Recollections of a Talland childhood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
by Muriel Jerram 1887 – 1975

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The Jerram family moved from Godalming to Talland Vicarage in 1891, the
following is an extract from the Recollections of Muriel Jerram, the third youngest in
a family of seven:

I am glad that by birth I found me in the middle way of life, by which I mean that
large range of middle classes where are found the professions, the clergy, doctors,
army, navy and the squires, and among the last I would include what were then called
the gentlemen farmers.
I have been further blessed with parents who were broad minded, and my Father very
tolerant. Both parents, though open to the awakening thoughts of the day, still held to
such traditions of the past as they found good, and did not clash with the movement
towards better conditions for the poorest classes. Here they would both, I think,
include better spiritually as well as materially.
My Father, an M.A. Oxford, was an excellent classical scholar with a keen interest in
politics, both at home and abroad. He called himself lazy and may have been by
nature, but worked very hard until within a few months of his death at the age of
seventy three.

Mother was never conventional, she shocked the Godalming mothers by wheeling her
own pram, and at Talland she washed, cooked and made many of the children’s
clothes. The small boys were hard on their knickers, and often reduced to a last pair.
Rowland once gave great delight to an admiring audience of young ladies, by
exclaiming “My mother is very clever, she made me these between meat and pudding”, with a smack on the seat of the new pants. She played the Church organ, often cleaned the Church, and indeed carried out more than all the work of a busy wife of a country clergyman. However hard she worked, or however low the Bank balance fell, no child was ever refused when he or she asked to bring home school friend for the holidays. I can look back on a sunny happy childhood.

I was under four years old when, with four older brothers and sisters, and Rowland, the eighteen months baby, we moved from Godalming to Cornwall. It was in 1891 after the great blizzard, and the older children remember many tales of hedges covered with snow, sheep buried, and post-men delivering letters through the top windows. But frost and snow made no part of our lives in Cornwall. The skates we brought with us, and first carefully greased and cleaned, were forgotten, got rusty, finally lost, or, as my father complained happened to so much valuable rubbish, “got dug into the garden hedge”

![Muriel, wearing a blue coat with Swansdown trimming, Winnie wearing a red coat with a hood](image1)

![Winnie, Posy, (Catherine) and Muriel](image2)

Six children, Catherine, just under eleven, Fred, Ralph, Winnie, Muriel and Rowland the baby, with mother, Miss Dennis, the governess, and nurse Fanny travelled to Cornwall. Father came later, driving Jenny the donkey from Plymouth, where a change of gauge made it necessary to leave the S.W. railway for the G.W. railway, which ran to Penzance. Of the journey I remember nothing. We stayed at Porthallow Farm waiting for the furniture to arrive, and that too is a blank. One day only stands out, when the nursery party visited the new house. We were met at the gate by Fred and Ralph armed with sticks, they had been guarding the apple trees from marauders they said. In August the apples would be ripe; I never knew the species, but they were the best I ever tasted, sweet and very juicy. Cornwall in 1891 was a wild, almost unknown county, and Talland, between the villages of Looe and Polperro, a solitary and very beautiful spot. It is over fifty years since I left it, and, though I have visited it since, it is as it was in those early days that I remember it best.

The front and back door of the Vicarage both opened onto a short drive which circulated round two great trees, a copper beech and a poplar, that in spring shed a
silvery mass of seeds that blew through the door and window, covering passage and stairs. The back door led to the old part of the house, the original Vicarage. Here were kitchen and scullery, with slate floors, a granite sink and, in the kitchen, many cupboards, an open dresser, windows with shutters and window seats. A long passage passed larder and pantry, and then a swing door leading to the dining room and school room, both with shutters. And then the new part, drawing room, Father’s study, downstairs W.C., porch and the front door. A wide wooden slab at the bottom of the stairs held the flat bedroom candlesticks, lamps for the rooms, and bracket lamps for the passages. Upstairs were the nursery, over the drawing room, upstairs lavatory and the ten bedrooms. Seven children and at least three maids, Father, Mother, and governess had to be accommodated, sometimes seven or eight pupils, and how they all fitted in is a mystery. Country vicarages in those days had no bathrooms. Parents and visitors had enamel baths under their beds to be emptied every morning. The nursery bath, oval with high sides, came from my father’s old home, and in this we bathed on Saturday nights in front of the nursery fire. In the drive were the outhouses. The coach house had folding doors and up them we could climb to the loft above the stable, preferring this method, even when the loft was turned into a schoolroom for the pupils, and an outdoor staircase built on to it. A path led to the field above the drive and here Jenny the donkey was soon joined by Nell’s son, or Nelson, as he was soon called, the fat lazy pony, half Arab, half Exmoor, given to my mother by her cousin, Sir Frederick Knight, who lived at the Lodge, Simonsbath, and who owned part of Exmoor. It was of Nelson that Robert Starling, driver of the Looe coach, made, and oft repeated, his famous joke, “he’s a proper Nelson, there’s no Boneparte about him”. A path running down the front garden was partly bordered with apple trees, the apples were stored in the big cellars under the old house, and apples and blackberries formed much of our diet. We liked it all except perhaps the apple pasties, and we sometimes grew tired of plain apple jam, the boys would complain if they found too many pots in their school tuck boxes. Girls did not grumble, but indeed we all accepted that there was no money for luxuries in food, or indeed for amusements on which money had to be spent.

Rowland and Aunt Miriam, (Mrs. E.F. Knight) making hay, to the right the donkey field and summer house.

There was other fruit, a fine old fig tree, and later gooseberry and raspberry bushes planted by my mother. She was a wonderful gardener and did most of the work, helped by a changing boy and an occasional odd job man. Once she received an official letter asking why he was not paying man servant tax? Her reply that her man
servant came to her on leaving school, then eleven years old, and left at sixteen to learn a trade or enter the navy seemed to satisfy the authorities, for she heard no more.

Talland Vicarage

I wish I could remember more of the very early days when my father was at home. He took a great interest in the garden and in local politics, but I was still quite small when pupils were given up, and he was only home in the holidays. He left to teach at Eastbourne and later made a profession for himself, lecturing on current events, living in rooms in London and visiting schools in the Home Counties.

After we left Talland, the lovely garden rapidly deteriorated until in about 1952, the Vicarage house and garden were sold to two sisters who performed wonders. Apple trees and fruit bushes were gone, paths, flower beds and lawns a wilderness. The old could not be restored, but wide lawns, flowering bushes and many flowers once more made the garden a thing of joy, and the modernised interior of the house seemed to have grown naturally from the old rough cast red walls. I have forgotten the sisters’ names, but shall never forget the kind welcome given to any member of the family who came to wander nostalgically round the house and garden. Once Bertrand, in sentimental mood, exclaimed “Oh, I should like to die here”! “Yes, do”, replied a sister, “come whenever you like”. ‘May we visit Windy Bank?’, we asked, and once again were standing on a bank overlooking the sea, and there was a sou’westerly gale to blow us down, and we shouted and laughed and climbed up again.
There was a ghost at Talland of course, Parson Doidge, himself a ghost layer in his day. On stormy nights he would take his horses from the stable and drive the devils down the lane into the sea. I wonder now if the story was invented for the children of those days to account for the noise of the smugglers carts.

...down the lane into the sea

There were steps cut in the rocks in the channel in Our Bay\(^1\) where many a time, maybe, the boats brought in goods to lie in safety in the Vicarage cellars. The nursery window looked onto the front garden, where on the lawn, until it blew down, was a skeleton fir tree, bare of branches except for a tuft on the top. And when the gales blew from the sea, it bowed almost to the ground. In the nursery I loved to sit between curtain and window and watch the storm outside, then look back at the fire lit room where the others were at play. Inside warmth and colour, outside the bowing tree and the noise of the wind blowing over the sea. I longed to be out, but was glad of the warm safety inside.

A coach ran from Looe to Menheniot where the Great Western trains stopped twice a day. In my early days we travelled by this, first on the roof with the luggage, but a sad day came when Robert forbade this for Winnie and myself. We might sit beside him on the box, but only the boys might go on top. Once Mother took Winnie and myself, Rowland and Bertrand to Plymouth by the paddle steamer, Richard Grenville. It was so rough that the steamer did not make the return journey. Going, everyone I think had been ill, except Bertrand, a three year old. He sat on the back seat shouting, “Hurrah, hurrah, a huge wave is coming”, until the Captain told him that if he did not keep quiet he would throw him overboard. When we left the return train at Menheniot the Looe bus was full. Bertrand was given a seat on the floor, Mother and Winnie walked sedately the twelve miles, but Rowland and I, both wild with excitement, raced behind the bus, and, with lifts on the step at times, kept up with it all the way. We were very pleased with ourselves until between Looe and Talland, Mother, in a hired trap, caught up with us and we were bundled in. The scolding I got was, I’m sure, well deserved, I might have killed my little brothers I was told, and indeed I was very thankful to see them both alive next day.

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\(^1\) Our Bay was the family name given to the beach more commonly called Rotteredam
I was, I fear, a rough unruly child. The top of the highest pine was my favourite seat. Once at the age of three years I ran away from Home. This was at Godalming. We had stayed the summer in lodgings at Lyme Regis where a Miss Semple, the landlady had spoiled me, and one day, being offended with Mother and nurse, I had collected my money box from the nursery mantelpiece and set of to return there. At first I was accompanied by Winnie, and an old organ grinder, a frequent visitor. But the organ grinder went into the first public house, and Winnie decided to return home to “say goodbye”. I was found not far from the station, sitting with a small boy who I had begged to open my money box, and was carried home howling in the pram, enraged at the ignominy, and because, (nurse would say), the boy was trying to steal my money.

A rough hilly road ran from Looe to Talland, through fields, with many gates, to open and shut, for we were early taught that all gates must be carefully shut behind us, with a long hill past Talland and the Barton farm, down to the sea. At the bottom was the farm labourer’s cottage, in which, during our occupation of the Vicarage, several families lived, the most interesting being the Vagues. There were eleven children, but never all home at once. Fine handsome boy and girls with bright colouring, black hair and very large dark eyes. The two youngest were called after my mother and Bertrand, our only Cornish born.

These children had a long, sometimes wet walk to school at Crumplehorn, and there were no school dinners then, but happily not many school inspectors, so one child was always kept at home to carry the hot pasties, straight from the oven, for their dinner. Mrs Vague became blind, she ended her days living with a daughter in a modern house on the high road from Looe to Polperro. They were an affectionate family, and she was kept in great comfort. At the other end of the lane was Talland Sands, and the road then divided, climbing up a very steep hill, or wandering by a rocky path to Polperro.

Where these two met the road had already been broken away by the sea which was, and still is, always encroaching. Here was a cottage built by Mr. Blatchford, the Clerk and Sexton of Talland Church. Mr. Blatchford lived here for many years with his wife and crippled daughter. They could remember when there had been an Inn, and the Green where Captain and Mrs. Pond danced at their wedding feast. There had also been a small quay for the boats that brought lime to the kiln. Now nothing remains but the ruins of kiln and cottage.
Talland Sands, the high wooden bridge in the background

Talland Sands beach was backed by a withy bed where Polperro fishermen cut the withies to make their crab pots. A stream ran through it down to the sea, and at one time a high wooden bridge spanned this, and when there was a storm, we loved to race to it between the waves.

After a storm there were bamboos and tallow candles to be picked up on the rocks, and a search for the washed up treasure we never found. We longed for a wreck, but I was grown up and far away when a French trading vessel was wrecked on Talland rocks, and it was Winnie’s son, Denys, who came in for this excitement, a schoolboy spending his holidays with his grandparents at Polperro. All the crew were saved, but years later the ship’s boiler could still be seen at low tide.

The boiler, taken in 2005

It was, I think, during the 1914-1918 war, that a body found on the beach was carried reverently to the Church and lodged in the Church tower. The coroner, a Mr. Castro Glub, was called to sit on it, and was met there by the Vicar to arrange about the funeral. Mr. Parson, who arrived late, found the coroner sitting on the tower steps convulsed in laughter. “He has four legs and a tail, bury him where you like”! It does sound an impossible story, but I believe it is quite true.

To go back to our arrival at Talland, I remember being put to bed on the nursery floor, but not the awakening in my cot in the night nursery. The furniture did not arrive until
after midnight and the angry men swore that never again would they come to Cornwall. They had had to borrow horses from the nearest farm to help drag the vans up the steep hills, and declared the descents were worse.

It must have been a strange experience for my parents, they were neither of them suburban. Father was brought up in a country vicarage and was in Honfleur, where Grandfather was English chaplain in the Franco-Prussian war. Mother lived much in France, and was a young girl nursing her father when he died there. But I do not think either had lived in such a primitive place as Talland was in 1891. My mother used to tell a story of how, in the ’90s she attended the Bath and West of England Show, and had ordered some goods to be sent to Looe. “There will be carriage to pay”, said the attendant, “but”, said my mother, “you advertise carriage paid”, “yes”, replied the man, “but only in the United Kingdom”. The story went on that he was assured that Cornwall had lately been annexed, he replied, “in that case, Madam, it will be alright”!

Pre-school days remain most vividly in my memory. In summer the daily bathe was a great event, and we begged for this as soon as Easter was over. I never learnt to dive, but as soon as I could swim I loved the deep water and the feeling of being at one with the sea and the air. When the sea was rough we bathed at Talland Sands. Here everything was different, we ran shouting into the surf, never going far, but often nearly swallowed by the waves. Was it because so few commands were laid on us that we took seriously and obeyed those that were? “Never go into the sea off the rocks in rough weather”, my father said, “or you will have difficulty in getting back again”. I was a schoolgirl when, on our way to bathe from the sands, we met some boys, visitors from Looe I think. They said they were going to bathe from Talland rocks, perhaps asking our permission, for we always called it Our Bay, and some friends would name it Jerrams’s Beach. Later we heard that a boy had been drowned, being unable to get back onto the rocks, just as father had feared for us. Only one bathe a day was allowed, but I think we were seldom dry on those long summer days, scrambling round the rocks, in and out of pools. If alone I was a water-baby such as Charles Kingsley’s Tom, or an explorer, who, after a long and dangerous voyage, returned to lecture to a large admiring audience. A fir tree overlooking the churchyard was an excellent pulpit.

A very old wall, said to be part of an old monastery, divided the garden from the churchyard. Through it and through the upper churchyard and then two steep fields was our way to the beach. Going this way we passed the door into the short granite tower which below was joined to he church by the porch. Through this door we could climb up past the bells and, pushing back a heavy lead slab, get out onto the tower roof where a ledge round the wall made a convenient seat. Here was a quiet and secret place for reading and here, as a very small boy, Bertrand would come with three different editions of Pilgrim’s Progress to read and compare.
Of course there were no libraries then for us, and a new book at Christmas was the greatest joy. Still we had books, Dickens, Scott, both poems and novels, Plutarch’s Lives, on which Mother had been brought up. Dickens I liked and so did little Emily Bennett, our maid, and Catherine would read David Copperfield to her and Bertrand by the kitchen fire. The wide steel grate always highly polished, being the small boy’s seat. My early loves were Harold, by Lord Lytton, Harold was my great hero, Kipling’s Jungle Books, The Vicar of Wakefield, the Days of Bruce, a very sentimental story. Over this and The Heir of Redcliff I could weep in comfortable secrecy on my tree-top seat. I never cared for the Alice books, but I loved Kingsley’s Heroes and Water Babies, and a story by Henry Kingsley called the The Boy in Grey, and George Macdonald’s The Back of the North Wind. I read, too, the Children of the New Forest many of Henty’s Historical Tales and some Sunday School stories such as Froggie’s Little Brother and a few older stories from the Jerram aunts’ bookshelves, such as the Crofton Boys and Amy Herbert. Two large volumes of Dante’s Inferno and Paradise were Sunday books. On Sunday evenings, when we came down to the drawing room, I would take on of these to the sofa and kneeling before it, pore over the pictures. At first reading the lines opposite, then a little way back and little way on, I gradually got some idea of the whole. Best loved picture was the twilight abode of the good heathen, and here I placed my beloved Harold the Saxon. But the picture of the half man half spider I would not look at, it filled me with horror. I wish we had kept some of the old 1d Classics, you never see them now. They were excellent, red paperbacks with good print and black and white illustrations. Among them I remember Gulliver’s Travels, The Redcross Knights, some Lambs Tales from Shakespeare and old tales such as Brer Rabbit and Goody Twoshoes. Poetry came to me later, first through my father’s reading Tennyson and Wordsworth, my first loves, and every poem must paint a picture and, since I lived in the country, my pictures were of natural beauty. Not until paintings and architecture were seen could words describing them mean much to me.

For us, in those early days, boys and girls wore much the same clothes. Blue jerseys and navy blue skirts or brown corduroy shorts, bare legs and sandshoes, except on Sundays. Winnie and I wore red stockinette caps, excellent for catching shrimps. The jersey I found most useful, for, tucked into a skirt, it would carry a book to the top of a tree or down to the rocks.

But to go back, in the top Churchyard were the graves of old Polperro sea captains: Ponds, Rowetts, Couches, Couths etc. Mary Slade who haunted not Talland, but
Duloe vicarage. The story was that she choked and died while eating fish, and that Bishop Temple, then a curate, ran all the way to Looe to fetch a doctor, who arrived too late. The last remaining Miss Bush told me she had been seen in her father, Cannon Bush’s day, but never spoken of. A much later vicar wrote to my mother saying that friends staying in the house had twice seen a maid, in mob cap and old fashioned print dress, go into their room and disappear. Talland Church is not, as far as is known, dedicated to any Saint, unless there was a St. Tallanus, as some maintain. As is usual in Cornwall, it is a large granite building. By the south path is a stone dedicated to the founder of the Bible Society. In the porch which joins the Church to the belfry and tower are the stocks, still in good repair. Inside the Church are some slate carvings, the Beville Tomb with The Ruby Bull in Pearly Field. In the helmet above a robin once built her nest and would appear with her family to join in the singing.

A slate to commemorate John Mark shows very clearly that smuggling was not considered in any way a disgrace:

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\begin{align*}
\text{In prime of life, most suddenly} \\
\text{Sad tidings to relate,} \\
\text{Here view my utter desting} \\
\text{And pity my sad fate.} \\
\text{I, by a shot which rapid flew,} \\
\text{Was instantly struck dead.} \\
\text{Lord pardon the offender who} \\
\text{My precious blood did shed.} \\
\text{Grant him to rest, and forgive me} \\
\text{All I have done amiss} \\
\text{And that I may rewarded be with everlasting bliss}
\end{align*}
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When last visiting the Church I was sorry to see that the mat protecting the fine slate carving, showing Joan Mellow and her little son, had been removed. Let us hope stiletto heels respect it; otherwise the Church seemed in excellent repair.

Talland Church

In 1891 the Church was heated by a coal stove which Mr. Blatchford stoked before the sermon. Later heating and lighting were both done by brass lamps hung from the
roof, and it was mother’s self imposed duty to fill and light these, for not long after we occupied the Vicarage the old iron stove and Mr. Blatchford both gave up work. The Blatchfords retired to a cottage in Polperro where I remember the old couple sitting on the settle by the fire, and Mrs. Blatchford wearing a black net cap. The cottage was bought by Mr. Romanis, a Charterhouse master, and here his wife and two sons spent many summers until he retired and built a house on the Warren. Here the widow of Donald, the younger boy, still lives. When Dr. Marie Stopes made a bird sanctuary by building a high wire fence, cutting off much of the land beyond Freshwater and the old coastguard path and right of way, the Polperro boys would go out on Sundays to cut this down, the land now happily belongs to the National Trust.

The Church played a very large part in our lives. Morning Service was followed by afternoon Sunday school and, as we grew older, often a second service in the evening at some distant Church. On the third Sunday of each month the service was in the afternoon, and something of a social occasion. To this service would come the choirs, and many of the congregation, not only from St. John’s Chapel, but also from the Wesleyen and Methodist Chapels. Wesley Curtis would bring his violin and he and Winnie would accompany my Mother, who played the harmonium. After the service there was tea in the drawing room and kitchen for many friends, and the Stevens also entertained at the Barton farm.

We decorated the Church for the festivals, Easter meant a walk to Kilmanorth farm where we had permission to go into the orchard and pick lent lilies, small wild daffodils. The walks were often cold and windy, but I always enjoyed them. Less enjoyable was the picking of the hundreds of bunches of primroses needed by my Mother for the texts she put in the windows. There never seemed to be enough, and Ralph was a stern taskmaster, though he certainly did his share. He also presided over the donkey cart expedition to Trelawney Woods for moss. Harvest was all beauty, the swinging lamps and the wooden candlesticks stuck into holes at the end of each pew gave all the light required, for everyone knew the hymns. Wreaths of bryony and ivy round pillars and lamps, huge stacks of corn, wheat, oats and barley, vegetables and apples in profusion. Asters, dahlias, michaelmas daisies, all the autumn flowers and berries, the whole filling the Church with colour and scent. A very glory of thanksgiving! There would be a visiting clergyman to preach, and for him and all the neighbouring clergy and friends, a supper in dining room and schoolroom, and we all waited on the guests. When all the traps and carriages had gone, we gladly sat down to finish the remains of the feast and talk over sermon and guests. We visited all the parish harvest festivals that were within walking distance, a festive day for nearly every man, woman and child. Always there was a public tea, sometimes a sale of work. Oh those teas at long trestle tables, saffron cake cut in chunks, bread and butter, tuffs and jam and cream. Bowls of cream on the tables for those who liked it with tea or cake. Nothing else, until those snobby little tables came, where for 6d extra you could have select company and shop fancy cakes, but we scorned these and sat with our friends at the long tables. Christmas followed the usual pattern for children of our time and class. Christmas Eve with donkey cart jaunts to the woods for moss and holly. The Church to decorate, and after supper, the house, with such holly as remained. Carol singers were late arrivals and as a very small child I would lie awake to hear the voices, getting ever nearer as they visited every hill and valley farm. Then they were at the door and I was carried down, wrapped in a blanket, to see the men

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2010 - The Romanis family still own the house
3Soft white rolls
standing in a circle with lanterns and music. Wesley Curtis with his fiddle, who trained them, the Mark brothers’ tenor, Tommy Tucker’s falsetto, George Andrew’s base. It was said that a famous conductor, brought to Polperro by Hugh Walpole, wanted to carry off George Andrews, but that he refused to leave an invalid aunt with whom he lived and who he nursed. Christmas day, and stockings to be felt and contents to be tasted long before it was light. Service in the morning and a rush home to see what the postman had brought, parcels and cards thrown into the porch, for everyone went to Church leaving ‘the angels to cook the dinner’, as the children said. Grannie’s hamper with turkey, oranges and crackers having arrived safely, all was well. I know of only one occasion when it got lost, though I think that there was always a drive to meet the last train on Christmas Eve, usually with Ralph as the driver. Dinner at mid-day with Bertrand in his high chair by mother, and a dispute over whose turn it was to light the plum pudding with a long paper spill and a spoonful of brandy. The afternoon meant a walk with my father round the cliff to Green Island.

Green Island, also known as Aesop’s Bed

Mother and Posy stayed at home to prepare tea and arrange the presents in the drawing room. After tea, the great present giving! We young ones had staked a claim on the sofa and given out our own presents, mostly bought out of ‘Grannie’s shilling’, her present to the four youngest. There was a small shop on the Looe quay where a Miss Isabel sold penny packets of twelve cards, pistols with caps full of gunpowder, tiny lanterns, boxes of pills, which, when lit, would uncoil into long serpents. An exciting shop, and more so because Miss Isabel had a most violent temper and would flare up if asked for anything from a high shelf. To this day the tuppence I never paid lies on my conscience. I was buying a birthday present and was so frightened I took the purchase and fled without paying. Like most large families we were exclusive, close friends who stayed in the house we accepted, and parties among near neighbours we enjoyed, but Christmas parties and summer parties, where we met old Cornish families, we hated, and there was always grumbling on the part of those who had to go to them. Our own games could not be joined by outsiders for they were the outcome of the books we read, Red Indians, with the summer house in the field as a Fort for the English settlers, or desert islands, and these, like the books, always had a new chapter. Other games we hardly played, Fred and Ralph, as they grew older almost lived on the sea, Rowland and Bertrand, with less spirit of adventure, joined in an occasional local cricket match. There was French and English or hide and seek, if there were visitors to entertain, and we girls joined in the games at the Sunday school
treats. A very early nursery game played with the nurse was ‘Poor Mary’, who after cooking, washing cleaning, and so exhausted that ‘you can’t see her now’, was finally dying and then carried by arms and legs to be dropped in her grave! I loved solitude, but as a member of a large family each one meant much to me. My eldest sister, now my great friend, I alternately hated or was indifferent to. My brother Fred I adored, and to go sailing or fishing with him was a joy. He was always kind and indulgent. As a subaltern at the Marine Barracks Stonehouse, he spent most Saturdays taking his schoolgirl sisters out. There were glorious walks cross Dartmoor, ending with a cottage tea at Yelverton. Such teas, in front of a huge fire, saffron cake, tuffs, jam and cream, more than we could eat, even with our healthy appetites. And I never knew then that these sixpenny teas were the only ones he could afford. Ralph, the third child was, even to the older brother and sister, a bit of a martinet; but Winnie said, when she lay dying, “he was always utterly to be relied on”, and this was true, even of a small boy. Winnie, two years older, was my constant companion until school parted us. We were quite unlike.

Winnie and Muriel

Of all her children she had the most of my mother in her, and a great deal of charm, that quality impossible to describe, but so easily recognised. She was an excellent needlewoman and clever with animals, though I do no know that she was very fond of them. Our garden boy used to say, “If Miss Winnie will catch the pony, I will harness him”.

Nelson and Ernest George, the garden boy
She was, I’m sure, the favourite sister of all the brothers, and she and Rowland were popular with outsiders, high and low. Rowland who came as a baby, and Bertrand, born at Talland formed their own world. There was also a small cousin, Mary, the daughter of Uncle Fred, who lived with us for some years. Poor child, she was not very happy I fear; it was unfortunate that Bertrand, next in age, was an exceptionally clever attractive child, whilst Mary, though she grew into a beautiful girl, was a plain child.

For myself, I was until the age of thirteen or fourteen, more boy than girl. To climb the highest tree, the most difficult cliff, to walk long distances and harden my body in any way I could, was my only ambition. Then I changed, lost some of my courage, was lazy and found all my pleasure in books. I think I had very little capacity in any direction. Music was, and still is, a closed art, I could not and still cannot yield pencil or needle, I had no love of animals or of gardening. Of course I did have many pleasures, day dreaming on the cliffs, or in the water, and in the books I read; but I look back on the years between school and 1914 as wasted time.

Of the adult world, Uncle Fred, Mother’s brother, was prime favourite, we loved him in the nursery above all others, only Fanny felt otherwise. When he appeared, she seized the baby and ran. Then the fun began, forts from the stone bricks were built on the opposite sides of the table and catapulted with wooden bricks by rival armies of children. Bricks flew across the room, furniture and children were hit, but I remember no serious casualties. When tired of playing with us he would tie us to the table legs and gain a little respite, while we struggled with the knots.

Edward Frederic Knight, taken in India when he was with Charles Spedding. His book, Where Three Empires Meet is an account of this journey.

Uncle Fred was a great traveller, his yachts, the Alert and the Falcon have told their own story. His books have a small but enthusiastic public. Small Boat Sailing was still on sale in the Falmouth shops not long ago, and I heard Where Three EmpiresMeet described as the best book of its kind ever written. Winnie and I always considered that this last owed something to us. It was written at Talland, and we would sit spellbound at the schoolroom table while he, busy with the typewriter, was
never too busy to tell us tales of the many sketches he had made, and to give us prints, which we treasured for many years.

Our Jerram Aunts were frequent visitors, but did not, I think, appeal to any of us much. In very early days I remember two cousins of my Mother, the Honourable Helen and Rita Winn, who were, I felt, unduly indulged; being allowed to take their toys to church, and fans and scent bottles. There was a Miss Opie who brought a small brother and he and Winnie were allowed to sit up to supper whilst I was sent to bed, which hurt my feelings very much. Miss Opie had had a nervous breakdown and, tradition has it, threw her breakfast tray at Emily Bennet, our maid.

Mrs Caffyn a cousin of my Father, was an early visitor coming alone, or once with her three sons. I rather disliked the two younger but was devoted to Harold the eldest, who teased and spoilt me. All three boys died young, Harold and Challoner in the two wars, Jack, the middle one, disappeared in Canada. Poor Mrs. Caffyn, her books were considered very daring in her day, but are now quite forgotten. One I liked, Anne Mouliverer, partly biographical, I think. Anyway they educated her three sons at public schools. On her first visit I was very young, and had to take her for walks after dark, for she worked all the daylight hours. Neither of us took any trouble to entertain the other and out walks were taken in complete silence.

Maud Gill, an old Bath friend of my Mother’s, was a frequent visitor, she was Rowland’s Godmother. She snubbed the small children unmercifully and was much disliked in consequence. But as we got older we learnt to understand her real love for us, and at last to return it in full measure. She knitted and sewed for us and I remember with pleasure a soft green smock she made me. The only other dress that seems to have made any impression on me was a dreadful bright blue, with brass buttons down the front, which belonged to my school days. I hated it and was ashamed to wear it.

There were many visitors of our own, school friends, boys and girls, and sometimes a boy to be coached in the holidays. Doris Marston came from Worcester and made sails for Fred’s boats, and was one of the many girls with whom Fred fell in love. Bertrand’s friend, Harry Townend, came many times and when Bertrand was growing up there was always a crowd of boys and girls; especially so when an American family, a mother and three daughters, occupied the Talland Sands Cottage for a year. These girls were exceedingly popular and collected as many ‘beaux’ as there were boys in the neighbourhood. Once my Mother was in London and returning by the night train unexpectedly, found her room occupied by Fred’s Colonel and his wife, who with two small daughters had been brought down by sea to what they had been told was an empty house. Mother told us at breakfast that on going into the garden she found a strange boy asleep under every apple tree. We young ones had been to a dance in Polperro, at the Perrycosts, and the boys, having walked home with us, had decided to stay the night. All were somehow fed, and I’m sure there was no question of Mother or Father being annoyed.

Mother was really a wonderful woman! A few days ago I had a letter from Fred, in which he said ‘What mother nowadays would send her sons, aged eleven and twelve, for a weeks walking tour in Normandy and two years later to climb Snowden?’ - from Worcester, where we were then staying.

All the summer the house was overflowing and as maids decreased, and we grew older, we did much of the work. Bed making, washing up, dusting, flowers, while father and brothers pumped water to the upstairs cistern and did many jobs about the stable and garden. Drinking water came from a well in the field and was deliciously cold. On fine days all the work would be done by 10am, visitors often helping. And
then to the beach until dinner at one, except for the girl whose turn it was to lay the table, and who must make an earlier start for home. I do not think Mother ever planned work for us, the elders set an example we would have been ashamed not to follow.

![Lake Rock and Downend taken from Our Bay](image)

Of the two coastal towns one on either side of us, Looe was the more sophisticated and least visited, some shopping was done there, and to drive to Looe in the donkey cart was a great treat. The shops were friendly, Oliver the draper would bring cups of tea for the nurse or governess, and sugar biscuits for the children. Chark, the butcher, loved to tell of a sermon he had heard at Polperro chapel with great dramatic effect. He would repeat the preacher’s story of the prodigal son, ‘Ere a comes, ere a comes, Hover the ‘ill, with ‘is ‘air sticking out of ‘is ‘at, and ‘is ‘eels coming out of ‘is butes. In Looe Dr. Thomas pulled out my first tooth and Mrs. Thomas, to console me, filled my pinafore with biscuits, and I cried all the way home in the donkey cart, not with pain, because there was none, but because after so much fuss I thought it only proper. When older we visited Looe to hire canoes for river picnics to Shallow Pool. The canoes were Rob Roy and the first trip of the season was apt to be exciting for they leaked badly. ‘I thought you’s a sunk before you got to the bridge’, old Pengelly would say, but although we were often very wet, there was only one occasion when a canoe sank, and then, of course, it was Ralph’s. Accidents always seemed to fall to him, it was he who fell into a snow drift on the only occasion we went to a pantomime in Plymouth. He who broke his arm when riding father’s penny-farthing bicycle round the garden, and nearly got his eye poked out when playing Red Indians. He blew himself up and badly burnt his face when he and Fred were making fireworks, and nearly blew off his nose, letting off these same fireworks from the church tower. It was this last accident that gives me my happiest recollection of him at Talland. He was late returning to school and for one week I became his close companion. I climbed with him, cliffs and trees, and there was one especially memorable occasion when we were returning from Polperro, rather late, and he suddenly flung his arm round me and we rushed down Sand Hill. Certainly there might have been a catastrophe; but there was not and I never, before or since, felt so like flying. Before the days of speed and noise how lovely it was to drift down the Looe River with a falling tide. To see the kingfishers one must keep near the bank and be very quiet, no talking or sound of paddle. The herons were less nervous and could be seen fishing in the shallows. For peaceful joy no boat can compare with a canoe.
The Looe River

One year we had canoes at Talland, I think the Jerram aunts made this possible. Never shall I forget the ecstasy of travelling alone, exploring the rocks and channels or crossing the bay to Lake Rock.

Talland Bay

Fred and Ralph had their first boat when they were thirteen and fourteen. The Nellie, a small lugger rigged centre board boat cost £15. They sailed her back from Fowey in a small gale and were watched by Polperro fishermen who never gave up expecting the disaster that happily never happened. For the Nellie remained until both boys grew up, and gave a great deal of pleasure to us all. Both boys became fine sailors and never gave up their joy of the sea; every leave was spent on the water, even after retirement, and Fred, who settled in Helford, went on sailing into old age. Catherine was a good sailor but too conscientious to escape home duties very often, Winnie and I were always ready to act as crew or ballast. I don’t think Winnie really much enjoyed it, but it is her children and grandchildren who have carried on the tradition. Looe could be the start of a journey, the train carrying trucks only, ran to Railway Terrace, to collect ore from the Cheeswring mines. Humans could travel in the trucks as parcels large or small. We stayed one summer at Mrs. Sergeant’s farm in Pensilva, but I still belonged to the nursery party and played mostly in the farmyard. Father and the boys went down a mine and the elders picked up tins full of coloured stones called Cornish diamonds. The Vicarage had been let to some Godalming people called Trinham who came with a party of servants, and I well remember when we returned home, the general indignation, and that everyone complained of the breakage or
misuse of some special treasure. But Looe was only an occasional excitement; Polperro was always the dear familiar village of our childhood and youth and, after 1918, was home in the cottage built next to the Romanis house on the Warren. From the house, Stone Cottage, can be seen, the long beautiful coastline from the Dodman in the west to Rame Head in the east. The Peak still guards the harbour, but here the old Polperro ends.

The Peak guarding the entrance to Polperro harbour

Gone are the cobbled streets, so beautifully clean on Saturdays when every housewife swept and scrubbed before her door, the whitewashed cottages with a black tar strip at the bottom of the wall, green doors with copper latches and windows full of pink geraniums. Women on pattens, blue frocked fishermen, donkeys carrying seaweed to the cliff gardens, women knitting as they walked the cliff path or stood in their open doorways. Children everywhere, except in the sea, and always in boots and knitted wool stockings, for only ‘the gentry’ went bare-legged. All have gone, and gone, alas, that most lovely sight of the sailing of the fishing fleet, thirty luggers moving out of the harbour on a high tide.

Polperro harbour taken by HLW c1937

Brown sails set and the long sweeps\textsuperscript{4} to carry the boats to where they could catch the wind. So fair a sight, we would offer it as a treat to our visitors, and bid them hurry to

\textsuperscript{4} Oars
get to Polperro in time. Miss Carthew, whose house overlooked the harbour, offered this as an attraction to her tea parties, which took place when the tide was right. Oh! but Polperro was lovely in those days. Those who know only the modern world can hardly imagine what it was like before the days of mechanical noise, and without artificial light, and with very little government interference. There was much poverty but little or no distress, no District Nurse, but the old and sick were nursed by relatives, and the disgrace would have been great if an old or sick person had been sent to the Workhouse. Even the idiots were kept at home and though as children we were afraid to meet Dummy or the Fiddler, who both roamed the lanes, still they did no harm and were happier than they would have been in an institution.

When fishing was bad the shops gave credit, all the women knitted jerseys, (frocks) and stockings, the surplus going to the Liskeard shops. The shops could only give goods in exchange, which meant some cheap finery being worn by the girls, but also ensured the children were being well clad. Every fisherman had his potato patch on the cliffs and every house its tub of salted pilchards put down for the winter. The Teglio Bros Pilchard Factory took most of the pilchards to put down in oil for the Italian market. Miss Rowett used to say that the good health of the children was due to the pilchard oil, since pilchards formed so much of their diet. Boots were a great trouble. Mother started up a Penny Bank in connection with the Post Office, grown ups had books as well as children, nearly always when money was drawn out it was for boots.

Most of our real friends lived in Polperro, in those days the ‘gentry’ lived on the hill, here was Johnny Parson, the Vicar, ‘Don’t think he can preach, but he can sing a bit’, had been his recommendation to the living at Talland. He was lazy, but a good man, and always inclined to do a kind action. With him lived his sister, a bit of a shrew with a spiteful tongue. When old and bedridden her complaint was that no one would quarrel with her any more. On the hill the Perrycosts built a very ugly house. He had a reputation for cleverness, but I never heard of anything he did or said that confirmed this. My father, I believe, liked him and enjoyed going to see him. Mrs. Perrycost was a good artist and botanist, but inclined to be affected, and at times hysterical. She was a very kind woman and her class of G.F.S. girls liked her, if they laughed at her. But she shocked Aunt Sally by her modern ideas on religion, especially on Sunday observances, which were Continental.

Captain and Mrs. Pond lived on the plat, a daughter of theirs married a Mr. Butler, an artist, and they built a house on the ground belonging to Miss Rowett, a Pond relation. He was an excellent artist, but had no push or commercial ability. Of his family, his four daughters were all artistic in their own way. Alice could turn an ugly house into a thing of beauty, Mary was musical, Ruth had an excellent dress sense, and Nancy so many talents, it seems a pity they were kept hidden from the public. Her house and garden were, with very little unskilled help, very beautiful. She painted miniatures, and when the house needed a new roof, she wrote articles for Blackwood’s Magazine to pay for it. Miss Carthew had a modern house overlooking the harbour. She gave many tea parties to which we went unwillingly, for as children we somewhat feared and disliked her. Best of all friends were the cottage Aunties, their long low house was always open to us for a bed or a meal. A lemon verbena grew over part of it, and was impossible to pass without picking a bit to keep in ones pocket. Auntie Hannah and Auntie Sally, her friend, were so called by us as by Auntie Hannah’s own nieces.

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5 Talland Hill
6 A flat bit of land
Auntie Hannah was the daughter of a merchant captain, she had relations in Burma, tea planters, with whom she had spent some years as a girl. She was steeped in the history of Polperro, and loved the people. She was always trying to persuade them to buy their cottages, then very cheap, and would lend them money to do so. But alas, they rather despised her as ‘one of us’, because she lent money, not gave it, as the ‘real gentry’ did. Well perhaps she was rather inclined to interfere in their private lives! Auntie Sally was a north-country woman, but we only knew her as an old inhabitant of the cottage. The two friends were very unlike each other, Auntie Sally petite with soft brown hair brushed back from a centre parting, very quiet and gentle, but very decided on all questions of morals and religion. I remember a supper party when the Bible Society delegate was staying in the house, he remarked that no one nowadays believed that the creation took place exactly as described in the book of Genesis. Poor Aunt Sally kept quiet until he retired, then said “Hannah, I hope that young man will never enter this house again”. I believe Auntie Hannah had been inclined to agree with the delegate, but although she seemed to be the leader I think she always gave in to Aunt Sally. The Aunties were fond of children and brought up several nieces. Carrie Rowett I never knew except as a very pleasant grown up, but Louise Betts was a contemporary of mine and each Easter I was sent to stay a week at the cottage. I disliked this, for I had to sew, practise my piece on the piano, and write answers to Bible questions. I excelled at none of these pastimes, nor could I compete with Louise who was an adept. Louise was a very good child but many years later she told me that ‘being a good child was not much fun’. She loved to spend a day with us at Talland, where I bullied her, but she would always come if she could and if things got too bad claimed protection from Winnie who was ‘always kind’. Ruth and Nancy Butler were the last nieces to live at the cottage and when grown sometimes complained of having been too severely dealt with. But to us the Aunties were always kind and indulgent. Aunt Sally’s little blue books of scripture verses, occasional story books, Little Susie’s Six Birthdays and Bruey are two I remember which were much treasured and Auntie Hannah’s Christmas gifts often exciting. Once Job’s wagonette delivered an armchair for me and a table for Winnie, this when we had our own rooms. I think the boys enjoyed the cottage as much as the girls, Fred and Ralph after going out with the fishing fleet often spent the remainder of the night there. Fred, though he complained that he was made to mow the lawn, continued to go even as a subaltern on leave, and he was allowed to romp with Ruth and Nancy to their hearts content. They, with Corina and myself, were bridesmaids at his wedding.

Miss Farr was another dear friend who lived on the Warren. She enjoyed all young things and made us welcome at any time. Later a Miss Vawdry took the cottage next door and the two old ladies would stand on their steps both claiming each passing friend. We felt very indignant on Miss Farr’s behalf, she, we said, was an old friend. There were many other friends around Talland and Polperro, Mr. Puckey a retired boatswain Royal Navy, who taught us to swim and sail a boat. When we were very small we greeted him with, “throw me up in your arms Mr. Puckey”. At Easter when reclaiming his boat from Looe, which had been there to be painted, he would call at Talland and take Winnie and me to walk with him and sail back. We were very proud on one occasion to be taken for his daughters, this no disloyalty to my Father, but Mr. Puckey was such a grand man who owned a boat! Mr. Braden the postman was a friend. Once to cheer up the long desert months between Christmas and summer birthdays he brought us letters addressed to us, usually advertisements in old envelopes. Old Mrs. Dart, if not exactly a friend, was an excitement. She walked from Plymouth to Truro carrying three baskets of tin ware, one basket balanced on her
head, calling at every house on the way. Mother, when she bought for the kitchen, would also buy patty pans for us with which we made cakes on the beach. In later years the daughter at home would take round the Parish magazine and the Church Army Gazette, or collect for the Bible Society. This meant visits to farms and cottages. Mrs. Medland, the wife of a farm labourer at Portlooee, was a true gentlewoman, one would be proud to call her a friend. She brought up an idiot nephew who was so clean, tidy, well mannered and happy, no one could have found him strange. Amongst all the many friends these stand out and are all connected with Talland, for I never lived at Polperro except for a year or two before Mother died and again for four years before the house was sold.

I was not in England when my Father died at Ralph’s house at Ferndown in the New Forest. He left the cottage in Polperro and what money he had to Catherine and myself, but to Ralph his thanks for very much kindness. When I heard the news I felt there was a great blank in my life. My Father had for many yeas been my chief confident and I had stored up many things to discus with him. My Mother was much loved in Polperro, her eightieth birthday party was to have been a purely family affair, we were all at home apart from Winnie in India who was represented by her son Denys, then at the R.N.E college at Devonport. News of the birthday party had penetrated the village and on the morning of November 2nd flowers began to arrive. It seemed as if every family had sent some and soon it was difficult to find jar or jug in which to put them. Dinner in the evening was family only, Fred and Rowland wore uniform and all who had medals wore them. We gave my mother her first wireless set and Denys presented a clock from the eight grandchildren. Mother, after her eightieth birthday, still continued to garden. The Penny Bank and the children’s library ended when they were no longer needed, but she kept on with the Mother’s Union until she died. So many of the members were Methodist or Wesleyan that the rather strict churchwomen at county headquarters began to get restive, but Mother was always a law unto herself and went her own way. The Polperro Mother’s Union was carried on by Catherine in the old pattern until 1939, when it came to a temporary end. When again revived, it was more of a Church institution, which I think it still is. How well I remember the meeting in 1938. It was the Christmas tea party, presided over by Catherine, and afterwards at her earnest wish, all the members filed through Mother’s bedroom to say ‘goodbye’. Mother died in January 1939. Winnie asked Bertram Puckey, the gardener, to make arrangements for the funeral and he decided it must be ‘real Cornish, old style’. So the men came to the house and before lifting the coffin sang some of Charles Wesley’s beautiful hymns, and then, in the village, sang again. A crowd followed us round the cliff path and there was another stop at the highest point where the 1914-1918 war memorial looks out to sea. A granite Cross raised to the dead of the parish, and also as a thank offering for the safe return of her four sons, and then given by my parents to the Parish Council.

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7 This war memorial now has the names of those killed in the 1939-1945 war, including those of two of MFJ’s grandsons.
One more stop, and singing, then up the hill to the Church she had served for thirty years where Mr. Lewis, the Vicar, met us. The Church was crowded and there was a great volume of sound, dominated by men’s voices in the singing of her favourite hymn, Fight the good Fight, and then, very quietly, the singing of the Mother’s Union hymn by members only. How could one be sad at such a happy farewell party, with so many friends there to say ‘goodbye’?

Mother used to say laughing, ‘if you want to please my Mother’s Union, give me a good funeral!’ It was a few days later that I was in Percy Oliver’s shop and Mrs. Oliver lent over the counter to say “Oh it was lovely, if I could have a funeral like that I would gladly die tomorrow”

What else do I remember of Talland? The rats that ran along the inside walls and rang the old fashioned bells. They may have been responsible for the ghost; for a bell would ring, feet patter up the passage to the dining room door, and then, if you went to look, there was no one there. There was a story Fanny used to tell. She and Louise the parlour maid, who also came to us from Godalming, were both very frightened of rats and would not go to the back kitchen after dark alone. One night when our parents were away, a late telegram arrived for Louise and she and Fanny received it. Louise’s mother was ill and, convinced that the wire was to tell of her death, they sat and wept on the back stairs until at last Emily the nursemaid heard the noise and persuaded them to open it. It was from my father, “Tell Turner, (the gardener) not to forget to feed the pigs”. In her last illness Fanny blamed my father for the fright he
gave them, unjustly I think, for I believe the reminder was needed. Both Fanny and Louise had sweethearts in Polperro and both of them insisted on the men joining the navy. Louise broke off her engagement and returned to Godalming. She was a very pretty girl, ‘pitty Louise’ I used to call her. She never married and she and Fanny kept up a friendship into extreme old age. Joe Gedye, Fanny’s husband, rose to be stoker chief Petty Officer, and since his book had no black mark, his widow got a special pension from the Royal Benevolent Fund. In early married days Fanny led a hard life, eking out her separation allowance by making the thick flannel vests worn by the A.B.S. After the 1914-1918 was she and Joe bought a small house in Devonport. When the bombing started in 1940 Fanny and Jo went to Polperro where they stayed, first with Catherine and afterwards made their own arrangements until they could return to Devonport. Fanny ended her days at Plympton Nursing Home, run by Anglican nuns, and never understood why fees for a single room with nursing and maintenance should rise from £3 to £4 a week. She had asked Rowland to manage her bank account, so he was able to pay the fees without troubling her.

Another Talland memory is of the food we ate. Apples used to be picked up and eaten anytime, and they formed much of our diet. Apple tart and baked apple dumplings, or mixed with blackberries, were all good. Stewed apple not so good and apple and rice horrible. Once, mother being away, Catherine was housekeeper and decided to be very economical, so we had stewed apples on Monday, rice pudding on Tuesday and apples and rice on Wednesday, Sunday, with its tradition of apple tart, being the only break. Gooseberries at Whitsun, rhubarb at Easter, blackberry pudding in the Autumn. There was fish of our own catching or from the jowters baskets, fresh into the frying pan, mushrooms picked at dawn and cooked for breakfast with bacon, or stewed in milk, saffron cake hot from the baker’s oven in Polperro, which we took to eat when out fishing. We had very few sweets, only at Christmas or Birthdays, and these, by tradition, must be handed all around, including maids and the boy. Once I had a small box of Fuller’s chocolates for my birthday and when these were handed round there were none left for me. Ashamed to complain I retired to my pine tree to cry. Old memories crowd in on me, one recalls the other and if I put down everything I shall never leave Talland.

School days had to come, and I hardly know if liked or disliked them. Rowland, two and a half years younger, was my first school fellow. Together we suffered and defeated two really very silly governesses. Then we went to Miss Farr in Polperro. Miss Farr, a late comer to Polperro, had been an excellent governess, and was certainly able to keep order in her very mixed school of boys and girls aged five to fourteen or fifteen. I learnt nothing there, but with much help made a hair tidy for my mother’s birthday, a round tin covered in blue satin and pink crochet work, which I later found in the rubbish bin, a suitable place, I thought, for I did not admire it at all. I also received a prize for writing which was pure favouritism for my writing was, as even I knew, appalling. There were three big girls, daughters of Merchant captains, and a daughter of the baker, a clergyman’s son, besides Rowland and myself, and others whose names I don’t remember. It was pleasant enough and we enjoyed the walk of one and a half miles, a rush down and up steep hills in the morning and a leisurely walk home round the cliff in the late afternoon. Often to find tea with the little ones waiting on the beach, and there was a bathe before we climbed the last hill to bed.

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8 A travelling fishmonger
9 These must have been Bertrand and cousin Mary Knight
Rowland at eight years old went off to Hillside, Godalming, with Eton suit and top hat, where all his brothers were educated. I joined my sisters at Worcester High School, afterwards known as the Alice Otttley School. After we went away to school I remember the first day of the summer holidays was the happiest day of the year. Ralph, as an elderly gentleman, said that and I realised how entirely I agreed with him. We travelled to Looe by coach, or later by train through the Looe valley, a lovely journey by the river with banks of high growing balsam. The pony carriage met us at Looe and so home. Walking up the long hills, ambling through the lanes and holidays really began at Port Looe, where honey-suckle, wild rose, Queen Anne’s lace and a thousand scents and glories of a passing summer day flooded the senses with endless joy. My school days were half over when the train came to Looe from Liskeard. At first we would have none of it, but alas it meant a later start of one hour and neither parents or children could resist this, and when the mail was sent by train the coach itself had to give up. Early days had meant a 6.30 breakfast, pony to harness, four miles to drive, and then in winter Mr. Martin at the coach station to take us to his office for a warm up before the coach started.

I never thought I should be glad to leave Talland, but the relief was immense when the sale of some furniture was over, the storage vans had left and Mother and I retired to the Romanis’ house, lent to us, with Mabel Puckey in the kitchen. Many things I would gladly enjoy again, scent and sounds I recall vividly, sitting on the field gate listening to the lambs and ewes calling to each other. Wind through the fir trees, summer waves, ripples drifting over the shingle or splashing on the sands. The cry of the seagulls before a storm, the hoot of the barn owl, the screech owl was frightening though I knew it for what it was. Once I heard it and, looking out of my window, saw a big white bird with immense spread of wing, rise slowly from the ground and make off. It was too big for an owl and I thought it a heron from Looe River.

The Jerram family left Talland Vicarage in 1919, “Talland had now to be given up, Johnny Parson retired and the new vicar wanted the vicarage to live in, and anyway it was too large for the reduced family”, only Muriel’s mother and sister, Catherine, with occasional visits from other members of the family. They moved to Stone Cottage, on the Warren in Polperro, into a house which had been built for them. There they stayed until Catherine and Muriel finally left to move to Devon in 1950. Muriel died in the WVS home in Exeter in 1975.
APPENDIX 1
Account of the Funeral of Maria Florence Jerram, nee Knight, who died at Polperro Cornwall, 27th January, 1939 by Bertram Puckey, Polperro, her gardener and one of the Pall Bearers.

It was on Tuesday the last day of the Month of January in the years Nineteen Hundred and Thirty Nine, when eighteen stalwart fisherman in their blue jerseys met at the home of the late Mrs. Jerram for that to them was the great honour to carry the one that they had known, many from mere children who had known her loving and devoted good deeds. With the sole desire of paying their last tribute of carrying her to her last resting place along the narrow cliff path to Talland Church yard, which near her old home must have been her suitable reward. The sight was unique, as they stood outside her home, with their heads bowed in the winter breeze, their lusty voices sang that wonderful old Hymn “Where the sun never sets, and the leaves never fade”. What a suitable farewell. The Grand old Hills she loved surrounded the scene and seemed to join in the refrain and echo back the tuneful strains of these brave toilers of the deep, of whom that dear mother had such love and respect. The adjoining restless sea too seemed to join in by adding its deep tones to that sad but impressive scene. Then along the cliffs the cortege was borne through the narrow path by the Coastguard look-out, past the Watering and on to Downend, where just beneath the cross she erected to the heroes who had lost their lives in the Great War, a halt was made and the stalwart fishermen bared their heads and helped by the mothers of whom the dear old Lady loved and helped so well, they united, and sang that lovely old Hymn, so dearly loved by Cornish folk, “Land Ahead”. Their voices rang out across the bay and echoes of that song will long remain in the memories of those that heard it then. Then the procession wended its way down the hill past Lake Rock, through the gate at Warren Style along the narrow path to Sand Hill where that dear old church came in view and with that ancient and Wonderful Norman Structure which seemed to be viewing the procession and seemed to be eagerly waiting to receive a most loving and devoted daughter into its sacred precincts. Then over the Talland bridge and up the steep Hill in through the main entrance that hill and path she knew and loved so well. Then resting in that beautiful old Norman Church, amid the gathering that had followed her over the hills to pay their last respects to a dear Lady who had devoted her life to good work, was an impressive finish to a simple and beautiful ceremony which had followed on foot a road which no-one can remember had ever been taken – a most suitable journey for an extraordinary Mother.

Lifes race well run
Lifes work well done
Lifes victory won
Now cometh Rest