

The Paine Brothers of Worthing



From top to bottom: Reg, Charlie, Harry, Gordon and Dick
[image from author's collection]

By Rosemary Pearson

The Paine Brothers of Worthing

Summary

This case study is based on the experiences of five Paine brothers who all served in the Great War. The main sources of information are letters and memoirs from a family collection. Also included are glimpses of the daily lives of some of their family and friends on the Home Front. The study is not intended as a detailed account of the war itself, but rather a series of snapshots showing its effects on one local family.

Introduction

The elder of the five brothers was my father, Reginald Paine. He was in his sixties when I was born, so it was not until many years later, after I inherited a large collection of family ephemera, that I learned of the family's involvement in the Great War.

Background

The Paines were one of Worthing's oldest families, descendants of William Paine, the Broadwater blacksmith who was first recorded in 1725. Some of the family moved to Worthing in the late 1700s and played an important part in the development of the resort. Edward Paine was appointed the town's first Beadle, Town Crier and Rate Collector in 1803. His eldest son, Duke Edward, was a successful printer and auctioneer until the late 1840s when Worthing was virtually bankrupt and his business was one of the casualties.

Duke Edward's eldest son, Duke William, had been expected to take over the business but instead decided to seek his fortune in the Australian gold fields. At least two of his grandsons served in the Great War and visited their Worthing relatives while on leave. The printing business was eventually taken over by Duke Edward's younger son, Walter, who married Catherine Twine Methold. They moved into Sumner House in Marine Parade with the business premises facing into Montague Street, where Walter printed and published the 'Worthing Intelligencer', and later the 'Worthing Observer' newspapers.



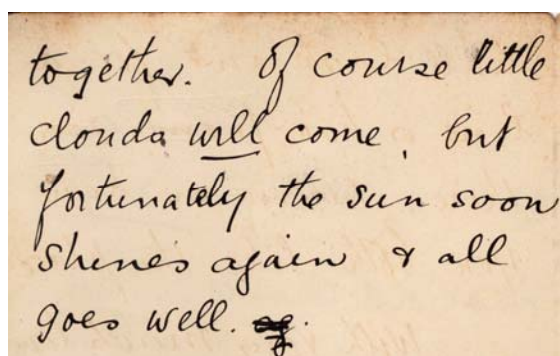
Walter Paine's shopfront, Election Day 1910
 [image from author's collection]

A jovial man who was always keen to promote the town and provide entertainment for the visitors, Walter was Honorary Secretary to many of the local sporting and entertainment societies and a director of the Worthing Pier Company, and encouraged all his children to take part in a range of activities.

Walter and Catherine had eleven children, two of whom died shortly after birth. The surviving nine, six sons and three daughters, were born and brought up at Sumner House, and were part of a very loving and close knit family. It was the five younger sons who were to serve in the Great War, the eldest son, Ernest Duke Paine, being too old.

By the time war was declared in 1914, the young Paines were making their own ways in life and looking forward to the future. Four were married and one had moved abroad, but all were to remain close.

On the eve of his marriage to Florence Norton in 1912, Charles Paine received a letter from Annie (Trot), wife of his eldest brother, Ernest, wishing the couple every happiness together and which included the following prophetic words –



'Of course little clouds will come, but fortunately the sun soon shines again and all goes well.'

[letter in authors collection]

Little did she know then of the black storm clouds looming on the horizon.

This account begins with the experiences of the Paine brothers.

Reginald Cleveland Paine (Reg)Private 6189 and 533064, 15th London Regiment

Reg was born on 5 March 1879, and following his education worked for a time in his father's printing business. Being good with people and loving to entertain, he joined the Worthing Operatic Company, playing a number of comic leads. When the post of Piermaster became suddenly vacant in 1909, he jumped at the opportunity, and apart from during his war service, remained in the role until his retirement at the end of WW2.

Reg was 35 when war was declared. He enlisted with the 15th London Regiment and served in France where he was wounded at least twice, though not seriously.

[image from author's collection]

His letter, which was published in the 'Worthing Observer' on 21 October 1916, shows that on more than one occasion he had a very lucky escape. Although only a Private, his concern for his younger comrades could be a reflection of the way he had looked out for his younger brothers at home.

Just a few lines to let you know I am quite alright again, after being slightly knocked about. It seems wonderful that so many of our boys have come through after the experience we had. I had several exciting moments, a piece of shell burying itself one foot in the ground between my legs as I was sitting in an out-post trench. The next day a shell exploded just outside our dug-out, filling my mess tin with earth and bits of shell.

On the day we attacked, just as we had left our trench, a high explosive shell burst right at my feet, but except for being choked by the smoke I was unhurt. We took cover a little further ahead and were preparing to advance again, when a small shell burst in front and wounded our officer. I caught a little bit on the side of the face. I fell back and was told to be quiet for a time. I dressed the place and helped to bandage up two other boys. Then we had two more shells that buried us with dirt, and soon after something hit me over the left eye, which made me a bit dizzy. We laid out in the open all night, and in the morning I went to a dressing station, and from there to hospital for a couple of days, and am at the present time again with the boys.

It was really wonderful to see the way in which the boys faced the terrific fire from machine guns and shells. Although we were unable to gain our objective we have been complimented on the work done.



Reg seated centre front with the 'boys' April 1917
[image from author's collection]

Reg received further wounds the following year and spent some time in hospital in June and again in September, this time at the Eastern General Hospital, Cambridge.

Charles Leslie Paine (Charlie)

Bombardier 96514, 341 Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA)

Charlie was born on 22 December 1880 and baptised at Christ Church, Worthing. He was a joint secretary of Worthing Amateur Boat Club with his brother, Reg, and one of the crew of the junior four which won the South Coast championship in 1902.

He began his working career as a Wine Merchant's Assistant, first in Worthing and then in London. In 1912 he married Florence Norton at Wells, Somerset and they set up home in Richmond, Surrey.

More is known about Charlie's war from his memoirs, which he wrote for his daughter. A scanned copy of these memoirs, entitled 'What Did You Do In The Great War, Daddy?' by C L Paine is in Worthing Reference Library.

As a married man, Charlie was the last of the brothers to be called up. On 11 June 1916 he proceeded to Fort Burgoyne, Dover to join his chosen regiment, the Royal Garrison Artillery.



Charlie Paine
[image from author's collection]

Following several weeks of intensive training, Charlie attended a course, after which he was promoted to Acting Bombardier, becoming a Full Bombardier in January 1917. As a welcome result, his pay increased from 7s7d to 12s3d a week. Further training followed until 28 May 1917 when his battery set off for the Front.

The first action Charlie and his battery saw was at Messines Ridge in early June, before making their way to Ypres where they arrived safely, despite coming under heavy fire on the road. Here, Charlie was appointed Battery Air Scout, and armed with a telescope, field glasses and a whistle, his duty was to warn the men of approaching enemy aircraft.

The next few weeks were to prove among the worst he experienced throughout the war. On 27 June, Charlie was nearly buried in the wireless dugout, then a few days later the dugout was shelled and wrecked, burying the occupants. Two men were killed and four were taken to hospital. The rest, including Charlie, all suffered from shell shock.

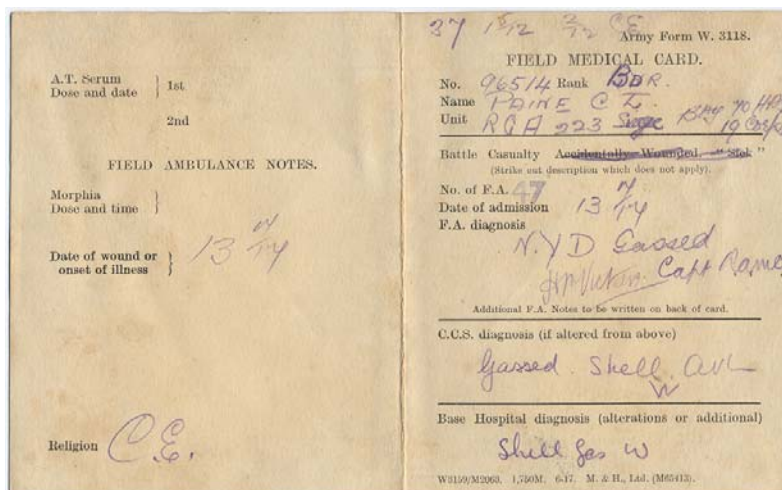
After two weeks of intermittent shelling, on the night of 12/13 July 1917 the Germans sent gas shells, which affected all the men including officers. Charlie recorded the experience in his memoirs.

A black day. Caught gas after breakfast and suffered severely all day. Eyes very painful. Quite blind.

The next day he was admitted to No 11 General Field Hospital where he received excellent care from members of the American Red Cross, before being transferred to Camieres. The gas had affected his eyes, throat and

chest, and caused a rash, and the doctors were curious as to the type of gas used.

Yesterday afternoon I was carried over to their Lecture Room and was the subject of an interesting lecture to about 25 doctors. The reason for this being that they were unable to diagnose the case properly, and find the type of gas used on this occasion, and so three of us had to go and answer questions put by them.



37 18/12 3/10 1918

Army Form W. 3118.

FIELD MEDICAL CARD.

No. 96514 Rank BDR.

Name PAINE C. L.

Unit RGA 223 Sigsbee 13th Div 1918

Battle Casualty Accidentally Wounded - "Strike"

(Strike out description which does not apply.)

No. of F.A. 47

Date of admission 13/11/18

F.A. diagnosis N.Y.D. Gassed

Additional F.A. Notes to be written on back of card.

C.C.S. diagnosis (if altered from above) Gassed. Shell. Owl

Base Hospital diagnosis (alterations or additional) Shell gas w

WHL59/M2063. 1/500M. 6-17. M. & H., Ltd. (M65413).

FIELD AMBULANCE NOTES.

A.T. Serum Dose and date 1st

2nd

Morphia Dose and time

Date of wound or onset of illness 13/11/18

Religion C.E.

Charlie Paine's Field Medical Card
[image from author's collection]

Shortly afterwards Charlie was on his way back to England. After a spell in Norwich War Hospital, where he was visited by his sisters, he was transferred to Kirkstead Red Cross Hospital, Norfolk where he remained until early November 1917. After this he was posted to Fort Brockenhurst, and then to a course at Shoreham, where he gained a Gunnery certificate.

He returned to the Front in May 1918, reaching Alvegham just a few days before receiving news of the signing of the Armistice. He recorded the events of the morning of 11 November 1918.

Confirmation at 6.45 am. I was on duty with our detachment by the guns when the news came through, and I had just got into bed, so another corporal and myself got out and rushed across the fields to Alvegham with the intention of ringing the church bells, but the church was knocked about so much that we could not get in on account of the debris.

When we got back to our Battery position we found the other boys had made a bonfire and had consumed the whole of our cartridges in doing so (if we had had to turn out to fire the guns we could not have done it!). All around the country there were flares and such like going up, and in the distance we heard cheers, bells ringing and bands playing.

After demobilisation, Charlie arrived back at Wells on 28 January 1919. He returned to his previous employers as Manager of the Earl's Court

branch of the wine merchants, remaining there until his sudden death at the age of 52 while on a visit to his brothers in Worthing.

Henry Wilfred Paine (Harry)

Bombardier 3rd Battalion New Zealand Rifle Brigade

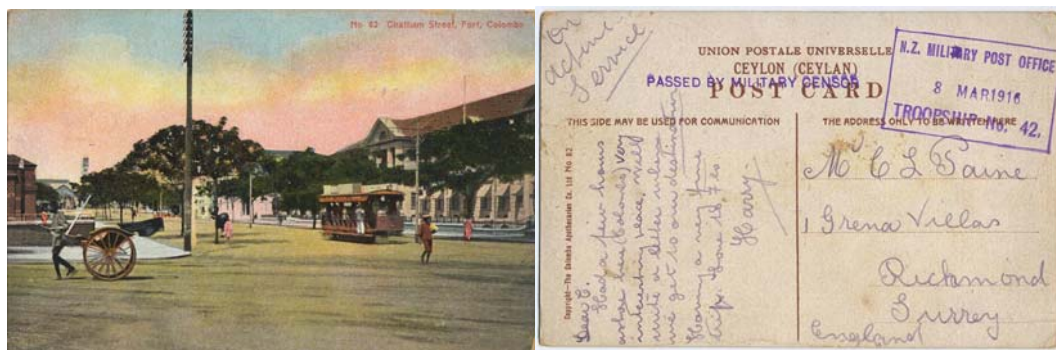


[image from author's collection]

Harry was baptised at Christ Church, Worthing on 25 February 1883. Along with Charlie, he was one of the crew of the junior fours who won the South Coast championship in 1902.

Originally employed in the family firm as a Stationer's Assistant, he later emigrated to New Zealand where he enlisted with the 3rd Battalion New Zealand Rifle Brigade after the outbreak of war.

Like many young men of his generation, initially he regarded this as something of an adventure. In March 1916 he sent a postcard to Charlie from Colombo, Ceylon, which he described as a most interesting place, having spent a few hours ashore while on his way to the Front.



Postcard sent by Harry to Charlie from Colombo, Ceylon
 [Postcard from author's collection]

Reality set in when he experienced the horrors of the Somme, a graphic description of which appeared in the following extracts from his letter which was published in the 'Worthing Observer' on 7 October 1917.

We started the attack at a quarter to seven in the morning. It was a bright, sunny morning – just right for the attack. The trench my battalion had to take was nearly 3,000 yards away, so you see we had a long way to go. As we went on in extended order, the bullets and shrapnel were whistling all around me, and the shells were ploughing up the ground and making huge holes. On one occasion, the Huns held us up for a long time with their machine guns; but we had to get on; and my Sergeant gave the order to advance. He went on and I followed. The bullets simply whizzed by us, through my legs, and mighty close to my face. We were the only two able to go forward. We went some distance and then had to take cover in a small shell hole. Here we managed to dig ourselves in a bit with our entrenching tools and we were eventually in this hole for two and a half hours. The enemy's machine guns were at last put out of action, and we again advanced, and this time reached our objective. We captured a lot of prisoners. Fritz's losses must have been very heavy indeed. Some of the trenches we went over were full of dead Germans. Bob Farrell (my chum) was wounded in the shoulder, and my platoon was rather badly cut up, but we did what we went for. The Huns made no counter-attack but they shelled us very heavily. Some days after we had been in the trenches, my Sergeant (Sergeant Atkinson) was killed. I was only a few yards away at the time – in fact I thought it had got me. A high explosive shell dropped practically on him and blew his head off and badly wounded two more men. It was a horrible thing, especially as we were hoping to be relieved at the time. I tell you it greatly upset me; my nerves hadn't been any too good, and that just about put the topper on. I was allowed to return to our camp, but don't feel at all fit yet.

The letter concludes with the following Post Script.

I hope you will be able to read this letter. Hope you will excuse the writing. I don't think I shall ever forget what I have gone through. I have seen sights which I couldn't possibly describe or talk about.

Harry remained in Worthing after the war and in 1919 married Violet Madgwick. He was employed as Worthing's Juvenile Employment Officer until his death in 1939 at the age of 56.

Gordon Valentine Paine

Sergeant 1727, Sussex Yeomanry

Sergeant 263100, 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment

Gordon was baptised at Christ Church, Worthing on 26 April 1885, and later worked as a printer's compositor. A musical young man, he was one

of the early members of the Worthing Operatic Society, and a founder and Scoutmaster of the first Worthing Scout troop.

Having initially joined the Sussex Yeomanry, Gordon transferred to the Royal Sussex Regiment on 21 January 1914 as a Sergeant Trumpeter, where he remained until his discharge on 21 January 1919.



Gordon seated in the centre with his brothers and an Australian cousin standing on the right.

[image from author's collection]

Gordon served at Gallipoli, and in a letter, recorded in Paul Holden's book, 'Brave Lads of Sunny Worthing', he describes some of his experiences and shows that at times, the weather was as much a cause of hardship as the shelling and bombing by the Turks.

The rough weather has set in out here and the other night we were almost swept away by a severe storm that swept over us. It was really awful. Heaps of the men were washed out of their dug-outs and had to dig for their kits the next day. My dug-out stood the storm pretty well, although the roof (waterproof sheets) almost disappeared. Several of the dug-outs collapsed altogether and it was a fine game rebuilding them the next morning.

Gordon contracted dysentery and was evacuated to the Bombay Presidency General Hospital, Alexandria, where he spent several months. He returned to the Front in France where he received severe wounds to his leg, putting an end to his army career.

Gordon was the only one of the brothers to have received the three medals, the Victory, the British and the 15 Star.

Richard Gilbert Paine (Dick)

Bombardier 905407, B Battery, 336 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery



[image from author's collection]

Dick was the youngest of the brothers and the only one to lose his life while serving in the war. He was baptised at St Andrew's, Worthing on 26 August 1891 and was the Godson of the Reverend Gilbert Moor, the first vicar of the church.

He began his working life as a Chemist's Assistant, and in 1908, along with his brother Gordon, he helped in the formation of Worthing's first Scout Troop where he was Assistant Scout Master.

Dick enlisted with the Royal Horse Artillery/Royal Field Artillery at Eastbourne and served in the Asiatic Theatre of War. He was wounded at Baghdad and died at 31 Stationary Hospital on 22 September 1918 at the age of 26. His war grave is in Baghdad, and his name appears on Worthing's main war memorial and on the memorial at Christ Church. He is also remembered on his parents' grave in Broadwater Cemetery.



[image from author's collection]

The Home Front

Those left at home faced their own challenges. Money was a major concern, even with aid from the Relief Fund. When married men signed up, many experienced a large drop in income and were forced to put their furniture into storage and to move back with relatives or into cheaper lodgings. Charlie and Flo were fortunate in being offered the spare room of some friends for their furniture, as London repositories were full or charging exorbitant prices, and they moved initially to the Worthing home of Charlie's eldest brother, Ernest and his wife Annie (Trot). This upheaval took its toll on Flo, who was in the early stages of a difficult pregnancy, and a further strain on their finances occurred in October 1916 when she spent two weeks in Seabrook Nursing Home, Queen's Road, Worthing, following the birth of a tiny daughter, Margaret Winifred.

Many women coped admirably with tasks formerly undertaken by the menfolk, although Flo wrote a number of anxious letters to Charlie seeking reassurance over expenditure from their reduced income, not least the medical expenses for their delicate baby. The two married Paine sisters, Evelyn Bond (Birdie) and Violet Youngs (Vi), had no financial worries, both being married to successful businessmen from Norwich. They were kept busy with the arrival of their babies, each having a daughter and son, although Vi found the absence of her husband most difficult to cope with.

Ernest and Trot suffered the heartache of the death of their seven year old son in 1915, and then the death of their daughter who survived for just ten days, in 1917. After this, Trot became more actively involved in the family business, which Ernest was now running along with acting as Piermaster while Reg was away.

Sumner House remained the hub of the family where Catherine Paine provided a 'home from home' for any visiting family and friends. (See Catherine's letter in Appendix 1).

In 1917, Walter suffered the first of a series of strokes and publication of his newspaper came to an end. Besides nursing him and running the household, Catherine and unmarried daughter, Edith (Edie), assisted in the business.

Some women joined the Red Cross, like Gordon's future wife, Constance Weston Arnold (Connie), whom he married in 1917. Connie was a sister at St Mary's Red Cross Hospital, Westbrooke, Worthing, where she organised a number of concerts during the war. Others began work on the land or in munitions, although Winifred Fairley, a family friend, was determined to keep up with her shorthand and typing skills in the hope of a office job. (See extract from letter in Appendix 2).

Conclusion

Relief at the ending of the war was combined with sadness at the loss of Dick, but with a real sense of pride at having 'done the right thing'.

Walter suffered another stroke and died on 21 June 1919. Sumner House was now too large for the remaining family and was later demolished to make way for a large branch of Woolworths. Catherine and Reg moved in with Harry and Violet at 10 Crescent Road, where Catherine died in 1923, while Edie moved up to Norwich to be with her sisters. Ernest moved the printing business to Portland Road, and after leaving the army Gordon set up his own printing business in George Street.

Undoubtedly, the character and good humour of the Paines, together with their strong family ties, helped them to survive not only the traumas of the war but also the challenges of a very different way of life in its aftermath.

Websites

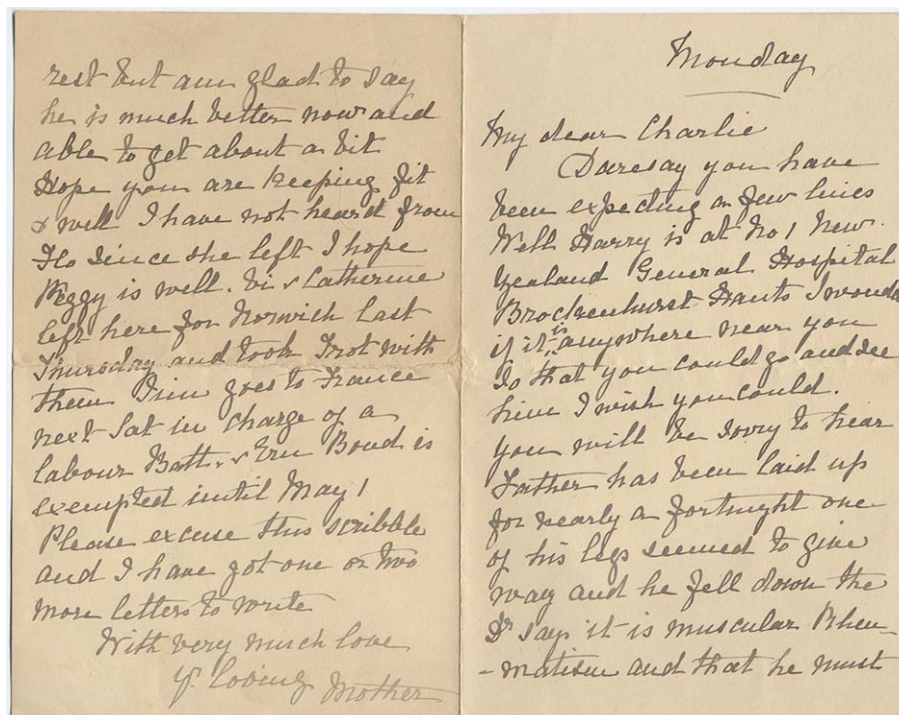
Ancestry www.ancestry.co.uk

Barrie Keech www.barriescenealogy.co.uk

Family Search www.familysearch.org

FreeBMD www.freebmd.org.uk

Appendix 1



Letter from Catherine Paine to her son Charlie (undated)
[image from author's collection]

My Dear Charlie

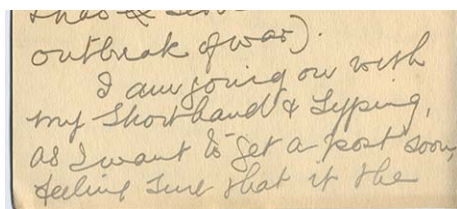
Daresay you have been expecting a few lines. Well Harry is at No 1 New Zealand General Hospital Brockenhurst Hants. I wonder if it is anywhere near you so that you could go and see him. I wish you could. You will be sorry to hear Father has been laid up for nearly a fortnight one of his legs seemed to give way and he fell down. The Dr says it is muscular rheumatism and that he must rest but I am glad to say he is much better now and able to get about a bit.

Hope you are keeping fit and well. I have not heard from Flo since she left. I hope Peggy is well. Vi and Catherine left here for Norwich last Thursday and took Trot with them. Jim goes to France next Sat in charge of a Labour Batt & Eric Bond is exempted until May 1.

Please excuse this scribble and I have got one or two more letters to write.

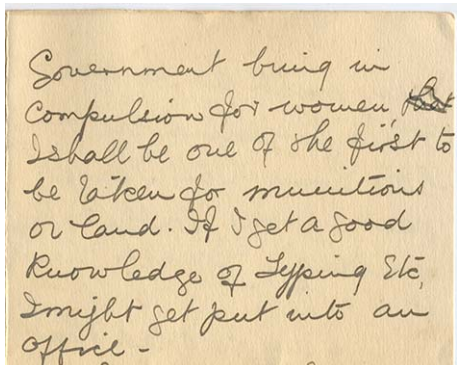
With very much love
Yr loving Mother

Appendix 2



outbreak of war).
I am going on with
my shorthand & typing,
as I want to get a post soon,
feeling sure that if the

I am going on with my shorthand & typing, as I want to get a post soon, feeling sure that if the Government bring in compulsion for women, I shall be one of the first to be taken for munitions or land. If I get a good knowledge of typing etc. I might get put into an office.



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Extract from Winifred Fairley's letter to Flo dated 15 February 1917
[image from author's collection]

Acknowledgements

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With thanks to my son Matthew Pearson for scanning the images.

With special thanks to my late cousin Margaret 'Peggy' Paine for bequeathing me her collection of family documents and photographs.