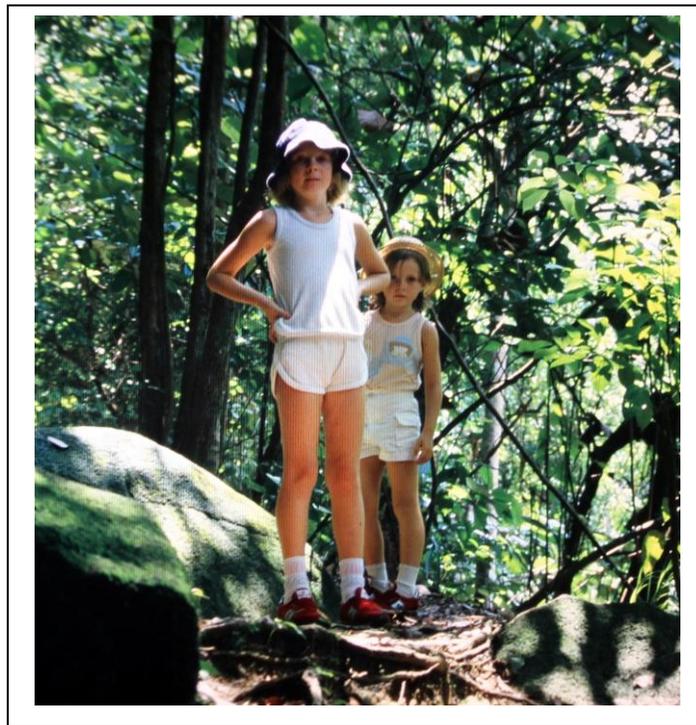


Singapore Diary

April to August 1983



**For my Children,
Anna and Polly.**

Singapore – Sat. 16/4/83 2-15pm

Why? Why have I, after 36 years, decided to set down in writing, events past and present as seen through my eyes? English, prose and anything connected with language has always been a big negative for me. Attempts to learn French and Russian in the past have always met with disaster, even spelling I have never mastered. So why put myself through this torture to record this history, a window on events past, as they will be to the reader. Why?

Well, I guess the last big event in my life, moving to Singapore, brought about a realisation that emotions, feelings and the basic reasons for the happenings in a person's life get lost with time. Which is a terrible waste. Why bother traveling from birth to death if there is nothing to show at the end of it all? My grandparents and father's lives were lived through some of the most momentous times of this century and yet there is no way of knowing how these events affected them personally. Their histories disappeared with them to the grave. Whilst I won't claim that what follows will always be objective, it will be at least how I saw it.

In truth, this "realisation" is not that sudden; it has been creeping up on me for a couple of years fuelled by funerals, a film and a book.

Singapore – Sun. 17/4/83, 11-15am

Jenny arrived in Singapore on the 6/12/82 after a domestic altercation (more of which latter) led to her applying for a job as a lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic in Singapore. After the dust had settled, domestic dust, we agreed that a swapping of rolls was in order, something which in my opinion was way overdue. So, I followed with the children on 1/2/83. The separation was harder on Jenny than on me and the kids. New place, new job, new home and on your own for the first time in years, is quite a lot to handle all at once. Even my bi-weekly telephone calls, at great expense, sometimes made things worse. Me saying the wrong thing or with the wrong tone would reduce her to tears. Apart from one other time when we were at University, it was the longest time we had been apart. Then, strangely, the telephone was the cause of that separation. An argument. Over the phone. Produced a nine-week layoff in our relationship, a relationship that started on the night the first President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. That was in late autumn 1963.

It was the humidity that hit me first when we stepped off the plane. It reminded me of the self-same event 10 years, correction, 14 years previously but at a different airport, in Accra. Not having slept for 48 hours, I wasn't feeling at all with it, unlike the children who had slept for most of the 16-hour flight. Immigration and customs were no problem and we were soon through the barrier for a bemused family reunion. Polly, in particular seemed a little dump struck, not being at all sure what had happened to herself at all. To totally up Jenny's excitement, Cliff Richards, her favourite pop idol from her youth, had arrived on our flight and she had almost touched him.

Dusk was falling as we were driven to our flat by a neighbour's chauffeur. A very convenient and welcomed thoughtfulness.

My first impressions are now a bit hazy. I remember the multitude of lights from the ships anchored off the east coast, making you wonder which was really the city. Then the tall buildings coming up on the right: flats and offices in ultra-modern style. What had happened to the S.E.A Singapore? Lots of chatter from the children about the flight and who had got what for Christmas and that's the cable car system that suffered at the hands of an oil rig.

We were driving in a hired car from Cheltenham to Heathrow to catch the flight when news of the cable car accident came on the radio. The report said that seven people had been killed when an oil rig had drifted into the cables and knocked off some of the cars. No prizes for guessing the thoughts racing through my mind. These were temporarily disturbed by Polly wailing for a pee. After confirmation that she couldn't wait until the next service station, we stopped under a bridge for a quick pants down and gutter job. Not ideal conditions, driving rain turning to sleet on the M5! That's Polly.

Arriving at the flat was excitement. Having seen their bedrooms in photographs Jenny had sent us, expectations were high. Their own rooms, one each. They weren't disappointed. Everything was as it was in the photos. Myself, I collapsed in a heap only too grateful to release responsibility to Jenny, who fussed around doing her motherly bit.

I was reminded of the cable car/radio incident again today by a similar event. Jenny had caught half a news item, hearing only Nigeria, nine 9 killed in a light aircraft crash. Such news had immediate effect. Mandy. Were they the nine dead? Panic. When was the next news on? As it turns out, the plane crash in Saudi, not Kartum, on its way to Nigeria from Saudi. Thank god. It was made more credible by the fact that Sarah and Emma would or could have been flying from Kaduna to Kano in just such a plane on that day. They would be returning to school in England after the Easter holidays

Today is going to be a lazy day. Jenny and the kids at the pool, dad will have to get dinner in a minute and nobody is developing a momentum to go anywhere. That is apart from Anna who wants to go to her favourite place, Tiger Balm Gardens. Perhaps later.

Singapore - Mon. 18/4/83 8-45pm

A late visit to tiger Balm yesterday. It must have been the 5th or 6th visit it being only about two miles from our flat. These larger than life, concrete animals and human figures hold a fascination for Polly and Anna. It is such a complex and intricate mess of Chinese fictional characters and stories; the children always find something new to excite them. Mind you, we always take the same route through

the place, although last night we did deviate to get a cold drink sooner. We missed the snake charmers too, the snakes were asleep.

The Confessions of a Train spotter was on the television when we got back. I sat riveted, wallowing in nostalgia for the whole hour. Training spotting was my absolute passion during my early teens. Even stood up girls for trains. That was in the days of steam, of Fowler, Coronation Class and the Flying Scotsman. My friends and I used to travel all over the country, even as far as London, to get at trains. In those days' types of locomotives were restricted to Railway Regions. How else then were we to see the Merchant class locs on the Southern Region, except by going to London?

Today has been hot and sticky and busy. Took little Nicki and her mother Daphne down to the B.C.G clinic for Nicki's injections; waste of time. They wouldn't inject her because of a skin infection; so it was off to the doctors this afternoon. Daphne has been with us most of the day. What with Nicki and young Nicholas from next door, Fatima has had a hard job cleaning around us all. I took the kids off swimming to give her a break.

Fatima is our domestic help who came to work for us about four weeks ago. She spends six hours a day, five days a week cleaning and ironing, etc. She is Malaysian and has a young son, Kamal. Aged about 9, I think. She is very good at her job and the kids like her and visa versa. We need help so I can have the time for a part time job at the Polytechnic. Changing Jobs yet again. From draughtsman to lecturer. This will make job change number 7 or there about. Not bad in 15 years! Settling to having a stranger around all day has taken time but it seems to be working out.

Today also made contact with a new arrival, Peter Creamer, who will be a colleague at the Poly. I met him first at the interview we had in London for the jobs here, the Poly is expanding over the next three to four years 3x which is one hell of an expansion rate. We will be starting with the new term in June. I'm a bit apprehensive about lecturing, not only from the physical aspect but also the content as well. What can I bring to the topic from my work experience? What is the topic?

Polly is awake. Complaining of feeling sick. She has settled on the floor with Jenny watching the night news on the television. She insists on carrying around a washing up bowl – just in case. Naked miniature human clutching an outsized blue bowl.

Singapore – Tuesday, 19/4/83 8-20pm

Always evening, or at least when the kids aren't around. I find it very difficult to concentrate on anything more complicated than snakes and ladders when they are up and at you. I love them dearly but sometimes I could throttle the pair of them. Not that they have given me cause today. Anna restarted school after the Easter holiday – almost two weeks. She came home at 1 pm a bit tired but excited about the new stuff at the tuck shop and a play area that is being built for them. After initial

doubts, Jenny and I agree that the school is adequate. We will have to back up the school with exercises, etc. The proposed purchase of a computer will help us doing this. We unfortunately boobed – we sold our BBC machine before we came to Singapore. Now we have to replace it, hopefully with a better system but it will still be the BBC with a second processor and a disk drive. This family is already into the computer age – early.

Anna first went to a school when she was two years old. Well, not a school as such, but a nursery run at the St. Joseph's Convent in Clydach and in particular by Sister Fenton. Both she and the place were serene. Polly was still attending it up to the time we left Wales. This nursery has given them both their initial contact with the outside world; the world outside of us. And judging by the results the experience wasn't too bad. They both attended four days each week from 9am till around 3pm. During this time Jenny worked from home. Work arrived by post for her. Her office was our front room and her tool a remote terminal linked by telephone to a computer in Bracknel, some 180 miles away. Operating software bugs were the Jenny thing. And she was good at tracking them down, even if it did sometimes take more time than she was paid for. Initially this was 16 hours per week but as the children got older she increased her working hours to 25.

After the convent, Anna went to an English speaking primary school in Taigwiath. Not a success. In fact, it was a disaster. Not only from an educational point of view but more importantly from a social point of view. The school was too rough for Anna, not that Anna is soft, she stands her corner, but the difference between expectations of behaviour at school and at home were too different for her to cope with. She suffered unnecessarily coming home in a right state every day. Tantrums, crying etc. Later than we should have done we moved her to a private school in Swansea, Emmanuel's. The only problem was the 15 miles between home and the school. One of the teachers at the school lived in the village and luckily for us he had a room to take and bring Anna home in his car. Sometimes there was a problem when he was off sick but otherwise it worked well. Dylan also started at the school at the same time as Anna. The change in her was immediate. Even with the 30 mile round trip, she was happy again. She loved her uniform with its berry, gymslip and the rest. Perhaps more importantly, she made a close friend, a girl called Anne. Same age, same height, same temperament. Weekends at each other's houses were in order.

The classes were also ideal. Small, around twelve in Anna's class. The school was a Baptist Missionary School run on the primary school lines by a very personable and able woman, Miss Jones. Although the class room was small and cluttered and the books were ancient it was very cosy and intimate, an ideal learning environment, one Anna and Emma before her had certainly responded to. Too bad really that it had to end prematurely.

Written a couple of letters to Mandy, Mum and Mark. Mandy's letters keep hinting at possible trouble during elections now imminent in Nigeria. Rumours of expats leaving for the summer and firms

shutting up shop because of import restrictions, causing layoffs of workers. All the ingredients for an outbreak of violence again. Between 3,000 and 4,000 people were killed 3 years ago in the area during an inter Muslim sect feud. Only hope, no pray, they have enough time to get their asses out of there.

Singapore 20/4/83 Wed 8-15pm

Found a nursery for Polly within walking distance of the flat. In fact, it is opposite the market, in the ground floor area of one of the HDB apartment blocks. The Y.W.C.A run it, primarily for working 'mothers' which I suppose I am. We first heard of it from a news item on the television when it was officially opened a couple of weeks ago. Polly was very shy of it but is now already talking of it as her school. Like Anna, she will have a uniform and bag which I think at the moment are the main attractions. She may have to wait a week or two to attend although it doesn't seem full. I suspect it is due to a lack of staff. Polly did her first people picture today, quite an unusual representation. No body. Arms and legs with a head but no body. Very artistic.

Picking Anna up from school was again full of humour. Once the car is parked with the help of an Indian chap, waving his arms all over the place, Polly and I stood waiting for Anna at the top of the entrance steps. I never catch sight of Anna until she is right on top of us, usually accompanied by "her Miss", Miss Peters, an Indian lady. Stroll back to the car which has now heated up to 35 + deg C in the sun and we extract ourselves from the mobile chaos, again with the help of our Indian friend. Perhaps the most amusing aspect is the reaction of the other cars' occupants to his expert help. Most of the white skinned ladies gesticulate with arms and facial expressions more understandable than our friends. For the rest, there is quiet acceptance.

Home then for dinner before driving over to pick Jenny up from work to go on a visit to the M.P.H. bookshop and the National Museum. Polly and Anna had a small book each, Bambi and Sleeping Beauty. Books at the shop are ridiculously expensive. Before our visit to the National Museum we called at a hawker stall nearby for a cold drink and to try a funny looking crushed ice and fruit juice. Quite delicious. Forgot to mention that we met Peter Creamer by accident outside the Poly. He is a big fella. Had to bend his head to sit in our tiny car. He is moving into a condominium owned by the Poly today and said he would accept an invitation to visit us as soon as he has sorted himself out. He is here on his own, just having got a divorce but hopes to get his girlfriend out with him soon. Funny how much you can learn about a person in a five-minute car ride.

The National Museum is running some sort of show for children, which unfortunately we just missed. We will probably try to catch it next Wednesday afternoon. On the drive home it rained. The first for ages. The papers are full of the drought, the first in 40 years. Malaysia seems to be suffering worst with reservoirs running out. Water rationing is already on in the rest of the peninsular.

Quiet evening. Been reading about the expansion going on at Nanyang Technical Institute. Don't know whether to apply for a job there or not, having already accepted a job at Ngee Ann Poly. I'll stew on it for a couple of days. The main attraction is that Nanyang has a production engineering department, the Poly doesn't.

Singapore 22/4/83 Thur 7-50pm

Missed a day. Opps! The reason is the wild goose chase we went on last night. Jenny had seen an advertisement for an exercise bike at a reasonable price compare to those in the shops. Apparently brand new. The seller being Chinese we didn't get so good directions over the telephone. A language problem. Coupled with it being in an area of Singapore we did not know and not having a paper map, resulted in us not finding it. We keep doing that – getting lost. It's a good way to get to know some where though. Nothing lost, however; I went and found it this morning. I don't really know why we are on this fitness kick at all. Jenny is trying to lose weight and I need some sort of exercise – there is the reason(s). We've both been pedalling like mad this evening, so I guess tomorrow we will both be walking around like robots! (How is this writing? I am trying really hard to improve it.)

Yesterday morning, Polly and I went down to get advanced booked tickets for the film Ghandi. Jenny and I are going to see the film on Saturday night, Fatima is babysitting Polly and Anna. After picking up the tickets – I just remembered a funny. We had to queue for the tickets and Polly was still insisting that she wanted a drink, or 'dwink' in her language, as she had been for the past ¼ hour. Whilst in the queue I spied a refreshment machine in the corner of the lobby. So I gave Polly three, 20 cent coins to go and get herself that much needed drink. She put in one coin and stood back to see what would happen. Nothing. Such a look of puzzlement came over her face. She looked at the machine, then at the remaining coins in her hand and finally at me. That "Where's my dwink" look on her face was priceless. After sign language had failed to get the remaining coins into the machine, the young woman behind me offered to keep our place in the queue whilst I rode over to the rescue.

Right; after we got the tickets we went for a stroll down Orchard road and came across a model shop selling 'N' gauge railway and model cars. 'N' gauge railway and model car collecting are my second line interests after Morgans, or rather, were in the UK. I don't think I've ever seen so much 'N' gauge all at the same time. At home it is much neglected, the most popular being the 'OO and 'HO' which is twice the size of 'N'. Although the 'Models of Yesteryear' Series by Matchbox were on offer, I bought a SSKL 1931 Mercedes from the Solido range. This brings my collection to 23, only two of them from Solido. Course, I got a bollocking from Jenny for spending the money. Solido's models are much better detailed than the Matchbox equivalent.

Took the children swimming in the afternoon and after tea set off on that abortive bicycle search. Couldn't face writing went we got back home.

Yesterday's post brought a letter or rather a series of notes from my old friends at Valenite in Pontardawe. Each had made his contribution and it was quite remarkable how character comes across in each part. They seem to be having a very unsettled time of it at the moment and I feel for them. The drawing office has had their working week cut to four days and five of the toolmakers in the machine shop have been made redundant. I wonder how long the company can last with only £2000 of orders in the office. Not long I suspect. Sandi, my ex-boss's secretary, writes me the nicest letters. She is so bored without work to do that she apparently trips off to the loo to 'knit'.

Jenny was quite upset last night as our cottage, Pen-cae-Du, is no longer ours. Poor old Pen-cae-Du, after all we were the ones who breathed new life into it. It's more than sad, it's a tragedy.

After picking up the exercise bike this morning, the day lapsed into its usual routine. The post brought an incorrectly addressed bill and letters from Pete and Mandy. Mandy seems very unhappy and her letters I find very disturbing. She doesn't deserve to be so unhappy and torn. I wonder if we will see her before Christmas. I can't understand why she hasn't got my letters. Jenny's are getting there.

All gloom and doom on the television news. People blowing up embassies, Vietnam attacking Thailand, football supporters throwing bottles at linesmen. Is the world worse than it was, or is this instant knowledge of such events just create the illusion that it is?

Singapore 25/4/83 Mon 2-30pm

Missed two days. This won't do. I can't make up for lost time or remember that well the day's events three only days ago. Polly and Anna are playing "houses" at the moment with the dining room chairs, so I thought I could do a quick write.

Lazy day Saturday. Jenny was working in the morning and it was a case of a little shopping down the market, tidying up the flat, write a letter etc. The afternoon was spent in much the same way, half watching television, half writing. Jenny took the kids off for a swim about 4 o'clock. 6-30 arrived with Fatima and Jenny and I took off for the cinema. Whilst I wasn't impressed by the film, I was by the story it told. The film is made up of a string of cameos, showing events in Gandhi's life, linked by some beautiful atmospheric scenes of India. God knows what the Singaporeans make of the British shooting defenceless people. Fair play to Attenbough, he did show that not all the British Raj were loopy. It is depressing how human history is so circular. It keeps making the same mistakes over and over again. One day it will really disappear up its own backside.

Sunday brought a "let's get divorced" argument. Just proving that we are part of that human race. It all seems to start out of nothing and before you know it, there is a mushroom cloud. I stormed off for a brisk walk which only achieved a sweaty body, making wish I hadn't. Anyway, after dinner things had calmed down enough for us to fly flags of truce and meet in no man's land, the bedroom. Hey- ho,

life goes on and about 3-15pm we departed the flat to wander round the Japanese Garden which are just up the road in Jurong. Beautiful. And quiet too. No cars or lorries pounding up the road. There are some of these vicious fish there in the ponds. To see them attack a piece of bread, you would think them Parana.

4-00pm

Just returned from the pool with the children. With the reoccurrence of Ann's earache yesterday, no Saturday, I've had to watch that she didn't put her head under the water. If she did it was to be immediate home. Last night I popped down to the hawker centre for beer and fags. Felt a bit off this morning as I haven't had a beer for at least a week. I must give up smoking. I don't smoke consistently, in fits and starts. Started smoking my pipe again just before coming out here but don't really like that either. I'll make a real effort not to buy another packet of cigarette; again. Off to pick Jenny up in few minutes and then over to the shopping centre for a food shop. I'll feed the children when we get back. Fatima was a bit late today as she had to go to her son's school today to see the headmaster. She is trying to get some help with the school fees. She being a permanent resident has to pay extra. Her Malaysian husband left her three or four years ago and she hasn't heard from him since. She has no maintenance or other financial help. All seems a bit of a mess. She lives with her aged mother and stepfather. From what I can gather, they are all a bit cramped in their HDB flat. Fatima almost seems reluctant to leave each day after she has finished her work. Otherwise a routine day, near enough. I must describe what I call a 'routine day'.

Letter arrived from Mandy today. She is coming out to visit us in August, after Ruth's visit. Apparently Ruth hasn't book her tickets yet, so my Mum can't fix her date to come out to stay with us. Mum has had a bit of news about an old school chum, Chas. He is still living in Branwell near Manchester, where he moved when he was first married to Gina. All that broke up and he now has a little girl of three by his second marriage. He is changing jobs as well. Now in a sixth form college. He wanted to be a school teacher which was always his ambition. His present will only be his second job since leaving University. Perhaps that is what I am doing wrong. Mind you, I thought I had a job for life at Valentite; not my fault I get bored easy. Guess I have no staying power. Jenny describes me as a professional dilettante. Strange, my last employer always introduced me as his 'Jack of All Trades'.

I have not yet mentioned FUA 722, my beloved Morgan. She is a 1937 4/ that was a two seater and is now a four seater. My Dad bought it for me in 1964/5. Cost £25. That doesn't sound a lot until you remember that was a week's wages back then. It was a non-runner and in a bit of a state. The engine was seized and the wooden body frame and chassis were in a multitude of holes and rotten. We pulled it all to pieces and started to rebuild it again but progress was interrupted by University. I really only tried to get it together again during the second year vacation. I didn't manage it. So it stayed, decaying in Mum's house for the next 10 years, until in fact Jenny and I bought Pen-cae-Du. The first

house we bought was at 100 Heol-y-Gors in Cwmgors. This house also need renovation and it wasn't for another year that we were able to afford to buy a garage for the top of the garden. By this time there wasn't much left of FUA apart from the larger chunks of metal. All the wooden parts had gone, disappeared. In December 1978, just before Anna was born (12/2/77) I jacked in work at I.N.A. Bearings on the outskirts of Llannelli and tried to make a go of rebuilding classic cars for a living.

I started off with two Frog-eyed Sprites but before I could do anything with them, I was offered a 1939 4/4 Morgan two seater for £500. A rebuilt Morgan would fetch in more money than Sprites, so I took it and for the next twelve months rebuilt it from the chassis up; new wood, sheet metal etc. That was the basic problem, the time taken to do the job, over 800 hours, working 30 hours a week. During that year we lived on Jenny's salary from I.C.L. and the dole money from me. Our thinking was that we were both working half time. Anyway, after one year I ended up with about £500 profit and a pattern for rebuilding FUA. Not wanting to go back to management, having enjoyed working with my hands, I persuaded the local government training centre to train me as a tool maker. What's a chap with an MSc wanting to do a toolmaking course for? Well as it turned out I wasn't the strangest trainee. On the course with me was a guy with a degree in French, Bart, short for Bartholomew. After finishing the training, nobody would employ me as a toolmaker; they didn't take me seriously, so I had to try for something else and of the three jobs I was offered, I took the one as a draftsman at Valenite-Modco.

Singapore 27/4/83 Wed 8-15pm

Missed another evening writing by going to the Motor Club meeting last night. Monday we learnt that the Mahood's, who arrived from the UK a week last Sunday were returning home. More than a surprise, a shock really. The one's least expected too, being young and without children. Apparently they told Rodney, Jenny's boss, on the Tuesday after they arrived in Singapore. Their plane home has just taken off. They wanted to stay until September but Rodney said, "On your Bike".

Talking of bikes, I'm now up to 2 km at 14 km/hr without stopping. Not bad, hey? My weight will rocket off the 8 1/2 stone mark soon. Jenny uses the bike more than I do, so perhaps we will be at the same weight soon. I don't know what weight she is starting from, she won't tell me. She has had a day off work today and she went down town for a window shop. Came back empty handed. After lunch we drove over to Bukit Timah for some trainers for Anna and to transfer some money to the UK. The bank was closed. We left it too late, 3-00pm. So we wandered around, had an ice cream which I am convinced had some of that dreadful durian in it and drove home.

Yesterday the weather broke. Since me and kids have been here there has been a heat wave, record temperatures and the longest dry spell in 40 years. Well, yesterday morning it started to rain and it has been doing so on an off ever since. We feel cold!! At 27 deg C. And taking a shower in cold water is murder. The heaven down pours make driving difficult as well. The road are so uneven, great puddles

form causing lots of spray from cars and lorries wheels. The roads surface is smooth, due to the strong sun light, which doesn't help I suppose. This morning at 5-30am it was so cold I went and turned the children's fans off and shut their bedroom doors. We have found by trial and error that the best way to sleep is with all the doors and windows open with three strategically placed fans to move the air through the rooms.

Great news for Polly yesterday. She can start the YWCA Child Centre on the 15th of next month. Jenny went to an interview last night at the place. It is just down the road opposite the market. Polly is half excited and half upset at the idea. She is very cautious with new people and situations, unlike Anna who jumps in with both feet and then looks where she is. Apparently, she will have to do Chinese classes. That should be interesting. She will be the only European there. The place is extremely organised with a time table for the various activities. Just the situation a child of her age needs, they getting so easily bored or distracted. In a way, if she settles there, I would probably prefer her to stay there till Christmas rather than move her to Dover Court in September.

The Car Club meeting was a bit of a wash out because of the rain. Oh, dear, what have I written? It was held up at a member's house in Chestnut Crescent. A Danish couple, who's recreation room was bigger than our flat. I was first there, as usual, and was in time to help his eldest daughter with her math homework. They had five children, mostly in their teens and they didn't seem too happy with the educational standards at the American School. Two of the children were transferring to Dover Court. After that brief conversation, the evening deteriorated fast. Only a few of the hard core members turned up and in my humble opinion they are the most egotistical lot of people have ever met. I came home vowing not to go to another meeting. I suppose the thing that pissed me off the most was their apparent misery. Shades of Simon and Garfunkel's, "Richard Cory". (The song tells the tale of a Richard Cory from the perspective of one of the men who works in his factory. The factory worker is envious of the advantages and enjoyments available to Cory, believing him (Cory) to be a satisfied man. The last verse of the song ends similarly to the Robinson poem: *Richard Cory went home last night and put a bullet through his head.* The chorus repeats again after this verse. This signifies that, despite Cory's unhappiness - explained by his suicide - the worker still "curses his [the worker's] poverty", and would still rather be Richard Cory.) They have so much, materially, and yet Fatima with all her rotten situation has more humour than they. I doubt that this sorrow is really remorse for accumulating more than their fair share of life's goodies. Sour grapes or deep seated socialist hackles rising? I wonder.

The rain has also brought out millions of temporarily winged insects, like termites. Once the beggars have found a place to start a new colony, they lose their wings, that is after copulating with any old queen they come across. Of course, most get incinerated on Singapore's millions of light bulbs, or receive fatal injuries inflicted by motor cars. I wonder how long before evolution favours blind termites.

I side tracked myself on Monday night. I was writing about FUA. The story continues.

In the autumn of '78, the Coopers and us three Whitworths, as we were then, moved up to Rhosymynydd. More about the Pen-cae-Du renovations and the family situation later, suffice to say now that by January 1981 we were near finished making the house habitable and could afford to buy a huge 15 foot x 26 foot precast concrete garage. And that is when, on the 18th to be exact, that FUA started it's rebuild.

Singapore 28/4/83 Thurs 8-00pm

Fatima wasn't in yesterday. She has been suffering bad headaches since she had an operation for a burst appendix about one year ago. Yesterday she went to visit her doctor in Geyland, which is over the other side of the city from us. The reason for that is her just having moved back to her mother's place from her sisters' in Changi. The doctor prescribed pain killer and I think antidepressants, since his diagnosis seems to be anxiety. Wrote letters to my friends at Valenite this morning. I have written to each of them except Carol and Wakers. They didn't write to me, so I will let them stew! Took Anna, Polly and Nicholas to the bird park this afternoon for a quick tear round. We actually saw the Kiwi in the dark house this trip: they have always been hiding or asleep before. Course, we had to take the tram round to the walk-in aviary and this time back again. We are all getting used to seeing the birds in the trees and shrubs now. You could walk through the place and only see pheasants and seagulls if you didn't look carefully. Shot off then to pick Jenny up from work and give Richard a lift home. Quite a jolly day really. Polly is getting into jigsaws at the moment. She managed quite a complicated picture of 25 pieces this morning and can now play picture dominoes without any prompting, well almost none. She has also started a sort of writing. Not exactly the Latin alphabet but definitely repeated shapes of a controlled size.

After the rain of Tuesday and Wednesday, the haze over the island has almost gone. We have had a beautiful blue sky and sunshine practically all day. But strangely it has not been as hot or humid.

To get back to FUA. My father's old firm of Ritherdons, sheet metal workers, supplied the new chassis for around £108. I had to put it together myself, although Teddy Hudson, an old friend of Dads, had marked it out on a jig table so it wasn't too difficult to assemble. For the next 18 months I hammered, sawed and bent for a total of 1500 hours. Most of the details I have now forgotten but some of the main 'events' I can still remember. Like getting the ash for the wooden frame. I had been on a trip to Leyland in Lancashire on Valenite business, trouble shooting again. I had the company estate car and so on the way home I stopped in a wood yard in Stafford and loaded the car up with £120 worth of sawn ash planks. Bad lad really but I had been looking for seasoned ash all over the country. This was too good an opportunity to be missed.

I made everything myself, apart from the upholstery which Jenny did. Not a brilliant job but one that gave me an enormous amount of satisfaction. Quite unequally by anything else I have done.

Singapore 29/4/83 Fri 2-40pm

Fatima is ironing and the children are playing around. Cleaned Anna's Cindy house this morning. The dust gets really thick here. I think it comes in on the breeze from the road at the back of our flat. Sent Mandy some prints of photographs we took while she and Dylan were here last month. Received a letter from Ruth saying she would probably be here on the 19th of July. I don't know what she thinks she is coming too. She asked if there is anything she could bring for us. Christ, you can buy more in this city than in London. I think she is in for a bit of a shock. Looking forward very much to her visit. She has been a friend for many years.

Another saga concerning FUA was the engine. I couldn't afford to do up the original Coventry Climax 1300 cc and in the first instance fitted a E93A Ford engine, which I bought with the first Morgan I rebuilt. I was lucky enough to find a Coventry Climax engine for that car in Cheltenham. What a performance it was trying to get the E93A running, made worst by the fact the car was ready to go. Not finished but ready enough to get through an MOT. The radiator was not the original either. I fitted an ordinary one from a J2 van to get the car on the road. After much toing and froing with no oil pressure, overheating, cracked head etc, I gave it up and persuaded Bob, our farming neighbour to give me the 100E engine from a dumped Ford Anglia he had in his yard. One Sunday evening he helped me lift it out. I can still see him standing with the engine cradled in his arms like a baby. Although he was short he was enormously strong. At least I now had an engine for which I could get spare parts relatively easily and which had a water pump on it to cool it. After an engine rebuild – re-ringing the pistons, machining out the big end to take bearing shells, pushing in new small ends etc – FUA was ready for her MOT. She passed first time despite having a speedo that didn't work. There was no drive gear for the speedo from the gearbox. Great joy. I used to car to get to work after that and really enjoyed posing, even in the rain. The car still doesn't have a hood.

Other drivers used to turn in amazement at the sight of me in sheep skin hat, hurtling along in dear old FUA. Driving in the rain was the worst. Somehow the wind used to carry it around the windscreen and drench my face, making it impossible to see through my glasses. Trouble was if I stopped, I got even wetter. I was just about getting myself know as a bit of a nutter. Perhaps as well we left Wales when we did.

I damaged the body too in those first few rides as the rear shock absorbers weren't tight enough which allowed the rear axle to clout the body a couple of time. Nothing that couldn't be repaired though. In the next village a chap called Malcom was rebuilding a 1947 Plus 4 and doing a perfect job of it too. Much better than my attempt. Anyway, in spite of that I took him for a ride and he was quite impressed, a little shaken, but impressed.

FUA is at present living with Mark in Bridgend. I had to wait for a window in the terrible weather we had over last Christmas and New Year. We had one beautifully clear crisp day in the first week of

January so I wrapped up the children in umpteen coats and covered them with blankets for the 40 mile trip over to Mark's place. I arranged to meet Mark about half way to transfer the children to his car because I thought it would be too cold for them to go the whole 40 miles. Of course, I was wrong. Polly fell asleep. That was the best and most unforgettable Morgan ride. Along the M4 at 50 mph, I think, wind whistling around my ears with a bright clear blue sky above.

At the change over half way, we met this old man who was trying to get to Neath hospital. All the busses were stopped because of the holiday, so Mark ran him back to Neath while I continued on to his house. David and Marcus were most put out that I beat them. By the time I had thawed out it was dark, so I treated them to a moon light ride around Bryna where they lived. It was like something out of the 1930's style of movie. Me with sheep skin hat and gloves, Gail with her woolly bob hat and scarf blowing out behind her in the wind. And, of course a full new moon to set the scene. Nostalgic my foot. Bloody good fun

Singapore 30/4/83 Sat 3-40pm

What promised to be a good old storm has fizzled out into a drizzle. It gets so hot and steamy just before the rain, it is a real relief when it comes. Not this time though.

Last night, early, we went down to Newton Circus for a Chinese meal, the first one we have had since Jenny threw up. Glad she has got over her aversion to the local grub, I've quite missed it. I took some night pictures of the hawker stalls and Jenny hung out of the window as we drove down Orchard Road to take some there. After the children were a-bed, hopped down to the food stalls to get beer and I'm sorry to report, fags. I really shouldn't. Felt lousy in the morning. Spoils the day.

Yesterday brought news of another shocking departure from C.C.S., Jenny's employer. A bloke who arrived about a week ago hadn't got the qualifications he claimed to have in the interview. It only came to light after immigration wanted to check his credentials. With two new arrivals and two departures, the score is still five at C.C.S. and the betting is now on who of the next batch will stay and who will go. Not funny really. Probably the most upsetting two weeks of their lives.

Quick whiz at the cleaning this morning. Had a visit from Doreen who has ricked her back and Daphne who is in the rudest of health. Little Nicki seems to be recovering from her fever. Nicholas has been here playing with Polly and Anna painting, trains, jigsaws and Anna bossily leading a game of schools. She is a right bossy beggar sometimes always directing the play. My constant corrections don't seem to have any effect. Polly's jigsaw making is really coming on. She can now do a 25 piece one. Nicolas had me going this morning. He convinced me he had fallen off his bike after the chain had broken. There's me, all concerned etc., examining the bike, then he tells me it's a pretend. Fooled again. These pretend games get quite involved. Last night on the way home from Newton Circus, Polly was interviewing Anna, pretend pop singer or something, with a pretend microphone.

Polly – “Do you have a brother?”

Anna – “No.”

Polly – “Of course you do!”

Presumably that last bit was off mic.

Singapore 1/5/83 Sun 1-20pm

It's doing it again. The clouds are threatening to drown the island but nothing is happening. The big black clouds are grumbling at us but passing on. Still, it is quite cool.

Jenny had a moving fit this morning. Moved the bedroom furniture around, ostensibly to get the make shift desk next to the power point ready for when we get the new computer. Three weeks she has promised. That was only an excuse though. Like the lemmings rushing to the sea, Jenny must move furniture about periodically.

Yesterday evening, we all tripped off down to Rangoon Road to find the BBC computer dealer but all the shops in the road were closed. We couldn't find it anyway but it was an interesting drive past seedy bars and sailors looking for something extra. After this failure we drove to Simlin Towers to price various bits of hardware. The place is packed with electronics shops selling chips and all the gear. But before I get into all of that, I need to read more about the theory and design myself something to make. My first thoughts are to make an interface board to run Polly's and Anna's Lego railway. That should just be about the right complexity.

After the Towers we drove over to feed the ducks and fish in the Botanic Gardens. The water level in the lake was very low making it is very crowded for the fish. During the walk about we had a look for the 200-year-old tree that has just been fitted with lightening conductors. We didn't find that either. T'was an evening of not finding anything.

She is at it again. Moving the kitchen about this time. Poor Fatima will wonder what happened here over the weekend.

Built Anna a cable car from Lego this morning. Nearest thing I get to being creative at the moment. We have got it strung between the railway layout and Anna's desk at the present. She is just about dextrous enough to play with something so flimsy. She is also developing a sense of humour. God help my sanity when they both start stringing me along.

We had a letter from Mum yesterday. Ruth is coming on the 19th June and leaving on the 6th July so hopefully Mum will come about the 7-8th July. It is going to be hell. We won't see Jenny for 7 days in the week never mind 5 ½ days. Good job we both love Ruth.

A second letter came from John Dorres, my only contact with the world of Morgans. He lives in Brighouse Yorkshire but I won't hold that against him. He is rebuilding an early +4 flat rad. We used to talk endlessly on the phone and I visited him a couple of times. The last time was just before we came out here. He had found a place to get the radiator cowl rolled, cheaply. Radiator firms specialising in that kind of work are charging anything between £600 and £900 for a complete rad rebuild. Doing it yourself piece-meal works out a lot cheaper but even so the rolling cost £84. Lovely job, though. The radiator really sets off the flat rad Morgan. FUA looked a bit grotesque with its unshielded J2 radiator. Unlike me, he is a time served craftsman and by the look of the work he has done on the Morgan, he must be very good at his job. I envy him his skill. The mahogany dash board he made was flawless. His doors fitted too!!

Singapore 2/5/83 Mon 2-15pm

The rest of yesterday was a lazy day. Watched television when there was anything interesting on and spent the rest of the time playing with the children or writing letters. Wrote to Sarah, Emma, and Julie. Felt restless and uncertain after writing to them. Must have been a pang of home sickness. I do miss Mandy and the children and our cottage and land. Found myself looking at the diary map of the British Ilse last night, seeing the places I know in my mind's eye. Skye, Darwen, Pontardawe. Sniff, sniff.

Down to earth with a bump this morning. Although it's a public holiday Jenny has had to go into work. These fellows have arrived from the UK to see if the standard of C.C.S. is up to HND. I reckon it is one big excuse for a working holiday myself. So I invited Daphne with little Nicki to come with me and the children to the bird Park. I'd promised our two that I would take them to the show that they love, this weekend. Well, I didn't reckon with an NTUC party as well. The place was jammed. Usually it is ultra-quiet. Not today. And we thought we were early at 10 am. We had to wait 1 ½ hours for the show so we had to toddle around till 11-45, drinks etc. The show itself was quite enjoyable with great eagles and hawks flying about your head and the usual cockatoos doing their talking bit. Got home about 1-00pm after calling at the shops for bread and stuff.

Anna has just been up to me asking when I will be taking them swimming. A one word answer from me has sent her away muttering "Daddy wants some peace." Out of the mouths, etc.

The shop keepers have got to know me now and I always get a smile and a greeting as I pass the shops and stalls, even if I don't go in. Today the surly fruit shop man was friendly. I think he must have a grudge against white skins.

Ideally must start writing about the past. For some reason I find it hard to start. I guess I cannot format it in my mind. I really need to start way back with my grandparents, but my knowledge of them is very sketchy in my memory. I'll start with Granddad Whitworth, Wilson, my father's father.

Singapore 4/5/83 Wed 11-40am

Monday evening, I went down to the hawker stalls for satay. I had promised the children satay for dinner but all the night stalls were closed. They love satay and it gets to a race to see who can eat the most. Polly even likes the chilli sauce that you dip them into.

Jenny came home very depressed and agitated about the way things were going with the vetting. Lots of awkward questions about course content and future development. Richard was very apprehensive as well. Yesterday had gone a lot better and Rodney Shaw told them their fears were unfounded. Thank goodness. David Watson, Rodney's number two, also rang last night and told Jenny that he had been told that they were doing alright. He was checking that Jenny had the sense to go in today. Bloody cheek.

Yesterday was a bit hectic. Daphne called round in the morning on the way back from the doctors. Both she and Nicki hadn't been feeling too good. Daphne has an ear infection and Nicki has an abnormally high temperature. In the afternoon on returning from the hairdressers' Doreen appeared. Such popularity. I am surrounded by women, this the story of my life.

One and a half hours at the hairdressers was a bit too much for Polly. She wouldn't have anything to do with the lady at first. Only a bribe-sweet afterwards got the necessary cooperation. We took books and things to read so the time passed quickly. Polly always looks so sweet and pretty that she melts everybody's hearts. Little devil though, you have to watch her. She is starting to tell like white lies. Felt too tired to do anything much more than watch television last night.

Bit more energetic this morning. Washed the car. Of course, just having finished it started to rain. Written to Mandy, should get a letter or two from her today, as the children return to Cheltenham the weekend before last.

3-25pm

Still no word from Mandy. We had a letter from Mum saying that she is changing slightly the arrival date as a distant relative is coming from New Zealand to stay with her in August. Tried to ring her this afternoon but got no answer. She is going to stay at cousin Lynn's place for a week starting tomorrow while Lynn goes off for a holiday in Malta. Mum is looking after the children. Lynn is recently divorced and I suspect finds the children a bit of a handful.

Rang Hoda, my prospective boss at Ngee Ann, to fix a meeting but he is on holiday until June first. That is a bit annoying as it gives me only two weeks to prepare for the lectures. Not knowing the subjects I am to teach doesn't help either, not to mention whether I have a job or not.

Anna came home from school a bit fractious today. I don't think things went too well this morning. We had a bit of a tantrum before settling down. Polly gave her Little Teddy to cuddle. Little Teddy is

Polly's answer to all the worlds troubles. She even gives it to Jenny and me if she thinks we are out of sorts.

It is raining really heavily this afternoon and the children are playing quite contentedly with an odd assortment of toys. Thunder and lightning don't bother them at all now, although some of the claps are very loud.

Strange we haven't heard from Mandy already. Mum's letter was posted last Friday. It could be that the children (Sarah and Emma) haven't had chance to post any letters they might have brought with them from Nigeria.

Singapore 5/4/83 Thur 4-30pm

Last night I nipped over to Faber Supermarket for steak and a bottle of wine. Treated us to a bottle of Guinness as well, so we both got a bit tipsy by bed time. Horrible hang over this morning.

Tidied our paperwork today. It's amazing how much junk goes with you whenever you move. Most of our belongings, furniture and personal stuff is at Mum's house. I hope it hasn't cluttered things up for her too much.

Still no word from Mandy. It's beginning to look a bit suspicious. Perhaps she has returned to England with the girls.

Anna has a friend from school round to play this afternoon. I was going to take them to Tiger Balm Gardens but the clouds looked so black I decided against it. Hasn't rained though. Leah is six going on seven but they seem to be playing quite happily. Polly is joining in as well, so they must be being tolerant although I suspect that Anna and Leah don't know each other that well yet.

Very hot and sticky today. With that and the lethargy from last night's booze I feel very sluggish today. Jenny was a bit groggy this morning but the news of the BTECH approval for the H.N.D. must have bucked her up. No doubt she and her colleagues will be out calibrating sometime next week.

Omelette and chips for tea. Cheese omelette I think.

Singapore 7/5/83 Sat 11-30 am

Yesterday was a pretty routine day. Up at 7-00am to shower, make breakfast, get the children ready to go to school. Jenny usually gets up first as I have great difficulty surfacing in the morning. I only really feel human about 10'ish. My blackest thoughts I think on walking up.

1-40pm

Jenny on the other hand bounds out of bed, dives in the shower, curtains open, windows open and ready to go. We switch attitudes in the evening. She is ready for bed by 10-00pm if not already asleep on the sofa. I'm usually wide awake at that time.

So, I take Anna to school and Jenny to work leaving the house about 7-40. The traffic is very bad at this time in the morning and although I have tried numerous routes, the total round trip still takes on average 40 minutes. On returning home I fix myself a cup of coffee and read the newspaper I've picked up on the way home. Fatima arrives just after nine and starts in on the clothes washing and the rest of the flat. The morning is spent doing odd jobs like cleaning the windows or the car, etc, and most mornings I walk with Polly down to the market for fresh food. Polly usually gets a small sweet out of me and lots of attention from the shopkeepers and stall holders. She is just about learning to enjoy the attention, particularly at Keni's, the general grocer. Another morning event is the arrival or worst, the non-arrival of the post, although lately the postman has been arriving later and later.

At 12-40 Polly and I leave to pick up Anna from school. Although the journey only takes from 5 to 10 minutes we have to leave in time to get into the school grounds before our Indian friend shuts the school gates. Anna appears about 12-55 and we arrive home about 1-05. Next phase is diner, which depending on what we intend to do in the afternoon is either a snack of sandwiches or cooked fish finger etc. Whichever we don't have at diner we have at tea. My repertoire of snacks and diners is not very extensive but it is growing. Spaghetti bolognaise, omelettes, chips with everything.

Yesterday we went to Tiger Balm again and I made the mistake of buying both Polly and Anna an iced lolly. Both had nagged me for one and I gave in, fool! Threw them away in the end. Fatima has gone to visit her sister in Changi and we helped her part of the way to Tiger Balm. Her sister lives in the old style kampong type style village. It might be worth a visit sometime.

It was hot in the gardens and after an hour we came home for a shower and to cool off before picking Jenny up at 5-00. If we haven't prearranged a time. Jenny usually rings me in the afternoon for a chat and see if there has been any post. For tea we nipped down the hawker centre for satay, fried rice and prata. That was about 6-00. Showers for the children followed by a bit of television and bed.

Our evenings are usually taken up by chatting, watching the tele, writing letters or this diary. Bed usually at 10-15. Moves are afoot to counter the rather wasteful use of an evening but unfortunately these cost money and we have a bit of a cash flow problem at the moment. This won't be resolved until I start work in June

We picked up the photographs that I took during night trips into the city. I'm quite pleased with the results. They were taken on slide type film with an ASA of 200. I'm not keen on slides that is Jenny's idea. I much prefer prints. Unfortunately for me taking prints off slides coast 4x that of proper colour prints. Don't like the results either. I'll have to get my own camera.

Lazy day today, trying to keep the children cool so that they will stay awake tonight. On the acceptance of C.C.S.'s course for HND standard, Rodney has invited all his staff and families round for drinks tonight between 5 and 7. We were going over to see Peter Creamer and some people he knows with young children but we have put that off until tomorrow. Peter is ringing me tonight to firm up on a time. He also told me today that all the ME staff are on holiday till the 1st June, he being the only one around at the moment.

Jenny has taken Polly out food shopping. Anna is watching television and I'm about to have a shower. I wish those guys across the road with that percussion hammer drill would take a hike. They've been at it all week and it's really getting to me. God knows why they are demolishing half the house.

Singapore 8/4/83 Sun 11-10am

Good time was had by all last night. A marvellous exercise in self-congratulation. I met the new members of C.C.S. for the first time with their families. There are some older children amongst this batch of new comers. Two possible candidates for early departures as well. Both men without their families. Also one chap with a very energetic wife. Why don't I feel the urge to go out and make waves? Perhaps I'm passed it. I don't think I am lazy, done too much in the past to think that. Perhaps its insecurity. The children enjoyed themselves, lots of crisps and biscuits, etc. I gave Daphne and Richard a lift home, so I wasn't drinking but I made up for that when we got back.

Richard brought their cine camera down and we watched clips of Nicki and Penang for the rest of the evening. The party was only till 7. I tripped down to the hawker centre yet again for beer. The night developed into a discussion about education, other C.C.S. staff, where C.C.S. was going or not going and what the hell are we doing here, etc. There is a terrible fascination about contemplating the motives and future actions of other expats. Gossip basically. Straight out of Coronation Street.

Peter Creamer rang last night and we are off to see him this afternoon. He is living up Sarangoon Rd. on the other side of town. For some reason, both Jenny and I thought he was living in Jurong.

Singapore 9/5/83 Mon 8-00pm

Yesterday afternoon we spent round at Peter's place up Sarangoon Rd. Very nice place. Quiet. Unfortunately, the weather let us down and we had to dive into Bukit Tima Plaza to escape the worst of a thunder storm on the way there. It continued to rain until we came home, although a game attempt at swimming was made by all, in the rain. Peter's neighbours are from Lincoln/Norwich (take you pick) have two young children three and one years. They have only been here two weeks and are still living out of suitcases. We are sending some toys over for the three-year-old Christian tomorrow. Anna and Polly behaved terribly and have been given a stiff lecture today about how to behave in other people's houses. Glum faces looking up at me. I threatened physical violence if it happens again.

They, Peter's neighbours, still hadn't adjusted to the climate. I reckon it takes at least six weeks. I feel completely different now to when I first arrived. Difficult to explain it or what 'it' is but I do. The children are certainly behaving differently. Cocky little beggars.

Started Anna off on two new tacks this weekend. First a dairy of her own. Her writing is a bit shaky but it will be great to see how it develops. Will also help her to think something though. The second is stamp collecting. She is ready for a hobby, something to spend her money on other than sweets. Bought her a small collection book and a packet of assorted stamps. I really hope I can keep her interest up in both of them. She has only been writing for about two months so we are in at the beginning. Tomorrow I will have to get Polly a stamp album as well. She didn't think much of Anna having one and not her.

There has been a hell of a thunder storm today. The children laugh at the lightening and the thunder, some of them made me very jumpy. It seems to be on top of you sometimes, flash and clap together. We eventually received mail from Mandy. It turns out that the girls went back to Cheltenham a week late due to illness. Her letters are OK content wise but a bit flat feeling wise. Perhaps it is just the effect of the class of youngsters she has started that is draining her. Don't know.

Fatima enjoyed her weekend over in Changi. She cleaned up after me this morning which I sent on my hands and knees scrapping the dried cement off the tiles in the bathroom and kitchen. How anyone can pay £130,000 for a flat like this and not insist on the finish being perfect is beyond me. And yet there is dried cement and paint on the floor and wall tiles, not to mention the toilet and hand basin. The place looks permanently dirty. Today is the second time I have attracted it. I'll keep at it for the rest of the week.

Jenny has had a quote from the computer agents for the BBC. For a printer, twin floppies, interface and microprocessor model "B" \$3,700 Sing which is near enough what we would paid for the same stuff in the UK but the loan is cheaper. She is off tonight to a friend's house, a strange woman and her teenage son whom Jenny met before I came. The son is into the BBC and he apparently has all the gear. Now that we are spending so much on a system Jenny is predictably in a quandary as to whether this is the right thing to buy or not. For me, what was true nine months ago is still valid.

Well since I am on my own, I might as well make a start on the past. I've changed my mind since I last referred to doing so. I'm going to start with me and my earliest recollections. That was my brother, Mark. Mum had him at home in the living room. Here is a divergence of fact. Mum says on a bed, I say on the dining table. The former seems more likely. I was looked after by this strange nurse who kept taking me out for walks down the back streets. There is, or was, a railway at the back of the house and a bridge which you could see from the kitchen window. She took me for walk under it. I was taken in to see Mum once or twice when I got too insistent, I suppose. The last time I remember I saw Mark for the first time. Mum was lying on her back with Mark under her legs which were bent up.

That experience must have been pretty traumatic because I don't really remember anything as clearly as that until I think the time I left home to go to University at 18.

Most of the other early memories are of holidays or major family events. I started at St. Johns' Primary School when 5 years old. I can recall wanting to go very much. The school was just visible from the front room window, again over another railway bridge. I used to watch the children coming home for dinner and at night very envious. Of course when I started, I hated it. Screaming fits in the morning, the lot. Especially after school holidays.

The chronology of events I'm going to write about over the next however long, will be jumbled but will cover the time to leaving primary school at 11 years old. Looking back, we were privileged to have a good set of teachers matched with a good set of pupils. I say the later because I was born in 1946, a bumper year for babies. World War II finished the previous year, say no more. So with this "bulge" as it was called came a greater absolute number of bright kids. Same proportion but a greater number. As primary schools favoured the brightest with streaming, the effect was catalytic. This phenomenon continued throughout my education right up until university. In my graduation year there was the largest ever proportion of firsts awarded than ever before. In fact, arguments raged about how standards were equated year to year as some of those with 2:1 class degrees might well have got firsts in a normal year. I remember chemical engineering awarded 13 first class degrees and created a storm. But this is jumping ahead.

The primary school building ought to have been condemned. It was built in the mid-1800s and your first impression on walking up the wide front steps and through the heavy wooden front door was that it was a work house. The room were massive with bare wooden planked floors and out of sight ceilings. The upstairs was one vast room with a full stage at one end. For classes the place was divided by great wooden and glass partitions that unfolded across the space from wall to wall. Space was so short that the stage itself was a class room. In that particular room I first learnt real-writing. It must have been a lot neater than it is now as mine was put up on the wall as the best in class. How things change.

Singapore 12/5/83 Thurs 3-40pm

Today is different. We are at the Mitsubishi swimming pool at Jurong. Well I am with Anna, Polly and Nicholas. Nicholas's mum couldn't come because she had to get her lord and master his tea. Why he couldn't wait for his tea is beyond me. Mind you Jenny makes a fuss or did if I don't measure up. You have to be careful.

Polly is playing in the children's pool and is actually talking to another little girl. This is something new. Polly sociable. Nicholas and Anna have been in the pool with the swirling water which is great fun. The water travels around a circular channel at about walking pace making swimming in the current

flow really fast. Mainly expats here this afternoon. Funny the Europeans preoccupation with hot, baking sun and blue water. Can't understand it myself, sat here steaming and sweating, being rained on by fine dust from the sand blaster cleaning the water slide. Seriously though if I didn't have to keep one eye on those three little devils, I could imagine it being very relaxing and enjoyable.

The children's water slide has just reopened and all three of them are at it. Noise seems to follow me about. The air compressors for the sand blasters are rather loud. Whatever happened to the sound of sheep, cows and the odd fox barking?

Tuesday Jenny finished early, 2-00pm but was too tired to do anything. That's three days ago so I don't remember too well.

Wednesday was a very busy day. In the morning I went down to the computer exhibition at the world Trade Centre. C.C.S. had put up a stand there and Jenny was to man it in the afternoon. Couldn't find her at first as she had me going to the wrong exhibition.

8-50pm

There were two exhibitions, Informatics '83 and Applications '83. When we did find each other we wandered around the two of them. They were mainly business orientated but we did find the odd micro we could afford and then we embarrassed a poor salesman by arguing the pros and cons of his Commodore '64 against the BBC. All to do with its graphics capability. Getting back to pick Anna up from school was a bit of a problem, it was raining like brazes. But Singapore organisation came to the rescue with umbrellas between the hall and car park.

After lunch I took Anna over to her new friend Leah's house for the afternoon and tea, Polly and I went up to the Bird Park, the rain having stopped. The birds had just been fed in the aviary and were flying about like crazy. Polly was fascinated by the bright colours and was pointing the ground birds to me in the bushes. She could obviously see them better being close to the ground. She also noticed the bird boxes in the trees and jumped to the fact that they were bird houses.

Last night Jenny and I went down to Newton Circus for the old Chinese nosh. We took Daphne and Richard and left Fatima to baby sit Anna and Polly. A very enjoyable evening was had by all.

I took Polly with me today to pick Anna up from School. As we were walking passed one to the rooms Polly said "And that's the library." A bit taken aback asked her how she knew that, "It's full of books". Silly me. We have to wait for Anna to appear and as we stood there Polly had her arm around my leg pulling the hairs on my calf, quite absent mindedly. Touching moment.

After lunch Polly, Anna and Nicholas to the pool at Jurong. Now it is time for beer, television and contemplate Jenny's tax problem.

Singapore 14/5/83 Sat 11-00am

Bit of excitement this morning. Two young lads were found peeping in at Doreen's bedroom window. She chased them off and got the security men who pursued them into the market where they lost the pair of them. What with that and her ants, poor Doreen was in a bit of a state. Tried to calm her down with a cup of coffee. She spent most of yesterday afternoon and evening with us. I think she is a bit depressed. I'll take her out sometime next week as she seems to be getting into a 'can't be bothered' syndrome.

Yesterday, Nicholas and little Ming from next door came round to play. Ming has finally got the idea that it isn't too bad here, although most of the time we don't know what she wants as she doesn't speak any English. They all play quite happily though.

I'm tightening up on the children's use of money. They are each to have three dollars a week to spend on whatever they like. After it is gone, nothing. It's a bit hard and wearing on the old voice box but it is going to be the only way to instil money sense into them. Wearing on shopkeepers too as they take ages to count it out.

We got a lovely letter from Sarah today. She is writing more and longer letters. Anna also received one from Anne, her friend from Emanuels to which she has replied. They all seem so far away and growing up outside our knowledge.

Sent a completed application form into Singapore Polytechnic today, hoping really that I don't need to. Although it is opposite Anna's school and could work out more convenient.

After picking Jenny up from work we all went down to the city look for and price colour monitors for the computer we are about to buy. Not much different from the one we had been quoted from Computer Comp. We decided to try and find out how to convert an ordinary colour TV to a monitor. The picture on a monitor is streets ahead in quality compare with a TV. Nobody in any of the shops had a clue so we are now looking for an electronics whiz to put us on the right track. I'm really looking forward to getting the machine. It'll go part way to replacing the old Morgan. I don't think so!!

11-20

Jenny will be home in a couple of minutes. I'll have to think about lunch.

Singapore 15/5/83 Sun 10-25am

Saturday afternoon we first had a false start and then made it to the Mitsuhisu swimming pool. First attempt staled by rain. On the way we called at Dover Road Swimming Pool but it turns out to be a Civil Service club pool, the club that Jenny has been trying to join for the past two months. Visited Bukit

Tima Plaza to pick up Jenny's glasses. She took the new ones she bought last week back because the enamel was peeling off. The shop replaced them with a gold framed pair.

So on to the swimming pool. We had forgotten to pack Polly's arm bands but after a bit of fuss and tears she was quite happy to go in without them. There are four different sorts of pool all on the same site. The water slide, the wave pool, the circulating water pool and a children's pool with a small water slide. Yesterday they spent most of the time in the wave pool. As usual I sat on the side reading out of the sun. I can't go into the water yet as I still have this abscess on my backside. It started last November but was only diagnosed as an abscess in January. Threats of being hospitalised and things like that. But it appeared then to be shrinking fast so I decided to come here regardless. And it is still shrinking. Doesn't leak nearly as much as it did. Lovely thing to write about but I don't think I'll forget it. Damned thing.

Jenny is off to man this exhibition for C.C.S. Me and the children are going down to a British Association, "It's a knockout" shindig this afternoon and Jenny will join us there about 3-15. She has just realised that she has to be there at 12 noon and not 1-00 as she previously thought. Flat panic. Chicken half cooked etc. Sunday morning, she keeps her hand in on the domestic scene. Makes a show of washing, cleaning and cooking.

Singapore 18/5/83 Wed 8-40pm

The first three days have been a bit fraught. Monday morning, I visited Mr. Dieu, the Polytechnics Head of Personnel and it was evident that I would not be given part-time work at the Poly. My visit was prompted by a letter from Dieu on Saturday morning written in not a friendly fashion. If I took fulltime, there's no problem. After two days of deliberation, we decided to opt for full-time employment and see if it works out.

The main reason for the decision going that way were the long term ramifications of not working. Not working for two or three years does not look good to a prospective employer. The argument goes between short term problems and the effect on the children of us both working on the one hand and the long term advantages on the other. More money makes for a better life and education, more travel and experiences for the children. In the short term Polly is a bit young at three and a half to be left with a sitter. In another year we wouldn't be bothered. The children will be left on some days till 5 pm. Then there are the holidays. They don't coincide with the Polytechnic's holidays, wouldn't you believe. We are asking Mum to come out for the long summer holiday next year. I think she'll do it. After much deliberation, will Fatima cope, how flexible is work going to be, after all that and weighing up the pros and cons, I rang last night at 5 o'clock to say that I could work full time. Straight away the answer was "Yes, well, I'll get your work permit sorted out". I definitely get the impression of being backed into a corner.

Professionals don't work part-time in Singapore. Besides that, the sphere of opportunities for jobs for me is restricted to education because of the government's policy of Singapore jobs for Singaporeans. Education, however, employ expats. All educational establishments are expanding at a great rate of knots. Singapore Polytechnic would only consider me for part-time evening work. And Atlantic College didn't want to know because I hadn't taught enough. Nanyang Technical College is physically too far away and would create as many problems as working full time at Ngee Ann. On top of all that I have only a visitor's permit to stay here till Christmas. Anyway, for better or worse the decision is made.

Sunday afternoon took the children down to "it' a knockout" competition run by the Women of the British Association. It was really hot and a few cases of heat exhaustion were rushed to hospital. The games were a great success with beer, fish and chips, beer and hotdogs. Ian Hall of Look North was the compare, specially flown in by the BA for the occasion. The teams were E, I S and W and the rivalry was really sharp. Arguments and dissentions galore. Jenny joined us at 3-20 straight from the exhibition.

Polly had us smiling. When we first arrived at the fields gates, we were turned away because the car park was full. So we drove off to find a spare bit of road somewhere. A couple of attempts ended up in dead ends. Polly didn't quite get hold of this and insisted that the were dead hens.

Polly started nursery on Monday morning. Both on being left and picked up she cried. Tuesday she cried on being left but didn't seem to want to come home for dinner. Wednesday was the same. One poor little Japanese boy there has been standing at the door clutching his bag crying without tears each day this week when I picked up Polly. Polly seems to be settled and gaining confidence by the day. Perhaps as well if I'm working full-time. Fatima was off Monday. Her cousin died early that morning and according to Muslin law he had to be buried the same day. Tuesday was a none day apart from the decision taken.

Today has been more interesting. Jenny has some Wednesdays off as she has today. This morning she attached the garden and I cleaned the car. A carpet out job. A really good clean. After that we went over to Bukit Tima to put me on the current account.

This afternoon after picking up the girls, we drive over to the East Coast Park to have a picnic. This despite the ugly looking thunder clouds. We sat on the sea shore in a beautiful cool breeze eating our butties and watching the ships anchored off shore. Because the clouds threatened to drown us we took off to the airport to watch the planes and get some super ice cream. The ice cream parlour looks out over the runway and with a plane coming or going every five minutes, it is very entertaining. Polly and Ann had sculpted ice creams in the shape of Big Bird, a character off Sesame Street, a children's programme on the TV. Of course, Polly knocked over her glass of water and dropped spoons on the floor but the waiters and waitresses were great and very taken with Polly. They thought she was very sweet. Little do they know.

Singapore 19/5/83 Thurs 11-30am

Polly went to school without any tears this morning, for the first time. Off she trotted bag in hand, quite happy to wave us off. She is gaining in confidence again after being off school for the past four months and she is becoming more extravert. We had to brake hard yesterday while driving out to the east coast and as quick as a flash she came back "It's OK, I'm hanging on!"

Took Anna's watch to be repairing this morning. In the market there is a man with a watch repair stall, old fashioned watches with springs. A finger had come loose when Anna dropped the watch at the weekend. The man put it back on free of charge. Nice chap. I am making the most of these last few days of peace before I start work. Pottering about etc..

We had a letter from Peter this morning dated 29/4/83. His news was superseded by letters we had received since then but it was great to hear from him for a change. No doubt the children will fight over who has the stamp. Wouldn't you know it, after cleaning the car last night we had a terrific thunder storm that woke Anna up. Not Polly. She slept through some of the loudest thunder we have had. Although she did wake Jenny this morning at 5-30 because she had a tummy ache. Anna didn't seem too tired this morning although she didn't get to bed till 9-30'ish. I think she is ready to stay up a bit later in the evenings now. They both go to bed about 7-30 at the moment. I think I will try 8-00 o'clock soon for them both. Going to school doesn't have any effect tired-wise on Polly at all. Still bubbles all day. If they can cope with that it means that we can have more contact with them when I start work.

Had letters earlier in the week from Keith and Lawrence, blokes I used to work with at Valenite. Seems the hard times could be over as they are back on a full working week and recruiting in the machine shop again. Stop, go isn't in it. It's funny to think of them all sat behind they drawing boards, nothing changed. Well, not quite, but things do change a lot quicker when you work abroad. They are bound to when you are on fixed termed contracts. It's only another 18 months and we will have to make a decision as to whether we stay here or move on. Do we go home or do we take another contract here or another country? Jenny and I both agree where we would like to live if we went home. The South Midlands, round Evesham or Pershore preferably. It is no accident that those places are near Malvern and the Morgan factory. Our interest stems from the time we had a 20-foot boat on the River Avon. We lived with Pete and Mandy in those days and could afford such luxuries. It's a very beautiful place with not too much rain. If working fulltime for both of us works out, then jobs in technical colleges become feasible for both of us. And we wouldn't have holiday clashes with the children either. Still, we might decide to go on the Australia or New Zealand.

The next couple of months will decide what we do I think, i.e. is it possible for us both to work full time. If it doesn't, it won't be for the want of trying. The monetary incentives are great too. With both of us working, we stand to leave Singapore after three years with £30,000. (*We actually left with £85,000*).

When you consider that we have sold our small holding with 7 acres of land for £26,000 it is not to be sniffed at. Out of that £26,000 only £12,000 was ours after we had paid off the mortgage, etc. and it has taken us 10 years to accumulate that amount of capital. Since Jenny's father left her £8,000 of it, in real terms we have been standing still if not going backwards.

Still life is like that, one big decision making game.

Singapore 22/5/83 Sun 8-10pm

Thursday afternoon I took Anna and Polly to the bird park. We were meant to take Leah but she has been ill all week with bronchitis or some such chest infection. We took the binoculars and sat under the falls for quite some time watching the birds. With keep going to the park the children are noticing more and more about the birds and what they do, as well as how differently they behave. Anna had the glasses most of the time and it was really funny to see her crouched peering at the birds in the undergrowth. After picking Jenny up from work we rounded off the day with satay and fried rice from the hawker centre: lovely.

Friday was a pretty ordinary day. Had a lot of mail, mostly from the Coopers, Sarah, Emma and Mandy. Mandy is still in the doldrums about everything. Girls in boarding school etc. She is even talking of sending Dylan at Christmas and he is only 8. Our views on things have certainly turned arse over tit in the last year. Got a letter from Mum too. The distant relative that is causing the delay in her coming out to us in August, is calling in Singapore for two nights (25-27 June) on her way to Europe. And she would like to meet us. I got quite excited at the prospect and dashed a letter off to her in New Zealand.

Her name is Vicki Cartwright and she is descended down the line of Mum's uncle who emigrated to NZ years and years ago. She has asked Mum to suss out all the graves and things about her great grandparents etc. so that she can visit them whilst staying with Mum. I can't explain why I find it so interesting. Blood thicker than water? I rang Mum on Friday night to see if she is coming as soon as possible and she is, on the 25/8/83. She is decorating the kitchen at the moment would you believe.

Saturday morning Jenny went to work and I scurried around cleaning up a bit and tripping down to the market for the fresh food shopping. Following back with Jenny at lunch time was Ms. Gillmor, a rather whimsical academic woman newly arrived from the good old UK. She has been married six weeks and has left her hubby back home with the prospect of him following in 3 months. We invited her to return for the BBQ after her already arranged flat hunting. She didn't appear even though she said she would. Funny young woman. She wasn't even red, never mind tanned. Guess she had been living in air-con for the last two weeks.

Peter, Andrew, Christen Kirsti and young Christopher arrived about 3-45 for the BBQ. Andrew had pick up their new yellow Suzuki 800 on Friday night. He is quite pleased by it. They are very good company and Peter in particular is a hell of a case. He is almost as stroppy as Mottershead. The BBQ was a great success, chicken drumsticks, homemade beef burghers and salad. Lovely. They have invited us round to their place on Wednesday for Kirsti's birthday party.

Today was a great day. We all left at about 9 am for Seletor Airbase where the MSVCR was having a trail. Boy was it hot. We all caught the sun. But the flying club house came to the rescue with plenty of cool drinks.

Singapore 24/5/83 Tues 11-25am

The Seletor trail was for vintage and veteran cars with the odd classic car. B. Wilson's Morgan was doing its stuff, very well and he has probably won his class. The cars included a Lagonda, TR4, Austin 7's, and Sunbeam Alpines. The usual crowd were there, around 45-50 people all told. The lunch was put on for us in the club house, a Chinese buffet which went down very well. The children enjoyed it if only for the swings and slides. They are a bit young yet to appreciate the beauty of old cars. Starting the indoctrination young.

The flying club has been operating since the 1920s and has a visitor's book going back to the early 1950s. Some of the entries are fascinating and give you a sense of the history of the club and place. The whole thing heightens your sense of being. The old colonial days when Singapore had more charisma than it has now. It still lives on in isolated pockets and in some of the older people.

Yesterday we got confirmation of my appointment at the Polytechnic. My salary will be \$3355 per month which brings our total earnings for the year to £40,000. This 3.5x what we earned last year in the UK. After a three term, because of the way the Central Provident Fund (CPF) works we will be able to go back home with £46,000. It all seems quite unbelievable and of course is conditional on the children being OK with us both working full time. But the long term benefits are obvious.

The post yesterday brought a letter from Swansea University with the address of Tan Lee who was a student we meet there in 1979. He and Kim who he has now married were doing an MSc project with Valenite at the time. We had them both up to our cottage for tea once just before they left for home. Not being able to trace a telephone number for the address, I took Anna and Polly out to look for them yesterday. We found the address OK but no Lee, so we left messages and our telephone number. Last night Lee phoned and we have arranged to meet today. He works out in Jurong and is calling in on his way home, I think. He must have had a bit of shock to hear from us. He did say at our last meeting "If ever you are in Singapore etc...." and we have.

This morning I went round to Tanglin School with Lear's mum. We are not satisfied with Dover Court's academic standard and are seriously thinking of moving Anna and sending Polly there when she is old enough. It's always a difficult decision to make schooling. You really only get one shot at it. They do have a long waiting list, about 6 months, so neither of them would go until next year and Polly definitely not until Sept 1984. First impressions are favourable and I have arranged to talk to one of the teachers about the academic side of the school.

4-00pm

Last night we all trotted down to the hawker centre for our evening nosh. Chinese of course. The centre has Malay, Indian and Chinese stalls. It's very pleasant to sit outside eating, particularly in the early evening. After eating we walked to the play area between the HDB flats and while the children played Jenny and I listened to the song birds. Song birds are a big hobby here. In the early evening the flats residents bring the cages down to a special area where they can be hung up next to one another. Very relaxing.

Leah is round to play with Anna this afternoon and the play swings from near riot to silent contemplation. Not to mention arguments. Anna is too bossy, I suspect.

Singapore 25/5/83 Wed 9-25am

Lee appeared last night in the middle of chaos. I had just fed Leah, Anna, Polly and Nicholas when Daphne arrived with Nicki, hot from netball. Into all this steps poor Lee. He hasn't changed a bit, still looking for new challenges. Been around a bit too since we last met, Japan, the States. Seems to work enormously long hours as a project engineer. Both he and Kim work, leaving their daughter with his brother's wife. They are all coming round on Friday afternoon for tea. At last we have made contact with a true Singaporean.

We got talking about work ethic here and how pressurised it seems to be. Lee recalled that it took him 6 months to adjust back into it after leaving Wales. That I can believe. Not only work but the social aspects of living in the two places takes some getting used to.

In half an hour I am off down into the city for a medical examination needed by Ngee Ann. Shouldn't be any problem, touch wood. After that I will take the contract into Dieu tomorrow and get mine and Fatima's work permits sorted out. So much paper work and red tape.

Singapore 26/5/83 Thurs 8-50am

Yesterdays birthday party for Kirsti was a great success. The children disappeared off to play and we didn't see them again until it was time to go home. Andrew's neighbours joined us for drinks including a new lecturer to the ME department, I think his name is Lin. He has been in Perth for the last few

years and came originally from Sri Lanka. Another lecturer from EE department was also there, a right prune. He has been at the Poly 18 months and is a stereotype prat. A bit hard perhaps but he has such a negative personality, as soon as he arrived the conversation dropped flat. Unfortunately you tend to get more of his type teaching than anywhere else. A personality defect that doesn't allow them to fit in with ordinary people and I guess they gravitate to jobs that do not require a lot of colleague contact. The students don't count, they get ignored. He actually said he didn't mind the bigger classes that were coming this year as that would mean even less student contact. He didn't even see the benefit of tutorial systems. Such arrogance born of insecurity is what gives the educational establishment its terrible image of childishness. Why am I becoming part of it? I think minimal contact with prats like that will be the order of the day and maximum contact with the students.

The medical went ok. They told me I was still alive. The practice of doctors was called Gethin-Jones and Partners Ltd, how Welsh can you get. The surgery is on the 4th floor of Specialist house and was pretty full when I got there. In fact, it is more like a mini hospital because they have laboratories and, X-ray facilities actually on the premises. Since all these places are privately run there must be money to be made out of sickness. Very well organised, of course, with about seven doctors attending the sick from their individual offices. But like a production line. Pee in this bottle, go sit down, come this way, go get your chest X-rayed. The actual physical examination took three minutes, still worked to my advantage. They missed all the problems I know I have.

This morning the rain is terrible. Got back to the flat after taking the family to their various day centres to find a flood in the living room. I forgot to shut the French windows. Hope Fatima has the sense to wait till the worst is over before setting off for our place. And it feels so cold, I feel very reluctant to go have a shower. Brrr. It must be all of 25 deg C.

Singapore 29/5/83 Sun 11-10am

If I leave the writing of this journal for a couple of days, I really have to scratch my memory to recall the past day's events. Must be old age.

Thursday I took Anna, Polly and Nicholas down town to the World Lego Exhibition being shown at the Plaza Metro. Quite spectacular with large models made of Lego bricks. There was a giant spaceship, 747 jet airliner, cars, trains, animals etc. The children were wide eyed. In the middle of the exhibits were child sized tables with Lego for the kids to play with. Anna and Polly made buildings of one kind or another and Nicolas made a kind of spider. Far outshone the local children. Unfair really as ours are quite expert in spite of their early years. A Chinese lady at next to Polly couldn't believe she was only three. The return journey was long and tortuous, through heavy traffic. I had the children each read a story. Anna's reading is very good and flowing, she is improving in leaps and bounds. Can't get her interested in her dairy though. Her writing frustrates her at the moment. Perhaps went she can do it

without thinking. After the stories we played "I spy with my little eye". I remember last time I tried to play the game with Anna, it was chaotic.

"I spy with my little eye something beginning with 'C'"

"Clock"

"No. Window!"

And so it went on. Not this time though. Got them all in 2 or 3 goes.

Friday was a public holiday so everybody was at home. Jenny took the children swimming after lunch and arrived back just before Lee and Kim got here with their little girl, Anthea. We all spent the rest of the afternoon chatting about this and that. Lees' conditions of work are horrendous. 5 ½ days a week, 48 hours/week and only 8 days holiday/year. When the rest of the industrialised nations are giving their workers more and more free time, this society still imposes Victorian working conditions on its work force. I read in the Straits Times yesterday in an article about work organisation in a West Germany company in which it was possible for the employees to take 3 months' holidays/year without loss of earnings. At this moment in time West Germany is one of the most prosperous nations on Earth, so such attitudes to work must be productive. West Germany has labour laws which make it illegal to work more than 173 hours/month.

Friday evening saw us all down the hawker centre where Lee ordered the food. What a difference!! He got us a steam boat, which is bowl of water heated by a gas burner stood in the centre of the round table. Into this you put various meats, fish and shell fish to cook. The meats etc., come raw on a plate and you tip it to cook as you wish. In addition to this he ordered us some beef and ginger, crayfish, fried prawns and bowls of rice. It rates as one of the best Chinese meals I have ever had. The whole lot only came to \$40. Jenny is not too keen on steam boat so I guess I will have to find someone else to take with me. The soup left at the end, once you have fished out all the cooked meats is delicious.

Lee and Kim had to leave early, 'cause they were both working on Saturday morning. They must be under a lot of pressure, both financial and social to live and work as they do. Their little girl has to stay with Kim's sister all week, only seeing her proper parents at the weekends.

Friday night had a couple of beers and watched our favourite TV series of the moment, Remington Steele, a detective soap. Jenny likes/fancies Steele. Anyway Saturday morning I resolved not to drink alcohol again. It always gives me a bad head in the morning and ruins the whole bloody day. Habits are hard to kick. Jenny threw my cigarettes down the rubbish shoot. Wouldn't say she is over bearing but she is over bearing. Saturday morning, we had a row as well. She came home from work earlier than expected, expecting to dash off out somewhere or other. Only two days ago she was complaining about the hectic week we were having and how she would like a rest. Women! Fickle! Of course I

wasn't ready. Not done the ironing you see. I like to take things easy and enjoy the present, not anticipate the future.

So we did go out, swimming to Mits-a-what's gardens. The water slide is repainted and everything looks sparkling new. There was a pop group playing and lots of people. I sat on my problem arse reading *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie. Jenny the children went round and round the swirling pool in dingy, falling in and out of it with glee. We had lunch from the hawker place, fried mee which was not too bad. There I sat, steaming, longingly looking at the water.

Saturday evening was David's son's birthday party. They live by the Botanic Gardens so we gave Richard and Daph a lift. The party was great for the children, lots of their favourite food, games and cartoons. I sat talking to one of David's neighbours, who originally came from Malvern, my Mecca. She is now living over the brush as they say in Lancashire with a management consultant. Must be a complicated story as she lived previously in New Zealand where she had a 100 acre sheep farm. Didn't get chance to unravel that part of her life.

Singapore 30/5/83 Mon 8-15pm

Afternoon tea with the Smiths yesterday. Homemade scones, jam with cream. What ho! Back to reality when the kids were in bed, satay and fried rice, from you know where. Jenny in bed by 9-30 as per usual.

Today has seen Fatima's work permit, Leah's birthday party and three letters. Fatima and set off for the employment office early at 8-30am. Least ways we thought it early. A hundreds others thought it late. So we queued. Most of the other applicants for work permits were Malay citizens. Fatima is a Permanent Resident and as such needs a permit to work, which seems odd. A straight forward Singaporean doesn't need a permit. There must be some subtle difference between the two which is lost on me. Perhaps Permanent Resident is another way of saying second class. Anyway, it wasn't any hassle. Me being there as dressed up or as dressed up as I ever get, must have worked to great effect. Mind you we still had to wait one hour. In that time I filled in one poor blokes form and advised another on a technical point. Fatima reckoned I ought to charge a couple of dollars a go. She was really chuffed with her permit. It could open the door to Singaporean Citizenship 1st Class. Even forgot her embarrassment at being thought my girlfriend. That came out a couple of days ago when I was driving her home. We had stopped at traffic lights and people walking across the road in front of the car were grinning at us. Fatima looked a bit distressed and told me they were very rude because of what they were thinking. Lost on me of course, until she explained. We both walked down to the nursery to pick Polly up today and she seemed more at ease than previously. Devil may care, what. I introduced Fatima to the staff and Polly walked home holding her hand. Today is the first day of our new way of life.

3-00pm saw me driving Anna over to Leah's for the party. On the way we called in at the Clementi shops for her present. Could I find anything suitable? Could I heck. Anna decided on a cartoon stencil character set and a lovely card. I picked her up after Jenny at 5-00pm. Poor little Gailean, Leah's mum. She looked as if she had had enough. Who says girls are nice. Worse than little lads, I reckon.

After tea, chicken salad, the kids went with Jenny to the pool (my writing seems very disjointed tonight) I met Doreen's latest visitors, her in-laws. Looked much the same as anybody else's.

Ruth's letter was full of excitement over her impending visit. Mum's was full of yoga and Vicki's was full of friendliness. She is a librarian in Christchurch and has worked out we are great, great grand cousins. Or some such. I am really excited about meeting her. I don't really know why. She has only got a half day tour of the city booked so we will have to fix something up for her a bit more exciting. Trouble is I cannot remember which hotel she is in. Damned memory again.

Singapore 1/6/83 Wed 7-45pm

The first day of work over. Yesterday was a false start. After hanging around from 8-00 to 9-15 for someone to arrive I was told to go home and come back tomorrow. Which I did. Three new staff started this morning, both the others were Singaporean. After being allocated the wrong room I was finally put in the same place as Peter Creamer. The only two Europeans in the department. I had dinner with Peter and Andrew. In the Poly canteen, curry and rice. Poor old Andrew had a tummy bug which stopped him eating.

So now I have a timetable and a subject, applied mechanics. Both seem ok and workable., even more so if there is flexibility in the finishing times etc.. The subject should be alright as I have been given lecture notes covering the first year. All I need to do is to translate this into slides for presentation. I only have three lectures, that is different lectures a week which cannot be bad. Guess my days aren't going to be as interesting as previously. No kids to look after, no trips to the swimming pool, no trotting down to the market.

Had a lucky lift home with Lee our neighbour. She had been shopping in Bukit Timah Plaza and spotted me at the bus stop on Clementi Rd.

Daph and Richard got their BBC computer last night, so we went round in relay to look at it. Should get ours soon. Perhaps this week. The disk drives make a hell of a difference over the tape storage and a printer with graphics capability, even better.

Singapore 5/6/83 Sun 1-20pm

12 o'clock last night we had a telephone call from Pete and Mandy in Nigeria.

7-45pm

Try again!! Sleeping Jenny and boisterous kids don't mix. Took them all to the bird park after we did a bit of shopping at Clementi. Yesterday bought a video tape recorder, a Philips and we are very pleased with its reproduction quality. Can't say the same for the tapes we hired. Bloody terrible. We trailed all round the city on the wind of Jenny's indecision. Was it the right one? Was the price the cheapest? Couldn't persuade her to buy a new tele as well. The one I fancy is a Sony with an RF input for computers. It's the only one on the market at the moment. But she wouldn't budge. The funniest twist of all was that after toing and froing in the city we found the same model cheaper in Clementi, right next door. Well we did buy something from cheap old Clementi. A \$50 stand to put the newly acquired equipment on. We should get the new computer this week, so everything is popping.

I haven't written since Wednesday because.....I don't know why. Guess it is getting into a new routine. This new job is OK and I feel I'm going to enjoy it. It seems to go at my pace somehow, somewhere between slow and stopped. I'm going to lecturing applied mechanics to the new year's intake. These guys and gals only have 3 'O' Level passes, so the hardest part of the job is going to be getting the information across to them rather than the subject itself being a problem.

There will be c=something like 700 new students. They are to be divided into groups of 50 making 14 classes and for each subject lecturer there are about 2 groups, making 7 to 8 lecturers per subject. The logistical problems are clear. To get round this we have been given the lecture notes and tutorials which each group will do in common. I will have plenty of time to spend working out how to get it across. The approach I am taking is to put up a transparency of the basic information, important information and lecture on the white board the understanding and example bits(?) of what's on the transparency. The students are young and have a reputation for being very timid. I'll have to work on that. Interaction will be the name the game.

I'm sharing a room with Peter and another at the moment, although I'm soon to be moved I think. Things are to say the least chaotic. Over 50% of the staff have been there less than a year. Twenty new ones are starting this term out of sixty. The place is still being built. Pile drivers all over the place thumping into your head all the time. Mosquitoes as well. Got bitten to hell. Took in my mosi-attack repellent spray can and coil. The other lecturers are all very friendly, although I have been there a week and haven't met Hoda yet. I think the man is intimidated by me. Well he does have his problems. A Singaporean, a certain Dr. Tan, left after being in the Poly for only two months. He thought the standard too low and was unhappy about his terms of employment.

Last night at 12 we had a phone call from Pee and Mandy in Nigeria. Things are getting a bit hairy out there with the probability of the Niira having to be devalued. This will cause problems for next Christmas making it too expensive to come home. Worse than that it took Mandy ages to come to the phone and when she did it was only to say a few words. She did say she had been drinking but she

sounded really down and depressed. But what can we do from such a distance, 8,000 miles, nothing. It is at least a month's turn around on letters, not exactly instant news or emotion. It's like being one month out of phase with somebody. Last night has only left things in the air and uncertain or should I say more uncertain.

Singapore 14/6/83 Tues 8-10pm

Nine days since I wrote a line. Quite a hectic nine days. Sorry. Last week was frantically preparing my lecture notes and things necessary to start teaching this week. It seems to be working out OK with the children and Fatima, although I do get concerned at the lack of time I have with them now. I really enjoy being at home with them, pottering about etc. But it wouldn't last for ever anyway, the little beggars grow up.

Saturday morning, I was stuck in a staff meeting for 5 ½ hours. I couldn't believe it. Such crap. Subjective judgement, hell. It's just not on to sit on your arse for 5 ½ hours without a proper break. Hoda is nuts. Made me too late to go to Anna's school fair which pissed me off even more.

Saturday was Doreen's party, beautiful crayfish and prawns done on the BBQ. Both Jenny and I drank too much. Both revoltingly ill when we staggered home. Not from the drink but from the BBQ. Put me off seafood for a while after that. However, 1 o'clock in the morning we were singing old rock songs, trying to wake the neighbours. Sunday morning, I thought Jenny was going to pass away. Never seen her so bad. She didn't recover until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I wasn't much better. Slept for most of the morning. Unfortunately, this meant that we completely missed the dragon boat racing off the East Coast Parkway. Singapore won in any event so they did alright without us.

Sunday afternoon we emerged to go to the Lego Exhibition that the Hotel Metro. Jenny was suitably impressed. Anna and Polly spent their spending money on small bits of Lego. The stuff is so expensive out here it's ridiculous. Sunday evening, we had another call from Nigeria.

Mandy is now coming now the 6/7th July to stay the summer. Whilst Ruth is here she is off into Malaysia with Anna and Polly if we can afford it. Man, it is going to be chaotic! Five extra people in our flat. We'll have to eat and sleep in shifts. Anna and Polly are already excited about it. It's going to be great to all be together again. I only hope the initial euphoria lasts the term.

Our computer arrived Thursday. And it is tremendous. Model 'B', 2 2 disc drives, super printer and about £100 worth of games and software. The BBC had really come on since we last had it. The games graphics are absolutely tremendous. I've already started a program to file our names and addresses on disc. Trouble is I am married to a woman who calls herself an expert; keeps wanting to have her turn. There's going to be blood soon! Anna has started using the system. God is she growing up. She is

supposedly going up a class at school soon. Tremendous. She can load the programs from the disc now and plays the learning games quite avidly, her and Nicholas both.

I started lecturing today. Bit nervy at first but after 5 minutes I was into it. Captive audience, don't know how. Not like home, cannot get a word in edgeways here. Three little women. Love them all. The student are quiet but not that quiet. I'm working on them to respond. It's a bit like manipulation but it is for their own good. Not sure it is for mine though. Four hours I have lectured today and it is pretty tiring. No air-con in the class rooms and we were right next to the bloody pile drivers. I was hoarse and sweaty by the time the 2 hours was up.

We are both learning to type, using a computer programme to that end. Jenny is on it at the moment. We also had a word processor in the package. I've already written to mum on it. All the better to read your writing my dear. I might transfer this diary on to disc. I don't know. A to less personal, but I have to admit my writing is atrocious.

Singapore 25/7/83 9-50pm

It's been too long. I don't seem to have the time I used to have. Don't write as many letters as I used to either. Still, it's like coming back to an old friend and it certainly worth the effort having just reread the last entry. Another thing is that there isn't as much to write about when you are working. Nobody, not even me, is interested in the incidentals of a working life. Work is a necessary evil in my book and doesn't warrant too much effort in recording its ups and downs.

It is impossible to remember what has happened over the last few weeks, although one or two things stand out. Vicki, the New Zealand long lost relative came to stay with us for a day. Poor girl. She is only 22 and was in a bit of a daze by the time she left us. Talkative too. Couldn't get a word in edgeways. Polly, Anna and I picked her up from her hotel at about 10-30am that Sunday morning and brought her back to the flat for lunch. That was after a quick tour of the city centre, Orchard Rd. and all that.

Before lunch though we all went off to Tiger Balm, again and after lunch a quick swim in the pool. This was followed by a trip to Bukit Tima Plaza to show here the sort of out of town shops. After dropping Jenny and the kids back home, Vicki and I took off down town. First to Sentosa, at about 6-30pm for a boat trip and a ride on the mono rail to watch the lights come on over Singapore. Back to the mainland and off to Newton Circus for the mandatory Chinese nosh and so on to china Town for the bright lights. 10-30, Vicki was staggering about so I took her back to her hotel.

She as since sent us a card from Florence and is going to write to us when she gets to Mums. She said she enjoyed our day together although I'd be surprised if she could remember much of it.

Next major event was the winning of a \$12,500 watch in a draw. When we bought the video player there were these draw tickets with it which we duly filled in and forgot about. Lo and behold, two weeks ago this letter arrived telling us we had won this blasted watch. 18 carat gold with diamonds all the way round the face. Course, euphoria. Sell it and spend. Pete and Mandy were here then and great discussions of holidaying together in Ceylon. So we duly advertised in for sale in the Straits Times and were inundated with phone calls. A jeweller and valued the thing at a real value of \$8,000 so we expected to get about \$6,000 for it. But even that was too optimistic, \$4,000 is what we parted with it for. Better than a kick up the bum though. The deal was struck in a very seedy way in the coffee bar of the Ming Court Hotel. Very furtive. Pete and I body guards to Jenny, she eating a beef burgher and chips making a deal between mouthfuls. Anyway to cut a long story short, this Germany woman bought it. So we all had presents. Anna had her longed for Walkman, Polly a bag of plastic buckets and things, Dylan a watch and Sarah and Emma clothes and a bag or something. Mandy and Pete are getting a zoom lens and we will get a tele/monitor for the computer.

At this time Pete, Mandy, Emma, Sarah, Dylan, Ruth, Toby and Jacob are staying with us and it is chaos. P and M have now taken the children down to the East Coast Park Chalets for this week and next week the Cooper's are off into Malaysia where we will join them the week after. It'll be nice to get away for a week. Tired, time for bed. Too much drinking recently and it always makes me tied after a time. Therefore I've stopped. For a while anyway.

Singapore 3/8/83 Wed 11-00pm

Ruth and Jenny are out on the town and I'm babysitting Anna, Polly, Toby and Jacob. Anna was ovely tonight. Felt I needed a helping hand, so comforted Jacob when he cried for his mum. Not that it lasted long. His crying that is. The promise of crisps soon shut him up. Ate the lot the little imp. Come 8-40 I announced that it was time for bed for the three youngest and blow me if off they didn't pop. Not a note of decent from anyone. Anna followed at about 9-00.

God knows where those women are. "Won't be long". That was four hours ago. Jenny has taken Ruth down to china Town, which won't be there much longer as they are moving the street sellers into a new concrete area, to make way for 'development'.

Mandy, Pete and the three other kids are on holiday in Malaysia. In Kunton at present. When Ruth goes home on Friday we will be flying up to Penang to meet Mandy and co. there. What we do after that is anybody's guess. They change plans like I change my sock. Regularly.

So what have we been up to? A bit of Newton Circusing with Ruth last Friday. Little Jacob slept through the whole thing. Our favourite waiter laid out two chairs and a stool for him and made a pillow from a towel. Admiring glances all round. Mind you, I don't know what he makes of me. Each visit I turn up with not only different women but different kids as well.

Anna and Polly loved it down the East Coast Parkway last week. We had a great party for Emma from the Indian restaurant on Singapore Road. Pete, Emma and I went to get the food. The Banana Leaf. Damned good curries, don't you now. Then two days later a party for Jenny, this time a BBQ. Cooked our own satay, well almost our own, bought raw satay from the hawker centre by the chalets.

Ruth has been out and about, Sentosa, Kusu etc. Jenny and I took her to the bird park show on Saturday morning with our kids and Dylan. We sat purposefully right in the middle of the amphitheatre and were rewarded by the eagle flying 3 inches directly over our kids heads. Quite impressed young Dylan.

Oh, Saturday night Ruth baby sat the lot and the rest of us took off for the Japanese indoor BBQ. Fantastic value at \$13 for men and \$10 for women. This kind of hot plate in the middle of the table on which you cook your food. Mutton, beef, muscles etc. You can take as much as you like but these notices on the walls warn of eyes bigger than bellies. Any food left, charged extra. Delicious. Eaters paradise, Singapore. Satay and fried rice Sunday night followed by chocolate cake. Why do I never get the quantities right? This time I didn't get enough.

Well the wanders returned. Complaining of being knackered. China Town and Satay club. And no video cable. What have they been up to? Jacob and Toby were really sweet. No trouble at all. Who has a way with little ones then?

Singapore 17/8/83 Wed 8-30pm

Returned from a week's holiday in Malaysia last Saturday. Great time was had by all.

Pete and Mandy had the previous week set off into Malaysia up the east coast by bus from Singapore to Messing, taking their little brood with them. From there they visited the island of Rowa and were impressed by its peace and beauty. Snorting off the coral reefs and generally lazing about. From there they travelled north by taxi and hire car to Kota Baru and then across the top of the country on the newly completed up country road. This road is right alongside the Thailand/Malaysian border and has army posts all along its length to counter the threat from terrorists. Every so often the newspapers carry reports of shoot ups between the army and the terrorists with the latter coming off the worst in most clashes; or so the media tells you.

Saturday they met us in Penang to which we flew that afternoon. SIA, of course. Too short though, only 55 minutes but the weather was clear enough to see the coast line as we flew up it. Very little human habitation. Mostly forest or plantation deeply indented by river tributaries. As we neared Penang, rice fields appeared looking like a shiny patchwork quilt.

Bay View Beach Hotel is where we stayed at a onetime village called Btu Faringie. Poor place has been absolutely squashed under the number of concrete hotels but some of the original eating places still survive and no doubt surviving under the new influx of Moronous Touristous! More white skins per restaurant than a Berni Inn.

Pete and Mandy arrived about an hour ahead of us and secured four rooms at a ridiculous price; good value that is. The next five days were spent swimming, sightseeing sunning. Pete and Mandy hired a Suzuki 800 for the trip over the top of Malaysia and it's ruggedness quite impressed Pete. In fact, all nine of us tripped around Georgetown together quite uncomfortably in it everybody ducking down when a policemen was spotted. Funny looks a plenty we had from passing traffic.

What did we see? Well the snake temple for starters which I am afraid was a bit of a disappointment. Not many snakes. I have since been told that on the special snake festival, the place is inundated with the things. What was there on our visit was enough for me.

Penang Hill. Up on the something railway, can't remember the name but as one car ascends, the other descends attached to a continuous wire rope, passing at the half way point. Really spectacular views of Georgetown and mainland Malaysia. Very cool at the top, going early evening, sunset etc. Crazy taxi driver tried to charge us \$18 to take us into town when the going rate is between \$5 and \$6. This prompted the first, 'How many can you get into a Suzuki 800' competition.

Getting tired of pool and sun, Pete and I took off in the Suzuki to tour the island. Once we got away from the north coast and past the airport going clockwise round the island you discover the real beauty of Penang. Hills, which you don't see much of in Singapore and clean, clear of people beaches with the sea lapping right up to the palm trees. We sat on a couple of beaches just chewing the fat and drinking in the scene. Around lunch time we stopped at a road side eating shack and had mee and cokes at a ridiculous \$3-80. Driving up the hill and over, I was almost puking my ring as Pete threw the car round every bloody bend. Little did I know that he could do even better.

A couple of miles down one side we picked up two stranded looking expats, one British and the other an Aussie. The more the Brit got verbal diahera the faster and more aggressive got Pete's driving. Eventually the guy shut up, whether from fright of neasia I will never know. Nering the end of te circular trip we pulled into a foorresty exhibition, showing local woods and crafts. Oh if only I could read Malay. Much more proud of their own thing the Malays which is a relisef from stereotyped Singapore.

Another day Pet and I with young Dylan took the ferry over to Butterwirth. Not an insprein place. Decidely not. Couplre of hamburgers ans back oon the ferry. The ferries are very distinctive , we counted 14 of them on the go all at once Unfortunately the new bridge currently being built will

eventually carry 90% of the traffic. Strangely the new bridge crosses to Penang not at the narrowest part of the straits. Very odd.

So Friday, after a lot of change of plans we eventually left the island in two f=hired cars for the Cameron Highlands. Took all day and our nearest shave on Malaysian roads. A bus tried to elbow us off the road. A couple of miles down the road and the same bus had knocked over a motorcyclist.. It happened in our sight and left the poor chap looking very dead in the middle of the road. I was in two minds to stop the children seeing him but decided perhaps it would be better if they did. Anna concluded immediately that he was dead and said so in a very flat voice. The image still haunts me.

The drive up from the main road to the top of the highlands was something else again. 36 miles squeezed into 20 miles as the crow flies. Bend after band after bend after bend. One and a half hours it took. Once at the top the climate was completely different and in fact in the night is positively cold. The hotel bar had a raging log fire.

Next day before setting off for KL we visited a tea plantation and the mandatory tour of the factory. The smell of tea everywhere. Saw the pickers in the fields, 100% women with men overseers. And the loads they carried on their backs held by bands around the head looked enormous. I doubt I could move one let alone Bought butterflies on the way back.

So down the hill with the kids throwing up due to the excessive motion round the bends and the long drive to KL.

Batu Caves were visited after negotiating the heaviest rain storm I've ever seen. Strangely enough although the visibility was almost zero, the polaroid sun glasses was wearing made things clearer. Helper a lot. The thing about visiting these 'famous' places is to ignore the human defacing of nature. I hope the photos of the place come out.

And so on to KL.

