

## Mona's Story

### Peace and War: The Far East, Plymouth and Scotland, 1908-19

*This extract is from "Mona's Story, an Admiral's Daughter in England, Scotland and Africa, 1908-51 " by Mona Macmillan. Edited by Hugh Macmillan (her son).*

*Mona Tweedie, now Macmillan, describes her time, as a young girl, living in what is now the "Three Bridges Hotel" in South Queensferry in 1917/18 when she was aged eight. It gives an interesting perspective of party frocks, picnics with the might of the Grand Fleet looming just off the beach.*



***Mona and her father at Kobe, Japan on 25 April 1909***

### Scotland - South Queensferry

Unfortunately, about six weeks after Jocelyn's birth a great and totally unexpected change came over our lives. Our cosy little world was dismantled; our parents' Japanese furniture and all our toys and familiar things were put in store and we moved all the way to Scotland - to South Queensferry. The move was very abrupt, but the journey was quite an adventure. We broke it in London and I made the first visit I can remember to Great-Aunt Sophie Hammond, who lived in Norfolk Square, conveniently close to Paddington station, and always put us up when we came to London. She was not exactly an aunt.

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Her daughter Mildred, was married to my Great-Uncle Peter Hammond, my Tweedie grandmother's brother - Mildred and Peter were cousins, both being Hammonds. The Hammonds were very advanced in their ideas, and Aunt Sophie was a lady of great character. I was much surprised to discover later on that she knew Ramsay MacDonald, and was not frightened by the first Labour government. My Tweedie grandmother, who had objected to her brother marrying his cousin, did not approve of Aunt Sophie, but she and my mother were fond of each other. In spite of her intellectual qualities her house was rather gloomy. We did not stay there on this occasion, but went on by the night train to Scotland.

We did not have sleepers, but occupied two whole compartments, my mother and five children, governess, nurse and cook. Cook was Mrs Angel, a Devon lady of mature age to whom everyone showed the greatest respect. She ruled the kitchen and the other servants, and was a mainstay to my mother. But she did not much like the idea of Scotland, a foreign country to her, and she declared that she would not have any bare knees in her kitchen. She did not settle well and returned before we did, I think to retirement in her native Paignton. Mrs Angel made our bread as well as other things, and sometimes allowed us children to help her and to make our own small loaves. But she was rather awe-inspiring, tall and straight, and always in black. The bread was rather odd, it had small pockets in it, which we called salt-mines, full of some substance that must have been unrisen yeast, but apart from these it was good.

We were quite comfortable in our railway compartments. Hugo and Michael slept in the luggage racks, which were made of matting, like hammocks. I slept across from one seat to the other, with a pile of suitcases to support me. Vere curled up at the other end of one seat and my mother and the governess occupied what was left of the two benches. In the other compartment the nanny and cook had almost two sides to themselves, apart from my two-year old brother Vere and a Chinese basket that contained one-month old Jocelyn. Another smaller basket held the cat!

We arrived in the very early morning at Edinburgh where there was a transfer from the Caledonian station at one end of Prince's Street to Waverley station at the other - a short enough distance, which nevertheless required the organisation of cabs and porters - I think we had breakfast at the Caledonian end. We older children and the governess walked to Waverley, and when we finally reached Dalmeny station, the infants and luggage were put into the inevitable cabs and we were once again told to walk. This we did by following a footpath through fields that led over the hill and down into South Queensferry. The great Forth Bridge took off a mile or more back and strode right over the head of the small town, which had no station.

I have never forgotten my first sight of the Firth of Forth. It was a glorious morning in what must have been late August. As we came over the brow of the hill we saw the Forth lying below us, a brilliant blue, one I have only seen in Scotland. The light was so clear and sharp, the hills across the Forth so clear, and the water was dotted all over with ships that shone silver, the great railway bridge spanning above them. The sky was incredibly blue, the water sparkled and the ships sparkled; their paint had the capacity to look silvery white or to change to a dull grey green, or, sometimes, to become quite black. There was a sense of height and space, for our journey was down the steep side of the firth.

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The fields had not yet been cut and the sides of the path were bordered by clumps of gowans - ox-eye daisies or marguerites - such as I had never seen before. A branch of the footpath conveniently led over a disused railway line through a wood to the top of a steep bank, down which there was placed a flight of wooden steps into the back garden of our new home. This we found was placed almost under the pillars of the bridge and on the very edge of the water. It was a large, rather vulgarly imposing, house with the advantage of great tall windows overlooking the sea. It also had the advantage for my father of being only five minutes by boat from his ship, which was lying just opposite.

The house, which is now the Two Bridges Inn, was then New Halls Villa. New Halls Road linked us to South Queensferry, running along the seafront and right against the very steep hillside. The gardens of the house ran up this hillside and, apart from a walled kitchen garden, were rather open and bleak. To the left of the house was the Hawes Inn, from whose owner we had rented the house, and Hawes Brae, with the steep road up to Edinburgh, and further left, under the bridge, the entrance to Lord Rosebery's Dalmeny estate. At both sides of Hawes Brae there were sentry posts to guard the bridge, the furthest of them at the entrance to Dalmeny. Civilians had to have a pass to enter the estate - as possessors of these passes we soon found that this was our playground. Once we were in, there was a long beach to be combed for interesting driftwood, and not far from the entrance a small stream where we often played. It was quite a long walk to Queen Margaret's wishing well, but we sometimes made it. We seldom penetrated further than that, except when we were taken with a grown-up party to picnic on the sands at Hound Point. The beaches nearby were stony, but the sands at the Point were wonderful, and those picnics were great occasions.

If the country was a wonderful surprise, the house was not so pleasing. New Halls Villa was furnished in a heavy Scottish bourgeois manner. It faced north with the steep rise of the hill behind it, and was rather dark. We older children were allotted as 'schoolroom' a long room at the left end of the house with its own side door. At the other end was a large dining room and above it a grand drawing room. These rooms had windows to the west and were brighter than the rest. The drawing room was elaborately furnished and had a gilt clock with figures, which I decided to treat as an idol, and I danced in front of it. But we did not frequent these rooms often; a back stair led from near the schoolroom to our bedrooms, and this was our part of the house. My bedroom was up yet another little stair on its own - I was proud of it, but it was rather isolated, especially if I happened to be ill.

The schoolroom may have been part of an older building, for its ceiling was lower and the windows a bit smaller than those of the grand rooms, but the windows still looked straight onto the firth. From them and from the low wall that divided the garden from the road, we could watch day and night a panorama of constantly moving vessels, small boats and ferries, discharging men, as in a film, onto the quay. Very soon we came to understand something of the water pageant we watched and to distinguish the different ships and their attendant boats. Each captain had a picquet boat, a small motor launch, and large brass-funnelled steam launches carried the crews ashore. We at once came to know our father's picquet boat and to tell when it left the side of the ship to bring him home.

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His ship was at first the *Champion*, a light cruiser and destroyer leader, rather bigger than the destroyers, which at the time were the smallest ships in the navy. They were berthed in a long line of as many as sixty ships above the bridge and up-river towards Rosyth. The big battleships with the flagship *Queen Elizabeth* were berthed opposite Rosyth, where the river widens into a broad basin called 'The Hope'. Below the bridge lay the Battle Cruiser Squadron, I think the fifth, which had been commanded by Admiral Beatty at the Battle of Jutland, and had done nearly all the fighting in that battle. Among them were the *Lion* and the *Repulse*. In consequence of the battle, Beatty had now been promoted to be Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet and had moved to the flagship. When they went to sea, the big ships were always attended by their own particular destroyers, and the flagship, even when berthed, was attended by the Oak, which always seemed the smallest of all the destroyers, with the most gleaming paint, and it looked like a little white seal nestling up against the bulk of her mother ship.

My father remained in the *Champion* until November 1917. He was Captain D, or commander, of the Thirteenth Flotilla, the largest of the Grand Fleet destroyer flotillas, with 34 ships under his command. He was also second in overall command of the five destroyer flotillas and had responsibility for the enlargement and completion of Port Edgar, on the north side of the Firth of Forth, as a base providing 'pens' for refuelling and restocking all the ships. Drawing on his experience in Mexico, he had the idea of building an oil pipeline across Scotland from the Clyde to the Forth to ease the flow of fuel to the storage tanks at Port Edgar - something that was completed before the end of the war.

In November 1917 Admiral Beatty appointed him commodore of the Grand Fleet destroyers. In doing so he told him he would give him only one bit of advice: 'Never suffer fools gladly.' He also told him that 'if you can't do it [handle the destroyers] I'll very soon find someone else who can'. As commodore he had 106 (later on it was 120) destroyers, five light cruisers, including his own, five depot ships, and a naval dockyard - a total of 12,000 men - under his command. He moved to the *Castor*, which replaced *Champion* under our windows.

I was sorry to lose her, for she was such a beautiful ship; I think she was a little smaller than the *Castor*, and built for speed with lovely lines. My father was not pleased at being promoted; he thought it would mean too much administration, and he would lose his Thirteenth Flotilla, which he had enjoyed exercising at sea. He reckoned that as Captain D he had worked for 14 hours a day for seven days a week, but as commodore he had to work for 16 hours a day for seven days a week. Commodore was not then a permanent rank; the *Castor* flew his broad pennant and not a flag. He was, as one of his critics put it, 'only a jumped up captain' and a junior one at that, with only three years seniority and, in the opinion of some rear-admirals, too much power. Only in war could a relatively junior officer be given so much responsibility. Although he had misgivings about taking on the role of commodore, he had no choice in the matter and he found the task varied and challenging. In his final report he recommended that it would be better for the destroyers to be under a flag officer in future, to give their interests more weight, and this happened when he left.

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He also recommended the commodore be in a bigger ship, a cruiser, to accommodate the extra staff and office equipment needed to administer so many ships. In the *Castor* the printing press had to be accommodated in a spare oil bunker - poor printers!

At South Queensferry, we were closer to the war than we had been in Plymouth, but we were aware of it chiefly through the preoccupation of our elders. My father was engaged in the most important and exacting job of his career. The destroyers we watched from our window and that were under his command came and went on ceaseless patrol; sometimes a group of big ships moved out too and they would all be gone for a while to Scapa Flow. It was an exhausting life, and when my father came home he needed to sleep, or relax with my mother, and the evening children's hour was less regular.

The year 1918 was dreadful; it began with heavy losses in France and the threat of defeat. My father was told to hold his ships in readiness to steam south and evacuate the army from France - the plan carried out years later at Dunkirk but fortunately not needed in 1918. Instead, the Americans came and a squadron of their ships joined the congestion in the Forth, berthing even further downstream than the battle cruisers. Their ships were recognisable by their curious masts, several strands criss-crossed like our modern-day pylons. The men we saw disembarking at the ferry came from the destroyers or the battle cruisers. There was little for the sailors to do in Queensferry. I remember when the Americans came they would throng aimlessly about the street, their pockets full of money, much more than our men had, with nothing to spend it on. Sometimes they would offer us children half-crowns, which we were too well brought up to accept. We probably looked very poor! There was even less to do at Scapa Flow where half the destroyers were at any one time, and finally towards the end of the war they were all brought down to Port Edgar. This was better for morale. Most of the men came from the channel ports and there was little accommodation for wives or families. We in our large house on the shore were a very privileged family.

On our walks along the Dalmeny beaches we could see these bigger ships, which never came past our windows. We had fun gathering driftwood, of which there was a great deal. I salvaged two round wooden cheese tubs in which I grew sweet peas. The beaches were fairly clean considering the number of ships, but a ridge of pitch black oil-coated pebbles marked the tide line. Their blackness was in stark contrast to the very white cockle shells of which there were also many; perhaps the cockles were killed by the oil. Close to Hound Point there was a sentry post with residential quarters and little flowerbeds outlined in these shells, on which the men had drawn designs. Hound Point, where the coast turns eastwards, is an area of beautiful white sand. Here we once found a boat half buried in the sand and still full of peanuts. They had burst out of their bags, but were still in their pods and I realised why they were called peanuts. Hound Point was too far to walk to very often, but we helped ourselves several times to this treasure, which had probably come adrift from an American ship. Another time we met a boat with some sailors who had come ashore to fetch some sand for scrubbing their decks. The boys accepted a ride to their ship and back, but either they did not ask me or I did not want to go. In the spring we were taken to see the snowdrops in a part of the wood that was off our beat; they had become wild and covered the ground as far as you could see.

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There was a ruin at this place - we were told it was the remains of a coaching inn, and that the road to Edinburgh had once passed that way. Dalmeny House was shuttered and empty. A lady who knew the housekeeper once took us inside. Lord Rosebery, the former prime minister, was not then living there. He was said to prefer Barnbougle, the old castle, which we only saw from a distance. According to a recent biography Dalmeny House was used as a hospital for part of the war and Lord Rosebery took a house in Edinburgh.

The governess who came with us from Plymouth was a good walker and quite lively. She made friends with an officer in one of the ships who had a movie projector and showed us films, particularly a bloodcurdling serial called *The Clutching Hand*. Sometimes he brought them to our schoolroom and at least once we went to his ship. The episodes always ended with the heroine hanging over a cliff or otherwise in danger - they must have been the origin of the expression 'cliff-hanger'. There were also some midshipmen who kept motorbikes in our stables and we talked to them and once asked them to tea, but on the whole everyone was too busy to be bothered with us.

I think this sprightly governess must have stayed until the beginning of 1918, or perhaps September 1917, when Hugo went as a boarder to Cargilfield School at Cramond, between Queensferry and Edinburgh. Hugo and I had been companions for as long as I could remember and his going left me high and dry. It was an unsettled time for me; as usual, I had no girl friends, the children we played with were all boys and younger. There were two King boys and sometimes we went to tea with a boy called Stuart Clarke, who lived in a castle, Dundas Castle, but he had a weak heart. In the summer of 1918 another sister, Dot, was born. I longed to have a hand in looking after her, but there was a nanny to do that. She slept in my father's dressing room, next to my mother's room, and one evening I stole her and put her to sleep in my room, well wrapped up in the Chinese basket. I thought it would be such a good arrangement if she slept with me, but alas I was not allowed to keep her. My father always said she was the baby he had the most to do with; perhaps she was the only one born when he was at home. About the time Hugo went to school, or maybe later, we got a new governess, Mademoiselle Gabrielle Genin, always called Mademoiselle. She stayed with us until the end of my childhood, surprisingly, because she and my mother did not like each other.

My mother thought she was stupid and lazy, and I think she must have been to have put up with the life she led. She seemed to have no friends and never went anywhere. She came to us from the family of a rich businessman, Sir Rowland Hodge, and sometimes she talked about the children she had left. Otherwise she had no interests, except reading novels and painting, with both of which she infected me. She was indeed very kind to me and was my nearest companion for several years. Her extreme placidity was, I suppose, a tranquillising factor. She was like one of those nannies in stories who always sit and knit in the background, but she was French and exuded Frenchness, and a slightly higher culture than that of nannies. She interested me in books, poetry and history, as well as novels, and she taught French very thoroughly, but she had not the slightest notion of mathematics. She was very plain, wore a wig and was probably older than she pretended. She talked much about the siege of Paris, which had happened nearly fifty years previously.

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Her father had had some business in Paris - she had seen better days; she had once studied at a good atelier, and had been at school at the Sacre Coeur. The great event of her school days had been acting in Racine's Athalie. I always felt guilty that I did not follow her up after she left us many years later.

One of the books Mademoiselle introduced me to was Little Women. I modelled myself on the March girls and was set on producing theatricals like them. I bullied my brothers and the King boys into acting a version of Jo's play from the book, and some of my mother's friends came to see it. It ended in chaos; the boys got stage-fright and the only lines I could improvise were 'My God! My God!' this did not go down too well with the grown-up audience, but Mademoiselle was consoling. Another memorable event was having my tonsils out, which was an unpleasant experience. Two very nice and I am sure very skilled surgeons did the operation at home on the kitchen table, but I was very rude to them. I fought so hard against the anaesthetic that I had to have a second dose halfway through. My throat was extremely sore afterwards and I had nightmares for some time. This happened during a bitterly cold winter, 1918-19, and I remember my frozen feet when I was first taken out after it. Queensferry was a very cold place and so was Edinburgh, which we sometimes visited. We went there in a bus, which had a bagful of gas on the roof to fuel it. Soon after the tonsils operation I was taken to have my hair done at Jenners, but I refused to have the hair-drier - it reminded me of the anaesthetic mask. I yelled and screamed in a way that must have been an embarrassment for my poor mother. In fact for a nine year-old I behaved very badly over the whole business.

King George V came twice to visit Port Edgar. I went to see him on the first of these visits in 1917, for it was fairly informal. There was only a small crowd of men, some of whom were being presented with medals by the king. Our little party stood at the back behind a line of sailors and we could see him very well. Afterwards we were allowed to see round the engineering shops; these were very clean and to me full of very alarming machinery. The rows of gleaming torpedoes, which were the destroyers' main armament, were slung from the ceiling of a hangar like large silver fish. One was being dissected on a table and seemed to be full of red lead, which looked like blood. Although the pens for the destroyers had been widened, they still needed a tight manoeuvre to get a destroyer into one and the captains vied with each other as to how fast they could do it. The champion, I believe, was Lord Howe, who had been a motor racing driver and he would take it at full speed.

The second of the king's visits came just after the wonderful news of the Armistice and the day before the German fleet was due to surrender. On 11 November 1918 the Armistice was signed. It seemed to come as a surprise and as a relief to everyone. We seemed to have got used to the war. When it began, we had been well informed, back in the nursery at Devonport, with copies of the Illustrated London News to cut out and colour, and little flags to stick on maps to show the position of the allied armies. But that was four years ago; we had since lost track of the war, but we were soon swept up by the excitement of everyone else. We had little flags to wave over the garden wall and the crisis came at night when every ship in the fleet let off all the rockets and flares - Verey lights of red and green - that they possessed, and they hooted their sirens at full pitch and on every conceivable note. We were taken out of bed to the front windows to watch and listen to the noise. Nobody would ever forget it; even my youngest brother Vere, who was only four, did not.

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After we had gone back to bed the noise went on and on and was rather more terrifying than joyous, I thought, like fiends in Hell!

The king's second visit to the destroyers came less than ten days later. There were 8,000 men on parade - I cannot imagine how they found room for so many on Port Edgar's little square! This was my father's affair, though Admiral Beatty was also present as commander-in-chief. When the parade was over, Admiral Beatty had to dash back to the Queen Elizabeth to receive the king on board; as that gave time to spare, the king and my father waited behind a shed smoking cigarettes and chatting. The king took the opportunity to let off steam about F E Smith (Lord Birkenhead). He always remembered this occasion when he and my father met at later dates. The king was finally taken off to Queen Elizabeth in the little destroyer, Oak, which was the flagship's constant attendant.

This all took place on the day before the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet on 21 November 1918. Before that a single German ship anchored off Inchkeith bringing, I suppose, staff officers to discuss the procedure. Conversation at home was beginning to be more relaxed and I heard some talk of how surprised these officers were at the supplies on our ships; the Germans were very short of necessities, particularly soap. The relaxation meant that our father was at home more in the daytime - before that he only came to sleep - and we heard more talk. Much of this concerned what could be expected when the fleets met. Did the Germans really mean to surrender or would they open fire? Was the whole thing a trick? I think our officers half hoped it was and few believed they would really surrender. They did not at all like the idea of a navy tamely surrendering. My father said they were ready for any eventuality, but the talk alarmed me. I was scared to death of Germans and was very relieved when I was excused from going out in a launch to witness the surrender - though I realise now that I missed one of the opportunities of my life. I had been having a lot of bad sore throats and was not considered fit to go to sea in November weather. When the 21st came my father and the destroyers left long before daylight to get to the rendezvous half way across the North Sea. His ship, the Castor, and the destroyers, led the Grand Fleet out of the Forth and his was the first to make contact with the High Seas Fleet.

The civilian party with some journalists, Lady Beatty, her younger son Peter, my mother and my brothers left about breakfast time and I stayed at home in my parents' large bed in the front bedroom to watch as the big grey ships came down one by one from Rosyth in their unhurried and dignified way - a stately procession heading for the middle arch of the bridge, which was the only one that could take them. I probably had the best of it; my father once said he would have loved to have been ashore to watch the fleet come and go, for he never could. But it was a long day; the house was very quiet and empty, so was the firth and the street - I suppose someone must have given me some lunch. Then at last the same procession of big ships came gliding back again safe and sound and passed to their anchorages at Rosyth. The German ships were left to berth even further down than the Americans and the destroyers had to bring up the rear and see them safely anchored. The launch, or was it a tug, which had been out as far as May Island, came back with the family cold and seasick, but intact. There had been no shooting and I was relieved that I was not the only one left alive, as it had seemed during the day.



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My father had returned to the Forth with 170 destroyers under his command, including the 49 German ones in the centre. When he gave the general signal 'anchor instantly', using the commercial flag code for the benefit of the Germans, he wondered if so many warships would ever again respond to one signal. The next day the Grand Fleet destroyers conducted the German ships up to Scapa Flow where there was a lot more space and I never saw them, but I was not sorry. The big ships followed a few days later. There, six months later, their crews scuttled them, at last performing one of the actions that had been expected of them, and that, from all I heard, was an immense relief to their naval guards.

In all this pageant there was no sign of a submarine although they had been the worst enemy and I cannot remember among all the ships in the Forth ever seeing a submarine.

The winter of 1918-19 was a nasty one. I wonder how we ever kept warm in that cavernous house. The schoolroom had a cosy fire, which was helped by our driftwood collecting. My parents abandoned the huge freezing drawing room upstairs and sat in a small room on the ground floor, which was my father's den and called the 'Smoking Room'. Here we were allowed to join them after tea beside the fire and listen to his yarns. It did not calm my nerves that he talked so much of 'revolution', which sounded worse than war. He and his friends had learned how bad the discipline on the German ships was; the men dominated the officers and, of course, being able to go straight home - especially the men in the destroyers who were being sent to support the anti-revolutionary Russian forces in the Baltic. One of my father's flotillas was ordered to go there, and threatened to refuse. A company of men went down to London to appeal to Lloyd George. Emmanuel Shinwell, who was the local MP, tried to organise sailors' committees on board the ships, and was my father's bugbear. There was a series of strikes in Glasgow and some of the destroyers were sent round to keep the city's services going. The ship's kitchens made bread, which was in short supply; this did not mean famine in those days as Scottish housewives did their own baking and their families lived on scones and oatcakes rather than 'loaf bread. To obtain yeast for the bread, ships were sent to Guinness's brewery in Belfast and there were amusing stories of how the yeast rose so fast that the ships had to put on speed to reach Glasgow before it blew them up. My father went to inspect and came back with lurid tales of the revolutionary spirit in Glasgow.

He took part in the review at Southend and also went to Paris, which was a more cheering experience. Representative officers were feted by the French and he received the Legion d'honneur. At my mother's request, he bought a hat for her in Paris, black with a single ostrich feather, very expensive but too plain to satisfy her. He and she both went to London for the grand wedding of Princess Patricia of Connaught to Captain Ramsay. Princess Pat had travelled to Canada on board the Essex when my father was its commander in 1914. She had then been on her way to visit her father, the Duke of Connaught, who was governor general of Canada.

Besides the strikes, riots and threats of revolution, 1918 also brought the influenza epidemic and the ships began one by one to hang out yellow flags showing that they were in quarantine. Food had been pretty poor. There was rationing, at least of sugar. For a long while we had not been allowed to have butter and jam on our bread at the same time. Later there was no jam, only treacle, which we disliked.

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Margarine made its appearance instead of butter. Meat must have been quite scarce as my father went to the trouble of bringing a whole sheep down from the Orkneys after one of his spells at Scapa Flow. He had to send sailors ashore to capture it and this gave rise to a rumour that the Germans had broken out of their ships and were being chased by the sailors. In Queensferry there was a fair amount of fish; its little fishing fleet had its own harbour, and could be seen putting to sea among the grander ships.

The Catholics in the town seem to have been among the fisher folk and my mother organised a choir mainly of fishwives and taught them to sing the Latin mass. It must have been at Christmas 1918 that she took me to midnight mass, and before that we visited the home of one of them and they made a presentation. The priest at South Queensferry, Canon Farquhar, was friendly, though he was a man of few words and was a convert from the Church of Scotland. His rather severe sister kept house for him; she had apparently not converted, seemed to disapprove of Catholics and did her best to keep the church locked. After mass on Sunday the canon proceeded in a 'fly' to Cramond, about nine miles away, where he said another mass. It was arranged that he should stop on the way at Cargilfield to pick up Hugo. As the only Catholic boy in a very Scottish school, Hugo did not have an altogether happy time, though he seemed to like the masters.

The end of hostilities meant relaxation for everyone. Until then my father had been unable to leave the house when ashore for fear of missing a signal that might call him back. Now there were a few expeditions further afield. We children were taken to see Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood; the two elder boys were invited to walk across the Forth Bridge, but I never set foot in North Queensferry, though we once went by boat to Aberdour for a charity fete with Lady Beatty and her children. I also remember going to a charity production at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh. That winter there was an outburst of children's parties. We went to one in a house at Barnton at which all the boys wore kilts. The ships gave children's parties, which were generally full of activities and too boisterous for my liking. At Devonport I had been to one where there was a Father Christmas, and a chute made of canvas rigged up by the sailors. I was also scared of all the machinery around - especially as sailors apparently thought that slight electric shocks were what amused children most.

I remember one party where you got an electric shock when you shook hands with your host at the entrance. So I went around in constant fear and suspicion of what might happen next.

In the spring of 1919 I was taken on an excursion that made a great impression on me. It was a visit to the part of the Tweed valley from which our family came. One of my father's flotilla commanders was a rich bachelor, Rafe, later Admiral, Rowley-Convvy, who owned a Rolls Royce and lent it with his chauffeur to my father for the day. We went looking for the old houses that had belonged to our Tweedie ancestors. One of them, Oliver, still belonged to our cousins, the Tweedie-Stoddarts, who made us welcome. We also saw the family graves in Tweedsmuir churchyard. It was the countryside with its openness and emptiness, its expanse of misty hills that impressed me most. We sat for a while on a hillside overlooking the Tweed and listened to the silence.

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It was many years before I went there again, but it always remained in my mind. At one stage, having got a bit lost, we drove right through the river at a ford.

We went by Peebles and returned by Biggar where we had some kind of a meal. My mother's friend, Mrs King, had come with us, and a discussion arose about the relative merits of Catholics and Presbyterians, which caused me to be sent outside. My father took seriously his promise to have us brought up as Catholics, and would not express his opinions on religion in front of us. This day's exploration was the end of Scotland for me, and as much of it as I was to see for a long time to come, but it provided a good memory to illustrate one's pride in being Scottish. My father toyed with the idea of settling in Scotland, but I do not think it would have suited my mother, though she also claimed Scottish descent, and it would not have been very practical for his comings and goings. He was impressed on a visit to St Andrew's by the educational amenities of that city, where I was later to spend a number of years.

The period of the armistice, which was really a truce, lasted from November 1918 to June 1919. At lunchtime on Saturday 28 June our mother told us that the peace treaty would be signed at Versailles at three o'clock that afternoon. I do not think that I kept a diary for the whole of the year, but I have a page of diary in which I recorded this historic event. We were still in the house at Queensferry, but most of our things were packed and we were getting ready to leave for Wraxall at the end of the month

I noted:

*Crowds of children passed carrying flags, and I nearly cried because our big flag was packed and the commodore 's house had only two teeny ones tied to a tree. However, Mademoiselle remembered a shop where she could get some and very kindly bought us all some. We were playing follow my leader in the garden when the guns went off. We waved our flags and cheered as loud as we could. Then we went and watched the guns and the children going by with flags. When the guns were finished the siryns (sic) started but not for long. After we were in bed they started again and the old tin band came around and the sailors sang till ten o'clock. Then the flags were taken off the ships and it all stopped.*



***Mona at Johannesburg in 1931***