

Anita Rosaline Bruce Binnerts was born in Rio de Janeiro on 21 Nov 1913. Her father Dr J C Willis was Director of the Botanic Gardens there a job which came to an abrupt end in 1917 and they returned to the UK in the Lusitania; they went to Cambridge where Anita met her two older sisters, aged 11 and 12, for the first time. Her father then taught Botany and did research into his theory of the evolution of plants until the ill-health of his wife forced him to go to Montreaux in Switzerland where he lived until his death in 1957. Anita went to school at the Perse at Cambridge, and then in Edinburgh. (her reports show that she was a average pupil but the Headmistress was mainly concerned about her untidiness! Anita's mother, Millie, died in 1931 and Anita finished her education in the UK and then went to Geneva University where she read French and German. She had really grown up as an only child as both her sisters were already married.

Anita always said that the 1930's were the highpoint of her life and one can see why. Her elder sister had married a wealthy man and Anita had the run of their large house in Sussex. She also visited her other sister who lived for much of that decade in Barbados and she went round Europe with her father who was a great traveller. She was very spoilt but she did not seem to have many friends of her own age or to have done much work although she took a secretarial course.

At the outbreak of the War Anita based herself at her sisters home in Sussex and worked as a secretary at the Mond Nickel HQ in London, commuting daily when the Blitz started. She met and fell for an RAF officer who commuted with her but he was killed by a German bomber that unloading unused bombs after attacking London. When the Blitz abated she moved back to London and in 1944 or early 1945 joined UNNRA, the UN organisation that tried to guide the rebuilding of Europe after the War and she was posted to France and then Germany. She lived in an Officers Mess in N. Germany where she met Adrian Binnerts, an accountant, who was separated from his wife. He was 16 years older than Anita.

Anita left UNNRA and took work with the UN in Geneva to be near her father who had been separated from his children throughout the War. Adrian joined her when labour permits allowed and they lived in Geneva, finally marrying in the mid 1950s when Adrian got his divorce. Just before that they had moved to the old family house, Waygateshaw near Carlisle Scotland, But this was quite beyond them both Physically and financially. It had large grounds which they could not maintain and the house was in a very poor state. They started a poultry business without taking any proper advice, but based on advice given by a Californian friend who had never been to England. It was all a disaster; they sold up and moved briefly to Switzerland - her father had died in 1957, and after they had cleared his flat they moved to Thornton Steward "because they liked it. They both had jobs in Bedale until Adrian became too frail; he died in April 1981 so Anita spent 20 years alone in The Villa which was far too big for her.

Anita was an anachronism, she lived in the past and her viewpoints and opinions were those of her father and she never changed them. There was only one way of doing something