

'Tanglin'
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I think it is a good idea to put together one's story; personally satisfying and certainly of interest to the children. In your case I am sure this would be especially so; the interest in your early childhood experience in Latvia could well extend beyond your family, perhaps the Latvian society or some immigration archive. From time to time I pick away at my early years in Collie and I find I always have something more to add to it. I have (had – he died a few years ago) an army friend who spent his early years during World War II in Hamburg which got plastered during the war. When asked what it was like he used to say it was exciting (for a boy) – so many things happened.

I don't believe I knew a great deal about Susan and Joe (always Mr and Mrs Mac to me) My 2-3 years living in that little house in Rathay Street must have been 1952 and 1953 and early 1954. Jim and I finished high school (Kent Street) at the end of 1949. In that last year of high school I lived with my Mum in a caravan parked behind an old house about half way between the McLaughlin's house and the school. Jim was in a different class to me and I didn't get to really know him until the following year. I can't recall exactly when we became close friends. At the end of 1949 Mum and I had left the caravan and moved for a while in with my grandparents in Bishopgate Street, Carlisle where I lived for about a year. Following that I boarded with a family elsewhere in Vic Park (purely a commercial arrangement) for maybe 6 months and it was then that I picked up with Jim. I had a bust-up with the boarding arrangement and moved in with the McLaughlins, Jim and I sharing the front room. That must have been in 1951. In 1953 Jim and I did our national service, Jim in the Army and I in the navy. I had a further 6 weeks of nasho in 1954 by which time I had moved in with my Mum and stepfather (Tiger Wilton) in their new home at 134 Great Eastern Highway, Belmont. Jim completed his National service obligation in weekend camps and a couple of weeks each year that being the system for army nashos. So that is the time frame. (Incidentally, Jim would be entitled to the National Service medal – quite a nice little bauble, and well deserved. Maybe you already have it although I could imagine Jim would have been a little disdainful. Robert or the girls might be interested)

After completing three years of high school at Kent Street and Junior Certificate, I went to work with the Western Australian Government Railways (WAGR) and Jim went to Perth Modern School to do his leaving. (He was a year or two behind Rolf Harris.) You are probably aware that Jim had rheumatic fever as a child which is said to leave one with a weak heart if strained during the illness in any sort of activity. Hence complete bed-rest is/was required – up to 6 months. Jim had a repeat attack during his final year of Mod and was confined to bed for at least three months. I think he was supposed to do study at home but that wasn't very successful. He certainly spent a lot of time reading – quite hefty tomes I recall – the unabridged version of Arabian Nights and the Decameron but also War and Peace and Crime and Punishment by those Russian authors with unpronounceable names. All of this didn't do his final year's schoolwork much good and his final results were a bit below par. I remember Mrs Mac was quite furious with him – sent him to Coventry for at least a week. I am not sure whether Jim was issued with a leaving Certificate however he had enough credits to get into Teachers Training College where he did very well, especially in English and literature. All of that happened in 1951 and I was well established in my corner of the front room with my drawing board (which I still possess) set up

next to my bed. I was doing an engineer diploma at the Perth Tech in night classes at the time and drawing roof trusses and stress diagrams on my drawing board with pages of calculations.

Our bike riding adventures started probably in 1951 or 52. Initially they were shortish trips into the hills – Kalamunda, the John Forrest National Park, Lesmurdie, in and around Fremantle. We liked exploring and at one time thought of doing a ride to Bunbury down the ‘Old Coach Road’. It was little more than a bridle track then, long out of use, servicing only a few farms on the various inlets. There had been a 19th century celebrated murder somewhere down there and we were anxious to explore the ruins of where it happened. That trip never came off but in the Easter of 1952 we cycled to Bunbury down the Great Southern Highway. We seemed to take just about everything but the kitchen sink – enough food for four days including a chook my Grandmother cooked, warm cloths, bedroll. We left Victoria Park at 4.00 am farewelled by a somewhat anxious Mr and Mrs Mac and got to Armidale fairly quickly and then up the range. (What is that hill called?) The load we were carrying was starting to tell; however, a passing motorist stopped and offered to take our baggage to Picton, describing where they would leave it – the veranda of a house right on the Highway. They seemed a decent couple and we quickly off-loaded our gear into the boot of their car. One thing we hadn’t reckoned on was the fact that the motor cycle TT races took place in Bunbury each Easter, through the streets of Bunbury and there were countless motor cycles screaming past us all the way down, not being too careful of the pair of lonely cyclists on that then narrow and winding highway. Nevertheless, we made Picton on the outskirts of Bunbury just before sunset, located our gear, loaded up and continued into Bunbury. We were both totally exhausted and thankfully found a treed park just before the city where we off-loaded and camped the night, ate our chook I think with buttered bread provided by my Grandma. The following morning we found that we had unrolled our swags onto a bull ant’s nest and didn’t get a bite until after we had lit a fire both to warm ourselves and to cook our sausages and toast we decided to toast a few bull ants. Not a good idea – the bull ants objected and we were both deservedly bitten.

We took the risk of leaving our gear packed up under a tree and rode into the City which was already preparing for the TT, closing off streets, placing bails of hay around all obstacles and putting up crowd barriers. We made our way to the beach and abluted in the change rooms – too cold for a swim and after exploring around for a bit took up a position at a tee junction to watch the race. It was quite a day and I think there were a few accidents. The streets of Bunbury were not designed for racing, but race they did, taking those ungraded right angle turns at breakneck speed. Some races were solo and others with sidecar with the sidecar ‘passenger leaning out almost horizontal with the road. The bikes all had megaphone mufflers; the noise was unbelievable and the air was soon acrid with exhaust fumes. But it was exciting. Not sure what we did after the race, drifted around perhaps – there were bikies (didn’t call them that then) everywhere. I think we treated ourselves to a milk shake and maybe some fish and chips before retiring to our campsite.

On the Sunday we set out for Perth again. The kind people who brought our gear to Picton had offered to take it back to Perth and deposit it at a shop on Albany Highway in Victoria Park – I can’t remember exactly where but it worked out okay. Leaving Bunbury rather late we were flagging somewhat in the last 50 miles before Perth when we were overtaken by two fellows also on bikes who offered to ride with us. They seemed to revive our spirits and we cycled on, arriving in Victoria Park about 11 pm. I can’t remember how or when we collected our gear but we must have done that, maybe the next day. Monday was our recovery day. I certainly recall stopping at a shop, a hamburger joint I think and having a Coca Cola. I think it was the very first Coke I ever had; they had only just come onto the market in WA and it was like nectar.

We took quite a few lengthy bike tours after that, the longest I recall was 140 miles in a day. They were relatively easy and of course we travelled lightly. Jim's bike was more of a racer than mine. I think it was a Malvern Star and mine was a Swansea roadster. Jim always beat me up the hills, like Greenmount, and would be waiting for me at the top with a silly grin on his face as I puffed my way towards him. We were always working on our bikes, re-spoking them, cleaning and painting them – on the McLaughlin's back veranda. They were very understanding.

Of course our bikes were handy for going to the beach in the summer months, usually City Beach or Scarborough, mostly the latter. Beach entertainment was quite a feature of Scarborough – beach bands with Geoff Manion compere. After a day on the beach, we were both moderately good body surfers, and a 7 mile ride home we would finish up exhausted. Returning from Scarborough late one Sunday afternoon pushing our bikes up the quite steep hill leading from the beach I collided with a car. I suspect I was staggering a bit across the road. My bike was a mangle and I had a few cuts and bruises. Between the two of us we managed to get the bike back to Rathay Street. I guess it must have been rideable – only just! It was in times like this that Jim was most supportive and helpful.

Jim had some great mates, mainly from the Teachers Training College I think. There was Keith Chesson (I have often wondered what happened to Keith – he was quite an artist and a water colour of his hung in Jim's room. Mrs Mac especially liked it). There was Wilf ? and Dave ? whose father was high in education and Dave who always seemed to have a comfortable allowance and the use of his dad's Chrysler 'Fleetmaster' car after he turned 18. With some of the girls from the College we made day trips to places like Lesmurdie Falls and the John Forrest National Park. I only remember a Sybil who I was keen on – from the distance mostly. On one occasion Dave drove us all to Bunbury and back on a day trip. We were packed pretty tightly into the car – no seat belts in those days – and on the way back we hit some oil slick on the road and the car went into a skid and we finished up still on the road but pointing back towards Bunbury. Of course all this happened long after Jim and my bike riding efforts.

Rottenest Island became a great attraction. I think Wilf was the main instigator of these. We would board the old steam ferry, the 'Zephyr' and make the two hour trip to Rottenest, one hour to Fremantle and one hour across Guage Roads, often a rough crossing. We camped in the old wartime munitions tunnels at the side of the rarely used airstrip, well north of the main settlement. The tunnels had been carved into a sandstone cliff and had soft sandy floors. On arrival we would have to scare off a few quokkas although during the day they were inclined to return and maraud our food supplies. Of course these were strictly boy's trips – no girls I can honestly report. Our favourite spot was 'The Basin' where we could sit under the overhanging sandstone cliff ogling the girls and letting our imagination run wild. Our attempts at making a connection were pretty feeble and not at all successful. Have you read the book or watched the ABC mini-series of 'Snake Pit' (or a name like that) by a Western Australian author. It was about a teenage boy growing into adulthood in Perth during the early '50s at a time a serial killer was on the loose. I think he was a junior journalist and a daydreamer. With his mates he frequented Rottenest and did as we did – at the Basin watching the girls go by and daydreaming. I still have some photos of that time taken with my old Box Brownie.

I had my own mates from work in the civil engineering branch of the WAGR. They were mostly a little older than me. One of them, a Peter Tournay, lived just around the corner from the McLaughlins and for quite a while called and took me to work every day in his Morris Minor convertible. So I had a life apart from Jim and his mates – playing tennis at Robertson Park somewhere near Lake Monger I think. Tennis was very popular and there were 70 or more courts at Robertson Park. I was never much good and it was something of an act of charity to partner me on the court. I was also involved in a concert

group with the Railway Institute and did a couple of silly performances on the stage. We played badminton on a Monday evening (I was a little better at that than at tennis) and did square dancing. Jim was never part of this and we were happy to go our separate ways. I became very fond of classical music, partly through one of my railway mates, a Tony Holtham – quite a bit older than me. Jim was more into jazz and modern music – pre-rock of course. I think I had developed into a bit of a classic music snob. I became a junior subscriber to the Perth Symphony Orchestra concerts at the Capitol Theatre with Rudolph Pekarek as the resident conductor. Nevertheless, most Saturday nights we sat in the kitchen and listened to Geoff Manion and Kit Denton on 6PR presenting all the latest – not hit parade stuff – we were both disdainful of that, but Glen Miller, Louis Armstrong and the big American bands. Jim has already started smoking.

Another joint activity at least for a while was sailing. I am not sure how I managed to get Jim into sailing with me in my VJ. I had had for some time a desire to sail on the river. My cousin Ken Dodd (older than me) crewed on a Sharpie and one of my work mates had built his own VJ. He was a carpenter by trade who was upgrading into civil engineering. He told me that all up with sails it was costing him 100 pounds, a fair bit in my mind. Anyhow, I saw an old VJ for sale in the paper for 40 pounds and somehow in late 1952 I bought it. It wasn't in good condition and I had to re-deck it, which I did in the McLaughlin's back yard under the wattle tree. Mrs Mac wasn't too enthusiastic about the idea, suggesting that I should wait until the house that my future stepfather, Tiger, was having built was finished. After all, it was actually right on the river. I think Joe persuaded her to let me go ahead. Eventually finished and glistening with new paint it was ready to hit the water. At this stage Jim was becoming quite interested. I had bought a book on how to sail a dinghy (my favourite reading was sea stories – the Hornblower series and others about blue water sailing) but of course we were both without any sailing experience at all. Somehow we got the VJ out to Tiger's block of land at Belmont where his part finished house stood (behind the Brisbane & Wunderlich tile park on the Great Eastern Highway; down the hill from the Sandringham Hotel) and launched it into the shallow water at the bottom of the block. Having studied the theory of sailing and become conversant with all the terms, running, reaching, tacking into the wind, going about, we pushed off. We 'went over' almost straight away but by climbing on the centre board (a heavy iron plate on a VJ) protruding from the keel of the hull, it would swing upright again and we would clamber aboard – only to go over in the opposite direction. We managed to get underway a bit, but in the course of the afternoon we probably went over a dozen to twenty times until finally, exhausted and cold we got back to the shore, packed up and carried the craft up to the protection of the part completed house. It was back to Rathay Street on our bikes and a careful analysis of what we were doing wrong. We were back the next day and into the water again and things started to go right. Maybe we went over two or three times and we were able to return to the shore from where we started. The previous day we had had to push the dinghy some distance along the shore wading through thick black mud most of the way.

We became more and more adventurous throughout the summer, sailing quite some distance up the river past Maylands until it became too narrow to manoeuvre and down as far as Riverton. Finally we decided to venture down to Perth Waters and this we did on a fair weather day finally making The Narrows and Sandy Point (the map tells me it is now called Point Lewis) in the late afternoon where Tiger and Mum were waiting for us to take us home. Thereafter we sailed Perth Waters each weekend for the remainder of the summer – across to Como, into Melville Waters a couple of times; we really got to know the river. We never sailed competitively but occasionally might pick up with another sailing dinghy, a Rainbow perhaps – they were the great competitor to the VJ – and have a beat across the river. I don't think our sailing lasted more than the one summer. 1953 was National Service year. I managed to get into the Navy, which is what I wanted; Jim applied for the Airforce but finished up with the Army. Because I had to forego Tech College that year, the Railways sent me to the Bunbury

District office after I completed nasho. Although I used to get back to Perth most weekends, still with the McLaughlins, Mum and Tiger got married, the house at 134 Great Eastern Highway was finished and I finally took up residence with them in 1954. I was then 19 and I bought a car, a second hand Austin A40. I got my driving licence in Fremantle where I was working on the construction of the Fremantle to Kwinana railway line through the sand hills as a technician surveyor, with Tiger who was plant supervisor for the job. I guess that was the end of our bike riding days. In 1954 Jim was consigned to his first teaching job, to a little one or two teacher school somewhere south of Bunbury. I called there once, under what circumstance I can't recall and it seemed to be a little school house buried in the forest.

In the A40 we had one significant trip – Jim, Keith Chesson and me and my golden cocker 'Bonney'. We did the south-west circuit – Bunbury, Collie (where my Uncle Bert took the three of us underground at the Cardiff mine (he was the mine vet) Busselton, Margaret River (I don't think there were grapes there then) Pemperton where we climbed the Gloucester Tree, around to Albany and back up the highway through Wagin, Narrogin etc. Perhaps that was the last significant thing we did together before I joined the Army and life changed considerably.

At about this time, 1953 when Jim turned 18 and had registered for National Service, he bought a motor bike, a second hand Norton. It was in moderately good condition although he seemed to spend considerable time tinkering with it – to Mrs Mac's disgust; she was vehemently opposed to it. Joe, however, accepted it and showed some interest in it mechanically when something went wrong. It was easy to get a motor bike driving licence then. The policeman would simply tell the applicant to ride up to the end of the street, turn around and ride back while he stood and watched. If the rider didn't fall off in the process, he had a licence, provided of course he (rarely a 'she') passed a very simple oral test of road rules. Motor bike accident statistics at the time were quite horrifying, perhaps because a much greater percentage of vehicular traffic was motor bikes than now. Jim used his bike to commute to the Teachers Training College and to nasho camps. My mother had made me swear on a stack of Bibles that I would never ride on a motor bike (my father had been killed on one in 1945) but on one occasion I went pillion with Jim. It was early evening and I think we were going to visit one of our old school mates and we turned into an unlit street somewhere in the back blocks of Cannington that turned out to be a dead end. Jim had revved up as we went down the street and suddenly we were confronted with a whole lot of 'willie bushes' and we were ploughing through soft sand. The bike went one way and we the other, fortunately the soft sand breaking our fall, also that of the bike. We had escaped with a few bruises and torn clothing, the bike a little worse off than we. We dragged it back onto the road and Jim managed to start it again and returned back to Rathay Street somewhat gingerly. Mrs Mac made a few acerbic comments although was sympathetic enough over our slight wounds. I don't recall the motor bike being around much after that and I suspect it was sold after Jim finished Teachers College.

Mr and Mrs McLaughlin came to Australia probably in the early '30s. I am fairly sure they were married here and like a lot of Scots they didn't get past the west. I think it was said that Perth had the highest percentage of Scottish people of any other part of Australia. Life must have been quite severe then, the depression years, and I have no idea what might have brought them here, other than perhaps the depression itself. Neither do I know what part of Scotland they left although in a conversation at one time I recall discussion of 'highlanders' and 'lowlanders', me believing that the 'highlanders were a cut above. I was disabused of that notion very positively – both were 'lowlanders' and I suppose that might mean that they came from somewhere south of the Glasgow-Edinburgh axis, possibly Glasgow itself. I can recall Joe talking of dole work on projects – roads perhaps – in the bush. (They were called 'sussos', short for sustenance workers.) Mrs Mac may have done domestic work. Apart from knitting she claimed she was no sower. She knitted Jim a beautiful Fair'Isle jumper at one time.

Joe was certainly an easy going fellow, always very even tempered. He was short and a little stout with thinning hair. He had a ready smile and rarely found fault with anything or anyone. I don't remember him having any close mates. On a Friday night he might bring home a bottle of beer which he and Mrs Mac would have. Occasionally they went out on a Saturday night, maybe to a picture show or perhaps visiting. There was usually a bottle of port or sherry in the kitchen. Mrs Mac cooked plain but wholesome meals and I can't remember ever being dissatisfied with meals. Jim had the odd habit (to my mind) of consuming each portion on his plate consecutively – all the potato, all the beans, all the carrots or pumpkin and then all the meat. I wonder if he always did that in later years.

Joe worked in a re-metalling factory – using white metal (I have no idea what that is) to re-metal engine pistons and cylinders. Joe was the union shop steward whose principal role was to collect union dues. Although both were staunch Labor people Mrs Mac often cautioned Joe against becoming involved in any industrial action. Perhaps this was a carry over of the 'depression mentality'. I am sure that Joe's weekly wage would not have been much above the basic wage. I met a fellow (Noel French) some years later who had been Joe's firm's bookkeeper and he told me that Joe McLaughlin was a 'nature's gentleman' thoroughly liked and respected by all his fellow workers. Indeed, he was.

Mrs Mac was certainly a strong personality – the decision maker in the home. Although she would get a little cross at times, even explode over something or other, usually a minor domestic matter (like when she decided to wash the blankets – apparently you need a windy day for that – and the day turned out hot, humid and still and the blankets came in from the line stiff as boards). I remember an occasion also when she found some 'naturist' (ie, nudist) magazines in Jim's drawer that came from the old bachelor that owned the corner grocery store in the next street. (There were stories about him that were a bit strange.) Jim was sent to Coventry again. Mr Mac found it a little amusing but I think he went and had a chat to the fellow to set him straight.

Mrs Mac was very anti-Roman Catholic (from something in her back ground). I had read the biography of Group Captain Leonard Cheshire who had been an Oxford tear-away in the '30s but had distinguished himself with honour in the RAF during WW2 and after the war had turned to the RC church which had managed to annul his pre-war marriage (it was to a protestant woman and therefore conveniently not recognised by the RC church) allowing him to marry a good Catholic girl. At the time I thought his logic was sound – that the Roman Catholic Church was the 'only true church of God. – I was seeking religion at the time – and put this proposition to Mrs Mac and copped an ear-full. Cheshire led a movement after the war that founded the Leonard Cheshire homes for disadvantaged children so he apparently did some good. Mrs Mac attended a religious gathering each Sunday morning in the city called the 'New Church'. Jim and I went with her a couple of times, Jim perhaps more. It was a bible-based gathering with numerous readings, a lengthy sermon and contributions from the floor of the congregation conducted upstairs in a large room in Barrack Street I think. I don't recall any subsequent conversation about the service, which I found rather lengthy and boring.

The house in Rathay Street was being purchased through a terminating building society where you kept contributing until somehow your turn came for a loan. I guess one's previous payments would have been taken into account. The house and land (quite a large block – the traditional quarter acre) would have been worth less than 1000 pounds and I seem to recall a figure of 700 pounds being spoken of. However, the final payment was made and then it was time for renovation and improvement. The house had been of oiled weatherboard giving it a very dark, almost black appearance – jarrah weatherboards I guess – with white trim. Not unattractive – quite a few houses were finished that way. It was an annual job to re-oil the weatherboards and I think we may have done that once. Once the house was theirs it

was decided to paint it. Green with yellow trim was the chosen colour combination and the three of us undertook the work over a number of consecutive weekends. Another job undertaken was enclosing the front veranda to create a sleep-out room. I think that was where Uncle Dave slept on his occasional visits. We three did that also; built the frame and enclosed it with asbestos sheeting sawn and shaped with increasingly blunted handsaws. No thought of asbestosis at that time. Mr Mac was quite a good handyman when put to the test.

Uncle Dave – Joe’s brother I think – was an occasional visitor, staying for a week or two. Dave worked in timber at Pemberton. He enjoyed a drink or two or three but never got beyond being a bit merry. Jim enjoyed his company. Mrs Mac was tolerant, even when Dave would take Joe down to the pub and bring back a few bottles of Emu. Dave had served during the war in the Middle East. I don’t know whether he was with the British Army or the AIF. His Scottish accent was much stronger than Joe’s and perhaps he had come to Australia much later, even after the war. I recall one evening when something has arrived in the post for Dave which on examination revealed that he had been awarded a MID (Mentioned in Despatches) in the Middle East. This is an award for conspicuous service and allows the recipient to have a small bronze fern leaf attached to his relevant campaign ribbon. Despite questioning Uncle Dave was reticent in divulging the circumstances of the award (modest fellow) simply saying he was a cook and probably served up a good meal on some occasion. We all believed that there was more to it than that.

When Jim, Keith Chesson and I called at Pemberton on our southwest tour in the A40 we met with Dave at the Pemberton Worker’s Club where he shouted us a steak and a beer or two. It didn’t seem to matter that we were technically under age. The Club was filled with brawny mill workers and I think us three felt a little out of our element. Dave obviously didn’t. That would have been the last time I saw Uncle Dave but no doubt Jim would have had continuing contact in subsequent years.

In about 1953 or 54 two of Jim’s cousins arrived from Scotland or maybe the north of England. I seem to remember Newcastle being mentioned but maybe they had simply worked there. I don’t know whether they were from Mrs Mac’s side of the family or Joe’s – I don’t recall them having the McLaughlin name. They were certainly ‘braw’ Scottish lads who seemed to fill the little house to overflowing and I think Mrs Mac was not sorry to see them move on. Neither did Jim nor I.

I think I am just about at the end of my story. In 1954 Jim had started teaching in the southwest and I had left Rathay Street and moved in with Mum and Tiger (by now they were married) in their new home at 134 Great Eastern Highway. I had been working on the Fremantle-Kwinana railway construction throughout most of 1954, commuting to and from with Tiger and getting itchy feet about staying on in WA. My night school diploma studies were not going well, my excuse being national service (I had two months to complete my obligation during 1954) but more accurately I had lost interest. In early January I had found an advertisement in the Commonwealth Vacancies for trainee surveyors in the Royal Australian Survey Corps offering a 10 month course at the School of Military Survey at Balcombe, Victoria. That was it for me although I don’t think I realised initially that it involved joining the army. Anyhow, I resigned from the WAGR, went through the enlistment procedure and sold the A40 to the local butcher. Then a tragedy occurred. At 9 o’clock on a Saturday night Mum was hit by a car while walking up the hill to the Sandringham hotel. She was instantly killed and her funeral took place at Karrakatta a few days later. Tiger was bereft. Mr and Mrs Mac and Jim attended the funeral. I decided to continue in joining the army and was attested on the 14th February 1955 when I went from being Mr R F Skitch to 52897 Skitch R F. But all that is my story.

I came home on leave for the Christmas of 1955 (the army ran a troop train across the Nullarbor) 57 and 58 and caught up with Jim on those occasions. I was in New Guinea in '56 and brought an army mate with me in '58, Kevin Moody who met Jim. Kevin became a life-long friend. I had met Wendy in 1958, at Charters Towers of all places, and the pattern of my life changed as a result. We were married in 1961 in Sydney. Jim and I corresponded sporadically over the years after that. I well remember your visit in 1968 to our Clovelly army unit and again in the mid '80s to our holiday unit at Caloundra. Wendy and I called on you on our return from Singapore in January 1971. That was a sad time; we arrived in Perth to find that Tiger had died a week before and his funeral had been held on the morning of our arrival. Both Wendy and I were able to visit Mrs Mac in her Swan Cottage and that was the last time I saw the dear lady. I called on you and had an overnight stay when attending the Cartographic Conference in 1986 and met Robert for the first time. He was greatly interested in all things scientific and had his own computer, a little uncommon at that time. (Perhaps Robert might be interested in seeing a copy of this)

I seem to have rambled on a good deal. I hope it is of some interest – I enjoyed doing it and will keep a copy for my personal record. I have lots of gaps to fill in. In my somewhat chaotic life as a young teenager I consider myself very fortunate to have had the stability and certainty of living for those three years with the McLaughlins in their little Rathay Street home.