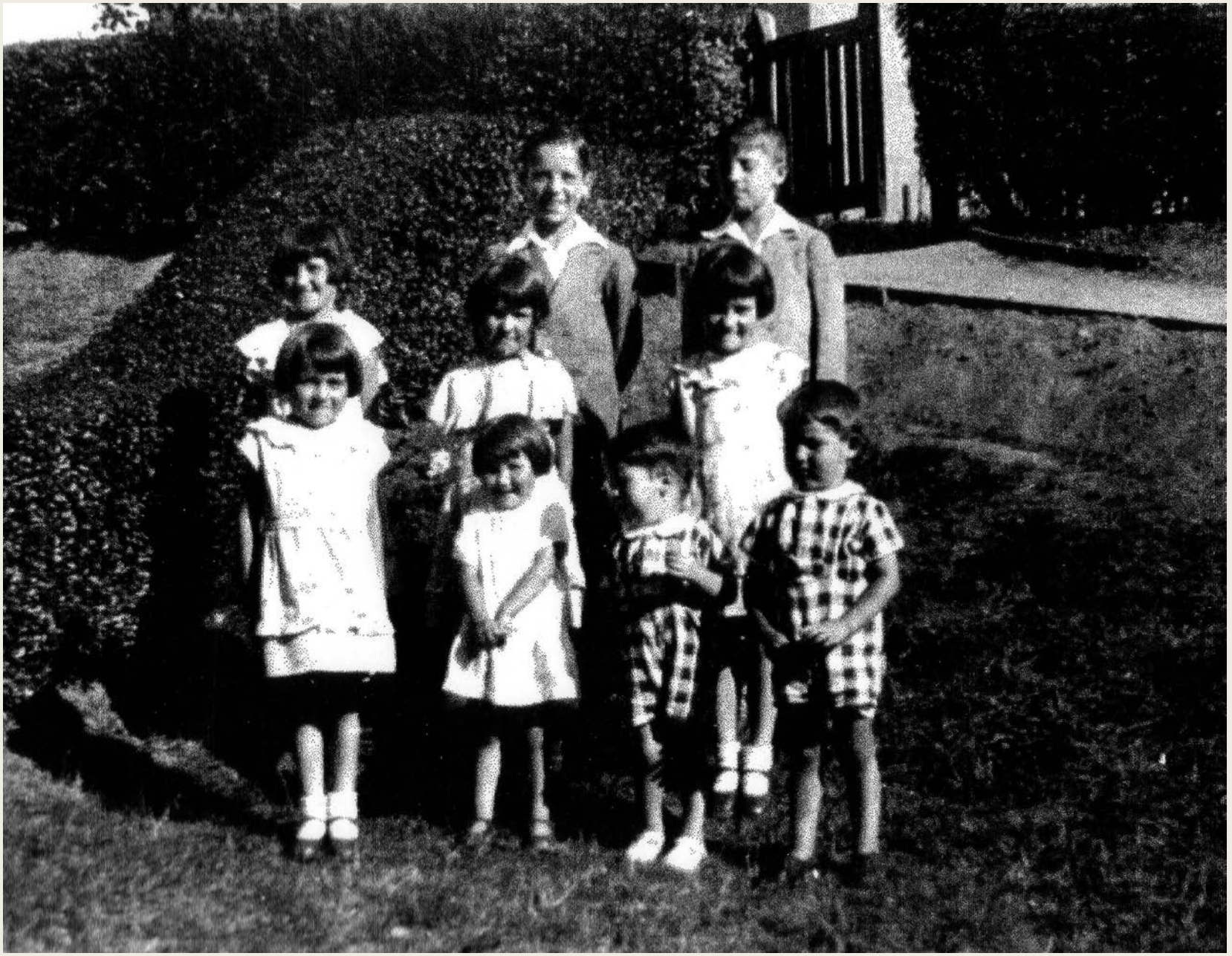
ALZHEIMER'S AND ME

John Jennings



Family link leads to breakthrough on Alzheimer's disease

By THOMSON PRENTICE, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE cause of an inherited form of Alzheimer's disease has been discovered by British scientists, offering the prospect of new drugs to treat it.

The disease is the most common progressive brain

tein known to form deposits in the brains of Alzheimer's sufferers. Amyloid is part of the body's ageing process and is associated with degenerative illnesses, including rheumatoid arthritis.

but symptoms seldom appear before the age of 60. The disease debilitates nerve cells in the brain, shrinking the volume of brain substance, and gradually destroying memory and personality.

dren Emily and John who have been involved in research into Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease breakthrough made

Family key may unlock the cure

SCIENTISTS have made a breakthrough which could lead to a cure for Alzheimer's disease — thanks to a Notts family.

Mrs Carol Jennings, of Ruddington, wrote to doctors working on the disease, which brings on senility, because her father and some of his relations developed it.

Because her father had ten brothers and sisters, four of whom were struck by the disease, the doctors wanted to study the family in more detail.

Now after three years' research, the doctors have discovered the particular gene which triggers the hereditary form of the disease.

And they have developed a test which shows people in families with a history of Alzheimer's whether they will develop it in later life.

"It is marvellous news and has made all the effort made by the family worthwhile," said Mrs Jennings, 36, of Loughborough Road.

Symptons

Carol's crusade began

'We had a 50/50 chance of senility'

Carol persuaded her aunts and uncles to give blood samples and, after she drew a family tree showing who had developed the disease, they sought funding from the Medical Research Council for an in-depth study.

Delight

But by 1987, Carol's dad had to go into full-time care, later to be joined by two of his sisters.

By now the family knew they had a heriditary strain of the disease and everyone had a 50/50 chance of developing it.

Carol knows that if she gets it, chances are one of her two children — Emily, nine, or six-year-old John — will develop it in later life.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