

*Edward Ashdown Bunyard:
a Biographical Essay*

EDWARD WILSON

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast-days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
“About this time,” or “shortly after this.”

John Masefield, ‘Biography’,

Philip the King and Other Poems (London, 1914)

One date in Edward Bunyard’s life, and on which we can be precise, can still be recognized by us as a ‘golden hour’, a feast day kept by the whole family: the centenary of the founding of the firm of Bunyard by James Bunyard on 16 September 1796. A Centenary Show was held at the Corn Exchange in Maidstone on Tuesday and Wednesday 15 and 16 September 1896, and the celebration began shortly after one o’clock on Tuesday, 15 September with the playing of the National Anthem by the Bijou Orchestra, after which George Bunyard, the head of the firm, entertained the judges and officials, editors of horticultural magazines, friends and gardeners, at a luncheon in the Mechanics’ Hall. After George Bunyard had proposed ‘The Health of the Queen, Prince and Princess

of Wales and the Royal Family’, a toast he said he thought particularly appropriate as he was the holder of the Royal Warrant, the speeches began.¹ One element in George Bunyard’s address was charged with significance for both him and his seventeen year-old son Edward, and which the *Gardeners’ Magazine* reported thus:

He felt he could not say all that it was in his heart to say, ... Mr. Bunyard concluded by stating that his son had that day come into the business, as the first of the fourth generation of Bunyards.

(XXXIX, no. 2238, 19 September 1896, p. 648)

In addition to the luncheon for some 60 to 70 guests (*Journal of Horticulture*, XXXIII (3rd series), no. 2503, 17 September 1896, p. 268), there was a magnificent exhibition, both competitive and non-competitive, in the Corn Exchange of fruit, vegetables and flowers. What impressed all correspondents who described the Show was the Fruit Trophy Car, for all the world like a Roman triumphal cart or Renaissance *trionfo*, designed to instruct, delight, honour and celebrate. Its iconic significance merits quotation of the fullest account of it in the *Kent Messenger* (19 September 1896, p. 6):

The principal attraction was undoubtedly a reproduction of the “Fruit trophy car,” which was placed in the centre of the Corn Exchange, and which formed a conspicuous feature in the Lord Mayor’s show of 1893. The car, which was shown by permission of the Worshipful Court and Company of Fruiterers, was designed by Mr. Bunyard, and carried out by Messrs. Wallis and Sons, and Mr. Martin, of Middle-row, assisted by the staff of the Nurseries. The sides of the car were hidden beneath red, green and white cloth with silver fringe. Upon one side was inscribed “God giveth the increase [a translation of the second motto of the Fruiterers’ Company,

¹ *Kent Messenger*, 19 September 1896, p. 6. Other accounts of the Centenary Show which I have consulted are: *The Gardeners’ Magazine*, XXXIX, no. 2238, 19 September 1896, pp. 647–8; *Journal of Horticulture*, XXXIII (3rd series), no. 2503, 17 September 1896, pp. 267–8; *The Garden*, L, no. 1296, 19 September 1896, pp. 238–9; *The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, XX (3rd series), no. 508, 19 September 1896, p. 343.

Deus dat incrementum],” and on the other “Britain can grow her own fruit.” Surmounting the trophy were the words “Ye Fruiterers’ Companie,” and in an oblique position numerous baskets of the choicest apples and pears were displayed to great advantage on either side of the car. As a conspicuous centre piece were large bunches of luscious black grapes, peaches, etc., and from the summit to the four corners two lines of apples, separated by tomatoes, were carried with pleasing effect. The light woodwork above the car was neatly treated, whilst the names of the four principal fruit-growing counties – Kent, Devon, Hereford, Somerset – were prominently displayed. Other fruits, etc., were introduced to fill up the minor positions, and the whole combined produced a trophy which must be seen in order to fully appreciate its beauty and artistic arrangements. Around the car Messrs. Bunyard exhibited a large assortment of apples and pears. A collection of geraniums of various colours evoked much admiration, and amongst the numerous varieties shown was a new zonal geranium. Handsome lilliums, maidenhair ferns, and other plants were advantageously displayed in this group. A third exhibit in the centre of the hall was that of hardy flowers, shrubs and plants, with grapes, apples and pears growing in pots. The gladiolus, asters and roses were of pretty hues, and the new giant violets, “Princess de Galles,” were universally admired.

The Garden gives details of the varieties of fruit in the car:

... some of the very best fruits ever staged; the base was built up of pyramids of the best kinds of fruit, the centre Pears and Apples, the ends Peaches, Grapes, Figs. The whole was relieved with small plants of various kinds, the Pernettyas and various berried plants being most effective. The whole was festooned with Grapes and wreathed with small fruits in variety. Mention must be made of the grand dishes of fruit, the Pears most noticeable being Dr. Jules Guyot, Beurré Mortillet, Doyenné Boussoch, Clapp’s Favourite, and Pitmaston Duchess. Apples made a grand show and were superb as regards colour. Duchess of Oldenburg, Duchess, Cox’s Orange, Ribston, and other dessert kinds were very fine, and the cooking varieties were extra large and in great quantities, many of them seedlings not in commerce. At each end of the trophy were large collections of plants from the firm, with a fine group of fruit trees in pots, the colour of the fruit being noticeable.

We have seldom seen such *Mère de Ménage*, Emperor Alexander and Cox's Pomona Apples as seen on pot trees here. Cordon Pears, a fine collection of small Fig trees in 10-inch pots, excellent pot Vines (Hamburgh and Foster's Seedling), with baskets of small fruits were also included.

(L, no. 1296, 19 September 1896, pp. 238–9)

In this setting of such sumptuous magnificence did EAB hear his father (1841–1919) extolled. He had entered the family firm on 5 September 1855, eventually easing out his father, Thomas (c. 1804–80), and, after a period of partnership with his brother Tom which did not go well, he 'was obliged to make him bankrupt' in 1880 – though these details, which are from George Bunyard's *The History of the Bunyard Firm from 1796 to 1911* (published privately, Maidstone, 1911),² naturally did not make it to the speeches. However, he cleared all debts, expanded the acreage from 20 to 100 (*Journal of Horticulture*, 17 September 1896, p. 268), and as he himself put it in his *History*:

Once free, fortune seemed to smile on my efforts, and in 1880, I was placed on the Fruit Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society ... In 1883, I was one of the chiefs at the Apple Conference at Chiswick ... I was Chairman of the Edinburgh Fruit Conference in 1886. The first edition of "Fruit Farming for Profit" was printed in 1881 ... The Fruiterers' Company, later on, 1896, honoured me by presenting me with the Freedom of the City of London, for the active part I took in the Great Fruit Show, held in the Guildhall, London [in 1890]. A Certificate was presented to me in the Mansion House by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, 1891 ... (pp. 22–3)

² The only surviving copy of this work which I know of is in The Centre for Kentish Studies, Sessions House, Maidstone (shelf mark U1945, Z1/1; a photostat of this is U1945, Z1/2). The printed dedication reads: 'I dedicate this private [underlined in ink twice] family history to my eight children. George Bunyard, V.M.H. Maidstone, February, 1911.' On the last page (32) it is signed 'George Bunyard', and the same hand has inscribed the front with the name of one of his daughters, 'Janet Bunyard'.

At the Centenary Show the young Edward heard John Wright, acting-editor of the *Journal of Horticulture*, proposing 'The Health of the Chairman', say that:

Mr. Bunyard, jun., was to join the firm that day, and he heartily wished them a long period of prosperity. It was Mr. Bunyard's attention to business that had made him what he was, and he had done very much for the fruit industry of this country (applause). He bore an honoured name, which was known far beyond the confines of this land, because he was at the head of one of the largest and most important fruit-growing tree establishments in the world (applause). (*Kent Messenger*, 19 September 1896, p. 6)

Nor would Edward think that he was the son of a man resting on his laurels: the acreage continued to expand, and other books and other honours (such as the Victoria Medal of Honour in 1897 and the Mastership of the Fruiterers' Company in 1906) were to follow.

On this splendid and overwhelming occasion the concerts, which were part of the celebration, must have been a steadying and calming contribution. According to the *Kent Messenger*:

The concerts took place in the Concert Hall, where the platform had been prettily decorated for the occasion. In the afternoon and evening of each day the Bijou Orchestra, conducted by Mr. J. C. Lomas, A.C.V., discoursed a capital selection of music, which included solos for the piccolo, viola, cornet, trombone, and clarionet. Mr. Dennis Lamb's Choral Class was present each evening and rendered some attractive vocal music. Mr. D. Lamb officiated as conductor, and Mr. F. Gilbert Lamb as accompanist. Besides a number of part songs by the Class, Mrs. F.S. Spender, Miss Haywood, Miss and Messrs. Lamb delighted the audiences with their quartettes, trios, and songs, which were heartily applauded and much appreciated.

Both George and Edward Bunyard were keen amateur musicians. In a portrait of George Bunyard the *Journal of Horticulture* records that for 40 years he was a 'bass singer in Maidstone Church choirs and choral societies' (LX, 3rd series, no. 3205, 3 March 1910, p. 198), and it is improbable that Edward's enthusiasm for music had not begun to show itself by the age of seventeen.

A biographical sketch of him in the *Gardeners' Magazine* says that:

His chief hobby is music, and he acts as accompanist to the Maidstone Choral Union. Of this society he has been secretary since its institution in 1903, and it is in no small measure due to his skill that the society won the championship for Kentish societies, and in 1909 won the "Daily Telegraph" shield at the South London Musical Festival. (LV, no. 3036, 6 January 1912, p. 2)

Thus was Edward Bunyard inducted into the firm in its centenary year, along with, we may add, the commercial introduction of the Allington Pippin apple.³ At the time, the occasion must indeed have seemed, in Masfield's words, 'gated by golden moments' ('Biography'). When 43 years later, haunted by the bankruptcy from which his father had saved the firm, he put a revolver to his temple, it must rather have appeared a scene from which the visionary gleam had fled, its bright hope now mocked by a dark despair, a reproof for the *dégringolade* he felt he had brought about.

Understanding how this fall had happened should probably involve not just a consideration of Edward Bunyard's own life, but an examination of what looks almost a genetic disposition to bankruptcy and financial mismanagement; indeed, as EAB delivered a paper at the Third International Conference on Genetics in 1906, the idea of failure, in Philip Larkin's words on a shied apple core

spreading back up the arm
 Earlier and earlier, the unraised hand calm,
 The apple unbitten in the palm,

(‘As Bad as a Mile’)

³ This apple, a cross between Cox's Orange and King of the Pippins, was first raised by W. & J. Brown of Stamford as South Lincoln Beauty, and it received a Royal Horticultural Society First Class Certificate on 13 November 1894 (see *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, XVII (1894-5), pp. clxvi-clxvii); George Bunyard, in his 'New Fruits of Recent Introduction' read at the Second Annual Great Exhibition of, and Conference on, British-Grown Fruit at the Crystal Palace in September 1895, said that as there were already several Lincoln Pippins, it had been re-named the Allington Pippin (see *JRHS*, XIX (1895-6), 257-69, p. 258).

is a notion which is perhaps not anachronistic even in Bunyard's own categories of thought. Certainly in his ancestry there is what appears an astonishing number of instances of financial incompetence and an inability to handle money in a prudent, competent, and business-like way. Though the evidence comes from George Bunyard's *History* of the firm (see n. 2), a private account written from his perspective only, it is hard to believe that there can be other than a factual basis for much of what is asserted.⁴

The founder of the firm, James Bunyard (d. 1844), had, besides two daughters, three sons: James (the eldest), Thomas (George Bunyard's father; Edward's grandfather), and Charles. Of James, George writes:

James (Uncle Jim) ran through seven thousand pounds in cash, gifts and loans, from Grandfather, and then became a drag on Father till he died under my care, (*History*, p. 9)

and of Charles:

Charles was a handsome, dressy man, he was quite domineering in his manner, and having married money with his wife (Miss Bodman), kept a carriage and pair in London, and did the swagger, but unfortunately lived beyond his means, and committing forgery (at that time a hanging offence, I believe), bolted – no one knew where – and was never heard of again. (p.8)

James Bunyard's second son, Thomas, though neither a wastrel nor a flamboyant crook, simply lacked energy and crisp financial control:

⁴ The anonymous [but presumably by EAB] 4-page pamphlet, *The House of Bunyard 1796–1919* (no place or date stated), published on 'the lamented death of our late principal, Mr. George Bunyard', being addressed to 'our customers' is naturally much blander and less frank than GB's *History*; for the location of copies see the Bibliography, s.v. *Pamphlets*. Also worth consulting is the well-illustrated 3-part article by Alan Major, 'The Bunyards of Kent', Part One, *Bygone Kent*, XII no. 3 (March 1991), 176–81; Part Two, *ibid.*, XII no. 4 (April 1991), 228–32; Part Three, *ibid.*, XII no. 5 (May 1991), 275–80; it has a few slips.

Looking back, I can now see that it was more owing to the energy, hard work, and household economy practised by my Mother, than to Father's exertions, that we boys owe what education we had; and her saving ways tided Father over a very difficult time, which as a child I did not fully recognise until I came into the business at 14 years old in 1855. Father was what may be called a worthy man, with no failings, honorable and respected, but he wanted that gift of leading and foresight so needful in our business, and contracted the habit of trusting those about him in both the selling and buying, more than any master should. His health inclined him more to retirement and taking things easy than to any sustained effort in a business direction. (p. 11)

George (born 5 February 1841) had four brothers: Thomas (Tom), the eldest; John Butler (Jack); Frederick; and Harry. Though George had entered the firm in 1855, Tom 'unfortunately did not get on with his parents, and ructions were frequent, so that he had to take work away' (p. 16). He remained keen as the eldest son to come into the family business, 'but again his want of tact, and readiness to make a row, prevented this, and so he returned to London [where he was with various seed and florist firms, p. 13] until 1863' (p. 17), when 'Father took Tom and myself into partnership, under the name of Thos. Bunyard & Sons' (p. 17), Tom working land at Ashford and George at Maidstone. Though at first things went well, 'Father had ceased to take any garden papers or periodicals; thus we fell behind the times. (p. 17) ... After a few years Father was unable to do much, and would not second our endeavours; so that I drew up an agreement whereby he retired, and Tom and I jointly agreed to pay him £150 a year, and to continue this to Mother and sister Mary Ann for their joint lives' (p. 18). Then, however, Tom had a very serious illness, and George:

had to go to and fro to manage for him, and found the Ashford books kept in a very slipshod way, and he was much annoyed at my setting them right, but we got on pretty comfortably, except [a significant 'except'] that Tom never carried out any agreement as to territory, paying for goods, or the up-keep of Father, always quoting as a grievance that I had the "Homestall" [i.e. Maidstone whereas Tom had new territory at Ashford]. His wife was extravagant and trouble began to brew. To extend Tom's trade at Ashford

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we bought fifteen acres at Willesborough. I raised other loans for Tom; but even then matters did not equalise. (p. 18)

At this point the youngest brother Harry's financial folly dealt a terrible blow. He had borrowed a large sum from a George Smeed, of Sittingbourne, who had 'egged him on and discounted his paper at 2½ %, till he got him in a hole, and then made it 10%' (p. 19). George and the other brothers were involved financially in trying to sort matters out, but the crash came in 1879–80, 'and in consequence of Harry's failure the old firm had to go into liquidation, pulling down Jack in London, and crippling Fred [a bookseller, stationer, and printer], but he managed to get through; Harry, like a coward, "bunked" to Spain' (p. 19).

George behaved generously to Tom:

I gave Tom the Ashford business with the book debts and stock as his portion, free from debt, and, had he then lived within his income, all would have been well; alas! he did not do so, and, after several years of bother and help, I was obliged to make him bankrupt. (p. 20)

None the less, as is often the way, Tom and his family were resentful, and considered that George had 'behaved shabbily', a charge that he vigorously denied:

Well, after lending him no end of cash and supplying stock at half-price, he [Tom] actually sent a lot of trees to be sold in Maidstone Market under my nose, contrary to our agreement. This decided me; even then I paid for his furniture to be sent to St. Leonard's, where his wife took a swell boarding house [echoes of the scorn for his Uncle Charles who 'did the swagger'], and even then I helped him at times. Can you wonder then that I refused to allow his family to be friendly with mine or me; and I could recite many other hard facts to justify my conduct.⁵ (p. 21)

⁵ Thomas Bunyard's bankruptcy was listed in *The Times*, 3 February 1892, p. 10 col. f: Thomas Bunyard, Ashford and Willesborough, Kent, nurseryman. *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, under the headline 'Golden Wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bunyard', is wonderfully unaware of all this, recalling that 'Many of our readers will remember the

Being a fourth generation of Bunyard was in many respects a *damnosa hereditas*. James (junior) was a wastrel, Charles and his nephew Harry each fled from financial disgrace, and both Thomas senior and Tom junior were without any business acumen or regimen. That Edward Bunyard should have died bankrupt, his suicide being the extremest form of Charles's 'bolting' and Harry's 'bunking', is not surprising. The surprise is that his father should have been such a hard-working, ambitious, successful, and necessarily ruthless nurseryman who recovered from a £12,000 loss (*History*, p. 22) to establish a large, prosperous, and world-famous firm; interestingly, when Thomas Bunyard took George and Tom into the Company it became Thos. Bunyard & Sons (see above), as it had earlier been James Bunyard & Son, but even when George died, and the firm was run by Edward and Norman Bunyard, it remained (as it did until its close in the 1960s) George Bunyard and Co. Yet Hamlet's words hover in the mind, that 'virtue cannot so inoculate [appropriately, in the old horticultural sense of 'engraft'] our old stock, but we shall relish of it'. Edward Bunyard achieved much as a nurseryman and grower of fruit and roses, pomologist, antiquarian bibliophile, and writer on gastronomic subjects, but Fred Stoker's elegiac words in his obituary have a sombre and sable significance when seen as part of a ruinous inheritance from his great-uncles James and Charles, his grandfather Thomas, and his uncles Tom and Harry:

he never struck me as bearing the insignia of a business man. His cheerful equanimity, breadth of vision and mellow wisdom spoke rather of the scholar than the trader; his gentle tact and conversational range indicated contact with literature rather than with balance-sheets.

(*Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London*, 152nd session (1939–40), Part 4 (1940), p. 362)⁶

pleasantly written and instructive articles on nursery management [*sic*] and propagation contributed to these columns some years ago by Mr. THOMAS BUNYARD, over the nom de plume "Experience" [*sic*], and recording that 'Mr. THOMAS BUNYARD many years ago was in partnership with his brother, Mr. GEORGE BUNYARD, of the Royal Nurseries, Maidstone, and since those days has filled several appointments with other firms' (LV, no. 1434, 20 June 1914, pp. 440–1).

⁶ Bunyard presented a copy of his *The Epicure's Companion* (1937) to Fred Stoker, and it is now in the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society (Case 641.5; Shelf

Thus freighted, the journey to this sad catastrophe had begun on 14 December 1878 when Edward Ashdown Bunyard was born at 74 King Street, Maidstone. His second name was from his mother, Katharine Sophia Ashdown, daughter of Charles Ashdown, a paper-maker of Mereworth in Kent. She had married, aged 22, George Bunyard, then 32, nurseryman of Maidstone, on 3 June 1873. George's father, Thomas, was more grandly described on the marriage certificate as 'Gentleman', suggesting a certain social aspiration and bearing out the son's belief that his father was not cut out for 'trade' (though in fairness it should be remembered that George had probably eased his father out of the firm by 1873, and so he was no longer an active nurseryman; see above). Indeed, even the business-like George thought it worth recording in his *History* that his mother 'was a Butler and a direct descendant of Rollo, the uncle of William the Conqueror, as our family tree shows' (pp. 10–11; the family tree is in *The Centre for Kentish Studies, Sessions House, Maidstone; shelfmark U1945, Z3*).

There were ten children, though two boys died in infancy:

1. George Pierson (30 March 1874 – 25 January 1883).
2. Lorna Frances (20 August 1876 – 27 May 1963).
3. Katharine Mary (4 November 1877 – 24 March 1963).
4. Edward Ashdown (14 December 1878 – 19 October 1939).
5. Norman Philip (29 September 1880 – 5 February 1883).
6. Janet (11 July 1882 – 29 June 1958).
7. Richard Geoffrey (19 August 1883 – 6 June 1973).
8. Frances Lucy Butler (15 August 1884 – 22 September 1982).
9. George Norman (21 October 1886 – 9 February 1969).
10. Marguerite Eveline (11 July 1890 – 14 May 1959).

George Pierson died first on 25 January 1883, aged 8, from bronchitis and measles which he had suffered for 13 and 12 days respectively (Death Certificate); Norman Philip died a little later on 5 February 1883 from

Bun); Stoker's obituary of Bunyard justifies the inscription: 'To F. Stoker / Scriptor sapiens / E A Bunyard'. There is an admiring review of *The Epicure's Companion* by F.S., who must be Fred Stoker (c. 1879–1943), in *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, CII (3rd series), no. 2657, 27 November 1937, pp. 397–8.

whooping cough, capillary bronchitis, and exhaustion (Death Certificate). Though in September 1896 Edward had been 'the first of the fourth generation of Bunyards', he had not been born the eldest boy.

Of his childhood we know nothing except that the *Kent Messenger* in its report of his death says that 'he was educated privately, as he was a delicate boy' (21 October 1939, p. 4). His books show him as prodigiously well-read (see below the chapter 'Edward Bunyard and Literature'), and this literary predilection must have begun in childhood. No university education followed for, as we have seen, he entered the family firm in 1896 at the age of 17.

In a wireless broadcast entitled 'Novelties from the Kitchen Garden' in the 'In Your Garden' series of the Radio Gardener, C. H. Middleton, Sunday 2 April, 1939, 2.00 – 2.20 p.m., Bunyard told Middleton that 'I suppose I can date my first adventures among vegetables to the year 1900 when I went to live in France. My hosts were an old couple and Marie the cook. All cooks were called Marie in France at that time'.⁷ He must have been 21 when he went, but how long he spent there is not recorded; *The Gardeners' Chronicle* obituary says, 'As a young man, Mr. Bunyard spent some time in France, where he studied French nursery practice and became a fluent speaker of the French language' (CVI (3rd series), no. 2757, 28 October 1939, p. 274). His knowledge of France, its horticulture, food, and wine, was profound. His last article in *Wine and Food*, 'A Few Meals in France', begins:

'Come and stay here,' said my friend B [Basil Leng: see my 'Edward Bunyard by the Mediterranean', *The Mediterranean Garden*, no. 38, October 2004, 5–14, pp. 8–10; and also later in this chapter], who lives on the Cap d'Antibes, 'the roses are out and the orange blossom, too.' Who could resist such an invitation? – and I knew that the nightingales would also be singing.' (VI.23, Autumn 1939, p. 223)

⁷ Copy of a typescript supplied by the British Broadcasting Corporation, Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading; the last Bunyardian humorous sentence was omitted from the version printed in *The Listener*, XXI, no. 534, 6 April 1939, p. 749. For other surviving texts of broadcasts involving Bunyard see the Bibliography of his publications at the end of this book.



Figure 2. The Bunyard Family at Oakwood Lodge, Ide Hill, Sevenoaks, c. 1898. Back row, left to right: Janet (1882–1958), George (1841–1919), Katharine (1851–1939), Geoffrey (1883–1973), Katharine (1877–1963), Edward (1878–1939). Front row, left to right: Frances (1884–1982), Norman (1886–1969), Marguerite (1890–1959), Lorna (1876–1963). (Photograph courtesy of Miss Katharine Bunyard, daughter of Norman Bunyard.)



Figure 3. 'Mr. Edward A. Bunyard'. This photograph appeared in *The Gardeners' Magazine*, LV, no. 3036, 6 January 1912, p. 1

Figure 4. 'Edward A. Bunyard, F.L.S.' This photograph is reproduced from one which appeared in *The Journal of Pomology and Horticultural Science*, XVII, no. 4, January 1940, facing p. 294. However, it had appeared earlier in *Amateur Gardening*, XLIX, no. 2513, 2 July 1932, p. 188.



And so he is off, to an *al fresco* luncheon at the bottom of the garden at ‘one of the show places behind Cannes’ –

With the tongues of many nations, we chattered our way down the hill, past crystal swimming pools, cypresses lifting their dark exclamation marks in telling corners, roses, azaleas and all the profusion of Riviera spring around us (p. 224) –

and then on over the days to Collobrières, Menton, St-Tropez, the hills near Grasse, and finally Paris at his ‘favourite hotel’ where:

there was a great find, a Pontet-Canet ’24 at 20 francs a bottle. I could not bear to think that it might be drunk by some Philistine, so I dined there for the few days of my visit. How well it showed up an excellent Matelote d’Anguilles [eels stewed in a wine sauce], which Ambrose Heath [a writer on gastronomic matters] calls ‘a dish in a million’. I agree – provisionally. (p. 229)

The visit to France in 1900 was the beginning of extensive European travel. The *Gardeners’ Chronicle* obituary already quoted says that Bunyard ‘also studied and spoke German’ (ibid., p. 274), and an article on the Himalaya Berry in the same journal indicates that he had been to Germany by at least the age of 33: ‘When in Germany in the autumn of 1912...’ (LXIV (3rd series), no. 1665, 23 November 1918, p. 205). A letter (23 March 1935) from the writer Norman Douglas to EAB (see below the chapter ‘Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas’, Letter C.1) indicates that though Douglas did not care to visit the Germany of the 1930s, Bunyard, when in pursuit of seeds, was not deterred: ‘I don’t know Trier or Erfurt. Don’t think I should care about Germany any more, seeds or no seeds’.

Though his travels also included Switzerland and Luxemburg (*The Garden*, LXXXIV, no. 2556, 13 November 1920, p. 561), the west Pyrenees (*Gardeners’ Chronicle*, XC, no. 2324, 11 July 1931, p. 36), and even South Africa (see *Gardeners’ Chronicle*, Bibliography, nos. 49 and 52; ‘... On a recent visit to South Africa...’, *Gardening Illustrated*, LII, no. 2668, 26 April 1930, p. 267; cf. ibid., LIII, no. 2712, 28 February 1931, p. 128), Bunyard’s other great love besides France was Italy. This had begun with an admiration

for the writings of Norman Douglas, then living in Florence, and a first visit took place in 1922; one outcome was the article ‘Some Early Italian Gardening Books’ which:

presents the fruits of a hurried search in Italian bookshops and street barrows, a pursuit, it may be said, demanding some patience and an entire disregard for dust. (*Journ. of the Royal Hort. Soc.*, XLVIII (1923), p. 177)

As my later chapter shows, the friendship with Douglas developed and deepened, and lasted through the 1930s; inter alia, it led to a visit to Capri by Bunyard, armed with a letter of introduction from Douglas to its mayor, Edwin Cerio (see the chapter on Bunyard and Norman Douglas, Letter G.8). Another motive for Italian travel was of course plants. Thus Graham Stuart Thomas writes of the rose *Brunonii*, ‘La Mortola’, that it ‘was brought by E. A. Bunyard from the famous garden whose name it bears’.⁸

Of course, the pursuit of old books had begun long before the Italian visit of 1922. Already the brief biography of Edward Bunyard in the *Journal of Horticulture* of 1910 had noted that ‘one of his several hobbies is the collecting of old books dealing with fruit culture’ (LXI (3rd series), no. 3238, 20 October 1910, 369–70, p. 369), and his two early articles in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* of October and December 1911, listing illustrations of apples and pears, draw extensively on English and European books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By 1927 the *Gardeners’ Chronicle* is declaring in ‘An Afternoon with a Pomologist’ that:

⁸ G. S. Thomas, *Climbing Roses Old and New* (London, 1983 edn.), p. 33. On the great garden of La Mortola, the creation of the Hanbury family in the 19th century, on the Italian Riviera, see C. Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden Abroad* (London, 1992), pp. 63–75. Cf. also Thomas, *ibid.*, s.v. ‘Filipes’: ‘Western China. Introduced in 1908. Though seldom seen in gardens this species should take a high place. The only form that I have grown or seen is one secured, probably from the Roseraie de l’Haÿ, by the late E. A. Bunyard, but so far I have found no record of it in his writings. A plant was purchased from him by Mrs Muir about 1938, and still grows strongly at Kiftsgate Court’ (p. 34).

He has made his home in the midst of some four hundred acres of fruit trees at Allington, and formed a library of books on fruit and fruit-growing, the equal of which is not to be found elsewhere', (anon., LXXXII (3rd series), no. 2124, 10 September 1927, 213–14, p. 213)

and a long final paragraph lists a number of the volumes, including an Italian treatise published in 1590, and ends:

he has collected – and still collects – everything which might serve to illustrate the history of fruit-cultivation in particular and gardening in general. (p. 214)

But books for Bunyard were not mere bibliographical items; his 'entire disregard for dust' in Italian bookshops and barrows reveals the ardour of the bibliophile. Indeed, in his love of fruit, roses, wine and literature, one informed the other. There is something of Goldsmith's Mr Hardcastle – 'I love every thing that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine' – when he writes in his essay, 'The Winter Dessert':

One secret only can I reveal. A fireside chair, a Blenheim Apple, slightly warmed, and in the other hand a volume of Fielding, whose mellow wisdom and acid sap find in the Apple their perfect counterpoise. (*Wine and Food*, I.4 (1934), 26–9, p. 29)

Not only was Bunyard early collecting old horticultural works, but he soon began what was to be a remarkably productive life as a writer of books and articles on matters horticultural and, later, gastronomic. His father, George, published, as well as a number of articles, several horticultural books, though with nothing like the range nor in the number of his son.⁹ EAB's first published appearance, however, was as a photographer.

⁹ George Bunyard's books are: *Fruit Farming for Profit* ... (Maidstone and London, 1881; there were also later editions); *Modern Fruit Culture* ... *Being a Reprint of the Cultural Articles from George Bunyard & Co.'s Catalogues* ... (Maidstone, 1892; most articles, though not all, are by G. B.); *England's National Flower* (Maidstone and London, [?1904]); George Bunyard and Owen Thomas, *The Fruit Garden* (London

When he was 25 there came out his father's *England's National Flower* [the rose] (Maidstone and London; n.d. but the Bodleian Library's copy is date-stamped '4.2.1904'), the photographs being, as the Introduction acknowledges, 'by my son, Mr. EDWARD ASHDOWN BUNYARD', and they are of considerable subtlety and beauty. The unsigned review in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* states: 'Photographic illustrations are given, which show how very beautiful Roses are when lightly arranged in vases and not throttled in the regulation boxes' (XXXV (3rd series), no. 892, 30 January 1904, p. 67). However, when in 1936 EAB published his own work on roses, *Old Garden Roses*, scholarly, substantial, and magisterial where his father's had been, designedly, a slighter (26pp.) though charming work, the photographs were taken by a Maidstone photographer, the improbably named Sweatman Hedgeland.¹⁰

There was indeed an artistic strain in the family. In George Bunyard and Owen Thomas, *The Fruit Garden* (London and New York, 1904), gratitude is expressed in the plural for the 'outline drawings of fruits to members of Mr. George Bunyard's family' (p. vi). However, it was Frances L. B. Bunyard, described on her Death Certificate – she was 98 – as 'Art Teacher (Retired)', who was the acknowledged artist.¹¹ She did the drawings for her father's *Handbook of Hardy Trees and Shrubs* (Maidstone, 1908), and was involved in

and New York, 1904); *Handbook of Hardy Trees and Shrubs ...* (Maidstone, 1908); *Apples and Pears* (London and Edinburgh, [1911]). The British Library once held the only copies I know of 4 pamphlets, but they were destroyed in World War II: *Cherries: How and Where to Plant and Sell*, 15pp., (London, 1895); *Gooseberries and Currants for Garden and Market*, 15pp., (London, 1895); Edward Bartrum and George Bunyard, *Raspberries for Garden, Field, and Market ...*, 16pp., (London, 1897); Edward Bartrum and George Bunyard, *Strawberries for Garden, Field, and Market*, 16pp., (London, 1897).

¹⁰ I owe this identification to Dr Joan Morgan. Hedgeland's business in the Broadway was close to Bunyard's shop.

¹¹ In the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society, London, are her watercolours of 53 varieties of cherry; the dates, on some of them only, are 1926 and 1928; the Library also holds a watercolour of 'Abnormal Pear (second crop)' dated October 1911. In the Library of East Malling Research (information courtesy of Ms. Sarah Loat, former Librarian of East Malling Research) are watercolours of various fruits: 3 of cherry, 24 of pear, 21 of apples, 33 of plum, 4 of fig, and 1 of peach; such

several of her brother Edward's publications (see the Bibliography of EAB's publications at the end of this volume for full references): (i) an article on red currants in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* (1917); (ii) an article on cherries in *The Garden* (1921); (iii) an article on fruit trees in the *Journ. of the Royal Hort. Soc.* (1922); (iv) the drawings and end-paper design, and probably the water-colour of a rose on the dust-jacket of *Old Garden Roses* (1936); (v) the drawings and possibly the dustwrapper of *The Epicure's Companion* (1937); (vi) an article on wild roses in *Country Life* (1938).

EAB's first written (as distinct from photographic) publication was his paper 'On Xenia' ('A supposed direct action or influence of foreign pollen upon the seed or fruit which is pollinated': *OED*), delivered, when he was 27, on 1 August 1906 at the Third International Conference on Genetics, and published in the *Report* of the Conference, edited by W. Wilks, for the Royal Horticultural Society, in 1907. Though both Edward and George Bunyard were invited guests (*Report*, pp. 22–3), only Edward gave a paper; it is remarkable that someone who was educated at home, and entered the family firm at the age of 17, should have been sufficiently learned and known in the field of Mendelism to be invited to deliver a paper at an international conference.¹² The *Gardeners' Chronicle* in the early years of the twentieth century records a number of scientific papers which EAB gave to the Horticultural Club in London (see Bibliography of EAB's publications, s.v. 'Reports of Papers delivered to the Horticultural Club').¹³

dates as they bear range from 1925–30; 4 of the watercolours appeared in N. B. Bagenal, *Fruit Growing: Modern Cultural Methods* (London and Melbourne, 1939; revd. edn. 1945).

¹² For the general background to Mendelism and the development of genetics see C. Tudge, *In Mendel's Footnotes ...* (London, 2000); see also Simon Hiscock's chapter below on Bunyard's paper on xenia. For secondary citation of Bunyard's genetics work see A. D. Darbishire, *Breeding and the Mendelian Discovery* (London, 1911), p. 131; C. M. Woodworth, 'Inheritance of Cotyledon, Seed-Coat, Hilum and Pubescence Colors in Soy-Beans', *Genetics*, VI (1921), 487–553, p. 504.

¹³ The Horticultural Club (still in existence) was founded by the Rev. Henry Honywood D'Ombraïn (1818–1905) in 1876 (see M. Hadfield, *Gardening in Britain* (London, 1960), p. 335). I am indebted for this reference, and for knowledge of Bunyard's 1909 paper to the Club, to Dr Vicky Graham of the Wisley Laboratory Library.

On 29 October 1901 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society (*JRHS*, XXVI (1901–2), p. ccix), and it was in the March 1910 issue of the *JRHS* that his first major article, ‘The Physiology of Pruning’, appeared (XXXV (1909–10), pp. 330–4); his father had published ‘Root Pruning of Fruit-Trees’ in the same journal (XV (1892–3), pp. 211–17). By one of those accidents that sometimes lend a kind of fortuitous symmetry to lives abruptly ended, one of his posthumous articles, ‘Simple Pruning for Beginners’, was in the same area and appeared in the November 1939 issue of the same journal (LXIV (1939), pp. 511–16). The other article published after his death, ‘Rose Hunting in 1939’, in *The New Flora and Silva* (November 1939), seems a ghostly echo of his photographic contribution to his father’s *England’s National Flower* (?1904). Over his life Bunyard published some five books, and around 400 articles, reviews, and letters (excluding 31 letters to *The Times*) in various journals and on topics horticultural and, after *The Anatomy of Dessert* (1929), gastronomic. In addition, there were wireless broadcasts, though only four scripts (1937–9) are known (see s.v. Bibliography at the end of this volume).

We have seen how Frances Bunyard was involved as an artist in some of both her father’s and EAB’s books, and two of Edward’s other sisters also played a part in his *The Epicure’s Companion* (1937). Lorna, described on her Death Certificate as a retired health visitor, co-edited this book and made many major contributions, writing the sections on Soups; Fish; Meat and Poultry; Sausages; Fungi as Food; Sauces; Macaroni, Pâté, Pasta; Pastry and Pies; Breads; Buns and Cakes; Soft Drinks; Kitchen Fitments; and the Kitchen Bookshelf; she wrote, like her brother, not just in practical terms but with a remarkably rich range of historical, geographical, and literary reference. In their whole cast of mind Edward and Lorna Bunyard were clearly extraordinarily at one. I have also come across L. Yarde Bunyard, *Modern Salads* (1938), a 14-page pamphlet published by the Royal Horticultural Society, and I am grateful to her niece, Miss Katharine Bunyard (daughter of George Norman Bunyard) for confirming that this is indeed Lorna Bunyard (though I have not traced the other publications to which she refers): ‘She adopted the name “Yarde” and used this in her many publications for the Women’s Institute & RHS. ...My family never knew why she used Yarde’ (letter of 9 August 2003).

EAB's sister, Marguerite Eveline, the youngest of the Bunyard children, described on her Death Certificate as 'Doctor's Secretary Agricultural Research Station (Retired)',¹⁴ besides contributing Spices (again, profoundly historical: 'We began with romance and we conclude with reality. This is the trend of history') and 'A Dinner in India' (a personal reminiscence) to *The Epicure's Companion*, also shared his interest in the problems of the colour description of flowers, and published several articles on the topic (see Bibliography, s.v. *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, no. 19).

Not all EAB's siblings have left records of any direct or persistent involvement with either the firm or with his interests and publications. His brother, Richard Geoffrey, emigrated to Canada where he was an architect (*Kent Messenger*, 21 October 1939, p. 4), and died at North Saanich, Vancouver Island (British Columbia Archives); according to their Death Certificates his sister Katharine Mary was a retired secretary, and Janet a retired masseuse. However, (George) Norman Bunyard, the youngest of the three brothers to survive to adulthood, eight years younger than Edward and three than Richard, was to share the running of the nursery with him. In 1903 the firm became a limited company, though the whole of the capital was still held by the family (*The House of Bunyard 1796–1919* [see n. 4], p. 4); and in 1908, when EAB was approaching 30, the *Journal of Horticulture* noted: 'Mr. George Bunyard has the assistance of his two sons [ignoring Richard], the elder of whom, Mr. Edward Bunyard, is now a partner in the company. Mr. Edward bids fair to emulate his father's achievements as an accomplished pomologist' ('D.', 'Messrs. Geo. Bunyard & Co., Ltd., Maidstone', LVII (3rd series), no. 3135, 29 October 1908, 436–7, p. 437). Two years later the same journal records: 'Now that Mr. George Bunyard, V.M.H., is upon the borders of his seventieth year a considerable part of the business conduct of the firm of George Bunyard and Co., Ltd., Maidstone, devolves upon the elder of his two sons' ('Leaders in the Fruit World. Mr. E. A. Bunyard', *JH*, LXI (3rd series), no. 3238, 20 October 1910, 369–70, p. 369). By 1915 the *JH* is recording that both Edward and Norman are directors of the Company and with defined separate responsibilities:

¹⁴ Ms. Sarah Loat, former Librarian of East Malling Research, has told me that they have records of M. E. Bunyard working at the East Malling Research Station (as it then was) from 1944 to 1955, though the records do not state in what capacity.

The company is purely a family arrangement in which Mr. George Bunyard retains the chairmanship and has the assistance of his two sons – Edward A. Bunyard and G. Norman Bunyard – as directors. Of these the first named entered the firm in 1896, and makes the Allington nurseries his headquarters, while the latter presides at the home nurseries, the seed and bulb warehouses, and the offices. ...

The special object of the present visit was to see the fruits, shrubs, and trees at Allington under the wing of Mr. Edward A. Bunyard, but the time was found for a glance round the divided charges of Mr. G. Norman Bunyard at home. Here are the houses containing the general collections of flowering and foliage plants. The bedding plants, of which immense numbers are grown, also find accommodation. The younger of the brothers has made a special study of alpine and aquatic as well as of hardy herbaceous plants, of which the collections are remarkably complete, especially when it is borne in mind that not a few people throughout the land think that Bunyards do nothing but fruit. If a comparison of the bulk of the older brother's charge were made with that of the younger brother the former would win in a canter, but number for number the latter would make a good race of it. ...

More interesting, if not more profitable from a business point of view, Mr. Edward Bunyard has travelled widely in Europe to find and bring home the best of the shrubs and trees that the continental nurseries afford, and he has drawn stock from all the principal distributing nurseries of the civilised world. (anon., 'Famous Nurseries. Bunyards of Maidstone.', *JH*, LXX (3rd series), no. 1809, 25 February 1915, 141–3, pp. 141, 143)

Does the antithesis between interest and profit in the last paragraph sound what in hindsight might appear a faint tocsin? It will get louder as the years advance.

Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, public recognition of the scientific side of his work came with his admission on 4 June 1914 as a Fellow of the Linnean Society (proposed 19 February 1914; elected 19 March 1914: *Proc. of the Linnean Soc.*, 126th session (1913–14), pp. 11, 12, 68; his brother Norman was elected a Fellow on 14 December 1922 and admitted on 18 January 1923, but his 'withdrawal' was reported on 28 May 1931, 143rd session (1930–31), p. 107). Though I can trace only one

paper, 'On the Origin of the Garden Red Currant', delivered to the Society on 4 May 1916 (see Bibliography, s.v. *Proc. of the Linn. Soc.*), he played a considerable part in its administration, first being elected to the Council on 22 May 1924, and being thrice elected as one of the Auditors for the Council (2 April 1925, 15 April 1926, 7 April 1927). Though he retired as a Councillor on 24 May 1927, he was still on the Society's Library Committee at his death (*Proc. of the Linn. Soc.*, 152nd session (1939–40), p. 362).

We have seen that EAB was educated privately because he was 'a delicate boy', and this in itself would account for why he did not serve in the First World War. However, according to Alan Major (see n. 4 above), his brother Norman had served in the Territorials from 1905–12, and fought in the war with the 10th Royal West Kent Regiment in France, Belgium, and Italy, and, having been a victim of mustard gas, was demobilized in 1919 with the rank of Captain (*art. cit.*, p. 279). Though Major's belief that he joined the Nursery only in 1919 (for the health reason of an outdoor life as a mustard gas victim) is not borne out by the *Journal of Horticulture* which has him on site and a Director in 1915 (see quotation above), his statement that Edward 'spent little time on the affairs of the nursery business from 1919 ... responsibility for this task being taken over by [Norman] and whose work was a considerable contribution towards the continuing success of G. Bunyard & Co.' (p. 279)¹⁵ bears out once again Fred Stoker's words (see above) on Edward being a scholar rather than a trader, and the *Journal of Horticulture's* reference to his pursuit of interest before profit. Throughout the war he published steadily on horticultural topics, often with a scholarly and historical emphasis; only two articles register the great conflict: an article by 'A.E.B.' (which is probably a misprint for 'E.A.B.') on increasing the supply of vegetables in *The Garden* of 13 February 1915, and a lecture read on 11 April 1917, on increasing the home fruit supply, in the *JRHS* for May 1918.

¹⁵ *The House of Bunyard* (see n. 4) also states that Norman Bunyard 'released from Army service, now resumes his position as Director' (p. 4). On NB's later role in the firm, and particularly his focus on irises, see, e.g. 'Nursery Notes. Irises at Maidstone', *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, LXXVII, no. 2008, 20 June 1925, p. 438; 'Nursery Notes. Messrs. Geo. Bunyard & Co. Ltd.', *ibid.*, XCIX, no. 2583, 27 June 1936, p. 423; and G. L. Pilkington's obituary in *The Iris Year Book* (1969), p. 103.

The year 1919 saw not only the return of his brother Norman to the firm, but the death of their father, aged 77, at Mereworth on 22 January from asthma and influenza (Death Certificate), one of the many who fell to the Influenza Epidemic at the time. In 1915 the *Journal of Horticulture* had said: ‘The “soul” of Bunyards is as it has been for the last hundred years, and we hope that it will endure for another century’ (LXX, no. 1809, 25 February 1915, p. 141). The nursery as George Bunyard knew it was to survive his death for a mere twenty years. His grave, below a yew tree, is in front of the west wall of the churchyard of St. Lawrence, Mereworth; the inscription, including the words ‘And this mortal must put on immortality’ (I. Corinthians xv. 53) is now barely legible.

The end of that year saw the appearance of the first issue of the *Journal of Pomology* (the Bodleian Library’s copy is date-stamped 21 November 1919), founded by EAB and edited by him until July 1924. His own articles are all in the first three volumes, though he also published a few reviews in it thereafter; he was on its Publication Committee at his death. About this time, there is a sense of an efflorescence of energy, an enrichment of his life in terms both scholarly and personal. In 1920, in his forty-second year, there appeared *A Handbook of Hardy Fruits ... Apples and Pears*; the second volume on other fruits came out in 1925. His friendship with the writer Norman Douglas (see my later chapter) began with his visit to Italy to see him in 1922, and was to last his lifetime. In January 1923 the Royal Horticultural Society announced the administration of a scheme for ‘The Testing of Varieties of Hardy Fruit for Commercial Purposes’: under the chairmanship of the geneticist, William Bateson (1861–1926), there was a committee of ten – five representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and five from the RHS, of whom EAB was one (*JRHS*, XLVIII (1923), 65–7, p. 66). At the Annual General Meeting of the RHS, on 13 February 1923, he was elected to the Society’s Council (*JRHS*, XLIX (1924), ii), and became Chairman of the Fruit and Vegetable Committee in 1929 (*JRHS*, LV (1930), cxxi ff.) – both positions previously long held by his father.

By the 1920s the *Gardeners’ Chronicle* declared that ‘Mr. Edward A. Bunyard has made fruit his hobby as well as business, and no one would dispute that he is the foremost pomologist in this country to-day’ (anon., ‘An Afternoon with a Pomologist’, LXXXII, no. 2124, 10 September 1927, 213–14, p. 213). As always with Bunyard, there is the Janus-faced quality:

certainly he knew his Mendelian genetics and he was a nurseryman, and yet he was also a connoisseur with a scholar's disinterestedness – profit was not put before pleasure, or the balance sheet before botanical curiosity. The *Gardeners' Chronicle* expresses this well:

Of course, the most serious side of the business is the raising and selling of large quantities of all kinds of fruit trees, but Mr. Bunyard likes to embark on what he facetiously terms “joy rides” from which no profit is derived, but much pleasure. For example, he has collected as many varieties of Gooseberries as he can secure with a view to classifying them and discovering if any of them are synonymous, whilst in another part of the nursery he has planted over two hundred varieties of Pears obtained from all over Europe, the United States of America, and elsewhere, to see whether any of them are of value in this country. ... Not much of merit has, so far, appeared amongst his Pear collection, but he has obtained what he considers a most valuable variety in Admiral Gervais ... Mr. Bunyard was careful to point out that none of these varieties will be sent out by his firm until its merits have been thoroughly proved.¹⁶ (*ibid.*, p. 213)

Similarly, Collingwood Ingram has drawn attention to EAB's role in obtaining two unusual varieties of ornamental cherry: (i) the Yingtao or Chinese Fruiting Cherry: this had been introduced into this country in 1819 by Samuel Brooks who then owned a nursery on Newington Green, London, but it subsequently disappeared from Western cultivation. It was then re-introduced simultaneously by Ingram who in the spring of 1922 obtained two specimens from Japan, and by Bunyard who obtained grafts from America in the winter of 1922–3; in May 1927 Bunyard exhibited its fruit, which had been ripened indoors, at the Chelsea Flower Show;¹⁷

¹⁶ Interestingly for a somewhat conservative man, EAB's term ‘joy rides’ was something of a modernism (and originally an American term), *joy-rider* being first recorded in *OED*² in 1908; it meant ‘pleasure trip’ with none of today's connotations of irresponsibility and even illegality; see J. Aitchison, *Language Joyriding* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 23–9.

¹⁷ See C. Ingram, ‘The Yingtao or Chinese Fruiting Cherry’, *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, LXVIII (1943), 307–9; C. Ingram, *Ornamental Cherries* (London, 1948), 122. *The Gardeners' Chronicle* in describing Bunyard's exhibition of the tree at

(ii) *Prunus cerasus*, var. *Bunyardii*: in 1924 EAB presented this tree to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, saying that it had come from Persia; though Ingram observes that ‘in view of the fact that Edward Bunyard was pre-eminently a pomologist, it is not unlikely that he received it as a fruiting variety’, the fact that EAB presented the only known specimen to a Botanic Garden makes it look like another of his ‘joy rides’.¹⁸

A discriminatingly phrased instance of what became a pervasive preference of beauty before pelf can be seen in his article ‘Fruit Blossom in Kent’, where, reflecting his musical interests (see above), he constructs a ‘floral symphony’ in four movements through the blossom season. It is worth quoting a whole paragraph for its unworldly praise of loveliness and its dismissal of commerce:

Our final movement has more colour and no less majesty, as it introduces the apple with its elusive shades of pink, apt to be seen against a blue sky, and for preference in an old orchard of gnarled and distorted trees, of which there are still a few in Kent. For apples let us, therefore, avoid the orchard of the successful commercial grower, on the brick earth or limestone soils as a rule, and pass through to the poorer clays of the Weald, where venerable trees may still be found, all worthy to be cursed as fruit producers, but to the artistic eye a cause of thankfulness and joy. (*Country Life*, LV, no. 1425, 26 April 1924, 659–60, p. 659)

Chelsea in 1927 gives a different source for it, though its non-commercial nature as a fruit tree is evident: ‘It was discovered by the late F. N. Meyer in 1907 near Tangsi, Chekiang Province ... Mr. Meyer sent grafts to Messrs. Bunyard from which they raised the first trees in this country. ... Mr. E. A. Bunyard informs us that the tree is quite self-fertile, and fruits quite well *where one tree only is grown*’ (my italics; *GC*, LXXXI, no. 2109, 28 May 1927, 383–4).

¹⁸ Ingram, *Ornamental Cherries*, 85. Miss Leonie Paterson, Archives Librarian of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh has kindly informed me (letter of 5 August 2004) that on 29 March 1924, Messrs. G. Bunyard & Co. Ltd. presented a number of plants from Persia: ‘Apricot Bitter Kernel, Cherry Blabitu [later referred to as *Prunus cerasus* var. *Bunyardii*, though now I believe it has been amalgamated into *Prunus vulgaris*], Almond Hard-shell, Almond Thin-shell, Almond Pistachio, Plum Gurjeh’. Miss Paterson tells me that apparently the firm also made other gifts of seeds.

On occasion artistic flair might well properly serve commercial ends, as in the display of apples at the Chelsea Show of 1929. *Gardening Illustrated*'s caption to its dramatic photograph of Bunyard's apples brings out the surprising modernism of EAB's debt to cubism, whilst we may also see it as the lineal descendant of the visual awareness evident in his photographs for his father's *England's National Flower* (?1904; see above):

a distinct breakaway from the basket or dish method, and the whole scheme is evidently influenced by the cubist movement. Vast cubes of black tower one above the other rather in the manner of New York's skyscrapers, and the fruit is piled on these without baskets or dishes. The gold and red of the Apples show admirably on such sombre backgrounds, and the whole represents an attempt to break away from the stereotyped methods of showing fruit. (F.A.H., 'Comments on the Chelsea Show', LI, no. 2621, 1 June 1929, 383; the photograph appeared again in the issue of 28 December 1929, 866.)

The devotion to the unusual, the interesting, and the epicurean was noble, but as Joan Morgan and Alison Richards have commented: 'For all it helped to keep the tradition of apple connoisseurship alive in sympathetic circles, Bunyard's evangelism could not arrest the slide away from diversity as commercial growers sought the holy grail of a few "perfect" market apples.'¹⁹ Even his bold Chelsea display of 1929 provoked the admiring *Gardening Illustrated* to the humorous, but none the less ominous, comment on the cubist towers: 'Some people are saying that this arrangement is Mr. Bunyard's allusive way of announcing the issue by his firm next year of the square Apple, which has been so long demanded by the packing trade' (ibid., 383). In personal terms, his eventual bankruptcy must derive in part from his 'joy rides' where profit was not served; as the medieval proverb had it, 'Un jour viendra qui tout paiera'.

Though an article in *The New Flora and Silva*, 'The Anatomy of Dessert: I. The Cherry Succession', appeared in October 1928, heralding *The Anatomy of Dessert* in 1929, in which it was reprinted as the chapter on 'Cherries',

¹⁹ J. Morgan and A. Richards, *The New Book of Apples* (London, 2002), p. 100. See also Dr Morgan's chapter 7 below.

EAB's greatness as a writer on food and wine must have been a long time a-ripening. Gourmets, like wine, are laid down and need time to mature. But prior to 1928 there are only two references to his epicurean appreciation: first, a mention of Carrie, the cook of his childhood days:

Carrie was our cook, a very dark, akimbo sort of woman, with a tender heart for an admirer of her skill. A hot potato out of the saucepan before they went to the dining-room, or fresh jam-tart – tantalising thing – too hot to eat, too good to wait for. Such was Carrie, bless her! (*The Epicure's Companion*, 1937, p. 155)

In gastronomy as in horticulture 'the Child is father of the Man'. The second indication of a honed gourmet's palate is that in a letter to EAB of 22 August 1924 Norman Douglas writes that 'The *Anatomy of Dessert* is excellent' (see my chapter on 'Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas', Letter A7, n. 5), and thus the book must have been in existence in some form five years before its publication.

The *Anatomy* was a limited edition of 1000 copies, signed by the author, and was published by Dulau of Bond Street, booksellers specializing in botanical books who also published the journal *The New Flora and Silva* in which two of the chapters first appeared. Its frontispiece, printed in green (and again in red on the dustwrapper), was by John Nash (1893–1977).²⁰ He describes the project in an undated letter to Dora Carrington:

I have just finished a block for a Book called the Anatomy of Dessert – bisected apples, a melon gashed open, bananas protruding from their skins & half peeled apples also etc Fun with the fruit shapes!²¹

Nash's engraving was used to draw attention to the book in leading literary journals of the day: J. C. Squire's *The London Mercury* (XX, no. 120,

²⁰ For details see J. Lewis, *John Nash: The Painter as Illustrator* (Loxhill, Godalming, 1978), pp. 125, 131; C. Colvin, *John Nash: Book Designs* (Colchester, 1986), pp. 31–2, no. 1.16; J. Greenwood, *The Wood-Engravings of John Nash* (Liverpool, 1987), p. 113.

²¹ John Nash Archive, Hyman Kreitman Research Centre, Tate Britain, TGA 8910.13.2.109, end of letter.

October 1929, 587); and Desmond MacCarthy's *Life and Letters* (III, no. 18, November 1929, inside back cover). The periodicals in which reviews appeared reflected its appeal not only to gardeners but also to a wider constituency of connoisseurship. In the horticultural journals there was an anonymous review in *JRHS* LV (1930), 160–1, and one by Sir William Lawrence (1870–1934), Treasurer of the Royal Horticultural Society 1924–8, in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, LXXXVI, no. 2235, 26 October 1929, 329; interestingly, Sir William drew attention to a quality of Bunyard which keeps recurring: a man who was not at ease in a commercial age:

Like Rolla [*vid.* Alfred de Musset, 'Rolla' (1833), I: 'Je suis venu trop tard dans un monde trop vieux'], Mr. E. A. Bunyard, whose book *The Anatomy of Dessert* I have just read with pleasure and with profit, was born too late into a world too old. Canning, chemicals and cold storage have combined with mass-production and marketing boards to produce a uniformly low standard of food, or, in Mr. Bunyard's words, "The Jonathan Apple and Jamaican Banana level" [p. v].

In journals of a non-specialist nature one may cite: George Forrester Scott (1864–1937), who published under the names John Halsham and John Halstead, and whose interests were gardening, classical literature, cricket, the country, brickwork [*sic*], and whose Sunday afternoons were devoted to the *Divina Commedia* in Bunyardian fashion 'in his beloved and worn Venetian edition of 1568' (*Times* obituary, 16 April 1937, p. 16; cf. also the *TLS* files), in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 October 1929, 807 (the review was published anonymously); E. V. Lucas (1868–1938), a prolific journalist, essayist, and author, in the *Sunday Times*, 3 November 1929, 14; G. C. Taylor (1901–62), gardening editor of *Country Life* and gardening correspondent of the *Observer*, and author of horticultural works, in *Country Life*, 2 November 1929, 1 (i.e. 50). It is worth drawing attention to a delightful review, 'The Compleat Carpophilist' (i.e. fruit-lover), by Martin Armstrong (1882–1974), novelist, poet, short-story writer, literary journalist, and *bon vivant* (like EAB, he was a member of the Saintsbury Club, and EAB would anthologize his poems on wine in *The Epicure's Companion*), in the *Saturday Review*, CXLVIII, no. 3868, 14 December 1929, 717–18; thus a brief extract:

Mr. Bunyard's book, though written in prose, is of the essence of poetry, and like all good poetry it is highly practical. He knows each variety of each fruit and calls it by its name, and he describes lovingly and accurately its flavour, texture and appearance, its excellences and shortcomings, and tells when it should be gathered and when, on a subtle expected change in its appearance, it is ready for eating. (717)

The association with John Nash, begun with the *Anatomy*, continued. In 1931 Bunyard's began the annual issue of a catalogue, 'Vegetables for Epicures', for 'those who prefer dining to exhibiting' (1931 preface); it was welcomed by a letter from 'East Sussex' in *Gardening Illustrated* (LIII, no. 2709, 7 February 1931, 83), stating that 'Messrs. Bunyard, of Maidstone, strike a new note in their little List, just issued, entitled "Vegetables for Epicures"'. All the catalogues save those for 1933, 1934, and 1938, are preserved in the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society, and each, apart from 1931, has a guest preface by a gastronomic writer: 1932 – Marcel Boulestin (1878–1943), restaurateur, author, and the first television chef; 1935 – Lady Alice M. Martineau (1865–1956), author of gardening and cookery books; 1936 – Dr H. E. Durham 'whose enterprise and skill in the garden and kitchen places him in the front rank of our apostles of Good Living' (Introduction), and presumably the author of *Notes on the Medical History of Cider, Past and Present* (Cambridge, 1929; copy in the British Library); 1937 – Rosine Rosat (probably a humorous pseudonym for Bunyard: see below in this chapter re *Old Garden Roses*); 1939 – André Simon (1877–1970), inter alia, President of the Wine and Food Society. Clare Colvin (see n. 20) reproduces (p. 91, no. 3.8) John Nash's line drawing for the fourth edition of the catalogue, 1934, showing: 'a hod full of bursting pea-pods, new carrots, marrow and parsley; more carrots, onions, baby turnips and a large cabbage complete the traditional summer medley of vegetables' (a copy must be in the John Nash Archive, now at Tate Britain, but is not currently retrievable). In 1963 Nash sent preliminary material to Studio and Vista Books, London, for some kind of autobiography (see SVBooks's reply of 19 July 1963; John Nash Archive, TGA 8910.3.1.4); in these unpublished notes is an account of his relationship with Bunyard:

In [the year is left blank, but probably 1929] I became acquainted with E A Bunyard for whose book the *Anatomy of Dessert* I did a cover design & was asked by him to serve on a [‘the’ written above] Committee of the RHS that criticised & made awards to the flower paintings sent in to the Society’s Shows. [The award was the Grenfell Medal, instituted in 1919; though Frances Bunyard several times (e.g. 1932, 1934, 1935) won the Silver Grenfell Medal for paintings of fruit or flowers, less good fortune attended Nash on apparently the one occasion he entered:] ... [I] sent in 8 paintings of plants over which I lavished considerable effort [‘care’ written above]. I was awarded a Bronze Grenfel [*sic*] medal for – as the citation went – my flower studies & felt properly put in my place! [see *JRHS*, LX (1935), clxxviii] The War terminated these pleasant occasions but before that I visited Bunyard at his bungalow in the middle of the orchards at Allington. His was a very comfortable bachelor existence carried on with due regard to the science of living. His collection of books on Pomology & other fruits was remarkable. On the morning after the night of my arrival he went out early & returned very gloomily with a branch of cherry on which the fruit then as big as large peas were blackened by frost. It was a [‘the’ written above] disastrous late frost of May 17th 193 [the final number is omitted, but it must be ‘5’: *The Times* of Saturday 18 May 1935, 14 d, has a number of reports, the first headed ‘A Return to Winter/Frost and Snow/Extensive Damage to Crops’, and the second headed ‘In the Orchards/Fruit Crops Almost Ruined’ begins with south-west Kent] & all the fruit crops suffered, while young ash & oak growth hung black & limp on the trees. (John Nash Archive, Tate Britain, TGA 8910.3.1.4, pp. 8–9)

In that fruit is, after all, grown for eating, we could regard all EAB’s writing as gastronomic, but the turn taken in his publications from the late 1920s shows his epicurean interests becoming overt and specialized: in addition to the *Anatomy* (1929) and its two chapters which appeared first in *The New Flora and Silva* (1928–9), there was ‘The Gourmet’s Fruit Garden’ (*Country Life*, 19 October 1929). He must indeed for some time have been establishing an acknowledged gastronomic expertise: André Simon records him as a guest at a luncheon on 15 October 1929 at the Connaught Rooms which sought to explore Saint-Pinot wines from Champagne and Burgundy; other guests were Sir Herbert Jackson, Sir George Chadwick,

and Stephen Tallents, all from the Empire Marketing Board, together with Sir Gerald Du Maurier (1873–1934; the actor-manager); Maurice Healy (1887–1943; barrister; he was to write EAB's obituary in *Wine and Food*); Compton Mackenzie (1883–1972; novelist, journalist, and memoirist); J. C. Squire (1884–1958; literary journalist and anthologist); A. J. A. Symons (1900–41; bibliophile, authority on literature of the 1890s, and now best remembered for his *The Quest for Corvo*, 1934); and Michael Sadleir (1888–1957; bibliographer and novelist, his best-remembered novel being *Fanny by Gaslight*, 1940).²² This was a brave new world of gastronomic, social, and literary sensibility in which EAB clearly moved at ease and at will. And who but Bunyard would bring these spheres together in an advertisement in *The New Flora and Silva* (VII.ii, January 1935, vii) for the 1935 edition of 'Vegetables for Epicures' where he quotes a couplet from an untitled work (mis-ascribed to Thos. King), William King (1663–1712), *The Art of Cookery, In Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry* (London, 1708):

The foods we eat, by various juice control
The narrowness or largeness of our soul. (141–2)

1931 saw the first dinner of the Saintsbury Club,²³ founded to honour that doyen of the wine cellar, Professor George Saintsbury, on 23 October; the menu included 'Pommes d'Allington' and 'Noix à la glace', the apples and walnuts being a present from Bunyard. The choice of Allingtons was a good one, not just because of the taste, but because its commercial introduction had been in 1896, the centenary year of Bunyard's when EAB had entered the firm; now it had appeared on the first menu of the Saintsbury Club. Records of the Club are incomplete, but the surviving ones show that Bunyard attended dinners on 23 April 1935; 23 April 1936; 23 October 1936; 21 April 1937; 19 October 1937; 27 April 1938; and

²² See A. L. Simon, *Tables of Content: Leaves from My Diary* (London, 1933), 42–3; and his *By Request: An Autobiography* (London, 1957), 68–9.

²³ Simon, *Tables of Content*, 142–4; *By Request*, 80–5; see also 'The Cellarer' [i.e. André Simon], *The Saintsbury Club: A Scrap Book* (first printed privately 1943; the edition published in 140 copies by the Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, California, 1993, has additional material). On Bunyard as a clubman see Alan Bell's chapter below.

26 October 1938;²⁴ he must also have almost certainly been at the third Dinner on 24 October 1932 as ‘Les Ribstons d’Allington’ were on the menu (*Saintsbury Club: Scrap Book* (see n. 23), p. 47). He was clearly coming into professional association with André Simon, one of the founders of the Club and its Cellarer; he became a regular contributor to Simon’s *Wine and Food*, the journal of the Wine and Food Society, from its first issue in 1934, and the Winter 1938 issue records him for the first time as a member of the Society’s Advisory Council.²⁵ On 23 February 1933 Simon records him as the Guest of the Day at the Wine Trade Club luncheon at which he spoke on ‘the selling of wine – at the consumer’s point of view’ (Simon, *Tables of Content* (see n. 22), pp. 240–1).

However, 1933 was more significant for the second edition of the *Anatomy*, now published ‘With a Few Notes on Wine’ by Chatto and Windus who republished it in their Phoenix Library of Food and Drink in 1936, the year which also saw Bunyard’s essay, ‘Gardening for Epicures’ in Miles Hadfield’s *The Gardener’s Companion*. Again, reviews of the second edition of the *Anatomy* were in both horticultural journals and in ones of a wider cultural interest. Thus H. S. Redgrove, a chemist, states in the *Gardeners’ Chronicle*, XCIV, no. 2428, 8 July 1933, that ‘It is a volume which everyone who grows, sells or eats fruits, and, indeed, everyone who loves good living and good literature, should secure, not only for the valuable information it contains but also for the sheer joy of reading it’ (28); and the

²⁴ I am indebted to Mr Merlin Holland for copies of the seating plans of the Saintsbury Club dinners. The Club dines twice a year, in April and October, but extant seating plans only begin with the April 1935 dinner.

²⁵ Given Bunyard’s pursuit of connoisseurship at the expense of profit in fruit and roses, it is worth recording the opinion of Julian Symons (brother of A. J. A. Symons, Secretary of the Wine and Food Society) in his *A. J. A. Symons: His Life and Speculations* (London, 1950) that the articles in *Wine and Food* increasingly ‘were written, more and more, not merely for a minority, but for a very small minority of the membership, conscious of its own gastronomic culture; the recondite nature of many of the subjects, and the tone of airy superiority in which they were treated must have frightened away more prospective members than it attracted. Lunches and dinners gradually became fewer, better, and – more costly’ (pp. 157–8). Though EAB’s articles should escape these strictures, one notes the unworldly ethos in which he moved.

anonymous reviewer in *The Listener*, IX, no. 229, 31 May 1933, declares that ‘this book is eminent, a little peak of wisdom, disgraceful to the flats of ignorance about it. No wife can become perfect without it.’ (883)

If we may trace the sophisticated gourmet back to the taste for the potatoes and jam-tarts of Carrie, the cook of his childhood, then perhaps the genealogy of Bunyard the rosarian goes back at least to 1904 and the photographs he took for his father’s *England’s National Flower*. He published on old varieties of rose in *The New Flora and Silva* from 1929, in *The Rose Annual of the National Rose Society* from 1930, in *Gardening Illustrated* from 1932, in *Country Life* from 1934, as well as in *The Countryman* in 1934 and in *JRHS* in 1938. Of course, Bunyard’s great publication on roses was his book published by *Country Life: Old Garden Roses* (London, 1936). Of this Graham Stuart Thomas wrote:

And then E. A. Bunyard turned his rare ability to the old roses, and the result, charming, readable, and erudite, *Old Garden Roses*, appeared in 1936. As far as I know this was the first book for over a hundred years which owed its inception to a deep-seated love for all the old roses. His life was prematurely ended, otherwise he would undoubtedly have corrected the several inaccuracies which are to be found in his book, but he gave new zest to the cause of old roses, and collected many varieties together. We of this generation owe much to his guidance.²⁶

The Hon. Robert James (1873–1960) declared in the *JRHS*, LXII (1937), 190–4, that Bunyard had ‘written beautifully and with charm of expression. He has command of his own language as well as knowledge of his subject (190), and ‘Oriflamme’, in *Gardening Illustrated*, LVIII, no. 3016, 26 December 1936, 754, reported that ‘A close study of Mr. Bunyard’s book has given your reviewer, as it will others, so much pleasure that frequently he lost himself in its pages’.

Bunyard’s own copy is in the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society (Case: 930; Shelf: ROS; No.: Bun), with a label that it was ‘From the Library of EDWARD ASHDOWN BUNYARD Purchased in 1940 out of the REGINALD CORY BEQUEST’. Bunyard had had it rebound in red

²⁶ *The Old Shrub Roses*, revd. edn. (London, 1979), p. 38.

leather, with gilt top-edges, and the title in gilt on the spine. At the back are two letters of appreciation: one, 6 May 1937, from Mrs Frederick Love Keays of Great Neck, Long Island, and the other from Vita Nicolson (Vita Sackville-West, 1892–1962). It is dated 12th January 1937, from Sissinghurst Castle, Kent, and is about two typed pages in length. Four paragraphs are detailed points which need not be quoted, but the opening is worth citation:

Dear Mr. Bunyard,

I must really write and tell you with what intense enjoyment I have been reading your book on roses. I have read every word of it and made careful notes at the end. It had the effect of driving me to look at the Wilton Diptych [on which EAB had written, pp. 49–50] in the National Gallery, and has also had the effect of giving me fresh ideas for the garden here. In other words, I want to plant a long rose hedge and also some roses under an overhanging tree. I wonder if you could possibly spare the time to come over here one day and give me your advice. Any day except January 21st. 22nd. and 23rd or February 8th and 9th would suit me.

Bunyard did spare the time. On 20 January 1937 VS-W wrote from Sissinghurst to her husband, Harold Nicolson, in terms which show she was aware that Bunyard was a gourmet as well as a rosarian:

My darling Hadjikins,

I've spent a lovely orgiaical day with Mr. Bunyard, ordering roses recklessly. He came to luncheon, and knowing that he was very epicurean in his tastes I gave him a delicious luncheon: Indian corn on the cob to start with, then woodcock sitting on a croûton with paté de foie gras and a necklace of truffles round it, and Clos Vougeot 1911 to drink – and Chateau Yquem to finish up with – all of which he greatly appreciated. Then when he was well-fed and well-wined (I also gave him one of Richard's cigars!) we went out and talked about roses for the rest of the afternoon.²⁷

²⁷ This letter is now in Sackville-West, V. mss. collection, Manuscripts Department, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. On Bunyard and Sissinghurst see J. Brown, *Vita's Other World: A Gardening Biography of V. Sackville-West* (London, 1985), 131; J. Brown, *Sissinghurst: Portrait of a Garden* (London, 1990), 31 ('[EAB] ... a visitor who amused her'), 72, 110 (Harold Nicolson ordered 20 musk roses from EAB).

So far as I am aware, no reviewer or correspondent commented on a sly Bunyardian piece of humour: the creation of an improbable pseudonym. The Appendix 'The Rose in the Still Room' is ascribed to 'Rosine Rosat'; when we learn from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (which Bunyard must have consulted in its multi-volume version) that *rosine* = 'rose', sb., is recorded once, 1500–20, in Dunbar, and that *rosat*, adj. and sb., is recorded between 1579 and 1674 as a form of *roset*, adj., = 'distilled from roses', recorded between 1398 and 1657 (Rosine Rosat talks about 'a rose vinegar "Roset"', p. 151), then failure to find the author Rosine Rosat is no mystery. This dark lady also figures in the 1937 edition of the annual catalogue 'Vegetables for Epicures' as the author of the prefatory 'Recipes and Reflexions'. Though humorous *noms de plume* were loved by gardening writers of the 1920s and '30s (e.g. Anne Amateur, Aytch Pea, White Lady, Smilax, Sub Rosa, Blackthorn, Ladybird, Ladye of the Flowers, Hortulanus, and see 'Ruslin Lieves' below), Rosine Rosat's 'Reflexions' have an edged wit which is EAB's signature: '[of cabbage:] Prolonged cooking reduces an otherwise honest personality to an insurgent of lamentable power ... [of peas:] Plain boiling water for these when young. And not too much of that. Their preparation demands the absorbed attention which moderns accord to the young. ... Older peas, and if it be not heresy, the first peas of all, which have been a little hardened by adversity, may be simmered with butter, onion and lettuce leaf. Who does not prefer a woman of the world, whose sophistication is an added charm, to the "old girl" whose aggressive maturity knows no ameliorative disguise? But youth should arrive unadorned' (copy in the Lindley Library of the RHS).

Behind *Old Garden Roses* were not only the Bunyard Nurseries which raised 400 varieties of rose, but a colloquy over the years with other great rose growers, both in England and Europe. Thus in his 'Some Rose Memories of 1937' in *The New Flora and Silva* (1938) Bunyard recalls staying with Major Lawrence Johnston (1871–1958) near Menton, and visiting Captain George Warre's garden at Roquebrune (Mrs Norah Warre, 1880–1979, continued gardening there into the 1970s after Captain Warre's death in 1957), and the Hanbury garden of La Mortola, near Ventimiglia; in England he visited Nymans in Sussex, owned by Col. Leonard Messel (1873–1953) who with his gardener, James Comber (c. 1866–1953), raised a great collection of old roses; the Hon. Robert James (1873–1960) who was assembling an

‘enchanted Rose garden’ at St. Nicholas, Richmond, Yorkshire; and the Hon. David Bowes Lyon (1902–61) at St. Paul’s Walden Bury, Hitchin, as well as the institutional gardens of the National Rose Society Trial Ground; Kew; and Wisley. He mentions saving several varieties from the collection of roses of the late Miss Ellen Willmott (1858–1934) who bankrupted herself gardening at Warley Place, Essex, as well as at her properties on the Riviera (cf. also *Old Garden Roses*, p. 77). In his article on rose hunting in 1939 in the same journal, he again begins on the Riviera, staying with his friend, Basil Leng (1898–1979, on whom see below and fn. 35), visiting the garden of Mrs Andrea (about whom I have discovered nothing) at Peymeinade, as well as many of the Riviera and Parisian nurseries.²⁸ It was from La Mortola, according to Graham Stuart Thomas, that Bunyard obtained the ‘particularly fine form’ of *Rosa brunonii*, ‘La Mortola’, and Thomas secured it from Kiftsgate Court in Gloucestershire where Mrs Heather Muir had planted it, and introduced it under the name ‘La Mortola’; Mrs Muir had also obtained the *Rosa filipes* ‘Kiftsgate’ from Bunyard who in turn had probably secured it from the Roseraie de l’Haÿ, near Châtenay-Malabry, Paris, which he visited at the end of his 1939 tour.²⁹

Yet all the time the development of these newer interests in gastronomy and rose-culture was taking place, articles, notes, reviews, and letters on fruit of all kinds and on the bibliography of matters horticultural continued to appear. Official recognition of his gifts also grew. We have already noted that he was on the Council of the Linnean Society from 1924–7, and he remained on its Library Committee until his death. He had joined the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1923 (*JRHS*, XLIX (1924), ii), and became a member of four of its standing committees, and chairman of two: the Fruit and Vegetable Committee in 1929, following in his father’s

²⁸ Most of the biographical details of the gardeners mentioned in this paragraph can be found in: R. Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Horticulturalists ...* (London, 1994); G. S. Thomas, *Recollections of Great Gardeners* (London, 2003); C. Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden Abroad* (London, 1992); V. Russell, *Gardens of the Riviera* (London, 1993).

²⁹ G. S. Thomas, *Climbing Roses Old and New*, revd. edn. (London, 1983), 33, 34.

path, and the Library Committee in 1925.³⁰ He was involved with E. A. Bowles (1865–1954) in the appointment of W. T. Stearn (1911–2001) as Librarian of the Lindley Library in 1932.³¹ Notable recognition came in 1934 when he was awarded the Veitch Memorial Gold Medal ‘for his contributions to pomology’.³² At some point he was elected a Member of the Royal Societies Club; founded in 1894, it was ‘for the association in Membership of Fellows and Members of the principal Learned Societies, Universities, and Institutions of the United Kingdom, India, and the Colonies; Academicians and Associates of the Academies, together with persons distinguished in Literature, Science, and Art, with the object of affording facilities for social intercourse and re-union, while furthering the objects and interests of the Learned Societies’ (*Royal Societies Club*, London, 1914, 11; copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford). Though Bunyard did not appear in the membership list of 1914, that list does give an idea of the Club’s scope and eminence: it included A. C. Benson, Louis Blériot, Lord Curzon, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Arthur Evans, Lord Halsbury, Thomas Hardy, Lord Kitchener, Nansen of the Antarctic (Captain Scott had been a Member), Ivan Pavlov, and Theodore Roosevelt; obviously not all were of this stature but the Society was no mean company. This 1914 list is the only one I know, and, grimly, we only know of Bunyard’s membership because it was in its premises, at 63 St. James’s Street, London, that he shot himself on 19 October 1939.

There is evidence, too, ‘about this time’, of a more popular recognition. Beginning in 1930, the weekly *Gardening Illustrated* ran a series of poems by ‘Poeticus’ under the title ‘Potted Plantsmen’; the second of these biographical sketches was Bunyard (LII, no. 2671, 17 May 1930, 316):

³⁰ F. Stoker’s obituary of EAB, *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London*, 152nd session (1939–40), 362; J. Morgan and A. Richards, op. cit. n. 19, 100; B. Elliott, ‘The gastronomic works of Edward Ashdown Bunyard’, *The Garden* (as the *JRHS* is now called) CXVI (1991), 320–1, p. 321; *JRHS*, LV (1930), cxxi ff.

³¹ M. Allan, *E. A. Bowles & His Garden at Myddelton House [1865–1954]* (London, 1973), 189–90.

³² H. R. Fletcher, *The Story of the Royal Horticultural Society 1804–1968* (London, 1969), 518.

A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

E. A. BUNYARD, F.L.S.,
Pomologist, Author, and principal of
G. Bunyard and Co., of Maidstone.

His initials "E.A.B."
Mean a lot to you and me
When they come below a "Fruit" dissertation.
He marks, and learns, and grows
Before his scholarly pen flows.
What he writes about, he knows
And no man better in his generation.

Four years later, the same journal had an article by Ruslin Lieves (*sic*), 'Round the World in an Hour: A Christmas Broadcast' (LVI, no. 2910, 22 December 1934, 747–8). In this imaginary broadcast there is a charming vignette of EAB and his brother, Norman, engrossed in the library at Allington:

We then trespass upon Edward A. Bunyard and G. Norman Bunyard taking their ease in the former's library at Allington. "E.A." is probably deep either in the very earliest or the very latest treatise on pomology, or he is writing one himself, and "G.N." is amusing himself with a few rhizomes under his new microscope, the present of the Iris Society, inscribed "From his admirers in grateful recognition of his work for the advancement of Iris cultivation and towards stopping the rot." (p. 747)

Scripts survive from 1937–9 of four wireless broadcasts in which EAB took part (see Bibliography for details).

In 1936 Miles Hadfield edited *The Gardener's Companion*, one of a series of *Companions* published by Dent, including *The Motorist's Companion* (1936), *The Golfer's Companion* (1937), and, of course, Bunyard's *The Epicure's Companion* (1937). There were five contributors to Hadfield, EAB's essay being a chapter on 'Gardening for Epicures', a *tour de force* in 24 pages on vegetables, herbs, and fruit: practical, deeply informed, humorous, epigrammatic, and full of literary and contemporary allusion. So we move from Petronius to the Marx brothers:

Those followers of Calvin who have tried to charge the epicure with the grosser indulgences of the gourmand cannot reach us in the garden. Trimalchio and all his crew would be sadly deflated here. No moral reprobation falls upon us as we compare the texture and flavour of our fruits and vegetables and decide to grow only the best. ... (p. 13)

The family of Cucurbitaceae are the Marx brothers of the vegetable garden, protean in their disguises and surprises, not for all tastes, it may be, but it would be unfair to judge them by their worst jokes. (p. 18)

As Edward Cahen said in his review of the book on EAB's contribution: 'a dissertation on vegetables and fruits packed full of good sense and fun as well. Alas! only 24 pages, but what pages!' (*Gardening Illustrated*, LVIII, no. 3008, 31 October 1936, 645)

'Shortly after this', in 1937, EAB had two gastronomic essays in the short-lived journal *Night and Day*. Other contributors to this weekly included Rose Macaulay, V. S. Pritchett, William Empson, Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh, Osbert Lancaster, John Betjeman, Hugh Casson, Pamela Hansford Johnson, Cyril Connolly, T. F. Powys, Stevie Smith, Christopher Isherwood, Alistair Cooke, James Thurber, Henry Miller ... once again, one reflects, no mean company.

However, 1937 was more significant in that it saw the publication of Bunyard's latest book, *The Epicure's Companion*. I have noted earlier in this chapter what a family production this was, with the editorial labour shared between Edward and Lorna, and between them they contributed almost all the articles; the illustrations were by Frances Bunyard, and their sister Marguerite also wrote two brief pieces. There were only six other essayists. EAB was the author of 'Oysters, Vegetables, Herbs, Strange Meats, Game, Foie Gras, Salads, Apple Pie, Cheese, Dessert, Oranges and Lemons, the Ceriman and the Grapefruit, the Banana, the Art of Drinking, the Wine List, a Table of Vintage Years, the Handling and Storage of Wine, the Lineage of Brandy, Rum, Gin, Cyder, Ale and Beer, On Wine-Merchants' Catalogues, Tea, Coffee, and Restaurant Technique'. There was also 'An Epicure's Anthology' chosen by Edward and Lorna Bunyard. EAB did indeed have in gastronomic matters 'the largest and most comprehensive soul'. It is small wonder that he became a member of the Advisory Council of the Wine and Food Society in 1938.

The reviews were admiring. The anonymous reviewer of *Night and Day* (though there are preceding reviews by Evelyn Waugh, I think this one, in a separate section, is anonymous) thought it ‘a very good book indeed’ (4 November 1937, 25), and the *Times Literary Supplement* (reviewer untraced) concluded: ‘This is a book to be read at leisure in the study or the drawing-room, digested in the comfort that follows a perfect meal, and put into practice in shop and kitchen the next day’ (6 November 1937, 854). In more specialist journals, Evelyn, Viscountess Byng of Vimy (1870–1949), who created a great garden at Thorpe Hall, Thorpe-le-Soken, in Essex, wrote a lengthy review in *JRHS* in which she said that:

In his latest book Mr. Bunyard, assisted by able friends, has again given us another of those ironic and witty treatises which readers of his “Anatomy of Dessert” would expect. The present volume is so filled with good things – not only gastronomical – that one is tempted to quote *ad lib.*, and excite the reader’s mental appetite as well as his gastric juices to a high degree of stimulation. There is a vast store of classical knowledge, of culinary expertness, and of humour in these 528 pages, and I thoroughly enjoyed the excursion into such varying provinces. (LXIII, 1938, 142–3, p. 142)

Though Bunyard sent a complimentary copy to Fred Stoker (c. 1879–1943; see n. 6), it would be wrong to see in F.S.’s encomiastic review (*The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, CII, no. 2657, 27 November 1937, 397–8) evidence of Gibbon’s assertion that complimentary copies are the levying of ‘an unavoidable tax of civility and compliment’ (*Memoirs of My Life*, chap. V, ‘*Essai: Service in Militia 1758–62*’). Stoker speaks with the warmth of personal knowledge:

A specialist has been defined as one who knows everything of something and something of everything. Mr. E. A. Bunyard’s wide scholarship, his willingness, nay, eagerness to try all things, and his acute sense of proportion – I speak of what I know – amply qualify him both to edit *The Epicure’s Companion* and to take a greater share in its compilation than any of his experienced and able collaborators. (p. 397)

He concludes:

In spite of its title and undoubted value to those for whom it is primarily written, it is a book for all who enjoy good writing and are not averse to extending their range of knowledge. (p. 398)

‘Ah, you publishing scoundrel!’

(Henry James, *The Aspern Papers* (1888), viii)

Miss Bordereau’s words to the narrator of *The Aspern Papers* are a reproof to all who would pursue the intimate life of a public figure. This biographical essay has so far concentrated on the official life – the books, articles, reviews, the plants, committees. And knowledge of the private man is, from lack of evidence, so fugitive. Of course, one could argue that this does not matter; that great medieval scholar, Helen Waddell, wrote in 1947, ‘All of me that matters is in the books’.³³ It is an austere view, but preferable to the prejudice that public achievement is somehow not expressive of ‘the real man’. For Edward Bunyard, books and fruit and roses, food and wine, were passions, and they tell us much about him.

None the less, we do know of some friendships. That with Norman Douglas (1868–1952), whose pocket-diaries record the sending of 310 items of correspondence to Bunyard, began in 1921 and ended only with EAB’s death in 1939; as this friendship is the subject of my later chapter ‘Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas’, I will say no more here.³⁴ Not so well known is his friendship with Basil Leng (1898–1979), and as this was, I believe, a significant relationship some fullness in my account of it is justified.³⁵ William Basil St. Quentin Leng was born on 20 August 1898 at Ecclesall Bierlow in the West Riding of Yorkshire. After Wellington, the

³³ D. Felicitas Corrigan, *Helen Waddell: A Biography* (London, 1986), 347.

³⁴ See also my ‘E. A. Bunyard and Norman Douglas’, *Norman Douglas 3. Symposium* ed. Wilhelm Meusburger and Helmut Swozilek (Bregenz, 2005), 73–9.

³⁵ The account here reproduces part of my ‘Edward Bunyard by the Mediterranean’, *The Mediterranean Garden*, no. 38, October 2004, 5–14. It gives me the greatest pleasure to acknowledge the help, by correspondence and telephone, which I have received from Mrs Gladys Clarke of Domme-en-Périgord who knew Leng.

First World War (he was a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards), and two years at Christ Church, Oxford (1919–21), he spent a brief period in the office of the family business of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, the sale of which a year or two later to the Kemsley empire for over a million pounds would give a pecuniary vitality to his life. In January 1922 he took up a post as gardener to Compton Mackenzie on the Channel Island of Herm (an appointment recalled in Mackenzie's *My Life and Times: Octave Five: 1915–1923* (London, 1966), 214–15), and then on Jethou. It was at this time that Norman Douglas wrote on 8 December 1924 to 'Dear Bunny': 'I am sure you would like Leng, the bottanist [*sic*]. His address is Isle of Jethou, Guernsey. I fancy he is in London now, but don't know for certain. Why not fix up some appointment with him?' (Letter A8 in my chapter 'Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas') In 1927 he purchased a house at Socoa, near St. Jean-de-Luz and Biarritz, and transformed a clay bank covered with rough grass into a garden of bulbs, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Bunyard had clearly taken up Douglas's suggestion to fix up an appointment with him for after a visit to Socoa in September 1930 he described in an article, 'A Seaside Garden', Leng's successes in gardening 'exposed ... to the full force of the great breakers which make so grand a spectacle' (*Country Life*, 1 November 1930, 563–4, p. 563). Three years later saw Leng and Bunyard as joint authors of an article, rich in historical reference, 'The Camellia in Europe' in *The New Flora and Silva* (January 1933, 123–9). Then around 1936–7 Leng purchased an old farmhouse, La Ferme des Orangers, on Cap d'Antibes. Besides himself creating a garden full of interesting plants, he became over the years the adviser and friend of many of the great gardeners on the Riviera: Mrs George (Norah) Warre (formerly Mrs Emerson Bainbridge) and the Villa Roquebrune on Cap Martin, on which Leng and Patrick M. Synge wrote a beautifully illustrated account in the *JRHS* (October 1966); Julien Marnier-Lapostolle and the Villa les Cèdres on Cap Ferrat; Major Lawrence Johnston and La Serre de la Madone in the Gorbio valley above Menton; Arpad Plesch and the Villa La Léonina at Beaulieu; Charles, Vicomte de Noailles and the Villa Noailles at Grasse; and Pierre and Nicole Champin and their garden, La Chèvre d'Or at Biot, near Antibes. Leng was indeed a man who touched many lives: besides Norman Douglas with whom he travelled in Italy (there are several references in Mark Holloway's *Norman Douglas: A Biography*, London,

1976), we find him in a photograph of a ski party at Davos in 1939 with amongst others Eddy Sackville-West, Peggy Strachey and Cyril Connolly (reproduced in Clive Fisher, *Cyril Connolly: A Nostalgic Life* (London, 1995), facing p. 306), in the company of the composer William Walton (mentioned in Nancy Cunard, *Grand Man: Memories of Norman Douglas* (London, 1954), p. 77), and there are delightful accounts of plant-hunting expeditions in the company of his brother Kyrle and Robert Gatherne-Hardy in the latter's *Three Acres and a Mill* (London, 1939).

In May 1939 Bunyard stayed with Leng at La Ferme des Orangers; his article 'Rose Hunting in 1939' (*The New Flora and Silva*, November 1939, 11–17) opens: 'My Rose year ... began in the Riviera, where, to the tune of nightingales and the scent of Orange-blossom, I settled in a friendly house for a few weeks' holiday'. Proof that the 'friendly house' was Leng's comes in Bunyard's epicurean account, 'A Few Meals in France' (*Wine and Food*, Autumn 1939, 223–9) of what must be the same visit:

'Come and stay here,' said my friend B, who lives on the Cap d'Antibes, 'the roses are out and the orange blossom, too.' Who could resist such an invitation? – and I knew that the nightingales would also be singing! ... At Antibes, the nightingales were already at work and, better still, my host had an excellent Italian cook, long resident in France, who combined the best of both cuisines. Next morning came marmalade made from oranges grown on the estate, my first experience of such a home-grown product. It was curiously Oxfordian in flavour, but that cannot have been due to the accent of my host.

The location on Cap d'Antibes, 'B' for Basil, and the Oxford accent all fit; and Mrs Gladys Clarke of Domme-en-Périgord, who knew Leng, has most kindly informed me that his cook, Thérèse, was Italian (from Turin), and that the *ferme* ('estate' is rather a grand word, apparently, for its size) did indeed live up to its name with orange trees from which Leng's marmalade was made.

Leng's was not the only friendly house for Bunyard on the Riviera. His earlier article, 'Some Rose Memories of 1937' (*The New Flora and Silva*, January 1938, 116–21) begins:

A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The Rose year of 1937 began very pleasantly for me in late March at Major Johnston's hospitable home near Mentone. In my room stood a generous bowl of Roses, magnificent under the electric light.

Lawrence Johnston (1871–1958) was the creator of great gardens at Hidcote in Gloucestershire and at La Serre de la Madone on the Riviera; he was some seven years older than Bunyard, and there is not quite the same indication of closeness with Bunyard as there is between EAB and Leng, some twenty years younger. Both men, like Douglas, survived beyond Bunyard's terrible death in 1939, Leng dying on 1 May 1979 (see Death Notice in the *Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 1979, 36).

Clearly, from their correspondence (seven letters from 1937 printed in the Appendix to the chapter on 'Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas'), warm relations also existed between Bunyard and Ian Parsons (1906–80), a partner in Chatto and Windus who published the second edition of *The Anatomy of Dessert* in 1933 (and a further reprint in its Phoenix Library of Food and Drink in 1936). Parsons was a highly literary man (a First in English at Cambridge), and was behind the short-lived weekly *Night and Day* (1937), to which Bunyard contributed two articles; he was keen on both gardening and travel, and 'a capacity for friendship was perhaps his greatest gift' (*Times* obituary, 31 October 1980, 14). All these interests and qualities sparkle in the letters between the two men. There is Bunyard's playful quotation from Pope (letter 1), and there is talk of his joining Parsons and his wife for dinner in London (letter 2), and for luncheon or tea at the Parsons' Sussex home when EAB can enjoy the garden (letter 7). There is mention of fruit and gardens and the Riviera where Bunyard thinks Parsons and his wife should join him, Norman Douglas, and others in that set (letter 3). It is evident that Douglas was a key figure in a web of friends that also included David and Heather Low, Pino Orioli, and Charles Prentice, a senior partner in Chatto (see notes to letters 2 and 7 for biographical details). The tone is light and amusing – 'Chianti is a wonderful germicide' writes Bunyard (letter 3) on hearing of an infection suffered by Parsons's wife. None the less, one must also note that the epistolary forms of address are 'Dear Parsons' and 'Dear Bunyard' – not the more intimate 'Dear Bunny' used by Norman Douglas from at least August 1924 onwards (see Douglas letter, A6).

‘Bunny’ was also how he was called by Maurice Healy (1887–1943) in his moving obituary of EAB in *Wine and Food* (Winter 1939, 324–6). Healy was a bachelor, barrister (a K.C. from 1931), broadcaster, and an epicure of charm and humour with a ‘comfortable rotundity indicative of good living’ (*Times* obituary, 11 May 1943, 6; see also the Memoir by Sir Norman Birkett in Healy’s *Stay Me With Flagons: A Book About Wine and Other Things*, 2nd edn. (London, 1949), 9–14). Besides *Stay Me With Flagons* (1940), he was the author of *Claret and the White Wines of Bordeaux* (London, 1934), and like Bunyard was a contributor to *Wine and Food* and on the Advisory Council of the Wine and Food Society. His obituary of Bunyard resists summary (it is printed at the end of this volume), but some aspects should be noted here. Healy wrote as one ‘who cherished his friendship’, and he spoke as one who knew him well: ‘his silences were as companionable as his speech, and it was friendly and pleasant to have him sitting at the other side of the hearth, whether he happened to be browsing in a casual book, or listening to the gramophone, or talking.’ Healy was a Catholic, but the absence of formal religion in Bunyard’s outlook drew a generous response:

Bunyard always seemed to me to be ethical rather than religious. His principles were firm and excellent; but I cannot recall any occasion when they were expressed in the language of any formal creed. Kindness was in his eyes the first of virtues; and he was not a man who failed to practise what he preached.

As a Catholic, and at a time when suicide was not only a crime but when the Everlasting’s canon ’gainst self-slaughter could make condemnation seem just, Bunyard’s suicide must have aroused a particular anguish in Healy, and as a friend it provoked that guilt which the friend of a suicide so often feels – could the act have been foreseen and so prevented? So Mozart’s

G Minor Quintet was his idea of perfection; and perhaps I ought to have recognized in his affection for its pathos an omen: a confession that he too knew what it was to sorrow, without Mozart’s gift ‘to ease his breast of melodies’, and throw away sadness as a thing, beautiful but melancholy ... Many a night did we sit here and listen together; and I never guessed the secret.

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It is the more affecting that in the fourth paragraph Healy moves from the earlier 'Edward Bunyard' and 'Bunyard' to the intimate sobriquet 'Bunny'. And Healy's concluding sentences have a dignity and goodness and hope which are a testament to Bunyard's qualities and Healy's friendship:

Into the last shadows let us not follow him; we know not what they concealed, or in what secret temple his soul may have found its peace. But I hope to meet him again, as I hope for my own salvation. I feel that there is another garden, the secrets of which are delighting his newly-opened eyes; there are books he never heard of that now are beckoning him from one to another in eager and excited exploration. Mozart may not be conducting the G Minor, but the *Kleine Nacht-Musik* or some other gay piece is surely in his ears. But all the time he is searching, seeking. He is looking for the nurseries of Heaven. And may a divine welcome await him there.

Some cold fate
awaits us at the ends of the earth.

Like the leaves we are coming within
sight of the final river,
its *son et lumière*
and breath of the night sea.
As if ghosts already
we search our pockets for the Stygian fare.

(Derek Mahon, 'October in Hyde Park')

The biographer, however conscious he may be of his intrusiveness, and with Miss Bordereau's accusation still ringing in his ears, must seek to penetrate a little those last shadows of which Maurice Healy spoke. By the end of December 1938 Bunyard had 'produced a report [for the Royal Horticultural Society] on the organisation of emergency food growing for

³⁶ B. Elliott, *The Royal Horticultural Society: A History 1804–2004* (Chichester, 2004), 44.

wartime';³⁶ it must have seemed to him a saddening echo of his 'Increasing the Home Fruit Supply' in *JRHS* (XLIII, 1918–19), and 'How to Increase Supplies of Vegetables' in *The Garden* (LXXIX, 1915). The new year, 1939, brought fresh responsibilities and honour: he replaced Frederick Chittenden as Keeper of the Lindley Library,³⁷ and resigned from the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society in order to become the Editor of its *Journal*.³⁸ The pattern of previous years continued. In May his rose hunting began on the Riviera, staying with Basil Leng (see above), and led to articles in *The New Flora and Silva*, *Wine and Food*, and *Country Life* (the last on 'Wild Flowers of the Riviera'); the tone is free of premonition – in *Wine and Food* (Autumn 1939) he promises to reveal the name of his favourite hotel in Paris 'in a month or so, after my next visit' (229), and his article in *Country Life* concludes with another promise, to write on a Damask Rose 'in another place' (29 July 1939, 488), which was his posthumously published piece in *The New Flora and Silva* (November 1939, 11–17, pp. 13–14). Other articles, notes, and letters flowed beyond the first half of 1939. There were two broadcasts on horticultural topics, the latter on 16 July (see Bibliography, s.v. 'Wireless Broadcasts').

We cannot be certain of EAB's mood in 1939. Clearly, having produced a report for the RHS on food-growing in wartime, dark prospects cannot always have been absent from his mind. But the enthusiast for plants and seed and food and wine can be remarkably disregarding of the disagreeable, of what lies beyond the range of the pleasurable pursuit. One recalls Norman Douglas's letter of 23 March 1935 (Letter C1 in my chapter 'Edward Bunyard and Norman Douglas') in which he writes: 'Don't think I should care about Germany any more, seeds or no seeds'; it sounds as if, unlike the more aware and tougher Douglas, Bunyard's determination to obtain seeds was not going to be thwarted or disturbed by evidence of Hitler's policies. In this attitude he was, of course, far from unique in the 1930s.

André Simon provides an interesting and instructive instance of how a passion can develop into a moral sclerosis. In *Tables of Content* (1933) he describes, still with a sense of astonishment and perspective, a 'dreary experience' of a dinner 'at one of the City Companies' on 24 February 1931:

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 170

³⁸ *JRHS*, LXV (April 1940), xxvii.

A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Some two hundred grown-up men, mostly grown old, in the same uninspiring uniform, eating and drinking something like £500 worth of food and wines, puffing away somnolently at cigars or cigarettes, whilst unemployment figures are mounting up to the three million mark, whilst India is in open revolt, Australia bankrupt and the whole world in a state of chaos. Wonderful. (107)

But by 1938 the character of superior isolation which Julian Symons detected in the Wine and Food Society (see n. 25) has developed into a pachydermatous covering which prevents a sensible and proportionate attitude to the political world and the part which gastronomy can play in it. An editorial by Simon in *Wine and Food* (Spring 1938) speaks of massacres in Spain and China, dictatorships, and class warfare, and then declares:

But there is still a patch of blue sky, a bright patch which refuses to be obscured by all the 'black-out' orders and experiments of panicky Government Departments. It is the Wine and Food Society now in the fifth year of its useful existence. Its message is the same as ever, but it is delivered with ever-growing effect as the Society grows in numbers and influence. Its creed is the same in spite of all the depressing happenings since its foundation. It still believes and preaches that it would be far saner to give school children a plateful of good soup every morning rather than gas-masks; better to build kitchens where people could be taught how to cook rather than shelters where they can take cover during air raids. Air raids may never come, but dyspepsia is here already ... Fears and hatreds, the blue and black devils which will ruin this fair world of ours if we let them, rise from acid, sour, pinched, sagging, ill-fed stomachs. They make many victims; they drive many out of their reason or of life, but they have no hold upon the sane, well-nourished optimism of the Members of the Wine and Food Society. (1)

Wonderful.

On 3 September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany; on Thursday, 19 October Edward Bunyard shot himself in his room at the Royal Societies Club, 63 St James's Street, Piccadilly. There are two accounts, both from William T. Stearn (1911–2001), then Librarian of the Lindley Library, of

the day of the suicide. The first is briefly reported by Dr Brent Elliott:

On 19 October 1939, he [Bunyard] left the Library at mid-day, telling Stearn he would be back after lunch to continue work, and went to the Royal Societies Club, where he shot himself. (Stearn, describing the incident, would remark that he must have had the gun in his pocket while talking to him.)³⁹

The second, and detailed, account is in a letter to me from Dr Stearn, written in the most difficult circumstances on 19 January 2001, a little over three months before his death on 9 May; I must record my profound gratitude to Dr Stearn for his response, and the letter is worthy of quotation in full:

17 High Park Road
Kew Gardens
Richmond, Surrey
TW9 4BL

19 Jan 2001

Dear Dr Wilson

Your letter of 2 Dec. 2000 came when I was lying helpless in hospital with a broken right arm. I was released only last week and am learning how to walk and write again, both with difficulty.

To get Mr. Chittenden removed from the directorship of Wisley, the late Lord Aberconway had him appointed Technical Adviser and Editor of R.H.S. publications and Keeper of the Lindley Library, which was subject to a Library Committee with E. A. Bunyard Chairman. I was appointed as Librarian, being interviewed by E. A. Bunyard and E. A. Bowles [in 1932: see above and n. 31].

One morning Bunyard said to me that we would deal with library business in the afternoon. He never came back which was not surprising. When on Air Raid Precautions this early morning someone showed me a newly arrived newspaper reporting the death of a noted rosarian, E. A. Bunyard. 'Did I know him?'

³⁹ See B. Elliott, *op. cit.*, 170.

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I went up to the R.H.S. and unfortunately it was true. He did *not* normally carry a revolver but kept it in a drawer except when he went out to his orchard to shoot bullfinches, those lovely pests of fruit trees in bloom. Evidently he had brought it to London with a set purpose. He went to the Royal Societies Club and there shot himself.

The inquest revealed that he was in good health and [?no] suspected cancer.

My supposition is that he was a victim of the War. He was now in debt; nobody bought fruit trees. Food-rationing had begun. He could no longer roam the continent for good wine. In short the good things of life for him were ceasing. There was too little to live for.

He had intended to bequeath his splendid library to the Lindley Library, but his creditors had priority. I accordingly went down to Bunyard's house at Maidstone and spent several days selecting books to be bought at valuation. I can tell you more about this.

Excuse this horrible scrawl.

Yours sincerely,

William T. Stearn

A propos the last paragraph, in a subsequent telephone conversation on 26 January 2001 Dr Stearn told me that Bunyard's library contained a remarkably large number of books on sex, including Havelock Ellis, but no specific titles were recalled.

Death was not instantaneous; according to his Death Certificate he died 'On way to St. George's Hospital' from 'Gunshot wound in head'. The notices of death placed in the newspapers were naturally euphemistic: *The Times* (23 October 1939, 1) and *Telegraph* (23 October 1939, 12) said 'suddenly in London'. A hint at more was given in the weekly *Gardening Illustrated*'s obituary: 'the death last week, in tragic circumstances' (LXI, no. 3164, 28 October 1939, 694). The *Manchester Guardian*'s news report (21 October 1939, 10) was explicit; Bunyard:

was found dead at the Royal Societies' Club, St. James's Street, London, S.W., on Thursday, after a shot had been heard. A revolver was by his side. ...

Lieutenant Colonel [F. R.] Durham, Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society, with whom he had been working in London, said to a reporter:

“Mr. Bunyard was the greatest fruit expert alive, and one of the most knowledgeable people on all horticultural books. He had published a great many himself, particularly on fruit trees, roses, and vegetables.”

Bunyard’s local paper, the *Kent Messenger* (21 October 1939, 4), was equally frank; under the headline ‘Head of Famous Maidstone Firm Found Shot/ Mr. A.E. [sic] Bunyard Dies at His Club in the West End’ it reported that ‘Mr. Bunyard was found shot on Thursday night, in his room at the Royal Societies’ Club in St. James’s Street, W.’

The inquest was held at Paddington on Tuesday, 24 October 1939, but its archival record has not survived (only 10% apparently are preserved). The *Evening Standard* (24 October 1939, 7) reported the verdict that Bunyard had ‘killed himself while of unsound mind’, and the account in the *Kent Messenger* (28 October 1939, 5) added that ‘it was stated that he dreaded the effect of the war on his business’.

Even now, however, it is possible to advance beyond the terse reports of the inquest, and consider what may have made Bunyard’s mind unsound. First, there is the fact of his bankruptcy. Whether he realized the full extent of his debts must remain unclear, but that ‘he dreaded the effect of the war on his business’ indicates that, at the least, he must have communicated some anxieties to others; they may have been deep enough of themselves to disturb the balance of his mind. The probate document of 1 February 1940, which wrongly locates his death as ‘at Vincent Square Westminster London SW1’ (headquarters of the Royal Horticultural Society), gives the gross value of his estate as £918.11s.5d, which was £311.2s.3d. net. His father’s wealth at death had been £19,268.8s.3d, though his brother Norman’s was to be £58,177.⁴⁰ In his will of 19 July 1935 clause 5 declared:

I BEQUEATH my library of Pomological Books dealing with fruit and its cultivation now at my house at Allington to the Royal Horticultural Society free of duty provided they are willing to preserve and maintain the

⁴⁰ See J. Morgan, ‘Bunyard, Edward Ashdown (1878–1939)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), viii, 711–12, p. 712, for the wealth at death figures for George and Norman Bunyard; the gross figure for Edward is also given.

library as a complete Collection with my name for the use of all students of Pomology and failing their acceptance of this condition then it shall fall into and form part of my residuary estate.

As Stearn's letter says, Bunyard's financial position meant that creditors had priority, and the RHS had to buy the books it wanted at valuation. The disposal of Bunyard's library was conducted by Hodgson's of Chancery Lane, London. The records of this firm are now in the British Library, and the valuation of EAB's books can be found in Additional MS. 54710, 'Valuations 1939-41, pp. 74-83, carried out on 13 April 1940 for Whitehead Thomas & Urmston of 9 King Street [the street in which Bunyard was born], Maidstone', Edward Urmston being one of two executors and trustees appointed by EAB in his will; the locations of the books included a 'study' (pp. 76-77) and a 'library' (pp. 78-81). The value of books on botany was £200 for the Lindley Library and £165 for Wisley; there were three other small valuations: for Mr G. St. Clair Feilden (author of 4 works on tropical and subtropical fruits for the Imperial Bureau of Fruit Production, East Malling, Kent, 1932-41); Mr J. Neame (presumably J. Armstrong Neame, author of *Among the Meadow and Alpine Flowers of Northern Italy*, London, 1937); and W. T. Stearn (see above).

The auction at Hodgson's took place on Thursday-Friday, 13-14 June 1940, which, oddly, was after the probate date of 1 February 1940. Bunyard's name was not mentioned, and the cover's title was 'A Catalogue of Books from Various Sources comprising Modern Books from the Library of a Gentleman ... with other properties, including ... the writings of Norman Douglas, several with A.L.s [autograph letters signed] ... A Collection of Books on Botany, Horticulture, Pomology, etc. ...'. Fortunately, another item in the Hodgson archive, British Library Add. MS. 54632, 'Abstract of Proprietors Jany. 1940 to August 1946', pages unnumbered, s.v. 'Sale No 6, 1939-40 June 13-14/40', identifies the owners of all the lots, giving as 'Books Bought Bunyard' lots 1-29, 73-131 (105-115 were the Douglas books), 195-223, 279-284, 375-399, 416-458 (the catalogue's sub-heading 'A Collection of Books on Botany, Horticulture, Arboriculture, Pomology, &c.' comes after lot 430, a section which runs until lot 571*), 461-504, 507-567, and 569-571*. Another Hodgson document, BL Add. MS. 54629, p. 60, gives the sums realized: on the First Day (lots 1-328) 'Books

Bought re Bunyard' came to £195.4s., and on the Second Day his books made £431.19s., giving a total of £627.3s.

The books of English and other literatures will be discussed in my chapter 'Edward Bunyard and Literature', but a few comments here can amplify Stearn's remark on the large number of books on sex (see above). The phrase 'on sex' has some ambiguity, but I would be inclined to exclude, for example, Rabelais (lot 94), Restif de la Bretonne's *Monsieur Nicolas* in translation by R. Crowdy Mathers with an introduction by Havelock Ellis (lot 97; an edition limited to 825 numbered subscribed sets); Joyce's *Ulysses* (lot 117), Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (lot 129), and probably Casanova's *Memoirs* (lots 95, 96). Only five lots seem to qualify as 'on sex' in the narrower sense: Marius Boisson, *Anthologie Universelle des Baisers*, 5 vols., 1911–12 (lot 83; not in the Bodleian or the British Library; I am indebted to Ms Sara Smith for tracing a copy); H. E. Meier, *L'Amour Grec dans l'Antiquité*, 1930 (lot 84; untraced); Hans Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*, 1932 (lot 218); Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 6 vols., 1914–18 (lot 219), and Curt Thesing, *Genealogy of Love*, 1933 (lot 220). The four lots I have seen of these five are all serious, scholarly books: Boisson's work is a sober, sociological and literary anthology of the erotic customs of the whole world (England: ii. 213–40) from ancient times to the present, covering every species of the erotic (heterosexual, homosexual, pederastic, etc.; Moinaux' poem 'Les Amours d'un Épicurien', i. 103, would doubtless have had its attractions), and with only one illustration, the frontispiece, high art and untillating, per volume; Licht was a Professor at Leipzig; Havelock Ellis needs no comment as a serious author; and Thesing's treatment is biological, anthropological, and medical, with only one chapter out of eight on 'Love in Human Beings' (the others being on all manner of insects and animals). To lot 84 one must add 19 'others in French'; to lot 218 '10 others by Havelock Ellis'; and to lot 220 14 'others similar'. There are, then, some 47 serious but unpornographic works 'on sex'.

Knowledge or fear of bankruptcy would be bad enough, but behind the present, and the grim future, lay on the one hand what must have seemed a cursed past of Bunyards known for financial profligacy and incompetence, and on the other the stern and heroic model of George Bunyard who had rescued the firm from disaster. Bad and good examples can seem equally minatory, and Edward Bunyard had both. Charles Bunyard's 'bolting' and

Harry Bunyard's 'bunking' set an all too ready precedent that escape was an option. Throughout this chapter we have heard that EAB was more the connoisseur and scholar than the flinty man of business; the peals of the 'joy rides', as he termed his adventures in unprofitability, now sound like the tolling of a passing-bell. 1896 must have seemed a long time ago.

The *Kent Messenger* (21 October 1939, 4) said that he 'had lived a secluded life in a bungalow on the nurseries at Allington', but this ignores his metropolitan life, not only his varied work with the Royal Horticultural Society and its committees but the gastronomic clubbability of the Saintsbury Club and the Wine and Food Society. It ignores, too, his visits to his Mediterranean and Riviera friends – Norman Douglas, Pino Orioli, Reggie Turner, Basil Leng, Lawrence Johnston. And when the *Kent Messenger* reports that 'He had been extremely depressed by the war and had not had a night's sleep since it began', it is, I think, a depression caused not only by the war's financial consequences, but because it brought to a close a whole European dimension to his life, which had begun in 1900 when he went to France to learn French nursery practice, and had grown into 'that sunlit Riviera world where Death seemed not present, and all was friends, roses, and the delights of Epicurus to the tune of nightingales'.⁴¹ Bunyard was not the only one to feel that the war was to be the end of the world he had known and loved. The medieval scholar Joan Evans has written:

Those of my generation who would still be alive after the war would be, I felt, *survivors*: people who would dwell uneasily as aliens in a world that was not theirs. We should be like the people who lived through the French Revolution into the nineteenth century, and find ourselves strangers in a world that had forgotten the old securities, the old graces, the old forms of thought, and the old ways of living. We should seem even older than we were, for our hopes would have vanished in smoke and flame and to our tired eyes the new dawn would seem cold and grey.⁴²

Bunyard was not to be a survivor. Joan Evans's elegiac words are hauntingly echoed by Stearn's:

⁴¹ E. Wilson, *art. cit.* in n. 35.

⁴² J. Evans, *Prelude & Fugue: An Autobiography* (London, 1964), 158.

My supposition is that he was a victim of the War. He was now in debt; nobody bought fruit trees. Food-rationing had begun. He could no longer roam the continent for good wine. In short the good things of life for him were ceasing. There was too little to live for.

Maurice Healy wrote in his obituary of the 'major shock' of Bunyard's death to all his friends. To his mother, aged 88, it was more than that. On 24 October 1939, the day of the inquest, she died of what the Death Certificate called 'Auricular Fibrillation' and 'Myocarditis'; her heart had, indeed, given out. Lorna, Edward's sister, who had edited and contributed to *The Epicure's Companion* (1937) with her brother, was present at the death, and registered it the next day. Edward's mother had lost two sons in their childhood; now she had lost a third. She was buried in her husband's grave in the churchyard at Mereworth.

And so it was over. The collection of 400 varieties of old roses was sold in 1939;⁴³ after William Stearn had purchased the volumes wanted by the Royal Horticultural Society, the remainder of Bunyard's library was sold, as we have seen, by auction at Hodgson's in London, the following year. Eventually the apples went, too, though Norman Bunyard kept the firm going until George Bunyard & Company Limited was amalgamated with Laxton Bros. of Brampton, Huntingdon, as Bunyards and Laxtons in 1964.⁴⁴ Today the sign painted on the wall of a house beside Barming Station, near Maidstone, bidding passengers 'Alight here' for George Bunyard & Co. is almost as illegible as the inscription on George and Katharine Bunyard's grave.

Edward's niece, Miss Katharine Bunyard, daughter of Edward's brother, Norman, has told me (letter of 6 November 2000) that 'His suicide was

⁴³ G. S. Thomas, *The Old Shrub Roses*, revd. edn. (London, 1979), p. 19.

⁴⁴ The first catalogue of the new firm, with a letter from Bunyard's of Summer, 1964, is preserved in the Lindley Library. For further details on the end of the old firm see A. Major, 'The Bunyards of Kent', Part Three, *Bygone Kent*, XII no. 5 (May 1991), 275–80, pp. 279–80.

a taboo subject in the family, and as I was only a schoolgirl at the time, very little was discussed at home'. However, she knew that he had been cremated, but did not know where or what became of the ashes (though she conjectured that they might have been scattered near his parents' grave at Mereworth).

Nine years earlier, at the fall of the leaf, 'E.A.B.' of 'Kent', in a letter to *Gardening Illustrated* (LII, no. 2697, 15 November 1930, 738) had contemplated his death and his memorial. He began with a description of a bed of Japanese Cherries, 'their leaves aflame with gold and red':

Yeshino, at this time the brightest in red and gold; Hisakura, later and paler in red, but wonderful in yellow, shades; Subhirtella autumnalis, very rich in claret to scarlet; Ukon in gold; and our European Avium flora pleno, showing a richer crimson, all make a cheerful picture.

Then his last words took on a tone and tint both autumnal and shaken free of melancholy:

And musing in the death of summer, I came to the view that for a memorial I shall have planted an avenue of Japanese Cherries; no gloomy Cypress for me, despite its age-long lore. No! Let us add a little to the beauty of the country; 50 years ahead it will need all we can provide.

