

Marian and Hope Gamwell



Two Extraordinary Lives

collated from internet sources by Ian Singer

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The Gamwell Sisters

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In the early 1960s my parents were posted to Abercorn in the Northern Province of Northern Rhodesia. Today the country is called Zambia and the town is known as Mbala. There they met two sisters, Marian and Hope Gamwell who were eccentric characters who had lived there since the early thirties. They had a 985 acre farm called Chilonglwelo on the road down to Mpulungu at the south end of Lake Tanganyika and would call into town for stores in the 1928 box-bodied Rugby Chevrolet, named 'The Horse', which had first brought them to the town on the 19th of December 1928. They were said to have driven ambulances with the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the Great War and to have held senior positions in that organisation during the World War II. They were thought to be wealthy although nothing about their dress or way of life gave much indication of this other than being able to afford to farm in the area which is far from large markets.



Illustration 1: Horizon March 1964

I recently started to research the origins and lives of these two ladies of enormous character using the internet and have managed to piece together quite a lot of detail to fill out the little I knew already. I met them only once when visiting Abercorn for the school holidays and they certainly made an impression on me in their khaki drill suits with sheaf knives on their belts; nothing I found online has detracted in any way from that memory!

Paternal Grandparents

The sisters' Gamwell grandparents were Frederick William Gamwell (GF), born about 1802, and Anne Vidall who were married at St Pancras, London on the 8th of August, 1827.

There were two daughters, Maria I Gamwell born in about 1830 and Ellen K Gamwell in about 1833.



Illustration 2: Horizon March 1964

On the 30th of December 1835, Frederick William Gamwell (GF) and his wife Anne had a son named Frederick Robison Gamwell (F) baptised in Islington, London. This was the father of Marian

and Hope.

In the 1861 Census Frederick William Gamwell (GF) was listed as an accountant living at 53 Larkhall Lane, Clapham, London with his wife and two grown-up daughters. The servants were a cook and a housemaid. In 1871 the same family members had moved to 7 Park Villas in the Civil Parish of St Mary, Lambeth, London and still maintained a cook and a housemaid.

On the 9th December 1880 the will of Frederick William Gamwell (GF) was proved and amounted to less than £2000. He had died on the 26th August 1880 at 7 Park Villas and his widow, Anne Gamwell, was the sole executrix.

By 1881 the household were still at 7 Park Villas but had lost Frederick William Gamwell. His son Frederick Robison Gamwell (F) is now 45 years old and was present for the census. His occupation is listed as East India Merchant.

From the above, it would appear that whilst the Gamwell sisters' paternal grandparents were comfortably off, they were not particularly wealthy.

Parents

THE LONDON GAZETTE, APRIL 13, 1877. 2589

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between the undersigned, John Samuel Swire, William Hudson Swire, William Lang, James Henry Scott, and Frederick Robison Gamwell, carrying on business as Merchants and Shipowners, at London and Liverpool, under the firm of John Swire and Sons, and at Hong Kong, in China, and at Japan, under the firm of Butterfield and Swire, and at New York, under the firm of Swire Brothers, was, on the 31st day of December, 1876, dissolved, by mutual consent, so far as regards the said William Hudson Swire; and that the said businesses have since been and will in future be carried on by the said John Samuel Swire, William Lang, James Henry Scott, and Frederick Robison Gamwell. —As witness our hands this 1st day of January, 1877.

<i>J. S. Swire.</i>	<i>J. H. Scott.</i>
<i>W. H. Swire.</i>	<i>F. R. Gamwell.</i>
<i>Wm. Lang.</i>	

Illustration 3: The London Gazette, April 13, 1877 page 2589

Frederick Robison Gamwell does not show up in censuses previous to 1881 but 'The Chronicle & Directory for China, Japan, & the Philippines' for 1872 lists him on page 89 as a silk-broker in Shanghai. By 1877 he was a director of John Swire and Sons.

There is an extensive archive of material pertaining to John Swire and Sons held at the School of Oriental studies and the following is quoted from the context statement for that archive. It will serve to give some idea of the standing of that firm in the 1800s. John Swire and Sons is today a huge operation with Cathay Pacific amongst its holdings and Coca-Cola a strategic partner.

Administrative/Biographical history:

John Swire & Sons (JS&S) was founded in 1832 when John Swire, a Liverpool merchant since 1816, extended his business to include his young sons John Samuel (born 1825) and William Hudson (born 1830). On his death in 1847, they inherited a small but solvent business.

Over the next twenty years, evidence points to a series of attempts by the firm to expand its trade in America, Australia and the Far East when China was finally opened to foreigners. The beginning of the firm's real expansion in the East dates

from the creation of Butterfield and Swire. Previously, textiles assigned to JS&S for sale in China were handled for them in that country by the Shanghai firm Preston, Bruell & Co. However, JS&S aimed to have their own trading house in the East to attend to this side of the business. In 1866 they formed a partnership with R. S. Butterfield - a Yorkshire textile manufacturer - to create Butterfield & Swire (B&S) with two other firms in England and America. B&S opened its first office in Shanghai in 1867, with William Lang and R. N. Newby to handle the textile shipments and James Scott employed as a bookkeeper. On 1 August 1868, the short-lived partnership came to an end, leaving B&S in the hands of JS&S, whilst the other two firms became the property of R. S. Butterfield. The prospects of B&S were quickly strengthened with the acquisition of the agency for Alfred Holt's Blue Funnel Line. JS&S continued to develop and expand and in 1870, the London Branch (established 1868/9) became the Head Office. Two years later in 1872, the China Navigation Company (CNCo) came into being, and in 1874 the Coast Boats Ownery was created, extending JS&S's involvement in the shipping trade. Both concerns, which amalgamated in 1883, were intended to act as feeders to Holt's ocean going vessels by capturing the growing steam trade along the China coast and Yangtze River.

It was, however, a period of economic difficulties and fierce competition with existing trading and shipping companies in the East, notably Jardine, Matheson & Company and the Chinese sponsored China Merchants Company. The impetus for the establishment of the Taikoo Sugar Refinery in Hong Kong in 1881 and the insurance interests of John Swire and Sons arose directly from this period of hostility with Jardines. In 1876 William was forced to retire from the firm because of poor health, further increasing the financial strain on his brother but also leaving him in sole control of the business. **By the late 1870s the partnership consisted of John Swire, his right hand man in London, F. R. Gamwell, and the three Eastern Managers, William Lang, J. H. Scott and Edwin Mackintosh.** Initially however, only John Swire put up any capital and until his death in December 1898 the history of the firm is very much that of its Senior Partner.

When James Scott became the Senior Partner on John Swire's death, he put through two schemes previously vetoed by Swire: the Taikoo Dockyard and Engineering Company (1901), and the Tientsin Lighter Company (1904). Scott died in 1912 leaving three partners: his son Colin, and John (Jack) and George Warren Swire, the sons of John Samuel Swire. These three became life Directors of the private limited company, which was formally announced on 1 January 1914. Throughout the Twentieth Century the firm has remained a family concern. J. K. (Jock) Swire and John Swire Scott joined the Board after the First World War and further generations were brought in after the Second World War.

From the above, it seems likely that Frederick Robison Gamwell spent time in the Far East with John Swire and Sons but that by the end of the 1870s he was back in London looking after the needs of the business there. In a later interview with Marian Gamwell she says that he was in Hong Kong and Shanghai for seventeen years. It would seem that he was in a partnership and, whilst it seems that he made a considerable fortune, there is nothing to suggest he was fabulously wealthy.

In 1890 at the age of 55 Frederick Robison Gamwell (F) married Marian Antonia Bankart. She was aged 25. The banns were called in West Norwood St Luke, Lambeth on the 14th of September 1890 with the marriage registered in Pembroke, Wales.

Maternal Grandparents

Marian Antonia Bankart was born in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire in July 1864. Her father was Arthur Bankart born on 18th February 1836 in Camberwell, London. Her mother was Mary Anne Whittington who was born in 1836 in Monmouth and died on the 31st January 1878 when her daughter Marian was fourteen years old.

The 1841 Census shows a family named Bankart living in Camberwell, Lambeth, London. The father is a solicitor named Frederick Bankart and there are eight children including the boys Frederick (16years), Howard (13 years), Hubert (7 years), Arthur (4 years) and Percy (6 months). There were three servants and the neighbours included a ship broker, merchant, and wine merchant. It would appear to have been a fairly prosperous address but the street name is illegible. The results of searches on the internet indicate that Frederick Bankart was a successful lawyer involved in many areas including being solicitor to the National Endowment and Assurance Society which it claims to have originated the endowment policy.

In the 1851 Census, Arthur Bankart is listed as 'a scholar at home' which may possibly indicate that he was being educated at home by a tutor.

In the National Library of Wales, Welsh Journals Online¹ are documents which indicate that the Red Jacket Works was built by a London solicitor named F Bankart, who had links to copper firms in the Birmingham area, in 1849 and that his two of his sons acted as agents at the works with £20000 invested in 1853 – half of this being borrowed.

THE LONDON GAZETTE, NOVEMBER 3, 1863.

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hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between the undersigned, Arthur Robert Burdon, of Derby, in the county of Derby, and carrying on business as a firm of Pritchard, Burdon, and Co., has dissolved by mutual consent, the said Robert Burdon from the said business, which will be conducted by Arthur Pritchard alone.—As witness our hands this 21st day of October, 1863.

Arthur Pritchard.

Robert Burdon.

hereby given, that the Partnership

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between the undersigned, Frederick Bankart, Howard Bankart, and Arthur Bankart, as Copper Smelters, and Co-partners carrying on business at Red Jacket Copper Works, Briton Ferry, in the county of Glamorgan, and No. 9, Clement's-lane, Lombard-street, in the city of London, was dissolved, so far as concerns the said Arthur Bankart, from the 17th day of June last past, by mutual consent.—As witness our hands this 21st day of October, 1863.

Fredk. Bankart.

Howd. Bankart.

Arthur Bankart.

In the 1861 Census, Arthur Bankart, now 24, is a visitor in a residence called 'Gelly' in Bettws, Carmarthenshire, Wales. The head of the household was Edward Morris who was listed as an 'Oil of Vitriol Chemist Manufacturer employing 38 persons. Arthur Bankart is listed as a 'Copper Smelter employing 11 persons. It is interesting to note that the middle name of the wife of the household is Whittington which raises the possibility of his future wife being connected to the family

The business is mentioned in trade fair catalogues such as those for the 1851 Great Exhibition Catalogue and the 1862 London Exhibition Catalogue as proprietors of the Red Jacket Copper Works, Briton Ferry, Glamorganshire; and 9 Clement's Lane, Lombard Street, London.

The above entry from the London Gazette appears to indicate that Arthur Bankart was involved in the business, possibly at the London end but left in 1863. To what extent he benefited from his involvement with the family business is not clear.

¹ Morgannwg - Vol. 23 1979 Enterprise and capital for non-ferrous metal smelting in Glamorgan, 1694-1924

The 1871 Census has Arthur Bankart, now 34, living with his wife, Mary Anne, daughter Marian A (6 years) and son Arthur R (3years), sister in law, Alice Whittington and two servants in Fairwater Cottage, Llandaff, Cardiff, Wales. His occupation is 'Foreign Agent')

In the 1881 Census, Arthur Bankart was a visitor at Wild's Temperance Hotel, Ludgate, London. His occupation was listed as 'financial agent'. Other occupants included a theological student, commercial traveller, general merchant and farmer. It would appear likely that his daughter, Marian Antonia Bankart, a scholar aged 16 was staying with her widowed grandfather Frederick Bankart, now 84 years, and his son Percy. Frederick Bankart is shown as a retired solicitor. Percy's occupation is barely legible but appears to be a clerk with the Young Mens' Christian Association. There were two servants.

There is no trace of him in the 1891 Census but Arthur Bankart, maternal grandfather of the Gamwell sisters died on the 13th of June 1901 in Eastbourne, Surrey.

The Gamwell Family at the end of the 19th Century

In the 1891 Census the newly married East India Merchant, Frederick Robison Gamwell and Marian Antonia Gamwell are living at 169 Knight's Hill Road, Norwood, Lambeth, London and have three servants, two of them Welsh, living in. Frederick is 55 and Marian is 26. Nearby, at number 175 are Frederick's two unmarried sisters, Maria and Ellen aged 64 and 59 respectively, both living on their own income.

Antonia Marian Gamwell (Marian Gamwell) was baptised on the 5th September 1891. Anne Hope Gamwell (Hope Gamwell was baptised on 14th June 1893. Frederick Whittington Gamwell was baptised on 19th February 1896.

All the baptisms took place in the London Borough of Lambeth.

In the 1901 Census, the family are living at Norbury Hill House. Frederick (the father) is 65, and his wife, Marian, is 36. The young Marian is 9, Hope 7 and young Frederick is 5. The father's sister, Ellen shown as aged 69, is living with them and they have a house servant, a cook, a nurse (domestic rather than medical) and three housemaids. In The Lodge, Norbury Hill House lives the gardener and his family. In The Stables, Norbury Hill House lives the coachman and his family.

The house is present on 1874 maps but is now the site of a small housing estate.



Illustration 4: Norbury Hill House c 1900 - old-maps.co.uk

Marian and Hope

Much of what follows has been extracted from a recorded interview with Marian Gamwell which is available on the Imperial War Museum website at

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80000498>

It makes for excellent listening. Other information is taken from Horizon Magazine, March 1964.

Mrs Gamwell was not very strong – she had a bad heart resulting from an attack of scarlet fever when she was young. The doctors did not recommend her going out to the East so Frederick Robison Gamwell retired in about 1896. From what has been previously stated about his London role there may be some question over this.

The family lived in Norbury Hill House until Frederick Robison Gamwell died in 1901 at the age of sixty-five. Mrs Gamwell did not care to stay there after her husband's death and took the family up to North Wales where they had very much enjoyed summer holidays. She bought a shooting lodge (other sources suggest that it was a dower house) from the Mostyn family and pulled most of it down, keeping only one gable and rebuilt it in a much larger form. There was a Home Farm with it at least. It was only about three miles from the sea and they loved it. The house is called Aber Artro and is at Llanbedr, Merionethshire.



Illustration 5: © Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales 2005 digital colour oblique photograph of the garden at Aber-artro, Llanbedr, from the north-east. Taken on 17/05/2005 by T.G. Driver.

Marian and Hope went to Roedean School in 1904 and 1905 respectively. They thoroughly enjoyed this although it was very different then. Although not active in Women's Suffrage, they were aware of what was happening in that area through school contacts, in particular the three Lawrence sisters who owned Roedean. They made many good friends with whom they remained in contact for the rest of their lives. One of Marian's friends lived in Lowndes Square in London and they used to stay there on their way back to Wales. Marian was invited to stay there to see the funeral of Edward VII

in 1910 which she was particularly pleased to do as her Uncle Reg was to walk beside the coffin. An obituary for her uncle reads as follows:

Surgeon Rear-Admiral Sir ARTHUR REGINALD BANKART, K.C.V.O., R.N., died at Kenbrook, Star Cross, South Devon, on June 19, 1943, aged 74. He received his medical education at the University of Edinburgh, whose degree of M.B., C.M. he took in 1892, and in 1905 he passed the D.P.H. Lond. His efficiency is also shown by the award to him of the Gilbert Blane gold medal in 1910. As early as 1899 he was appointed surgeon in Queen Victoria's yacht Osborne and was transferred to the new Victoria and Albert yacht in 1901, on which he served until July, 1914. On the outbreak of war a month later in that year he was appointed senior medical officer to the battleship Agincourt, and once more proved his efficiency at the Battle of Jutland and was noted for early promotion. In 1917 he became medical officer of the Portsmouth Marine Division and in 1919 once more joined the Victoria and Albert yacht. He was promoted to be surgeon captain in 1920 and surgeon rear-admiral in 1923, and retired at his own request in 1924. At various times he attended members of the Royal Family, and was awarded the M.V.O. in 1898, the C.V.O. in 1911, and the K.C.V.O. in 1923, in addition to being appointed as Honorary Physician to the King. In the course of his distinguished service Admiral Bankart was awarded foreign orders by Turkey, Russia, Greece, and Denmark.



Illustration 6: Funeral of Edward VII 20th May 1910

Marian observes that it was a magnificent procession and that it must have been the last time that so many crowned heads of Europe, including Kaiser Wilhelm, were gathered together.

At some point, prior to 1910, the family had gone to Switzerland for the winter sports and went on to visit a school friend who had gone out to Berlin to study piano. The sisters had several German school friends and one was the daughter of the Kaiser's Naval Attache. They thought that they would be interested in a service in the Schloss Kapelle in connection with the Order of the Black Eagle where the Royal Family and foreign diplomats would be present. Mrs Gamwell was not keen but Marian, Hope and Frederick went and had seats at the very front of the balcony above the altar and the gold chairs for the Royal Family and diplomats. After the service the Kaiser came up to the altar to thank the padre for the service. Marian recalls that she thought Hope, who was leaning over the balcony, was rather quiet, looked at her and realised that she was 'pea-green' and was about to be sick! She pulled her back and she was indeed sick. She wondered what would have happened to them had it fallen on the Kaiser! Whilst Marian and her Mother were at the opera, Hope and her brother also nearly set fire to their hotel, the Kaiserhof. Frederick had been given a toy by his Mother which worked by methylated spirits and he managed to set one of the curtains on fire. There was a 'hullabaloo'!

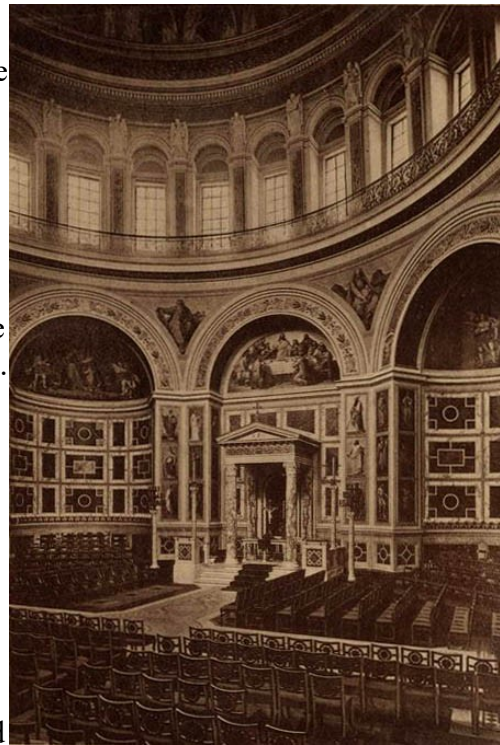


Illustration 7: Schloss Kapelle, Berlin

Marian left school in 1910 and she and Hope visited Germany for the Oberammergau play with their mother. Hope went on with the family of a school friend to walk in Switzerland. Marian and her mother went on to Munich, Berchtesgarden, Konigsee, Salzburg, Vienna and then to Linz. From their bedroom balcony they saw Archduke Franz Ferdinand go by on his eightieth birthday. After this they returned home.

In October 1911, they went out again, by car, to Germany where Marian was the first woman to drive in Dresden. She had learnt to drive, in London, from a driving school using a car with dual controls. She had a French licence as well but did not need to use it as they changed their plans about driving back through France and sold the car returning through Scandinavia.

Whilst in Dresden, Marian observes that the army were rude and pushed everybody into the gutter if they wanted to march down the pavement and a completely conceited senior German officer would push you off the pavement. She felt that the German Army at that time were aggressive and conceited. The Gamwells and their German contacts were not aware of any tension building up at the time – they were far too busy enjoying themselves. The Franco-Prussian war had not really registered with them and it was 1913 before Marian was aware of any tension. Marian's Mother wished to buy her some Blue Fox furs and they visited a famous furrier and chose a number of pelts by putting initials on the back and paid for them. They returned to their hotel for lunch during which there was a telephone call from the manager of the shop. Apparently the Kaiser was in the shop and wished to buy the same furs but Mrs Gamwell refused to give them up! Marian felt quite happy about that – especially afterwards!

After she and her mother returned from Dresden, Marian, interested in the work on the Home Farm, wished to be either a farmer or a veterinary surgeon and had visited a number of farms in England. None of the agricultural colleges would take women and the only instruction available was practical instruction on farms. On one farm, one of her jobs was to brush harrow the Cheltenham Race Course! She also worked on a chicken farm in Berkshire. She saw an advertisement in the paper placed by someone, possibly linked to the Suffrage Movement, who was trying to encourage girls to go out to Canada where she thought there were openings for girls to farm for themselves.

By 1913 Marian was in Canada learning to farm on the prairie. She was the only hand on the farm except for ploughing for which 'a dear old boy' used to come to help. They had to get up at about three in the morning to avoid the midday heat. They would start again in the evening. The 'old boy' would wake her by battering on her door at 3am saying, " Miss Gamwell, are you going to stay in bed **all** day?" She recalls it being a delightful experience although hard work. She was pleased to perform better in tasks such as pitching sheaves up to the threshing mill than her male neighbour! Whilst waiting for the corn stooks to dry she visited Vancouver with a view to farming there on her own account as British Columbia was the only Province to give land to women on the same terms as men. She was offered virgin land north of Prince Rupert Island which she would need to clear of trees then fence. She was warned that she would only get mail twice a year and that one of them would be by dog sleigh. She did begin to wonder about this and her mother wrote to say that the tenant of the Home Farm was giving up and that Marian should come home and take over there.

In November 1913, after sleeping in front of the Dover Stove in the kitchen to keep her face warm when suffering from toothache, she finally decided to return home and did so through America via the Dakotas and New York. The safety of the American railways did not impress her when she saw a whole train tipped over the banks of a river. She had a few hours walking around in New York and saw the lights of Broadway. She wasn't very pleased because a governor was being elected and everyone had gone completely 'wild and mad'. There was one boy who had a mop head dipped in soot with which he was blackening people's faces, including Marian's. She left New York on the Lusitania in the middle of the night and enjoyed her voyage. On the voyage she met the newly appointed American Ambassador to Berlin. She was met by her sister in Liverpool.



Illustration 8: RMS Lusitania at Liverpool.

The First World War

When the war started in 1914 the sisters were anxious to 'get at the Germans' and made a start by acquiring a magic lantern and slides from someone dealing with recruiting. They tied gas cylinders on the running boards of the car and went up to the small villages in the mountains of North Wales and showed the slides, mostly of the Boer War. Marian had no recollection of how many they managed to recruit. Marian did the talking and Hope showed the slides.

Soon after, their mother Mrs Owen had got in touch with Doctor Elsie Inglis who ran various hospitals run by women. She had had nursing training at Guy's Hospital before she was married. She was sent as an advance party to the Abbaye de Royaumont, about thirty miles from Paris. The party consisted of her two daughters, a friend who was the daughter of the Lord Lieutenant of North Wales and three of their household servants.

When they first arrived in November 1914 they had to get down on their knees and scrub out the enormous rooms which were turned into wards. These had been occupied by German Uhlan Cavalry who had stabled their horses there. There was no heat and no electricity so they used candles and lamps. They were working with the French Red Cross. The main body of the staff followed with all the medical equipment.

Marian drove their car which had been turned into an ambulance and Hope helped the doctor who was in charge of the X-Ray.

Marian travelled into Paris to get chairs and tables and suchlike. She recalled that there seemed to be nobody there, the Government having moved south, and that there was therefore no traffic.

After the French military medical authorities approved the

preparations, the patients started to arrive from railway stations which initially caused great excitement among the staff. Marian's duties were day to day chores, fetching this and that until the first man died. She was made responsible for the dead. She was told that she should take the body out although she wasn't told where. There was a small chapel in the cloisters and she managed to



Illustration 9: Modern view of Abbaye de Royaumont.



Illustration 10: © IWM (Art.IWM ART 3090) The Scottish Women's Hospital : In The Cloister of the Abbaye at Royaumont. Norah Neilson-Gray 1920

get three orderlies, English girls, to help her with the stretcher. They took it out of the ward but the door was not quite wide enough for the stretcher so they had to tip it sideways which was very difficult as one of the girls, who was very nervous, almost collapsed. They laid the body, on the stretcher, on the steps of the altar. She next had to get a coffin from the village and had to get help to place the body in the coffin. She was determined that there should be a proper military funeral and organised the padre of the church to carry it out. The coffin was put in the back of the ambulance and a tricolour draped over it. The curtains were left open so that the villagers could see that their dead were being properly dealt with. One of the doctors dashed down with an enormous bundle of washing and was about to throw it on to the top of the coffin to be dropped off on the way but Marian refused to allow this and instead came back for it. Later on, when a drain burst in the cloister, she and the same doctor scrubbed it out after it had been repaired.

Hope worked hard in the X-Ray room and Marian felt that the hospital did marvellous work. They each had a cell and there was a sitting room for the orderlies at the top of the tower but this was a quarter of a mile from the kitchen and dining room! The only male and the only French person on the staff was a representative of the Abbaye's owner and the French Red Cross. All the other staff were British from cooks to doctors. She recalls a good relationship between the staff and the French patients.

First Aid Nursing Yeomanry

FANY (Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps) is still active – see www.fany.org.uk for more.

In May 1915 the sisters were both anxious to get nearer the front line, and drove in the ambulance up to Calais to join the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. Their mother went straight home with the servants there no longer seeming to be any necessity for her particular job having done all she was expected to do. She started a British Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital for British soldiers in their home which she ran for the rest of the war.

They had somehow learnt about 'the FANYs' which they saw as a means towards what they saw as more active service. They wanted to work for the British but there was no possibility of this at the time as the War Office were adamant that they only wanted their own army nursing service and did not need any drivers.

They had some first aid training but not a great deal. Marian and Hope went to the Belgian hospital in Calais, Lamarck, and remained there until 1st January 1916. Marian drove an ambulance and found the Belgians only too thankful for whatever help was offered to them. Some of the FANY, including Hope, ran a soup



Illustration 11: © IWM (Q 7950) Members of FANY preparing to start their lorry at Calais.

kitchen. As well as the treatment of the wounded, there was a typhoid ward at Lamarck, where Hope worked for a while. The medical officers were Belgian military doctors.

The Belgians were hard up for baths for the soldiers and their mother gave an enormous Daimler car fitted up with four or six canvas baths on each side with tent covers. The water was provided by large primus type heaters inside the body of the car and Hope became responsible for running it with Marian helping when it went outside Calais although she mainly drove the ambulance. The heaters were vulnerable to wind and one day someone flung the door wide open and an enraged Hope turned round and said, "Who the hell is that? Shut the door at once!" - it turned out to be Baden-Powell! On another occasion they were sent right up to ? (unclear) well up in the Belgian lines where they lived in an estaminet. The mobile bath house was set up in a field, the far corner of which came under German shellfire. They were rather astonished and thought it rather a 'poor business' but didn't worry about it! The bath was in great demand. Baths were a source of difficulty for the FANYs themselves but the railway company installed some baths in railway trucks, two in each, with hot water from the engine for which permits could be obtained. On another occasion they were, for some unremembered reason, in the British Sector going to Poperinge and the road was very narrow. The vehicle was very temperamental and while Hope was driving, Marian had to pump petrol into the carburettor whilst lying on the bonnet standing on the running board. The Germans started shelling and a long row of staff cars behind which couldn't pass were hooting but they all arrived at their destination without casualties.

On the first of January 1916 the War Office changed its policy regarding women and the sisters were sent to join the British Red Cross convoy which had been run by Quaker men. The War Office wanted these men up at the front. Hope's mobile bath did not go with them. Two or three British hospitals were set up in Calais. During a night time bombardment a shell was dropped on their camp outside Marian's cubicle window just in front of the lorry which carried blankets and stretchers to the hospitals from the hospital ships. Hope, who drove the lorry, noticed it when she went to use the starting handle and was instructed by the Commanding Officer to report it to the senior British officer in Calais. He sent a young officer and some young NCOs but they failed to locate it. This was unsatisfactory so the CO contacted the French who sent up a 'brisk little sergeant' and several men with an

enormously long crowbar. They found the shell which was later held by the Imperial War Museum. They had great pleasure in telling the British that they had got it!

They were initially under canvas in bell tents in a camp above the Casino. Despite 'Nursing' being part of their organisation's name this was not part of their job which was simply to transfer the wounded as quickly and gently as possible. One car they had was called 'The Kangaroo' and was disliked intensely because it jumped as it went along. One of Marian's jobs was to see that the new FANY recruits could drive sufficiently well to drive on the quay as it was very narrow. On one occasion an



Illustration 12: © IWM (Art.IWM ART 3089) Etaples Hospital Siding : a VAD convoy unloading an ambulance train at night

ambulance did go into the harbour but fortunately it was empty and the driver was a good swimmer and the curtains were up. Marian had to arrange to get it out of the harbour. The majority of the

work was transporting patients between the hospital trains when they came in and the hospitals and from the hospitals to the hospital ships at the harbour. Marian's main job was to drive the three or four miles from Fontanet (sp?) where the trains came in and to take patients to Boulogne or to the Sisters' Hospital at Wimereux. On Good Friday 1916 she broke her arm after her ambulance had been worked on at the RAMC workshops. The ignition had been advanced and she was not told with the result that it backfired when she used the starting handle. As it was Good Friday the surgeon was away and couldn't be got at and she was treated by the dentist and the ear, nose and throat man. They put her arm over a broom handle and pulled hard which was 'a trifle painful' and bandaged it tightly but couldn't put it in plaster. It was X-Rayed and found to be very well done.

Marian had to go down to the Nurses' Hospital at Wimereux as, for administrative reasons, there was no place on the hospital ships for women. She was provided with a batman, 'a dear little man', who had been a jockey who used to sit at the end of her bed in the ward cleaning her clothes, and generally looked after her. He was very intent that she should have plenty to eat and used to somehow get her two helpings of anything that he thought was really delicious. The surgeon refused to allow her to be sent home unless he saw it first but unwrapping the bandages allowed the bones to overlap. She was taken to Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital in London where she was met on the steps by her mother and her uncle. Mrs Owen would not leave her daughter there and took her away to have her wrist properly plated. Her Uncle Reg found someone to do it and she went into a nursing home and had it done.

At home, she found everyone very busy with her home full of Tommies with everyone passionately anxious to know how things were going. She didn't recall any real bitterness towards the Germans although that was to be different during the Second War. She read and did what she could without the use of her right arm. Her mother had re-married a Welsh widower, Robert Prys Owen, eighteen years her senior, in January 1912. His profession is shown in the marriage record as 'D & JP' for Merioneth. Her stepfather was very fond of fishing and they went up to the North of Scotland while she was on sick leave for a few months.

On her return to France, Marian was able to resume the same ambulance driving duties as before. She particularly dreaded dealing with the really badly wounded who arrived on barges because of the rough roads. They took four at a time on stretchers and did the best they could to avoid holes and go very slowly over the cobbles. Marian drove a Wolsely ambulance but at one point they were equipped with all Napiers. Their wheels were held on by a ring which was turned tightly with a special tool with a plug inserted to lock it. Sometimes these got worn and the wheels would come off. Marian was driving back to Calais one night with wounded men on board and was astounded to see her wheel going ahead of her over the snow. She managed to retrieve the wheel and jack up the ambulance which was not badly damaged.

The condition of the men coming off the trains varied greatly but if they were very, very unwell they were kept in the hospitals in Calais. Patients were unlikely to be Allies as the lines were separate but they did transport wounded German prisoners who were normally accompanied by an armed guard. On one occasion she was carrying three German cases on stretchers and one British 'mental patient' but no guard could be spared. Sitting cases were transported in charabancs and all the guards were needed for them. Just outside the gate an appalling noise started up inside the ambulance with the Germans yelling and screaming. Marian could not recall anything appropriate in German to say to them but thought of the notice that was always put up in German railway carriages and reeled it off in German through the curtain and there was dead silence followed by roars of laughter. She had told them not to spit and not to lean out of the window! Her German returned and she was able to understand that one prisoner was complaining that the British soldier was trying to grab his helmet which the German did not wish to give up as it had holes in it and was a souvenir of his escape with minor injuries. The British soldier was told to give it back as it was the German's souvenir. All was well and they reached the hospital where Marian was asked to

give a Military Police sergeant a lift back to the station. She told him of her experience on the way and he asked her if she was interested in souvenirs to which she said yes. On a later trip he handed over a sack of shell cases, bits of machine guns and so on at which her colleagues' eyes were popping out of their heads when she returned to camp.

The Belgians were still in Calais until almost the end of the war and the Belgian King and Queen used to travel across from England. The Belgian HQ was still on Belgian soil. The British Royal Family used to come over too – Queen Mary not very often as she was not a good sailor – but the King came over several times and went up to the Front. The Prince of Wales was nearly killed on his way back from leave by Marian, who was transporting patients, as he was coming off his ship up into the town in the pitch darkness. He suddenly appeared in front of her car and seized hold of the radiator cap and almost leapt onto the bonnet despite being covered like a Christmas tree with all his equipment. He was very cheerful about it and saluted her as he went off.

In Calais there were large numbers of Chinese, Egyptians and others who acted as labourers. The Chinese were apt to throw themselves into the canal and it was the FANYs' job to fish them out and appear in court to say what they had found and under what circumstances although these were not clear apart from the supposition from Marian that they were miserable. There was also a contingent of Fijians who Marian thought very highly of and she recalls them giving swimming displays.



Marian recalled the American troops when they came in 1917. She thought them perfectly all right but remarked that they did get drunk a good lot. They were very cheerful and in the evenings they used to go to the small estaminets and get terribly drunk. It was the FANY's job to take them away if they were immobile which they didn't mind doing but were less happy the next morning when they had to clean their ambulances.

In the evenings there were always two FANYs on duty but the others often used to go down to the omelette shop in the Rue Royale and have a meal there which was very nice. The people who kept the shop were great friends to the FANYs. The FANYs themselves attended fancy dress dances together with the British units stationed round about Calais. The remount camp used to lend them horses and they could go for a gallop on the sands. How much free time they had depended on what was happening at the Front. During a major push they would be very busy.

Some of the FANYs ran a concert party called the Fantastics (sp?) for the troops which visited different camps giving performances and also used to go fairly far up the line. Performers used to come over from England to take part.

Not many of the cars had windscreens and were quite open with a board roof with canvas over it. In bad weather they just 'sat it out' in very thick mackintoshes and goatskin coats which were marvellously warm. They generally had to keep the carbide headlights turned off and there was no street lighting other than from houses or shops.

In winter it was bitter and the cars froze if they were left. They tried putting hot bottles under the bonnets with heavy bonnet covers along with every device they could imagine but they simply had to be on duty to start all of them, more than twenty vehicles, every twenty minutes. They had to do their own cleaning and maintenance along with one mechanic who helped with things the FANY's couldn't do. Serious problems had to be sent down to the workshops. There was no training in vehicle maintenance but they had learnt a lot from their own cars at home and experience taught them more than anything else.

Marian was responsible for stores of car parts, petrol, oils and so on with an old bathing machine to

keep it all in. One day a new recruit came to her and asked for some Glaxo. Marian queried this, pointing out that she didn't keep groceries but was told that a colleague had been seen putting Glaxo in her car. Of course, it was just the tin that was being used to pour oil in. The FANYs had to change and patch their own tyres, which were pretty thin, themselves. Each driver had her own car which she was responsible for.

They took great pride in their vehicles which were inspected by the CO and by Marian who was a sergeant for most of the time. The CO was Miss Franklin, known as 'Boss'. Miss Thomson was second in command but took over command of the St Omer Convoy when it was split off. Marian stepped into her shoes but was not there for very long after. At the end, in April 1918, She became ill and had to go back to England. She had appendicitis although she was not operated on and was not able to return. Hope took over her duties and returned with the Convoy on a ferry with all the vehicles.

For six months, while she was on sick leave, Marian went as a member of the Aircraft Inspection Department to Rolls Royce. Her job there was to inspect the engines and write out all the necessary paperwork for their dispatch. She had to make sure that they were outwardly all right and that all the split pins were in place and see that they were dispatched. She had no particular qualifications for the job other than being able to see and carry out the instructions she was given but found being in a factory very interesting. Everything was done by hand by the male factory workers who took great pride in their work at what she considered a 'tip-top' concern.

Marian kept in close contact with Hope so knew how things were going with the Convoy as things were closing down. She recalled Australians lighting a bonfire at the foot of Nelson's Column and went to the Victory Dance at the Albert Hall. The Convoy returned in either late 1918 or early 1919.

Between the Wars

Information is rather sketchy for the inter war years. Their mother, Mrs Owen was awarded the Royal Red Cross, 1st Class, in addition to a lesser award made in 1917, for her war work as Matron and Commandant of the Aberarbro Auxiliary Hospital which she had opened in her home. This appeared in the London Gazette of the 19th January 1920. She died on 9th June 1922 at 83 Victoria Street, Westminster, London and left £18859 according to probate. Her husband, Robert Prys Owen, survived her but did not benefit. His probate effects were £2785 and were left to two males with the surnames Roberts and Stokes. His address at the time of his death was Ael-y-bryn, Dyffryn, Merionethshire.



Illustration 13: Mrs Owen's London apartment block today.

Hope received a Belgian decoration for her work during the war and became a member of the Headquarters Staff Committee which played an important role in FANY development.

On pages 1507 to 1509 of the London Gazette dated 2nd March 1923 is an extensive application for a Special Order by Marian, Hope and Frederick as the executors of Mrs Marian Antonia Owen, their mother. It concerns the supply of electricity in a number of parishes in the rural districts of Deudraeth, Dollgelley (sic) and the urban district of Barmouth. It would appear that they intended to generate and distribute electricity in the area but no other details are available. There is a less extensive but similar application in the Gazette dated 19th September 1924 on page 6918. I have seen a modern picture of old pipework carrying water under pressure in the area which may have been concerned with the generation of hydro electricity but this is far from clear.

Marian again worked on a farm in Canada for a while and Hope travelled through East Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

Marian is recorded as having arrived in Liverpool on the 1st February 1925 from Teneriffe apparently in company with a Miss F G L Davis. This is possibly a friend called Freda Davies who later stayed with them semi-permanently.



Aber Artro was sold in 1928 and the sisters determined to move overseas. The thought of Canadian winters decided them in favour of Africa and they set out in their car with a servant, camping equipment and a game licence heading for Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Starting on 6th November 1928 they had a strenuous journey from Nairobi over rough roads and found themselves in Abercorn, not far from the southern end of Lake Tanganyika on the 19th December. They meant to stay for just a few days to replenish their stores but were persuaded to stay at the Tanganyika Victoria Memorial Institute for Christmas and then to have a look around the

area with a view to farming there as it was envisaged that the area was going to become a famous coffee growing centre. They dug eight foot test pits all over the district and chose the area which they were to make their home for the next thirty five years. The homestead was a collection of high-thatched buildings snuggled together to make a home with accommodation for visitors.

Frederick must have joined his sisters in Africa at some point as he is recorded as arriving at Southampton from Lourenco Marques, Mozambique along with Marian, but not Hope, on March 13th 1930. They travelled First Class and their London address was 87 Victoria Street.



Illustration 14: Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificates

Both sisters gained Aviator's Certificates in 1930 at the Hanworth Flying Club in Hounslow, London. Their brother Frederick had gained his certificate in 1914 and flew during the war with the Royal Naval Air Squadron finishing with the rank of Major. He received the Greek Military Cross, Class 3.

It can be assumed that the sisters spent much of the thirties setting up their farm although they are recorded as arriving together at Liverpool from St John's, Canada on 13th September 1938. Marian's address in the UK shown as 32 Wilton Place, London, SW1 and Hope was to stay at the Forum Club, Grosvenor P1, London. They travelled 1st Class.

The Second World War

The sisters learnt of the start of the Second World War from the European press with nothing starting in Africa. They did not think of returning until the FANYs called them up. Tanganyika, a former German colony which was still under British control, had German settlers who had been allowed to return to their farms in the mid twenties. The Germans were keen to escape so many of them went to the shore of Lake Tanganyika and stole boats from various missions to get themselves across to the then neutral Belgian Congo. The Gamwells participated in the efforts to catch them. In one case there was a mission which the District Commissioner had gone to as he had heard that a

German was there. A young African was riding a bicycle along a path and saw a European, absolutely worn out having walked round the southern end of Lake Tanganyika on his way to the Congo. The German had a rifle which the African offered to carry as he was so tired. The African took the rifle and set off for the mission to warn the DC who caught the fugitive.

Hope returned to the UK first and was appointed to the ATS as a Company Commander (equivalent to the Army rank of Captain) on the 8th January 1940 (Supplement to the London Gazette 16th April 1940 – page 2232). The FANYs sent for Marian because they wanted someone to arrange the FANY again outside the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). (*The existing FANYs, including Hope, had been incorporated into the ATS*) Marian had to dig up all their coffee which was just coming into bearing and burn it because the government would not allow commercial crops unattended by Europeans as they were concerned about the possible spread of diseases. There was no one left in the area to attend to the crops as they had all joined the war effort. (The Gamwells' staff kept things in good order for them while they were away and Hope was most impressed with the condition of everything on her return about a year before Marian. The herd, however, hadn't grown much as most of the calves had been eaten!)

Hope relinquished her ATS rank on 10th May 1940 to rejoin the FANY and was sent from FANY HQ to command a FANY unit which had been formed to look after the welfare of Polish Forces based in Scotland. They drove ambulances, staff cars and mobile canteens and also undertook roles in the Polish Ministries and in the Army Welfare Department of the Polish Ministry of Defence. Hope's rank in the FANY was 'Staff Commander' which was equivalent to Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army. Marian's rank of Commandant was equivalent to Colonel.



Illustration 15: Polish ambulances paid for by public donations in the USA.

Marian flew back to England in early February 1940 to join the FANYs following Hope who had already gone in September 1939. She stayed with a friend in her London flat and reported to the FANY headquarters, a flat in Grosvenor Crescent. She gave her name to a young FANY who reported to the officer in charge who was busy recruiting. Marian noticed outside the office, hanging on the wall, a notice saying exactly what *her* duties were and had a good giggle. The officer finished what she was doing and, not knowing Marian, asked her to come in thinking she was a recruit. She asked her name and realised she was not being recruited. She became one of their greatest friends.

It was very hard work at that time as the War Office was intent on persuading everybody that the FANYs had now given up because they had all gone into the ATS. Marian had to take steps to refute this idea which they did 'by various means'. They were allowed to continue as a corps outside the ATS and, doing their own recruiting, were divided into units. They also recruited for the ATS for about a year. Marian often visited an ATS recruiting officer at Scotland Yard and they would lunch together at the Royal Empire Society in Northumberland Avenue. The FANY took people who were not eligible to join the regular services for various reasons. They raised a unit of FANY ambulance drivers for Southern Command Red Cross. When the Poles arrived in Scotland and were preparing to fight alongside the British Army, another ambulance unit and a canteen unit were sent up. The canteen units were mostly run by older women whose children had left home. There were also a lot of individual jobs done by FANYs.

One of the FANY officers at HQ was a friend of General Gubbins who raised the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE needed a uniformed force to serve with them, mostly on the codes and signals side with some of them eventually dropped into France. Four of them, Denise Bloch, Cecily Lefort, Lilian Rolfe and Violette Szabo were taken prisoner and gassed at Ravensbruck. This SOE unit was the largest and, unlike the other units, was paid by the War Office. Marian was not in touch with those in the field. Marian dealt a great deal with a Chartered Accountant named John Venner who she thought very highly of. He was the SOE paymaster wearing RAF uniform. He died at the end of the war; Marian believed that this was due to overwork.

SOE recruits were sent to Marian to see if she was willing to recruit them as FANYs although their FANY training would not be extensive. She interviewed them at her flat rather than the office.

The IWM taped interview is rather unclear here but it appears that Marian was really vetting them and trying to make sure that they appreciated what they were letting themselves in for. It is not clear whether she was just interviewing prospective agents or all those FANY working as coders and signallers.

Marian recalls discussing the fact that she had children with Odette Sansom who nevertheless went ahead (*and survived torture by the Gestapo and Ravensbruck Concentration Camp*). She recognises that they had to be very special people as they had to be faultless in French and in living in France as they could be given away by any careless slip. She tried to boost the morale of those she thought were suitable although she says that it wasn't up to her to turn them down. *Presumably her opinion was considered by SOE, Certainly she was aware of what the prospective recruits might be letting themselves in for.*

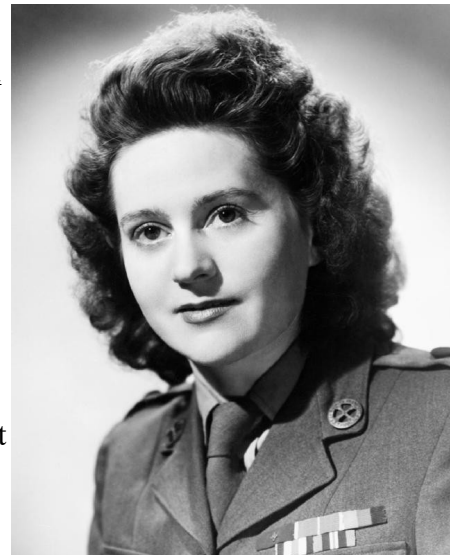


Illustration 16: Odette Sansom

These FANY were recruited through private contacts by an SOE recruiting officer with whom Marian had dealings. Marian expressed great admiration for the FANYs who did the work of agents. After the war was over, Princess Alice, the FANY Commandant in Chief, who had been in Canada during the war came to see Marian to hear what the FANYs had been doing. She was unable to stay for long as she was having lunch with the King. Later the Queen's lady in waiting rang Marian to ask her to bring four FANYs who had been dropped into France to see Her Majesty. Marian chose four, Odette among them, and they went to Buckingham Palace to see the Queen on her own. She asked questions and had them use one of the children's atlases, which was lying on the piano, to show where they were. As they were going down the stairs to leave they stopped and one said, "Gamwell, did you see she had a darn in her stocking?" This impressed them greatly.

Very soon after the visit to Buckingham Palace, Queen Mary's lady in waiting rang and asked to see one which was arranged. Marian took an older FANY this time, Lise de Baissac from Mauritius who had done incredibly good work. She had been working with her brother who had been the chief officer of a Maquis group in the Poitiers area at the time of D-Day. He had had to go back (*to England?*) to get instructions. The Germans were expecting a larger landing in the South of France and had a great number of troops and equipment which they attempted to move to Normandy. Lise organised the destruction of 400 lorries heading north. The lady in waiting and Marian sat on a sofa while Queen Mary and Lise



Illustration 17: Lise de Baissac



Illustration 19: Cairo Conference 1943

From Cairo, Marian had to go on to do a similar job in Delhi and was supposed to fly there via Khartoum but the Cairo Conference was on and couldn't get a plane as Mountbatten was using them all. She was discussing the matter with one of the senior SOE officers and learnt that two men had made the journey by land. He fixed it all up for her and she travelled from Cairo to Haifa by train. At Haifa she went to the Rail Transport Officer to obtain a warrant to travel to Damascus. She saw a little East African soldier who was trying to talk to a Corporal who was struggling to understand him. Marian asked him, in Kiswahili, where he came from and his face beamed! The soldier explained that they had been travelling by train and had found a (rather battered looking) gas mask which it was his duty to hand in to the RTO's office so the matter was resolved. Marian then explained that she wanted a railway warrant to go to Damascus. She was advised not to use the train as it had only hard wooden seats and she would be utterly miserable. Instead, a lift with an RTO sergeant from Damascus who was in Haifa with a truck, was arranged. They were a mixed bag, a Palestinian ATS, a Polish airman, RASC driver, the RTO sergeant and Marian. They had a 'wonderful time' and when they got to a very inviting orange grove they decided to stop. The sergeant produced a very oily looking newspaper parcel from under one of the seats which turned out to be an army cake fried in oil with jam in it and which they enjoyed very much. At the border they had coffee and the sergeant dealt with the paperwork for entry into Syria.

On arrival in Damascus, where she was booked into a hotel, Marian again found a friend. She had to wait for a desert bus which did not run every day so with her friend, visited the Mosques and the Souk. The buses across the desert, which did not run every day, had been organised by two New Zealand officers who had fought in the First War (*The Nairn brothers*). They had marked out a route using white painted oil drums from Damascus to Baghdad.

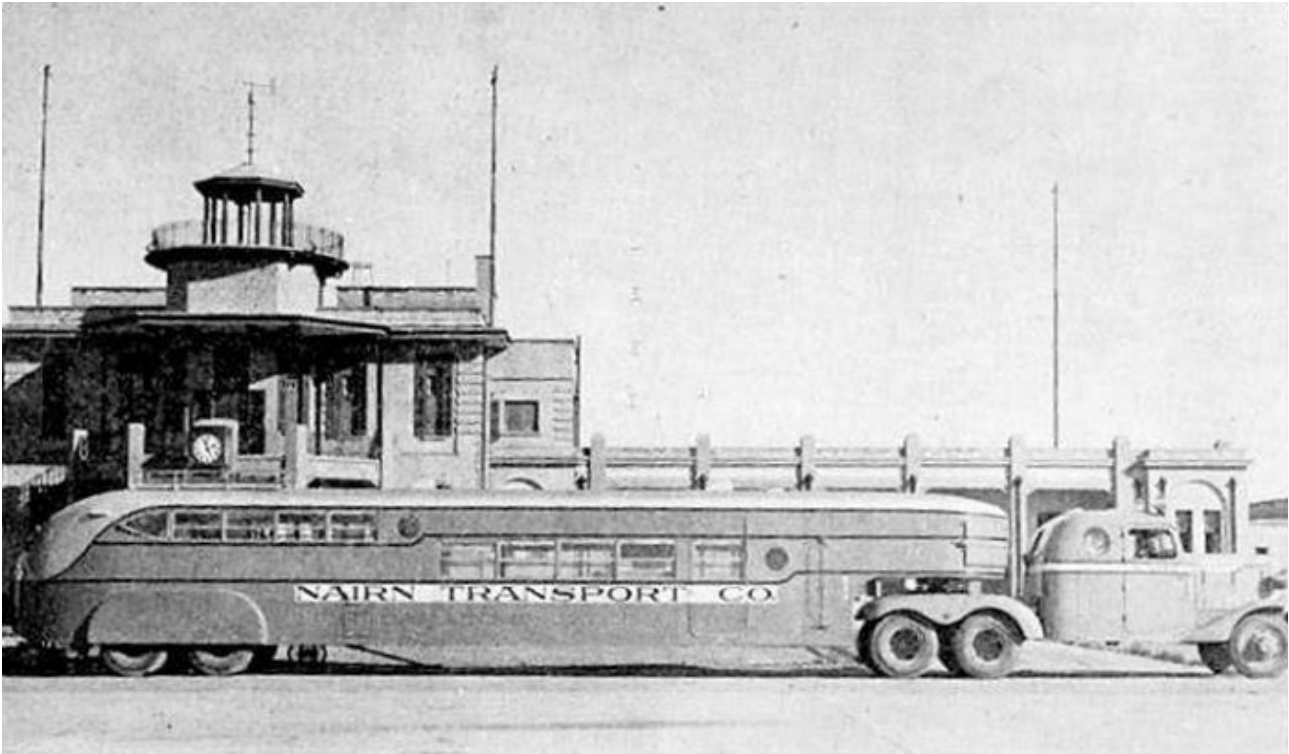


Illustration 20: Nairn bus

The buses were extremely comfortable, rather like the accommodation in the flying boats with chairs in which you could sit upright or stretch out. There were toilets at the back and food was carried but the country they travelled through was terribly dreary.

The Conference had moved from Cairo to Tehran and nobody was allowed into Iran while it was on which meant that Marian could not go on. Arrangements had been made for her to stay with the Foreign Office's archaeological adviser to the Iraqi Government. She was well looked after and saw the museum and various diggings around Baghdad with partridge shooting in the afternoons.

Eventually Marian travelled on to Tehran by air and it was hoped that she would be able to go on almost immediately as it had taken her nearly a month to go round but it was decided that she should go down from Tehran to Zahedan on the Baluchistan border where the railhead was by truck. There were two regular trucks, one owned by a Treasury organisation buying local produce for the troops and the other by the British Council. The journey (*about 900 miles*) was to take several days. Because the Treasury lorry passed through the Russian zone it was felt that Marian should travel on the British Council lorry. The Afghan driver was late in arriving because he was in dispute as he considered that he should have had a new lorry rather than someone else. The matter was sorted out by the old lorry getting the new tyres in exchange for its worn out ones. All this took some time. When she met him, Marian found out that the British Consul in Zahedan had known of the matter but had kept out of it! There were British Consuls, recruited from the Indian Civil Service, in various parts of Iran at the time.

After finally getting away from Tehran the first stop was Isfahan where something needed to be done to the lorry. There was a rather nice old German missionary and his wife who took Marian to see the Mosques and sights of the city as well as the best of the miniature painters for which the area was famed. This painter was in a very bare house and was on a platform below which the visitors sat and talked to him. Marian saw that the only ornament in the room was an enormous map of Africa. He spoke English and she asked him why he had it. His reply was that it was because he had the greatest admiration for David Livingstone. When she told him that she lived in the area that

Livingstone had worked in he drew her a delightful little sketch, which only took him ten minutes, which she still had on her mantelpiece in the seventies.

From Isfahan they went on, stopping the night at a coffee shop with Marian using her own food, mainly raisins and army biscuits, and sleeping on her own camp bed. Next they went on to Yazd where she visited the Consul's assistant who organised a meal and a bath. For the next night he told her to make sure that the driver stopped at a particular coffee house and not the one before it because it was not a good place. As brigands were active in the area they were given an escort of soldiers to stop Marian being taken up into the mountains and stranded with all her stuff being stolen. The driver insisted that he should also have a rifle and managed to borrow one from a friend but this meant that they were late in getting away and arrived at their destination in pitch dark with Marian just being able to see that there were mountains ahead. The driver, after discussion with the soldiers, was reluctant to stay at the recommended place as they would have to go through a pass with its lights on making it an easy target for the brigands so Marian agreed to stop. The people turned out to be very nice and she was accommodated in a little cell off the passage where the others slept on high slabs. A Persian rug was put under her camp bed with another hung over the doorway as there was no door. She had a tin of soup which she boiled up, ate some more of her raisins and biscuits and then went to bed and slept like a log. They set off early the next morning, with no sign of the brigands, with one more stop at Kerman.

They arrived in Zahedan at about midday on Christmas Day The Consul, Mr Barlow, who lived in a large compound, had been warned to expect Commandant Gamwell but, because she was later than expected, had left a note to tell her to come on to the friends he was lunching with if she wished but she chose the other option of having a bath! When he came home he was staggered to find he was providing accommodation for a woman! He gave a party that night where Marian met a lot of very charming people, mostly missionaries and carpet factory owners.

As the train was not to leave Zahedan for some days the Consul suggested she stay there as there was nowhere else suitable. She was taken to see a lot of carpet factories where she was horrified to find that they were no longer doing the old Persian patterns but new floral ones instead because the Americans and French liked them. She saw that the children did a lot of the weaving in little sheds where the pattern was sung to them by a man at the end of the row. Whilst she thought the children seemed very bright and merry she did suggest that, in the UK, it would be thought of as slave labour or something!

Mr Barlow thought that his staff should play volleyball every day to get exercise and it was suggested that Marian play with them but she unfortunately strained a ligament in her leg and had to have it bound up at a nearby mission. The Consul gave her the address of a very famous surgeon in Quetta where she was due to spend a day but it had mended itself by that time so she didn't bother with it.

She travelled on by rail to Quetta where she spent the day being shown around by some people who had been warned that she was coming. She went on that night arriving at Lahore the next day where she spent the day with the Bishop and his family. He saw her on to the Delhi train that night. *Arrival in Delhi meant that she had covered another 3000 miles and probably more.*

After the Second World War

After the war, the sisters returned to Abercorn, Marian with an OBE. Coffee growing was no longer an option. They described their occupation as "experimental and research farming" including a herd of 27 cattle, research into grasses and the extraction of a commercially valueless oil used for teaching at the University of Ontario named strobilanthopsis liniptia (*perhaps 'linifolia'*). They had, in the thirties, experimented with extracting an essential oil used in perfume-making from a local

plant known as 'nindi'. Nindi is scientifically named *aelloanthus myrianthus gamwelliae* in their honour although the its use has not developed as they perhaps had anticipated. Hope, in particular seems to have collected a number of plants for the Natural History Museum in London including *Crotalaria gamwelliae* and *Anisopappus abercornensis* in addition to the aforementioned nindi. Nearly twenty come up under the name of Gamwell, A.H. in the JSTOR website.

In 1951 Mary Richards, a Welsh plant collector, visited them and was to become a regular visitor until 1958 when she set up home in Abercorn. Mary stayed on until 1974 by which time she had collected more than 29000 specimens for Kew in London.

The sisters were very involved in looking after the Tanganyika Victoria Memorial Institute (TVMI) where they had stayed on their first encounter with Abercorn in 1928.



Illustration 21: TVMI, Abercorn 1964. Photo by Marshall Singer

In 1961 they wrote a history of Abercorn (now Mbala) from prehistoric times to 1930 which was published in the Northern Rhodesia Journal, Volume IV, No. 6 which can be viewed online at <http://www.nrzam.org.uk/NRJ/V4N6/V4N6.htm>

My Mother has recollections of the sisters from the early sixties when they would come into town to pick up supplies from Westwood's Store – in a more modern vehicle than 'The Horse' which seems to have been restricted to getting about on the farm along with a Ferguson Tractor. Whenever the vehicle stopped, a servant would leap out with a wooden block to put under the wheels, even on flat ground! Also of a Red Cross fund raising event at the TVMI at which they were seen in 'civvies' - fine but rather old-fashioned clothes including large buckles on their shoes. My parents went to have a typical English afternoon tea with them quite regularly and my Mother particularly remembers a beautiful roll-top desk which Hope had made using a foot pedalled lathe. My Father had some issues as whenever he bought cattle from them, they needed a considerable escort of herdsmen to prevent them returning to the farm. This delighted the sisters as they felt that it indicated how happy their cattle were!

'Abercornucopia' was the local newspaper produced by the Lake Press and the issue dated 13th April 1964 carried the news that the Gamwell sisters were putting their 985 acre freehold farm, 'Chilonglwelo' on the market. Their increasing reliance on farm labour as they got older and the deteriorating quality of the workers were cited as the reasons for their decision. Marian would have been 73 and Hope 71.

On June 10th 1964, Abercornucopia carried the news that 'The Horse' had been sold with 41000 miles on the clock to a Border Motors in Lusaka where it was to be restored and put on display.

On April 12th 1965 Abercornucopia reported that Marian had been the victim of a serious road accident in London where she was staying with a friend in Lowndes Street, London. She had been knocked down on a zebra crossing by a sports car which carried her 20 yards before stopping. She had multiple fractures to both legs, a fractured arm and nose, dislocated shoulder, severe bruising and shock. Hope was in Jersey at the time where the sisters had virtually completed the purchase of a house.

And that's about it. My parents received Christmas cards from both sisters and then just Marian and we know little of how things went for them. Marian mentions in her interview with the Imperial War Museum in 1974 that one of her arms wasn't much use but whether or not as a result of the accident I don't know. Both died in Jersey, Hope, aged 80, on 25 April 1974 and Marian, 86, on 13 May 1977.



Antonia Marian Gamwell 1891-1977 Anne Hope Gamwell 1893-1973