

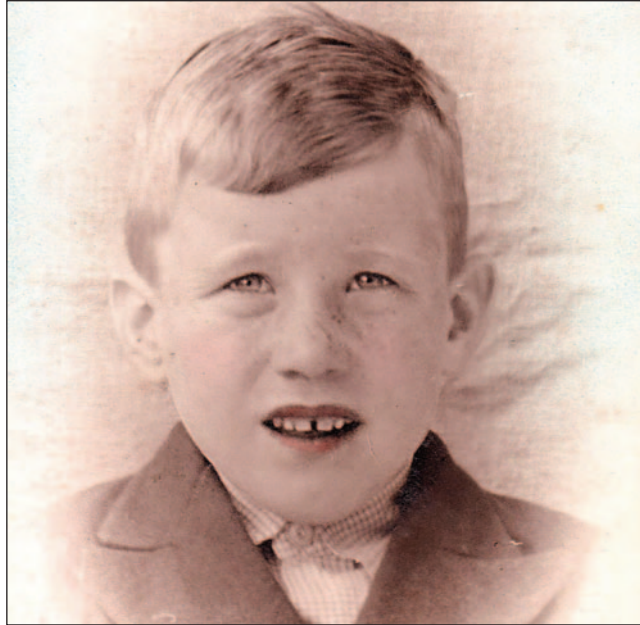


A Policeman's Lot

A short biography of

Leonard Stanley Morris

By Keith Morris



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Chapter 1 - Preamble

June 1934 was no ordinary month. It saw several headline-grabbing sporting successes, a brooding political scene in Europe, along with the slightly less heralded birth of Leonard Stanley Morris in the family farmhouse in the Welsh borderlands.

That month, Italy beat Czechoslovakia 2-1 in the FIFA World Cup final held in Rome and the French Tennis Championships saw an English women's singles champion when Margaret Scriven beat American Helen Jacobs.

Perhaps this was an omen for Len's lifelong love of, and commitment to, the game of tennis – he is still playing occasionally at the age of 91 – as he proudly tells his doctor.

But on the international stage, more ominously, a disarmament conference in Geneva failed, Hitler met Mussolini in Vienna and went on to stage a bloody purge of the Nazi party in the "Night of the Long Knives".

All these events have echoes in Len's life as he would go on to have involvement in peacekeeping after a European conflict, play in and coach winning football teams and, most notably, enjoy a lifelong participation in his beloved tennis, but more of all of these in due course.

Chapter 2 – A growing family

Len was the second son of Albert Sidney Morris, a native of Newtown, who worked as a County Court Clerk, and Mary Lloyd, the daughter of the farm owner, where Len was born.

It is traditional for some Welsh people to be called by their middle name and father Sidney was one of eight siblings. Sister Florence died at the tender age of 7 and Richard at just 26. The first-born child was Alice who was a nurse and spinster, until her death at the age of 59. Mabel (known as Nora) was a seamstress and spinster and lived

to the ripe old age of 91. Rosa was a district nurse who married Walter, a banker, and reached the age of 76.

Then came Sidney, born in 1904. He was followed by brother Aubrey two years later. Aubrey was a motor mechanic and married Jessie Sharples. They had one son, Beverley, who married Gloria and they had three children.

Youngest sister Dorothy married Jack Quinn and they had three children, Joyce, Brian and Ken.

Mother Mary Lloyd was three years younger than Sidney and was a full-time mother and housewife.

She grew up in the homestead farm in Aberhafesp near Newtown in Mid Wales, close to the English border.

Her father Francis, was a farmer and her mother, Mary, was a farmer's wife, with all that entailed.

Blodwen was the fourth of five siblings.

Brother Jack was a farmer and married Gladys and they had four daughters (Thelma, Irene, Joan and Elaine).

Second eldest brother Francis married Dilys, and had three children David (who became a farmer) Wendy (who married policeman



Parents Blodwen and Sidney with Len and Percy.

Grenville) plus sister Marilyn.

When father Francis died, son Francis and wife Dilys took over the farm.

Sister Kit married Jack Pryce, a blacksmith and they had son Alan.

The youngest sibling, Moni, married Percy and they had five children (Sheila, Glenys, Megan, Jennifer and Glyn).

Sidney and Blodwen's first child, Percy Lloyd, was born on June 26, 1932, at home on the farm. Len was also born there, two years later, on June 23, 1934 – perhaps late September was a slow time on the farm, after the harvest!

Sister Megan Gwendoline, was born barely a year later than Len on August 8, 1935, with Betty Doreen arriving the following year on November 10, 1936. Geoffrey Lloyd completed the family on



Sidney with Len (left), Megan, Betty and Percy.

December 1, 1938 – five children in less than seven years – some going!

While Blodwen was busy having and looking after her growing brood, Sidney was developing a career as an administrator in the local courts system.

The Morris family lived in Shirley in Birmingham for a couple of years, as Sidney worked as a county court clerk and Len remembers living in a couple of different houses. He also worked in nearby Bridgnorth as a senior clerk.

In 1937, Sidney moved jobs again, this time to Madeley in Shropshire, where the family would settle down, and he was in charge of the court administration office until it closed. He then worked as chief clerk in Kidderminster for ten years until retiring in 1964 after a total of 44 years as a county court clerk.

Len's memories of the family farm were from frequent holidays taken back there as a child: "We used to go back to the farm until we were teenagers, for summer holidays when we would help with the hay harvest and around the farm," he recalls. "They also kept pigs and sheep."

This all took place against the backdrop of a changing and scandalized monarchy.

In January 1936, King George V died at Sandringham in Norfolk and his eldest son Edward ascended to the throne as Edward VIII. In December the same year he abdicated over his proposal to marry



American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Following Edward VIII's abdication, his younger brother, Prince Albert, became King George VI in the "year of three kings". His coronation took place in Westminster Abbey in May 1937.

There was a royal connection with the growing Morris family, as in the same year as the new king was crowned, they moved into a new council house in Coronation Crescent in Madeley.

Sidney was not called up for active National Service, as his brother Aubrey had been, because his left arm was shorter than his right and this meant he had a medical exemption.

Uncle Aubrey served in the Army in North Africa, as an infantryman.

Alongside his work as a court clerk, Sidney was a keen apiarist (beekeeper) and kept an allotment, which the children were encouraged to help with.

"As we grew older, I remember regular visits to our allotment where, in addition to growing vegetables, my father pursued his hobby as a beekeeper," said Len. "I remember him having many bee stings and his wrist or face would come up as he had a reaction to them."

"He was a quiet man and we used to ride on the back of his motorbike to go to the homestead, where all of our holidays were spent, because our uncles and aunts had farms in the area."

"Dad had a serious accident in his fifties, after he went to visit a friend at the Innage old people's home in Bridgnorth, during a lunch break from his court work," remembers Len. "As he walked away and stepped out from behind a gate pillar, he was hit by a vehicle, which broke several bones and he ended up in hospital."

Blodwen was a typical housewife – who stayed at home – and had her hands more than full with five young children to look after.

The family lived in a three-bedroomed council house on Coronation Crescent, with the three boys in one bedroom and the two girls in the other.

A coal fire in the living room was the main form of heating.

“Mum was a quiet homely lady, who delivered food to older people in their homes with the meals-on-wheels service,” remembers Len, “she never learnt to drive.”

She was also a member of the Methodist Church’s Wesley Guild and United Sisterhood and organiser of its Tuesday coffee mornings.

Sidney was a lifelong smoker and died in November 1967 from lung cancer at the age of 63, when Len was aged 33. He left an estate of £5,140.

Blodwen survived Sidney by seven years and died of a stroke in 1974, at the age of 67.

Chapter 3 - School Days

Len’s first school was the Fletcher Methodist junior and Infant School in Court Street, Madeley, located behind the Fletcher Methodist Chapel and just a 10-minute walk from home. “Our family used to go to the Methodist Chapel on a Sunday,” recalls Len. “I remember the harvest festival.”

The Second World War broke out when Len was five and just starting school, and ended when he was 11.

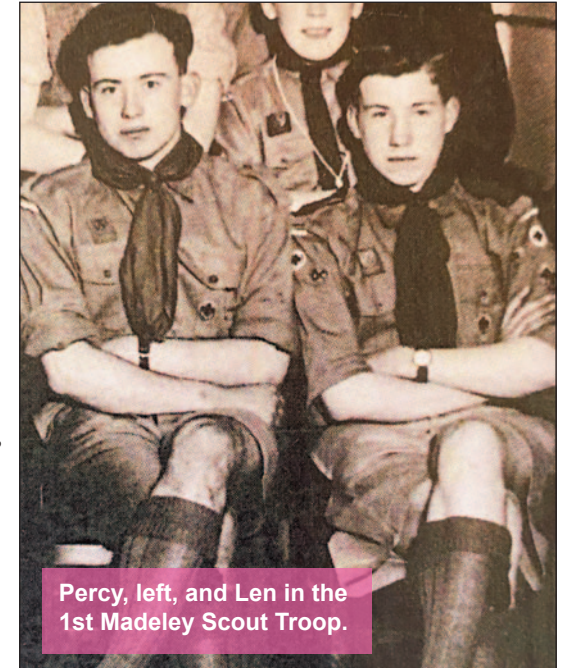
“I remember that we used to act as dummies for the Home Guard and pretend that we were injured for search and rescue exercises,” he said.

“There was no bombing in our area, the closest was Coventry and Birmingham. Everything was rationed of course, but we did not suffer a great deal on that side of things.”

At the age of 11, Len moved to the Abraham Derby Secondary Modern School – a walk of about one mile.

“At the age of 13, I passed an examination which allowed me to go

to the Walker Technical College at Oakengates,” explained Len. “This required more travelling, in fact it was a train journey from Madeley to Oakengates, followed by a one-mile gradual climb from Oakengates station to the Technical College, which was on higher ground. This was for two years, until the age of 15, when I left to take up my first employment.



Percy, left, and Len in the 1st Madeley Scout Troop.

“I do recall that during my time at the college, I didn’t do much in the way of sporting activities, although there were some outdoor games of cricket and football. I was however good enough to represent the college at chess – a game of patience.”

He does remember playing in the Bridgnorth Football League at age 17 where “adults used football boots as weapons,” said Len, and then in Madeley as a winger or a full-back.

‘O’ levels were not part of the education system at that time and in order to gain any success when leaving school, you were required to pass enough subjects to get a School Certificate – this meant you needed to have passed eight subjects altogether, which Len did not.

Being a Scout during his schooldays led to some adventures for Len, like when he cycled 84 miles to Plynlimon, the source of the River Severn, with brother Percy, over an Easter weekend for example.

There was also a summer Scout camp in the Barmouth and Fairborne

area in a field on the side of a hill, to which they all travelled in the back of a lorry.

Chapter 4 – Starting work

After leaving the Walker Technical College at the age of 15, Len started work as an apprentice in the machine shop at the Sentinel Works at Shrewsbury, where they made parts for cars and the military.

“I had no experience of machine shop work, but I realised that I needed to find an occupation until the time for my Army call-up came along at the age of 18,” said Len. “This was the only choice at the time, but unfortunately involved a lot of travel and obviously time in getting back. I used to leave home on my push bike at 6am and cycle to Dawley, which is approximately three miles, then catch a bus from there to Shrewsbury, returning home in the evening at around 6pm.

“The work included training on drills, lathes and other types of machinery in the toolroom. At the age of 16, I was approached to see if I intended to complete my apprenticeship in the tool room, but with National Service due when I turned 18, I decided to leave.”

Len did continue his education, for one day a week, at the Walker College for as long as he was at the Sentinel Works at Shrewsbury.

There was a company in Madeley called the Coventry Gauge and Tool works which had room for people who were skilled in doing this kind of work. They had moved out of Coventry during the war and Len was not required to take up an apprenticeship. So that suited him down to the ground as it only involved a 10 or 15-minute walk to work each day and was much more sociable for a couple of years, before his Army call-up.

“I remained with this company until I received my call-up papers at the age of 17-and-a-half,” said Len.

Chapter 5 – Sibling memories

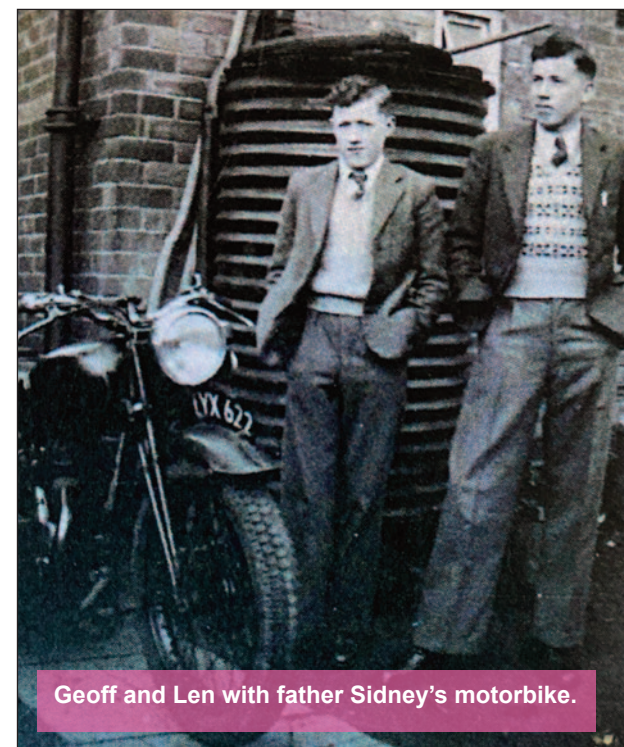
Len was the only one of the five children to do National Service – which was only for men anyway.

Percy was excused because he was training as a surveyor in the mines, which is where he spent most of his career. He lived at home until he married Sheila and they had two children –

Angela and Ian. He particularly enjoyed playing cricket.

Sister Megan became a hairdresser when she left school, until she got married to Phil, who was in the Army as a Training Instructor and then a despatch driver when he was called up to the Suez Crisis. He later worked for his brother who had a haulage business. They had four children, Kevin, Paul, Jill and Anne.

Betty went to Priory School in Shrewsbury when she passed the 11+ and she boarded there. When she left in 1955, she trained as a nurse and then as a midwife. She worked at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham and also in Lytham and Chester until she got married to accountant Bryan in 1972. They then moved to Solihull and later



to Crawley in Surrey with their two children, James and Catherine.

Younger brother Geoff was in the process of completing his apprenticeship as a tool maker, which was a reserved occupation. Geoff had a problem with his ear and, along with it being the last year of call-up, “it seemed like a bit of an excuse for not giving him a medical ‘A’ grade,” said Len. This was a blow for Geoff, who had wanted to join the Police, but this medical condition meant that he couldn’t.

Geoff worked in a tool room at Madeley and became the foreman. He married Eileen, a bank clerk, and they adopted three children, Simon, Rachel and Anthony.

Unfortunately, Geoff has had medical issues and been on dialysis treatment for the last 15 or so years, going to hospitals in Shrewsbury and Telford three times a week.

Chapter 6 – Answering the Army’s call

In May 1952, aged 17-and-a-half, Len was called up for National Service and he left home, never to return.

“I joined the REME, which was the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, with the intention of doing a vehicle mechanics course as my training for the Army. I also signed up for three years, rather than the statutory two, as it was better pay and there would be a foreign posting – so I could see a bit of the world, as I had never even been abroad,” said Len. “I also wanted the training to become a vehicle mechanic as it would give me an occupation if needed.

“I knew that I wanted to go on to join the Police and it would only help me in that and I was quite happy with the discipline involved.

“My first experience in the Army was basic training, which took place at the base at Blandford in Dorset. That basically involved marching drills, fitness and firearms training etc. I learnt to put one foot in front of the other and say ‘yes sir’ to the higher ups and all

about spud bashing.

“I was stationed in a barrack room with ten men on each side – there were Geordies, Brummies, Cockneys and Scousers as well as Scottish, Irish and Welsh lads and it was quite the job to understand their dialects. The Sergeant would come in yelling and bawling. We all eventually got used to it.”



Len as a squaddie in the barracks at Blandford, Dorset in 1952.

Len was then sent on a vehicle mechanic training course to Taunton in Somerset. This lasted about three months. It was whilst on this course, in August 1952, that the great flood disaster of the day – at Lynmouth in North Devon – occurred.

“The course was suspended for a few days whilst a contingent of soldiers were sent to help out with the flood disaster that was covering the area of Lynmouth,” said Len. “We were billeted in tents in a field with latrines and the aim was to go and help people out wherever needed, for about a week I seem to remember.”

After completing the vehicle mechanics course, Len was then sent for another spot of discipline training at Bordon in Hampshire.

After leaving the station at Bordon he was attached to a signals training regiment at Ripon in Yorkshire and became part of their

local aid detachment (LAD).

“As experienced vehicle mechanics, we were spaced out at the different Army regiments to provide the facilities for their vehicles to be maintained or repaired if necessary,” explained Len.

“I had chosen to enlist for a three-year service, followed by four years in the reserves, instead of the normal two years which was considered to be the National Service at the time. There were two elements to this decision, firstly you would receive £3 a week (60 shillings) instead of just 28 shillings and you could select three options for service abroad, neither of which things were part of the National Service training. On my list for going abroad I opted for Tripoli, Trieste or Cyrenaica in the Middle East.”

And so it was, in June 1953, that Len headed off on his first ever trip abroad to an active service station in Trieste for three months. This took place shortly after Queen Elizabeth II’s Coronation, on June 2 at Westminster Abbey

“During the period of the Coronation we were on standby at the local barracks in Farnborough, just in case any additional troops were required at short notice.

“When it was clear for us to go, we had transport to Harwich where we caught a boat to the Hook of Holland. From there we travelled by train right the way across Europe to the northern parts



Corporal Len Morris on peacekeeping duties with the REME in Trieste in 1953.

of Italy and Austria before crossing over into Trieste – a journey which took over 24 hours,” recalls Len.

Trieste was deemed to be an active service station – after the second world war many locations had to have high security in case of any attack from “the other side”.

Trieste was a territory that three different countries wanted – Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia. The United Nations were responsible for the security of Trieste and this was entrusted to the UK and American forces to keep the peace. The area eventually became part of Yugoslavia.

The REME had their own workshop in Trieste because they looked after the vehicles from the various units that were based there. Sometimes they would go into Yugoslavia, nearer to the American base, to test vehicles or to get spare parts.

And this was also where Len passed his driving test – on a three-tonne lorry, driving on the wrong side of the road.

“I went out in a lorry with a sergeant and an instructor in the morning and passed my test on the same day. So I learnt to drive the hard way – driving on the right,” said Len. “It is still the licence I use today as I later transferred it into a civilian UK licence.”

Len also remembers carrying a Sten gun around, but never having to use it, except in training.

“There was not much mixing with the locals, except going out for an occasional drink, and I got to know two or three soldiers from other units. I do remember going down to seaside one day and sitting on the sea wall and the sun was shining and then getting severe sunburn on my shins, so I was hobbling around for a few days.”

While completing his military service, Len was awarded an Army Certificate of Education – third class – in April 1954.

On May 11 Len, dressed smartly in his new suit, was demobbed from the Army – but he wouldn’t have much time to take a break or celebrate...

Chapter 7 – Beating a path to dream job

On May 12, 1955, the day after being demobbed following three years of horizon-broadening service, Len swapped his Army uniform for a Police one when he joined the Shropshire Constabulary.

He had been planning this very moment for quite a while and had a couple of decent references lined up. One from Rev Percy Johnson (from Madeley Methodist church) which read: “Len is a good product of his home and family, which are of the best. I am glad to testify to his character and trustworthiness. He is a young man of Christian principles and I wish him well.”

The second was from Alderman Fred Bostock JP, ex-mayor of Wenlock, and also known to the family through the Methodist Church.

Fred wrote to the Chief Constable at Shrewsbury: “Len is of excellent character and he is a young man who I can recommend to you with complete confidence because he has been brought up in the correct home conditions and under the influence of the church. From a child he has been connected with the Madeley Methodist Church and Sunday school and has always displayed an active interest with the young people. For nine years he was a keen scouter through his membership with the first Madeley troop. Mr Morris has had a very good education winning an examination at the Madeley Modern School which enabled him to spend the last two years of his school life at the Oakengates Technical School.

“He is at present just completing three years’ service in Her Majesty’s Forces holding the rank of corporal. Mr Morris is very intelligent, hardworking, honest, trustworthy, truthful and dependable and can be relied upon to take the keenest interest in whatever he takes in hand. It is because he has such excellent qualities and character that I commend him for the post for which he now applies and, if so appointed, I feel sure he will justify your confidence too.”

His Army certificate of service book read: “A well-spoken NCO who has done well during his service. He is a good vehicle mechanic and

is able to supervise others extremely well.

Conscientious and reliable at all times, he can be recommended as an asset to any employer.”

The only possible snag was the Police medical, as Len recalls: “The Police doctor pointed out my varicose veins. I said to him: ‘The Army said I was A1, so why is that not good enough for you?’ Len passed the medical and a life-defining 32-year Police career was launched.

“I felt I still wanted to be in a disciplined service and I could see opportunities there for a career,” said Len, explaining his career of choice.

He did his basic training at the school at Mill Meece near Eccleshall in Staffordshire. The course lasted approximately three months, after which he returned to his first station – Shrewsbury. He lived at the police hostel at Lindisfarne, Kennedy Road, Shrewsbury and began his two years’ probation.



PC 111 Len Morris outside the Lindisfarne Police Hostel in Shrewsbury.

In 1956, Len was posted to Much Wenlock for six months to do his rural beat training and he lived in digs with a local family.

“All my work was done either on foot or cycle,” he said. “I returned to Shrewsbury, where I continued my training on the beat. A couple of years later I was posted to Broseley, which was part of the Much Wenlock section, to cover for a beat officer who had been sent on a course. It was very hilly, with mountains and the valley and I did it all on a bicycle – I cycled down four miles and then walked back up.”

During his posting at Shrewsbury, Len became friendly with several other officers, one of whom was Cyril Hughes, who was staying at the same Police hostel.



PC Morris on a rural beat in Much Wenlock in 1956.

The pair were born just a few miles apart along the River Severn, Cyril at Penstrowed Hall, 3 or 4 miles from Aberhafesp.

They became the closest of life-long friends, sharing several adventures abroad and Cyril played a key role in introducing Len to the woman who was to become the love of his life.

With a shared interest in motor sports, the pair went to the Isle of Man for the TT motorcycle races and, later on, a European camping holiday which included a Grand Prix motor race in Reims, France.

“We spent a fortnight touring Europe in my A40 Austin-Morris car and sleeping rough,” said Len. “On one occasion we put our tent up in a field, only to woken in the morning by the Gendarmerie who had arrived to organise security for the Reims Grand Prix which was adjoining our field.”

The Morris and Hughes families grew up together, sharing holidays and home visits. They



Len on a European tour to the Reims Grand Prix in 1959 and, above, travelling partner Cyril Hughes.

remain close friends.

Cyril sadly passed away in March 2022 and Len wrote the eulogy that was read at his funeral.

Chapter 8 – A mission to Cyprus

The summer of 1958 saw a sharp rise in inter-communal violence on the island of Cyprus, a British Territory, with clashes between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, including bombings, shootings and assassinations.

It was fuelled by the ongoing political struggle for the island's future and saw the beginning of segregation between the two communities.

In June 1958, Len responded to a request for volunteers to go to help out the Colonial Police force in Cyprus and was honoured to be the only member of the Shropshire Constabulary to be selected to join the contingent of 75 officers from right across the United Kingdom. The posting was for a period of four months from July until November 1958.

Whilst in Cyprus, all of the UK officers on the secondment were given the temporary rank of Sergeant and a personal revolver and a Sten gun: "We carried these whenever on duty, and you used to sleep with a revolver under your pillow and when off duty," said Len.

"We worked in pairs and we always had two UK officers together," he recalls. "I was stationed in Nicosia, the capital, and that was my beat area. Our method of patrol was usually in a Land Rover, where there would be two UK officers plus one Greek and one Turkish officer, so then we could deal with the language and the various problems of the different sects.

"Nicosia itself was divided by the Mason-Dixon Line, which was the division between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots. Our main patrol area included two streets which ran parallel together and which were known famously as the 'murder mile' because of the amount of incidents that used to happen there.

One of the more risky roles undertaken by Len and his colleagues was providing escort duties to take supplies to the teams manning the air traffic control centre on the top of the Troodos Mountains. The mountains were full of Greek EOKA terrorists. So it was a difficult place to get to.

"During my time in Cyprus there was a war going on between the USA and Lebanon, so the air traffic control centre was a very busy place, which controlled all the air traffic movement in that area.

"I found the heat at that time of the year caused me to put on a stone in weight, but I lost that weight soon after getting home," said Len. "During some of our off time we used to go the Army secure camp on the coast at Kyrenia, where we were able to have a swim undisturbed. This was not too far from Nicosia where we were not allowed to go out on our own because you could not tell an EOKA terrorist from a member of the public."

In November 1958, a working agreement was reached where each ethnic group ran its own affairs as part of the EU. In 1960, Cyprus gained its independence from the UK, while the UK retained sovereignty over two military bases, Akrotiri and Dhekelia.

"When we returned to the UK in November, we were three short in numbers, one officer had been killed and two seriously injured," said Len. "A chief inspector was going to visit somewhere he shouldn't



Sergeant Len Morris on his secondment to Cyprus in 1958.



Most of Len and Cynthia's grandchildren, with their parents in Cobham, Surrey.



Len and Cynthia's family, and partners, with Nan and Granda Rogers on their Golden Wedding anniversary in October 1985 at Attingham Hall, near Shrewsbury.



The five Morris siblings with their partners at Percy's 80th birthday in Madeley. From the left Betty and Bryan, Megan and Phil, Geoff and Eileen, Percy and Sheila and Len and Cynthia.



Len and Cynthia with best friends Diane and Cyril Hughes at the Long-Mynd hotel in Church Stretton in October 1967.

have gone and was shot and killed by a terrorist. It was on my beat, so I had to go and deal with it and have him certified as dead.”

Chapter 9 – You shall go to the ball

Very soon after returning from Cyprus, Len was to have an encounter which literally changed his life.

While abroad, Len had split up from girlfriend of two years, Wendy Reed, when she started another relationship.

It was New Year’s Eve in December 1958, and the two young Police constables, Len and Cyril, went to the new year ball at the Morris Hall Ballroom, Shrewsbury.

Around midnight, Len and Cyril left the Hall but returned later when



Cyril introduced Len to a pretty young trainee nurse, named Cynthia Rogers, whom Cyril already knew from a previous occasion.

“We must have clicked,” recalled Cynthia in her own biography *The Midwife’s Tale*, “because Len came to the hospital later that same day and took me out on my afternoon off. We also saw each other that evening – so three dates in just one day.”

Len obviously also liked what he saw and the couple started a regular friendship over the following months.

Soon after, Cynthia went off for six months to Chiswick for some training, and remembered being seen off at the railway station with her big trunk by Len.

Soon after returning, a further six months of training in Cheltenham

loomed and Len decided to act and he asked Cynthia to marry him – happily she readily agreed.

Len recalls: “She was great fun and we seemed to get on well together. I formally asked her father Stanley’s permission, after she had agreed to marry me of course.”

The couple were married on October 22, 1960, at St Lawrence Church in Preston upon the Weald Moors, near Telford. It was barely two hundred yards from where Cynthia had grown up in the Preston Hospital almshouse, before she was adopted by Stanley and Theckla Rogers, the parents of her best friend at the village school, Josie.

Mum knew the vicar from growing up there and family friend Jim Lineton was an organist at the church. Len’s best man was younger brother Geoff and the occasion was recorded for posterity on video by an uncle.

Afterwards, the wedding party went to The Majestic in Wellington, for a reception paid for by Stanley, followed by a honeymoon in Bournemouth.

Chapter 10 – A Policeman’s lot

The happy couple began their married lives in a flat above the main police station in Shrewsbury.

“The bedroom was over the archway and it had a lounge, kitchen and bathroom and it was a bit noisy at night but it was down a side street,” recalls Len.

By then, Cynthia was working on a maternity unit in Wellington, where she continued until they started their family.

While preparing for his wedding, in 1959, Len attended an advanced driving course at Stafford and after successful completion, was transferred to the Wellington division motor patrol and lived in accommodation on Haygate Road near the Bucks Head. His patrol car partner was Charles Bennett.

After the October 1960 wedding, Len moved to the Shrewsbury

motor patrol and his work partner was Roger Jenks.

The couple later moved to Police accommodation in Belvidere Road, Shrewsbury, and it was while there that twins Timothy and Keith were born, at the Copthorne Hospital in Shrewsbury, on February 12, 1962.

“We decided we wanted a family quite quickly after getting married,” said Len. “We found out the unexpected news about twins at a scan and soon got used to the idea.

“There were pros and cons to having two at once and they were a handful. They got up to quite a lot of mischief and I remember them pulling stuff out of drawers.”

One infamous incident, when they were a bit older, was while visiting relatives in Madeley with the family car parked at Coronation Crescent. The twins were throwing pebbles from the drive at each other and one hit the car windscreen. Keith recalls: “The whole windscreen instantly went white – as did I. I had to go and find mum and dad and own up. We ended up driving back to Worcester with a plastic sheet as a windscreen – never to be forgotten.

“I remember another incident when we were playing football in the back garden at Henwick Road. The ball went through the dining room window – a great shot but not worth the pain afterwards.”

In 1963, Len moved to a rural beat station at Hanwood and the family moved into a Police house – which doubled up as a Police station – just off the main road. The twins also started their education at the village school. That year Len also attended and passed a motorcycle course at Stafford.

“With regards to children, we decided that ideally we wanted a boy and a girl and so on July 8, 1965, Helen was born at the Police station in Hanwood – quite a claim to fame really.”

Cynthia did not work for eight years while bringing up the children.

“Hanwood was a convenient posting for the family because Uncle

Francis and Auntie Dilys owned a farm in the village,” said Len. “We were frequent visitors where the children could safely play or when we needed any baby-sitting duties. In 1966, a new Police Station had been built at Ford, which we fully anticipated moving into because it was in the centre of the Hanwood beat. Alas, when a new officer moved into the house, I knew my days at Hanwood were numbered.

“When the new officer moved in, I was transferred to the Police HQ, in Shrewsbury to take charge of cadet training and also perform control room duties.”

Len remembers taking ten cadets on an outward bound course in Snowdonia.

In October 1967, the amalgamation of four Police forces – Worcestershire, Worcester City, Shropshire and Herefordshire – took place to create the West Mercia Force and in January 1968, Len was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and transferred to Worcester Division, to be their Training Sergeant.

“Unfortunately, my father was never to see this promotion because he passed away in November 1967,” said Len.

The family moved to yet another Police house (with the forbidding words “Police Station” on the front) – this time at 229 Henwick Road in Worcester. The children attended the local Henwick Grove Primary School and then, on passing the 11+ went onto the Worcester Royal Grammar School for Boys and the Worcester Girls Grammar School until they all left for various universities in Norwich, Leicester and Bedford, at the age of 18.

As Training Sergeant, Len was responsible for giving lectures to PCs, sergeants and inspectors on the Theft Act.

After a few years in this role, he was transferred to patrol duties and subsequently, after a couple selection boards, was promoted to the rank of Inspector and was transferred to the Control Room at HQ at Hindlip Hall in January 1976, for a number of years.

“Not being a Mason was not helpful at some of the promotion boards,” said Len, who felt it held him back from advancing his



career. “But Chief Constable Mullett knew me better and promoted me.”

While serving in the Police, Len completed a wide variety of courses which included: 1955 – Basic Training Course, Mill Meece, Stafford; 1959 – Advanced Driving Course at Stafford; 1963 – Motorcycle Course, Stafford; 1968 – Student Instructors Course. Dishford, Yorks; 1975 – Reg Insp Course, Birmingham; 1977 – Senior Officers Course, Police College, Bramshill; 1980 – Communications Officers course, Durham; 1984 – Director of Studies Course, Harrogate

It was whilst attending a Senior Officers course at the Police College, Bramshill, that Len ended up in Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey (where later he became a more frequent visitor after the move to Ash Vale). “I was taken there because of a hairline fracture in my right foot, which happened whilst playing indoor football at the College,” said Len.

In the early 1980s, Len moved back to patrol duties at Worcester, and in early 1985 was put in charge of the Prosecutions Department, vetting all files and prosecuting in the magistrates court for traffic and minor theft cases and the like.

In 1986, the Crown Prosecution Service took over court prosecutions and employed solicitors to do the role and soon after this, in June 1987, Len retired after 32 years' Police service at the enviable age of 53.

This happy situation enabled Len to then start a second and a third career as a house builder and a tennis referee and coach.

Chapter 11 – The sporting life

Those who know Len, know about his passion for sport and in particular for tennis – which he continues to play at the age of 91, despite it putting him in hospital at least twice.

He was heavily involved in Police sport – which may be the other reason why his promotions were slower in coming.

Almost from the start of his Police career, Len was involved in both playing and organising tennis, football and other sports – and has a cardboard box full of trophies to prove it.

“After joining the Police in 1955, I spent some of my spare time playing tennis or football. After a couple of years I began to get the bug for organising it, because I felt it was not being done efficiently,” he said.

“After my probation was completed and I was settled down in Shrewsbury, I began to get involved with committee work. There was never a time until my retirement that I was not involved in running a sports committee of some sort from county, regional and national level. I was also involved in playing football, tennis, badminton, squash and athletics.”

Len remembers running a quarter of a mile race (440m) at the

Alexander Stadium in Birmingham representing the Police.

Another highlight was coming up against World Cup winning legend Bobby Charlton on the football pitch, as he explains.

“Up until the amalgamation of West Mercia in 1967, Shropshire Constabulary had a football team in the North Wales Police football league which consisted of 8 or 9 teams. There was a Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) camp at Nesscliffe, near Shrewsbury, which was allowed to join the league. They had a strong team because players from the professional Manchester teams did their National Service there. I can remember playing against Bobby Charlton and legendary midfielder Duncan Edwards from Manchester United and other members of their senior squads.”

“After the amalgamation, we played sport against different forces, and our teams would of course be stronger because of a wider selection of talent. During this time I did a lot of organising on a regional basis.”



Len front second from the left with the Shropshire Constabulary Police football team picture in March, 1958.

Inter-divisional sport competitions were organised and, together with civilian sports officer Jim Hunter (an-ex military man), Len organised a spectacular Family Gala Day at the Hindlip Hall HQ for 12 years – a highlight of the year for his young children.

“I especially remember the helicopter rides and a massive greasy pole over a huge rubber tank of water with participants using pillows to knock each other off the pole into the water,” said Keith. “It was brilliant fun.”

In 1978, Len was elected as the member for the West Midlands Region on the Police National Athletic Association Council. This was the body that governed all police sport. It was made-up of two representatives from each region, one being a Chief Constable or Assistant Chief plus one other officer, so Len rubbed shoulders with the highest ranking Policemen in the country.

He served on this committee until retirement in 1987, alongside sub-committees for tennis, badminton, squash, athletics, cross country and hockey.

“One of the requirements of committee members was to attend all quarterly meetings, plus the annual general meetings and meetings of their own sub-sections. This of course involved a lot of time, and I was allowed Police time to attend these particular functions, which meant travelling all over the UK from Wales to Scotland and to Northern Ireland. I was appreciated for my organising ability, hence so much of my time was spent doing it.

“Hockey was a sport that I was charged with setting up a national



Len in his official Officers Mess dress in 1985.

team to represent the British Police, with the help of other officers from different forces,” said Len. “We produced a national hockey team which played a variety of different organisations, including the Army, the Navy, the Royal Air Force, the Civil Service and Combined Services. Running a national team was the icing on the cake for me. I handed over the running of this section in 1986.”

His best known player was Imran Sherwani, of Pakistani descent, who went on to play for England and win an Olympic gold medal with the GB squad in the Seoul Olympics in 1988.



Len on the tennis court.

Chapter 12 – Anything but retirement

It was no great surprise to anyone who knew him that, once he had hung up his Police helmet and truncheon, so to speak, Len dived once more into the world of sport – and organising it.

For the first couple of years after retirement, Len spent time at the local tennis club at Hallow, which was the first tennis club he had ever joined.

“I got involved and helped to coach the juniors at the club. This interest encouraged me to undertake an elementary tennis coaching course and similar training in order to referee tournaments,” he said.

“I also joined the Herefordshire and Worcester County tennis committee, for which I produced a regular news sheet detailing the activities and results of the activities in the county.”

As a tennis referee, Len also organised the county junior tournaments, which were taking place regularly during the course of the year and also the senior county events.

Probably the biggest tournament Len organised was the annual Malvern Junior Open Competition which took place at Manor Park Tennis Club and involved entrants from all over the country and even Europe.

“As an open event, 23 competitions were organised which involved somewhere in the region of 250 children and, in the course of a five-day week, I would cover something like 500 matches on the 32 courts which were available to me. Also, on the finals day, I had



Len's self-built
Orchard House in
Worcester.

three or four umpires available to umpire the main finals matches,” said Len.

“This was in fact a lot of hard work and a lot of memory work involved as well. I did not have the advantage of the Tennis Tournament Planner – a computerised system which is used in all tennis tournaments today. I refereed my last tournament in 2007.

“Fortunately, I was able to keep playing tennis despite the fact I spent a lot of time in coaching and refereeing,” said Len.

“The tennis organising involved a lot of work and I wound it down gradually, so that by 2010 I was free to look after Cynthia who, by then was needing more and more assistance.”

Len's other big retirement project was building his own home

In 1973, the couple acquired some spare land at the bottom of the garden of the police house at 229 Henwick Road in Worcester. For around 15 years it was used as a garden extension, an orchard and even a small putting course.

Len gained planning permission in order to build a dormer-type bungalow.

“I was involved in drawing up the plans and helped to get them approved by the local authority with the assistance of an architect. Over the next couple of years I was very much involved in hands-on work on the site.”

By early 1990, the garden was taking shape with plants and trees. Orchard House, off Himbleton Road, was completed in the early 90s and was ready to be lived in by 1993.

“The original plans for the bungalow show that the ground floor consisted of seven rooms with two bedrooms on the first floor, plus a bathroom and a spare room. Unfortunately, the ground was not in the best of condition and we had to lay a concrete raft throughout the whole length of the house and, as a result, we had a cellar to the house which covered another seven rooms. They were a carbon copy of the ground floor of the house. This of course meant we had two

sets of stairs to negotiate to get from the cellar to the bedrooms.

“Most of the building work was sub-contracted to appropriate builders, but there was inevitably a lot of work to do to join their work together, which is what I was involved in as the supervisor of the building programme.

“Retirement for me was anything but, as I had the house building and supervision, tennis coaching and refereeing and looking after the house and garden,” said Len.

“From 2010 onwards, Cynthia needed wheelchair assistance whenever she went out, and I gave up my work with the tennis committees and organising tournaments.

Chapter 13 – Travelling the world



Len and Cynthia with great friends Cyril and Diane and daughter-in-law Nicky, in Lanzarote in 2014.



Len and Cynthia on a camel safari during their first visit to Lanzarote in 1984.

The first time Len and Cynthia went on holiday abroad was in 1982 when they went to Tunisia.

In 1984 they visited the volcanic island of Lanzarote in the Canary Islands along with lifelong friends Cyril and Diane Hughes and they made a decision which was to bear fruit for the next 35 plus years.

They were staying in Playa Blanca in the south of the island and visited the first timeshare resort in the town – Las Casitas – situated close to the picturesque harbour and original beachside walkway with its many restaurants (although then there were only a few). This pioneering purchase has proved its worth time and again over subsequent years when the couple would return for two weeks in October/November and meet old friends and have a wonderful relaxing time playing tennis, swimming and eating out. The property is still in family hands.

With the children having flown the nest to various universities, Len

and Cynthia also became veteran world travellers enjoying trips and cruises to many foreign shores, mostly in the January to March period, before Len's tennis junior coaching activities clicked into gear for the spring and summer.

Among notable trips was a visit to China to see the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, the Terracotta Army and Shanghai.

Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the Pacific Islands and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia were enjoyed alongside Hawaii (and Pearl Harbour), North and South America and Canada – including Niagara Falls.

The Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa, were also visited, as were many European countries and North African ones including Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt.

Chapter 14 – A final move

While still in Worcester, Cynthia had heart problems requiring a coronary artery stent and a heart valve replacement. She also had some mental health issues.

This combined with her chronic osteoporosis, ten damaged vertebrae, developing dementia and declining mobility, meant that the couple decided to move down to the Surrey area to be closer to Helen and to Tim and his family who were living down there. By this time they had been in Orchard House for 22 years and Cynthia was using a wheelchair to get about outside the house.

In August 2015, they moved to Rosemont on Waverley Drive in Ash Vale, near Aldershot.

A staggering 27 yards of hanging clothes and hundreds of neatly folded plastic bags were just some of the huge amount of house contents that moved with them, remembers Keith. He discovered, on arriving to help with the final move out from Worcester two days beforehand with Nicky, that Len had not even started to clear out his

jam-packed seven-room cellar.

“In Ash Vale, we were closer to Helen and Tim, who were able to give me more assistance in looking after Cynthia, with regular visits from Keith and Nicky,” he said.

The couple settled into their new home and Len joined the Ash Tennis Club, playing at least once a week at the age of 80.

On June 15, 2017, Len was admitted to hospital with a bout of pneumonia, which was complicated by a pulmonary embolism – a blood clot in his lungs. This required 24 hours on a ventilator and two weeks in intensive care plus convalescence at home “to get me fit enough again to play tennis,” said Len. “I have had one or two other injuries but none which could not be fixed in a few days.”



Len, Cynthia and their grown-up children at Rosemont on Waverley Drive in Ash Vale.

In 2018, Len joined the Normandy Tennis Club, where he is still a playing member (albeit some of his joints are showing signs of wear and tear, acknowledges Len grudgingly) and a keen member of the tea and cakes syndicate on a Wednesday morning.

“Since 2010, Cynthia needed a lot of care, particularly since 2017, and she had been looked after well by Sue Fox, her carer alongside myself,” said Len. “During her last two years, she spent 15 months in and out of nursing homes because I was not able to look after her for more than a month at a time.”

Cynthia passed away on October 29, 2023, after a final couple of weeks in a nursing home.

“I had always promised her that if I was fit enough, she would end her life at home,” said Len. “Sadly that was not quite possible, despite my best endeavours. She is now at peace and I hope we shall meet again one day.”

Cynthia’s funeral was held at Park Crematorium in Aldershot, which



Cynthia and Len in their happy place - Lanzarote - in 2014 and, inset, back in the 1990s.



The California branch of the family with Timothy and Shalla (centre front). From the left, Grayson, Jamie, his partner Alyssa, Jordan, Isaac, Emmi (Jordan's partner) and Eva.

was well attended by family and friends. Son Keith gave the eulogy and Rev Neil Lambert conducted the service.

It is planned to reunite her ashes with Len’s in due course in their happy place – the island of Lanzarote in the Canaries.

Chapter 15 – Family of the future

Cynthia and Len had three children, twins Timothy and Keith born in 1962, followed by daughter Helen in 1965. All three attended grammar schools in Worcester and then went onto university.

Timothy, the eldest son (by 10 minutes as he always reminds Keith), attended university in Norwich and then settled in Cobham, Surrey, for 40 years until relocating with his family to southern California in early 2025. He spent almost all of his career in communications consultancy and followed Len into the police service, working as a

civilian media relations adviser for three different police forces including the Met and Surrey Police.

Timothy married twice, firstly to Kelly, a teacher and a native of New Hampshire, USA, with whom he had two children. Eldest son Jamie is a tattoo artist and Jordan is a construction engineer, both living in San Diego, California. Timothy married for a second time to his wife Shalla, a journalist and communications consultant. They have two children, Isaac and Eva, who are both now teenagers at school in California. Jamie has the honour of producing the first great grandchild in the family, Grayson, born in 2022 and a citizen of the United States.

Keith went to university in Leicester where he quickly met future wife Nicky, who was also studying there. Keith has had a varied career in journalism and communications working on magazines, a daily newspaper and as a communications director for a large media company, Archant, and the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia. He also launched a long-standing tabloid newspaper and then a successful website, Network Norfolk, for the Christian community across



Len on his 90th birthday with Keith and Nicky (centre), and Tom and Becki, left, and Hannah and Gautom, right.

Norfolk. Nicky trained and then practised as a General Practitioner near Norwich for 28 years and then spent four years as a Medical Examiner in local hospitals.



Helen, with Len and Cynthia in Guildford.

They have two children. Hannah has followed in her mother's footsteps and is currently a registrar in intensive care in a Brighton hospital with partner Gautom, an anaesthetic registrar. Thomas, is working in fintech as a platform engineer and living in Tooting in London with his fiancé Becki, a high school head of history.

Helen went to university in Bedford where she studied to be a Physical Education and Maths teacher, but her career took a different path. Initially as a gym instructor, before deciding to train as a Chartered Accountant. After qualifying she went on to train and implement financial systems across Europe working for a large US firm. She took a year out to travel before moving to work in the City for a UK firm and then a couple of major US law firms in leading financial roles, which ultimately allowed her to take early retirement at the age of 52.

Helen has been fortunate to travel across the world to many varied and amazing destinations throughout her working life despite the long hours spent at work. Early retirement has allowed her to indulge this passion and her enjoyment of photography further and take increased holidays with a variety of friends and to get back to playing sport on a regular basis, while also being around to support her parents in their later years.



Len and Cynthia at
Rosemont in Ash Vale in
October 2017 on their
57th wedding anniversary.

Below, the Morris family in 2012 at
Keith and Nicky's 50th birthday party.

