Winifred Lucy Poole (née Garbett)

A Memoir

Recorded and transcribed on the occasion of Lucy’s 90th birthday, February 15, 1999
by her daughter
Imelda Mary Magdalen Poole

Edited and annotated by her son
Bernard John Dominic Poole

In loving memory
Foreword

The following document, based on a tape-recorded conversation with Lucy Poole, was originally transcribed and manually typed up by Imelda Poole, and then distributed in hard copy to all the brothers and sisters and other family and friends. The following is Imelda’s Introduction to the original document:

On our Mother’s 90th birthday it seemed to be a good time to start recording her life, in order that we, her family, could retain some of the memories which she has and which we could savour throughout the history of our big family.

For several years we have talked about this together but the time was somehow not right and the thought of writing this down seemed such a burdensome task for Mother.

So on this special day, February 15th, 1999, I sat down with Mother, armed with a Dictaphone which I had borrowed from one of our community workers, and we just talked about her early life.

The following is as close a record as I was able to make of all that she said on that day. The last section on her journey towards becoming a Catholic, Mother wrote herself and sent it to me as a conclusion to this first section of her life.

I have had great joy in putting this together in honour of Mother’s 90th birthday and I hope that you all enjoy it and find it as moving as I did.

Bernard took the hard copy sent to him by Imelda and transcribed it into a word processor. He made small edits along the way, such as would be necessary in any document that has been manually typed, and thus precluding easy correction of minor errors. At the same time, Bernard took it upon himself to add [bracketed] inserts in the running text to remove ambiguity here and there. Bernard also wrote extensive footnotes, which provide much historical family background to Lucy Poole’s story. The footnotes are written by Bernard alone, and as such any errors therein are to be laid at his door.

The document has been posted to the Lucy Poole In Memoriam website at the following URL:

http://www.pitt.edu/~poole/WinifredLucyPoole/InMemoriam.htm

Bernard welcomes any and all corrections and additions to his footnotes. The family should think of this as their document—representing an opportunity to share valuable information about the family for generations to come.

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December 4, 2009
On February 15, 1999, on her 90th birthday, Mother Poole sat down with Imelda, one of her daughters, and reminisced about the early years of her life. Following is the text of this conversation¹.

The first thing that I remember in my early childhood was when I was five. I was on the platform at Ditton Priors or Cleobury North railway station. We were coming back from my father’s [family] home where we had been for a short weekend. It was Bank Holiday Monday and on the platform the station master told us that the 1914 war had been declared. I can remember that so well when I was just five. It was so sudden.

When I was seven I can remember getting a letter from my father² while he was fighting in the war. He did not choose to fight at this time; he was conscripted. It all happened so suddenly. It was a terrible time for my father. He was in Egypt during the war and around the Holy Land. I can remember getting a postcard from him and I can remember writing him a postcard as well. I can just remember these two happenings and then I don’t remember anything else until he came home.

I can remember him coming home. I was in the house with my grandma and my mother wasn’t there. She may have been at work; I’m not sure. I can remember the excitement of his coming home. It was just wonderful.

My grandmother, my mother’s mother³, lived with us during the war. She became a father-figure in a way. We were very fond of each other. My father’s mother⁴ died when I was very young, but I do remember her at my father’s home [in Ditton Priors, Shropshire, UK] sitting on a stool and milking the cows.

My grandfather on my father’s side died when I was a baby, so I never knew him. The funeral was in Ditton Priors, in Shropshire. The family walked from the farm where they lived to the church and I was carried in my mother’s arms all the way. There were no Rolls Royces [for the likes of us] in my day! Many of the Garbett family members are buried in the church at Ditton Priors.

¹ Bernard Poole (one of Lucy’s sons and the transcriber of this document for the web) has a genealogical chart which he put together several years ago after conversations with mom and with other members of the family, including Auntie Nora and older relatives and family friends. He will eventually make this chart available on this website, too. Bernard has drawn on his conversations with family to include footnotes which attempt to put in context the various names and places mentioned by Lucy in her narrative.

² Benjamin Garbett, second son and seventh child of George and Eliza (née Bowen) Garbett. In all, George and Eliza had 9 children, 4 boys (George, Benjamin—our grandfather on my mother’s side—Harold and Albert) and 5 girls (Emily, Louise, Elizabeth, Nellie, and Lucy). Benjamin Garbett was born in 1878 and died December 23rd, 1956.

³ Elizabeth (Betty) Ladywell, born 1845, died 1930. Betty had one sister named Clara.

⁴ Eliza (née Bowen) Garbett.
My mother’s name was Hodgetts. I didn’t know my Grandfather Hodgetts either, as he, too, died when I was very young. My mother told me that her mother was born in Oxford, not Birmingham. Why she came to Birmingham I do not know. It was possibly to do some form of domestic service.

My mother met my father in Birmingham. He had come there [from Ditton Priors, Shropshire] to work for an agricultural company. It was a pony and trap business. He worked on a horse-drawn dray, delivering agricultural produce around the farms near to Birmingham. He was lodging at my Great Aunt Louisa’s house in Birmingham. Louisa was not my mother’s sister, but she was related to her in some way.

My mother met my father at Great Aunt Louisa’s house. Another memory I have of my father’s mother, my Grandma [Eliza] Garbett, is that she always wore black with a shawl around her shoulders. She was very tall. My mother’s mother, Grandma [Elizabeth] Hodgetts, was different; she always took great pride in her appearance. She re-trimmed her bonnet whenever she went out. She wore beautiful bonnets. She was very fond of the music halls. The Aston Hippodrome was not far from our home. I never went there, but I can remember my grandma getting dressed up in her special bonnet. She would put pansies in it and all sorts of flowers. She was a seamstress; she was very good at sewing. She would go off to the variety performance on her own.

My Grandmother Hodgetts and I became very close friends. She lived with us and looked after me while my mother went to work with a cycle firm. My mother painted all the lines on the [Sun] bicycles. It all had to be done by hand in those days. She always did the show models. She

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5 Known only to mom as Mr. Hodgetts, a greengrocer by trade.
6 Interestingly enough, our dad (Lucy’s Billy) was shipping manager for the Birmingham-based Phillips Cycle Corporation. So bicycles were destined to be a thing on both sides of the family. Birmingham, UK—very like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA—was an Industrial Revolution hub. As such, it was a filthy town where a few men made millions while thousands, if not millions, of men, over time, made a living working their hearts out for the fortunate few who created businesses which survived the ups and downs of commercial competition. Phillips was the second largest British cycle maker until merged with the British Cycle Corporation (BCC) as part of the Tube Investments takeover in 1960. Phillips made its cycles at its Credenda Works in Smethwick, Birmingham. The Phillips “True Temper Steel Bicycle,” with its lion crest and its motto “Renowned the world over,” could be found in the farthest corners of the world, if only because Britain, at the time of Phillips’ ascendancy in the 1920s and 1930s, were masters of a huge chunk of global real estate, commanding an empire on which “the sun never set.” At home, in Rotton Park Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham, I remember that our back patio area (there was no garage) was littered with bicycles, all Phillips bicycles, of course, and all acquired very inexpensively by dad after they had done Roman service as floor models at one cycle show or another. I was delighted (not to say amazed), not long after I emigrated to America in 1980, to find a Phillips True Temper Steel bicycle in my sister-in-law’s garage! It’s possible that my father was responsible for its shipping to America, since he was the last shipping manager for the Phillips Cycle Corporation. However, as already mentioned, in 1960, a few short years before dad died, the Phillips Cycle Corporation was bought out by BCC, a subsidiary by then of Tube Investments. Shortly after that, Raleigh joined the BCC conglomerate and took over the “True Temper Steel Bicycle” monogram, but kept the Phillips name for that brand of cycles. Dad and mom, and what remained of the at-home family, moved from Birmingham to Nottingham, since that was where the BCC was based. Phillips bicycles and tricycles continued to be produced at that time. It was good of the BCC to keep dad on board, but I think it must have taken the heart out of dad to be a small fish in such a very big pond. I can’t begin to imagine the kind of pressure he must have been under during those last few years of his life, wondering, in his 50s, if he would continue to have a job with the BCC till he was
was very adept at painting these fine, coloured lines, which depicted the particular make of
bicycle. She had the eye of an artist in her. I did not inherit this gift. When I did make some
attempt to paint, I was left with more paint on myself than on whatever it was I was painting! So
I had nothing of the artist. I was more of a practical person, and I enjoyed reading.

I loved books. I can remember as a little girl that I would frequently go to the library for a book.
I was never told by my parents to go and get a book. There were never any books at home. I
picked up my love of reading from Mother Columba. She taught me at St. Chad’s school where I
went from a very early age, because it was my nearest school. I was not a Catholic at the time.

I was a pretty bright girl and when I was eleven I was put into the top class. During my time in
this school, I lapped up poetry because Mother Columba loved it and she would read it with such
meaning. I love poets such as Walter de la Mare. It was all like music to me and I started to write
a bit of poetry.

Before I left that school, Mother Columba moved to Preston, but I wrote to her and sent her my
poems for her to read. She was very sensitive and she would write back to me with her
comments. I was always good at English. One time, when I was in the 11+ end of the school, a
man came to give a talk on ‘Wireless Telephony.’ The whole of this top end of the school had to
write an essay related to the talk and I was given the prize for the best essay. I was always able to
express myself. When I was in the Grammar School we were always writing essays. Our English
teacher was a bright but very stern person. I can remember writing an essay on ‘A dissertation to
a Rose,’ and she called me out and said: “Come on, Winnie, read out your essay. That’s the way
to write it.”

I didn’t get any big top prizes at my secondary school. There were just some pointers that I was
good at these things. Perhaps if it had been another time, I would have gone to university, but in
those days it wasn’t seen to be such an important thing to do. I did, however, always love books
and avidly read them at this early time of my life and ever since. I especially loved the author
Marie Stokes and all alchemist literature.

able to retire. The issue proved to be moot, however, since dad died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack
(September 13, 1965) a few short years after the move to Nottingham.
7 Lucy did pass on this, her mother’s, gift to several of her children, at least a few of whom demonstrated artistic
talent of various kinds. Dad was artistic, too, mind, and very musically gifted, as was dad’s mother, Gertrude, the
first wife of Grandad Poole (William Thomas Poole)—she apparently had a beautiful singing voice. So any gift for
artistic/musical talent demonstrated by the offspring of Lucy and Billy Poole come from Lucy and Billy’s randomly
intermingled DNA. Their first daughter, Mary, for example, loved to make beautiful floral arrangements and at one
point in time enjoyed creating natural-life floral collages, a couple of which I still have. Margaret, too, as I recall,
had a talent for art. Gerard was given every opportunity to develop his talent for music, which he continues to
nourish to this day, his eyes set, even at age 70, on a Royal College of Music award. Josephine showed her artistic
talent in home and garden design. She also showed considerable flair in the exquisite culinary confections she
prepared for family gatherings at her home in Bristol. Anthony has always had an instinctive talent for working with
wood. He also has the valuable talent of turning a home into a showpiece. He’s done this a couple of times with
homes and gardens in the Staffordshire Potteries. Francis, too, has shown a talent for art. Andrew, perforce of
circumstances, has, like Anthony, developed a knack for transforming run-down properties into desirable residences.
That takes artistic talent, too.
From being a little child until the age of about fifteen, I used to go over to Ditton Priors with Dad and Mother every summer and stay there for the holidays. I had such a happy time. I lapped up the countryside and enjoyed being with my cousins. I would pick fruits from the hedgerows and eat the wild strawberries. I would find a gooseberry bush in the middle of a hedgerow where the seed of the bush had blown and I would pick the gooseberries and bring them home to the family in Ditton Priors.

The strawberries I would give as a little hand out to Auntie Minnie, my dad’s brother Albert’s wife. She was a real country woman. She would stop everything to make cakes and toffee for us children. Everybody was always well fed at Auntie Minnie’s. Uncle Albert would put traps in the farm meadows to catch rabbits, which he would bring, once caught, to Auntie Minnie. She would skin them and I can still see a couple of rabbits which she would have put, skinned, into a casserole dish, along with sage and onions. These would be cooking while we were up on the hills picking winberries and bringing loads of wood down from the hills. The wood was stacked high in the summer to be used as the main fuel for the winter. Coming back to the house for the rabbit stew was more of a feast than any caviar or roast duck could ever have been for me.

The potatoes we ate with our meals were always out of the garden. Their garden was a vegetable garden with a few odd bushes and flowers in it. The garden was set out for food, with vegetables and soft fruits. At the back of the garden there was a toilet—we always used an outside toilet in our day. By this toilet there was a most beautiful gooseberry bush. I think that I went to that toilet a lot more than I needed to in order that I could eat more of the gooseberries!

So although I was a city girl, living each year in the country gave me a love for country life and it also gave me great health as I had so much opportunity to breathe in good, fresh, country air.

My mother was a good cook, like my Auntie Minnie. Mother would never buy fish and chips, for example. Each Friday, even though we weren’t Catholics, she would buy fresh fish and cook us a lovely fish meal. For most people, Friday was a fish day. Perhaps this remained a tradition going back to the time of the Reformation and before. Both my mother and my [Billy’s mother] Grandma Poole would go all the way into the centre of Birmingham, to the big market there, to buy fresh fish to be cooked the same day.

My father’s family were not farmers. My grandfather was a carpenter for the Lazells family, who owned a big estate in Ditton Priors. Uncle Albert was a clerk. He was very good at figures. He did the books for a quarry mining firm on the Clee Hills. He walked miles to get to work each day. The quarry mine was all part of the Lazells estate. This is why Uncle Albert and Auntie Minnie had a farm house. The house was in the family because, as I said, my father’s father had been a carpenter to the Lazells family and the house came with the job. It was a small holding where they could keep pigs and a couple of cows for the milk. Although Uncle Albert did not follow in his father’s footsteps as a carpenter, his work for the quarry enabled him to keep the house after his father died.

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8 George Garbett.
Even when Uncle Albert died at the age of ninety-three, his two children were never pushed out of the house. It remained in the family and Cousin Lilly and Cousin George stayed there until Cousin George died and Lilly was admitted to a nursing home. By this time, all the fields had been rented to farmers in the local area. This was so unlike when I was a child, as we had three big fields to play in. It was wonderful! I was very close to this family. My father had other brothers and sisters, but only one sister had any children. So I don’t really know any other members of my father’s family.

Auntie Nellie, my father’s sister, was very tall, like most of his family. She had children, and we did visit them. In fact, one of her children wanted me to go out with him, but I didn’t. He would have been a first cousin; it wouldn’t have been wise. Auntie Nellie and her husband were killed during the [Second World] War. They were bombed. It was very sad.

Auntie Lizzie was a housekeeper to a well-to-do man whose wife died, and Auntie Lizzie stayed on to look after his children. She never married. Nor did she have children of her own. Aunty Lucy married, but had no children.

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My Billy, I’ve been told, came from a family who dealt in coal. They sold coal, which must have been delivered by horse and cart in those days. Billy’s grandparents were still around when he was a young man but they died before we were married. They were all Birmingham people on his grandfather’s side. His grandmother’s family, the Witton family, were closer to Billy. Harold

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9 Bernard Poole notes: Actually, according to my records, which are bolstered by my mom’s fabulous (not to say fabled) memory, George and Eliza Garbett, Lucy’s paternal grandparents, had nine children. The oldest, George, had no children. The second child, Emily, had one child. Louise, the third child, died, childless, at the age of 21. The fourth child, Elizabeth, had two children. The next child, Nellie, had three or four children. The sixth child, Lucy, had no children. Then there was Benjamin, mom’s dad, who had the one child (our Lucy). Next after Benjamin came Harold, who also had no children. The baby of the family was Uncle Albert, who had three children: Elsie, Lilly, and George. Lucy’s maternal grandparents, a Mr. Hodgetts and Elizabeth (Betty) Ladywell, who was born in 1845 and died in 1930, had eight children. The first child, Thomas, was a general dealer and married a lady named Matilda. They had one child, a girl. Next came Clara, who had an illegitimate daughter named Annie (Annie married a Mr. Stiles after “housekeeping” for him and they had several children). Joseph was the third child (he was a greengrocer), followed by Charlotte and then Alfred (another greengrocer). Elizabeth was the sixth child (she married a Mr. Thorn and had 3 or 4 children). The seventh child, Charles, had one child. The eighth and last child was Alice, my mother’s mother (my maternal grandmother). Our mother, Lucy Poole, told me herself that her mother very much disliked having brothers and sisters at all! She really wanted to be an only child. One of her aunts, Clara Ladywell, married one Sam Ball and, after a few years, they were still childless. Grandma Garbett, bless her soul, asked her parents if she could go off and be the child that her aunt so much wanted. Grandma Garbett’s parents (bless their souls) agreed, so off Alice went to be the only child in her aunt’s family. Next thing you know (as luck would have it), her aunt gets pregnant soon thereafter, and gave birth to a boy named Ernest (who eventually married a lady named Winifred). Alice was so upset (my grandmother wore her feelings on her sleeve) that she just went right on back to her birth family.

10 Presumably George and Eliza Garbett’s daughter, Elizabeth.

11 See contradictory footnote 6 above.

12 William Gerard Poole (Billy), Lucy’s husband of 31 years and our dad. He also was born in 1909 (March 16). He died, following a massive heart attack, in 1965 (September 13).
Witton, Billy’s grandfather’s brother, lived opposite Erdington Abbey. As far as I know, they were rooted in Birmingham, too. The Witton family had a grocery store.

Grandma Poole, soon after she was married, went to India with Grandad Poole, who was in the army. Grandma Poole had to come back with the first three [of her five children] because of the [Great] War. She had to leave Grandad Poole behind to fight in the War. He was a permanent soldier. He was a sergeant major in the army. Grandma Poole had got no home to come to, so she and the first three children, Billy, Nora, and Fred, had to live with Grandma Witton at the store [in Erdington]. This was in St. Vincent’s parish, [on Nechells Parkway in Birmingham]. It was a lovely area.

13 Gertrude Alice Poole (née Witton), born 1883, died August 29, 1939.
15 Lucy’s Billy, William Gerard Poole, was the firstborn. Next came his sister, Nora, who died a Carmelite nun. Nora was followed by Frederick (born December 29, 1913, died January 10, 1983). These first three children were born in Burma at a time when Burma was administered as a province of the British Raj—the sub-continent of India (Burma—now Myanmar—became a separate, self-governing colony in 1937). Billy, for sure, was born and baptized in Maymyo, Burma. Lucy showed me his birth certificate, of which I have a copy. Maymyo, interestingly enough, is on the road to Mandalay. In 1914, Billy, Nora, and Frederick returned to England with their mother, Grandma Gertrude Poole, immediately after the outbreak of the First World War. I find it fascinating to think that Dad, born in 1909, was seven years old when he first stepped foot on English soil. Hence, he must have had vivid memories of his early days in India and no doubt had friends amongst the local Burmese children. Certainly he acquired a taste for South-East Indian food, for we children of his often enjoyed a fine, hot Indian curry cooked at home by our mom, who learned to cook Indian curries from dad’s mother, Gertrude. Phillip, the fourth child of William and Gertrude Poole, and Francis, the last child, were born in Birmingham, England. Francis (Uncle Francis) was killed in action during World War II. He was serving in the Royal Navy. His ship went down with all hands when it was torpedoed in the North Atlantic in 1943. Uncle Francis was 20 years old at the time of his death. The story goes that, the evening before Uncle Francis’ ship set sail from Malta, where it was stationed at the time, he visited a church in Valetta and he made a vow to God that he would become a priest if he survived the war. The date was March 9th, 1943. That same day, he penned a letter to his and Billy’s sister, Nora, by then a nun in the enclosed Carmelite monastery in Dolgellau, Clywd County, North Wales. In the letter he told Nora of the vow he had made. Curiously, twenty years later to the day, Gerard, the oldest son of Billy and Lucy Poole, was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. There is another reason why March 9 is an interesting date in the Poole family saga. Imelda, the 5th daughter of Billy and Lucy Poole, and their 10th child, was born on March 9, 1946. As it happens, of all the girls, Imelda was the only one to become a nun (in the Order of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), also known as the Loreto sisters). Today (November, 2009) Imelda is working as a missionary to Albania, where she devotes herself to the cause of trafficked women, along with other local charitable endeavours.

16 After they were married, at St. Chad’s Cathedral on April 3rd, 1934, mom and dad lived next door to Grandad and Grandma Poole at 35 Warren Farm Road in Kingstanding, Birmingham. Their first child, Mary, was born there on April 23rd, 1935. The second child, Margaret, who was born June 7th, 1936, was also born at Warren Farm Rd. I say “at” Warren Farm Rd. rather than “while mom and dad were living at” Warren Farm Rd., because, of mom and dad’s 12 children, only one was born in a hospital (Bernard, the 8th child, who was born in 1943 on the maternity ward at Tamworth Hospital while the family was living in evacuation quarters in Haunton, Staffs). The rest, with the aid of a midwife, were born (as mom told me herself) in mom and dad’s bed—wherever mom and dad were living at the time. By 1937, it seems (according to Gerard, though this is unlikely), the family may have moved to a house in the Nechells district of Birmingham, and there, apparently, is where Gerard was born on August 11th, 1937. I say “apparently” because that is what Gerard himself seems to think. However, I have a photocopy of the first several pages from the Family Bible, in which mom religiously (pardon the pun) recorded dates (and even times of day) for the births of all her children, along with the place where they were born. According to mom, all first 5 of her children—Mary, Margaret, Gerard, Josephine, and Anthony—were born at Warren Farm Rd, in Kingstanding, Birmingham, UK. Remarkably, these first five children were born in the space of just 4 years and 8 months (which caused some amusement at mom’s funeral when the ministering priest joked about how that just didn’t seem right,
When I knew Billy, the family had been given a spacious council house in Kingstanding, Birmingham, on a lovely new estate. They had a nice corner house. This is the only house I ever knew.

Billy did not talk much about his early life so I don’t really know very much about his family. Billy got through to the Catholic grammar school, St. Philip’s. Sometimes, after school, young people, in my day, instead of going home would get on a bus and go into town to walk around the shops. I was at Aston Tech at the time. I saw Billy when I was in the town once. I knew him from church because by this time I had been received into the Catholic Church. I knew when I saw Billy that I had a feeling for him. I was sixteen at the time. I went to the town often, but I never saw him again in the town. I always went to Compline on a Thursday night and I went to Vespers on Sunday night at St. Chad’s cathedral in Birmingham. Billy was in the choir, which was always placed in the front, on the sanctuary in those days [in the monastic pews either side of the altar, typical of gothic church architecture—St. Chad’s was designed by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin], so I saw him from afar often!

I actually met Billy at Cath Brian’s house. Cath had a teenagers club at her house. We used to go there on a Sunday night after Vespers and have tea and sort of party games. Some of the choir boys used to come as well as girls from the Children of Mary. Cath was great. Her father owned a big firm and they had a big house inside the firm’s grounds. Cath’s mother played the accordion and we would have great fun singing and dancing at her home. It kept us off the streets and gave us a good time as well. She did a great job opening the family’s doors to all of us. Being young was great in those days; it was such a happy time.

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but the facts speak for themselves). The entries in the Family Bible are all made in mom’s fair hand, but (which is significant) they were all made at the same time (there is no variation in the writing style or pen used). So the entries must have been made in a Family Bible acquired after the birth of her 12 children, but, possibly, before any of her children’s offspring were born. So, in this, what appears to be an after-the-event, Family Bible, either mom’s memory was vague (which I doubt, since she was there) or (as is more likely the case) Gerard’s memory is questionable. Hey, Gerard has a whole bunch of my DNA (whether he likes it or not), and our mom got on my case for as long as I can remember because of my forgetfulness and absent-mindedness (I guess it’s appropriate that I eventually became a professor!). Could I be the only child in a family of 12 so endowed cursed? Maybe. But I think not. Having said that, I have to point out that I did some research about the mass evacuations of children from Birmingham at the beginning of September, 1939. If, in fact, our family evacuated to Haunton at that time, then Anthony would have been born in the house in Haunton, not at 35 Warren Farm Rd., Kingstanding, Birmingham. However, it’s quite possible that the Pooles were not evacuated with all the other children in Birmingham. I have a note from my mother, Lucy, dated July 18, 1995, where she states that the family were housed, from July to November 1940, in the rectory at Ditton Priors, where her own father, our grandfather, went to school. No children were born during this time. Anthony was born the year before, December, 1939, probably at Warren Farm Rd., as mom states, and Barbara was born in April, 1941. So the family must have moved to Haunton some time after November, 1940, since Barbara, according to mom, was born at Haunton. This is all very complicated, and no doubt your head is spinning if you’ve bothered to read this at all. Clearly more research needs to be done to get the facts straight. For example, I have a copy of the registration of my baptism in the Parish of Haunton, in the Diocese of Birmingham. I was baptized on August 20th, 1943, by Father Shephey Green, who was a close friend of dad’s. The document indicates clearly that I was born while the family was living at Haunton. Can Gerard and Anthony produce the same document to verify their place of birth?

17 Read more about this famous 19th century English architect, famous for his neo-gothic designs that included the British Houses of Parliament, at http://www.nndb.com/people/220/000044088/.
Before I conclude this story of my early life, I would like to talk a little about how I was led to become a Roman Catholic. You know why I went to a Catholic school earlier on in my life. While I was at this school, I received the same religious instruction as the rest of the children. No bother was made of the fact that I had been baptized in another faith. I’m not sure whether I was an exception in the school or not; it didn’t seem to matter. Suffice it to say that every day I thank God that I had this great good fortune to absorb all the wonder and joy of the Catholic way of being.

I was brought up by my parents to be a good Christian anyway and I was regularly taken by my parents, and later sent on my own, to the local chapel just across the road from my home. I loved all the singing in the “Band of Hope” on Sunday evenings. This was many years away from the time when I would be going to mass, evening Vespers, and attending the Children of Mary and processions, which all came in my pre- and early teens, from when I was about 12.

It was at this time that I started to go to Sunday mass and I would refuse to eat meat at all on Fridays. Lo and behold, my parents went along with all this. When I suggested to my parents that I would like to become a Catholic, I received a very definite ‘No!’ from them.

Mother Columba, with whom I had stayed in touch from when I was her primary school student those years ago, invited me to go to Selly Park for the Corpus Christi procession, but, alas, only to watch. I could not strew the flower petals in front of the Blessed Sacrament because I was not a Catholic. This was such a pain for me, but it really sealed my mind that I would become one of “them.”

Mother Columba refused to allow me to be received without the permission of my parents, so soon after this, one Saturday afternoon, she came to my home. It must have been in October, 1923. To the joy and surprise of both Sister Columba and myself there was no argument. My mom said: “Well, our Winnie is already living as a Roman Catholic, so why not let really become one.” I was received the following Monday, October 15, and I made my First Holy Communion on Sunday, October 21.

So the greatest treasure ever given to me, my Faith, became a reality. Now for seventy-five and three quarter years it has been the centre of my existence. The Eucharist has fed my soul, helping me to cope with all the ups and downs of life and giving me the strength to accept whatever has happened knowing that the Good Lord knows best. He will sustain me always. Of course, I have other gems in my life, namely my family: my children and their children and their children, who give me so much pleasure and carry me along into old age with still a zest for living and a reason for being.

18 Mom was 14 years of age.
19 It’s difficult to keep track, but at the last count (as of October 2009) there are over 100 offspring from the 1934 union of William Gerard Poole and Winifred Lucy Garbett. Ironically, Winifred Lucy’s mom, Alice Garbett, as already noted, wanted, more than anything, to be an only child (according to mom’s account to me). So poor Alice must have wondered where her daughter got her proclivity for such plentiful procreation! We Pooles, of my generation, are strong-headed and stubborn, just like Alice. We’re also loving and, for the most part, generous like her, too. One of my strongest memories, as a child, is the sight of my maternal granddad and grandma walking, arm-in-arm, up Rotton Park Rd, Birmingham 17, to visit us every Wednesday afternoon. They brought goodies galore and, for sure, made it easier for my mom and dad to cope with having 12 children. I can remember as a young boy going shopping with mom to get clothing (perhaps when I was ten years old and preparing to go off to boarding school after I passed the 11+ exam). Mom took me to 33 Miller Street, Aston, Birmingham, where Grandad and Grandma lived. Alice ran a drapers store out of the house and had an account with a warehousing company called Bell’s, where she was able to buy clothing at wholesale prices. So off the three of us—mom, grandma, and me—to Bell’s where, I wouldn’t mind betting, Grandma paid the bill for my trousseau. I believe Grandad and Grandma Garbett also co-signed the mortgage our mom and dad took out on the house in Rotton Park Rd, Edgbaston,
90 years and still going strong! DEO GRATIAS!

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Following is a series of pix taken when Lucy’s son, Bernard, arrived unexpected from the USA on February 15, 1999, to help mom celebrate her 90th birthday in Stone, Staffordshire, England.

Birmingham 17, into which the family moved at the end of the Second World War. The last four children—Francis, Imelda, Teresa, and Andrew—were all born at Rotton Park Rd. I wonder how many of us remember the phone number at 98 Rotton Park Rd. Well, it was EDG1798, and it was only years later that I realized that, in those days, a phone number (in Birmingham at least) was constructed based on the postal address. EDG short for Edgbaston, 17 for the district of Birmingham, 98 for the number of the house. How about that?