

Christopher James Metcalfe, 1914 – 1986

Christopher James Metcalfe was born at 28 Freville Street, Shildon, County Durham, on 22 May 1914, the son of Elsie, a teacher, and James Henry Metcalfe, a master shoemaker. His



family later lived above the shoe shop owned by his father at 93 Church Street. Shortly after he was born his sister Thora died in the June quarter of 1914, aged six, and his sister Elsie died at the age of five in the December quarter of 1914. His older

sister, Dorothy, had been born on 30 December 1911. The family was complete when another boy, Frank, was born in 1917.

Christopher's mother Elsie Metcalfe née Johnston (see Johnston file) taught at the local school in Shildon. When he reached secondary school age Christopher went by train to King James I Grammar School in Bishop Auckland (September 1926–July 1933). He was a boy who loved outdoor pursuits such as fishing, bird-nesting, shooting and camping. He would often go to Arkengarthdale, near Richmond, Yorkshire, to camp at Shepherd's Lodge, a farm owned by the Harker family, where his beloved Aunty Maud Metcalfe lived. What relation she was to his family, if any, is uncertain.

He trained as a teacher at City of Leeds Training College, Beckett Park, Leeds (1933–1935),



where he excelled at sports such as swimming and rugby. After he graduated as a certified teacher and teacher of handicraft in 1935, he got a job teaching at Ainthorpe

Grove Senior Mixed School in Hull. By then his parents' shoe shop had failed during the economic depression of the 1930s. They moved to Hull, where they lived at 18 Louis Drive, Willerby Road, so that his father could try to get a job.

Chris Metcalfe bottom right

At Ainthorpe Grove School (or possibly earlier, in Leeds) Christopher met another teacher, Olive Kennedy, daughter of Joseph Wright Kennedy, miner (see Kennedy file). They married on 1 January 1939 at the Methodist church on the corner of Willerby Road, Derringham Bank, Hull, and lived at 15 Kirkstone Road, off Priory Road (and later 32 Legarde Avenue, Anlaby Road). War with Germany threatened throughout summer 1939, and on 27 August Christopher volunteered for the army and



joined the Royal Artillery Anti-Aircraft Battery stationed near Hull. He served with the Royal Artillery until 20 January 1942, when he was transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, where he served until 30 September 1942. He then moved to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, until 16 January 1946. Olive took Ainthorpe Grove schoolchildren to Beverley, Yorkshire, at the end of August, as evacuees. She then lost her job as a teacher. Half way through 1942 Olive moved to Northowram, Halifax, to live with Kit's parents. Kit's father James had got a

job there at Seed's, a boot company.

The pair was parted until February 1942, when Christopher was appointed to teach wireless and radar techniques to soldiers at the Bury Technical College. As a result of this training he was made an Associate Member of the British Institution of Radio Engineers. Christopher and Olive took a house at 19 Tarn Drive, Bury. On 10 May 1941 their daughter (Maureen) Alison had been born in Westow, near York, and they had another daughter, Christine Stephanie, on 23 January 1943. Both she and her brother (Christopher) Shaun (born on 10 April 1946) were born in Bury.



Christopher (now called Kit) was demobilised in 1946 and got a job with the Crown Agents for the Colonies, as a teacher in Kenya. He travelled from Liverpool to Kenya on 28 December 1946, on the Union Castle steamship SS Georgic, leaving his wife and children to follow in the troopship Dominion Monarch in early 1947. In April 1947 he met his family in Mombasa and drove them 500 miles to Eldoret on the Uasin Gishu plateau. They lived in a school house at the Central School (later called the Highlands School), which was mostly attended by the Afrikaans children of

immigrants from South Africa. Kit was successful in passing the Standard Swahili Examination in 1949. Kit and Olive Metcalfe taught at this school from 1947 to 1950, when they moved to the new Nyeri Primary School at the foot of Mount Kenya. Kit was acting headmaster while the head O.T. Davies was on leave. While they were at Nyeri the Mau Mau rebellion broke out, and in September 1950 Kit was appointed a Reserve Police Officer. After three years the family moved to the relative safety of Nairobi, where Kit was deputy headmaster of Parklands School from March 1953 and, from August 1953, of Westlands School. Olive taught at St George's School.

In August 1954 Kit was appointed headmaster of Mombasa Primary School and Olive headmistress of the Aga Khan Girls Secondary School in Mombasa. After several months in a house at Tritton Road, they lived in a house beside Mombasa Primary School. Their two daughters, and later their son were sent to boarding school in Nairobi. Having been a keen fresh-water fly-fisherman in English rivers, Kit took up deep-sea fishing with enthusiasm, and



bought the family a small motor boat, Yellowfin. In November 1969 he was made an Honorary Member of the Mombasa Sea Angling Club, of which he was a founder member. He was also interested in shell collecting, and acquired an almost complete example of every cowrie on the Mombasa coast.

In 1963 Kenya became independent and Kit was transferred from the Overseas Civil Service to the Coast Region of the Government of Kenya. . In April 1970 he resigned from the headship of Mombasa European Primary School and took a job as factory manager in Kenya Casements, an aluminium window-making firm in Mombasa. He built a house at Nyali, just north of Mombasa (PO Box no. 90270). He also owned another house at Nyali, given to him in payment of a debt (he lent money to the husband of one of his teachers). He rented out this house. Kit and Olive stayed in Mombasa until January 1975, when they decided to leave Kenya now that their children all lived in England and had families of their own. They bought a house in Chinnor, Oxfordshire (50 The Avenue), at the foot of the Chiltern Hills. There Olive died, of lung cancer, on 28 July 1982. Kit died of retro-pharyngeal cancer on 31 July 1986, at Victoria Cottage Hospital, Thame, Oxfordshire. Olive and Kit were cremated and their ashes buried in St Andrew's churchyard, Chinnor.

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