like his Dad and the other three older brothers from that generation he was almost 70 when he died.

### **Jim Sidwell (Sep 6, 1924 – Nov 26, 1992)**

Deceased son of Rennie Sidwell, born in Cleveland, Ohio. Died of cancer in Atlanta, Georgia. Married to Sheila in 1968. Jim and Sheila had two sons, Michael in 1969 and Richard in 1971. Sheila continued to live and work in Atlanta after Jim died and supported the boys through university until 2001 when she returned to Lancashire to remarry. She and her husband, Robert Haythornthwaite, now live in Garstang, Lancs.



Rennie, Fanny and their son Jim

Jim grew up in England after Rennie lost his job in the depression and returned from America in 1935. The family settled in Bedford and Jim won a scholarship to Bedford School. When WW2 broke out Fanny and Bob moved to Lancashire to stay with family members while Rennie and Jim stayed in Bedford. Jim was an apprentice motor mechanic and engineering student, a "reserved" occupation, and was not called into the

## The Sidwell Family

services when he came of age but serviced vehicles for the armed forces, was on night patrol duty in the town and taught aircraft engineering at evening classes. He got this important work despite his young age because, Sheila explained, *"he was the only person available who understood the combustion engine!"*

Jim was a car mechanic in Blackburn, Lancs, for a time after WW2, then returned to live in Ohio in about 1955 when he was just over 30. He later moved to Guatemala to open a foreign car garage with a partner. Rennie and Fanny were living in Blackburn when Rennie died and Jim returned there to look after Fanny. Soon after his brother Bob went to work in Atlanta, Jim and Fanny followed and Jim got a position as an electronics technician with Scientific-Atlanta. He was very interested in ham radio (but decided not to get an operator's license) and that knowledge got him the job. Bob says Jim was extremely intelligent. Roy remembers him as a happy person who he very much liked.

### **Bob Sidwell (b. Jul 8, 1930)**

Bob is Rennie's second child and was born in the US. Bob and his first wife, Marian, had two sons, James and David, who live in England, and a deceased daughter, Beverley. Bob now lives in Maidenhead with his second wife, Joan. They were married in 1989. Joan has two daughters from her first marriage.



Rennie, Fanny and Bob

## The Sidwell Family



"Uncle" Jim, Bob, Beverley, David and James

Bob did a 5-year heavy engineering apprenticeship at a firm whose products were used mainly on ships, after which he had either to go into the armed services or the Merchant Navy for 5 years. He chose the Merchant Navy. At the end of that time when he was 26 he had a motorcycle accident and his left leg took two and a half years to recover (he had a second accident in 1981 that broke the same leg. The doctor warned him he may not be able to bend his knee again but he made a complete recovery). In May 1959 when he'd recovered from the first accident Bob began work as a draftsman at English Electric Aviation in Preston, took classes and became a stress engineer.

In 1965 Britain made a deal with the US for economic support and many British defense projects were canceled. Bob's wasn't one of them but he thought it had a problematic future (it was a jumping jeep) so he decided to join the "brain drain" to the US. He joined Lockheed in Atlanta and worked on the C5A Galaxy and the Tristar (a large part of whose tail plane he designed).

Bob and Marian returned to the UK in 1970 to get better care for their daughter, Beverley, who was born with a hole in her heart. They settled in Camberly and Bob worked on RAF Farnborough projects, then the Belgian space laboratory, oil rigs, and finally at the firm where he and Joan met and later married. Bob is retired but still works on topics that interest him. He thinks he's cracked a long-standing problem relating to vertical takeoff, for example, and is writing an article about it.

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Roy told me Bob was a particularly determined child. On one occasion he wouldn't eat his food because the peas were touching the potatoes. Fanny was equally determined not to let him waste good food and wouldn't let him have anything else until he'd eaten that meal. She kept bringing the plate back for three days but still Bob wouldn't eat. *"He'll never eat it,"* Rennie said at last. *"He'd rather die."* The determination not to be forced is a common Sidwell characteristic.

### My Cousins

Pictures of several of my cousins are among those in Appendix 6, Mar 2005 Reunion.

#### Madge and Brian's Children:

##### Michael (b. 1960)

Michael is single and lives in Manchester. Add more...

##### Alison (b. 1962)

Alison is married to Chris and lives in Chichester. Add more...

### Children of my Father's Cousins

#### Roy and Anne's Children:

##### Stephen (b. 1962)

Steve is married to Janet Mooney, a singer whose work I highly recommend. They have two children, Katy, born in 1995 and Patrick, known as Paddy, born in 1996. They live about 10 minutes away from Roy and Anne. Roy wrote, *"Steve plays trumpet, writes, arranges, etc."* Look on the web and you'll see that his career is a lot more impressive.

##### Neil (b. 1964)

Neil is married to Karen. They have two children, Abigail, born in 1998, and James, born in 2004. They live in Finchley (London), also quite close to Roy and Anne. Neil also has a daughter, Jazmin, in California, born in 1990 with a previous American wife. Roy wrote, *"Neil plays trombone, also piano and writes music, too."*

##### Richard (b. 1966)

Richard is single and lives at Turnpike Lane (London). Roy wrote, *"Richard plays trumpet, does some writing, copying, etc."*

# **The Sidwell Family**

## **Richard & Gill's Children:**

### **Amanda Jane (b. Jul 27, 1962)**

Amanda is married to Lawrence Snelgrove. They have one daughter, Elizabeth Jane, known as Libby, born Feb 15, 1991.

### **Jonathan Richard (b. Jun 26 1963)**

Jonathan, known as John, and his partner Kate Ashcroft have two children, Laura Jane, born Mar 23, 1990 and Ryan John Richard, born Dec 28, 1999.

John joined the Merchant Navy when he was 17 and says it was extremely valuable. He decided to leave after two and a half years because he realized he'd lose touch with all his friends if he stayed in.

## **Jim and Sheila's Children:**

### **Michael James (b. 1969)**

Relocated from Atlanta, Georgia to Garstang, Lancs as a British subject in 2004. Married to Stefanie. They have one son, Samuel. Michael works as a psychological therapist.

### **Richard Andrew (b. 1971)**

Earned his Ph.D in 2002, works for a pharmaceutical company and lives in Atlanta, Georgia with his wife Mary Melissa, known as Missy. They were married in 2002 and have two children, Will and Elizabeth.

## **Bob and Marian's Children:**

### **James (b. Aug 9, 1960)**

James and his wife, Anita, have daughters, Zoe and Lucy, and a son, Anthony, from her previous marriage. They live in Ely in England.

### **David (b. Jul 7, 1962)**

David and his ex-wife had one child when they emigrated from England and two more in the US. I believe their names are Louis and Christian. After the marriage broke up they all returned to England where David married Amy.

## The Sidwell Family

### **Beverley (May 21, 1968 – Oct 21, 1991)**

Beverley was born in Atlanta, Georgia with a hole in her heart. She died in her early 20s. Madge says, "*She was highly intelligent (like Bob) and trained as a teacher with great success.*"

### **Thelma and Charles's Children:**

#### **Eileen (b. Mar 28, 1945?)**

Eileen is an historian who lives in Chester and is the heritage and historic environment manager for Liverpool's European Capital of Culture program. Until last year (2004) she was head of culture and heritage in Chester (there's a fascinating BBC interview with her from that time on the Internet).

Eileen is married to Michael Scammell, an historic building conservation architect. They have one son, Duncan, who was born on Mar 22, 1989.



Eileen, Christmas 1955

### **Other**

#### **Minnie Sidwell, nee Bland**

Minnie was Leonard's first wife. They were married at Wheatley Chapel near Barrowford, Lancs. Madge used to walk over to Roughlee near Nelson when Leonard and Minnie lived in a cottage there.

## The Sidwell Family

It was because Madge was so impressed by Minnie that she became a teacher. Minnie was vivacious and stylish, very different from her straight-laced parents. Gill Sidwell knew Minnie several years later. At the time Gill and Richard (Arthur's son) were married Richard was still seeing Minnie at least once a week. Gill viewed Minnie as a "*man-eating intellectual*." Minnie's father, Richard Bland, was Mayor of Pendle and a friend of Whalley's. Unlike Whalley, Minnie's father never included her in his political activities. Mrs. Bland was very deaf. Minnie stayed in touch with Whalley and Edith after she and Leonard separated.

Once when Minnie took the train to London to visit Leonard she met a man who invited her to a party, and she went. Madge speculated that Minnie was naïve.



Leonard and Minnie at the pacifist Hillside Community

The man Minnie went with when she and Leonard separated is one of the others in the picture above but I don't know which.

### Edith's Parents and Sisters

Edith Sidwell's parents (i.e., Madge's maternal grandparents) were Alice (nee Blacko) and Henry Kenyon, who had five daughters.

Leonard told me about Aunt Martha Blacko, who lived in Colne and had five children, and Aunt Sally Blacko, who was a sister of Alice's. This was after he began having small strokes and became a bit confused so I don't know if Martha was also Alice's sister, or Sally and Alice's mother. Madge doesn't know much about her mother's family but vaguely remembers "Aunt Sally" who always wore long black dresses and took great interest in the garden and loved to have cuttings from various plants when she visited Edith and her family.

## The Sidwell Family

About her grandparents, Madge writes, *"they had a large house on the edge of Nelson. My Grandmother was a dressmaker and ran a business from home and Grandad was in charge of security at a local manufacturing works. They seem to have had a good standard of living, one of the first to have electricity installed and their five daughters had new outfits several times a year."*

About her mother and her mother's sisters, Madge wrote, *"Each of the daughters took six weeks off school to learn to look after the family. Sadly, two of the daughters died young, one in a road accident and another in her teens after a tonsil operation. One sister married an Australian soldier after WW1 and whilst my family was in America they all went out to live near Bondi Beach (Sydney). They seem to have made a good life out there and my Grandparents lived happily and long enough to celebrate their Golden Wedding. The two sisters out there married and one had two girls, Alma and Gene and the other had a son, Keith. Alma became a nursing sister. Mother must have missed her family and was very thrilled when Alma came over for a couple of years in the 1950s and made 114 Regent Street (Edith's house – Whalley had died by that time) her base. Brian and I lived there at the time and I remember it as a very happy time."*

I have notes about what Leonard remembered of Edith's sisters (prompted by photos in an album Edith made) but those, too, were after he became a bit confused. He said:

- Florence Alma was killed when she was nine by a horse and dray when the family was on holiday at Grange-over-Sands
- Elsie married the Australian soldier, Tom, their daughters were Alma and Gene, and Elsie was killed by a bus when she was quite old
  - Alma married a man named Nilsson and is now deceased
  - Gene married and had a daughter, Susan, in about 1950 who was attending Daceyville Public School in 1961
- Mildred married a man named Alfred and they had one son, Keith, who had a son and three daughters (I have a photo of Mildred holding Keith)
- Doris was another sister (I have a photo of Doris and Elsie with Alma and Gene)
- Margaret was another sister (the one who died in her teens?)

That's six sisters altogether, five who reached adulthood including Edith, and four who immigrated to Australia (but maybe it was only three because Margaret didn't?). Madge doesn't think there was a sister, Margaret, and suggests she may have been a friend. Leonard thought they went to Australia in 1925.

Madge says Elsie and Doris were qualified milliners and worked in a Sydney Department store and Alma was a nurse. Edith's mother objected to Alma becoming a nurse because it was *"no job for a lady"*. Edith always stayed in touch with her family in Australia and they exchanged letters, photos and parcels. Gene, the youngest one, asked Madge to go over with the children and Alison wishes they had.

# The Sidwell Family

## Me and My Family

### Martin Leon Sidwell (b. Mar 25, 1944)

Only child of Leonard and Florence. Married Felicity on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1965 and moved to America in April 1970. Felicity came the following year.



In my Dad's boots

I had an idyllic childhood in the country and an unhappy adolescence in Ware. I went to the doctor at last to get relief but he told me there was no treatment for depression (he had it, too) and I'd just have to get used to it. For many years I did. I'm very grateful there are now effective treatments.

I worked in the computer business. I stumbled into it in 1964 when the man I car-pooled with said I should give it a try. Computers and the people who worked with them turned out to be fascinating, especially after I joined IBM UK then a young American company planning to expand to the UK in 1970. That was how I ended up here. Two weeks into my training, they postponed the expansion and I stayed in America. Networking computers with a bunch of smart, creative folks was great fun and I stayed at that firm until 1982 when I set up a management consulting business so I wouldn't have a boss any more. That eventually got lonely and unsatisfying so in 1990 I started commuting to New York and was general manager of an entrepreneurial advanced development unit at Dun & Bradstreet. When that was reorganized out of existence I spent a couple of years as a corporate executive in a vain quest to

## **The Sidwell Family**

reestablish a sense of adventure at 160 year-old D&B, then a more enjoyable couple of years at an Internet venture. At last I was able to retire in 2002 - my goal since I first started work. Since then I've developed an unexpected passion for trekking in the Himalayas.

### **Felicity Mary Sidwell, nee Blay (b. Jun 8, 1945)**

Daughter of Dr. Leslie and Madge Blay. Felicity has an older brother, Paul, and a younger one, Andy, who live in England, and a younger sister, Stella, who lives in Sydney, Australia.

Felicity worked as a microbiologist in hospital labs, then as a fulltime mother, household and sheep farm manager while I was commuting and working sixteen hours a day (we sold the sheep in the end), and as a dental assistant when the kids were older. She has always painted and exhibits her work in her own gallery.

### **Stephen Gregory Sidwell (b. Sep 12, 1976)**

Steve runs the technical side of a computer and network equipment liquidator in Brooklyn, New York. He is married to Julie and they have two children, John and Grace.

### **Mark Jeffrey Sidwell (b. Feb 25, 1982)**

Mark is responsible for logistics to a healthy snack company. He and Julie Olsen plan to marry in 2018.

### **Daniel Andrew Sidwell (b. Aug 4, 1984)**

Dan works in Air Force intelligence. He is married to Megan Whitmore and they have two children, Sarah and Eleanor.

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### Appendix 1 - Whalley's Jul 7, 1918 Letter to Jim from Liverpool Prison

Dear Bro Jim,

As you seemed to set so much value on that last letter home, and as it came to a rather untimely end, p'raps the best thing I can do is to send this in its place. After all, Jim, a lost letter is a small matter provided the contents have been read and I should not like you or Ethel to bother any more about it. You might tell Ethel I shall put it on the same bill as the broken pane in the cold frame and the jug she kept from some months which belonged to Tom Toms! But tell her also that I would rather she lost it where she did than anywhere else on earth and unless she runs away before I'm out we'll go looking for it over Kirkstone some day. Looked at in that way it's another link with Lakeland and I rarely regret things which induce my thoughts to hover again above those sweet Arcadian vales. As for your letter to me, Jim, it was champion and I don't know that you missed anything in the one you answered. I was only sorry it wasn't a double number and I'd like you to try your hand this time on unruled paper. One line of writing helps you with the next and I don't think you'll have any difficulty while the result will be much to my advantage. Should you lack matter, pass it along and let R or F or Dad have a go at it. It doesn't need to be all in one hand so there's no need for you to make copies of what they may have to say. Towards the end of this letter I may make a few remarks of a general character, addressed particularly to yourself; but there are one or two friends from whom I would like a word and if you think the remarks will be likely to extract the response I should be glad if you will show them to Fred Hankle and Jim Witham. Of course if they have a short message to send maybe you wouldn't be averse to copying that bit out.

What a ripping time you must have had on your holiday! I wonder if you could tell me what you think of some of the lakes you saw? And what did you think of the run from Ambleside to Grasmere? Or the one along the side of Thirlmere and then down Dunmail Raise? And how did you enjoy your boating on Windermere? In reference to this you say it was the first of the lakes I had ever seen. Well, what did you think of it? Did it come up to expectations? Methinks Blackpool and New Brighton will now be out of favour, eh Jim? I well remember my first glimpse of Rydal and Grasmere! It was in the evening of a tremendously hot day over ten years ago. Harry and I had worn no clothes all day except a cotton shirt, short pants, stockings and shoes and if our mothers had seen us they would have sworn we were stark mad. It had been much too hot for a tramp and we had been on Winderemere seven or eight hours in the boat we had hired for the week. But it was a few degrees cooler in the evening, so I obtained a bike and set off to see Wordsworth's last resting place. I had never been beyond Ambleside then and Nab Cottage (shame on me) went by unnoticed. All my gaze was bent on the lovely panorama which changed with every yard on the opposite side of the road and I thought then, as I think now, that nothing could present a more peaceful scene than did Grasmere, nestling so prettily at the foot of the bracken-covered heights of Loughrigg and Rydal Fells. Ah me! Happy days! I suppose I cut a weird figure in that get up, for the natives looked scared, but what would happen if I was to go scorching through the village in my present rig-out?? Sorry to hear of R's smash up: but that's the worst of

## The Sidwell Family

"grids"; always something happening. They are alright as a means of extending one's field; but only the tramp is really care-free and self-reliant. Try tramping next time you are out for pure pleasure. Say yank! Since when have you been a dancer? Yes, I know George Mac alright. Did he mention a certain Sat I once had with him at M'chester?

Pleased to have a note from F and J and to hear they had been away. Money spent on holidays is money well invested for anything which broadens experience and which ministers to the physical and the higher needs of life is good, and working folks ought to give themselves every chance to live in the fullest possible sense. That's a tip for mother and father too and tho I cannot hope that my most specious arguments would induce them to go away "up to me" I can still say I should be glad and happy if they would. Congrats to F on his second class and best wishes for further successes both theoretical and practical.

Glad to hear of our Joe's new departure. If the worst comes to the worst, he will still be able to knock on as a sound or pavement artist. Mention of his birthday reminds me that our annual family fever is now raging, and I must send my hearty wishes to Jane, Mother and yourself. (Saves space to put three in at once!!)

I trust that by this time R has fairly recovered, and is once more on the peace path? Has he been swotting too hard at Datton's? How are you getting on with it? I hear good recommendations of it, but I reckon it will do well to surpass the Sloan-Deployan system, for when all is said and done it must always be largely a matter of practice. Does our A use any short hand? Speaking of A, I should like R's view on his position under the latest legislation. Will he be called into training here, or will he be sent by British authorities to train in an American camp? What medical standard will he come under? I understand his teeth and weight are responsible for his low medical category at present, but as these are of no account in the land of hope and glory, I expect, if he is submitted to our medical tests he will emerge in the same class as a 7 ft guardsman? I trust that R has done what he could under the existing censorship to show the true and real state of affairs. I can easily understand feeling impelled to join up as a Red Cross worker. It is quite in accord with the lad's best feelings, and he will do what he thinks is right whithersoever that may lead. The pity is that he has been both ill-informed and badly-informed and the Red Cross section of Warfare is capable of being represented in such a way as to attract conscientious men who have no access to the facts. But R will surely be able to show how RAMC volunteers have fared here, and this in itself, without the scores of instances of duplicity and corruption which could also be placed alongside it, ought to show him just how desperate and immoral men, egged on by a rotten press may be trusted. Arthur is as he always was, honourable; he ought to know that in this country "honour" is a word which has lost all meaning, except in so far as it enables politicians to hold on to treaties which are themselves shameful, dishonourable. I wish I could write to A. He may enter the army if he liked, but he would then do it with open eyes.

How will this law affect Ethel's plans? In case she still wishes for a passport, I told Edith on Sat what I should do in her place, but I very much doubt the advisability of proceeding with the matter. It's hard luck but there are lots of us in that boat

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nowadays, and I think the safest plan will be to ride in the gale. There may be rocks ahead if we attempt to land.

Now for you, Jas, you will persist in saying that months is a fairly long time. Ger away man! It's a mere flea bite. Mind you, I wouldn't have you waste any time about this matter and you must enjoy yourself to the full just as long as you have the opportunity; but I would like you to bestow a passing thought on it now and then. It becomes increasingly evident that there is no sort of shadow of hope of Conscription disappearing from among us for years and years to come. In fact I can see very little hope even of Peace, for public opinion is once more apparently consolidated behind L G. The only real hope is in a General Election and as Parliament has again extended its life, that can hardly take place this year. And even then another War Gov't may be returned; and then where are we?? Of course it is always poss that diplomacy may bring it to a sudden end, but such an end would be simply a hotbed for future dissensions. You sh'd ask how these views may affect me in my position here and how, with such an outlook we find it possible to maintain high spirits? I admit that I am human enough to have my days of depression; when the home-sickness steals over me; when the thought of my loved ones falls very heavily upon me; when I miss the common everyday comforts which are so large a factor in a happy, homely life; when, as on the visits, I get a glimpse of the great world beyond the walls; and when, what is p'raps harder than all 3 years for a share and place in the life and love of my own little lad. But I need only compare the bigger things with these, Jim, and I see quite clearly that it is well worthwhile. I go back to byegone days, and recollect how the pioneers of our movement, the Quakers of old, were chained in damp, dark dungeons until, in some cases, death released them after years of imprisonment. I come to our own days, and I think of how hundreds of thousands of lads 4 years ago, left homes as dear to them as mine was and is to me. Many of them are now sleeping under the sod in France and Flanders: many more are spoiled and maimed for life, and those who have so far escaped are still compelled to live in a turmoil which has long since lost for them, all hint of romance or glamour, of duty and glory. And I think of the lads and the future, of you and Leonard, who, were it not that some few barred the way, would be drawn powerlessly into the grip of the insatiable machine. I think thus, Jim; and take fresh heart. One is always hearing of prospective offers of work in prison. Well, let them offer what they like, my resolution is stronger than ever. Short of definite instructions from home to the contrary; I shall never leave prison till I leave as an absolutely free man. I wish to keep my health and to maintain my place in the ranks. There must be a break left in the otherwise dead wall of Cond'tion and at present none can hold that breach but the absolutists. It is a big enough task for a life work, Jim, but what a good work it is! We are standing in the gap, and through us the lads of the future may pass on to Freedom! Who, seeing this, would count the years they spent in such a work? What are two yrs! Five yrs! – a lifetime! Even a thousand lives, if we had them, would be but a mere drop in the vast ocean of time which lies ahead, or which, without Freedom is valueless to countless unborn millions. For nearly nine months I have never been further than about 100 yards from the cell I am now in, and I have small hope of any alteration for many months more; but my spirit has explored regions it could never otherwise have seen. Were I to tell you my thoughts you would say I was dreaming, but my dreams must be pretty solid when they will support all the joy and happiness (and the reverse) which my present life contains. So let us be happy, Jim, even amid

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the cares and woes of a grief stricken world; let us rise above the battle; let the soul go marching on. The day will come when God, the great unifying Spirit, who even now is diffused through all creation, will complete His mission and will invest, to the uttermost bounds of Infinity, every particle of matter in which His spirit may dwell with the full consciousness of Life. We need to realize that tho forms are destructible, Spirit is not. Spirit is the real life; is God. The plan of the universe is the development of Spirit, and not until every particle has attained to full and perfect consciousness is God's work complete. As so much matter none of us exist, but as matter animated by Spirit, by God; we live. And so we can only assist God by broadening our faith in this which we call Spirit. Everyone has an inborn faith in the goodness of Life, for everyone prefers it to death. Everyone believes in the ultimate triumph of Love over Hate and Fear, for Love means expansion and Hate and Fear mean contraction.

You have here the groundwork for a pacifist lecture but my space is gone and I must reluctantly close. In doing so let me say this. If you ask me how this development is to take place; what we as a people ought to do in such and such a case, I answer plainly, I do not know! But neither does anyone else. Yet it is in every man's power to say what he knows is wrong for himself as an individual, and if he wishes to get the most of life; to serve his fellows as a whole; to broaden consciousness and to help God; let him avoid that wrong. Expediency is no excuse, for right is the only thing that is right.

Love to all at home, Whalley

P.S. Let me know the date on which you post your reply. W.

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## **Appendix 2 – Leonard’s Article in Peace Pledge News**

[Get the date from Leonard’s autobiography. He drove all round England on behalf of the Peace Pledge Union giving a film show with guest speakers.]

### ***On Tour with the Publicity Van***

**Since May 1 the Peace Pledge Union Publicity Van has been touring the countryside. Here is an account of its work.**

The season opened very depressingly. Fast and frequent rain marred our meetings, and apart from one lady who made a spirited attack on David Spreckley our small Cheltenham audiences were very meek and long-suffering.

However, with a change for the better in the weather, things began to look up.

A two-days tour of villages in the Golden Valley area of Gloucestershire produced much interest. Two more days, useful though relatively uneventful, were spent in villages near Bath, where John Deacon of Leicester took over the speaking.

We then journeyed to Severn Beach, a Bristol pleasure resort, and had an excellent afternoon meeting topped off by an equally successful evening meeting in Bristol.

After three days around Burnham-on-Sea and Bridgwater (where we had no conspicuous success) Exeter received us kindly with a good meeting – though the police would not permit us to use the loud-speaker.

### **Good Work in Devon**

Then on to Newton Abbott, where Ted Maddox, Devon Organizer, met us. There followed a trip to Plymouth, where Reg Burnett, our new speaker, addressed an audience of about 300.

Bideford, Brixham, Kingsbridge, and Paignton were covered during the week, and a final huge Saturday evening meeting in Newton Abbott made us feel that our week in Devon had been well spent.

At Taunton, Miss B. Underwood of Epsom took over the speaking. Three days were spent in talking to Somerset villagers before we went across country to Eastleigh, Hants. In this district we had two hectic days of almost continual meetings.

Owen Page of Lincoln joined me in Winchester. Apart from meetings in Winchester and Andover, the three days in this area were devoted to villages.

### **In the Villages**

## **The Sidwell Family**

Wokingham and Ascot were next visited, and the following three days spent in Berkshire villages. Small attendances are usual in villages; most villagers prefer to listen through open doors and windows.

Owen Page left the van at Oxford and local members spoke at Witney (where the crowd was most hostile), Woodstock, and Kistlington.

Rugby, too, provided its own speakers, and we had small meetings in the neighboring villages. At Rushden, Northants, we had two good evening meetings before going on to Northampton and Market Harborough.

The following three days were spent in Leicester suburbs, where we had some fair-sized meetings, marred somewhat by rain.

At Keyworth, the van joined up with the Nottingham group, and James Norbury of Manchester came to speak.

### **Picnickers Interested**

A Sunday visit to Edwinstowe, a favorite picnicking ground, proved valuable. The rain came down and we gave the sheltering picnickers a sort of "Luxemburg" program. We were altogether well received.

A later meeting in Mansfield Market Place was also excellently attended. But cold and rainy weather affected meetings at Bulwell, Hucknall, Beeston, Long Eaton, Sutton, and Kirby-in-Ashfield.

Sheffield came next, and we spent a very enterprising three days visiting housing estates. We had no large crowds but reached a lot of people in houses. On one day John Barclay was the speaker.

The final week in the first two months we used in visiting mining villages around Rotherham, Doncaster, and Worksop. Roy Walker did most of the speaking in this period, during which two or three really useful meetings were held – the best being at Mexborough.

And so the van goes on...

**Leonard I. Sidwell**

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## Appendix 3 - Jim's Notes About the Whalleys

Leonard wrote that Jim's (son of John Henry) source for the following was an article in Lancashire Life, a monthly magazine. I don't know the date. I imagine Jim made notes from the article and sent them to Whalley as a curiosity.

### Is your name Whalley?

#### **Arms of Whalley of Clerk Hill**

Argent three whales' heads erased lying fessways two and one sable. The whales' heads are shown as pulled off at neck and are black on a silver shield.

If so you could be descended from a family established in Lancashire early in the thirteenth century when Henry, son of Ughtred de Whalley was granted lands in Leyland by Robert Bussell. It appears that there were two Whalleys of the same name at this time for in 1240, Geoffrey the Elder, Dean of Whalley, married Avice de Billington. Their sons took the name Billington. Henry de Whalley had land at Euxton and claimed unsuccessfully for land in Darwen in 1246. He appears to have had two other sons, Roger and Henry, in addition to Geoffrey. Roger held land in Darwen in 1275 and gave land to Stanlaw Abbey. Roger's brother, Henry, had a son Henry, living in 1292, whose son, John, living in 1333 was the father of Roger, Robert, John, Alice and Katherine. In 1313 their father had been granted land at Withnell and in 1366, Katherine and her husband released the right to inherit John's land in Hoddlesden.

Land in Euxton was held by the family in 1593 in the person of Henry de Whalley and his son William was in occupation in 1604. In 1617 Roger Whalley of Blackburn, said to be of the Darwen branch, married and had two sons, Thomas and Thurston. Roger of Blackburn followed and his son Roger died in 1724.

Another branch was settled in Rishton and in 1484 Christophed Whalley was living at the Halgh. His descendants, James and Thomas, were there in the early part of the seventeenth century and Thomas Whalley of Eachill was a governor of Blackburn Grammar School in 1647. From him descended Thomas of Rishton who acquired Sparth in 1672, his son bought Clerk Hill, Whalley and his grandson Robert Whalley was the father of Sir John Whalley-Smith-Gardiner who was created a baronet in 1782.

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## Appendix 4 - Arthur's Notes About Saint Sidwell

Sidwell or Satwola is said to have been a Virgin Saint of British origin and to have had three sisters, Jutwara, whose translation is celebrated at Sherborne on 13<sup>th</sup> July, also Eadwara and Willgith, but these are certainly not Celtic names. But Willgith we find as Wulvella or Wilvella at Lancast associated with her sister Sidwell, and I strongly suspect that Eadwara or Jutwara is the Jutwell of Lanteglos. Sidwell is said to have been the sister of Paulus Aurelianus. If, as is probable, the church of St. Paul at Exeter, which is within the confines of the ancient British City, was founded by Paulus Aurelianus, then it is not surprising to find near it the church of St. Sidwell. But in Exeter she is said to have suffered martyrdom, her head having been cut off with a scythe and then thrown into a well, since reputed to be holy, in the parish. But it is doubtful that she was a martyr, and it may be suspected that the symbols of scythe and well were adopted from her name and originated the fable of her martyrdom. More probably she and her sisters moved west and settled beyond Tamar. At Lancast, where she and Wulvella are commemorated, is her holy well, called Jordan, whence water is always drawn for baptisms. In one of the church windows is a fragment of stained glass representing Wulvella as a crowned and veiled virgin.

[MLS Note: There is, of course, more information about her on the Internet. Since she was a virgin it's not likely we're her descendants.]

# The Sidwell Family

## Appendix 5 - Arthur's Poem to The Radio Times

### A PROTEST

As a listener to Sound  
And a viewer profound  
I'm agin the NEW Radio Times  
But it's awkward I know  
To please everyone, so  
I've waited ere bursting in rhymes

To protest at the waste  
Of time when in haste,  
To find what's on sound or on sight  
I have to wade through  
Umpteen pages like glue  
Ere I come to the page that is right.

But now I've no doubt  
That your present lay-out,  
As an effort to find something new,  
Is a waster of time  
(And I hope you'll repine)  
For I find it unpopular, too.

I've checked among friends  
To find if the trends  
To separate all sound from sight  
Is "A good idea, son,"  
But I haven't found one,  
Who will give it his blessing outright.

My plea, therefore, is,  
Forget all this biz.  
Of separating sight from sound,  
And return right away  
To keeping each DAY  
As a programme all separately bound.

The Radio Times reply, dated 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1957, reads:

Dear Sir,

We are sorry to learn from your poem of 12<sup>th</sup> August, which I am afraid we were unable to publish, that you do not like the new make-up of Radio Times, and are grateful to you for letting us have your views.

## **The Sidwell Family**

Sound and Television for each week is laid out on separate double page spreads. If you open Radio Times at, for instance, the spread for Tuesday Television, turn the page over, and open it at the spread for Tuesday Sound, you will then find that on one side you have the complete Television programmes for the day, and on the other the Sound programmes. I think you will then find cross-referencing between the two quite simple.

Yours truly,

etc



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## Appendix 7 – Roy's Notes about Jack & Lizzie

John Willie Sidwell (known as Jack) was born on the 5th June 1897, the 5th of 6 sons born to John Henry and Sarah Jane. He was born in Nelson, as were his brothers, probably at 67 Regent Street. He attended Bradley school and a photograph shows his class of 1906. I suppose he stayed at this school until 1909 at which time he left to go to work at 12 years of age.... his father had started work at 8 years of age!!!! I presume the work was in the cotton mill.. where else??

There's little record of the brothers activities together.. did they play football.. cricket.. swim ? The ages would be too different maybe. Was there much political discussion? I can't think it would have been with their Father somehow, and yet they arrived at similar conclusions. It's been put forward that Mother was the influence on their thinking.. among her ancestors were Quakers at some point, so although there is no evidence of her belonging to any such movement did her thinking still run along those lines?

I don't know at what point my Dad's convictions were formed, but he decided to be a C.O. (Conscientious Objector). Nor do I know what happened at his trial, but he finished up as a non combatant in a camp in Ireland.... Ballykinler, County Down (a place I cannot yet locate). Sadly we never discussed this, or if we did he wasn't too keen, the only thing that stays in my mind is my Dad saying that as an English working lad he had no desire to shoot a German working lad. Some C.O.s had the deepest motives, political or religious, with possibly many deep rooted feelings I'm sure, but it seems to me that my Dad (always very proud to be of the working class) made a quite simple decision. I'm sure he had deeper reasons, but I'm also sure that the statement was honest and heartfelt, so much credit to him.

After the war what?? He came back to Nelson I guess and took up the old life, but it must have been difficult. There are photos of him in a billiards team in which he won a medal I know. There are many photos of him on rambles with a variety of people though Uncle Jim often appears, and maybe many of them were like minded people.. The Independent Labour Party had some strength in those days, though they have since pretty well disappeared ... and there were various leftish movements, including of course the Labour Party which won its first election in the twenties.... also the Peace Pledge Union, which Whalley had some part in, but my Dad I think not somehow.. and while all this was going on, there appeared on the scene one Elizabeth Green from Barrowford, and from a family of eleven children ! Father a cotton weaver and Lizzie (as she was always known) also worked in the mill as a reacher-in for her Dad.. This requires an explanation I'm not knowledgeable enough to explain, but it was something like reaching into the loom to tie broken cotton strands together.. It needed nimble fingers and I would have thought a fair bit of courage though I presume there were guards of some kind on the machine, though of minimal protection in those days I imagine. Whatever it may have been that the job entailed, I have heard my Mother mention walking to the mill with her Dad on cold dark mornings at something like five o' clock, working a long day and of course walking home... this being a five and a half day

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week. On Sundays because of her abilities on the piano she played for the Church three times a day... the rest of the week was her own !!!!!

So they were married on a date I am unable to find right now.. probably about 1923, and I believe in September. They lived at 33 Tavistock St.. my Dad worked in the mill and I arrived in due course on 15 March 1927. I don't remember my Mother working. My Dad had troubles with his ears due to the noise in the mill.. I remember visiting for some reason on some occasions and it was LOUD!!!! So much so that lip reading was the thing as conversation was impossible.

The house was smallish with an outside toilet...I don't remember a bath .. it was probably a tin tub in front of the fire. I remember the clatter of clogs on the pavements as the mill workers went to work I suppose around 5.30 am. There was also a knocker up ... a man with a pole who rattled the bedroom windows of the not so good getter ups... I guess he was employed at a small rate.

I'm not sure about their social life.. I remember a few friends popping round.. musical evenings sometimes, which was mainly my mother playing the piano.... Beethoven Sonatas were popular and various pieces of the day, though where the music came from I don't know, except some of it must have been from my Mother's student days... she became an Associate of the Trinity College of Music. She later did a fair bit of teaching at home to supplement the family income.

I guess it's worth noting that Nelson and similar northern towns were populated by people of equal status in a way... almost the whole town would be employed in or around the mill. Cars were way out of the affordable league, so if one arrived in your street it was noted with curiosity. I suppose people visited the pub as ever, but this was a bit out of my ken as the Sidwells were never pubbers at all.. in fact as mentioned elsewhere they were to the best of my knowledge non drinkers all.

We moved to 67 Regent St for a short time, then on to Thursby Rd. My dad carried on in the mill... did a spare time job in the evenings collecting insurance .. probably 3d or 6d a week for some doubtful benefits later in life. This was hardly the job for him.. I remember a story he told me about knocking on a door and the lady of the house hard pushed for the 3d or whatever finally came up with it and said to my Dad "Do I have to pay this?" He understood the situation and said "No, you don't love" and gave it back to her.... this must have gone down well with the bosses when he paid in.!! What happened????? I don't know.... but one up to him in my book!!!!

Then things changed. I think probably due to my Dad's health (ears) a move came up . My Mother had a sister in Morecambe (more properly Heysham) .. Her husband worked for Servis, the washing machine people and we moved there to a house in Fairfield Road, and my Dad commenced working for or with my Uncle Harry... I went to a new school and so it was for a while. I don't know exactly what my Dad did as he was not an electrician or mechanic, and again things went wrong though I believe my Dad's health was better. We moved again to Hawksworth Grove. He and my Uncle started making soap powder, to go with the washing machines I guess, but things didn't work out, and although I knew nothing of what was going on, I think in retrospect things were tough,

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so another move. This time another sister of my Mother's called Hettie who lived in Blackpool suggested a move there to work with Uncle Tom (her husband ) who had stalls in the amusement arcades. So off we went to Blackpool.. another house .. another school.. another job for Dad.. again hardly his cup o' tea!! But things went O.K. for a while..

I realize I missed out some chronology... Nelson to Heysham would be 1934/5... Heysham to Blackpool 1936/7. My Dad worked the amusement stalls for some time but never happily I believe.. I went to Devonshire Road school.

This went on for a couple of years.. Dad working the stalls. I was, I suppose, coming up 10.. this meaning that the following year I would have what is now the "11 plus exam". I would have to sit an exam to decide where I would go ... be it Grammar or Central or ordinary senior school. On top of this (I can't remember the exact date of the move but the War would be approaching) we moved again.. 48 Torsway Ave.. not far.. same school, but for some reason unknown to me, my parents made the fairly extraordinary decision of baking at home, my Dad to tote the stuff round the streets to sell and build up some sort of business working from home. In retrospect this was a heck of a decision. Be it said that my Mother was a really great pastry cook and my Dad and hard work no strangers but.....!!!! So off they went... my Dad got a bike with a carrier on the front.. they were up very early, and he went off on his rounds, leaving my Mother baking the next batches of cakes and pastries, ready for his return and a refill and away again.. and it worked!!!!.. they built up a regular bunch of customers.. they then added an evening round with meat and potato pies.. my Dad on his bike riding round the streets calling... "Hot meat and potato pies". Things went O.K. but again it went wrong, this time caused by a war, and rationing. Of course my Mum made good stuff with good ingredients.. nothing else would have done, but sugar for one thing went on ration.. how it worked with them pursuing a business I don't know.. what allowances they may have had I have no idea, but it finished them anyway, leading my Dad to apply for a job on the trams, and here he stayed until his retirement around 20 years later. He was a conductor at first, then a driver. He was probably 42 when he started on the trams.

So this was a kind of settled down period.. I think he quite enjoyed the work on the trams, at least when he became a driver, except possibly for the shift work, which he'd had experience of and this was the nature of the job like many others, and I imagine he settled pretty quickly. My mother worked too, at least in the summer, in Uncle Harry's (her brother) boarding house, just generally helping out. There's little else to say.. I pursued my education, went to work in a bank (Ouch )... found an interest in music and that was that. The bank fired me at the end of the war as I was only temporary anyway. I went to work in Nutbrowns, well known in the area as makers of kitchenware, left there to do a summer season in the Isle of Man in a band, and that was that. My parents always liked Blackpool.. my dad enjoyed his work driving along the whole length of the sea front.

He stopped work at 65 and was as happy a retired person as you would find....sometime after he retired, he read in the paper that people who turned up on time for work received a bonus.. his comments I leave to you!!!! Another one which Richard reminded me of was that Pop (he was always Pop to my boys) when talking about the old

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days..... a much too rare event sadly, told them he remembered the time he could buy a packet of Woodbines (cigs), pie and peas, a bottle of pop and a box of matches, and still have change from 6d (a sixpence). Another one from Richard was "We worked from 5am to 5 pm, 5 and a half days a week.. church 3 times on Sunday...and all for 7 shillings."

That's pretty well the main points of Jack's life. I think I mentioned before that I have much more knowledge of my dad (obviously) and Jim's life because they were the youngest and lived long past the other brothers.

We took my Dad to Grange to see Jim on a few of our Blackpool visits, and they were always pleased to see each other and it was a real nice day out. Had a trip round the Lakes sometimes, and they enjoyed each other's company a lot.

I am reminded of other stories by Richard and Anne.. illustrating the times. For instance there is one of Uncle Rennie who holidayed in the Isle of Man, and discovered to his horror on the boat on the way back, a halfpenny piece in the bottom of his pocket. This was terrible because you had to spend ALL your holiday money as a matter of pride, and come home broke, so he threw it over the side.

They did manage the occasional holiday, which surprisingly enough depended on Grandad's [John Henry] luck on the horses I was told!!!!!! I believe it was usually Blackpool, but grandma did all the baking and rented a room, carrying their own food, including umpteen loaves.

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## Appendix 8 – Gill's Notes by and about Richard

### Richard Arthur Sidwell - 20 October 1920 -1 August 1990

Was born in Ohio USA at 6.40pm in the Peoples Hospital, in the City of Akron, County of Summit.

Akron was regarded by many as the original "Hicksville". It was also the home town of the spinster played by Katherine Hepburn in Lean's Summer Madness.

In actuality Akron was a highly prosperous city, whose main industry was rubber manufacture (Firestone, Goodrich, Goodyear, etc.), producing more than a quarter of the total tire product.

His father, Arthur, and mother, Ethel, were both born in Nelson, then a small Lancashire cotton town. Apprenticed as a weaver at the age of 12, Arthur wasn't content with his lot and took a part-time job in the local theatre to save up for his £10 fare to Boston. Before emigrating, he proposed, on a walking holiday in the Lake District, to Ethel Kershaw. She had to wait until after the end of the Great War for it to be safe enough to cross the Atlantic so that they could marry in Akron.

Like his father Richard really enjoyed the US and the Mid-West weather. He had happy memories of playing in the thick winter snow. Less happy were memories of learning to swim in the freshwater lakes around Akron. He had such a high specific gravity that he sank like a stone!

His mother was unhappy because she adored the sea and Akron was almost 1,000 miles from the Atlantic. A memorable holiday was spent on a trip to the seaside. They had an open tourer automobile resembling those in Chicago gangster films, and he had the whole of the back seat to play on as they drove across New England to Maine. A great bonus for him was his father reading Treasure Island to him each night. He remembered too the car ferry from New York State to Vermont and finally jumping in the Atlantic rollers at Orchard, Maine.

Another memory was of the excitement of Halloween, with pumpkin masks with lighted candles and the drumming sound made by notched cotton reels spinning on elastic against window panes.

Yet another was of the ice box in their kitchen, with one compartment for food and one for ice, from which it slowly melted away into a drain in the basement. The iceman called every day, and his mother put a notice in the window of the porch to let him know how much they wanted. He found it exciting to watch the man split the ice into blocks of 25, 50, 75 or 100lbs and carry them on his shoulder, held in place with an ice pick.

Though an only child (which he deeply regretted) he had plenty of friends, and they used to play on the vacant plot of land between their house and the one next door.

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Favorite toys which he remembered were a kit for building a log cabin and a jigsaw of 48 pieces, one for each state.

No sooner had he arrived on the scene than his mother wanted to show him off to grandparents, aunts and uncles, so as soon as he had recovered from whooping cough and other childish ills, back they all went to Nelson. The trip was a great success.

A second trip was therefore planned within three years, this time without his father. His mother paid for this trip herself out of earnings from singing. His memory of her voice was of a Kathleen Ferrier quality. She used to sing for various different congregations, mainly the Christian Science church. She also sang on the radio from Cleveland and he remembered being allowed to stay up and listen through their cat's whisker radio.

Richard was not at all sure however that he really enjoyed this second trip. He preferred the weather to be hot or cold, not dank and gloomy! However he provided the family with some amusement exchanging an American accent for a Lancastrian one in the space of three months.

He was eight and a half when he returned, with his mother, to England for the third and final time. He had vivid memories of the journey. His father drove them to Cleveland to catch the night train to Montreal. He remembered lying on the top bunk and pulling aside the curtain to see the deserted station in the middle of the night at the Canadian frontier at Buffalo. They embarked on the 'Laurentic' sailing down the St. Lawrence River for 4 days and 8 days open sea to Liverpool. He and his mother both distinguished themselves. He was the sole passenger in Tourist Class to appear for all meals every day, and his mother sang in the concert on the last night. On arrival at Liverpool he suffered a traumatic experience. On disembarkation he was carrying a model aeroplane which he had made from a kit. It was no ordinary plane. It was a scale model of "The Spirit of St. Louis" in which Col. Lindburgh flew the Atlantic solo. Sadly he became separated from it in the Liverpool docks, so his arrival was blighted by the loss. From Liverpool they went by train and bus to his grandmother's house at 61 Napier Street, Nelson.

Living at his grandma's he underwent considerable culture shock. He had been accustomed to central heating and storm doors and windows. At his grandma's the lavatory was outside, down ten steps at the back of the house, with a wooden seat which she scrubbed frequently and vigorously. The lighting was by gas, and the only heating came from the iron grate in the kitchen, as did the baking and the hot water in a small tank. There was a sink with cold water only in the scullery. The front room was rarely opened, and its fire was lit once only each year - on Xmas Day.

He spent something like a year there and two sounds dominated these early memories. The knocker-up who tapped on his aunt's bedroom window with a long cane to call her to work, and then the crescendo of the clattering clogs.

Whilst waiting there for his father to salvage as much as possible from the wreckage of the 1929 Wall Street Crash, winter approached and his mother began to suffer badly from her chronic bronchitis. However she was lucky enough to renew a friendship with

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an artist called Hugh Grestey, who had 'emigrated' to St. Ives. His mother, Mrs. Grestey, also had a house there and could offer them accommodation for the winter, so they spent a very happy winter in Cornwall. This meant another change of school for Richard. He had found the change from Cahooga Falls to Nelson surprising enough, but this next school was quite startling. There were only three classes, all held side by side in the same large room, heated by one large coal stove and situated within sight of the sea. The climate lived up to its reputation for being mild and sunny. They enjoyed many weekend walks and Richard's favorite was along the railway embankment since the trains didn't run on a Sunday. He had memories of yellow being the predominant color: spiky gorse and dainty primroses all successfully avoiding the infrequent trains during the week. On the rare occasions that rain kept them indoors, he used to perch on the window seat which overlooked the main street of the town, and watched the world go by, played with his Meccano, or read his "Boys Own" comic.

Towards the end of the winter they had news from his father that he had completed winding up his affairs, and would soon be returning from Akron. Richard was very pleased to see him again, in spite of it meaning another change of school - the first of several within the next few years. In spite of the Depression his Dad found employment with a company called British Moulded Hose, whose factory was in Watford. They moved into furnished accommodation, but unfortunately his mother fell ill again and had to go into Ware Sanitorium in the mistaken notion that she had "consumption" (tuberculosis) and Richard was cared for by his father. Not a happy time for the family with Richard hating his first school and having to change from it, and his father suffering financial difficulties.

A substantial change in their fortunes occurred in 1932. The firm for whom Arthur was working was taken over by the company he had worked for in Akron and who were setting up the manufacture of boots and shoes. Thus he was immediately offered a good post in Burton-on-Trent. So for the last time Richard and his mother were destined to keep each other company, whilst Arthur arranged accommodation and they all waited for the results of Richard's scholarship exam to Watford Grammar. He managed to scrape through, and was able to transfer to Burton-on-Trent Grammar, so at last they were together with Arthur in a good job, and Richard in a good school. He commented that, apart from the menace of the rise of Fascism, these were the happiest days of his life.

During the latter part of his schooldays he struck up a close friendship with the Head Boy, Eric Sudale, who subsequently went to Oxford and became the youngest HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools) in the country. Eric encouraged his interest in music, both classics and jazz. But Richard's abiding passion in the arts was the cinema and he began to spend more and more time watching films. There were four cinemas in Burton and sixteen in Derby, a cycle ride away. Most exciting was the discovery of French films, the first being Mayerling.

Though clever at school, he failed to win sufficient scholarships to take him to Oxbridge, so in 1939 he won a place in the Executive Grade of the Civil Service.

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(Note: This where his writing ends, so the next part will be much more sketchy, based on my rather poor memory of things he told me)

His posting was to the Ministry of Social Security in Sheffield where he worked as an Inspector in a vast housing estate in a poor area. His job entailed visiting claimants and snooping around, peering to see what shoes were under the bed, to see if they were co-habiting. A strange occupation for a 19 year old boy! All I know of his life there was that he had a piano and a musical girlfriend, and that they enjoyed leisure time walking in the surrounding countryside.

RICHARD ARTHUR SIDWELL contd.

(Note: With regard to his wartime experiences, I am afraid I have no dates - I'm just going on recollections of bits and pieces he told me. For his time in the film industry, I probably could find more details. At the moment I can't lay hands on his curriculum vitae, but I know it exists.)

When he resigned from the Civil Service in 1941, he got his call-up papers, and refused military service. He failed his first tribunal and as a consequence was sent to Wormwood Scrubs where I think he spent about six months, including Christmas. Conditions were harsh but he met some interesting people amongst his fellow pacifists. He was released following his appeal tribunal where he this time won his case. He was very touched by the backing he received from his father, who, with his mother, was not supportive of his pacifism. (I think this was mainly on account of seeing the terrible treatment received by Whalley and others during the First World War.)

He joined a horticultural community at Apsley Guise in Buckinghamshire and worked in glasshouses looking after tomatoes, where he contracted rheumatic fever and had to give up working on the land.

He did various jobs in London, including working as a porter at Charing Cross Hospital, for a publisher, and for the Save the Children Fund, who he was hoping would send him to Greece as an ambulance driver. Unfortunately for him he proved himself too useful as an accountant in their London Office! (I found it hard to share his enthusiasm for meticulous book-keeping and was amazed to find someone who actually enjoyed completing his own tax returns!)

At this time he must have been living at Youth House in Campden Town, whose residents were for the most part, idealist left-wing pacifists - many of them Jewish refugees. He played an important part in the running of this community and organized its musical activities. It must have been there that he met an attractive, previously-married, Czech lady, Liselotte Wiesmeyer, and married her at Hampstead Registry Office on 8th December 1945, I gather in order to give her British nationality. It was thus probably mainly a marriage of convenience.

It was through an acquaintance that he finally managed to gain an introduction into the film industry. The only way then was through whom you knew. His first job was as an assistant cameraman on a documentary film about Canals. It was an extremely useful

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entree which gained him his all-important ACT (Union) membership. However, he did not enjoy having to hump around the very heavy camera equipment that it entailed!

His entry into the cutting rooms was as second assistant editor on Olivier's Hamlet! He always said that, from the point of view of the quality and prestige of films he worked on, it was downhill from there on! This was a very exciting time for him; he was bowled over by Vivien Leigh, and attended the party to celebrate Larry's knighthood.

During the following years he worked in the cutting rooms of all the major studios - Elstree, Riverside, Pinewood and Shepperton - the latter being his favorite. At first it was as assistant, till he worked his way up to Sound Editor, for which he earned a high reputation for his skills. He particularly enjoyed cutting to music. His ambition was to edit feature films and in the main he only achieved this through filmed series for TV, such as the Robin Hood films. He also worked on the drama which went out on the opening night of commercial television.

It was as editor on a film series that gave him the opportunity of a year in Bermuda. This was called "Sea Hawk". (This was not long after we'd met and he asked me to go with him, but I thought it unwise as we were both still involved with other people at the time. He had though split up from a long relationship with Trudl Lowengard, having lived with her and her daughter Barbara (who wanted to be a ballet dancer) at Cricklewood. His Bermuda existence sounded idyllic. His cutting room was on an island in Hamilton Harbor, reached by boat every day. Christmas was a beach picnic, and he was able to do some water skiing and scuba diving until he cut his leg badly on some coral. I think he found cultural opportunities non-existent and the social life stultifying, drinking with the same sets of people. He made a lot of money though and afterwards was able to visit the States, including his godparents in La Jolla, Hollywood, and New York where he visited a different theatre every day!

On his return to England he was pleased to be reunited with his pride and joy, his MGA sports car, which had to be laid up soon after its purchase. He also made another very important acquisition: his first flat - in Marylebone, above the Angus Steak House in Blandford Street. Prior to this he had been living in rented accommodation, first in Bayswater then in a shared house with friends in Abingdon Villas, just down the road from my flat in Lexham Gardens. It was through his giving me a lift while we were both working at Pinewood that we properly got to know one another.

Workwise it was then mainly editing documentaries for such companies as British Transport Films and the Shell Film Unit, both of whom were turning out some interesting stuff.

Then another breakthrough came - into directing - albeit only of filmed sequences in TV drama. He worked for quite a long while on what was then a very popular detective series called "No Hiding Place". A lot of his time was taken in looking for locations, when such things as good loos and good restaurants had to rank high in his priorities! Once he got press publicity for notorious reasons, wading in the sea with the equipment, when the unit got cut off by the tide whilst filming near Beachy Head! Another TV job he enjoyed was the film sequences for the Somerset Maugham series. Other interesting

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assignments came through working for This Week (current affairs). For instance he filmed an interview with Willy Brandt against the backdrop of the Berlin Wall. On another occasion a disillusioning experience was an interview with Arthur Koestler - not a pleasant human being. Since Associated Rediffusion often didn't have the need of a film director, he was allowed to cut his teeth on live TV with such things as children's programs. A program he particularly enjoyed was a series on film, Close Up. When this ended and it became apparent that they could only offer him more of the same, he decided it was time to move on.

Breaking into mainstream directing, however, proved very difficult. Unfortunately it was a financially difficult time for us too. Already with one adopted child and with another suddenly and unexpectedly offered, it became imperative for us to move out of our small flat. We found a wreck of a house in Pimlico and employed architect friends whose work we admired to do an exciting conversion - all whilst I was stuck at home with two babies and he was unemployed and with no prospect of job security.

I realize that I should backtrack a little here where our private life was concerned as I've got him with two kids, buying a house, without even mentioning our marriage!

Well we finally 'got it together' on New Year's Eve 1958/9 and got engaged and started living together soon after. We planned to get married that summer and booked our honeymoon - a Grand Tour of Italy - but unfortunately the wedding wasn't to be. Extricating himself from his previous marriage turned out to be a lengthy and complicated business and his Final Decree didn't come through until August 1960 when we were finally able to marry. We didn't let it stop us having a great pre-honeymoon touring Italy in the MG though! Our actual wedding was a quiet registry office affair with just close friends and family present, but we made up for that with a large and memorable evening party at the flat. Everyone remembers our bath being filled with ice and bottles of champagne. As Richard was in the middle of a series at the time, we just had a short honeymoon in the Yorkshire Dales.

Very important to us both was starting a family and the lack of success in this direction was all that spoiled our happiness. We tried absolutely everything, and when the injections that R was having gave him a horrible allergy we felt it was time to call a halt and follow the path of adoption. This was no easy option as the adoption societies didn't find us suitable - too old, divorced, working in the film industry. We were particularly incensed by the attitude of the Church of England Society who turned us down because we weren't prepared to tell lies about going to church on Sunday, yet were prepared to consider us for a black child! Luckily we had the help of the gynecologist who was treating us and another one (a quite famous lady) introduced by a friend, and it was through a colleague of hers that we were offered Amanda (who I visited every day in hospital from her birth) and subsequently eleven months later, Jonathan, who we also took home at two weeks old.

After that important diversion, back to Richard's career He did manage to get a few directing jobs in commercials and documentaries. Of these the one of which he was most proud was a film called "Jessie" for the Spastics Society. We even set up a production company of our own, Pimlico Films, with me as a director, but although we

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had a lot of projects, none came to fruition. Eventually, in order to make a living, he decided he would have to go back to film editing. What he did was to set up his own editing service with cutting rooms in the premises of a friend with a sound recording studio in Redan Place, next door to Whitelys department store in Bayswater. There his most constant employer was the BBC. He established a special relationship with several producers in their Further Education Department. This led to some interesting work, notably on language series such as "Greek Language and People" and "Russian Language and People". For the latter he had to teach himself the Cyrillic alphabet. There was another series called "Whatever Happened to Britain?" and various sociological subjects. He also did some Horizons (scientific series), one of which won a prize at a film festival, of which he had a share. This came in very handy for us for some new hi fi equipment! He specially enjoyed Arts programs, such as the one on Bernard Haitink and the Concertabuw Orchestra.

Sadly, owing to cut-backs at the Beeb, this sort of work started to dry up. Then, after a longish period of inactivity, a final change of direction offered itself. For a long time he had been interested in the possibility of teaching film, and just such an opportunity presented itself. He got to hear that the London International Film School was looking for a Head of Film Editing and he applied and got the job. I was very proud of the fact that he managed to do this at an age when most would be enjoying retirement. It was a devastating blow when they didn't renew his contract, but with hindsight the reason was only too apparent. He must have already been in the early stages of his dementia and wasn't fully functioning. Following this, what I took to be depression at being out of work was also part of his illness. This was not to become fully apparent until that disastrous holiday when he had a complete mental and physical collapse in Soviet Central Asia, ending up in a sanatorium in Samarkand.

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## **Appendix 9 - Additional Research Ideas**

### **Sidwell Relatives in Coventry**

Arthur's diaries show that John Henry went to stay in Coventry for a few days during his annual visits to Arthur in Burton. Leonard wrote that John Henry's father, Benjamin, relocated his family from Coventry to Nelson. It should be quite easy to trace these Coventry relatives via the records at Ancestry.com.

Bob says Arthur once advertised in the Coventry newspaper for people named Sidwell to gather in a pub one day and meet their potential relatives. Quite a few turned up but there is no record of who they were.

### **Florrie Blackburn's US Relatives**

There are almost certainly additional US relatives of my grandmother Florrie Blackburn. Two of her sisters came to the US, one to Salt Lake City. The other, Ada Singleton, came first to Akron and then to Salt Lake City. Leonard wrote that Ada lived in California, so presumably she and her husband Fred moved there later. There are photos of Ada and Fred with their baby Freddy in Arthur's album of photos and very likely additional photos of them that aren't identified. It would probably be quite easy to trace these folks and their descendants via the records at Ancestry.com.

## The Sidwell Family

### Appendix 8 – March 2005 Sidwell Get-Together/Reunion

We held a couple of gatherings of many of the living Sidwells in London in early March and several smaller meetings. Here are some photos:



Felicity, Alison, Roy, Madge, Anne, Joan, Bob, Mark  
Dan, Steve, Martin, Gill

In the next photo, Madge and Roy are enjoying a photo album that I brought while Gill and I are chatting and Anne is reading a summary of Arthur's diaries that I'd frenziedly finished typing the day before we flew to England. The binder on Madge's lap contains the entire 276 pages of diaries and the suitcase on the coffee table is full of Arthur's collection of old photos which I'm currently sorting, scanning and getting developed to add to the album Roy is holding. Dan and Madge are enjoying a joke in the following photo. From the ones after that it's obvious we all had a great time. The last few photos were taken at Roy and Anne's house where we met several of their family and also had a great time. You can see why Baby Jamie was the big hit with everyone.

## The Sidwell Family



Madge, Roy, Gill, Martin and Anne



Dan and Madge

## The Sidwell Family



Martin, Alison, Anne, Amanda and Felicity



Madge, Roy, Mark, Dan and Joan

## The Sidwell Family



John and Gill



Amanda and Felicity

# The Sidwell Family



Bob and Martin



Laura and Libby

## The Sidwell Family



Steve and Mark



Roy, Felicity, Gill and Anne

## The Sidwell Family



Jamie, Steve, Katy and Paddy



Paddy, Janet and Roy

## The Sidwell Family



Steve, Dan, Paddy, Neil, Jamie and Martin



Katy and Felicity

# The Sidwell Family

## Sources

Most of this stuff is in Leonard's leather suitcase in my study, some is in the desk that was originally Whalley's, some certificates are in our safety deposit box (I'll put more in there for safe keeping) and Arthur's photos are in his suitcase in my study.

Stuff in electronic form that's easy to share is highlighted.

As well as what's on paper, I learned a lot from conversations with Madge, Gill, Sheila, Bob and Joan, Roy and Anne, as well as Leonard, especially late in 2002.

John Henry:

- Dec 26, 1885 Certificate of Marriage to Sarah Jane Whalley (1987 copy)

Whalley:

- Jul 22, 1886 Certificate of Birth
- Nov 17, 1895 Certificate of Baptism
- Jan 6, 1912 Certificate of Marriage to Florence Blackburn
- Oct 9, 1920 Certificate of Marriage to Edith Kenyon
- Jan 7, 1942 Right of Burial at Nelson Cemetery
- Jan 31, 1952 Certificate of Death
- Feb 29, 1952 Probate
- Letter from jail to his brother Jim (original and electronic)
- "Pages from an American Diary" (original and electronic)
- Extracts from above in May 2003 Quaker newspaper from Madge
- Percy Wall's book of poetry with one dedicated to Whalley
- "Beautiful Wakeland" a favorite book of Whalley's signed by him

Edith:

- Jul 15, 1974 Certified Copy of Certificate of Death
- Annotated photo album

Arthur:

- 1914 – 35 pocket diaries (original and electronic)
- 1949 – 60 pocket diaries (original)
- Oct 5<sup>th</sup>, 1947 postcard from Archie Wood to Ethel & Arthur
- 1965 postcard from Rennie to Arthur about "Friends reunion" (note: the reconstruction group was not War Resisters International because WRI wasn't formed until 1921)

Madge:

- Feb 14, 1979 family history letter from Religious Society of Friends
- Notes about Edith's family

# The Sidwell Family

Roy:

- Emails (2003 and 2004)
- Notes about Sidwell family (2004)
- Notes about Jack and Lizzie (2005)

Gill:

- Emails (2003 and 2004)
- Notes by and about Richard (2005)

Leonard:

- Jan 18, 1913 Certified Copy of Birth Certificate
- Letters to Minnie from Rio Hondo TX & Akron OH
- Oct 29, 1930 US amateur radio license
- Mar 1931 Certificate of Award from Summit County OH
- May 1931 letter of acceptance for chemistry at Baldwin-Wallace College
- Jun 1931 High School Transcript, diploma, class photo & graduation patch
- Jul 30, 1932 UK amateur radio license G6JF
- Jul 21, 1939 Peace Pledge News article about the Publicity Van
- National identity Card, Sep 1944 – May 1946
- Apr 1, 1950 Certificate of Marriage to Florence Stanton
- 1952 letter from me when he was away repairing sea flood damage
- Jun 12, 1953 amateur radio license G2KB
- Jul 12, 1953 certificate for ham radio contact with all continents
- "Years in Texas" (original typed by Florence and electronic)
- "My First Fifty Years" (original and electronic)
- 1961 RSGB ham radio handbook
- G2KB ham station logs, Nov 1948 – Nov 1957 and Nov 1957 – Nov 1989
- QSL cards (all 48 states scrapbook, unique countries scrapbooks, box of others)
- Family tree diagrams
- Notes about Uncle Jim's "Is Your Name Whalley" article
- Passport, Jul 2, 1968 – Jul 2, 1978
- Aug 20, 1968 Certificate of Marriage to Maisie Hinton
- Passport, Nov 20, 1989 – Nov 20, 1999
- Jun 6, 1990 G2KB License
- Letters to Ivy
- Dec 8, 1990 Certificate of Marriage to Ivy Whenman
- Wills (1991, 1992, 1993, 2001)
- Letters about Prudential pension & book about Prudential's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- 1993 diary
- Apr 1994 letter from Pamela

Florence:

- Mar 5, 1908 Certified Copy of Certificate of Birth
- Jun 1929 Creche Workers' Elementary Certificate
- Jun 1929 Creche Workers' Advanced Certificate
- Oct 29, 1929 Testimonial for Training in Residential Nursery

## The Sidwell Family

- Passport, Jul 8, 1932 – Jul 8, 1939
- 1938 Pocket Diary
- Coronation Day "At Home" invitation from Italian Ambassador
- Letters & testimonials from Marquesa & other employers
- Oct 7, 1941 testimonial from Fortis Green School
- Aug 28, 1943 letter acknowledging resignation from Paddington Nursery
- Gloves knitted for me when I was a baby
- National Identity Card, Jul 1943 – May 1946
- May 14, 1967 Certificate of Death

### Maisie:

- Sep 9, 1912 Certificate of Birth
- 1967 Passport
- Oct 16, 1989 Certificate of Death

### Ivy:

- Photocopy of Dec 12, 2000 Certified Copy of Certificate of Death
- Moor Fuel Ration Book
- Chinese Nationalist Gov't Bonds bought when Ivy was an ambulance driver
- Story about Brass Bed – May 1963
- Typed poem "I'm Fine Thankyou"
- "Very nice letter from Felicity"
- Wills (1982, 1993, 1998)