

Intrepid Travellers

Three Wychwoods Women in the 1880s

WENDY PEARSE

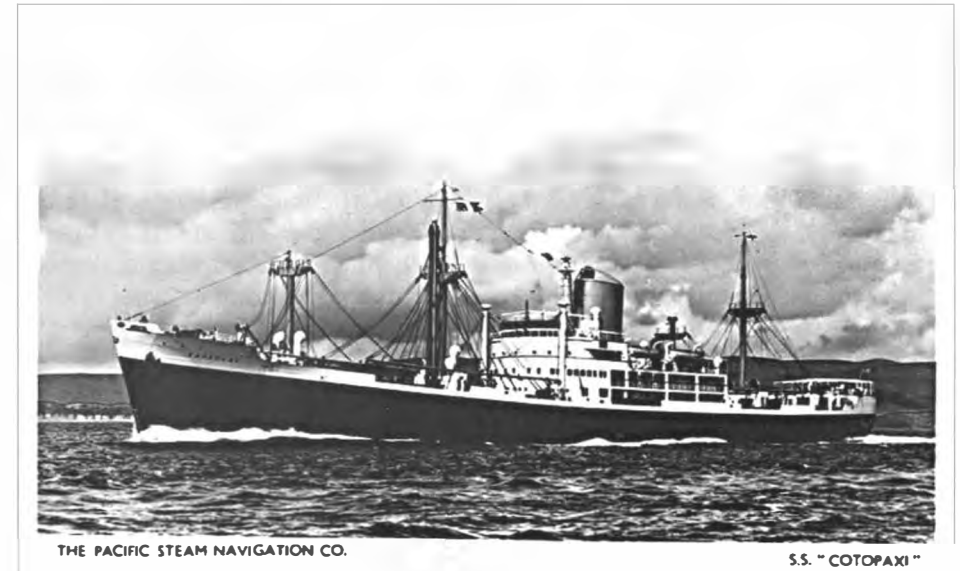
Bessie Bolton née Groves

WHO knows what thoughts must have run through the mind of Mary Groves as she watched the small boat leave Blackwall Pier heading for Gravesend Docks? On board were her eldest daughter Elizabeth (Bessie), aged twenty-one and Bessie's newly wed husband Edward Bolton, a twenty-four-year-old Methodist lay preacher and son of a gentleman farmer from Finstock. Their dream of a new life in far flung New Zealand must have, in 1881, seemed to Mary like an expedition to the moon and the uppermost thought in her mind must have been the question of whether she would ever see her daughter again. Close relatives, in previous months, had expressed severe reservations about Bessie and Edward's emigration and probably even Bessie herself felt some trepidation as she watched the figure of her mother disappearing into the distance. She had taken leave of her father Alfred Groves, a prosperous builder living in 'The Elms' at Milton, two days earlier, for the couple had spent their last night in the Wychwoods area with Edward's family at The Manor in Finstock.

The diary, which Bessie had begun two and a half years earlier, on 3 April 1879, her nineteenth birthday, is rather enigmatic. Despite a seemingly serious nature, at first her deeper feelings are expressed. She had a deep religious conviction, taught Sunday School, played the harmonium at chapel services and attended many and varied services and meetings. The diary is littered with various texts for the day, her regard for the preachers and little prayers of entreaty, thanks and praise for her Maker. Bessie also mentions all kinds of visits about the village, and further afield, to numerous friends and relatives. With, however, the 1881 Census only listing one servant living with the family (there may have been others who came in daily) she also spent a good deal of time assisting her mother with various household chores like washing, ironing and entertaining visitors. Her two elder half-sisters were already married with households of their own, but with one older half-brother and seven younger siblings there must always have been plenty to do.

Edward Bolton had taken her totally by surprise when, in December 1879, on a short journey together, he had asked her to marry him and perhaps go with him to New Zealand. Bessie was apparently speechless and neither referred again to the matter for at least three weeks of private agonising. Bessie's mother, when appealed to, told her she must please herself. But

with the help of Edward's sister, the matter was finally settled, a ring was exchanged and Bessie's life became monopolised with love for her Edward. Probably this is what sustained her over the next two years, for questions were apparently posed by her many relatives about whether she should leave her loving family and secure life and go to the other side of the world with this man, especially when, after eighteen months of courtship, some were also beginning to consider him 'A Laggard in Love and a Dastard in War shall never wed fair Helen etc. ...' This made Bessie so angry that she felt the need to pray to God to take the anger from her heart. These criticisms, however, served only to fuel Bessie's determination and when they were finally married on 4 October 1881, her course was set.



Their passages had been booked on the steamship 'Cotopaxi' waiting at Gravesend and fortunately there was a family named Knight on board with whom they were already acquainted.

Most of Bessie's diary from then on is full of factual descriptions and only very occasionally do her inner feelings emerge in brief sentences. The status of married woman enforced some changes. 25 October: '... there was dancing but I did not dance my dancing days are over I expect.' And 4 November: 'I am never called Bessie now. It is always Mrs B.'

Apart from the Knights the couple soon became acquainted with other fellow travellers, and, after 'a fearful time' in the English Channel, the weather gradually became warmer until on 22 October they cast anchor at St Vincent. There coaling took place over the next day, night and following

day. Precautions were taken but the noise was deafening and everything was covered in coal dust. At least the passengers could go on shore, attend services and briefly explore, but they found the local community very poor and deprived. Then on to Cape Town, the intervening days spent in reading, sewing, games, preparing and performing a concert, and attending services on Sundays.

Bessie gives very little description of the steamship 'Cotopaxi'. The couple were fortunate to have a cabin to themselves where they could have time together, but they also socialised with the other passengers in their class and exercised by frequent strolls around the deck. Their boxes were brought up from the hold once a week in case they needed any extra items. Edward, however, also kept a diary of this outward journey and he describes a visit to the engine room where he found a number of engines. One made electric light, one forced water around the ship, one pumped water to be condensed into steam which then converted the steam from salt into fresh water, the waste steam being carried back to the boiler as hot water. A long steel shaft was turned by the engines and turned the screw. A nearby dial connected with one beside the officer on the bridge from whom instructions were relayed to the engineer below. There were six boilers and eighteen furnaces and sixty tons of coal were consumed daily. There was a small engine on deck for steering the vessel and the ashes from the furnaces were brought up by steam and thrown into the sea.

Their arrival in Cape Town on 6 November was apparently a 'red-letter day' for Bessie. Amidst the 'uproarious' of coaling, the couple, together with a number of other passengers, left the 'Cotopaxi' early for a day ashore. They were both greatly impressed by Cape Town. It seemed just like an English town. The streets were well arranged, adorned with fine houses, shops and well furnished hotels. Carriages, not out of place in Rotten Row, paraded the streets and the inhabitants were splendidly dressed in the latest fashions. Edward was most intrigued by the new Wesleyan Chapel which had been built at the huge cost of £18,000. A commanding building, the woodwork, carvings, pews and stained glass had all been imported from England. However the labour costs were high and despite the huge congregation of 600 to 1,000, the chapel was still £5,000 in debt. Edward, in his notes, was very much concerned with the price of everything, from 3s. for a good tea to the fact that the boat trip to Cape Town from the 'Cotopaxi' cost 6d., whilst late arrivals for the return journey were charged 5s. and in the process nearly missed the boat. Cape Town's biggest function seemed to be as a coaling port and Edward decided he 'should not like to live there'.

The next few days the ship rolled badly, one of the lady passengers was injured in a fall, and Bessie ended one afternoon in 'having a weep, I must not be so foolish again'. And so the journey continued. Bessie found various ways

of occupying her time with handicrafts, reading, writing, strolling the decks and enjoying the company of her varied fellow passengers.

Making their initial landfall in Australia at Adelaide with a brief trip ashore, on 27 November they arrived at Melbourne. It was a Sunday and they were pleased to be able to attend the Wesleyan Chapel. But Edward was irritated by one lady who 'had a very strong voice and seemed to try to attract notice'. They walked around the beautiful botanical gardens and enjoyed a meal at the Tankard Temperance Hotel. The following afternoon, having collected all their baggage, they left the 'Cotopaxi' for the last time and took a room in the Temperance Hotel in the town where 5s. per day for meals and bed 'suited us nicely'.

Two days of sightseeing followed until they were down at the docks once more and taking passage on 'this horrid little steamer "Arawata" packed almost like herrings, Edward away down in the hold while I sleep up here. One has to scramble for dinner like so many hungry schoolchildren, although we are travelling first class. The steamer rocked so fearfully, we were (or seemed to be) in imminent danger of being tossed over.'

Five days later they reached Bluff Harbour on the southern tip of South Island and their first port of call in New Zealand. Edward, who was to undertake a farming partnership with his brother John who had arrived in New Zealand two years previously, was not impressed. '... soil seemed poor, little grass growing, a few cows to be seen & these not the best breed, the weather cold and damp.' Next morning travelling on up the east coast they reached the 'very pretty' Port Chalmers. Dunedin 'the chief city in New Zealand' was about nine miles away by train and 'delightfully situated. The flowers and ferns are prolific and the scenery is indescribably beautiful!' Edward, rather more impressed, 'formed a favourable impression of the soil, the grass very thick & long. The cattle looked well but small.'

On 8 December they reached Lyttleton, the port for Christchurch, and as the train took them to the town Edward noted happily, 'travelled through land laid down with English grass, saw some fine cattle, looked like producing abundance of milk'. In Christchurch they sought out Mr Buller, a Wesleyan minister whom they knew in England, and whose home was 'replete with every European luxury'. He was able to hand over a letter from brother John who said that he had selected land on Foster and Grants block, news which Edward was 'very glad' to know.

The following day they arrived at Wellington, mostly 'built of wood, because of earthquakes'. Bessie noted that the Museum 'was quite worth seeing, a pure white peacock & also the Weka & the Kiwi a thing half bird, half animal, no wings and fur on its back. The Maori house was very interesting. Carving most beautifully done but the subjects very ugly.' They also toured the cathedrals, Houses of Parliament and botanical gardens. There were 'flowers



Lyttleton Harbour

everywhere'. Travelling then up the east coast of North Island they next reached Napier in Hawkes Bay before finally taking leave of the 'horrid little "Arawata" at Gisborne, 'a prettily situated town'. It was a Sunday and they were met by a Mr Kurtain whose house they were due to take over in the next few days. At the service in the Wesleyan Church several people mistook Edward for his brother John who actually arrived in the town on the following Friday 'looking browner & fatter and not quite so quiet as he used to be'. They set about acquiring 'a few things which we should require to keep house on a small scale, bed, mattress, lamp, saucepan, cups, saucers etc.', and Bessie was soon asked to take over playing the harmonium at the chapel. By the end of the following week Bessie and Edward had the whole house to themselves but 'I used to be a bit homesick sometimes in the morning & two or three times had a weep'.

Their circumstances hit Bessie rather hard on Christmas Day, which fell on a Sunday. 'So hot we could hardly bear it. I gave Edward a box of figs & John a pocket diary. I had no presents first Xmas I have ever been able to say that. I felt rather dull, thinking what a splendid time they must all be having at home.' It must have seemed dismal indeed considering the big Christmas family gatherings in her early diary entries and the huge number of wedding presents that the couple received.

Bessie then began sorting the house out and coping with all the accumulated washing, until on Tuesday 3 January, 'we were up early for John and Ed were going up to Tologa Bay to see Mr Stewart's land'. On Thursday 5 January, however, 'Edward and John are home again. They are greatly disappointed with the land they saw up Tologa way, and have determined to go home.'

Perhaps it is not surprising that Edward and John were disappointed by Tologa Bay. Situated forty-five kilometres from Gisborne, the region around the bay is rugged and remote and for many years, certainly in the 1880s, the only access was by boat. Because the bay is so shallow the longest wharf in New Zealand was eventually built there to accommodate vessels. A region of New Zealand mainly populated by Maoris, today it is a popular holiday resort. Not so when the Boltons made their expedition. The remoteness of the bay was further emphasised for the couple when a Mr Clarke visited. He lived at Tologa and only saw his wife about once in three months as she was forced to live in Napier so that their children could be educated.

6 January. 'Edward sent a cablegram home.' Presumably this was to tell their families that they would be returning to England.

On Friday 13 January Bessie finally had news from her family when she received her first letters from home. But preparations were in hand for their return and on 23 January 'We left Gisborne & the many friends we had made there & started for Auckland'. On 25 January they embarked on the 'Hero' for Sydney. During this leg of her journey Bessie reflected on her impression of the colonies. 'There seems so much infidelity & scepticism afloat in the colonies. All men appear to think of is money & pleasure ... All around is beautiful & fair except man who is so marred one can hardly credit he was formed in God's image. So few are there that will own Jesus to be their Lord.' On 31 January, 'A very rough day ... Towards evening it got worse & I was very frightened.'

Arriving in Sydney on 1 February, Bessie and Edward were soon enveloped by Bessie's aunts, Lucy and Kitty, and their families, who had emigrated to Australia some years before. They spent the next fortnight visiting, sightseeing and renewing acquaintance with a number of people before re-embarking on the 'Hero' as it continued its journey westwards along the southern coast of Australia, picking up more passengers at the major ports. On 25 February the 'Hero' left Adelaide and Bessie and Edward took their final leave of the southern continent.

Over the next three weeks the weather was very hot while the 'Hero' steamed northwestwards. On their return the Boltons did not follow the route of their outward journey. Instead of sailing around Africa, the 'Hero' headed for the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean. At times during this rather tedious period when there were few glimpses of land, Bessie recorded that she was very unwell. Perhaps her reserves of determination were gradually diminishing. At last on 16 March they entered the Gulf of Aden and on 22 March she recorded joyfully 'Land again!!! Hurrah. I have just been up on deck to see the place where the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. It is a right glorious morning. Last night we had a very good concert. I feel very, very much better today'.

Unfortunately Bessie's jubilation met further obstacles on the next day. 'This is the second day we have been stuck in this canal. Neither can we go on

shore as we may have to start at any moment. The cause of our delay is that the 'Rome' is aground. They are unloading her to get her up. She is hindering 13 or 14 steamers the canal is very full now. Everyone is getting very impatient except the Arabs who are doing a good trade in feathers, coral, fancy work, beads, oranges & Turkish delight.'

Two days later: 'We are still in this canal and I am very weary. The heat is intense. I suffer all day from headache. Now we are at a standstill again and shall not reach Port Said tonight. Horror!'

At last they emerged from the canal and proceeded on through the Mediterranean. 'Anything more beautiful than the flowers in Naples couldn't be imagined. We saw Vesuvius by day & night, we saw the flames plainly at night, only smoke in the day.' On 2 April 'We saw Gibraltar last night'.

The next day: 'This morning April 3rd 1882 I am 22. Have been feeling very seasick. Not a very bright birthday. We saw a great many steamers yesterday.' 4 April: 'Our voyage will soon be over we have had fine weather all the way though the head winds and our stoppage in the canal have rendered it somewhat tedious. We shall be in the Bay of Biscay in about an hour. Hope it won't be rough ...'

And with that exclamation Bessie's diary finishes. It is not known whether she ventured abroad again but probably her voyage to the other side of the world remained the adventure of her lifetime.

Alice Ward née Calvertt

In 1875 John Simpson Calvertt came from Lincolnshire to take on the tenancy of Fairspeare, one of the farms created following the disafforestation of Wychwood in 1856-7. These farms were never so productive as the ardent supporters of the disafforestation were led to believe and, in the eighteen years of their availability, two tenants had already decided that this Crown property was not living up to expectations. Despite, however, the double onslaught of a disaster in the farming regime and economy of Britain, and the very worst that the weather could throw at the country, John Simpson Calvertt stuck to his resolve and continued pluckily farming until his sudden death in 1900.

In April 1876 Calvertt's wife Jane and his three sons and three daughters joined him at Fairspeare and shortly afterwards another daughter was born. His two eldest daughters, Alice Louisa Jane and Elizabeth Anne were twenty-one and nineteen respectively at the time of their arrival in the Wychwoods and they were very soon making the acquaintance of their social equals amongst the middle-class society in the neighbourhood. On Sundays they attended various churches in the area. Leafield was their parish church but on other occasions they drove to Charlbury, Ascott, Shipton, Witney, etc. Witney was a favourite town to shop in whilst balls, bazaars, fetes and sporting occasions at locations like Blenheim, Ditchley, Heythrop and Cornbury, were all frequented

by the Calverttts. Hunting was a great passion and this also included a grand social agenda. Around Christmas, Calvertt, accompanied by his wife and one of the older girls, would repair to the imposing, newly built Salisbury Hotel in London and whilst pursuing a shopping spree, they would visit the sights and enjoy theatre visits in the evenings. The diary which Calvertt kept throughout his lifetime mentions numerous friends whom they met frequently on every possible occasion, and the lives of his two eldest daughters appear to have been fully engrossed in the means and manners of their era. Elizabeth Anne (Lizzie) however, may have had more contact with the lower classes since she taught a Sunday School class of girls, presumably from Leafield Church.

John Simpson Calvertt's diary gives all manner of details of his and his family's lives. This is the only source of information that we have about Alice and Lizzie but because of the diary we can follow their movements through the 1880s and, like Bessie, these two young women were soon to leave British shores for a life abroad, one travelling to Belize in Central America and the other to India.

A certain disruption entered the life of the family when Alice met Herbert Marlow Ward sometime before 8 July 1881, the day when Calvertt noted in his diary 'Herbert Marlow Ward, proposed to Alice'. We do not know how Alice and Herbert became acquainted and the first mention of his name in the diary is only three weeks before on 19 June when he came on a visit to Fairspeare. He was a graduate of Christ Church College in Oxford and was then studying for his MA and a life in the ministry. His father was the vicar of Morville and Ashton Eyres, just outside Bridgnorth in Shropshire, and the next January Alice went off to visit his family there.

The engagement was not short. Obviously the couple were waiting for Herbert to finish his studies and it was not until May 1884 that Alice and Herbert travelled to Oxford so Herbert could receive his MA degree.

It seems that plans were then laid for him to pursue his ministry abroad. How the decision to become the vicar at St Mary's Church in Belize City in Central America was decided is unknown, but only a few years earlier the Archbishop of Canterbury had requested the Bishop of British Honduras (Belize) to reorganise the church in the colony. This was accomplished in 1883, the Bishop personally supervising the process and securing the property into the hands of the church. Seemingly a new vicar was soon required at St Mary's, the subordinate church to St John's Cathedral in the city, and it was to there and the neighbouring rectory that Alice and Herbert were destined after their wedding at Leafield Church on 11 March 1885. Calvertt made a grand point of describing all the wedding arrangements and listing all the eighty wedding presents which presumably later travelled across the Atlantic with the young couple. On 3 May Calvertt noted 'At Church & Sact., with Alice - for the last time for some years, if evermore at all!!!!...' So like Bessie's mother, Calvertt

and his wife Jane must have found it hard to hold back the tears when on 13 May 1885, 'Jane and I bid the Revd and Mrs Ward "adieu" at the Paddington Stan.'

The family received their first letter from Alice on board the 'Salerno' five days later. This had probably been posted at one of the ports in the south-west of England but it was not until 7 July that a letter from Nassau in the Bahamas arrived.



Salerno

Within six days of sending this letter Alice and Herbert reached Belize City. A former pirate colony at the mouth of the Belize River, the Anglican Church had first sent chaplains to Belize City in 1770 to attend to the spiritual needs of British colonists and a military garrison centred there. Over the next decades the number of nationalities and religions increased in the area until in the 1880s the city was home to a multifaceted population of whites, blacks and coloureds. The whole country is about the size of Wales and is blessed with spectacular scenery. Off shore is the longest barrier reef in the Americas with a chain of islands known as cayes, scattered along its entire distance. It is a technicoloured world of turquoise shallows and cobalt depths populated with numerous varieties of fish and corals. Beyond the city the interior is densely forested, the whole a truly tropical paradise. All this lay before Alice and Herbert as the 'Salerno' negotiated a passage between the islands to dock in the estuary.

In 1871 Belize had become a Crown Colony with a resident governor appointed by Britain, and the town itself was a main centre for logwood and mahogany export. The Cathedral of St John had been consecrated in 1826 but, as the city expanded to the north in the mid 1800s, it was deemed necessary to construct another church. In 1852 a small wooden building dedicated to St Mary the Virgin was built. A rectory was constructed next door. We do not know whether a more substantial building had replaced the original in the ensuing thirty years but these two buildings, constructed along the river frontage amongst colonial style wooden houses, were Alice and Herbert's destination.

Probably Alice found that one of her major problems was coping with the weather conditions. It is always warm in Belize, often hot and humid. The lowest temperature between March and October is 21°C with the maximum about 32°C. July is also near the beginning of the rainy season which lasts through to November, with clear mornings and one to two hours of drenching

rain every afternoon. The worst rain occurs in the height of the hurricane season between September and October. These unfamiliar weather conditions must have made life even more difficult for Alice, then aged thirty, since pregnancy had commenced near the beginning of her marriage. On 12 January 1886 the Calvertt family received a letter from Herbert stating that Alice was dangerously ill. Her son John Sebastian Ward, was born on 22 December 1885, so it would seem likely that she had been ill prior to the birth. How full of anxiety the days must have been for her family at Fairspeare awaiting the arrival of the next letter. Calvertt does not record the date they received better news but on 25 February noted 'Papered Alice', so things had certainly taken a turn for the better by then. 15 June he noted 'letter from Alice - returns via "Salerno", via Nassau, Bermudas & Azores. Will stay in England 3-4 months, and evade the Hot season at Belize.'

The 'Salerno' sailed into West India Docks in London at 5 p.m. on 24 August and by 5.30 p.m. on the following day Alice was at Fairspeare introducing her eight-month-old son John to her family. In fact her journey home had been 'Quick, Calm, Enjoyable, leaving Belize on 21st July, a total of 35 days.' So Calvertt did not have to wait too long to attend Leafield Church again with his eldest child, and the added bonus of his first grandson.

South West India Docks



Alice remained at Fairspeare until 3 February 1887 when Calvertt noted 'Alice & her Son, left Ascott by 1.15 train, direct for "Salerno" in the West India Docks -

they & nurse "Margaret" were all in excellent health.' The next day he continued 'At 9 a.m. the "Salerno" steamed out of W.I. Docks for Dartmouth - Teneriffe, one of the Canary Isles - Nassau, one of the Bahama Isles & they would call also at 1 or 2 Ports at Cuba before they landed at Belize - a long journey across the world.'

Was this parting even more difficult than the first? No-one knows. But by 22 June of the following year, 1888, Calvertt could thankfully write 'The Revd. H. M. Ward, Mrs Ward & Son all safely reached London, from Belize - via Jamaica, Boston and N. York'. Shortly afterwards Alice's second son Reginald was born. And it seems that Alice then remained in England for the rest of her life.

It is difficult to understand how fearful the population in those days was of long sea voyages. It was the only way to travel distances and certainly there were a number of shipping disasters which must have been broadcast to the country through newspapers, and along the multi-routed railways. As with the higher mortality rate at the time, perhaps there was more acceptance of 'acts of God'. But when a dearly loved family member set forth, there must have been much heart searching.

John Simpson Calvertt and his family were doubly affected by this type of situation since his second daughter Elizabeth Anne (Lizzie) was also destined to travel and in her case much longer separations were in store.

Lizzie Abbott née Calvertt

As with Alice the first we learn of Lizzie's future husband is from a brief note in Calvertt's diary for 30 April 1884: 'Mr Abbott wrote me from India'.

Algernon Abbott, who was fifteen years Lizzie's senior, had been born in London around 1842. By 1864 he had married and joined the Indian military forces in India. Together with his wife Sarah he had a son, Algernon William, born 1864, and a daughter Ada. In the latter part of his diary, Calvertt mentions a visit from Algernon William who later became a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. There is, however, no mention of his sister. Presumably, together with her mother, she succumbed to the hard conditions in India which were particularly harsh on European women and children.

Algernon was obviously a widower by the time he met Lizzie and perhaps met her whilst on leave in England visiting his son, who like so many children born in India was sent back home to be educated. Regardless of the circumstances of their meeting, by 10 October 1884 Lizzie was packing for a journey to Bombay, so probably the note in Calvertt's diary refers to an official proposal of marriage.

The traffic between Britain and India had increased considerably since the early part of the century, especially following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. This had reduced the length of the journey to four weeks or even less

and led to booklets being produced giving various instructions to travellers. Women were advised to bring out a large number of clothes from England. The heat necessitated frequent changing of clothes and European clothes were not easily procured in India. Besides, it was obligatory amongst the middle class to keep up to date with fashion and dress in the latest mode. As far as household goods were concerned, travellers were advised to keep these to the bare minimum since rough handling in passage frequently led to damage. However it was sensible to take a good supply of household linen.

On 20 October 1884, two days before her ship was due to leave, Lizzie's parents and eldest brother travelled up to London with her for a brief stay at the Salisbury Hotel. The next day they were joined by her younger sister Grace, on leave from boarding school, and the following day by Herbert Ward, Alice and Calvertt's friend, Mr Price. On 22 October this family group accompanied Lizzie to the Royal Albert Docks where they looked over the steamship 'Kerbela' before in 'delightful weather' watching her slip anchor and hauled by two tugs, pennants flying, her rails lined by waving passengers including Lizzie, enter the Thames channel, destination Bombay.

A letter sent by Lizzie from the Isle of Wight, reached Fairspeare three days later and mentioned twenty-five first-class passengers and twelve second-class including three clergymen and their wives, the weather continuing delightful. These passengers contributed to their own social life aboard, something to which they were well accustomed in their normal life at home. There would have been singing, dancing and theatricals, and probably by that date a library had already been established on the 'Kerbela'. The journey through the Mediterranean could well have included a stop at Malta where coral, silver and lace shops were prolific. Then later, Port Said presented rather more of a culture shock to first-time travellers, since beggars, little boys and fortune tellers swarmed around disembarking passengers, and women could only venture forth under escort for fear of cut-throats. In the Suez Canal bumboats swarmed, their owners selling black bread, onions and monkeys, whilst little boys ran alongside the canal begging from the passengers on the ships.

Approximately one month after leaving London the 'Kerbela' approached the handsome curving harbour of Bombay where gently rising hills framed the city. As they drew near the waterfront, wafting on the breeze would have been strange unfamiliar smells of garlic, tobacco, spices, jasmine and sandalwood. European-style buildings crowded the waterfront whilst to their rear stood the densely packed native quarters with narrow streets and gaudy coloured houses. The city would have been full of noise; creaking bullock carts, cackling birds, alien-style music, craftsmen in leather, brass and other metals banging industriously in their tiny shops. The native women would have been bedecked in vivid colours, their glossy black hair and clothes enhanced with gold lace and ornaments. Strange shaped temples would have dotted the horizon and

mounds of flowers and unfamiliar vegetables would have bedecked the streets. Fortunately for Lizzie she arrived in what was known as the cold weather season which ran between October and March.

On Christmas Day 1884 Calvertt noted 'While at church a.m. - the Postman left, the "Times of India" in which we found Elizh. Anne's marriage to Algernon Abbott, GIP Railway: at Christ Church, Bycalla, Bombay'. The Great Indian Peninsular Railway which ran from Bombay north east into the heart of the continent had been established some thirty years earlier and from Calvertt's comment it would appear that Algernon Abbott had left the Indian military forces and taken up a position with this thriving railway company. The company workshops were at Byculla. On the following day, 26 December, Calvertt's diary entry reads 'interesting letter from Mrs Abbott - with particulars of her marriage - Presents - Voyage - Capt. Turner - Her New Home - altogether she has received a very good impression of Bombay, and its Climate'. About 10,000 Europeans were living in Bombay. It was a world of bungalows and clubs, bustle and gossip. The Anglo-Indian society felt themselves to be the most important members of the community and they would have had little contact with native Indians apart from servants and those adding decorative value to their lives. The women's roles were as wives and mothers and the memsahib was not expected to do any work but must be constantly aware of what was going on in her home. Convention was rife and Lizzie, as a newcomer, would have had to learn the ropes quickly, both socially and with regard to a strange house with alien servants whose work was dictated by both caste and religion. A good cook was considered a very valuable asset and a reliable ayah cum ladies maid was most important. The society was highly structured with strong pressure exerted on social preference. Social life ranged around races, parties, concerts, polo matches, dinner parties, amateur dramatics, and balls and dances where men outnumbered the women three to one. Various sports were also considered suitable for women, riding to hounds (jackals), tennis, golf, gymkhanas, cricket and archery.

With April came scorching hot weather with temperatures over 100°F, followed by monsoons in June. For Lizzie, whose first son Gerard was born in the autumn of 1885, the summer of that year must have been a feat of endurance, as for her sister Alice then in Belize. Conventionally dressed in long dresses, petticoats, corsets and stockings, the weather conditions must have been almost unendurable. The monsoons, which lasted between three weeks and two months, left everything covered in a green mould, fabric always felt damp, insects multiplied and ate into everything. After twenty-seven years of an equable English climate, the moths, flies, ants, caterpillars, centipedes, eye fly, scorpions, bees and mosquitoes with their constant threat of malaria, must at times have been hard to bear, let alone the unceasing presence of snakes.

Sadly for Lizzie and her husband, Calvertt's diary entry for 20 July 1886 reads 'Lizzie's son Gerard is dead from Teething eight and a half months old'. A very poignant remark and probably the event made even more so for Lizzie without the support of her family. Childhood illnesses were a constant threat in India, probably much more so than back home in England. There was great concern about whooping cough, dysentery, bronchitis and fevers, and the dreaded effects of teething were always prevalent in babies. Lizzie, however, was probably already pregnant with her second child and her second son, Bernard, was born shortly after this traumatic experience.

The following March an amusing letter arrived at Fairspeare in which Lizzie regaled the family with an account of her meetings with the Duke and Duchess Connaught and Lord and Lady Brassey and their three daughters, at a Jubilee Ball and also at the races. Lord Brassey's brother Albert was the owner of Heythrop House and Master of the Heythrop Hunt with whom Calvertt and his family frequently rode. So Lizzie must have been pleased to renew her acquaintance with the family. Lord Brassey, accompanied by his wife, family and crew, circumnavigated the world in his steam-assisted, three-masted, topsail yard schooner the 'Sunbeam' between 1876 and 1877. This is said to have been the first circumnavigation by a private yacht and it was during this voyage that the family must have met Lizzie in India. Unfortunately, in September, Lady Brassey died of fever off the Australian coast and was buried at sea.

When Alice arrived home in June 1888, she must have been devastated to find her mother seriously ill, and although Jane rallied in the ensuing months, it was only a temporary reprieve and on 10 February 1889 Jane Calvertt died. A difficult homecoming for Alice, but a harsh blow for Lizzie who would never see her mother again.

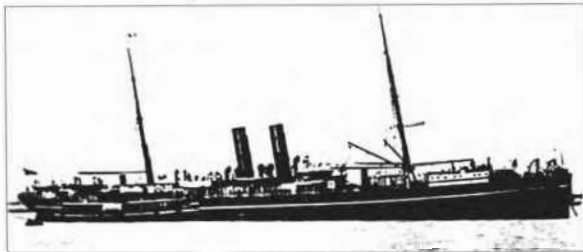
In April 1891 however, six and a half years after seeing his second daughter off from the Royal Albert Docks, Calvertt could at last look forward to seeing her again. After a twenty-five day journey on the 'Peshawar' through the Suez Canal and Mediterranean, Lizzie, Algernon and their three-year-old son Bernard arrived in London, from whence Lizzie and Bernard travelled on to Fairspeare the following day, to what must have been a great reunion for all concerned. Apparently the next day Lizzie and Bernard accompanied the family to Leafield Church but found the weather so cold that they had to leave before the sermon.

For the next fifteen months the Abbott family remained in England staying with Algernon's relatives in the London area whilst making frequent visits to Fairspeare. In July 1892 Lizzie's younger sister Grace married Frederick Matthews of Fifield at Leafield Church with Lizzie and Bernard in the congregation. In August Algernon returned to India in the 'Asia' leaving Lizzie

to prepare herself for a parting with her son who was to remain in England to be educated, making his base the home of Algernon's sister Edith in Waltham Cross.

On 8 December 1892 Calvertt accompanied Lizzie to the Royal Albert Docks in London as she approached her second sortie abroad. Her heart must have been heavy having already taken leave of her young son. The parting from her father must have been made even more poignant by the fact that

eight years earlier her whole family had been there to wave goodbye. Her ship this time was the 'Paramatta', but probably because the ship's destination was Australia, Lizzie was due to change ship in Aden. At the end of March 1893 Calvertt noted 'Mrs Abbott sent me



Paramatta

an Indian Guinea 250 years old!!! and a small Time Piece given her by the Marabaune of Baroda on her way out to India in the "Paramatta".

At least Calvertt could keep his eye on Lizzie's son over the next four years since Bernard and his Aunt Edith Abbott were frequent visitors to Fairspeare. It must have been comforting to Lizzie to learn about little episodes in her son's life from her father's letters. During this second sojourn in India, the Abbotts moved from Bombay, three hundred miles upcountry to Bhusaval, another major station on the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. The company's lines had by then been driven far into the north of India and also southwards reaching out towards Madras. Lizzie's final three months in the country were spent at Bangalore in the far south during the hot season. So perhaps she was glad to leave the high temperatures behind when she and Algernon departed Indian shores for the final time. On 15 September 1896 Calvertt noted 'Mrs Abbott came from Town after being away 4 years'. By May 1897 Lizzie and family had settled at 6 Norman Avenue, Henley-on-Thames, and on 4 July her daughter Beatrice was born, a blessing to Lizzie, then aged forty. At last her travelling life had been relinquished for a settled home in her own country, with her children close at hand.

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