

CHAPTER THREE

The Nash family come to live on the Isle of Wight

3.1 Basil, Rose and Betty NASH stay with Aunt Bet at the Stag Inn

As we have already discovered, my grandfather, Basil John NASH, returned from working in Canada in 1914 after the death of his younger sister Dorothy. A year later, on 3 November 1915, he married my grandmother, Rose Emma ATKINS, in St Mellitis Church, Hanwell (Middlesex) and they then lived at Croft Cottage, Eton Road, Datchet, close to Basil's parents, Benjamin and Frances NASH (see 1.4.1). On 13 January 1916, only two months after their marriage, Basil was called up to serve in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. My mother, Betty Rosamond NASH, was born in Windsor on 14 August 1916. Two years later, on 7 May 1918, Basil was discharged from the Labour Corps as no longer fit for service. He had badly swollen glands in his neck, which a doctor misdiagnosed as an abscess and treated by lancing, which resulted in a long and painful illness.



Figure 3.1: Betty, aged 3, on the beach at Lake

who helped her to achieve this, as he had by then started his taxi business in Ventnor. Betty started school at Bruntsfield School on the cliffs at Lake, and she recalled going to the Church of the Good Shepherd just up the road from the Stag Inn.

It was only in 2017 that I discovered that Aunt Bet had had a son, Raymond, who is commemorated on the War Memorial in Lake and also on a plaque and a window in the Church of the Good Shepherd (see 2.4). I am surprised that neither my mother nor my grandmother ever mentioned this, but perhaps my mother was unaware, as Raymond had died the year before she was born and, at the time that she was living with Aunt Bet, she would have been too young to be aware of the impact of his death.

Basil's doctors had recommended that he should convalesce somewhere near the sea, and so Basil, Rose and my mother, Betty, left Datchet and went to stay at the Stag Inn with Basil's aunt, Aunt Bet. However, on 3 December 1920, Basil died of tubercular meningitis in St Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

After his death, Rose and four-year old Betty remained with Aunt Bet at the Stag Inn for a while before moving back to London. Rose was a qualified teacher, but she bought a Ford car and took up driving a taxi on the Island for a time. This was quite a courageous thing to embark on in the early 1920s and she was one of only two female taxi drivers on the Island at that time. It may well have been Basil's brother, Gerald,



Figure 3.2: Rose in her taxi driver's outfit



*Figure 3.3: The Church of the Good Shepherd, Lake
The window commemorating Raymond TRINDER is on the left*



Figure 3.4: The Stag Inn, with the wooden carving of a stag above the door

Photo from Postcard

Rose and Betty then returned to live in the Ealing area of London, where Rose went back to teaching and Betty attended Haberdashers' Aske's School, trained as a teacher and then taught in London. For a number of years they lived together at 10 Highdown, Worcester Park (Surrey) and it was here, through the choir and the lively youth group at St John's Church, Old Malden, that Betty met and married my father, Donald Walter CLOUGH, in 1951. Initially they lived in North Cheam (Surrey), and then, three years later in September 1954, they moved to live in Ventnor, as we will discover later in **3.6.1**.

3.2 Gerald NASH and his family in Ventnor

Basil's older brother, Gerald Kimber NASH, married Nina (Nan) Anne Louise Stuart RONALDS on 4 December 1918 in Farnborough (Hampshire), where Gerald was working as an engineer at the Royal Aircraft Establishment. Gerald and Nan then moved to live in Ventnor on the Isle of Wight. Their son, John_{N4} Stuart NASH, was born there on 7 June 1921 and their second son, Douglas, was born in 1930.



Figure 3.5: Betty with her cousins, John_{N4} and Douglas NASH

John_{N4} NASH told me:

It was Aunt Bet who had suggested to my father that setting up a motor business in Ventnor would be a good idea. After the war he went to the Island to visit Aunt Bet and she said there was only one proper garage in Ventnor and why not go and take a look. He borrowed some money from his mother, Frances, and purchased 23 Pier Street, in Ventnor. He bought a car and worked as a taxi driver, getting up early in the morning, and also doing car repairs, while his wife, Nan, sent out the bills. After a while he had a taxi and a driver. Then he bought a coach and purchased another property at 1 Pier Street. This had an enormous piece of land and lock-up garages at the rear. He got a foreman and a mechanic and it all grew. In addition he ran a coach company, Nash's Coaches, and acquired a property on the High Street and he also bought a shop on Victoria Street where he had a petrol station. He was an entrepreneur.



Figure 3.6: One of Gerald NASH's early cars



Figure 3.7: A later fleet of cars

Photo by permission of Terry Nigh



Figure 3.8: The Nash family on Ventnor beach (around 1933?)
 L to R: John^{NA}, Betty, unidentified, Douglas, unidentified, Gerald, Nan

At Nan's suggestion the coaches were all named after characters in *The Song of Hiawatha*, the poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Red Chief, Hiawatha, Minnehaha, etc. They took summer visitors for trips to various beauty spots and on popular tours around the Island. Nash's Garage with its workshops and showroom was a flourishing business in Ventnor.



Figure 3.9: A 'Red Chief' outing, 1925

Photo by permission of Geoff Golding



Figure 3.10: The 'Red Chief' charabanc outside the Volunteer public house on Victoria Street, Ventnor
 Photo by permission of Geoff Golding

3.3 Benjamin and Frances NASH move to Ventnor, followed by Aunt Bet¹

Gerald's business success meant that Ventnor now became the Nash family focus. Soon after Basil's death in 1920, with none of their immediate family living nearby, Benjamin and Frances NASH moved from Datchet to live in the flat at 23 Pier Street, Ventnor, with Gerald (Gerry), who was their only surviving child. Benjamin and Frances, Gerald, Nan and their young son John_{N4} lived there together until 1926.

Benjamin and Frances then moved into the flat just along the road at 1 Pier Street, where they remained until Benjamin's death in 1929, aged 77. In 1923^{RE}, at the age of 70, Aunt Bet gave up running the Stag Inn in Lake and moved to live in Pound Lane, Ventnor (the little road leading to the workshops at the back of Nash's Garage). She lived there for three years and then in 1926^{RE} moved round the corner for a couple of years to 2 Albert Street, which was just across the road from Gerry and Nan's flat at 23 Pier Street. After Benjamin NASH's death, Frances continued to live in the flat at 1 Pier Street, Ventnor, where she was joined by Aunt Bet, her half-sister. Frances died nine years later in 1938, aged 71, and was buried in the cemetery in Datchet, near Windsor, in the same grave as her husband Benjamin, their daughter Dorothy Gertrude Linstead and their son Basil (see Figures 3.12 & 3.13). This was where, in 1985, my grandmother Rose was also buried.²



Figure 3.11: 1 Pier Street, Ventnor

¹ For locations in Ventnor which feature in the family history, see Map 10.

² Location of the grave of Benjamin, Frances, Dorothy, Basil and Rose NASH: Datchet Cemetery, plot ref: B278.

IN LOVING MEMORY
 DOROTHY GERTRUDE LINSTEAD NASH, DIED APRIL 23rd, 1914, AGED 11 YEARS
 BASIL JOHN NASH, DIED 3rd DECEMBER 1920, AGED 31
 BENJAMIN EDWARD NASH, DIED MARCH 14TH 1929, AGED 77
 FRANCES EMILY NASH, BORN 17th MAY 1866, DIED 17th MARCH 1938
 ROSE EMMA NASH, DIED 2nd NOV 1985, AGED 95

Figure 3.12: The inscriptions on the Nash family grave in Datchet Cemetery

3.4 John_{N4} NASH's memories of his grandparents and Aunt Bet

In a conversation with John_{N4} in December 2017, he talked about some childhood memories of his grandparents and Aunt Bet:

I remember one day when the sea was very rough, my grandmother and Aunt Bet took me and Dougie, who was in a pushchair, to see the massive waves. We stood by the boating lake watching the waves crashing against the sea wall. My grandmother was frightened that a wave would hit Dougie in the pushchair and she stepped backwards, and fell straight into the boating lake. She let go of the pushchair and I caught hold of it. I helped her out. She was wearing a beautiful fur coat, but she looked like a drowned rat. It was really laughable and I couldn't stop laughing. I was still having a chuckle when we got back to number 23 [Pier Street], but my father was as mad as a snake and said 'It's no laughing matter!'

I used to spend a lot of time with Aunt Bet until I was sixteen, when I went to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough as an apprentice. Aunt Bet was lovely. She was very gentle, relaxed and good humoured. She was extremely kind.

My grandmother was very kind to me too. She was a great fan of making home-made wine — parsnip, dandelion and that sort of thing. I remember she had just made some parsnip wine when I called in to see her at number 1 [Pier Street] on my way home from school one day. She said she had just made this new batch and asked if I would like some. I did, and said 'It's really lovely, Grandma'. So she asked if I would like another one. When I went to walk down the street to number 23 I was wobbling! My grandmother was a very Victorian lady. She always wore a long skirt, a striped blouse, gold earrings with a diamond in the centre, tied-back hair, black shoes with a buckle, and stockings.

I didn't know at the time what the problem was with my grandfather [he was suffering from depression as a result of the death of his daughter Dorothy: see 1.4.1]. He was confined to bed for most of the time, but when he did come downstairs he was immaculate, wearing a beautiful grey suit and polished black shoes.



Figure 3.13: The Nash family grave at Datchet Cemetery



Figure 3.14: Ventnor Boating Lake, now a car park

Photo from Postcard

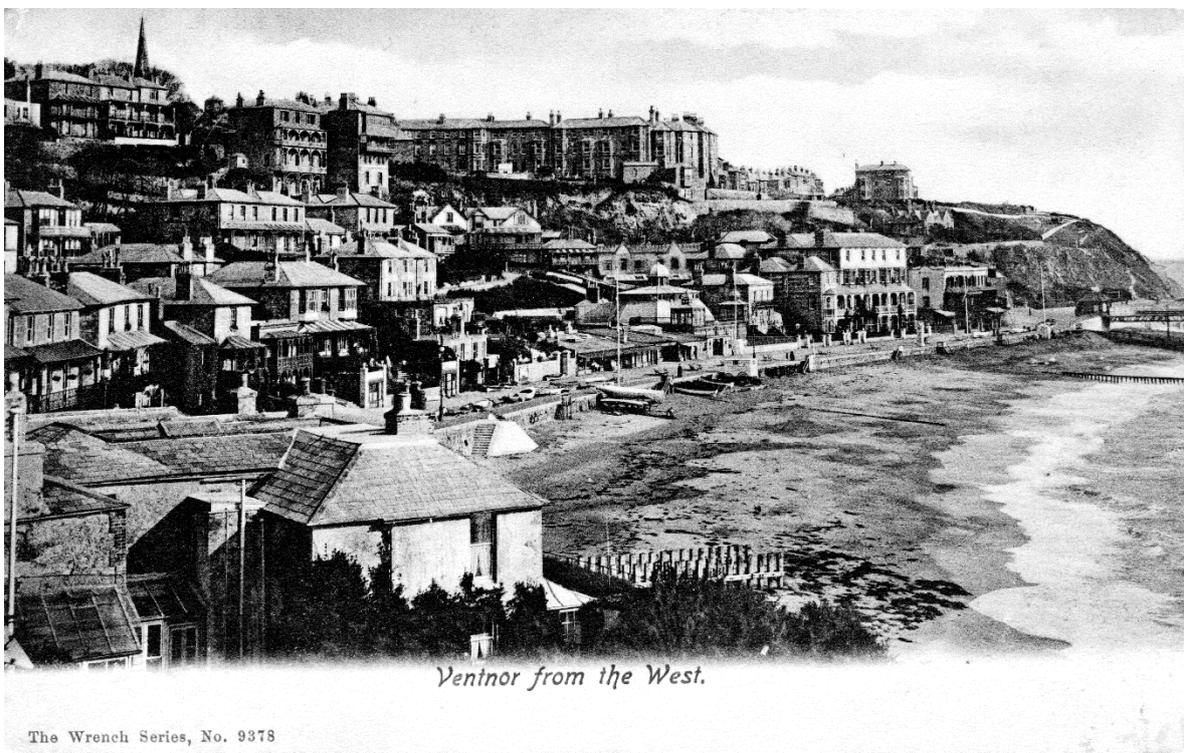


Figure 3.15: Ventnor beach — the spire on St Catherine's Church shows that this view is pre 1921

Photo from Postcard

3.5 Gerald NASH's family and business

We now return to Gerry's family and business ventures. As time went on, Gerry had also acquired a petrol station in the nearby village of Niton and moved there with his family to live in the adjoining house which they named 'Linstead', after Gerry's grandmother Sarah Linstead (see 1.3.1).

Gerry and Nan NASH's eldest son, John_{N4}, was set on the idea of becoming a journalist, but in 1937, when he was only sixteen, his father encouraged him to take up an engineering apprenticeship at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) in Farnborough (Hampshire). In 1942, Nan's niece from Bournemouth, Tina RONALDS, came as a baby to live with the family for several months. A few years later, in 1948, tragedy struck the NASH family when Gerry and Nan's younger son, Douglas, developed cancer and died, aged only eighteen. Soon after this Tina returned to Ventnor and spent the rest of her childhood and teenage years with Gerry and Nan. Tina lives in Godshill and she is the last link with the Nash family still to be living on the Isle of Wight.



Figure 3.16: The Linstead nameplate on the gate of what was the house of Gerry and Nan NASH in Niton

3.5.1 John_{N4} NASH

During the war John_{N4} was part of the team at RAE that developed the Gyro Gunsight, a device that greatly improved the accuracy of fighter pilot gunfire, increasing the hit-rate and thus saving many Allied pilots' lives. In 1953 he married Thelma DAVIES and they lived for a time in Ventnor, where he helped his father to develop the business. They then moved to the mainland and after a period working at Crown Agents, Scribbans-Kemp and English Electric, John_{N4} moved to work at Harwell and the family settled in Newbury (Berkshire). John_{N4} later commuted from Newbury to work at the National Research Development Corporation in London.

John_{N4} and Thelma had four sons, Gareth Stuart (born 1955), Gregory Kimber (born 1957), Howard Roderic (born 1960) and Carl Greville (born 1964). It was another devastating blow for all the family when their son Gregory died, aged only five, as a result of chickenpox. Again we see family names being used as given names: Kimber from Gerry's family and Stuart from Nan's family.



Figure 3.17: John_{N4} and Thelma's wedding, 1953



Figure 3.18: Gerry, Nan, Howard, Gareth and Gregory NASH



Figure 3.19: Tina RONALDS with her uncle, Gerry NASH, on her wedding day in 1965



Figure 3.20: Betty NASH with, Tina RONALDS, Gerry NASH and his dog Seamus on Bembridge beach, 1952

3.5.2 Nash's Garage

Gerald Nash died in June 1970 and was buried in Ventnor Cemetery. After his death Nan moved to live in Newbury with her son John_{N4} and his wife Thelma. Nan died in May 1994, just a week after her 100th birthday. Thelma died five years later in 1999. It is sad that all Gerry and Nan's family photos and records were destroyed in a fire in 1970 when they were being kept in storage in Newbury.



Figure 3.21: John^{N4} and Thelma NASH



Figure 3.22: Nan NASH



Figure 3.23: Nash's Garage, with 1 Pier Street to the left and terrace above

Photo by permission of Terry Nigh

Nash's Garage continued until Gerry's death in June 1970. Gerry NASH is mentioned, along with a number of photos of his cars and coaches, in the fascinating books written by Mark Chessell which chart the development of the car and the coach businesses on the Island: Chessell (2012 and 2017). Mark has kindly shared photos with me, as has Geoff Golding, who has for a number of years been restoring the Red Chief charabanc shown in Figures 3.9 & 3.10. I am grateful too for the other photos

that have been shared by Terry Nigh, whose father Stanley knew Gerry NASH well. Stanley Nigh bought the Morris Isis reg no. MDL 291 which is featured in the photo of the showroom (Figure 3.25).



Figure 3.24: Nash's BP Petrol Station in Victoria Street

Photo by permission of Terry Nigh



Figure 3.25: The Nash's Garage showroom with MDL 291 in the foreground

Photo by permission of Terry Nigh



Figure 3.26: Nash's Coach Tours depot on Pier Street

Photo by permission of Terry Nigh

3.6 Basil NASH's daughter, Betty

3.6.1 Betty and Donald arrive in Ventnor

As previously mentioned, my mother Betty, who was Basil and Rose NASH's only daughter, married Donald CLOUGH at St John's Church, Old Malden in 1951. They lived nearby at 147 Henley Avenue, North Cheam, and their first two children were born in Epsom: John Francis in 1952 and myself, Mary Priscilla, in 1954. At the time Gerry NASH's business, Nash's Garage, badly needed an accountant, and Betty's cousin, John_{N4} NASH, suggested that Donald should come to work with his father. So six weeks after my birth, Betty and Donald moved to Ventnor and both Betty's mother, Rose Emma NASH (née ATKINS), and Donald's mother, Ada Sabra CLOUGH (née FREEBORN), moved to Ventnor to be near the family.³ Donald worked for Betty's Uncle Gerry for fourteen years, from 1954 to 1968.

Betty and Donald lived in the flat at 1 Pier Street with their young family for a couple of years before they bought a piece of land in Madeira Vale, between Ventnor and Bonchurch, where they had a house built which they called 'Beechcroft' because of the large and very beautiful copper beech tree in the garden. Soon after moving there, in 1957, their third child, Elizabeth Joanna (Liz), was born in Newport. Rose was a skilled seamstress and Ada was a fervent knitter and so our grandmothers kept us kitted out with handmade clothes.



Figure 3.27: Donald and Betty's wedding
31 March, 1951

³ Rose lived at Greystoke, Southgrove Road, Ventnor, and Ada lived at 23 South Street, Ventnor.



Figure 3.28: 'Beechcroft', Madeira Vale, Ventnor — the home of Betty and Donald and family

John and I started school at Longdown Infants' School in South Street, and after it closed Liz and I went to St Margaret's Infants' School in Upper Ventnor. We all attended Leeson Road Junior School, but John had shown an exceptional musical talent and when he was seven he went to the Choir School of All Saints' Margaret Street, London. I went to Sandown Grammar School until we left the Island in 1968, travelling by steam train until the line was closed in 1966.



Figure 3.29: John riding the stone horse on the roof garden at 1 Pier Street



Figure 3.30: Mary and her grandmother Rose on Bonchurch beach



Figure 3.31: Betty and John with Tina on Ventnor beach



Figure 3.32: John learning to drive at Uncle Gerry's petrol station in Niton

Betty was a teacher, and once we were all at school, she went back to teaching, initially as a supply teacher at the infant, junior and secondary schools in Ventnor, and eventually as a class teacher at St Margaret's Infants' School in Upper Ventnor. Betty and Donald were very involved in St Alban's Church, Ventnor, where Donald was a churchwarden for many years, and Betty was a member of the choir and the Mothers' Union. They were key members of the Ventnor Recorded Music Society. As children we were all encouraged musically and we had a freedom which children rarely experience these days, walking on the downs and swimming at nearby Wheeler's Bay. We all certainly benefitted from living in such a beautiful place in the shadow of St Boniface Down and near the sea.



Figure 3.33: John, Betty, Liz, Mary and Donald, and their dog, Dunky, at Beechcroft

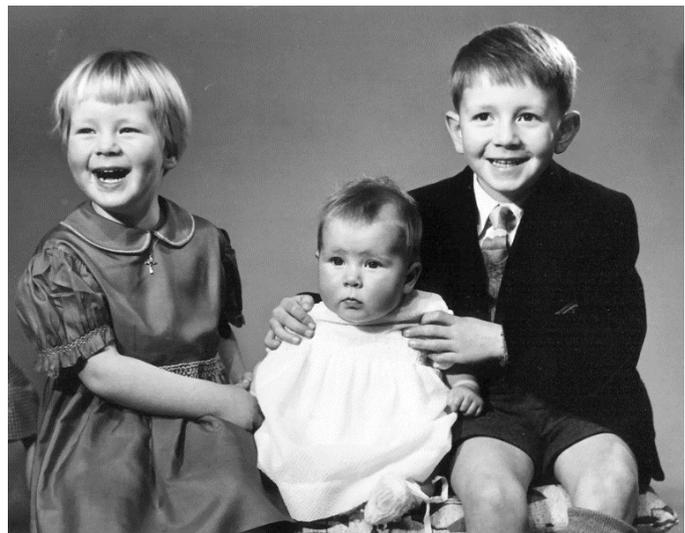


Figure 3.34: Mary, Liz and John, 1957



Figure 3.35: Ventnor Carnival 1956. Our family watched the procession every year from the roof terrace above Nash's Garage⁴

⁴ I think that it could be Betty sitting on the post above the Thistle sign, and Donald to the left — maybe John and I, aged 4 and 2, are peeping through the balustrade.

3.6.2 Betty's family leave the Island

By 1968, the business at Nash's Garage was winding down and Donald left the Island to take up a new job as the accountant to the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, and so the Clough family (plus both grandmothers) moved to the mainland to live in Wantage (Oxfordshire). Leaving the Island was a big wrench for all the family and the Island never lost its charm for them.

Betty worked as a classroom teacher at a delightful traditional village school in East Hanney near Wantage. It was a great tragedy to Betty and Donald and all the family that, on 29 November 1977, their son John died as a result of liver disease at the age of 25. John was a very gifted musician: his musical career, which took him to be a cathedral organist at Gloucester Cathedral and St Albans Abbey, had started as a chorister at Holy Trinity Church, Ventnor. He had a wonderful way of getting people of all ages enjoying making music. A bursary in his memory was set up at St Alban's School to encourage promising young musicians.



Figure 3.36: John at St Albans Abbey



Figure 3.37: Four generations — Betty, Rose, Frances & Mary

My grandmother Ada died in 1981, aged 78, and Rose died in Wantage in 1985, aged 95. Her ashes were interred in Basil's family grave in Datchet (see Figures 3.12 & 3.13). A few months later, in February 1986, Betty and Donald moved to live in Cambridge to be nearer to myself and Liz and our families.

Betty and Donald enjoyed life in Cambridge and being nearby to see all their five grandchildren growing up. In their retirement Betty took up calligraphy and Donald developed an interest in gardening and they both enjoyed listening to Donald's extensive collection of recorded music. Betty died in Cambridge on 17 November 2006, three months after her 90th birthday. The family scattered her ashes on the Downs at Ventnor, within sight of the house 'Beechcroft', where they had lived and



Figure 3.38: Liz and Rose at Wantage

been so very happy. Donald died on 28 October 2014, six weeks before his 90th birthday. His ashes are buried in the churchyard at Little St Mary's Church, Cambridge, where he and Betty had been committed members of the congregation for many years.



Figure 3.39: Betty and Donald on Betty's 90th birthday

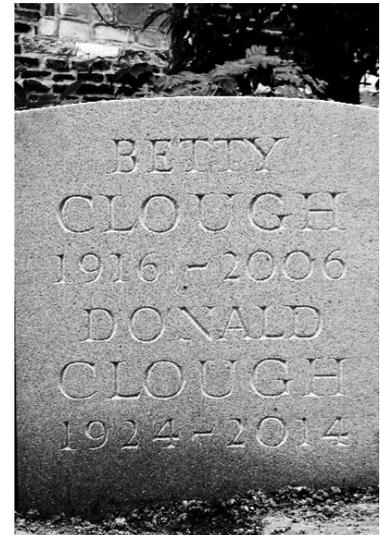


Figure 3.40: Betty and Donald's memorial stone at Little St Mary's Church, Cambridge



Figure 3.41: Our family's favourite view from St Boniface Down, overlooking 'Beechcroft'

3.7 Mary and Chris POUNTAIN come to Ventnor

I left the Island when I was fourteen but, having grown up there, it is certainly where I have always felt my roots are. Although my own return to the Island is not as a permanent resident, Chris and I and our family have been frequent visitors since 1984 when we bought our holiday home, 'Chelsea

Cottage', in South Street, Ventnor. It is in the same street as my grandmother Ada's house, and the building that was previously Longdown Infants' School, where my brother John and I first went to school. 'Chelsea Cottage' has a wonderful sea view and continues to be a favourite place for ourselves and our family, as well as for my sister Liz and her family.

It has been fascinating to discover how through several generations, the Island has been a home for the Nash family and, for many years before that, the Kimbers and the Trinders, and to discover something of the intricacies of the relationships within these families.

A positive aspect of embarking on this research is that it has also helped me to reconnect with John_{N4} and his sons, cousins whom I had not seen since my childhood.