“Tony” Bertram Anthony Flack, CMG.(1924-2009)

Soldier, Diplomat and favourite Uncle

By Dr Ted Flack

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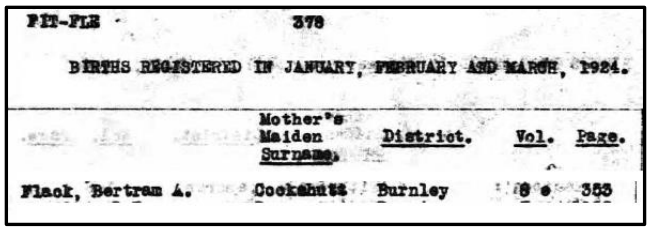
“Tony” Bertram Anthony Flack, CMG. Soldier, Diplomat and favourite Uncle (1924-2009)

Bertram Anthony (known as “Tony”) Flack was born on 3 February 1924 in Nelson, Lancashire, the second-born son of Dr. Frederick Henry Douglas and Alice Flack, nee Cockshutt, his birth registered in Burnley Registry Office in the March Quarter 1924 (Reference: Volume 8e, Page 353) Mar 1924.



PIT-FLE 378

BIRTHS REGISTERED IN JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH, 1924.

	Mother's Maiden Surname.	District.	Vol.	Page.
Flack, Bertram A.	Cockshutt	Burnley	8 e	353

Tony Flack’s parents, Dr Frederick Henry Flack, known as “Harry”, who was born on 5 February 1878 in Burnley, Lancashire and Alice Mary Flack, nee Cockshutt, born 13 June 1890 at Bamber Bridge, Lancashire, were married on 22 January 1914 in Nelson, Lancashire.

Tony was the second son of Harry and Alice Flack after the birth of his older brother Henry Edmund Douglas Flack (1917-1985)[1].

It is likely that Bertram Anthony Flack was baptised at St Mary’s Church Nelson in 1924 and likely named after his father’s brother Lt. Surgeon Bertram Flack, (1882-1919) who had tragically died of the Spanish Flu in 1919, aged just 37. No record has been found of a baptism in his name in Lancashire during the years 1917-1927. (There is a family story that suggests that Tony was to be named Anthony Bertram, but “ABF” was known as a short form of “a bloody fool” in the 1920s, so it was changed to Bertram Anthony.)

Flack Family group photograph, taken in 1932 at Brookside, Nelson.
Top row, Left to Right: Douglas Flack, Gordon Johnson, Dr Harry Flack
Seated, Alice Flack, Mabel Flack, William Henry Flack, Clarice Johnson, Lucy Flack
Bertram Anthony Flack.

[1] (see Lt. Colonel “Douglas” Flack – A life of service and compassion”.)

Tony Flack's family had lived at 56 Railway Street Nelson from his birth in 1924 to 1932, when his grandfather, William Henry Douglas Flack (1852-1936) purchased "Brookside" in Habergham Eaves, in the country just outside Burnley.

Tony's grandfather, William Henry Douglas Flack, died in 1936, at which time, his father, known as "Harry" Flack, retired from medical practice in Burnley, and, with his mother Alice, moved to live at 40 Blundell Drive, Southport.

A modern photo of 40 Blundell Drive, Southport.

In the summer school holidays, the family caught the ferry from Liverpool to the Isle of Man where they often stayed in holiday accommodation in Port Erin.

Tony Flack with his mother Alice and elder brother "Douglas" on holidays in the Isle of Man. c. 1930

Tony Flack attended Terra Nova Preparatory School in Birkdale, Southport from May 1931 to July 1936 (aged 8 to 13). The school records show that he was appointed a School Monitor. It is not clear as to just when Tony's parents moved to Southport, but it appears that Tony may have enjoyed some time at Terra Nova as a "day boy" rather than a boarder since their new home in Southport was within walking distance from the school.

Terra Nova Prep School Building, Birkdale, Southport
as it was in 1995

Tony Flack (fifth from the left) lined up as a Scout (probably taken in Southport in 1935).

Tony sat the 11+ Examination in 1936 and gained entry to Epsom College, Surrey, in 1937 where his brother, “Douglas” Flack was already a boarder.

In Tony’s second year at Epsom College in 1939, war with Germany broke out. There must have been grave concerns for the safety of pupils at Epsom College which was close to the flight path of German bombers during the London Blitz from September 1940 to May 1941. It is recorded that two high explosive German bombs landed in the immediate proximity of the college during this period.

Tony’s school record shows that he was appointed as a “Monitor” in 1939. It is likely that Tony gained entry to Liverpool University’s Law School in 1940 and that he commenced studies there in 1941 aged just 17.

We know that during 1941 he joined the Liverpool University’s Officer Training College and a photograph of his class at OTC training on the Isle of Man is reproduced below.

William Flack, Tony’s son, provided the following comment about that period:

> *One additional detail is that at some point between 1941 and 1943 my father was in the Home Guard in Southport. He was in the same group as his later father-in-law John Mellor. I think his first name was John. We always knew him as JV because of his initials. He was also know as Jack. JV used to like play the fool and get laughs by pretending to be stupid. When my father later met him as the father of the girl he was going out with he got a shock to find that it was the man who use to play the fool at the Home Guard. He told an amusing story about how the Home Guard had been assigned to digging a trench facing the exit from Southport station. When asked why they*

were doing this they were told that it was so that they could shoot at the invading Germans as they came out of the station having travelled up from Liverpool on the train.

He also mentioned when he was a student in Liverpool at the same time he used to get to the university in the morning to find that buildings in the area had been destroyed by the German bombing which was taking place there and they would have to clear rubble.

166 Infantry Officer Training Unit, Douglas, Isle of Man. 1943.

By July 1943, now aged 19 years of age, he was appointed Lieutenant with an "Emergency Commission" in the East Lancashire Regiment.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 16 JULY, 1943 p3229

REGULAR . ARMY.

EMERGENCY COMMISSIONS.

E. Lan. R.

Bertram Anthony FLACK (276881).

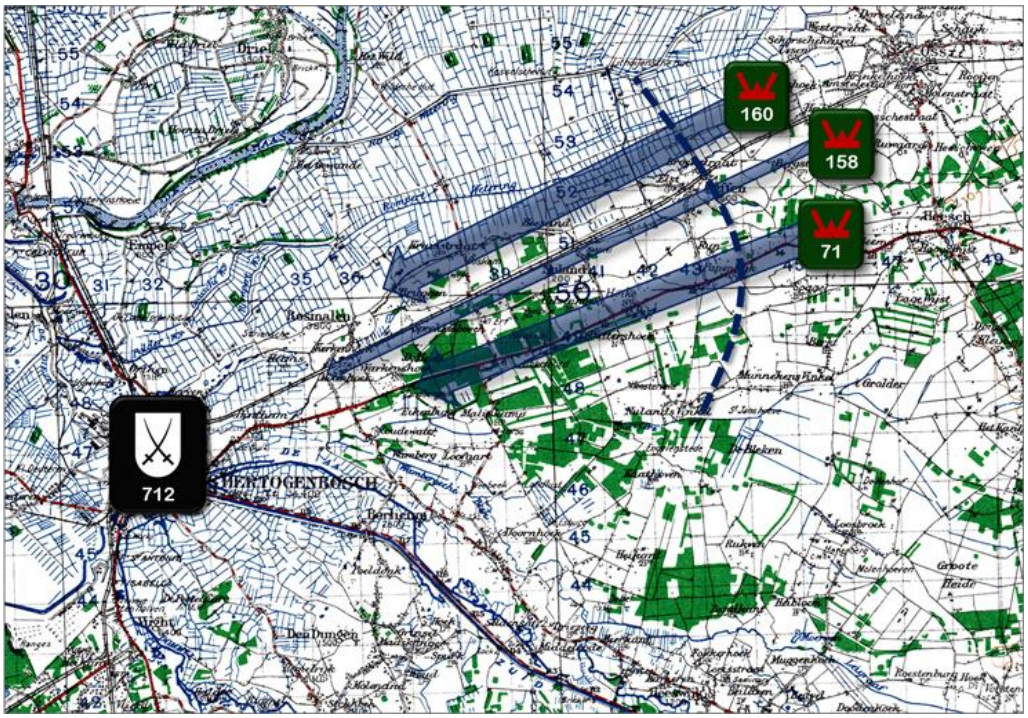
The East Lancashire Regiment had been a first line Territorial Regiment before the war but was mobilised in September 1939 and by October 1943 was training for the invasion of Normandy as a part of the 71st Brigade of the 53rd (Welsh) Division.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division, including the 1st Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment, was not a part of the initial landings Normandy on 6 June 1944 but relieved the 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division in the west of the British salient on 1st July 1944 as a part of the Battle of Odon. It was subsequently involved in the capture of Caen and the rapid advance across France and into Belgium and Holland.

It appears that Lt Bertram Anthony Flack (known as “Tony”) joined his Battalion as a reinforcement in August or September 1944 as the Allied forces attacked towards Antwerp.

Montgomery's plan to open the port of Antwerp

Lieutenant General Ritchie's XII Corps, which was in the Nijmegen salient, was ordered to drive westward with the 15th (Scottish) Division, 51st (Highland) Division and the 53rd (Welsh) Division directed against Tilburg, Boxtel and 's-Hertogenbosch respectively. Operation ALAN was the codename for the assault against 's-Hertogenbosch. Uncle Tony’s 1st Bn East Lancashire Regiment was part of the attack on 's-Hertogenbosch.



158th Infantry Brigade was to be in reserve ready to pass through the forward Brigades supported by the 53rd Reconnaissance Regiment and a Squadron of 5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards to seize the Canal bridges and bridges over the River Dieze and River Dommel in the city should a favourable opportunity occur.

The 1st Battalion the East Lancashire Regiment of 158th Infantry Brigade was mounted in Kangaroos ready to make this bold charge into the city as soon as chance presented itself.

(A Kangaroo was a Canadian armoured personnel carrier (APC) during the Second World War which was created by converting a tank chassis. Kangaroos were created as an expedient measure "in the field" by the Canadian Army, and were so successful that they were used by British and Commonwealth forces.)

The Allied operations in Holland were of strategic importance. The failure of the Operation Market Garden's objective of capturing the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem had meant that capturing the Port of Antwerp had become crucial in shortening the distances stores and equipment would need to be brought to the pending battles to defeat the Germans.

The Dutch terrain was difficult for military operations with rivers, canals and wetlands restricting manoeuvre and forcing combat onto narrow frontages. As a result, heavy casualties were experienced on both sides.

Taken in October 1944 in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, this picture one of a father running past a Sherman tank with his two children under his arm. The tank is parked next to a petrol station with walls covered in bullet- and shrapnel holes and not a single window remains intact[2].

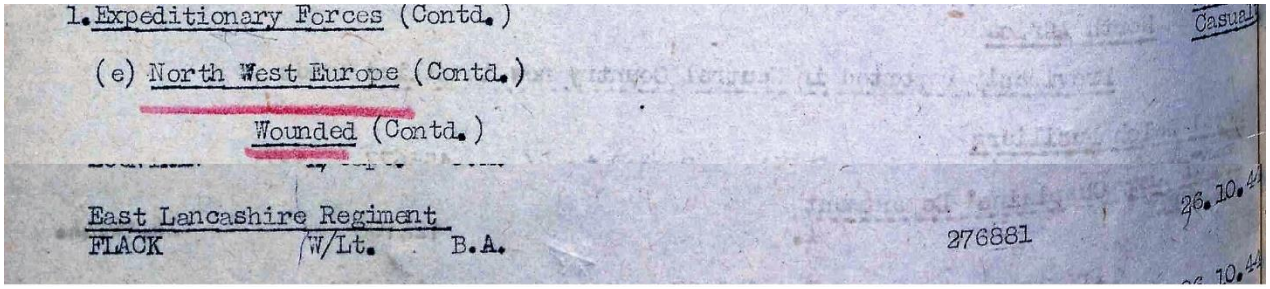
Liverpool Echo *October 13, 1944*

Liverpool In Holland

Lieutenant Tony Flack, of 40 Blundell Drive, Birkdale, Lancashire, is a liaison officer attached to a brigade of the 53rd Welsh Division now fighting in Holland. He is a graduate of Liverpool University. Throughout the fighting in France, Belgium and Holland he has met only one other Liverpool University man—a German sergeant-major. The latter was just about to move off with 400 other prisoners when he noticed Lieutenant Flack's shoulder titles. "I know Lancashire—I was at Liverpool University," he said. He had a date with a P.O.W. cage; otherwise Lieutenant Flack could have continued the conversation.

During the fighting in and around ‘s-Hertogenbosch on 26 October 1944, Tony was wounded in the leg and right hand and subsequently evacuated to England.

[2] In 2009, Rory Bremner was the subject of the series “Who Do You Think You Are?” in a quest to research about his father, whom he barely knew. His father had served in the 1st Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment during the Second World War and was often away from home. Bremner travelled to 's-Hertogenbosch, the Dutch city liberated by the East Lancs, amongst other places to retrace his father's footsteps.


1. Expeditionary Forces (Contd.)

(e) North West Europe (Contd.)

Wounded (Contd.)

East Lancashire Regiment

FLACK W/Lt. B.A. 276881

Casual

26.10.44

Just three days after he was wounded, in a letter home from 108 (Br) [Army] General Hospital in Belgium dated 29 October 1944, Tony states that "I got rather too close to a bursting shell and the only permanent damage will be the loss of my right thumb, forefinger and most of my little figure. Evan that, according to the doctor who operated on me this morning can be put right by plastic surgery."

Tony's son, William contributed the following account of his visit to 's-Hertogenbosch with his father, Tony and mother Jean in 1994:

> *I did go to Holland with both parents. That was in October 1994. During that time we met the woman who had been the girl who was injured at the same time as him in 1944 when she and her brother had been talking to him. A German shell had exploded in a tree above them and they had been hit by shrapnel. Her brother was killed. My father and I also went to the spot where the shell exploded. We found the tree which was still showing signs of damage 50 years on. We asked a passing elderly man if this was the tree where a German shell had exploded in 1994 to which he replied rather tersely "Yes, Yes, we all know this story."*
>
> *The trip to Holland was very interesting. I remember thinking that I was very fortunate to be able to meet the veterans and discuss the historical events which they had witnessed. One of the older participants had been in France in 1940 and still seemed more angry with the French for having thrown in the towel than he was with the Germans for invading. We also visited Arnhem, which was a surprisingly short drive from Den Bosh and were very moved by the cemetery there and how very young so many of those buried there had been when they died. My father was moved to tears.*

In early 1945, Tony transferred to the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in England.

He appears in this undated unit photograph wearing the cap badge of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and a "wound strip" on his sleeve.

Badge of the East Lancashire Regiment **'s-Hertogenbosch Memorial Medal**
Badge of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

In the period immediately after the war in Germany that Lt Bertram Anthony Flack attended the German Language Course conducted by the Army Intelligence Corps in the British Army of the Rhine (BOAR).

Lt "Tony" Flack took his discharge from the British Army in 1946 and returned to Liverpool University to complete his law degree in June 1947. The following is a transcript from the University Alumni database.

Title	First Name	Middle Name	Surname	Former Name	Subject	Year	
Mr	Bertram	Anthony	**Flack**		Law	1947	
Mr	Henry	Edmund Douglas	**Flack**		Medicine & Surgery	1941	

In early 1948, Bertram Anthony Flack was admitted to the newly established Commonwealth Relations Office in London and later that year on 16 October 1948 he married Jean Winifred Mellor, the daughter of John Victor Mellor (1899-1990) and Winfred Illingworth (1900-1944) at Southport.

FIV-FLA 362

MARRIAGES REGISTERED IN OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1948.

Names of persons married.		District.	Vol.	Page.
Flack, -- Bertram A.	Mellor	Southport	10 f	1145

Tony was formally appointed to the Foreign Office from 1st January 1950

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 28 JULY, 1953

p. 4133

Foreign Office, 27th July, 1953.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to appoint the undermentioned gentlemen to be Officers of Branch A of Her Majesty's Foreign Service, with effect from the dates specified after their names:—

David Nowill Royce, Esquire (12th September, 1949).
Bertram Anthony Flack, Esquire (1st January, 1950).
Peregrine Alexander Rhodes, Esquire (31st January, 1950).

After a short training course in 1948, Tony was appointed as Third Secretary Karachi, East Pakistan. His new bride, Jean, followed Tony to Pakistan from London by ship on 25 November 1948 aboard P&O liner "Strathaird". The passenger lists indicate that Jean travelled alone.

Form No. 1910/329b. P.M.21

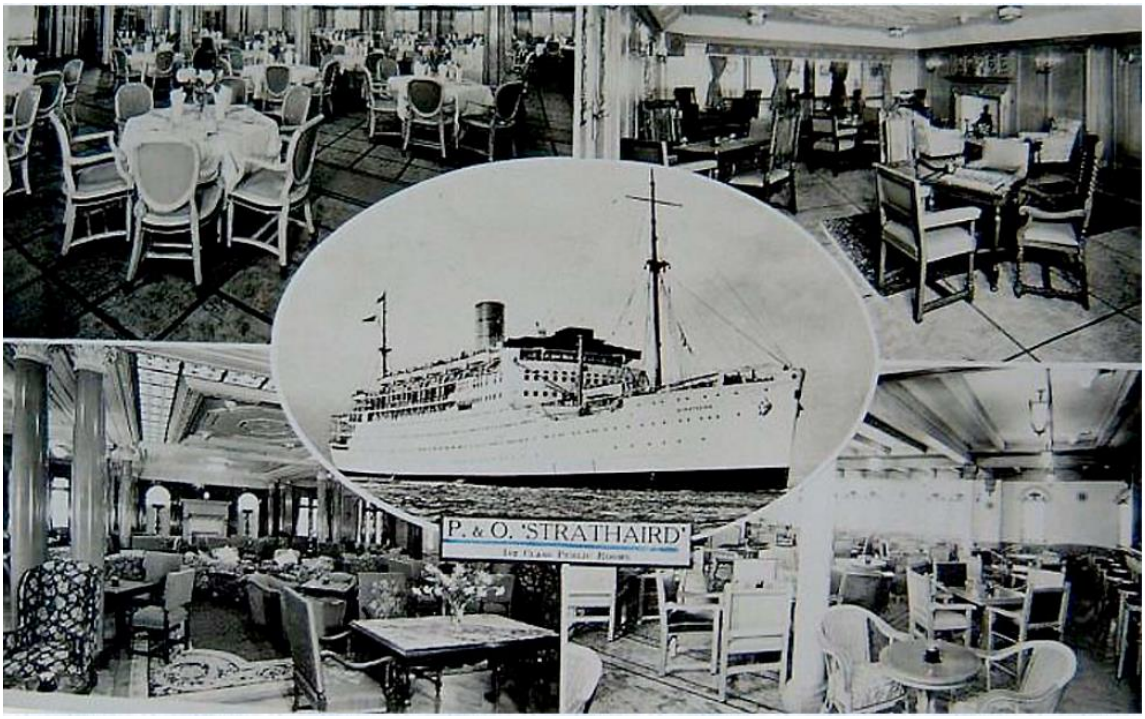
Name of Ship "STRATHAIRD" Page 9. *Date of Departure* 25th November, 1948.

Steamship Line—P. & O. *Where Bound* SYDNEY

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS EMBARKED AT THE PORT OF LONDON

(1) Contract Ticket Number.	(2) Port at which Passengers have contracted to land.	(3) NAMES OF PASSENGERS.	(4) CLASS (whether 1st, 2nd, Tourist or 3rd)	(5) AGES OF PASSENGERS: Adults of 12 years and upwards. Accompanied by Husband or Wife. Males	Females	Not Accompanied by Husband or Wife. Males	Females	Children between 1 and 12. Males	Females	Infants. Males	Females	(6) Last Address in the United Kingdom.	(7) Profession, Occupation or Calling of Passengers.	(8) Country of Last Permanent Residence.* England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Eire	British Possessions	Foreign Countries	(9) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence.*
	Bombay	FLACK, Jean Winifred	27384 "			22						-do- 28, Ashton Road, Hillside, Southport.	Housewife "	1						1	" Pakistan

The SS Strathaird travelled via the Suez Canal, Bombay and Columbo and onwards to Australia so it is assumed that Jean would have transferred to another ship at Columbo for her onward passage to Karachi in East Pakistan.

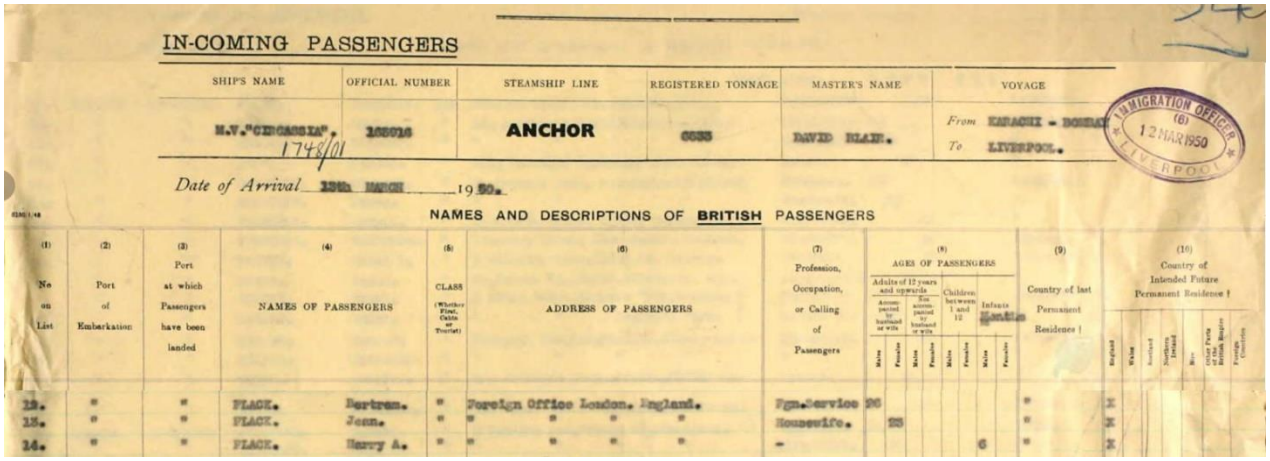


In July 1949[3], Harry Anthony John Flack, Tony and Jean's first child, was born in Karachi.

F L A - F L O UNITED KINGDOM HIGH COMMISSIONER
BIRTH INDEX PRIOR TO YEAR 1946

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF BIRTH	VOLUME/ TYPE OF POST	PAGE
FLACK HARRY A J	KARACHI	1949	1	277

Tony, Jean and their six-month-old son, Harry, returned to Liverpool from Pakistan aboard MV Circassia on 13 March 1950. After brief home leave, the family left for Egypt where in 1950, Bertram Anthony Flack was appointed 3rd Secretary Alexandria. He served until 1952 when the family returned to England for Tony's new post at the Foreign Office in London.



IN-COMING PASSENGERS

SHIP'S NAME	OFFICIAL NUMBER	STEAMSHIP LINE	REGISTERED TONNAGE	MASTER'S NAME	VOYAGE
M.V."CIRCASSIA". 1748/01	165016	ANCHOR	6633	DAVID BLAIR.	From KARACHI - BOMBAY To LIVERPOOL.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (8) 12 MAR 1950 LIVERPOOL

Date of Arrival 13th MARCH 1950.

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS

(1) No on List	(2) Port of Embarkation	(3) Port at which Passengers have been landed	(4) NAMES OF PASSENGERS		(5) CLASS (Whether First, Cabin or Tourist)	(6) ADDRESS OF PASSENGERS	(7) Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers	(8) AGES OF PASSENGERS: Adults of 12 years and upwards, Accompanied by husband or wife, Male	Adults, Accompanied by husband or wife, Female	Adults, Not accompanied by husband or wife, Male	Adults, Not accompanied by husband or wife, Female	Children between 1 and 12, Male	Children between 1 and 12, Female	Infants under 1 year, Male	Infants under 1 year, Female	(9) Country of last Permanent Residence †	(10) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence †	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Eire	Other Parts of the British Empire	Foreign Countries
12.	"	"	FLACK.	Bertram.	"	Foreign Office London. England.	Fgn.Service	36								"		X						
13.	"	"	FLACK.	Jean.	"	" " " "	Housewife.		25							"		X						
14.	"	"	FLACK.	Harry A.	"	" " " "	-							6		"		X						

[3] The dates of births and marriages for those known not to be deceased are omitted for privacy reasons.

In September 1951 Victoria Jane Flack was born in Alexandria, Egypt

42

FIN-FOK INDEX TO CONSULAR BIRTHS - 1951-1954.

Name.	Consulate.	Vol.	Page.
FLACK, Victoria J.	ALEXANDRIA	45	442

Foreign Office records indicate that Bertram Anthony Flack was appointed Second Secretary and later First Secretary Stockholm in 1955.

Whilst serving in Stockholm, Tony and Jean learned of the death of Tony's mother Alice Mary Flack, nee Cockshutt (1890-1955) on 8th July 1955 in Southport, Lancashire.

In 1958, Tony was appointed First Secretary in Accra, Ghana and returned to the Foreign Office, London briefly in 1960 from Lagos aboard MV Aureol to Liverpool with Jean and Victoria aboard.

COMING PASSENGERS

P.M.2B.
Second Schedule

Name of Ship R.M.M.V. "AUREOL".

Date of Arrival 21st March 1960.

Owner or Agent Elder Dempster Lines, Ltd.

Whence Arrived Lagos Via Las Palmas.

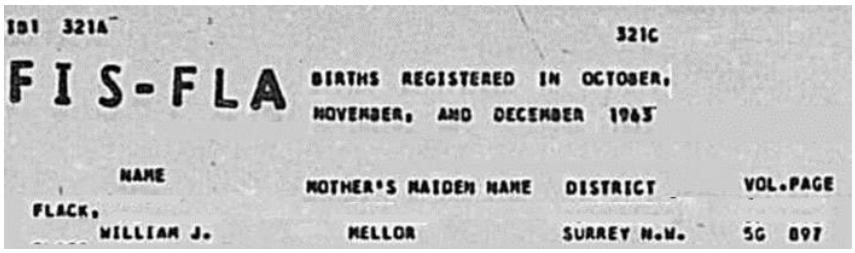
NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND IRISH REPUBLICAN PASSENGERS LANDED AT THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL.

(1) Names of passengers (Surname first)	(2) Class of Travel	(3) Port of Embarkation	(4) Sex (M. or F.)	(5) Date of Birth: Adults of 12 years and over	(5) Date of Birth: Children between 1 and 12 years	(5) Date of Birth: Infants under 1 year	(6) Married or Single (Widowed or divorced to be entered as single)	(7) Address in the United Kingdom	(8) Occupation (i.e. Profession, calling, or kind of work done rather than industry in which engaged)	(9) Country of which a citizen as shown on passport. (If citizen of U.K. and Colonies state also country of issue of passport)	(10) Country of last permanent residence* (Residence for more than 12 months)	(11) Country of intended future permanent residence* (Residence for more than 12 months)	(12) If visiting the United Kingdom for 12 months or less: Intended duration of the stay in	(12) If visiting the United Kingdom for 12 months or less: Chief purpose of
171. FLACK. Bertram. Anthony.	1st	"	M	3.2.24	-		M	40, Blundell Drive, Kirkdale. Lancashire.	1st Secretary, UK. High Comm:	UK-Stockholm	-do-	-do-	3mths.	V
172. FLACK. Jean. Winifred.	1st	"	F	22.7.26			M	-do-	Housewife.	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	V
173. FLACK. Victoria. Jane.	1st	"	F		2.9.51		S	-do-	Daughter.	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	V

On 22 December 1961, Tony's father, Dr Frederick Henry Douglas Flack, known as "Harry" died at Hesketh Nursing Home in Southport, Lancashire. Tony was appointed trustee of his father's estate. (Dr Harry Flack's oldest son, Henry Edmund Douglas, known as ""Douglas" Flack (1917-1985) was at that time living in Australia.)

FLACK Frederick Henry of 40 Blundell Drive Southport **Lancashire** died 22 December 1961 at Hesketh Nursing Home 14 Park Avenue Southport Probate **London** 19 March to Bertram Anthony Flack officer of H.M. Foreign Service and Harry Nicholas Roberts solicitor. Effects £49517.

The family remained in England until Tony was appointed Consul in Johannesburg in 1964. Meanwhile Tony and Jean's second son, William James had been born in Surrey in October 1963.



1D1 321A			321C
FIS-FLA	BIRTHS REGISTERED IN OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, AND DECEMBER 1963		
NAME	MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME	DISTRICT	VOL.PAGE
FLACK, WILLIAM J.	MELLOR	SURREY N.W.	5G 897

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 22ND DECEMBER 1964

21st December 1964. **10935**

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to appoint, with effect from the dates respectively indicated:

Bertram Anthony Flack, Esquire, to be Her Majesty's Consul at Johannesburg (12th October 1964);

Tony and Jean's second daughter, Sarah Jean Flack was born in July 1965 in Johannesburg.

Tony was promoted Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca, East Pakistan in 1967 but served only about a year there before returning to London as an Inspector Diplomatic Service in 1968.

> *In June 1967, the author, Tony's nephew, visited the High Commission in Dacca on his way back to Australia from visiting Edmund's parents and Tony's brother (Dr Henry Edmund Douglas (1917-1985) and Barbara Flack (1915-1979) in England.*
>
> *Tony invited Edmund to join he and Aunty Jean at a diplomatic function that was being held at the High Commission that evening. Edmund was introduced to six guests on his table including an Indian-born doctor and his wife. The doctor's wife was dressed in a Burka and did not speak through most of the meal. The meal was very grand with all the diplomatic silverware on display and uniformed staff serving the tables. Later during the meal, the doctor and I were talking about rugby songs when the Doctor turned to his wife and said, "You probably know that song don't you?" To my great surprise she answered in a very cultured English accent "Oh yes. I heard that song when I was at Oxford"! It was quite a surprise and Uncle Tony and I later had a chuckle about it.*

In 1971, Tony was promoted to be the Head of the Communications Department of the Commonwealth Office and served years two years before being posted to Stockholm, Sweden in 1973 as Counsellor. He subsequently served at the Canadian National Defence College in 1975 and Minister in the High Commission in Ottawa, Canada in 1976.

Photograph of Tony and Jean and their four children taken in the garden at their home in Ottawa, Canada in 1978

In 1979 Tony was awarded the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George in the Queen's Honours list.

C.M.G.

To be Ordinary Members of the Third Class or Companions, of the said Most Distinguished Order :

Bertram Anthony FLACK, British Deputy High Commissioner, Ottawa.

His final posting before his retirement was as British High Commissioner in Kampala, the capital of Uganda from 1979 until November 1980.

Bertram Anthony Flack had received several foreign awards as well as his service medals.

Unknown Swedish Medal

Unknown Egyptian Medal

Tony and Jean retired in 1981 and lived in the Isle of Man, being recorded in the Electoral Registers in 2002 and 2003 as living at Ripple Cottage, Douglas Street, Castletown, IM9 1AY.

Jean suffered a brain aneurysm and then a stroke in 1990 and despite being was confined to a wheelchair, continued to live at home with the support of Tony and their children. She died in 2008.

Tony died on 16th February 2009 in the Isle of Man, Tony and Jean are buried together in Kirk Malew Church Graveyard.

Telegraphannouncements

Bertram Anthony (Tony) aged 85 years (formerly of H.M. Diplomatic Service), on Monday 16th February 2009, peacefully on the Isle of Man. Beloved husband of the late Jean, dear father of Harry, Vicky, William and Sarah and a much loved father-in-law and grandfather. Enquiries please to Cringle & Co. Ltd. (01624) 833602.

Author's Comment:

I have very happy memories of my Uncle Tony's visits with our family in Southport and later in Aldershot in the early 1950s. I remember him for his happy expressive face as he told us children's stories and played with my sister Sarah and I.

I remember my father telling us of Uncle Tony's struggle to learn to write again after his right hand had been wounded in the war. My father said he was amazed with the style and neatness of his brother's newly learned handwriting.