

## Introduction

My upbringing was in rural Cambridgeshire. I was born in Cambridge during a very foggy spell of weather, on 30 November 1948. My mother said the fog had been so dense that one of the two ambulance men had to get out and walk in front of the vehicle taking her by road from Croxton Park to Addenbrookes Maternity Hospital on Saturday the 27th. She had me by caesarean section as I measured 21 inches in length, which was exactly one-third of my mother's 63-inch height.

I later read that new 'FIDO' oil burners (fog dispersal equipment) at Blackbushe Airport had been used for their first, last and only time on my birthday; increasing visibility to 700 yards temporarily along the runway that afternoon, allowing an "Airwork Viking" to take off in the dense fog that had also paralysed London for several days.

Apparently, two famous writers, Sir Winston Churchill and Mark Twain were also born on November 30th. My upbringing was very different from those two great men, and my father was apparently the last Gamekeeper to be employed by The Jockey Club from 1955 until the National Stud arrived at Newmarket in 1963. He is even mentioned on p.65 of H.W.Pearson-Rogers' 1962 book, "Guns This Way" in connection with organising The Jockey Club Shoot.

I had always been encouraged to paint and draw by my mother, who bought me a 'paint-it-by-numbers' oil-colour set of a kingfisher when I was aged about ten from Tindall's Stationers in Newmarket. Mum had been a professional "stencil colourist", bringing black & white picture-postcards to life at "The Rotary" Works in West Drayton during the 1930s. As a tribute to her colouring work, I painted "Beacon Farm, Ca.1960" from an old black & white photograph taken by my father, with help in memorising the colours coming from my cousin, Marilyn Kenny, who is depicted bowling, with me (aged 11) already an aspiring England opening batsman in front of the fire-guard which acted as wicket-keeper!



"Beacon Farm, Ca.1960", oils on canvas 2009-10, 33 x 24 in. (83 x 61 cm).

Beacon Farm was built around or about 1825, according to old maps, and stood beside the "Cesarewitch" starting gate for some 150 years, before eventually being demolished in 1975 when the Newmarket-By-Pass was constructed nearby along the old 'green road' of the Icknield Way which ran along the opposite side of the racecourse. These historical maps indicate that, around the mid-1800s, what had been "The Four Mile Race Course" was re-named "The Beacon Course", presumably after Beacon Farm, which would have been a prominent landmark.

Water was precious! Annual rainfall was often no more than about 20 in. (500 mm) in the Newmarket area, and the old well had been replaced by a borehole in the back garden of Beacon Farm, from which my father used to draw underground water from time to time when our tank needed replenishing by means of a petrol-engine working a pump. The nearest running water emanated from a small wood near South-