

**Rebel's Lane**

**By**

**Stephen Petchey**



## Contents

Contents.....	3
Foreword.....	5
Dedication.....	6
Chapter 1 Napier Avenue.....	8
Custard.....	13
Chapter 2 Archer Close.....	14
Anyone for Winkles?.....	24
Chapter 3 Uncle Den.....	25
What Gets Up Your Nose – at Christmas!.....	30
Chapter 4 Holidays and a Brother - at last!.....	32
Fleeting Moments.....	36
Chapter 5 Southchurch Hall.....	37
Barriers.....	44
Chapter 6 Work.....	46
Angels.....	50
Chapter 7 Born Again.....	51
Good Intentions.....	58
Chapter 8 Matters of the Heart.....	59
My Favourite Place.....	61
Chapter 9 Coming of Age.....	63
The Hand of God.....	69
Chapter 10 Beyond the Veil.....	70
Life, Freedom, Forever.....	77
Chapter 11 Giving All.....	78
Time.....	84
Chapter 12 Finding Her.....	85
Sing Praise to Him.....	90
Chapter 13 When Two Become One.....	91

*Rebel's Lane*

Our Shoes of Life .....	96
Chapter 14 The Long Haul.....	98
And What Cheese are You? .....	104
Chapter 15 Maldon .....	105
The School Song .....	114
Memories of Mandeville .....	115
Under My Umbrella .....	124
Chapter 16 Up North.....	125
The Divine .....	135
Chapter 17 Building Bridges.....	137
A Time to Eat and a Time To... ..	145
Chapter 18 My Quiver Full .....	146
The Best Sound in the World!.....	154
Chapter 19 From Warton to Hoghton.....	155

## **Foreword**

Rebel's lane was a thoroughfare to adventure. It began at the corner of Archer Close, and meandered between farmland out to the country villages of Barling and Wakering, to Dove Woods, old World War II fortifications and the marshes of the rivers Crouch and Roach. Alongside it, behind a hedgerow, was the bank of a small brook which provided an obstacle of fun and challenge. In those early days of my life this path was my route to adventure.

I have always tried to look at life as an adventure. The times when I have felt lost or have been when I have forgotten to see it this way. I believe it is an attitude that helps in the day to day grind because it momentarily takes you out of the here and now, out of the action and into the cinema seat where you can see and feel the excitement of the plot. It is an attitude that can get you through difficult times and inspire you to take on new challenges.

Of course, adventures are not just physical, not just people and places, success and failure, new this or that. The most exciting adventures I have been on have not been in the physical world at all, but the spiritual which began when my mind was opened to look and think upon our eternal journey and adventures associated with the big questions of life. I also believe that once on that spiritual adventure the danger is to become bogged down in dogma, that there is a 'last word' on any subject. The spiritual adventure only continues as the mind continues to seek new understanding through both faith and perseverance.

But Rebel's Lane would not have been a path to adventure in my childhood if it had not been for a place that was home, a place I could always return to and feel secure. So it is now, although there is a Rebel's Lane now in my mind and my heart, it is only a pathway to adventure because of those who love me, Eileen, my family, my place of refuge, my home, for which I will always be grateful.

## **Dedication**

**I dedicate this simple account to the one who in this life I owe the most, for she, whether intentionally or not, is responsible for starting both the adventure that began at birth and the one that began at what could called, my re-birth.**

**To my Mum.**



## **Chapter 1 Napier Avenue**



In the summer of 2008 I suddenly had this urge to write about my life for reasons I soon forgot about. I guess it was to take my mind of other things. But when I finished my first draft and returned to the beginning I decided that the best reason I could have for writing anything about myself and it is the reason which I hope will remain, is gratitude. So whatever follows, it is with profound thankfulness for the adventure of life I have so far experienced that I give this brief account.

I was born 16<sup>th</sup> August 1948, one of the post World War II baby boom. My earliest memories are of living at a house in Napier Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex. I am still unsure whose house it was, my mum and dad lived there with others for the first few years of their married life. It must have been owned by some family member but I cannot remember who. I think my dad's father, Walter, died there just before or after I was born so perhaps it was his. Whatever happened, it was not left to my dad.

The house was not far from the town centre shops and was particularly close to Southend Central railway station. It was a main station with shunting yards and sidings and so was a hive of activity. Its close vicinity brings back vivid memories because my first adventure was to its platforms - alone. I have often thought that I played there regularly but I cannot believe my parents would have allowed it even though restraint on children was not like it became a generation later. But on at least one occasion I, a small child of no more than four years of age, went out of the house, turned left, strolled to the end of the street alone and into the portals of that citadel of steam! Yes, these were the days of steam locomotion. Southend Central was on the line from Fenchurch Street to seaside destinations along the north bank of the Thames estuary, transporting London commuters and cockney day trippers back and forth from Leigh, Chalkwell, Westcliff, Southend,



Thorpe Bay and Shoeburyness which was end of the line. These mechanized monsters would thunder into the station and I would try to withstand the noise without putting my hands to my ears. While the loco was stationary I used to run down the underpass that went between platforms and come up gingerly the other side as the engine began its angry pulling away, hissing and wheel spinning and slowly gathering speed. It is funny how you can thrill while experiencing fear. Though but three or four years of age I new it was just a machine, so I understood it could not harm me, yet its noise, particularly in the enclosed space of the station, terrified me. But it excited me too. Was this my first taste of that elixir of life called danger? How much does danger tempt and entice us? Is it not facing up to dangers that make us who we are? But not all dangers are a threat to our physical health, many threaten our social, emotional and psychological well being. But do we not thrive on them, which ever kind? Until they perhaps enslave us and escape is nigh impossible, without help.

My sister Fay was born a couple of years after me and so she began to figure in my life, mainly interfering with my solitary play. I enjoyed playing by myself – I guess I still do. I seem to remember that it was even at this young age that my personality was critically analysed and described with one three letter word that so annoyed me. I associate it, whether rightly or wrongly, I doubt anyone can verify it, with my aunt Dot, mum's sister, who said looking down at me,

“Oh, isn't he a shy little boy!”

Shy! I was labeled, pigeon holed, categorized and I no doubt believed that indeed I was a shy person. All because I probably lost my tongue when asked,

“How are you Stephen?” or some other greeting!

Shy, what does it mean? Introverted? Does not speak much? Blushes easily? Is afraid of girls? Well, it is a branding that really says nothing, is entirely open to interpretation – and – as you may be getting the idea, is a word that really gets me angry. I would never describe anyone else as shy!

I had lots of aunts and uncles, at least, on my mother's side, but the only grandparent I have ever known was my mum's mother, Irene Kirk who married

twice. Her first husband died fighting in the first world-war. From him she had two children, my aunts Winnie and Ella. To her second husband, who was a bit of an entrepreneur and wheeler dealer, she had six more children who lived; Dot, Stan, my mum Emily (though all her life she was called Hazel), Barbara who emigrated to Australia when I was very young, Eileen who lived in Staffordshire and Dennis who I never knew before he finished national service in the RAF. Most of the time he was posted to the middle-east, Aden, I think.

One of my earliest memories was a Christmas at Aunt Win's place. I just remember the high ceiling and the enormous Christmas tree. Her marriage failed, rather unusual in those days, but so did Aunt Dot's. Aunt Dot worked in the telephone exchange which was then a skilled, well paid job. She lived in what I thought was a really modern apartment and wore trendy clothes like long jumpers down past her bottom, maybe with nothing else on! She was the first to have a record player that played seven inch 45s. For the historical reader, up until then, recorded music was played on gramophones. The black fragile disks were either ten or twelve inches in diameter and spun at 78 rpm (revolutions per minute). Then came out the plastic, vinyl disks; singles that were 7 inches in diameter and spun at 45 rpm and multi-track LPs (long players) that were 12 inch and spun at 33 rpm. Well anyway, it was aunt Dot who first had a gramophone that played this latest recorded media.

Occasionally we would catch the number eleven bus and visit Ella who lived twenty miles away in Chelmsford. She was married to Bill and he worked at the sweet factory called Hawkes. They made boiled sweets and we loved the visit as we would always come home with a bag full. They had children, three daughters I think, but all were older than me except for the youngest Marilyn who I thought was so pretty.

Stan was married to Geoff and they had two children, Terry and Susan, who were only just a bit older than me and Fay. They also lived nearby so were cousins who we played with and I even remember sleeping over with them at least once. Stan worked for the same company my Dad did, the great, wonderful, multi-national electronic conglomerate called..... EKCO!!! What? Never heard of it? Sad, sad!

Before your Sony's and your Panasonic's and Samsungs, before even your Phillips, there was E.K. Cole Ltd.

Eric Cole was an inventor and his company manufactured the first mass production radio housed in a green Bakelite cabinet. The headquarters for EKCO was a multi-acre sight in Priory Crescent opposite Priory Park. His electronic empire spread round all of the British Empire with manufacturing as far apart as the West Indies and India. The Art Deco offices fronted the production lines



Uncle Reg and his wife Geraldine

behind where thousands assembled the first consumer electronic devices. To the side of the factories was the sports ground with its football pitches in the winter and cricket pitch in the summer and its sports and social club house. But enough of this for now, you will read more about EKCO, later.

Eileen was married to Collin Lane and they lived in the potteries, Stoke-on-Trent. Collin was a welder and also a Roman Catholic so they had lots of children though we did not get together very often.

The only other relative to mention is my uncle Reg. Reginald Arthur Petchey was my dad's older brother. He also had a step brother but I have never met him. Uncle Reg was rich! He never married until very late in life and was also in the electronic communications business. He worked for a big company called Cable and Wireless and was a highly skilled engineer who went to far off, wonderful places where I believe he installed transmitters – though he just might have been a secret agent! The places I remember him living and working in mostly were Lebanon, the West Indies and Venezuela. Each year he would come home and stay at a top hotel, would drive a posh car like an Armstrong Siddley and would give dad money to buy us kid's presents for Christmas. He was a bit of a photographer and is to blame for most of the baby shots of me. There was always one of his old cameras lying around, a Leica which was pretty posh in those days. He also insisted on paying for our TV license, in case dad neglected it!

Of those long ago days, one memory that remains bright and clear, perhaps because I still have the scar to remind me, was my first encounter with hospitals! I must have picked a spot, or a boil or something that was growing on my thigh, because it became infected and turned into an abscess. It meant several trips to the outpatients department of the local general hospital, a place I was to frequent on quite a few more occasions during my formative years after we left Napier Avenue.

Although it gave me shelter and the necessary start to life, the feelings I have for that first home in the town centre with the nearby shops and trains is one of darkness and gloom. That was to change instantly when in 1953, we moved to the bright open spaces and to a modern home on the edge of the Essex countryside, to number 5 Archer Close.



## **Custard**

Custard thin, custard thick,  
Smooth and creamy or set like a brick,  
With vanilla from Madagascar and Jersey cream,  
Egg yolks a plenty left slowly to steam,  
Or powder straight from a tin of Bird's  
Just milk and sugar, no fancy curds.

But to have no lumps is the clever thing,  
So to the cold mixed paste the hot milk you bring,  
And slowly apply the heat some more,  
Until it thickens and is ready to pour,  
On rhubarb crumble, or apple pie,  
The English elixir will bring a sure sigh!

Custard thick, custard thin,  
May it never be out but always in.  
Some like it hot, some like it cold,  
Left in a pan, nine days old!  
Some eat the skin while others remove it,  
Some almost chew it, others drink it!

Now the French call it Crème Anglaise,  
Which compared to 'custard' is a classy phrase,  
And a savoury custard called Chawanmushi  
Japanese may sip with their fishy sushi.  
While it finds its way into pastry and pie,  
And donuts from where it drips on your tie.

So where will it end to where will it go,  
Missions to Mars or Gulag Archipelago,  
Forget your yoghurt, all probiotic,  
Custard will sooth and heal the psychotic!  
A food more holy than Angel's Delight,  
With the flow of custard world peace is in sight!

## Chapter 2 Archer Close



The birth of my sister Terri, (Theresa Ann Petchey) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1953 provides a key, verifiable, reference date in my early years. My birthday is in August, so I was still four when Terri arrived and we were then living in our new home, 5 Archer Close. She was born at home, upstairs in the bedroom overlooking the back garden where I was playing at the time and wondering just what was going on.

Another event which happened soon after our arrival and which I remember, perhaps because of a photo of me that may still be around, is of the Queen's coronation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1953. It was celebrated by having street parties but on our nice grassy estate one was held on the green in Archer Avenue. Everywhere was decorated with flags and bunting. Dad got hold of this old peddle car, spruced it up and dressed me up as a racing driver. I think it won a prize. There was a lot of good community spirit at that time. You could have written a soap about the goings on in Archer Close.



Our house was almost new, the end of a terrace, but not terraced in long straight rows like older homes. These were council owned; built in the baby boom after the war and to a high standard. Three or four bedrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, toilet upstairs and one outside, shed, and coal-shed. They were also occupied by all shades of working class families, no one was unemployed. Our street was a cul-de-sac, which meant no passing traffic and safe to play out doors in. The homes were spread out either side with spacious front and back gardens.

Over the back fence to us were allotments and out the front of the house were trees, grass areas to play football and cricket on, and just beyond the grass was

## *Rebel's Lane*

farmland that stretched for miles to the Essex marshes and the banks of rivers Roach and Crouch that took you out into the North Sea. It was called the green belt, the boundary which housing planners and developers could not cross.

Dividing the fields of wheat or peas, right at the end of our cul-de-sac was a brook which somewhere joined the Prittle and alongside which was an overgrown path called Rebel's Lane. Quite an appropriate name, I thought, for this was the main



Temple Sutton Primary School, left - juniors, right - infants

thoroughfare for us council house kids, a place to hide, build dens in the bushes, explore or stroll along to the Rose Inn with mum and dad on a Sunday evening. A



typical day might be me leading my sister Fay or some lads or just going by myself up the lane finding gaps in the hedge row where you could jump the ditch. This was a very popular game. The idea was to jump to the other side without falling in. There were numerous jumping places each with a different degree of difficulty. If you slipped the damage was never serious, we would just get what we called

a 'boot full', that is, a boot full of water. On the corner where Rebel's Lane made a right turn was a field that never seemed to be used for much. It may have had a horse or two grazing in it but that was all. We would scramble under the barbed wire fence and stroll over to a pond that had been formed by a German pilot off loading a bomb on the way back from a raid. There were several bomb craters around that had filled with water and become habitats for creatures like the crested newt. We would fish for them and maybe did nasty things to them – or maybe not. This was a place we might also have a puff at our first cigarette, or play with matches trying to start a fire. I have to confess it was I that did indeed

once start a hedgerow fire, not in Rebel's Lane but along one of the other fields owned by Mr. Rayner. I was a long way from the scene when the fire engine arrived and just a little concerned at the amount of damage I had caused.

From Rebel's lane, as we grew older, we would wander far and wide. Through the village of Barling, out to Dove Wood, on to the banks of the rivers or east to Star Lane brick works, Wakering, or west to Rochford Airport.

There were many pill boxes, defense bunkers left over from the last world war that were always fun to play in. One of our favourite haunts was not just a single pill box but a major area where anti-aircraft guns would have been stationed, defending the airport from where fighter aircraft would take off to fight the Luftwaffe. Here was a warren of multiple bunkers that could not be seen from the road but were hidden behind bushes and trees. But we discovered them.



Me ready for school – what a mean serious face!!

Being an August baby meant that in the education system I would always be one of the youngest in my year. That September saw my induction into the world of learning. Along with all the council estates built in that area were also the new schools. There was an old school not far from us, Hamstel Primary, but I got sent to the new one called Temple Sutton. It was large for a primary school and must have had something like a four class intake each September because before long you would get streamed into at least one of a four tiered year. But that was not until you reached the age of seven. The first class I was put in was especially created for late arrivals like me. It gave me a good start for I was soon reading and up to the standard needed to enter the top stream. School life was mostly okay, though I did get into a few scrapes. One thing I remember enjoying was the head



teacher reading to the whole infant assembly, daily episodes of a book that I think was the Silver Chair by C.S. Lewis. But it could have been some other story about a magical chair.

Unlike today's children, parents *never* met you at the gate when school was over and you had a choice whether to stay for school dinners or go home. I think I could count the number of school dinners I ever ate on the fingers of my hand.



The meat you could never swallow and the custard was, well, yuk!

I was only ever taken to school and brought home on that very first day, after that it was up to me. I am sure I never went alone, but with neighbour's kids my own age, like Peter Cave next door or Graham Hardy, one of the policeman's children opposite us. I walked the half mile or so – could be further – in the morning, back home for a mid-day dinner, back for afternoon lessons and home again at around 3.30. Was there any danger in this? Sure, especially from each other. Those walks back and forth were the times we really got into

trouble and caused quite a bit too! Like playing 'knock down ginger' which is just knocking on someone's front door and running away and hiding. Once or twice I played truant. I remember when I was caught the teacher put me in the corner. Then when class was over she asked me,

"Did your father fight in the war?"

"Yes," I replied.

"In which service?"

"He was in the RAF, was posted to India and Burma. He defended air fields."

"Do you think he would be proud of you, missing school because you were afraid of something?"

“No miss.”

It taught me the lesson I needed.

Then there were the monkey trees – this was a hedge row that went almost the whole distance from the corner of Archer Close, along Archer Avenue to the Hamstel Road crossing. It was always a challenge to traverse the length of these trees without setting foot on the ground. It must have ruined our clothes. Mind you, we boys all wore shorts in those days, until we finished primary school or maybe even later. I think I was actually twelve when I finally graduated to long trousers. Same time as I found out I needed glasses.

Those daily journeys were also times to play games like marbles along the curbsides, or picking on some weak kid and making them cry or throwing stones. I remember once throwing this stone high in the air and it landing plum on some



poor kids head. They never new where it came from and I was not going to own up! Nasty bit of work! But in fact I was more likely to stick up for the kids smaller and help them out when being picked on, as I was a bit large for my age. But I did once pick a fight, I must admit, with the help of one or two others.

Now as I mentioned in the previous chapter, I became a regular customer at the local hospital. My next series of visits must have begun when I was about six years old. In the summer months we children were allowed onto the school playing fields during the breaks. What we were playing I cannot recall, but during the afternoon I fell awkwardly and simply could not get up. Everyone else ran back to classes and left me there. Who realized I was missing or who rescued me I cannot remember, but I do remember getting a ride in the heads car. We had no telephones in those days, so I do not know how mum was told. Anyway, I was taken to casualty and came out with a full plaster of Paris cast, toe to hip! Having the leg set and the cast put on was no big deal, but getting it off some weeks later, that was painful! They used these shear things that cut into your skin in that hollow behind your knee – well, the leg mended, but from that day to this my right foot has always turned out more than the left one.

A few years later I was back again, my left arm this time, badly broken. It was a



Sunday afternoon and I fell when trying to swing from a branch of a tree out front. I know it happened on a Sunday because while at the hospital my only

concern was getting home in time to watch on the telly, the pianist Liberace who was top of the bill on Sunday Night at the London Palladium! I think they got me home in time.

Although we council kids had sizable back gardens, we seldom played in them. In most seasons and weathers we would be out and about. Then too I would often get into scrapes with other kids. I also had a bit of a temper, which has come to the surface over the years, I particularly remember whacking with some steel rod this poor girl just round the corner from us in Archer Avenue, I have no idea why I did it, it really was awful. I was certainly punished, though never physically by my dad, he had a heavy hand and so left any punishment to mum. I think I was as they say these days, 'grounded', not sure I suffered much more than that for this act of sheer violence. But I was still only five or six!

I remember one fight I got into with some lad called Collin's. I was obviously losing because some parental hands came and dragged me kicking and screaming into the house.



Family life was good. Dad worked at Ekco until he retired, mum was a typical '50s housewife and a wonderful mother. She kept a clean and tidy home; fed us well and dad did all that was expected of him, as far as us kids

could see. But he was also a sporting man. In the winter he played football and in the summer cricket for the company team. His only transport, until later years was a bike. On the cross bar he had a small child's seat and so I would perch on that as he rode the two or so miles to the sports ground each Saturday. He worked five and a half days a week and played on Saturday afternoons. Some Sundays there would be a cricket match to which we all might go and mum and the children walked. These were usually all day affairs and so there would be a wonderful tea laid out for all with pork pies and cream cakes and a glass of

shandy. I too learnt some sporting skills, particularly cricket, but sadly never played many competitive matches. Dad was often my hero, especially as a cricketer. He was an Ian Botham type, good with both bat and ball. He would bat at around number seven and would never wear pads for protection and would often hit the ball over the fence onto the nearby factory roof. I have often thought about going through the archives of the local rag, the Southend Standard and put together a history of my dad's cricketing achievements that made it to its pages.

Another milestone in ones development has to be learning to ride a bike. I borrowed some heap of old junk off my friend Graham and achieved some degree of stability so it was not long before I was given the surprise of my young life. I had to close my eyes and wait for a moment. Of course, it was my first, very own bike. It was not new, some army surplus thing I think, but it was the most beautiful bike I ever had. Funny, the more I write this the more I am beginning to appreciate my great dad.

Most Sundays were spent at home. I was introduced to the local Sunday school at



Hamstel School and later, when it was built, at the new Whittingham Avenue Methodist church. But I cannot say I ever learnt anything and became a believer. My attendance was spasmodic and in later childhood any influence it had was replaced by a new kind of teaching,

within the extended family, which I shall elaborate on later. We had visits from uncles and aunts and cousins. Dad was very inventive and a good handyman. He would decorate the rooms and make this and that. But then came the day when we became the proud owners of the latest in technology, a TV.

Dad somehow managed to acquire from work the working parts of a television. There was this beautiful old walnut table that suddenly had a rectangular hole, seventeen inch across the diagonals, cut into it. As I lay in bed of an evening with my door slightly ajar I would see my dad come out of his and mum's bedroom next to mine with what looked like a large glass bottle in his hands. Each evening he would take it down and presumably take it back when he went to bed. Eventually, we all were given the unveiling. We sat in our lounge and Dad switched on our first telly, assembled by his own hands. We were so proud of him and of having such a thing in our home. We were without doubt one of the first in our street and our family to have such a marvel. There were a few tvs about, old nine inch models that could only receive one station but ours was a 17 inch that received programmes from both the BBC and the newly launched commercial station, ITV. Were we posh!



The programmes of those early days I remember most were the original Robin Hood series starring Richard Green, presenters like Arthur Askey, Wilfred Pickles, puppets like Muffin the Mule and those in the children's programmes, Andy Pandy, Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men and Rag, Tag and Bobtail. Then there were quiz games like Take Your Pick and of course live sporting events. I am sure there is information about all this somewhere, if you are in the slightest interested.

Although we had TV and radio and some kind of record player, the main form of entertainment was the cinema. There were dozens of them in those days. For the record these are the ones I remember. The nearest one was in Southchurch called the Plaza, with its dome. It still stands to this day and is used for some form of entertainment. Then there was the Gaumont, a real picture palace with seats that were called the God's, way up

high. It stood on the left as you come into Southend centre while opposite was the old Talza Arcade which had a real flea pit upstairs which at one time also hosted live entertainment where females would undress themselves!

Round the corner from the Gaumont was the Southend Essoldo. This was at the back of the Keddies Department store and which was later converted into Supasave, Southend's first American style supermarket. Across the road from Keddies was the Garon's cinema; then down nearer the Central Station was the best one in town, the Odeon. This was a large, modern, spacious cinema and theatre. I remember seeing some show where the stage was made into an ice rink. Later in the sixties it would be the venue for the Beatles, Rolling Stones (I saw them twice) and for me the great jazz legend, Count Basie.

There was another cinema in Alexandra Street which is now a theatre, the Art Deco palace called the Ritz that was at the top of pier hill and just out of town you had the Westcliff Essoldo and the Mascot. These of course were all just single screen cinemas, but the programmes they showed were always a 'B' movie followed by cartoons then the 'A' movie. The very first movie I can remember seeing was at the Westcliff Essoldo (might have been called the Metropole in those days) where my Uncle Dennis, who must have just finished his national service, was the projectionist. He took me and put me in the auditorium while he went upstairs to work the projector. The film was the old classic musical, 'Singing in the Rain'. The local cinemas were also the places most kids went on a Saturday morning for a programme just for them.

Well, this brings me neatly on to the next chapter in my life's story, how I began to develop my inner self, my interests and attitudes, my feelings and philosophy, though I was certainly not aware of it. Though my parents loved me and raised me well, it was my mum's youngest brother uncle Dennis, who became my inspiration and mentor.

## **Anyone for Winkles?**

A bucket of winkles for tea,  
Fresh from the briny sea,  
Would for the young of today,  
Perhaps seem a trifle risqué.  
So stark on a white tea plate,  
Awaiting their uncertain fate,  
A pile of tiny black snails,  
Not even showing their tails.



“Winkles”, you say, “are you being rude?  
You surely do not suggest they are food.  
Are they not little molluscs that crawl in a pool,  
By the shore at Clacton or maybe Blackpool?”  
“How do you eat them?” You wonder and stare,  
“Do you crunch ‘em or smash ‘em with vigor and flare?”  
Or whisper, “Come out, look what I have here.”  
And gobble them up when they shyly appear.

“No! With a pin you poke and pry inside,  
And pick it and prick it and gently guide,  
Not pulling too hard, extracting with care,  
Until it is out, exposed and bare.  
Your lips close over the curl of grey meat  
And chew and wonder as you savour the treat,  
A morsel so tender, so sweet and so fine,  
Ate with a slice of home made bread is divine!

So you can have your Imperial Reserve Caviar  
And your rare white truffles all the way from Alba,  
Prime porterhouse steak from Dean and Deluca  
Or lobster tails from the coast of Dominica.  
The food no gourmet should leave off in haste,  
From his menu for those of discerning taste,  
That will win him Michelin stars with a twinkle  
Is the shell fish of England, the humble, black, winkle.



### **Chapter 3 Uncle Den.**

As I have mentioned earlier, my only living grandparent was my mum's mother,



Irene Kirk. She had a pretty tough life, living through two world wars, the depression, losing her first husband in the first world war, being a soldier's wife, giving birth to nine or ten children, I think two died, being moved from place to place following her second husband's business ventures. At one time she was posted to Germany where I am told she dived into the Rhine to save some poor soul. She too suffered an injury, falling out of a bus or something, which injured her back seriously. In younger years before I was born she was a tall, slim, elegant woman. I ever knew her as this small bowed over woman with a hump back, caused by the

accident.

As a widow she never had a settled home but was shifted around from child to child. At one time she lived with us in Archer Close; I think she slept downstairs in the lounge. At the time of her death she was living with her eldest daughter Win in a house owned by one of Win's children.

Often on a Saturday morning, when not attending the local cinema, I would catch a bus to Southend centre and meet her outside Woolworth's. She would take me round the shops and for a treat to the upstairs café in BHS (British Home Stores). When we parted she would always put some coins into my hand for pocket money. Then when Uncle Dennis finished national service, he and nan lived for a while in a basement apartment in Palmiera Drive, Westcliff, just up from the sea shore. After my first visit with mum and learning which buses to catch and how to get there I began going there on a regular basis, mainly on a Sunday. Here I would enjoy a full Sunday roast dinner with nan and Dennis and he would teach me

things. I certainly had a soft spot for my nan, one mother's day I bought her something without any help, but without buying my poor mother anything.

Dennis was a bit of an artist and a modern man of the day. He had seen something of the world and was intelligent and an independent thinker. He showed me some of his pencil sketches, mostly scenic landscapes and taught me how to do them. Funny, my dad liked to draw a bit too; he mainly drew ocean liners so I learnt to draw them as well in that sort of Art Deco style.

Well, the basement flat was obviously not big enough and they moved to a rented house in Roots Hall, where the Southend United football ground currently is. When living here my visits became regular, every Sunday. I would arrive about 11 am, Dennis would sit with me, show me how to draw and discuss anything. We would give each other quizzes about anything before sitting down to nan's wonderful roast dinner which always included a tin of Nestles sterilized cream. I would usually clean out the tin. After dinner we would listen to a bit of radio, usually the comedy shows of the day like 'Round the Horne', before I would leave and he would go out for the afternoon, presumably on a date.

This went on for years until he eventually married and began a family. Later on in that relationship he introduced me to music that in many ways changed my life and the life of my children, well Samuel at least. It was innocent stuff, the current hit tunes of Dave Brubeck – Take Five, Raggy Waltz, Unsquare Dance. I became hooked on modern jazz, obsessed and captivated by it. At around the age of fourteen, music became the biggest thing in my life.

I suppose this could all be over stated, maybe there were many other influences that I ignore. But there was something in that relationship between me and Uncle Dennis that prepared me for what lay ahead. As I grew I would assist him in decorating and fixing things but I helped dad do this too. Dad was a sportsman and I was a bit that way, but Dennis was more intellectual and that seemed to appeal to me more. Dad bought us a telescope when I was about seven, which also sparked such a powerful interest in astronomy and space travel, but he seldom let me use it. I think it was that Dennis managed to spark my imagination more than anyone else. Dad loved a good discussion, he was very politically

motivated, very much believed in the socialist ideals and was never even interested in owning his own home.

Well – I don't know, I am pondering this as I write, both my father and my uncle were hugely influential, Eileen would probably say I am becoming more and more like my dad. But there is really no competition, I have just always felt that this young uncle inspired me greatly in those formative years.

One event I particularly remember at this time was when for some reason or other I stayed over in the house at Roots Hall. While I lay in bed, nan and Dennis were discussing rather heatedly about a new bed or something for nan. Whatever the cause of the argument, it upset my tender heart and I cried and explained what upset me. I think the problem was soon sorted.

In my adult years I have kind of lost touch with Dennis and his wife Inga. He worked for EKCO but when the company moved to Crawley he went with it, along with Stan. I visited them once or twice. Recently Dennis was admitted to hospital and because it sounded serious I drove down from Lancashire and back one day to visit him. I was surprised he never used e-mail, which was a shame, but the visit was good – though it would be so nice to sit with him again and stretch our minds together, talking in the way he did, the way that captured my imagination way back in my early years.

As for the rest of my education, I think it progressed pretty well, though I failed the eleven plus. I also had a nervous problem – quite a serious one. I had nightmares and was terrified of fire drills at school. There were some tv programmes I remember watching that also gave me bad dreams, like Quatermas and the Pit, or an episode of an underwater adventure series called Sea Hunt. In one episode this guy was trying to get to the surface but his lungs gave out and he died. I would lie in bed breathing deeply and afraid to go to sleep. I used to hear helicopter noises in my head too. Too much telly! Too vivid an imagination. Well, I had to take some drug that had a name that sounded like 'finabarbetone' to quell my fears.

One of the highlights of my primary education was singing in a massed choir of school kids in the Kursaal Ballroom. Our head teacher was a Mr Ryman who by all

standards was a pretty good musician and I was selected to be in the school choir which went to this big event. I also began learning to play the recorder, which went well until I was told I was playing it left handed which stopped my progress. I was not motivated enough to start learning all over again. Until I was much older, that is.

But education was not just at school or from the TV, mum taught me to cook! I also taught myself, once I could read. One year, cannot remember just when, but my mum became very ill, so ill she was confined to bed for at least a week. There was no one to look after the family so I cooked all the meals. I found this recipe book and did some wonderful things. Only one I can remember was a Spanish omelette with loads of stuff in it. Mum also taught me how to bake cakes which I loved doing, decorating them too. But on one occasion one of my sisters spoilt this beautifully iced cake and I was so upset I lost my temper, throwing things and storming to my room. Sisters were a pain in the neck until our years entered double figures, then all suddenly changed, we became friends, particularly Fay and I.

I began to learn the piano once, but the piano at home was an 'out of tune give away' that was no fun to practice on, so I soon gave up the lessons. But mum and dad taught me more than I realize, mostly by just being who they were. I think some of my mum's nature rubbed off. One thing I did not learn from her is the managerial technique of delegation. Like her, I would much rather just get on with something myself than ask anyone else to help or do it for me.

Dad would get paid on Fridays and would always come home with 'Friday sweets' for us kids. I used to hoard mine while my sisters saved nothing. He was particularly clever at improvisation, not so much on a musical instrument but by making something useful with what was available, which meant doing things 'on the cheap'. I think this is a good quality though it does mean that sometimes things end up getting done twice, whereas if you spent more or got it done properly in the first place, it would last.

Sunday tea was a time when we would all be together, perhaps with a pint of winkles from the shellfish vendor who would go round the streets on a Sunday

afternoon. We would eat loads of bread and jam and mum's wonderful cakes, talk about politics and Terri would usually get the Sunday giggles and have to leave the room. Sundays would usually be bath night so we would take it in turns, the water being heated by a back-boiler behind the lounge coal fire. The only heating we had apart from this was smelly paraffin heaters. We usually went to bed in the cold and woke up in the cold, but I only have warm, happy feelings about those times, times not to be forgotten.

## What Gets Up Your Nose – at Christmas!

They came from the east with fragrances rare,  
Gifts to a new-born royal heir,  
Without a thought, without a stupor  
That thousands of years into the future,  
Their choice of gifts would inspire the art,  
Of obscure,  
subtle,  
unintelligible,  
vague and irritatingly nauseous,  
moving images and  
usually single French word ads,  
that on our tellies  
have at Christmas become an indelible part!

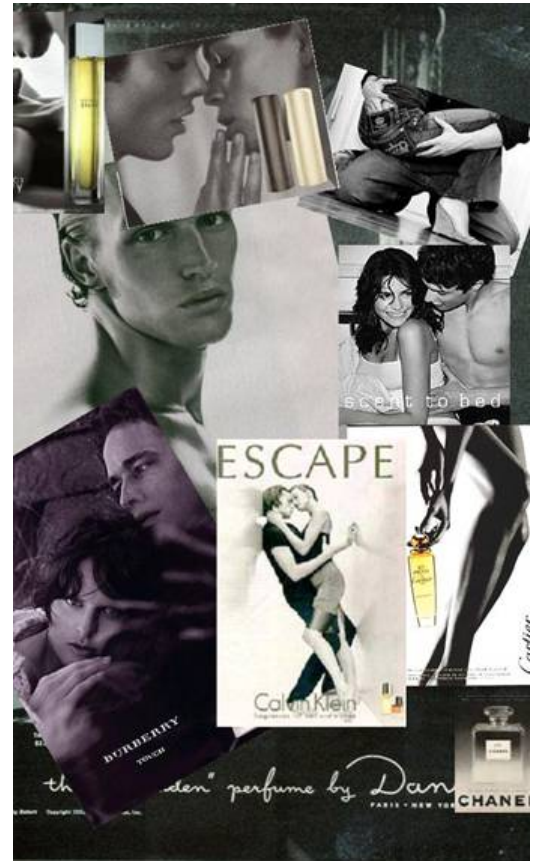
Yes! THEY are to blame for the annual deluge  
That erks and makes you run for refuge,  
Flee from the telly that goads eyes and ears,  
Though not yet the nose, though one has fears  
That someday a digital code will squirt,  
Like instead of an inkjet, odours to flirt  
You into a trance and make you swoon  
To the first who walks into your room..... AS IF!!!

So what this is all about, that makes me sink inside my sofa,  
Is that on the telly when you're an idle loafer,  
Some swoozy ad for some hyped up pong  
Will make you thump the remote and ask,  
“Have I missed something, is there something wrong?”

AND so!

Ads for perfume, scent, eau de... what ever you call it  
Our Christmas peace, they pervade and intrude on it!  
(In those little fancy bottles with deco label  
That you would never give to Joan or Mabel.)  
They seldom hit our screens at other times of year, like Valentine's Day,  
Just at Christmas they seem to always appear, come what may!

So who will join me in a call to ban them,  
Censor or at least a health warning give them,



Or just a hint in time to click the switch  
Before the first grey flesh makes you sweat and itch!  
And to restore some decorum to our Christmas fun,  
But then, what next, oh yes it's time for those equally frustrating  
and callously cruel  
teasing and grating  
Ads for holidays...

.....IN THE SUN!

## **Chapter 4 Holidays and a Brother - at last!**

In the summer of 1957 mum was getting ready to give birth to her fourth child. It was decided that it would be best for me to be out of the way so my Nan took me on a holiday to her daughter Eileen and her family who lived in Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire. I loved the train journey to London and then up there, the old steam trains were still a big excitement.



Eileen, Collin and children, Nan, Fay, Terri and Me? All at Chester.

They lived in what I felt was a dingy terraced house, no garden out front and just a yard out back to play in. It hardly seemed a place for a holiday. But Uncle Collin had a

car and so we were

to taken places like the annual fairs called the Wakes, Chester zoo and some hill where we picked red and white currents. We also once went to Rhyll in North Wales but it was so windy, when we got out of the car I was hardly able to walk or even to breathe when facing the wind. We never stopped there long.

When I returned home I was thrilled to learn that I now had a brother who I named. I was into an old comedy TV programme called 'I Love Lucy' starring Lucille Ball and Ricky Arnez, so when he was born 19<sup>th</sup> August 1957, he was name Richard. After nine long years I had a brother at last! Sadly, by the time he was old enough to play with, I was rather more interested in girls than boys! But when we do get the chance to get together we get on well. I always feel he became the son dad at first wanted me to become. Richard and dad would play snooker together and enjoy a drink, something I later dropped out of for reasons that will become apparent.





This was not my only holiday to my Aunt and Uncles in the potteries, two or three years later I returned. They now lived in the small town of Hanley and had a nice detached house on a one acre site adjacent to an old quarry. Of course I had to try climbing the cliff face and of course I got stuck half way up, or down, depending on your position. Well, I got off it some how. There was also a nasty little incident when I lost my temper with poor Michael, their oldest; I threw something at him that hit him plum in the forehead.

Collin had his own business, a workshop come garage and shop where he did welding, car repairs and even sold the odd car or two. As I was up there for some weeks I went and helped out at his garage. Got paid a bit too! It was very educational. I remember taking out either a starter motor or a dynamo from an old van, preparing this old pre-war car for sale and sorting out the junk

shop he had.

That last holiday up there in the land of china and chimneys was certainly more enjoyable than the first, but it was my last visit, I never went back and Uncle Collin has now passed away.

Most holidays were spent at home. When I was very young dad often worked his annual leave at the Kursaal fun ground. This was a bit like Blackpool Pleasure Beach and dad worked on the water chute until one year he broke his collar bone and that put an end to it. Usually we spent holidays on the beach just at the

bottom of Liftsan Way or maybe at Thorpe Hall corner. The sea there was always good to swim in, so long as the tide was in. If not you might wander out on the mud or just play on the shore. The beaches were a bit crowded when the weather was good, but there was still enough room to build sand castles. Up at Westcliff was the town's only public swimming pool, open air and filled with filtered, salty, sea water. But it was not here I learnt to swim. One day, entirely on my own, I must have been ten coming up to eleven, I went down to the sea just west of the pier, walked into the sea and swam for the first time. One glorious summer, think it was '55, we spent almost every day of the two week annual holiday on the beach.

Near to our usual beach was Southchurch Park where there were swings and a small menagerie but where was also a model boating lake where men, who were really still boys, played with their radio controlled or high speed model boats. I can still remember the smell of burning nitro fuel and the shrill sound of those tiny engines.

Every summer the highlight was the annual carnival procession and illuminations. Carnivals from all the smaller towns would converge onto Southend for one enormous procession that went from Chalkwell Park to the Kursaal. In Chalkwell Park there would also be a giant fun-fare. EKCO Social and Sports Club always had a tent at the fair, not sure why, but a couple of times when I was a bit older I earned a few pounds with my dad on a Sunday after the last day, packing up everything, loading it into a van and storing it till the following year.

One holiday outing I particularly remember was in 1959. A friend of Dad's who had a car took us both to the Farnborough Airshow. This is the major airshow of the aeronautical industry and the armed forces. Here the nation's latest aircraft were displayed and the top teams put on their best shows. I remember the record breaking Fairy Delta II climbing at a phenomenal speed, the Earth quaking roar of a Vulcan bomber turning on full thrust from its four engines. These were also the days of the Black Diamonds, predecessors to the Red Arrows. I think there were sixteen planes in the team not nine, their display was amazing. I also saw Cockrells first hovercraft and a thing called the flying bedstead that lead eventually to vertical take-off landing. Oh, yes, the Harriers, they were not around

then but I did see them at a later visit along with an amazing Concorde fly-past before it went into service.



Christmases were never a let down. Mum and dad really spoilt us kids considering their income. Of course they were never too happy with us waking in the early hours finding toy guns and other noisy presents to open. The routine changed at one point, main presents being opened later in the day in the lounge and just a stocking for the early morning; much the way we do things now. I suppose the Christmas gift I remember most was a snooker table that dad made me. Of course with mum's cooking Christmas dinners were the full works, though no turkey, chicken was preferred. Of course alcohol was a significant ingredient and I was introduced to the full range at a very early age, though of course, only in small amounts. Dad's birthday was on New Years Eve, he and mum usually went out to the Ekco Social and Sports club. Sadly though, dad did not always behave himself once inebriated.

## **Fleeting Moments**

Far away places excite the mind,  
Lure you in hope of wonders find,  
Tease you in your daily grind,  
Dazzle your eyes and make you blind.

While within a memory lies  
Vistas and magic that never dies,  
Scenes and scents, cries and sighs,  
Sadly how our sojourn flies.

Do we scorn the looking back? saying,  
"That's for those way down the track"!  
If only our minds we could really hack  
But then we'd relive both white and black!

So savour moments when they come,  
Grasp the detail, drink the hum,  
Every day there must be some  
Enduring moment to beat the drum.



## **Chapter 5 Southchurch Hall**



For me, graduation from primary to secondary education was a traumatic event. At Temple Sutton I had some good friends and enjoyed sport, particularly cricket, swimming and football, the lanes and fields were my playground, life was good. I was always in the top stream at school, but just did not have what it took to get into a grammar school. I failed that critical educational hurdle, the eleven plus. This meant I would be sent to a different school to the one my best mates attended. But that was not all, there were two secondary modern schools, remember this was before the days of comprehensive education

and there were two I was eligible for, Wentworth and Southchurch High.

Primary education, of course, was mixed sex; secondary, in the Southend Borough, was almost entirely segregated. It turned out that I was the only boy from where I lived and in my old class at Temple Sutton, who was sent to Southchurch Hall High School for Boys. I think the reason was because I was borderline with the eleven plus and this school, though not providing the status of and facilities of a grammar school, nevertheless had a fifth year which gave pupils the opportunity of sitting G.C.E. examinations. In those days the school leaving age was fifteen and there were three levels of examination before you left. There was the School Leaving Certificate which was given after sitting an examination that everyone took. Then you could stay on an extra year for C.S.E. (Certificate of Secondary Education) in subjects you chose. Finally there was the G.C.E., (General

Certificate of Education) which was the examination that took you on to grander things.

But as a school, Southchurch Hall had been around a while, in fact both my dad and Uncle Reg went there and at least one of the teachers, who taught history, was still there and still rode the same bike to work!

The school had no playing fields attached, for sport we were bussed to some a mile or two up the road. But the standard of academic education was good, with plenty of homework, and I settled in. I did pretty well in Mathematics, Art and creative writing, even played goalie for the school football team on a few occasions, but making friends took time. Of course there were no girls anywhere near. In my dad's day the school was split in two, girls in one half boys the other with a wall dividing the playground. But in my time the nearest girl's school was miles away so social development was a bit slow. Fortunately Fay was growing and once I got past my infancy, we got on well and began to share our friends.

Here too I tried school meals on the first day, but that was the last, even though it was further than to Temple Sutton, most days I journeyed home and back either on a bus, bike or walking.

A subject that I did pretty well in was mathematics and I really feel I have my dear mum to thank for that. Right from the start we were given homework and I was not finding it too easy. Mum was concerned and she was not able to give me any practical help. But instead she went to a neighbour, the Cotgrove family about four doors up from us. Their eldest son was a year or two older than me and was a bright lad so he came round and gave me that extra help I needed. It would have been so easy to have given up. Good old mum! I passed my O level in maths which was the one and only qualification that I left school with that helped me on to higher things like engineering and teachers training college where mathematics was my main subject and which I taught for a while.

I became involved in a number of boys organizations around this time. At the local Methodist Church in Whittingham Avenue they had Boys Brigade and for the younger ones, Cabin Boys. At another church hall near my old school they had a Scout Troup. I went to Cabin Boys when in Primary School, tried scouting, even

went on a camp at the old witch's village Canewden; learnt about knots and laying trails, but the group I hung out the longest with was the Boys Brigade. It was run in rather a military fashion with a lot of marching, cleaning your brass belt buckle and learning to vault. There was not much more too it except you were supposed to attend Bible classes on Sunday but they thought I went to a different church so I got away with going. The guy who ran it must have impressed me; he was obviously a committed Christian but not over zealous. The highlight of the whole affair was going to the Royal Albert Hall for some grand gathering of Brigades.

But going off to the church hall of an evening had some other attractions too, like trying to smoke. There was no education in those days about the dangers of smoking; every lad was enticed into having a go. There was also this girl who caught my eye and whose house was just round the corner from the hall and who hung around the kid's playground en route and although she once said I was good looking, nothing ever came of it; I was just a bit young for her and some older lad was also interested.



Home life went along okay. It was not long before there were five of us children, Mark my youngest brother, came along but my poor Mum worked too hard. At one time she used to go cleaning before we woke up, came home and did a day's house work and went cleaning again in the late afternoon; all for a few pounds more. So mum was worse for wear around then. Dad did not treat her well, not physical violence but other things, though just what was going on she would never let on. She had a bad accident, think she miscarried after coming off the back of Dad's motor-cycle. Mum was in hospital a while and

may have died from a hemorrhage if dad had not visited her at a crucial moment. Then on another occasion she had a malignant tumour. Fortunately she was removed in time and she continues a long and active life.

My working life began early, I must have been twelve. We used to get piece work to do at home which was usually making small sub-assemblies for the electronic industry. It meant soldering some little socket onto the end of a piece of wire, dead easy to do and I began earning more money than later on when I went into full-time employment. One holiday I also went and worked at Ekco plastics which was to the back of the old TV assembly plant. It was repetitive work, packing fridge panels or trimming waste plastic off injection moulded car panels; but it paid pretty good.

But really, from the age eleven till around fourteen, life was pretty tame, but then a few things combined to change my life. Firstly, dad bought the family a new toy – a tape recorder. This was a reel-to-reel sound recording machine that you could



record live sounds on through a microphone or you could plug it into your radio and record the latest music or any other radio programme. As mentioned earlier, I became hooked on jazz after my uncle Dennis introduced me to Dave Brubeck, so with this I was not reliant on buying expensive records. Music became a big thing.

Then there were these guys at school who had got together to form a group. The leader was Freddy Wheeler, he had learnt violin as a kid but then took up the electric guitar. Trevor Taylor was another guy who was always

tapping his hands on the school desks; then he brought in his drum sticks. Eventually he acquired a very basic, cheap drum kit. I think a boy by the name of Dave Huntingdon became the bass player and Alan Goddard the rhythm guitarist. All this never happened all at once, but how I got involved was when one of them



asked around if anyone had a tape recorder. Well that was my chance; I had a very nice tape recorder, state of the art in those days, so I was in!

They were all hooked on music of the Shadows who came to fame as the backing group for Cliff Richards. Hank Marvin was the lead guitarist, Bruce Welch rhythm, Brian Bennett on drums, though I believe originally it was Tony Meehan. Jet Harris was the original bass player but he went solo, cannot remember the name of his replacement. Well anyway, Freddy Wheeler imitated Hank Marvin's playing to a 'T'! No sheet music; just listened to the records and copied him exactly. Tunes like Apache, FBI and Dance On come to mind. But none of the four were singers. Neither did they do anything but practice.

Well, I liked to sing and at the time I was learning to play trumpet. My teacher was a band leader, Cyril Andrews. He was leader of the resident band at the EKCO Social and Sports Club. On a Sunday night there was opportunity for us amateurs to get up and play a tune or two but they needed at least one vocal number, so I volunteered. My first song was Dancing Shoes by Cliff Richards. Even if I do say so my self, I think we had a real good sound and we played on Sunday nights for quite some time. Eventually we also got a paid booking, one wedding we played at we were paid £8!

I guess I was also a bit ruthless too. Dave the bass player became a bit unreliable. My dad was keen to support me, he had already bought me a good microphone so I could sing, but now he paid for a bass guitar and second hand amplifier. I soon learnt to play and we never saw Dave much again.

We used to practice in the homes of us lads. First we were based at Freddy's, then we set up in our front lounge, then it was where the drummer lived. All this was happening at a crucial stage in my education. Although it all began in our fourth year, we were soon in our fifth and supposed to be studying hard for these all important G.C.E.s. I am afraid I did not do as well as I should have. I particularly remember the poor woodwork teacher. He boasted that so far, no one in his class had ever failed G.C.E. in woodwork. Well I forgot the day and time of one of the exams and I was so embarrassed when he knocked on the door of Trevor's home

out in Leigh to drive me to the exam I was supposed to be sitting. Needless to say I failed. Thankfully I managed to scrape passes in maths and art.

I could have killed myself on one occasion – I mean that literally! We all stayed over night at Trevor's which was just up from old Leigh where the cockle boats are and the quaint old houses and pubs. We went out for a walk early, I began larking around. As we approached the sea wall, foolishly, I ran intending to leap



onto the top of the three foot or so high wall. Yep, you guessed it; I slipped and vanished over the other side landing on my back in the black, sea-bed, mud. The tide was out and fortunate for me there was nothing lying there that could have either impaled me or banged my head in; I was just a muddy mess.

You know, getting to understand the opposite sex is a mine field and those teenage years is the most precarious time of life and by the time you have any idea how to go about developing relationships, life is over! Well, the first few girls we lads from a boy's only school somehow got to know lived up in Chalkwell, I think they were friends of Dave Huntingdon. it was during the summer of our GCEs. There were two or three, cannot remember them all, just the one who seemed to take a liking to me. We messed about on the beach in the day or in the

shelters at the end of the Western promenade before the road turns up Chalkwell Avenue. The name of the girl who seemed to fancy me was Brenda Price. She was short, cute, full of confidence and knew how to lead a poor soul like me on for as long as she liked. She was also the daughter of a notable car dealer in the town, owner of Price Motors. They had a nice big

Not Brenda Price but Maureen Woods,  
school friend of Fay's

house right there on the prom so she was way out of my league, a council estate kid from Archer Close.

Well, I did not know what was going on, what game she was playing at but there came a defining moment. Some lad asked her whether there was anything on between her and me, I knew nothing. She then drops back from the bunch, gets close to me running her fingers over the black vinyl lapels my mum had sewn on my jacket. Looking back it is obvious what to do, I was so slow; should have taken her in my arms and planted my lips squarely on hers, but instead we parted and the lad who made the enquiry had his reply. That was the last time we saw this bunch of girls.

One other notable event during these latter school years was the winter of 1962/63. It is recorded as the coldest winter of the century. Snow fell and remained for months. Though I am sure it was a difficult time, my memories of it were the wonderful Sunday rambles I had with a beautiful golden retriever that was owned by a family friend and with my sister Fay. We would walk round to the home of this dog and set out over my familiar places which were now a winter wonderland.

This was also the time Beatlemania began, with the Beatles hit, Please, Please Me being released that winter. But more of that later.



## **Barriers**

Says Yang :-

In all directions, barriers bar the way,  
Not made of concrete or stone but even more impenetrable,  
Barriers that restrict thought, expression, behaviour;  
Barriers limiting perception, imagination and consciousness.  
Restrictions in relationships, imposed or desired,  
Fear, guilt, cultural norms, expectations of the club,  
Health, language, foundations of understanding poorly laid.  
In all directions we are encased.

Answers Yin :-

A procedure used in technology when something does not work,  
For when there is fault in design or error in execution,  
When a programme simply cannot function in the way intended,  
Is, "let's find a work around."  
First, acknowledge your limitations  
Second, re-appraise what you have,  
Third, consider options less efficient,  
Fourth, let the ends justify the means!

Responds Yang :-

But so often it is not one barrier alone that keeps us in,  
But layers, each in turn re-enforcing, damning you,  
Desire may be strong, passion overwhelming,  
Physical stamina may be up to the task, strength no hold,  
Fortitude, resourcefulness, courage and vision may abound,  
But within the shell, doubts are spawned of guilt,  
That desires and passions are selfish, irresponsible.  
So silently we pursue our path of least resistance.

"But", says Yin:-

So what about a work-around, there is always one to be found,  
They just rely on one, singular, unmentioned force,  
The means by which all can be accomplished, every barrier pierced,  
There is no endless night, no eternal death,  
Your mind can change, be-reborn, your existence renewed,  
All possibilities can be certainties,  
Whether through faith in the power of God, Devil, or mathematical probability,

Patience will always win out.

Asks Yin :-  
Do you have an example?

Answers Yang :-  
I want to be a tree!



## Chapter 6 Work

I returned to school after receiving my G.C.E. results, intending to re-sit English and technical drawing, but for some reason, did not receive much encouragement and so I strolled along to the EKCO plant and was immediately taken on. I was given the position of shop-boy. The shop was a department that made printed circuit boards for the TV assembly line. It was a responsible and varied job but I failed to appreciate it at the time. If I had remained I could have made my way up the managerial ladder, if the company had stayed.



Mr. E. K. Cole, chairman and managing director of E. K. Cole, Ltd., presented his firm's 1,000,000th television receiver to Nurse E. M. Howling, who accepted it on behalf of a local children's home.

I worked eight to five, five days a week for £3 18s 6d, almost four pounds of which I gave £1 10s (£1.50) to my mum. There were also monthly bonus payments for productivity. The main job was each day to fill this large, open, rectangular tank with 100 gallons of water and about one hundred kilograms of a chemical called ammonium persulphate. This was an acid that etched away the copper not covered by the resistant ink that was printed onto the mica panels. The circuit was printed on using silk screen methods. After filling the tank I would load it with racks of panels, turn on the compressed air agitation and unload and rinse them when etching was complete. I also prepared the panels before printing, stamping tooling holes into them and degreasing them in a tank full of trichloroethylene. Safety and the disposal of hazardous waste were not major concerns in those days. I had very little protective clothing; my clothes were always getting splashed with acid which resulted in holes after mum washed them. The degreasing agent was a powerful solvent and although there was extraction and I was warned about breathing in the fumes, it was all rather casual. At the end of the day I emptied the 100 gallons of bright blue effluent straight down the drain.

At this time I was really into my music and some of the fads of the day. I was often getting ribbed at work because of the length of my hair. The Beatles had been around a couple of years by this time and the British pop culture was invading the world. As a group we started hanging round more and more at Alan's place. His parents owned a place near where the roundabout now is at the junction of Sutton Road, Southchurch Road and the bye-pass that takes you off to Victoria Station. It was a workers café on the ground floor, living rooms for his family upstairs and a night-club, coffee bar called the Zanzibar downstairs. Coffee bars in basements were the in places at that time, where under eighteens could hang out, listen to music and meet girls. No alcohol; though sadly drugs did get passed around, not heavy stuff, just pills called purple hearts. Well, none of us were into any of that, we were only interested in music – oh, and girls!

Although the sixties is a decade drooled over for many reasons, for me, the most exciting things that were happening were not on the ground but in space. Since the Russian's launched the first artificial satellite in 1957, Sputnik 1, the Space Race was never out of the news long with the U.S. and Russia competing head to head. Each step, success or tragedy, enthralled me. I knew the history of rockets and how liquid fueled rockets worked. I studied the practicalities of space flight, how it could be achieved and the mathematics of defeating gravity to get stuff up there. But of course I also delighted in the great science fiction writers of the day, particularly Isaac Asimov, his Foundation Trilogy is a classic that lit my imagination.

Well as I mentioned, I never really appreciated the job I had. My mates had started work in London, commuting daily so to 'get on' I felt I had to do the same. I took a train up to the big city, dressed as well as I could. I never had a suite but I did my best. I went to some agent who saw my details, looked me over and sent me to the offices of the British and Northern Shipping Agency. I was successful and so handed in my notices at Ekco. It was sad to leave, but felt it was best. Little did I know then that I would be back.

Commuting back and forth from Southchurch East to Fenchurch Street was certainly a chore but I was into Charles Dickens around this time. I subscribed to his complete works, a volume delivered monthly, so I read and occasionally

played cards, if my memory serves me correctly. I usually got a seat okay, but it really was sardines in a tin by the time you picked up at Barking.



The title of my new position was Port Rate Clerk. I had to calculate the tax ships using the Port of London had to pay. I also had to run errands daily to the Port of London Authority on Tower Hill and to Custom and Excise that was near Billingsgate Fish Market. These excursions were a welcome relief from the confined office I worked in. There were about six clerks who worked in a room not much larger than my lounge at home, they were friendly enough, but sadly, their language and humour seriously got me down. Sex in all its perversions was the general conversation. One guy even exposed himself in the office to illustrate some point he was trying to make.

This was my second job in my first year after leaving school. I was at Ekco for about eight months. After six here I was ready to return to factory life. If those I worked with were a fair representation of office workers, I pitied anyone employed in that environment, especial women. Without permission I began missing days. One week I tried to find a new job in Southend, something with some training and future. I was interviewed and offered a position at a company that manufactured industrial heating appliances and other odds and ends. It was called Electrothermal Engineering. What mattered most was that I would get one day off a week to attend the local college so I could get qualified. I accepted the position.

The Friday I returned to British and Northern, the boss was not too happy as I had been off since Monday without phoning in; I was given the boot and would be given no reference. I told him it did not matter; I had a new job and was starting



in two weeks, so I was giving my notice in anyway. But instead I had two weeks off which suited me fine.

This little episode is one I have often reflected on. The paths we take in life seem pretty mundane until something quite out of the ordinary happens that, although you may not realize it at the time, will shape the rest of your life and not just your own but your posterity for generations to come. Such a fork in my path of life presented itself during that unintended two week break in my working life, which path I set foot down with little looking back.

## **Angels**

Unseen, unheard they fly in haste, to our side they swiftly race,  
To our call when doubts and fears numb our heart, deafen our ears.  
Bearing words of truth and light, to bring us hope to wage the fight,  
Faith and strength for times in life, when burdens weigh, when strife is rife.

There is no effort they withhold as they pursue their mission bold.  
Engaging agents of the one, who fell to Earth when time begun.  
Agents who invade our minds with lies and discouragement to blind.  
Whispers to coax the moods of man, confuse and tempt him all they can.

Between the worlds of life and peace, fed by hate that will not cease,  
Where light and truth is all they fear, from swords of them whose aims are clear.  
Of them, so few in ancient times, but now their numbers steeply climb,  
As valiant souls who pass the veil join in their fight that will not fail.

Unheard, unseen they fly in haste to battle those who kill and waste,  
In the cause of truth and light, there are no depths, there is no height,  
Never tiring, no sleep, no rest, united in their sacred quest  
They wage the war to end his reign, finally bound in eternal chains.

## **Chapter 7 Born Again**



In August of 1965 my mother did something which changed the course of history. Why she did it, what her thoughts were that moment of the day, what caused her to respond as she did, I may never fully understand. It may simply have been because of their charm or perhaps because the two callers sparked memories of wonderful war years when American soldiers were in town. But so it was, two nineteen year old Mormon missionaries knocked at her door, introduced themselves and asked if they could come back when the family was home and deliver their message. Her response was not to

make an appointment for the whole family, but just for Fay and me. That evening I arrived home from somewhere and she gave me the news that some fellers from a church wanted to come and discuss something about religion. At the time, I had more faith in truths discovered by scientific enquiry than any other way, for me there was no God; if there was, why was he not doing the same things he was doing thousands of years ago? I was ready for any discussion; Fay was not, so it was just me and them. Well, of course they kept to their appointment, they came and introduced themselves, but there was no argument. Instead they told me about Joseph Smith, a prophet of God, called in our time. Whether it was after the first visit or a subsequent one I am unsure, but they soon challenged me to pray about the message they had delivered; to ask God if Joseph Smith was indeed a true prophet. I did, and I found out for myself, he was.

I do not believe it can be overstated; the significance of this singular event. It was not just that two Mormon missionaries came to my mother's door, but the precise moment they came which has led to so much that otherwise would not have. Maybe it was fate, all calculated to happen, or maybe it was pure chance. I believe that the faith and prayers of generations of my ancestors had some influence in it coming to pass, their hearts had turned to me.

Elders Richardson and Tullis were not just missionaries, they were sportsmen too. The best time for them to teach me was on a Saturday afternoon but this was not their best time, they were in the mission baseball team, star players. Games were on Saturdays. In those days they had a twelve-seater mini-bus which they used to pick up those like me and take to the church which was out in Eastwood, on the Arterial Road just before it leaves Southend. It seldom had just twelve passengers, more like double! They also used it to get to the Saturday baseball matches that I was soon going along to.

Church was not like anything I had been to before. Although the services and lessons were quite formal, a bit like the Methodist way, there was no one who you could pick out as 'the minister'. The service was led by men, but the branch president and his councilors had regular working lives outside of church. Clinton Lee was the branch president then, who was an electrician by trade, then there was Sheridan Newman who just happened to work at Cathodean next door to where I was working; they made cathode ray tubes for TVs. Finally Ralph Waghorn was the second councilor who was an engineer at the telephone exchange. He knew my aunt Dot.

I was soon involved in the social activities at the church and enjoying the friendship of other missionaries. The whole experience was a breath of fresh air. As well as myself there was this girl they were teaching who they picked up in Newington Avenue, round the corner from me. We got chatting and it was not long before I asked her out for my first date. We got on very well. I took her to the Palace theatre to hear some jazz band playing, enjoyed other dates out or at her home or mine. I guess it lasted a month; we then broke up though sadly, she also gave up having the lessons. We talked about it at some point, I had decided I was

joining, but she felt differently. There were no heavy feelings about it; it was just rather matter of fact.

There was a lack of continuity in the teaching process in those days. Elders Richardson and Tullis were moved areas, they never passed on my details to their successors so for weeks I heard nothing. Fortunately I had the phone number of the digs where the Elders stayed so I called and before long some new ones paid a visit.

I gradually came to believe all I was taught. I read the Book of Mormon at work, even showed it around, I attended the services, but there was one hiccup; I smoked. I was seventeen then and had been a regular smoker for the last two years. I had tried to give it up, on occasions, but without much success. It was a drain on my meager income, or sadly, I was always scrounging a fag of Alan or someone. My health suffered too, with chest infections. It was Elder Martin who finally issued the challenge. He had the spiritual power necessary. I remember the moment; he sat close, face to face and committed me.

“Will you give it up?” he asked, “Yes,” I responded.

“Can I take any cigarettes you have with me?” “No,” I replied, “but I will give them up.”

I must have finished that last packet, or I may have thrown it, what I know is, it was my last. Strange as it may sound, I found it easy. I knew I wanted to be a member of the church, that was a strong motivation, I knew that if I did not give them up I could not be baptized. Where I worked at that time was in a clean air environment because of the electronic components I was testing. If I wanted to smoke I had to go outside, which helped. Also, reading the Book of Mormon made it easier; its spirit seemed to take away any craving. So it was just into the New Year, 14 January 1966 when I was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It was not long before they had me doing things, it is not a church where you sit idly by. They called me to Sunday school, first as a secretary then onto the presidency. I soon gave my first talk at the pulpit, which when you consider that

at school I managed to escape from ANY public speaking, even when the rest of the class had to, this new willingness to stand up in front of a crowd and speak, was truly a miracle. My confidence went from strength to strength. But what about my worldly interests, music and all that?

I do not remember the exact chronology of events. Around this time, Freddy Wheeler, our lead guitarist gave up with the band. Maybe it was education or career – I do not know. We tried to find a replacement but no success. All the time I had been with the lads, I tried to influence musical tastes. Trevor in particular began to like what I liked, jazz! He started to get into all the great jazz drummers of the era and learn their techniques. I am sure we went to my first live Brubeck concert together. We also used to hang out down the Studio Jazz Club, a coffee bar near the Cliffs Pavilion that had a stage in the basement where jazz, soul and rhythm and blues bands of the day came and played. We would groove into the early hours, especially Saturday nights. But I still managed to get to church by 8.30 Sunday morning when the men met.



Left to right: John Chapell, Melvin Taylor, Trevor Taylor, Alan Goddard, Me, Martin Griffin, two saxes?? (Forget)

It must have been Alan who made friends with him, John Chappell, who was a pianist and wanted to start up a soul band. He had come into a bit of money, was an only child and offered to buy me a trumpet if I joined up. Although I had not played trumpet for years I quickly picked it up again and the music was great. The exact timing of all this in relation to my new religious convictions is a bit hazy, but somehow, both mixed okay, for a year or two.

Alan's dad had by then sold up the Zanzibar, compulsory purchase order, but had a car accessories shop along the London Road. We practiced at the back of it. The inspiration for us was rather varied, but mostly it was Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames. We called ourselves Sebastian Tymes Big Soul Band. We did some good gigs, including a couple in London. We also recorded a demo disk, one side was a cover version of Nina Simone's great song, 'Break Down and Let It All Out', but I cannot remember the other side. I think Alan still has a copy. Fay hung out with us quite a bit which was nice. I got to date one of her school mates, just remember her nickname as Sprite, forget her real name. That was a fun time.

Around then I also bought myself a motor-cycle, a Greeves 200cc, two-stroke. Greeves were a local company in Benfleet who made scrambling and motor-cross bikes. Mine was just a road bike but I was proud of it. As I was paying for it on the never-never, I decided I could no longer afford taking out girls on dates. But that resolve did not last too long.

The summer of 1966 was particularly memorable. I also have a historic moment as a reference, namely July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1966, the day of the world cup final between England and Germany at Wembley. Although I was interested in football, music took priority. That weekend I think I coaxed a friend at church, Paul Scott who had a car, to take me and a few others, including two girls, to the Jazz and Blues Festival at Windsor Park. It was at great event with The Who, Cream and Georgie Fame playing with the Harry South Orchestra. We arrived Friday night and slept rough. After the great victory at Wembley we all drove into London to witness the celebrations which really were something. England really was the place to be in the sixties.

As well as the music there was also the fashion. Alan and John had boots made to measure with Cuban heels, all the craze of the day. We would go down Carnaby Street where many pop stars bought their gear and we also went to Portobello Road and bought second hand clothes that we actually wore. Makes me cringe to think of it now!

There were two girls we got to know, one was Antoinette; I think that was her real name, she sang with a popular band in town called Antoinette and the Fingers and her friend Penny who I dated for a few weeks. One date I particularly remember was going to my first Indian restaurant. At work I had made friends with an Indian chap, interesting guy who also had a pilots license for flying light aircraft but was trying to upgrade to bigger things, anyway, he gave me a list of dishes to order and I ordered the lot! Curries and biryani's, popadoms and chapatti's, it was way too much for two. We had a fun time that summer, the beach, music, parties, but of course, without any ado, we broke up.

While working at Electrothermal Engineering I attended college and was doing pretty well. But then I had the opportunity of an apprenticeship at my old employers, E.K.Cole Ltd. By this time the TV assembly plant had packed up. The old factory was bought up by a bank and it became the offices of the Access Credit Card. But Ekco Avionics, a subsidiary of E.K.Cole remained there. They designed and built airborne weather radar systems as well as other high tech electronics. I became an apprentice, electronic draughtsman which I remained at until 1971.

Eventually, members of the band went their different ways and I became more heavily involved in the church. Each year we had an event for the youth called a convention. The first couple I went to were held on the Isle of Sheppey, just across the Thames in Kent. We stayed from Friday evening to Sunday after noon and enjoyed dances, workshops, music, dance, speech and roadshow competitions we had planned for all year. It must have been on the second one I went to that I got a ramshackle band together. We were not very good but made an impact. We tried doing gigs elsewhere but were just not good enough. Now which convention was it? It must have been the last one. It ended with floods that prevented us getting back through the Dartford Tunnel. We were in a coach that



had to divert all over to get through. Streets were flooded and in some they were out in boats!

Before one of these conventions I invited my sister Terri out to join in the Roadshow we were rehearsing. She came and was soon being taught by the missionaries and was baptized. A second member of my family was now in the church.

In the church there were some good influences in my life. In particular there was my Sunday School teacher, Vera Croughton. She was a widow, though she could not have been more than forty. Tragically her husband had died very young with cancer and she was left with two children to bring up. She was a school teacher by profession and in her church role invited the young people she taught back to her home to share music and chat. I shared with her my Brubeck and MJQ, she shared her Beethoven and Bach. I spent many a Sunday afternoon in her home that did me so much good.

One Sunday the branch president, who at this time was Bill Henley, invited me to Sunday dinner. While with him he taught me the fundamentals of genealogy which fascinated me. It was not long before I was down at the local library and then up to London searching for my ancestors. I have always felt that by doing Temple work for them sooner rather than later has blessed my life. I simply feel that because I may have unlocked doors for them, they have been on my side when I needed them!

Up to this point I had never yet dated a girl who was a fully baptized member of the church. The girls who went to the church always seemed more interested in the missionaries. There were converts like Susan Benning, but she was older than me and was soon off around the world on one of her jaunts. But she did give us young adults some interesting times, particularly getting involved in local dramatic productions like *Oliver* at the Cliff Pavilion. I did go out with June Dunt, she was a member, but that too did not last. Up to this time I think the longest I ever went out with any girl was for a month. But then in what must have been the autumn of 1968, that all changed.

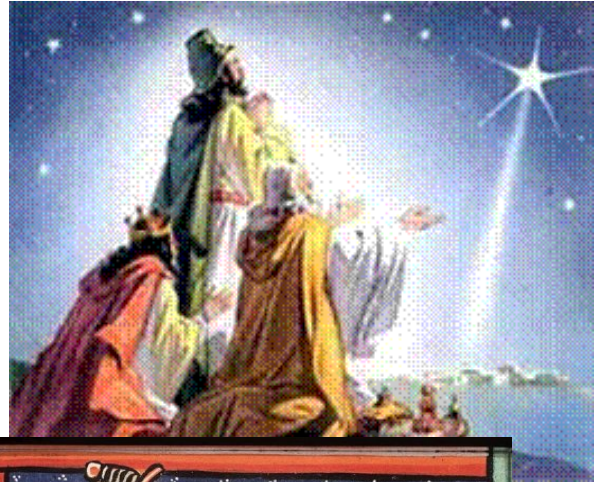
## Good Intentions

Those impulsive men, so called wise  
Who from the east came to advise  
An evil tyrant of a state event,  
The birth of a king from heaven sent.  
Was their wisdom of God inspired?  
Or were their prophecies and signs conspired  
From occult knowledge, mystic whispering,  
That brought to Rama her cries and weeping.

They came to honour a nation's king,  
Gifts and homage to a royal babe bring.  
No doubt they came with intentions pure,  
Unaware of the power behind the lure,  
A power unseen with intent alone,  
To destroy the rightful heir to the throne  
And thwart the designs of God above,  
To save a sinful world by love.

Angels came to the humble shepherds  
Declaring, singing His joyous words,  
Goodwill to all and peace on Earth  
Sent forth to seek the royal birth.  
So finding him they obediently did,  
Amidst the crowded town, quite hid,  
In a stable behind the Inn,  
They knelt and adored their heavenly king.

But men from the east; were they invited?  
Although their minds were much excited,  
It was not angels that inspired their ardour  
But stars and signs scrutinized with candour.  
And though their mission God did not spurn,  
But through their dreams led safe return,  
Still mothers were left to mourn their plight  
And a royal family, into exile, made to take their flight.



## **Chapter 8 Matters of the Heart**

A new chapel was built in Chelmsford. I remember going over there on my motor bike and racing round the building site and on one occasion I had to get home after a snowfall; that was an interesting ride, I came off so many times including on a hill with both me and the bike flat out on the ice, sliding down between two cars.

In the summer of 1968 they held a fancy dress dance at Chelmsford; I think the theme was Robin Hood. One of the members invited this Malaysian student who was studying at the college there and lodging with her. Her English name was Joyce Lowe and Malaysian name was Seong Ling. Always interested in a pretty face I danced with her and invited her over to Southend the following week. In those days there was very little discouragement for dating none members, I thought nothing of it. Also, I was at the time a local missionary and planning to serve a full time mission. So after her weekend in Southend I asked if I could come over to Chelmsford to teach her about the church. But she never joined. I on the other hand was soon finding my way over to Chelmsford, or she was coming to Southend every weekend. It was the start of a long term relationship that after six months drew me away from the church until the relationship came to its stormy end.

In the summer of '69, during college holidays she got temporary work in London and found a bed-sit in Westcliff near us. We also went on holiday, catching a ferry from Newhaven to Dieppe, hitch-hiking to Paris, camping in the Bois de Bouloigne, then down through France to the Mediterranean. It was in the small town of Beziers, near the Spanish border where we finally camped and I celebrated my twenty-first birthday.

Just before this holiday, amongst other things I bought my first car. It was a white, 1955 Ford Mk1 Consul that I bought off Paul Scott for the grand sum of £60. Despite the price, my mum helped organized me the finance through a friend of hers. I had driving lessons, £5 an hour and on the second attempt at the driving test, I passed.



With the start of the new college year she returned to Chelmsford but to new digs. During November she began dating someone else at college and with me it all came to an emotional end. I remember getting my motorbike out, which had been left in the shed for

ages gathering cobwebs and driving it top speed round the lanes and countryside. Scared my poor mum. But I soon got over it. Joyce played piano and had a sweet voice and on occasions we went to the local folk club. A song she and I used to play and sing was the old calypso, Yellow Bird. Though the relationship was over, for Christmas I bought her this yellow budgie, cage, stand and all and took it up to her new flat in Ilford; thought it might remind her of me. That was the last I saw of her. She wrote once asking for her share of some premium bonds we had saved, which I sent, though I still have a two pound one from those days, somewhere amongst our papers.

All the time I was not attending church, I never gave up praying, every night. I remember the Sunday I returned to church; it was a warm though not over-the-top welcome; I felt I was home where I belonged. My old car had broken down some weeks before we broke up and I left it at the place where she lived in Chelmsford, in the driveway. I never did get it home. Eventually, I guess it was scrapped.

In reflection, this relationship taught me a lot, like what was most important in my life. Although love is a powerful force, it cannot over power faith, if that faith has taken root. What lay ahead of me was not clear. But there was still the old dream of serving a mission.

## **My Favourite Place**

Built nine hundred years ago  
By monks of the Cluniac order,  
Near the south-east Essex coast,  
The Priory of Prittlewell, St Mary.  
Within its thirty acre park,  
Through which the Prittle flows,  
Nestles a walled garden, for which,  
My fondness doth never vary.

Just an acre, or maybe less,  
Formal in shape and design  
Shady bowers on raised terraces,  
Full length of opposite sides.  
Beds and borders, fountains and pond  
Embrace all colours and hues  
But here not just my senses thrill,  
A quiet spirit abides.

When still young in trousers short,  
I first beheld its glory,  
But though adorned in springtime splendour,  
'Twas mystery that impressed my heart.  
No child could walk its paths alone,  
Through barred door I would peer,  
To sip the beauty it would pour,  
And sacred warmth impart.

Perhaps nostalgia magnifies  
This place within my mind,  
For oft I sat here, in younger days  
Before embarking on adult quests.  
I also read and came to know  
The one who gave His all,

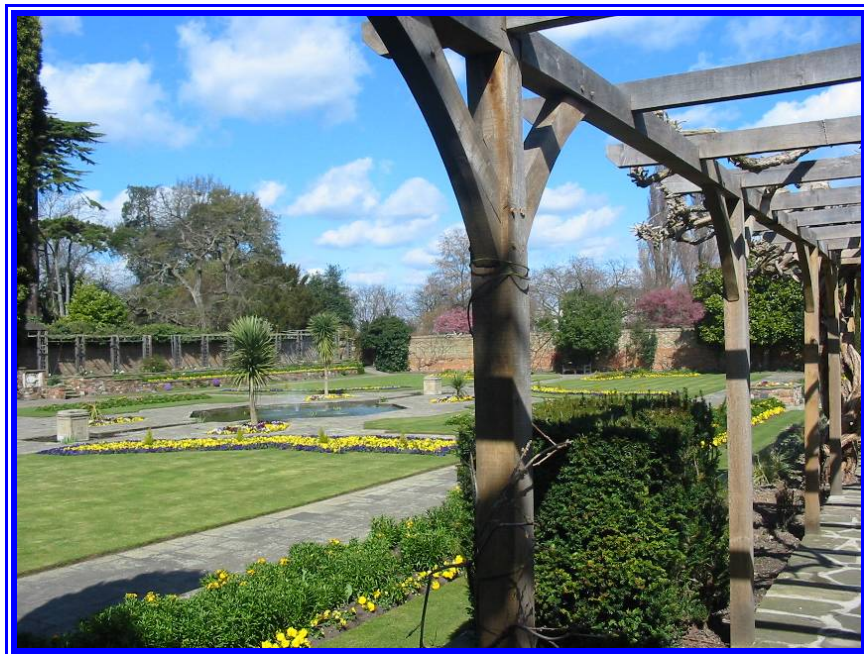


*Rebel's Lane*

And since, in recent years renew  
My faith on whom all rests.

Not always alone have visits been,  
In winter, summer or spring,  
But with those whose love I sought  
And hoped for courtship true.  
Now the fruits of love have come,  
And distant my dwelling lies,  
To share this treasure with those I love, alas,  
Have been occasions too few.

So to those, who may not know,  
This haven and sanctuary,  
Or have forgotten, what lies within,  
These walls and sacred Garth,  
I invite you, here to come,  
And spend a quiet hour,  
For this for me, quite simply is,  
My favourite place on Earth.



## **Chapter 9 Coming of Age**



1970 was a year I picked myself up. I was in my first year of an HNC in Mechanical Engineering and my apprenticeship was nearing the end. I was now back in the drawing office after doing the rounds in laboratories and workshops so was getting better paid. Church was exciting too, under the new mission president there were many families joining and there was much talk on the three mission districts of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex at last becoming a Stake of Zion.

In the summer I decided to try and repeat my travels of a year ago, though this time alone. I caught a ferry from Dover to Ostend and began hitch hiking through Europe. First lift took me to the outskirts of Brussels. I camped one night and saw some of the sights and tasted some waffles. I then hitched lifts through to Luxemburg, sleeping rough in shelters, arriving just before a storm. To keep dry, I paid a small price to sit inside a night-club until it closed after which I slept inside a shop doorway. Getting lifts was always interesting. One in particular I felt was amazing. This guy was on his way to the birth of a new child but he bothered to stop and pick me up, some people are truly exceptional.

I was carrying a small tent and sleeping bag but did not use them except that first night in Brussels. For my second night in Luxemburg I tried to put up in a youth hostel but they would not let me in, my hair was too long! So I teamed up with this American guy and looked around the city. As the day drew on we were wondering where we might stay when up walked some Boy Scouts. They asked if we needed somewhere, of course we did and so they took us to the troupe meeting place, an old fortification of some sort, a round tower, about three stories high. They showed us up to the top floor which was just an open space with a wooden floor, but it was dry and we were grateful. There was quite an

international gathering there. For me, the Boy Scouts of Luxemburg will long be remembered.

Next day we were offered a lift by some other patrons of the establishment who had an old van, so I took a ride to the French boarder. It must have been on this leg of my journey when I was picked up in a truck by this French guy who when he saw I was carrying my guitar on my back insisted I got it out and play some songs, which I did. Eventually we came to where he lived with his family. Once again I had to perform. I shall never forget the level of poverty they were in. His wife was on a bed at the back of what was little more than an empty container, or shack, or maybe it was an old caravan but it had no windows, just open at one end. It was a very humble dwelling.

After the recital he kindly took me on my way and I eventually arrived in Basel, Switzerland. Here I looked up the church and made much needed use of the cloakroom facilities. I then took a train to Zurich and then to Zug on the banks of Lake Lucerne. I found the Church Mission Home and rather foolishly slept the night on its doorstep. In the morning I was not the welcome guest of the mission president I thought I might be, in fact his attitude was hardly Christian, certainly could not be compared to the Boy Scouts of Luxemburg! However, one of the missionaries lodging there had some compassion and gave me some food.

Sunday I found my way back to Basel and very much enjoyed church there. Although in German, the singing was so rich, everyone sung in parts. I was invited back to a gathering of members and missionaries; had a superb meal and the missionaries invited me back to their place to sleep. Christianity was once again alive and well in the church! I stayed two or three nights but then felt I had to take my leave of Switzerland. I found my way across the French boarder hoping to reach Bordeaux. My sister Terri was at a French college there as part of bi-lingual secretarial course she was doing. The idea was great, only thing was I could not get a single lift. After sitting by the roadside for a full day I finally gave up. I had just enough money to get back to Ostend or Calais by train so I enjoyed the luxury of the French Railway and finishing my holiday in good old Southend. Although I had been away less than two weeks, I really appreciated the basic comforts of life.



The trip did something for me. I think I grew up, matured and blew away some cobwebs. I became more committed than ever to the church and my testimony of the Saviour deepened. When back at work, at lunchtimes, I used to go just over the road to the Old World Gardens in Priory Park, where I read the scriptures and in particular, Jesus the Christ by James E. Talmage. My spirituality and faith increased many fold.

I was soon recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained an elder. I was interviewed by President W. Dean Belnap, happily confessed all my sins which could not have been too bad as not he did not hold back the blessing just said three things would happen, one, I would receive the priesthood, two, I would complete my apprenticeship and three I would serve a mission. He was a priesthood leader I greatly respected. Never since the early days of the church in England has there been a missionary like him. Thousands joined in his three years as mission president. He pioneered using the Family Home Evening as a missionary tool and had a travelling home evening programme with a musical singing group that went to community halls and on council estate greens in the east-end of London, places that had been no-go areas for ages. I received my ordination and soon, after the East Anglia Stake was created. The Southend branch became a ward and Mike Harris its first Bishop. I was called as the ward mission leader. It was a busy time with many interested families and young singles who became stalwart members. Like John Cooke, David and Linda Page, Jim and Kath Rand and the Prentice family became active and introduced many of their friends.

When Terri got back from Bordeaux and told us of her adventures, it turned out she had made a new friend, one Kathryn Alexander. She came out to church and was interested in learning all about it. Of course, I was quick off the mark and was soon dating her. I also bought a new car. Really it was an old van, a blue Austin A35 with windows, VERY cheap, think I paid £45 for it. So the autumn of '70 was fun.

At the same time there were three other young women all about seventeen years of age, friends, and living nearby each other, who began attending church; these were Amanda Jones, Carol Barnes and Rosemary Cooke. There was also an older

single woman, as in a bit older than me, a French girl called Francois. She had this old Bedford mini-bus which she took us to church in. So things really were looking up! I dated Kathryn a while but had my eyes also on Rosemary. She invited us all to her grandmother's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in the Co-op Hall. There was just something about the spirit of this girl that attracted me. Love for her grandmother just beamed out of her face which touched my tender heart. I guess I was smitten. I cannot remember just when I began dating her, but I do remember how the relationship began. During the last six months or so I had improved quite a lot in my guitar playing. Rosemary was learning to play, so what could be more natural than to ask,

"Can I come round and show you a few things on the guitar?" The offer was accepted and so my second serious relationship began. It could not have been more different than the previous one. I often feel I was reaching my spiritual apex around this time. I dated and treated Rosemary the way a Latter-day Saint young man should. I took her out to the usual places like the cinema, but it was in the simple things that we enjoyed so much, like reading, praying, walking and serving others. Sundays was always our favourite day.

The missionaries in our ward at this time were exceptional. They began teaching a family consisting of a grandmother and two teenage grand-daughters, their names, Nanny Boltwood, Linda and Julie. The children's parents had deserted them and they had serious social problems that their grandmother had great difficulty coping with. So the missionaries asked if I would hold home evenings in her home each Monday. I never had home evenings so I took up the challenge. Both Rosemary and I would go to her flat in Shoeburyness and give them the full works. I baptized them and began picking them up for church and helping in any way I could. Eventually she applied for moving to a house nearer the church, to Danescroft Drive in Eastwood. It was an old council property but she was given a grant to help do it up and I volunteered to do the work. Once she was settled there we began having home evenings that included all the young singles with no where else to go. We would all enjoy singing, lessons and in particular hearing Nanny Boltwood's poems and stories she wrote of her childhood. She was also a pianist, good one in her prime, so we got on like a house on fire.

This short outline of my involvement with this family is understated. From this experience I learnt to serve, not just out of duty but unconditionally caring for those who really needed it. It was all coming together at once; repentance, studying the life of the savior, caring for others in a Christ like way, doing my priesthood duties and dating a non-member girl in a way that built her faith and taught me what true love was about. Love, unselfish love simply makes you a better person.

I was also now in the last year of my college course and my apprenticeship at Ekco Avionics. Normally, I would have been offered a job, however, the company was bought up by Phillips and merged with one of their subsidiaries, M.E.L. that was based in Crawley, West Sussex. I was given a choice, to either move with the company or leave. However, the financial settlement for accepting redundancy gave me the opportunity of serving a mission for the church. So I took the money. President Belnap's prophecy was fulfilled.

Prior to my leaving for my mission in the north of England I received my patriarchal blessing and went to the temple. I had a date with Rosemary the evening after receiving my endowments. It was to watch a movie of Woodstock, a hippy rock festival. After my experience at the temple, I just could not stomach it so we walked out of the cinema after only ten minutes.

Rosemary turned eighteen before I left and was free to be baptized which service I gladly performed. Then the weekend before my leaving we attended the first Area General Conference held in Belle Vue Manchester. It was a tremendous experience, thousands of saints from all over the British Isles gathered to hear Joseph Fielding Smith, the prophet of the day, and many other general authorities and it took place in the area I was to serve.

I remember well a little faith promoting incident on the Sunday I gave my farewell talk. Rosemary and I were out walking and we lost track of time. She was a little concerned as we were about four miles from the chapel with only minutes to get there and not on a direct bus route; I was the final speaker. With my arm around her shoulder as we walked and with no feeling of panic I simply said,

“Have faith!” With which I just raised my hand off her shoulder, thumb extended and immediately a car stopped which drove us to the chapel! Just coincidence, of course!

## **The Hand of God**

Where can the hand of God be seen in this world of vain ambition?  
Is it seen above in the vast cosmos or in a saint's contrition?  
Is it seen in the ebb and flow of tides or the rhyme of a poet's words?  
In the rhythmic seasons of the year or the strike of a heroes sword?

Does the mind of God spur the quake, flood, pestilence or famine?  
Or turn the heart from selfish pride to bended knee before Him?  
Was his the voice upon the mount dispensing law and order?  
Is his the whisper in the heart, the reassuring comforter?

Or are all these delusions, images of the mind?  
To coin a simple answer in the complex world we find?  
Is all just pure statistics, odds and probability?  
Or is there a grand design, intelligent creativity?

Certain answers cannot be found through rational debate,  
Nor from the science of the day however true or great,  
Organic senses have limitations within this mortal realm,  
Other senses must be sought and tuned to find the helm.

Whether real or imaginary, these senses do respond,  
Consistently and predictably they lead to right from wrong,  
They glean from evidence of things we cannot hear or see,  
Bringing substance of things hoped for to faith to make us free.

## **Chapter 10 Beyond the Veil**

My mission is documented in detail in my Missionary Journal, but it is rather a lot to wade through to find the highlights, so I relate a few here.

It was an emotional farewell as I said my good byes to Terri and Rosemary at Euston Station. I was excited at the adventure ahead so I did not appreciate how hard it would be on both these beautiful young women over the next two years. Lives change in that length of time and unforeseen events determine destiny.

As the train approached Leeds I was intrigued by the skyline, from a distance its silhouette looked like a pine tree forest, but as the horizon came more clearly into view I realized the peaks were chimney stacks on the tops of rows of back-to-back terraced houses. I had never seen housing quite like this, not even in Staffordshire.

I changed at Leeds for a local train to Harrogate and listened. I liked the dialect and cheerfulness of the locals on board and felt I was going to get on well with them. At Harrogate I caught a bus to Rossett Green where the North British mission home was, walked up the gravel path of this very prestigious estate and knocked on the big oak door. This was not the usual way missionaries arrived! Normally they were picked up in the mission home mini-bus from the airport, safely managed. I felt more like missionaries of yore, left to their own devices.

There were others who arrived that day so we enjoyed a fine meal and were given opportunity to introduce ourselves and bare testimony. The following day I was whisked off to the barbers for the obligatory mark two hair cut, mine was just not down to an acceptable length. My mission President was Henry V. Jenkins from Florida, USA. He and his wife lead and mothered almost 200 missionaries spread over the north of England, from Chesterfield in Derby to the south, up to the Scottish border and from west coast to east and I was soon being driven to a small town in Lancashire called Rawtenstall. Here I was introduced to the branch president, Arthur Hardy and his family and my first missionary companion, Elder Steven Foote.

President Hardy is a man I came to deeply respect. He was a hill farmer, a shepherd, when missionaries found, taught and baptized him. Just as he lovingly tended his woolly sheep, so he cared for his human flock. He had only recently given up his farming, bought a nice house and set himself up as a milkman when he was called as the new branch president. Now, after an absence of about nine months, missionaries were assigned to serve there too. So we really were breaking new ground and preaching afresh in this corner of the Lord's vineyard.



Our digs in Haslingden

One of the first tasks we had was to find accommodation. Temporarily we stayed in the home of a dear elderly sister, sister Love. Yes! That really was her name. I think I got the bed while my companion slept on the floor. My hero then and still is the missionary of the restoration, Parley P. Pratt. Vera Croughton had bought me his autobiography which was a great inspiration before my mission and my companion was descended from him. He was

the best senior I could have had, totally committed to the mission schedule and rules and walked everywhere at a pace I found hard to keep up with. We were expected to be on the first doorstep of the day by 9 am, not leave home at 9 am, on the first knocker! He made sure we were. We would tract from 9 am to mid-day, have an hour lunch and tract until we returned to our digs at 5, leave at 6 for appointments or more tracting, be home by 10 and in bed by 10.30. Mondays was our preparation day, time for laundry and writing letters and maybe see some sights, but at 6pm we were out again. On Sundays we attended church meetings but in between and after sacrament in the evening, it was the same, this was the 'tracting mission!'

My first goal was to learn the six missionary lessons. I had already learnt and taught the first before I left home so I had a head start. It took six weeks to pass them off, word perfect, the way the gospel was taught in those days. We soon found digs, a place in Haslingden where truckers stayed over. The room was comfortable and the food great, full English breakfast every morning and an evening meal.

I particularly remember, in those early days, of walking the streets in the dark evenings, smoke curling from the chimneys of row upon row of stone built terraced houses, front room windows lit and welcoming and us out in the chill of the evening bearing the gospel of eternal life, just two of us for all these who are comfortable and content and wanting nothing. How could we possibly find, teach and baptize anyone. But I soon realized if you just do the work, He who knows the hearts of all, prepares the way.

The first person we baptized was Jim Walker. He was the son of a widow who tragically lost her husband who was a mountaineer. He had gone off with one of his sons to the Alps and they never returned. There was a public memorial service for him as he was well known in the community. I learnt how important is the process of laying to rest your loved ones. If they just vanish, you never go through that process and life just grinds to a halt. But she did her best

Sadly, Jim did not stay active long, but at least I had chalked up my first baptism, the second, however, was someone truly extra-ordinary. We were passing the chapel and decided to call in and have a chat with Donald Simcock the custodian. Upon entering we found him talking to a young man from Pakistan who had asked if this was a Catholic church and if we performed baptisms. Not being shy of his faith, Donald began explaining what church this was. We then took over, but first, this young man who called himself Paul, had his own story to tell.

His family name was Iqbal, a common name in Pakistan. As a young man he was sent to an Islamic college in Bangladesh but while studying there met up with Christian missionaries who introduced him to the Bible as well as to texts from the Koran that seemed to testify of Christ. There came a point in his studies where he had to choose, the New Testament and Christianity or the Koran and



Islam. He sat on the banks of a river, read scriptures from both and threw the Koran in the river. Of course, rejecting Islam as a Moslem meant rejection from his family; he was no longer their son. In peril of his life he left Pakistan and travelled to his sister in Paris but she soon heard of his new faith and had to cast him out. From Paris he went to Glasgow and finally to Haslingden, Lancashire; each time his family and friends sending him on. Without a home and with his belongings stranded in Glasgow he was passing our Church and walked in.

One thing our chapels cannot be used for is as places to sleep in, but President Hardy put need before the rules and let him. We also assisted in providing him money to go back to Glasgow and collect his stuff. Eventually we assisted him in claiming benefits, finding a place to live and before long, employment at Duralay. At the same time he was reading the Book of Mormon and having the missionary lessons. In a few weeks he was baptized.

He had deliberately taken on himself the name of Paul because he saw himself like the great apostle of the New Testament, apt to take off anywhere as a free spirit on the Lord's errand. I remember him getting a new job in a hospital for the mentally ill but then learnt he had travelled to Southend and meeting my sister. But as I was moved on I completely lost touch, until I was in the last area of my mission, Blackpool. At the time we were staying in a guest house owned by one of the members of the branch. We were enjoying our evening meal when I was told I had a visitor, in walked Paul, as usual, all smiles. It was a joyous reunion and what was more amazing was that he had found his way Stateside, been to the Temple, married and was assisting in translating for the church at the college in Idaho. It was such a story; though sadly, that was the last I have seen of him. Years later I did contact the church to try and locate him but apparently he had taken off somewhere else.

This whole experience is one of many I have had when you feel there are workings going on beyond our conscious awareness, events being determined by powers unseen. There were several more that occurred in Rawtenstall that reinforced these feelings. Family history or genealogy is not the responsibility of missionaries, but my grandmother, Caroline Alison Coultate was born in Burnley, which was in our missionary district, we held our district meetings there every

week. I was able to go to the Burnley library on a 'P'day and research much of my family history on her side. Then on one occasion I was on splits with an American missionary who was with me in Haslingden for just a few hours. That week he had received a letter from home detailing some ancestors who came from that same town. Without any detour or distraction from our missionary work we walked into the church yard of St Mary's, he opened the letter, read out some names where upon we looked at where we were standing. It was eerie. There under our feet was a gravestone laid into the path, on it was a name we were reading from his letter. We were standing a few feet above the bodies of his ancestors. Of course, the events that brought him to that point at that time were pure coincidence (I say that sarcastically) – I think that believing in such coincidences is harder to believe than believing in unseen powers and forces at work, guiding our footsteps.

The event that really got me thinking happened one day when a woman answered the door who recognized what we were, saying,

“You're Mormon missionaries, aren't you, I know the Mormons.” With which she began telling us about a young man, native of Rawtenstall, whose name, sadly, I have forgotten, who many years ago left his home, immigrated to the States, met the missionaries and joined the Church. He settled in Idaho and prospered. After retiring he turned his attention back to his roots, made contact with the church there, contributed towards building the chapel and entertained members at his home in Idaho. Eventually he passed away but with their fortune his wife continued to assist in building the Lord's Kingdom.

Now in those days, if missionaries and their family and friends were unable to fully fund their mission, they could apply to the First Presidencies Missionary Fund. I only had about 10% of the amount needed to serve a two year mission so I applied to this fund and received the assistance. Each month I received a cheque, not from the fund but but from an individual donor to that fund. My benefactor was this same man, once born of Rawtenstall, now passed on to the other side. I questioned my mission president as to whether there had been a special request from his widow. He knew nothing about it, missionaries, remember, had been with drawn from Rawtenstall for the last nine months. So once again; extra-

ordinary coincidences? Mathematics is something I have studied and taught to quite a high level, I would hate to try and work out the probabilities of such an occurrence, as me, on that day in September, being sent to serve in the same area as my benefactor was born, my first area and one where I had such faith building experiences. Perhaps even more strange is my returning 18 years later, being called to serve as Bishop there followed by my son Samuel who too has served as Bishop of that ward.

Well, continuing with our progress in Rawtenstall, we baptized a mother and children and an elderly sister with angina who despite her condition had the faith



to be baptized. We had no medical practitioner at the service but went ahead anyway with all the members of the branch fasting for her. Both Elder Foote and I entered the font with her as she was quite a large woman. After saying the words she attempted to immerse herself by bending forward and we kind of went along with it, trying to push her head, face down into the water. It was disastrous. She must have

caught some water into her lungs because she began gasping and groaning. We immediately laid our hands on her head and administered a priesthood blessing (without the oil!). It worked, she calmed down and we proceeded to baptize her in the appropriate manner. While confirming her, in my mind I prayed for reassurance that what we had done was justified. I received from the spirit a quiet reassurance that all was well. In later years I learnt she outlived her husband.

This baptism took place in the month of December 1971. It was a month and a Christmas that was like no other before or since. In the autumn we had a mission

conference at which President Jenkins related how he had fasted and prayed for several days regarding the mission this Christmas time. In past years, missionary success rather dwindled in the months of November to February. It seemed to begin with American Thanksgiving celebrations, followed by Christmas and New Year. He was impressed to issue a challenge to all the mission that if we made December a month of sacrifice, every team would baptize. There were to be no Thanksgiving Celebrations and we were to be out tracting even on Christmas Day. We were also encouraged to not open personal mail, except on P-day. The whole mission responded to this challenge. In January there was another conference and we heard the results. In November there was record baptisms, I think it was about 85, which would usually be followed by less the next month, but not so, there were, I think, 96 baptisms, the same number as there were teams in the mission.

On Christmas day we called on a guy living in a remote farm house up on Cribden Hill. He let us in, we had a friendly chat and left him a Book of Mormon. We then went to homes we knew were occupied by elderly people living alone and simply visited with them and left an uplifting message. There was also a carol service at church and we had Christmas dinner with President Hardy and his family.

Sadly, the end of 1971 meant the moving on of Elder Foote, in his place came Elder Armstrong who was not quite so fired up, but we got on well enough and baptized one Diane Whittaker who was a friend of Michelle Vernon. Today, she is better known as Diane Oliver, faithful, married to Stuart, with three children temple married and....??? Grandchildren! So she has been a fruitful harvest.

## **Life, Freedom, Forever**

Mother, how much pain did you suffer to bring me into this world?  
Soldier, how willing were you to die for my freedom?  
Lord, what you did for me, was it necessary?  
These undertakings, can I ever appreciate?

Mother, did I ask it of you, could I have?  
Soldier, did you volunteer?  
Lord, was it your will, yours alone?  
For these services, can I ever reciprocate?

For my mother's pain, I am,  
I thank you.  
For soldier's lives, I am free,  
I will not forget.  
For my Saviour's life,  
There is no grave that will hold me,  
By His Gethsemane and Calvary,  
He will erase every, tormenting, regret.

Comprehend – I know not.  
Repay – I can not.  
Cease rejoicing? I hope not!



## Chapter 11 Giving All



After nearly six months I was transferred across the hills to Yorkshire and the people of Bradford. Even then it was a very cosmopolitan town but we never proselyted in the Asian areas that were close the centre. Here I served for the nearly seven months with two companions, Elders Nielson and Hardman. The first had a missing hand, he having lost it in a meat grinder in his father's butcher's shop. He used to joke about them selling 'handburger' meat!

It was a successful area, we worked hard and I baptized quite a few souls, in particular the Longstaff family and Caroline Hey an older woman who suffered from multiple sclerosis. She was a special spirit; we really hit it off with our mutual



Caroline Margaret Hey

love of classical music. But it was here I also had to face up to a big disappointment when I received a 'Dear John' from Rosemary. She had started training as a nurse and lodged with the Hunt family in Chelmsford and began dating young Bob Hunt. Naturally I was upset, but not so much as to distract me from the work. I carried on regardless. I also had a visit from Terri who came up with Sylvia Smith and we took them out to the Bronte village of Haworth which was in my area.

After six months and as the time approached when I anticipated being moved I had a fear that I would be sent to Liverpool. I do not know remember the one occasion when I

have ever had a prophetic dream. In this dream I did indeed get sent to Liverpool, it was really tough but it became a defining challenge. When I awoke, all I wanted was to serve in Liverpool. My attitude had completely changed and of course, that day, it was on a Thursday in those days, the transfer letter landed on the door mat and as expected, I was bound for Liverpool.

All I am going to write about Liverpool is that it lived up to that dream. I was there just three months, baptized no one and never really made any friends. I served in the Penny Lane branch which met for Sunday school in a dancing school above a shop on the corner of Penny Lane. But I worked harder than ever, I wallowed in the challenge and it prepared me for my next move when I was sent to Stockport and was made the district leader there.

In Stockport I plunged into the work as I did in Liverpool. It was a bit too much for my first companion and he, though he stayed in the district, was moved out to

Macclesfield. I was given a new missionary to train, English, 28 years of age and engaged; his name, Elder Tummons.

Although more English boys were leaving for missions, there were not many in my mission. Most seemed to be sent to Scotland where there was an English mission president. In my district though, there were three of us blokes and three Americans. I think I lead the work well, we certainly all worked hard and got on, but baptisms did not come easy for any of us. Eventually, persistence, obedience and faith, paid off. In those days Sunday School was held in the morning with sacrament in the evening, we were given the instruction not to attend Sunday School unless we had investigators. Not all missionaries obeyed this rule but we lead from the front and did. It was on a Sunday morning when we could have been at church when we knocked on the door of Joyce Thompson who lived out in Bredbury. She worked week days and it would have been unlikely for us to make contact any other time. Joyce and her son Ian we taught and they were baptized right at the end of my time in Stockport. Joyce became a close and special friend who after my mission we stayed with and when I married she stayed with us so we kept in touch until sadly she died of breast cancer. At the time of her passing she was the Manchester Stake Relief Society President and was much loved by hundreds. What a blessing her life was to mine, all because of obedience and faith.

Just one other little thing I feel to mention is how good my health was. The only time off I had for sickness was a few hours one afternoon in Stockport. I woke up one morning with a stomach upset. I had a district meeting to take so I made it there and back to our digs. I had a blessing and after just a couple of hours was able to resume as before and not miss any appointments that evening. We used bikes a lot in Stockport, even cycled out to the team in Macclesfield. One evening we were cycling down this long fast hill when I hit this pot hole in the road. I flew over the handlebars and landed spread eagled in this muddy puddle. I never suffered a scratch, just a rather wet and dirty suit. Like that leap on a wall in Old Leigh, once again, someone prepared a soft landing for me!

Later, after my mission, Joyce and Ian came to stay and Ian met up with Paula Smith a young member of my ward in Southend. I was then bishop there so had





the privilege of performing their wedding ceremony. Sadly, their marriage did not last and I have lost touch with Ian. However, a few years ago we were contacted by Paula. Claire, her and Ian's eldest daughter, had just been called to serve in the Manchester mission, where of course her grandmother had joined the church. They visited us and we told her all about Joyce, her grandmother she had never met. Later still, Paula, Claire and all the family moved into the South Ribble ward and I was their bishop. Surely Joyce has been and is still looking on.

My final area of service was Blackpool and it was for the summer months! I really noticed the difference in my shirt collars, the air in Blackpool was so much cleaner than grimy Stockport. I was also now under a new mission president by the name of Royden Derrick. He had the task of introducing a new set of lessons for teaching. For an old dog like me changing methods was challenging, but I adapted the best I could.

My companion, Elder Duerden was an interesting guy; his dad was a personal



security guard for Howard Hughes who apparently only employed Mormons for such jobs. He also introduced me to some music by two English bands that seriously appealed to me, namely 'Yes', and their album 'Close to the Edge' and 'Days of Future Past' by the Moody Blues. We were posted out to St. Annes, a nice part of the Fylde though rather a lot of retirement homes. Missionary work was very slow so we tried something new. There was a large YMCA there so using the theme Days of Future Past I took loads of photos around Blackpool and put together a slide and music presentation which we gave to a large crowd of young people. I think it made them think more about eternal things – we certainly enjoyed doing things

differently for a change.

During the final two weeks I had a strong impression that although we were not seriously teaching anyone, I was going to baptize before I left for home. On one of my last Sundays a young woman came to church I did not recognize, so I introduced myself. Her name was Lorna and she was the daughter of brother and sister Hepworth, members in the branch. She had just broken up with her long standing boy friend and decided to come out to church. I chatted with her and at the end simply challenged her to be baptized. She went off to the branch president and asked if she could be, he certainly agreed so for the next week we gave her all the lessons. At the end of it I baptized her at the chapel in Preston. It was a fun week and rewarding. As well as baptizing her I had a pork pie eating contest with her dad – of course I won!

I never received an interview from the mission president for my release as he was away so my departure was with as little fanfare as my arrival. But he did leave a challenge for me with one of his assistants, that if I were to study the scriptures for ten minutes every day I would be successful, but if I were to study the scriptures for an hour every day, I would be great. The challenge was not issued with any spirit so I cannot say I ever really took it to heart. Although I have never neglected scripture study, I cannot say I have ever kept to an hour a day. Hence, no greatness!!

As I sat alone in the railway carriage and watched the English countryside pass me by I reflected on the past two years. I was satisfied that I had served well, I was excited at returning home but I was also just a little apprehensive. My last companion issued me a challenge before I left, nothing complicated, just a simple, straight forward goal that I guess I took on board,

“Elder Petchey” he said, “you have just three months to find a girl and... get married!”

I was up for that!

## Time

I heard a thing the other day that made me stop and think,  
About the past and time and how my days pass in a blink,  
How when we're young and years before us appear a distant place,  
But looking back it seems as though we've not begun the race.  
We get confused about it, what it is and how it works,  
As though it were like wealth or grains of sand or where fate lurks,  
We cannot hold or quantify it, though we try to, it's an illusion,  
Time is simply parallel events in their multitudinous profusion.

Robert Clive, our nations hero, a man who new no fear  
Died in seventeen forty four, his tortoise just last year

Because some things re-occur in persistent regularity,  
They are used as a reference, to perceive a random story,  
So as to know when past and future events can be related,  
On timelines histories compared and events ahead predicted.  
The marine organism called a Gastrotrich, to us its life is short,  
But with no memory to speak of, it gives time little thought.  
Birth, life and death all passing-by in three short days,  
While Aidwaitya the tortoise may hardly have begun its weekly graze.

Robert Clive, our nations hero, a man who new no fear,  
Died in seventeen forty four, his tortoise just last year.

When life and death depended on the cycles of the earth;  
When to plant, water, reap, or celebrate new birth,  
A day here, a day there, may not have really mattered,  
No catching seconds on motorways all stressed out and battered.  
Time is how we perceive it, either in seconds lost or gained,  
Or in the timeless creative process, extended and retained,  
The race to reach the next event, never satisfaction find  
Within the fabric of our hearts and memories of our mind.

Robert Clive, our nations hero, a man who new no fear,  
Died in seventeen forty four, his tortoise just last year.



## **Chapter 12 Finding Her**



The first weeks after serving a full time mission are an emotional roller-coaster. For me, the lows followed the highs in quick succession starting with the first Sunday back. But I was particularly pleased with myself at how well I remembered names and faces. One of my first appointments was with the stake president, Dennis Reeves, who formally released me from my calling as missionary and asked me about who I was interested in. I mentioned Rosemary, but that she was now dating Bob Hunt. He suggested I might still win her over and gave me £10 towards taking her for a slap up meal. At the time she

was living in nursing halls of residence in Chelmsford so I dug this old bicycle out of somewhere, cycled over, bought a single rose and rang the bell of her dormitory. It is hard to describe the re-union from this point in time. I would hate to over colour an event or misrepresent her or myself but I will always admire how sensitively she handled me at the time, it could not have been easy.

I am grateful she spent time with me over the next few days. We walked and talked a little, I learnt how apprehensive Bob was but then a 'penny dropped'. All along I had mistaken Bob Hunt for Peter. Now Peter was about my age and to me, was fair game. Bob, however, I suddenly remembered from years back as this young boy who dated this other young girl but who really was not my peer at all. It changed everything. I suddenly realized that he and Rosemary were peers, of the same age and generation. Although being five years older would mean little in years to come, at that time in our lives it was just enough to make me appreciate I was simply not for her. That does not mean I did not still love and respect her a

great deal, it just put our relationship onto a different footing. Rosemary spoke positively and kindly to me, assuring me of who I would eventually meet. I feel it was prophetic, that I would meet someone very special who God had prepared. But where was she?

Well, I still had money to spend on a date and now had less than three months to find a wife, so I began with Rosemary's best friend, Carol. We had a couple of dates, but although enjoyable, we were simply too quiet for each other. My conversational skills were not the best and neither were hers.

Both during and after my mission Kathryn Alexander was often in my thoughts but sadly, at that time she was dating a young man named Michael Hindle. Bishop Harris discouraged me from interfering with that relationship so I took his advice.

There was at the time a sweet young girl investigating the church, very attractive and so I dated her. I forget her name. She certainly stirred the juices but thankfully the spirituality and disciplines of my mission kept me from making any mistakes I would regret. Then came the annual youth convention to which she did not go. It was to be held in Skegness and one thing I became involved in was writing the convention song. This was a competition and each ward was to enter an original song based on the theme My Destiny. I wrote one and recorded it with, I think, Rosemary, Alison Emery and ? the girl with partial vision, forget her name though she is still strong and active in Southend ward. Well anyway, the song was played on the PA system at the holiday camp and judged and lo and behold, it won!

Over the years before my mission I had travelled to various events around East Anglia and there was this girl from Norwich who I often noticed, whose name I never knew, but who always had a ready smile for me. During that weekend I 'chatted her up' and we got on really well so I invited her down to Southend for next weekend. We had a happy, romantic time together and Bishop Harris invited her into his office for a chat and with Elder Duerden's goal firmly in mind I did not hesitate in talking about marriage. Well, I guess it was just all too quick. I do not know and have never found out who it was in Norwich who discouraged the relationship but the following week I received a letter calling the whole thing off

and I never spoke to her again! I think her name was Anne Mitchell, though I may have it wrong.

The only adventurous ideas I now had left was the possibility of returning to Blackpool, for after all, I had made an impression on the girl I baptized there during the last week of my mission. But to be honest, after this snub from the spiritual elite in Norwich I was getting discouraged, in fact, I was going off all romantic adventures, that was, until I heard of Minnie Mouse.

Home from a tour in South America with a show called 'Disney On Parade' was my old friend Susan Benning. In her usual style she invited all the young single adults in Southend around to her mums tiny flat in Westcliff for a fireside at which she told us about her adventures. While touring she began sharing accommodation with a dancer, Eileen Doubleday from Benfleet, just ten miles down the road from Southend. When they arrived in Rio, as it was to be a long stay, Susan arranged accommodation with the Stake president and his wife. Eileen, impressed by the love and spirit of their home, asked to have the missionaries teach her. She was taught in a week and baptized.

Naturally, I was curious to see this fledgling living just up the road. I found out there was to be a barn dance at Basildon, the ward she attended, so off I went. Picking her out from the crowd was not difficult as she certainly caught my attention, petite and full of personality. I tried to partner her in the dances but I was either beaten to it or the first move was to change your partner. Well, there was a friend who noticed things were not going to plan, namely Christine Brandon, who ensured we had the last dance with no changes. I had arrived at the chapel on public transport and was expecting to return the same way; however, Eileen had a car and was happy to take me home. Before we parted I made a date with her.

Now communication has never been a strong point in our relationship. I was sure she was expecting me at her mum's home one evening that week but apparently she thought I said I would phone to confirm it. Because she never received my call she had a poor opinion of me concluding that I was no gentleman. So when I

knocked at her house in Church Street, Thundersley, just after she had returned from work, she was just a little flustered.

Eileen had been called as the ward music chairman and had agreed to meet that evening at Christine Brandon's, who played the piano, to go through hymns. Christine was a little surprised when I turned up too as Eileen had earlier been on the phone to her blackening my reputation. Well, we did the musical business and afterwards went to a pizzeria that had opened up along the eastern esplanade, near the gasworks pier in Southend. So for our first real date we sat at arms length, on a cold beach in November eating pizza.

When tracting in Blackpool I taught this chap who inspired me to be a teacher, so when I returned from my mission I applied at the teacher training college in Brentwood. I was turned down because I never had a GCE in English. So I got a job as a draughtsman at Marconi in Basildon and enrolled at an evening class to get my GCE. I needed a car to get to about so I bought this 1964 Vauxhall Viva from a garage near where I lived. Being mobile, I was now able to get to Eileen on my own steam and date her regularly. One of the first I remember was a trip to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden to see a ballet but most of our social life was centered in church activity. My sister Terri was then engaged to Dave so we occasionally made up a foursome. Eileen was then co-opted to assist choreograph a major production, *Fiddler On The Roof*, to be held at the Wandsworth chapel so we would often drive up to London on a Friday evening for rehearsals. One Saturday I made a surprise appearance there. That morning I had been to the Temple in Lingfield, Surrey but with nothing better to do in the evening, decided to find my way to the Wandsworth chapel. Eileen was not expecting me but was pleasantly surprised and possibly relieved when I showed my smiling face as there were others after her scent whom she was not so interested in.

Eileen's career was temporarily on hold. Since the death of her father she had not spent much time with her mum, so she was not in a great hurry to get back on the stage. She found secretarial work in Southend but soon learnt that there was the possibility of another tour with Disney as well as other opportunities in Australia or the U.S. in the New Year. I was unaware of any deadline, except my last companion's three month one that was now past, but nevertheless I felt I had to





make a decision. We were sitting on the sofa in her lounge when it finally came into my heart that I could say to her those three all important words. I seemed surprised at the feeling that came over me but really, it was not surprising at all that I had indeed

fallen in love with this beautiful, intelligent, faithful, interesting and simply wonderful new person, a precious gem the Lord had prepared for me for the rest of eternity. So it was, on or very near to New Years Eve, on a Sunday late in the evening after church, when we sat on a bench on the grassy cliff at the end of Thames Drive, Leigh, overlooking the Thames under a clear, starlit sky when I asked her if she would marry me and added words to the effect,

“Even after the stars we see in this sky shall dim and pass away, our marriage never will, we shall be - forever.”

## **Sing Praise to Him** (*Johann J. Schütz, trans. by Frances Elizabeth Cox.*)

Sing praise to him who reigns above, The Lord of all creation,  
The source of pow'r, the fount of love, The rock of our salvation.  
With healing balm my soul he fills And ev'ry faithless murmur stills.

To him all praise and glory!

What his almighty pow'r hath made His gracious mercy keepeth.  
By morning glow or evening shade His watchful eye ne'er sleepeth.  
Within the kingdom of his might, Lo! all is just and all is right.

To him all praise and glory!

The Lord is never far away, But, thru all grief distressing,  
An ever-present help and stay, Our peace and joy and blessing.  
As with a mother's tender hand, He leads his own, his chosen band.

To him all praise and glory.

Thus, all my toilsome way along, I sing aloud thy praises,  
That men may hear the grateful song My voice unwearied raises.  
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart! Both soul and body bear your part.

To him all praise and glory.

## **Chapter 13 When Two Become One**

Because Eileen had only been baptized in August she was not eligible for the temple until a year had passed. The months before were busy but happy ones. I was called as a councilor to Bishop Harris and then to Jeff Hill when Mike was released. This, along with work kept me well occupied. We also found time for a



trip north and stayed with Joyce and visited other places where I had served on my mission. Eileen felt that all eyes were on her when we attended a fireside at the Blackpool branch, particularly those of a certain young sister and her mum.

The day of our wedding was set for 24<sup>th</sup> August and so all preparations were focused on that date. To complete the fairy godmother role, Susan Benning made Eileen's wedding dress. A friend at work recommended a hotel in a place called Killin in Scotland so we booked it for

the first week of our honeymoon leaving a second week to tour and live simple in a two berth tent.

Prior to our wedding, in June, Terri and Dave were married so it was quite a time for my dear parents who I have hardly mentioned in these recent chapters. Fay had married Alan, the bass guitarist in our little band, just before my mission. My dad had corresponded with me while I was away on my mission and I felt our relationship was on a good footing. They had little expense with the weddings as

in Southend we had a marvelous team of sisters lead by Kay Lee who really put on a splendid reception for very little money. For ours we went to Tiptree and picked loads of fresh strawberries and we made and iced our own wedding cake though we put so much icing on the top we could not get the knife into it when the time came.

The wedding at Southend chapel was the nicest I have ever been to, not that I am biased, but others have said the same. My friend Bernard Hutchings was the organist and so the music was splendid with a beautiful choir of sisters from both our wards. The evening before the wedding I had a fun stag night with my dad, brothers and friends which ended with me delivering a big bunch of pink roses to Eileen's home. Everything went perfectly, my bride was stunningly beautiful, the weather good and the reception fantastic. A moment we always remember was in the singing of the closing hymn which was, 'Sing Praise to Him'. As the words of the last verse 'both soul and body, bear your part', were being sung, we looked into each others faces and every time we have sung it since, we do the same.

Well, the only minor thing that was not so well planned was the leaving behind of a small piece of paper called a temple recommend without which Eileen was not allowed to enter the temple. Fortunately her bishop, Jim Cracknell, was with us so eventually we were allowed in and the sacred moment could take place when we were sealed together for all eternity. Immediately after the ceremony we were left alone in the celestial room where we knelt and had our first family prayer. We prayed for children, special spirits who we asked our Heavenly Father to entrust us with. Over the years every child was prayed for in the same way. Each child has been an answer to that first prayer of faith.

We slept our first night in the little cottage that used to be in the temple grounds, not the manor house and the accommodation centre was not built then, then the next day, instead of going to church locally or speeding on our way to Scotland, we went to Wandsworth chapel. President of the church, Spencer W Kimball, had called a surprise meeting there for all the saints in the area. We could not miss the opportunity. He came to extend a challenge to all young men of the British Isles to serve missions, it was an historic moment and we, on our first day of marriage, shook hands with the prophet of God.

The honeymoon was wonderful, despite a few midges and some mechanical problems with my car. The one thing we had not sorted out though, just another



minor detail, was having somewhere to live when we got back! Fortunately there was room in Eileen's mum's bungalow, but we did not want to be there for long. On our way home from our honeymoon we called into Ipswich chapel as it was stake conference there. Here we met with our Bishop, Jeff Hill, who gave us the great news that he had found us a ground floor flat in Southend, on the corner of West Road and Salisbury Avenue. This became our home for most of the following year.

I look back on that year with the fondest memories. It was a spacious home, not far from the town centre. Eileen worked just round the corner and I had been accepted onto a three year course at Brentwood College to train as a school teacher, which meant travelling there each day. Christmas was especially romantic as we established our own traditions. We ate simply, sweet and sour

pilchards I shall never forget, but we entertained and enjoyed the company of friends and family even if a no smoking rule occasionally upset someone.

We could easily have remained there until I had finished my course but I was a bit unsettled as to what I would do in the long summer holiday. We had a grant that helped keep us during term time and Eileen was working, but it was difficult making ends meet. I was at home one day, must have been in February half-term holidays and was reading the ads in a local paper when I saw for sale a mobile shop on a caravan site out at a place called Lawrence Bay. I drove out there, fell in love with it and gave the farmer a £10 cheque for a deposit on the business; but there was not enough money in our bank to cover the £10, let alone buy it. I phoned Eileen and told her,

“Guess what, we are in business!”

But we had no money. The bank would not lend us any because I was a student and we had no security to offer so we went to Eileen’s brother-in-law, Chas Hall, who had a car sales business and he helped to arrange a loan. For just £250 we bought this old Commer mobile shop and full sales concessions for the year on the Beacon Hill Caravan Park. We were soon over there whenever we could, painting up the van and preparing for the season. We borrowed some more money from Eileen’s mum to buy stock and were then ready to trade.

It was a profitable enterprise and we managed it well, but there was one snag which we had not foreseen, the farmer had never thought we would not sell on a Sunday; we had never thought it would be a problem. We were in a dilemma. It was then time of the April General Conference and we went to the broadcasts only to hear a powerful address by Mark E Peterson on keeping Sundays as the Sabbath. We were sorry, but we could not open Sundays.

Despite this hiccup the business took off, but we found it difficult commuting all the way back and forth to the site, so we bought an old caravan, gave up our flat and lived there. That summer was a heat wave which really helped business. It was a great life-style; we ate out, bought a decent car and lived in one of the most beautiful parts of the Essex countryside. My mum and dad even came and stayed a weekend with us. Eileen also fell for our first child, due the following February,

so as the summer neared the end we felt we should sell up. The site management was obviously pleased at how we ran our business as they made a very lucrative offer. They were going to expand and upgrade the whole enterprise and build a beautiful detached house with a proper shop and everything. It was an offer hard to refuse except for the clause; we would have to open on Sundays. Well, we just could not compromise, Sunday was the Lord's Day and although leisure is important, we were not offering an essential service. So we turned it down, sold the business and returned to live in Eileen's mum's place.

The designs of the almighty always amaze me. We only have vague ideas of what He is preparing. It was not comfortable where we were living but we did not mind. But our first child was well on her way and a place to live was so hard to find. Then one day at work, Eileen heard there was someone coming in and giving away new homes. Okay, that is putting it simply; he represented what was called a housing association, something we had never heard of. It was a charity that bought brand new homes in residential areas and rented them out. Eileen managed to get an interview with him, she told him our plight, he went and saw how we were living and offered us a place, a brand new three bedroom house in Eastwood, walking distance from the Southend Ward chapel. Is it surprising that within the year of moving there I was called as the new bishop of Southend? The Lord certainly works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform.



**Honeymoon Hotel, 2007**

## **Our Shoes of Life**

From time to time new footwear is required to accompany us on our daily toil. Arranged for men, ladies, boys and girls, in size order, a myriad pristine shoes line up on chromium racks awaiting the attention of would be buyers. We scan the assortment of styles seeking what appeals, what compliments our personality and satisfies their purpose. From the many, a few are selected to try. We prepare them for that first encounter and thrust a foot inside. Instantly we feel the fit; too tight, too loose, too soft too hard and take a few hesitant, critical, steps. We assess their value, style v comfort, check the price tag, examine the materials, the workmanship and the quality and so from the many, make the choice, make the commitment and pay the price.

During the first full days of working together some discomforts may develop. A slight imperfection in the stitching, or the depth of the heel or shape of the toe may cause unforeseen irritation, but because we like how they make us look and feel we persevere. The shoes break in and mould to our feet, to our tread and pace of life.

Shoes are like our lives, with both body and sole, pun intended. Those early days of discomfort are like adolescence where we seek to fit into our surroundings. But as life continues, their style, strengths and imperfections come to reflect who and what we are, where we sit, how we stand and for what. Through all weather; sun, rain and snow, along the avenues, streets, paths and lanes, in crowds or alone they stay with us, they wear and adapt as they submit to us on our walk of life. On occasions we may even wade through fog or torrents losing sight of them. So our shoes, though once made to a pattern, have now become patterned after us.

Each day our shoes, if they are to last and not be discarded at the first scuff but to continue to stand us in good stead, need care and preparation. Many times a light buff will suffice, while on occasions a good wax and polish is needed, but given this they will continue to reflect and represent us well. But even with this care, as time marches on, their lustre will fade and so more thorough treatment will be needed, their soles may even need reinforcing.

On us our well worn shoes look right, they suit us. They may not look perfect but they keep out the rain, they protect and give comfort as we tread life's highways. As we look at the shoes others wear, no matter how good they look on them, it does not take much to realise they would not bring us the same comfort.



At times we need to look back over the journey our shoes have taken us. We may forget and fail to appreciate what has brought us to where we are. The lives we develop, who and what we are and what we stand for, may become clouded over. When this happens, we need to give ourselves a good polish, clean of the grime, wax over the scuffs and scars, brush up and buff until we look upon ourselves again as shiny and not new, but warmer and richer in our sheen. After such treatment, as we put those soles back under our feet, as we enjoy again their comfort and familiarity we will look upon them with satisfaction, and can stride forth again with faith, confidence and purpose.

## **Chapter 14 The Long Haul**



Also during that summer of '75 I had my first teaching practice which was in a primary school in Laindon. I did not do very well and it would have been the best thing to have been told I was not cut out for teaching, but then our later life would have been much different. So I began my second year at college.

We moved into our beautiful, brand new home, 69 Steeplefield, Eastwood. Christmas came and went and February soon arrived. What an eternal moment that was when we first

became a mother and a father and to a special, beautiful little baby girl, our Helen. But poor Eileen, giving birth to her had its complications and so Helen was born by cesarean section. Funny, I was certain we had agreed on her name, which I promptly registered. Helen May, May after Eileen's mum. I think I named her even before Eileen had gained full consciousness.

We soon adapted to our new roles and I think I was a modern dad, though you might need a second opinion on that. Helen was not breast fed, something to do with how she was born, so I shared in the bottle feeding and most of the other pleasant chores, day or night.

This new phase of my life is what I have always looked upon as 'the long haul'. Up until the birth of your first child life seems so full of destiny shaping events all

happening in quick succession, the first this, the first that. Childhood, education, adolescence, freedom, relationships, employment, love; all new and exciting facets that shape who you are and who you are going to be, all bringing you to this point, being a parent.

So this is a chapter in itself, parenthood, which although it will go on for ever, up until the last child is an adult, is a chapter – a big one, but nevertheless it is one chapter. Okay, within that same period there are many challenging episodes and when you are active in the church callings may conflict with your primary role. It is a time when nothing should be allowed to over shadow that main responsibility



demanding all the faith, courage, talents and love that you can bring to it.

Helen, Samuel, Jennifer and Elizabeth seemed to come in quick succession. These were the years we lived in 69 Steeplefield and when I served for the first time as a Bishop. They were glorious years, full of events too numerous to mention. We established a home squarely on gospel principles and values. We prayed, studied together, held family home evenings every week, attended all our meetings, took on any callings

and assignments the church extended often carrying little ones to meetings and events. Family Home evenings were very important in our family life, so also was every admonition of the prophets of the day, family prayer, reading the Book of Mormon, keeping Sundays free from TV or playing out or parties or anything that would distract. It may have been challenging to make the day special, but in those days church began at 6.30am for me with a Bishopric meeting, 8.30 am was priesthood for all the men, 11 till 12.30pm was Sunday School for the whole

family and from 5 to 6.30pm was the sacrament meeting. With meals in between, most of our waking hours on a Sunday were well occupied. It was not unusual for each of our children to be all in a line, flat out asleep on a pew in a sacrament meeting. Our family home evenings have always been special, music particularly helped them come alive with me on the guitar singing simple songs like Tom Paxton's 'Going to the Zoo' or 'Let's Pretend' which still gets sung when we have any get together.



There were also some special people we particularly cared for. First, there was the Boltwood family. After my mission I picked up where I had left off and gave what support I could to them. Then one Saturday I was singing at a music festival in Romford with nanny Boltwood as my accompanist, there was a wet patch on one of the floors in the chapel, she slipped and broke her leg and was admitted to Harold Wood hospital. With her leg in a cast a clot formed which caused a

stroke and she died. I was at her bedside the day before and she seemed to have a premonition of something happening as she was concerned for her spiritual standing. I reassured her as best I could.

Her eldest daughter, Linda, had married so she was taken care of, in fact her husband joined the church and they moved to Macclesfield where they raised a large family and became very active. But Julie had no where so we took her in. Sadly, she had what is nicely called, light fingers. I learnt in my teacher training that it was common for a child, who had no reliable mother figure in the first year of their life, to develop this anti-social problem in later years. Her criminal activities gradually got worse, even to the extent of her breaking into homes of church members, the Hill family in particular. Eventually she was imprisoned and

though we tried to support her, with our growing family we had to leave her to the system that deals with such people.



Someone else we befriended and who lived with us for a while was Mike Lee. I think he was in his forties when the missionaries found him and brought him to church. He was once a jazz trumpeter so we got on well. In the past he suffered a serious road accident that not only affected his mobility but also badly disfigured his face. Because of this he wore dark glasses causing some to mistrust him. He fell in love with a single sister in the ward but she

was unable to reciprocate his feelings. He had a tumour on his brain that he knew was like a bomb that could go off at any time. While he was with us he slowly became incoherent, the doctor came and diagnosed he'd had a stroke. He was admitted to a hospital in Romford where after a few weeks he passed away. He too, while he was still at our home and just before the stroke, discussed his spiritual standing with me, his bishop.

You may be glad to know that not all of our live-in guests died. Chris Wills came to town; he had just passed some business exams and was taken on as a general manager of a major electrical appliance store in Rayleigh. He lived with us before buying a house and moving his family down. Sadly he later lost his job and was for a long time unemployed which was a challenging test case for the new welfare programme we were trying to follow in the church at that time. As bishop I was encouraged to look after his welfare, which included the mortgage on his home, with fast offerings. He would get very depressed. It was a challenge keeping him busy with voluntary work and hopeful about getting a new position. But I learnt that dawn does follow the night, however long it may seem. He obtained

employment somewhere up north and went from strength to strength and eventually became the manager for the church distribution centre in Birmingham.

But I guess I am mostly remembering those who passed away while I was bishop. A most tragic death was when Jim and Lynette Spong lost their first child. I forget the circumstances, but they just found her dead in her cot. Eileen insisted I visit them immediately. I remember so well just sitting with them, silently feeling their grief. It was heart breaking, though faith in the plan of salvation and in children born in the covenant will always be yours, the loss was so hard to accept. I still remember standing at the graveside and seeing that tiny coffin and Jim saying how when he found her he felt he could have used his priesthood and brought her back, but it was not God's will.

Although the church was big in our lives we both had large extended families that we stayed close to. We would enjoy Sundays at my mum and dads home, visiting Eileen's sister's homes and spend as much time as we could with Eileen's mum. We enjoyed Christmases and special birthdays, weddings and anniversaries.

There is an occasion I cannot forget, mainly because there is an enormous photo of Helen, Samuel and Jenny, sitting on a beach, hanging above our heads in our bedroom. It is of a holiday when we rented a large static caravan on the Isle of White and took Eileen's mum along with the two of us, our three children plus all the kit you need for a baby piled on the roof of my tiny Hillman Imp.

Although I qualified as a teacher, I did not last long in my first job. I was taken on as a mathematics teacher at Park School in Rayleigh, but I could not control the kids. So after three years training and six months in the job, I returned to being a draughtsman at Marconi in Basildon where I left nearly four years earlier. I appreciate Eileen's patience with me; it must have seemed such a waste of time.

I worked there for the next three years until I eventually got so bored that I went into sales. I was taken on as a field sales engineer for a company based in Goring, West Sussex, called Control and Readout. I had to sell sophisticated, digital, temperature controllers visiting places like breweries and canneries. It was an exciting job and I still feel the thrill I had when I picked up my first company car.

After what I had been used to, it was pure luxury! We also enjoyed the odd hotel or two when we attended company does.



I served in Southend a full five years as Bishop, the longest anyone had until then. Of course, I could never have done it without Eileen at my side. She never, ever complained about the time I spent on the Lord's work and was often an inspiration. One occasion I particularly remember was trying to come to terms with policies and instructions I was receiving from

the stake president of the day, President Herbertson. I strongly disagreed with him, went off to my favourite place to pray but could get no answers. I walked into the house and Eileen said something that was the answer I needed. I cannot remember the details but whatever she said, it did the job. How many years of our early married life as the first children arrived did Eileen sit with them while I was always on the stand?

We very much wanted to get onto the property ladder but because of the rules of the housing association we were not allowed to buy the home we were living in. But then they had some new properties out in Heybridge, near Maldon, that we could part purchase and part rent. We could hardly believe how much we were being blessed; we were given a beautiful, new, detached three bedroom home on a new estate right near the river Blackwater. We also moved into the Chelmsford ward until a new ward was formed based in Witham, but which included Maldon.

So, although the long chapter of parenthood continues, moving from the Southend, ward and settling in a new home was a major event in our lives that led to even more adventures in the years ahead, so it deserves a new chapter.

## **And What Cheese are You?**

One morning as I drove my daughter home, she mused in a reflective mode,  
And asked me the question, "Am I mature?" Which diverted me from the road!  
"You are, dear Kath, like a medium cheddar, mellow but not too strong",  
With which she responded, "I'm like what, a cheese with a smelly pong!"

Of cheeses there are many kinds each with character unique,  
Flavours and textures, colours and rinds, and odours that hint or reek!  
To which would you liken yourself; are you crumbly, soft or hard?  
Strong in flavour, nutty or mild, dry or fatty as lard?

The King of cheeses Stilton is, creamy but crumbly too.  
Strong in flavour, just like me, with blue bits through and through!  
While Jenny's the queen, a soft, smooth Brie, subtle in flavour and tone,  
But not the supermarket kind but found in France alone.

Now Eileen likes the Dutch cheeses, Edam and Gouda the pair,  
But I feel she's a Lincolnshire Poacher, an English champion rare,  
And Susan fancies goat milk cheeses, soft creamy and white,  
Like a safe, practical, Bougon, sweet and always just right.

Cholesterol and fat are mum's big hates, which keeps her sprightly and trim,  
Like an elegant, low-fat ricotta, filling lasagnes to the brim.  
A cheese of the Caribbean, is Duroblando, smoky and firm.  
Like my adventuresome daughter Helen, who lived there for a term.

My friend Kate has a keen sense of humour and likes to travel far,  
Like a Swiss, holey, Ementaler which in cartoons is often a star.  
Samuel, my son, makes music, on piano, fiddle or drum,  
Reminding me of a creamy white Cheshire, with flavour in every crumb.

Jacob has 'his head screwed on,' or so many do say,  
Like a rich, mature, Wensleydale, safe in every way.  
Finally there is Elizabeth, who honeymooned with the Czechs,  
Who like their sheep-milk Abertom, is irresistible for nibbles and pecks.

So if you feel weighed down as you grapple with life's pursuits,  
Go sample some unfamiliar cheese with some grapes or other fruits,  
And like the scent of a floral bouquet that lingers in the air,  
So may your cheesiness hang around, this world of toil and care.



## **Chapter 15 Maldon**



Maldon is one of the oldest towns in the country, full of character and history. Mum once took us to the park there when I was very young. It has a lake filled with sea water for boating and bathing and so was a pleasant place to spend a summer afternoon. It is a place famous for Sea salt and sailing barges. When we had our mobile shop just along the river from Maldon a most amazing sight used to be during the early morning mist when you could not see where the sea became sky and seeing a red sailed sailing barge appear to glide through the air on its way out to sea from the quay at Maldon.

When we moved there I was still working for Control and Readout but then the firm started to go to the wall. Eileen spotted this shop available for rent situated just as you come into Heybridge from the Maldon Causeway. It was a run down café which was ready for a new lease of life. We borrowed £1000 from my dad and dived into converting it into a take away with the name Take 5. It was successful. We mostly sold a range of burgers with all sorts of extra fillings as well



as ice cream sundaes and other odds and ends. My dad took photos of our children tackling these giant filled buns which we blew up as posters. All the menu items were given jazzy names and I played my jazz records all day. AT the back of the shop we had a giant freezer and a sofa. We never had a TV in the home for about five years but we bought a VCR and the family would gather there on a Friday evening for a film show. Although we did well, we just could not break into the big time, if we had been business people we would have opened a chain of them and made some serious money. But we were working evenings which meant an anti-social life style.

Eileen was a very dedicated ward relief society president for a number of years, often out visiting teaching with young ones in tow. I was the ward mission leader and a primary teacher. We met in the Witham community centre but the goal was to have our own chapel. At one point, when finances was borderline, we gave up having a car and all used to cycle to church and back which was an inspiration to at least one dear sister. We made good friends, in particular, I got together with some other musicians and we formed an Irish styled folk band. We played at barn



dances and socials, it was really good fun. I also became involved in the primary school our children attended, serving on the PTA for a number of years. Sadly, Eileen miscarried a child, we called him Hyrum, but then later she gave birth to Jacob and then Kathrine and so our family was complete.

It was a beautiful place to live. We loved the countryside and would walk along the route of the old railway or along the

canal. One summer Helen, Samuel, Jenny and myself cycled to Mersea Island with a tent and stayed a few nights. Later on I acquired an old canoe and love to paddle the canal.



Once again people were put in our path who I think we served. In particular there was a young family, Rosemary, her husband and two children, who moved into a new house built over the back of us. Sadly, at a very young age the husband died of a brain tumour. Eileen helped Rosemary through her time of grief giving considerable support and comfort. Then there was The Stedman family who we got

to know through Helen's friend Lorrain. The mother, Maureen, had a disability and a broken marriage and became quite involved in the church and although she

Finale of Turn of the Tide



never joined, after we moved north they came and stayed with us in Rawtenstall and we remained in touch right up until she happily remarried.

Something that brought us great pleasure at this time was singing together as a family. We would sing at Stake festivals and whenever we could. One particular song we would sing which usually brought a tear to the eye was the Janice Kapp Perry song, 'Where is Heaven'. Eileen and I also once sung a duet in church, something I do not think we have repeated since.

The most exciting performances we were involved in were in a production called 'Turn of the Tide'. Peter Reeves was a talented member of the Southend ward. I performed the marriage ceremony between him and Sarah and we remained friends after moving to Heybridge. He wrote this full length stage musical centered on the time just after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It told how three characters, Pilate's wife, Simon the Zealot and Saul were converted, their lives turning like a tide. The music was modern and up-beat, Eileen choreographed the dance sequences, I played bass guitar in the backing group and my children were extras on stage. It ran for a full week in a theatre in Grays and there were big plans for it going to other theatres, but problems arose. I really feel it had a lasting influence on my children, particularly Samuel in his career and even Kathy, who was born after it, has often played the tape of the music. Although it was not performed again on a public stage it did show in Hyde Park chapel. For that an extra song was added called The Road to Emmaus which I wrote.

For me, providing for my family while also remaining sane was a big challenge. Even before we sold up the burger bar I began working full-time back at Marconi, though not at Basildon but at the Chelmsford site. It was reliable, steady income

but I was soon looking for something better and returned to sales again. This time I worked for Flightspares which was a distributor for the American company AMP the made all kinds of electrical connector. My sales patch was just about everywhere inside the M25, which is greater London. I persisted, but only just met my targets and then I had a serious crash on the M25 when I was sandwiched between this old VW Beetle and the central crash barrier. Not long before this one I had another when I took a left hand bend too fast, skidded to the far side of the road just missing the front of this articulated lorry but knocking down a traffic sign. It left me dazed but I was unhurt. The car was still drivable although the radiator was obviously damaged as water soon began leaking from it. I was very lucky, or was someone looking after me!

It was soon after these incidents when I heard on the radio that they were desperate for teachers to work in the inner London schools of Hackney. I applied for a position and was accepted as primary school teacher at Mandeville Primary School, just on the edge of Hackney Marsh. More about my adventures there later, for now I shall just include a few general notes.



Uncle Ted with Helen, his brother George to the left

Getting to and from school was never easy. One car we bought for the job was

particularly unreliable; I remember once changing a clutch at the roadside! It was also the time when we got to know uncle Ted, who was May's brother. He lived in Leyton and we occasionally visited him and took him to our place in Maldon. Occasionally I would call in on him on my way home from Hackney. Then one day he asked me to do something for him. He lived alone and was becoming incontinent. He was too embarrassed to ask the welfare women who visited him to wash him, so he asked me. I have never cared for someone like that. It was a spiritual moment, an act of service outside my normal comfort zone. I have always been so glad I was able to perform this small act of kindness. About a week later he passed away. He had previously asked me to be the executor of his will. I fulfilled that responsibility as best I could, though if I had been a better business man I am sure I could have done better on selling the house.

Some chapters back I wrote about experiences I had on my mission that convinced me there were those who had passed on who from the other side were at work guiding our thoughts and footsteps. These convictions were reaffirmed



when I became involved in the lives of previous inhabitants of this backwater town in Essex. We got to know a young single woman of the ward named Sharon Everett. She told us that back in Victorian times there was a large, thriving branch of the church here in Maldon. She showed us an article in one of the church magazines about one William Wood who was a young man who joined the church in Maldon and tried to join the saints in Utah

by joining the British Navy. Unfortunately the ship he joined went to the East China Seas instead of West to the New World. However, after circumnavigating the globe he eventually found his way to where he had set out for. This story and Sharon's information sparked an interest in me so I wrote of to church HQ and they sent me copies of the old branch records. Upon studying them there were certain names that stood out amongst the rest, in particular the family name of Stratford.

I was sitting at home one evening, pondering on these people and the name Stratford, wondering what became of them once they left Maldon back in the 1860s. I decided to phone Church HQ in Salt Lake. To this day I do not know how I got the right phone number, there was no internet then, but in a matter of minutes I was dialing the number of Dale and Edna Straford of Ogden, Utah. This woman answered, I introduced my self and a new friendship began. Her name was Edna, the wife of Dale, great, grandson of George Stratford, ex president of the Maldon branch in the 1850s. She was excited to learn of my interest and said she would send me a copy of the missionary journal of Edwin, son of George. She also informed us that they were coming to England that summer on an historical tour. It was 1987 which was the sesquicentennial anniversary of the church in England. Dale Stratford was a state senator in Utah, so we invited him and Edna to our celebrations to meet the mayor of Maldon and his wife. The event was



held in a hall in the centre of Maldon, we put up displays telling the history of the church in England and in particular in the Maldon area, we enacted scenes from the past and our Irish folk band, Cor-Unum played. Dale presented the mayor with appropriate gifts and so

relations were established. Sadly, Dale suffered heart problems and died, but Edna we have kept in contact with and met up with since.

Cor-Unum :- Liam Doherty, Steve West, Ann Turner, Me and not in the photot, Jane Gough



After the celebrations I continued working on the history of the old Maldon branch and eventually publish a short book called A Quest for Zion. In particular it

told the story of Charles Penrose who was sent to Maldon on his first mission and the success that followed. It was a story that I felt those who went before wanted to be discovered and written. Years later, long since we moved away from Heybridge, a new ward was formed and it has been called the Maldon Ward in recognition of those early members. This may all seem insignificant, but to me it was a faith and testimony building experience.

We only lived seven years in Heybridge, but they were eventful ones. There were now eight of us in our family and the children were getting older, bigger and more expensive to keep! Although we increased our share of ownership in the property we were buying, because of the cost of living and house prices going up so, it seemed impossible to ever entirely own our own home. Teaching in London was very idealistic, but it was not providing enough for us to live on. Eileen tried various business ventures like selling Pipa Dee clothes and school uniforms, but it was not enough, we had to do something to improve our situation. Then we heard that the cost of living 'up north' was considerably less than 'down south', so we embarked on a new adventure, to find a place to live that we could afford and where we could buy our own home.



But moving meant me leaving my teaching position at Mandeville. I worked hard the spring and summer terms there as teacher for the oldest class. Although I had many shortcomings, I nevertheless received qualified teacher status which I had not completed at my first teaching position. The next year I was given responsibilities under what is called Section 11. This is usually about providing language training for children where English is a second language; in this case though I was providing the children with, 'increased access to the curriculum'. What I actually did was to take charge of a set of computers and set them up for classes. I also taught music in a practical way. It was the most challenging fifteen months of my working life, but I overcame tremendous obstacles and succeeded where many would have failed. A year or so after leaving, the head Mr. Griffiths, retired and I was invited to his farewell. He really appreciated our coming down for it. I could not have missed it, he is without doubt one of my heroes.



The staff of Mandeville Primary School

## **The School Song**

On the edge of Hackney Marsh beside the old canal,  
Stands a school tall and proud, its' name is Mandeville  
For a hundred years it's stood with doors open wide,  
Giving warmth and shelter to those who learn inside.

Mandeville oh Mandeville, you may be sand and clay,  
But in your walls there is a soul and heart that beats today.

If you had a mouth to speak what stories you could tell,  
Kings and queens have come and gone their reigns you knew well,  
Memories forget the deeds of many great and true,  
Thousands don't forget the time they once spent with you.

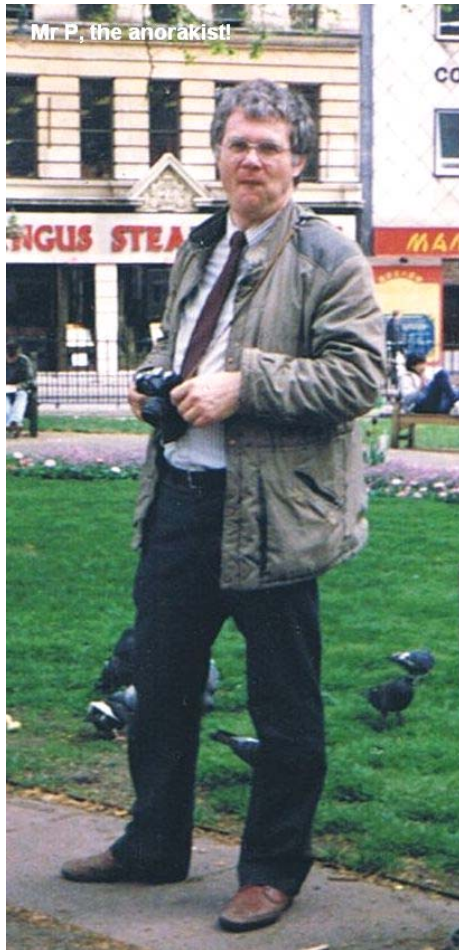
Mandeville oh Mandeville, you may be sand and clay,  
But in your walls there is a soul and heart that beats today

Through two wars so long and hard you were not destroyed,  
In those hours of greatest need you were well employed,  
Then in time the planners said, you would not remain,  
But instead to teach the young, you were born again.

Mandeville oh Mandeville, you may be sand and clay,  
But in your walls there is a soul and heart that beats today.



## Memories of Mandeville



In 1986 Mr P was a sales engineer and his patch was everything inside the M25, London. Twice in as many years he had accidents in his car that should have been fatal. With this and not hitting his sales targets, the whole job was getting him down. One morning he was listening to the news in his car, it went on about there not being enough primary teachers in Hackney and that they were closing schools, well, that same day he drove to the offices of the Inner London Education Authority in Hackney and started the process of getting back into teaching. Although he had qualified back in '74, he had never completed a full year in the classroom and what he had done had been in the leafy suburbs of Essex. What ever made him think he had the makings of a classroom teacher anywhere was hard to imagine, but inner London, Hackney, surely he would be eaten alive! Well, the newscast was

accurate, they were desperate for anyone, in January 1988 he began work as a classroom teacher at Mandeville Primary School, Hackney marsh in a mostly Caribbean community.

### First Day

It was Mr P's first day in a school classroom for about twelve years. He had taken hours preparing his material, his strategy, his exciting curriculum. But he had not thought about how to get his class from the school yard to the classroom!

The school was an old three story Victorian brick building with no playing field just a yard. At the start of day each class lined up in the yard and followed the teacher



to their classroom. Mr P's was the top class, year 7, and they had the furthest to go on the top floor. Mr P soon learnt that once the uniform file entered the building it was impossible from the front of the line of kids to see what they were up to at the back and from the rear you could not see what they were doing at the front. Which ever place Mr P stood he would be losing control of behavior or just plain losing them. Because you are supposed to start firm and ease off later he was taking them back to the yard making them do it again hoping to get it orderly and right. But they enjoyed that, going up and down and Mr P was starting to get just a bit wound up! Eventually, after

he reached the top for the nth time, Jason (nickname Faze), black, cool kid, best trainers and jacket, mature for his years strolls up to him and says words to the effect, "Hey man, you just got to play it cool!"

Well Mr P paused for a moment, took a deep breath and gave in, it was good advice. The kids of Mandeville could wind him up so easy and he was never going to win by getting cross or walking them up and down stairs. He had to relax, enjoy them and just play it cool.

Not all who came to work at Mandeville received such advice. There was many who came on supply when a member of staff was sick who never even lasted a day!

## **Learning by Discovery**

Each day Mr P traveled to Hackney from Maldon, Essex by car or train and tube. The nearest tube station was Leyton which meant a brisk walk across the marsh to the school. Always on the lookout for things to stimulate discussion and project work he noticed these enormous wild plants in the creak that runs through the marsh.



“Right, he thought I will take one into the class, they can draw and paint it and we can cut up the fat stalk and look at how it is made”.

Normal Hogweed has a stem of about one centimeter in diameter and grows little more than one meter in height. These monsters had stems that were six centimeters in diameter and four meters tall. Despite their size it was easy to break one down and so Mr P was soon walking into the classroom with this enormous weed over his shoulder looking like it had come from a horror movie set. It certainly had the intended effect in creating some interest.

After an hour or two with it standing in the corner of the classroom some of the young West Indian boys started scratching their short curly hair heads. Not sure what was going on Mr P noticed the windows were covered in tiny flies, they were everywhere! When the rest of the children saw them they ran riot rubbing their heads and Mr P had to do a mass evacuation in a hurry. He later learnt that giant Hogweed spores had escaped from Kew garden and that the sap of these things could cause serious skin burns. Fortunately the flies on them had prevented any such discovery and from then he was a little more careful about what he brought into the class.

## **Football**

On Friday after-noons year six and seven boys played football while the girls were left with Mrs Benn, the year six class teacher. Football pitches were not on the school grounds but just across the canal footbridge lay the wide expanse of Hackney Marsh. Mr P was keen that the boys played football on real turf, but in order to go anywhere off school premises there had to be a second adult. Fortunately, a parent who did not work on Friday afternoons was willing to cooperate.

At the school gate the boys dutifully gathered before leaving for the marsh.

“Now lis-sun, it is very kind of Mr P and Cliff to take you for football training. If there is any misbehaviour I expect them to tell me and I shall deal with it, is that understood? You are to leave school together, *walk*, across to the fields together and return together.”

Every boy respected Mr G. He was a tall, slim, moustached, dignified figure. He spoke in a resonant voice that penetrated even these children’s absent and wandering minds. He was originally from British Guyana but had been teaching in London for several decades. He was more than their head teacher. The black children especially saw that his staff, the police, officials and parents of all colours openly revered him. He was their colour and had made it. However, when out of range of his sight and voice not even he had lasting influence on behaviour.

Why was Mr P so keen to play on the Marsh? What was he out to prove? It had



been raining quite hard recently but was sure *these* boys were not softies. He was taken by surprise.

“Sir, me trainers are muddy,” and, “my mum will do you when she sees my track suit.” Most boys wore track suit bottoms and trainers the whole time and never brought a change of clothing to play on the marsh. Maybe it had not occurred to Mr P that when it rains on the marsh the water does not drain away or evaporate in a big hurry.

You would not have thought that these streetwise kids who act so tough would have been bothered buy a bit of mud, surely the marsh was their playground. In actual fact it was almost forbidden territory. Parents kept their kids off it, wary of worse goings on than those on the street. While hundreds of acres of green meadow were available to kids that lived on the edge of it, the only people that used it were dog walkers and golfers practicing their swing.

Anyway, needless to say, the kids got muddy, but no one was muddier than Mr P himself. He had played in goal for his school when a lad and still felt he had it in him. The looks on the faces of parents coming to fetch their kids as he and his bedraggled juveniles returned was of puzzled wonderment. “What is this guy?” They seemed to be asking themselves.

Now of course, where there is a magnet to it little iron filings fling themselves. On the marsh there were several powerful magnets to these Mandeville boys. There was the old burnt out wreck of a car discarded in the car park the surface of which was a covering of loose stones. Like Indians attacking a pioneer wagon they swooped on it filling their hands with stones and whooping with delight at each resounding clang caused by a well aimed missile. Did Mr P really think it wise to walk into the middle of their bombardment threatening vain and empty punishments, soon to be forgotten seeing as it was almost home time on a Friday afternoon.

Then there were the ‘ressies’



Conservation work was slowly going on here but there was no one to keep out the curious. It was an overgrown wilderness covering a Victorian sewage plant. The reservoirs were brick walled lakes, teeming with pond life. But these lakes were surrounded and hidden by a dense jungle of shrubs, trees and hogweed.

One of the trickiest aspects of training was organising teams so they could have a competitive game. Whether captains chose their teams or it was by luck of the draw or by Mr P's dictating who played against whom, these kids could not take losing or even being on the side they thought would

lose.

Little Ricky was probably the worse when it came to accepting defeat. He simply had not yet grown out of baby ways.

So what do you do when two goals are scored against you in the first ten minutes? Of course, you walk off the pitch and go and play hide and seek. Well at least that's the way Ricky saw it and what better place was there to hide in than the 'ressies'!

Bloodhounds would have been useful, plus a helicopter, a life raft and giant butterfly net! Mr P's assistant went back to the school with those who would go with him while the helpful ones, without being asked of course, tore into the undergrowth to seek out their comrade. Just how many bodies would end up in the depths of these Victorian cesspits he dreaded to think, but at least Mr P believed in prayer! What else could help him? He momentarily closed his eyes when suddenly, out from the bushes at the edge of the tank emerged Ricky, his pursers giving him no choice but to cross to the other side via an 18 in diameter black pipe.



"I'll follow him sir!" came the helpful Beagles chasing their prey. Well his prayers must have been answered, no one fell in!

Of course you are asking yourselves, what was Mr P doing in all this? Well he was trying to be strategic, to be in the right place at the right moment. He could have been there all night.

Fortunately he did not need to be. It sounded like God had spoken from the heavens. A voice stopped everyone in their tracks. Mr P felt like one of them. The whole posse emerged from cover. All he said was, "come on Ricky, let's have a talk. I'll talk to the rest of you on Monday."



Mr P eventually remembered what he was supposed to be and ushered the rest back to school with his parent helper, but there was still one lad missing.

He found James sitting on a wall with his legs hanging over the edge of the weir. A wide stream of water poured into foam beneath them. "Why you doing this James", Mr P asked. James shrugged his shoulders, he never spoke much at the best of times. "Got anything you'd like to tell me about?" He shrugged his shoulders again. "You know I can't leave you here."

"Maybe you should sir." The voice was Joycelin's. She was a mother figure in the class and understood some of the problems these kids had. "We'll watch him sir."

It seemed irresponsible but he took her advice and walked off. After ten minutes Naisha ran up, "He's gone home sir, he's okay."

There were football matches as well as training. After school, on the marsh, schools from the area took on each other in various competitions. The boys from Mandeville never used to win. They had three or four good players, especially Jason and Adrian, but somehow they always seemed so much shorter than their opposition. They also found the heavy turf of the marsh too much for the skills

they learnt on asphalt. Plus they always lacked a good goalie. Whenever the ball had to be kicked out it never got past the nearest opponent who just kicked it back into the net. Tactics were not their strong point. But then, just as the season ended they tasted the joy of victory – and was it sweet! It brought a smile to Mr G's face too. When he had coached football, teams won trophies, but that was not at Mandeville.

## **Mandeville Goes to Westminster**



When it comes to school trips, you did not have to go far from Mandeville to find places of interest when the greatest city on Earth is on your doorstep. Transport is also readily available so Mr P felt these future citizens should at least see the seat of government of their

nation. After a somewhat exuberant train ride the class soon find themselves outside the palace of Westminster. In Whitehall there were two ice-cream vendors and one had left their barrow unattended. "Help yourself", the vendor who was there shouted out referring to his colleagues ice-cream, "he's probably gone for a pint!" With which like bees to a jam pot they were filling cones with delight. By the time Mr P reached them he being the honest chap he was felt all he could do was reach into his pocket and leave a token payment, which on his paltry wage was all it could be.





Downing street was the main objective of the day, because of the Irish problem some security issues were inevitable, but they were soon overcome. The first object of interest was not so much number 10 but an official car parked outside. Was this the car the prime minister was driven about in? Did it have bullet proof glass, was it bomb proof? Whatever were its security devices

it stood up well to the Mandeville onslaught of posers wanting their picture taken with THE car. And no one got inside or went for a joy ride though there were some worried looks on two rather official looking gentlemen in shirts and ties. But were they to be allowed onto those famous steps, the official residence of the nations prime minister? The home of the cabinet where the policies and decisions regarding the nations welfare security and prosperity was decided. Thankfully, despite having a teacher with an Irish accent, no holds were barred; Mandeville took over and stood on the steps of number 10.



## Under My Umbrella



There's a place I like to be, when rains from gloom descend,  
A confined hideaway, just room for one, or cozy with a friend,  
Where in the dry you can see all around, while you your way still wend,  
Whether skipping puddles just for fun, or hurrying to attend.

There not only can you thrill at the visual precipitation,  
As it stages a reflective lightshow of surface transformation,  
But where too you can audibly drink a rhythmic demonstration,  
Like a drum solo by Buddy Rich on tight-skinned percussion.

This amazing contrivance, centuries ago, the Chinese may have invented,  
Though to shield us from the rain it was not first intended,  
But for the emperor, who from sun, had to be defended,  
'Till in our day, for rain and sun, king or commoner, its presence has fully blended.

Whether singly, in a bouquet, or filling a thoroughfare,  
You cannot at their perfect geometry, help but stop and stare,  
As they sway and bob or tug along, disguising joys and cares,  
Enveloped within their solitude, to intrude no one dares.

Upon the arm it discretely, modestly, hides its open splendor,  
Until like magic, with a flick and a wwwwwoosh! it unfolds to its full grandeur,  
Like a metamorphosis bursting forth, for all to gaze at and wonder,  
Until a lively, sprightly, wily, sneaky, crafty, wicked wind...  
...wrecks it all asunder!

## **Chapter 16 Up North**

Some friends, ex members of the Witham ward, were living near Huddersfield so with somewhere to stay over for a few nights we began exploring the north of England in search of, 'this is the place'. I heard on a radio programme that the cost of living in Rotherham, Barnsley and Preston was the lowest in the country. So we started up the east coast, drove through Rotherham and Barnsley but never actually looked at Preston. We had not driven far over the border of Lancashire from Yorkshire when we entered a valley I was well familiar with. With the rain pouring and everywhere looking wet and grey, Eileen bursts out,

"This is the place!"



Rawtenstall 1971 when I first was there on my mission

We had descended from the hills into the first town of my mission, Rawtenstall. Eileen had never fancied this side of the Pennines because of the quantity of rain that falls there, but despite it living up to those expectations, she felt we had found what we were looking for. Naturally, this being familiar territory I was very happy with her prophetic utterance. With growing excitement we looked around, went to an estate agent or two and decided it all looked very promising. But now we had to sell up and move. House prices where we lived had soared in recent years and no one was able to sell. We only had a 50% share in our house, would

that make any difference? We went to our nearest estate agent who took our details and in less than 24 hours we had sold. I guess what we were selling was what first time buyers could afford.

Eileen and I now had to seriously look for a new home. When we next drove up to Rawtenstall we decided to tap some local knowledge. We called in at the chapel, it was like walking through a time warp, the same brother as when I was on my mission was there as the custodian. He even called me Elder Petchey as if not a year had passed. But he was very helpful telling us that a member of the ward was selling a house near him up on the Hall Carr estate. It needed work on it but was going cheap. When we saw it, it could not compare with the lovely home we were leaving, but at £16000 it was a bargain and suited our needs. Arthur Hardy was once again Bishop of the ward and was as helpful as ever; he arranged our house to be re-wired and members re-decorated two of the bedrooms.

Moving itself was a challenge; we had to dispose of a lot of stuff as we were only taking up a single Luton van. Eileen, with 6 children, really struggled to get the house ready for vacating; she would never leave it other than how she would want to find it. Roger Mullocks, a brother in Witham came with me in the van, we arrived very late but two Rawtenstall brethren, Donald and Ken were still there, waiting to help us unload.

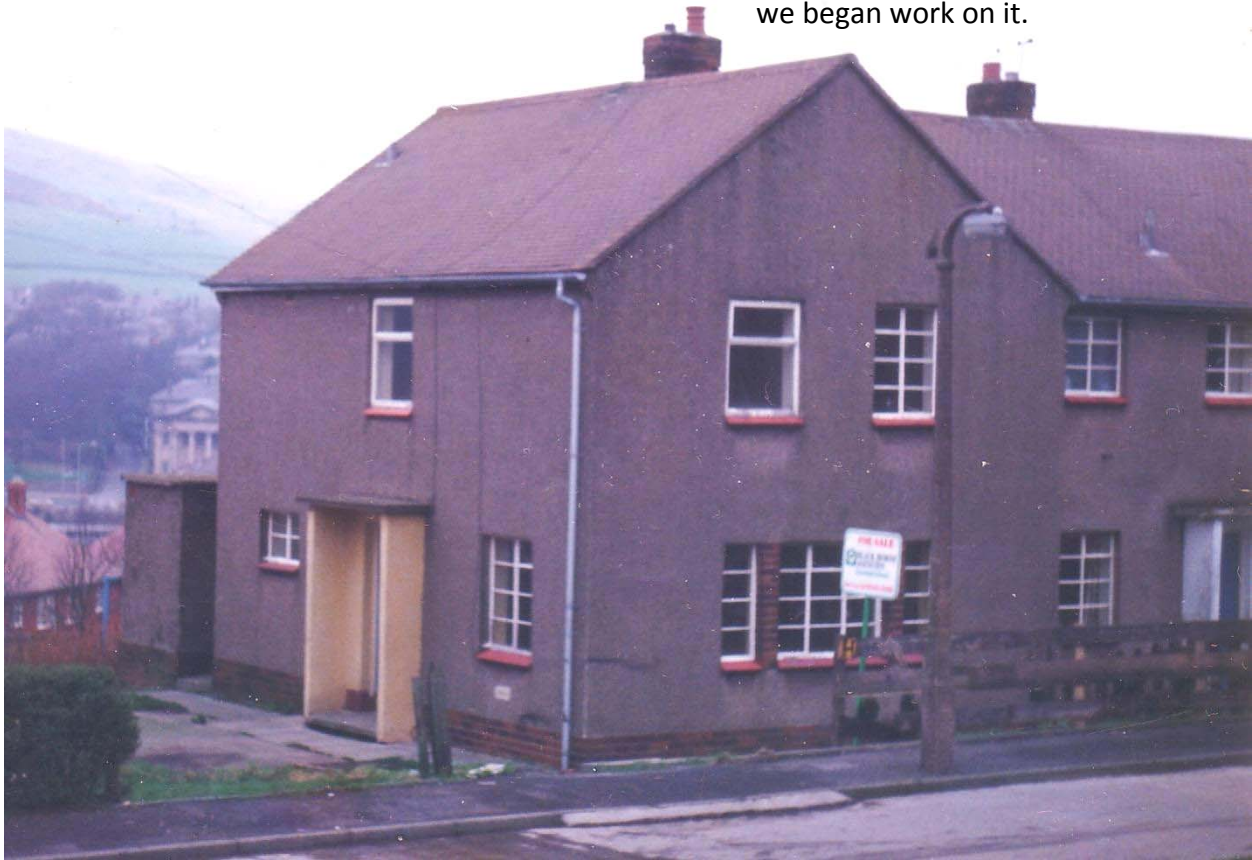
We enjoyed an amazing farewell from Heybridge. We hired out the local, community hall, had a party inviting all our children's friends, school teachers and neighbours as well as church members and the band played too, it was a great send off. The day finally arrived for us all to say goodbye to our Essex home. A year or two ago we had bought an old caravan, so with this in tow and with six children in the back of our Cortina Estate, we set out on what felt like a mission.

My memory is a little confused at this point. I am sure that Eileen, with all her journals will correct the account. I seem to remember taking the caravan up in February, on Helen's birthday in fact, because we had to stop over a night on route and improvised candles on a cake using match sticks. But I think it was April when we actually moved in. Well, whatever the dates, we arrived and began our new life. There was a lot to do on the house but we had some equity from the

sale of our Heybridge property so we got to work making it a suitable home. We divided the front lounge up into two rooms, a large bedroom for Samuel and Jacob and a small music room near the front door. We joined the old brick built shed onto the back of the house and converted it into a small lounge. We used the caravan for our kitchen and dining room while we fitted out the one in the house.

For employment I planned to teach and was fortunate in getting a term at a primary school in Hyde near Oldham. At church I was called to the Bishopric so life was soon steaming ahead at top speed. In the autumn I was taken on as a

7 Hawks Grove, Rawtenstall before we began work on it.



permanent teacher at a primary school in Haslingden. I had two members children in my class, Gemma Parks and Jenny Lomax, which was nice.

Our children had some tough challenges settling in, especially Samuel, he was bullied quite a bit because of his accent, but he was brave. Elizabeth immediately copied the dialect and sounded like a native. For some extra cash we distributed free news papers once a week. I will always remember doing this as a family and

especially with little Jacob posting into the letter boxes that he could hardly reach.

It was not long before I was called as Bishop, dear Arthur could at last hang up his gloves! But then new challenges began which I confess, in the end, I ran away from. Even though I had been counselor to Bishop Hardy, I had not come to appreciate some of the conflicts between members that had started long before we arrived. When I asked for a certain two brethren as my counselors, one would not work with the other. After some discussions with me I settle for a second choice, which was those same two brethren who were faithfully waiting to unload my van, Ken and Donald.



Together in our small lounge at the back that was once a shed

Although there were some minor scuffles, everything seemed to work well for most of the first year. I especially remember our Christmas 'pop-in' that year. These were a long standing tradition in our family. In the spirit of providing a welcoming place for anyone on Christmas Eve we would invite friends, neighbours and anyone to just pop-in on Christmas Eve, staying as long or as little as they



liked. We would sing carols till we were hoarse and Eileen would make a million mince pies! Our lounge in Hawks Grove was tiny, but we squeezed in everyone who called and it was wonderful.



Another tradition that comes to mind with these times was our birthday routine. I cannot remember when we first started them but because we have some on video tape from our Rawtenstall days, those are the ones I first remember. On the morning of the birthday all the gifts are piled on the mat at the front door, the one whose birthday it is stands at the top of the stairs, usually still in their pyjamas while everyone else stands at the bottom of the stairs in pairs with arms held over to form an arch. To the usual song of happy birthday the one whose it is skips down the stairs and has to get through the archway of arms before reaching their pressies. What fun and what memories simple little things bestow.

We had a great bunch of youth and we participated well, especially in things like the stake roadshow festival and athletics and we had a ward song and slogan, 'One Step Ahead'. I had written a musical version of Dicken's 'A Christmas Carol' while I was at Mandeville which made great roadshow. One weekend, because the London Temple was closed undergoing major refurbishment, Ken drove us



plus the young men of the ward all the way to Frankfurt Temple, Germany and back arriving at our chapel just in time for sacrament meeting.

But then I felt inspired to call Ken as the Elders Quorum President. Elder Holland is to blame for that, he instructed us to call our best man to the job which Ken was by a long shot. He was always willing and able to help out anyone, in fact, he was a bit of a knight in shining armour. Once when out somewhere Eileen broke down in our car and who should just turn up the moment he was needed? But he did have a way of speaking that some found abrasive, particularly the sisters. Stuart Oliver, who married Diane who I confirmed back in my mission days once came into our bishop's office and physically threatened Ken. When I put Ken's name forward for Elders Quorum President it divided the ward as to who would sustain him. I had to back down.

Before all this began I made a most humiliating exit from the teaching profession. I tried hard at my new school, but it was an open plan building which meant other teachers heard and saw what I was doing and they would give their opinions to the head. Also, I did not find it easy slotting into the mostly female staffroom sociality. The head asked for a county inspector to come and spend a day in my

class. The morning was a disaster and I just fell to pieces. Okay, no dramatic scenes in the classroom itself, but at lunchtime the head pulled me into his office, recognized I could not carry on and released me there and then.

So what next? Well, what should come to my rescue, but my first career and qualifications. I went to a company that placed draughtsmen on contract at British Aerospace out at Warton, about 30 miles away, seven miles the other side of Preston. They needed electronic draughtsmen, which was my expertise and I was taken on. My only problem was transport, not just getting to work but for my growing family and the youth I was called to serve. I borrowed some money off my dad and bought this big old mini bus. It turned out to be a bit past it, but while it ran, served us very well. About this time my dad had his first heart attack. He was okay for a while, but then there was an upset with mum and he had another, this time it was fatal.

My dad was always there for me. As I have written this I have come to appreciate him more than ever. Despite being a very physical person he never punished me in that way. He always supported me in my hobbies and schemes and also inspired me to write. He once helped; well actually he wrote all of an essay I had



for homework when I was in primary school. It was so good I had to read it out to the class. I learnt that during the war, when he was in hospital in India recovering from malaria, he wrote Sherlock Holmes stories. Oh that I could have

them now.

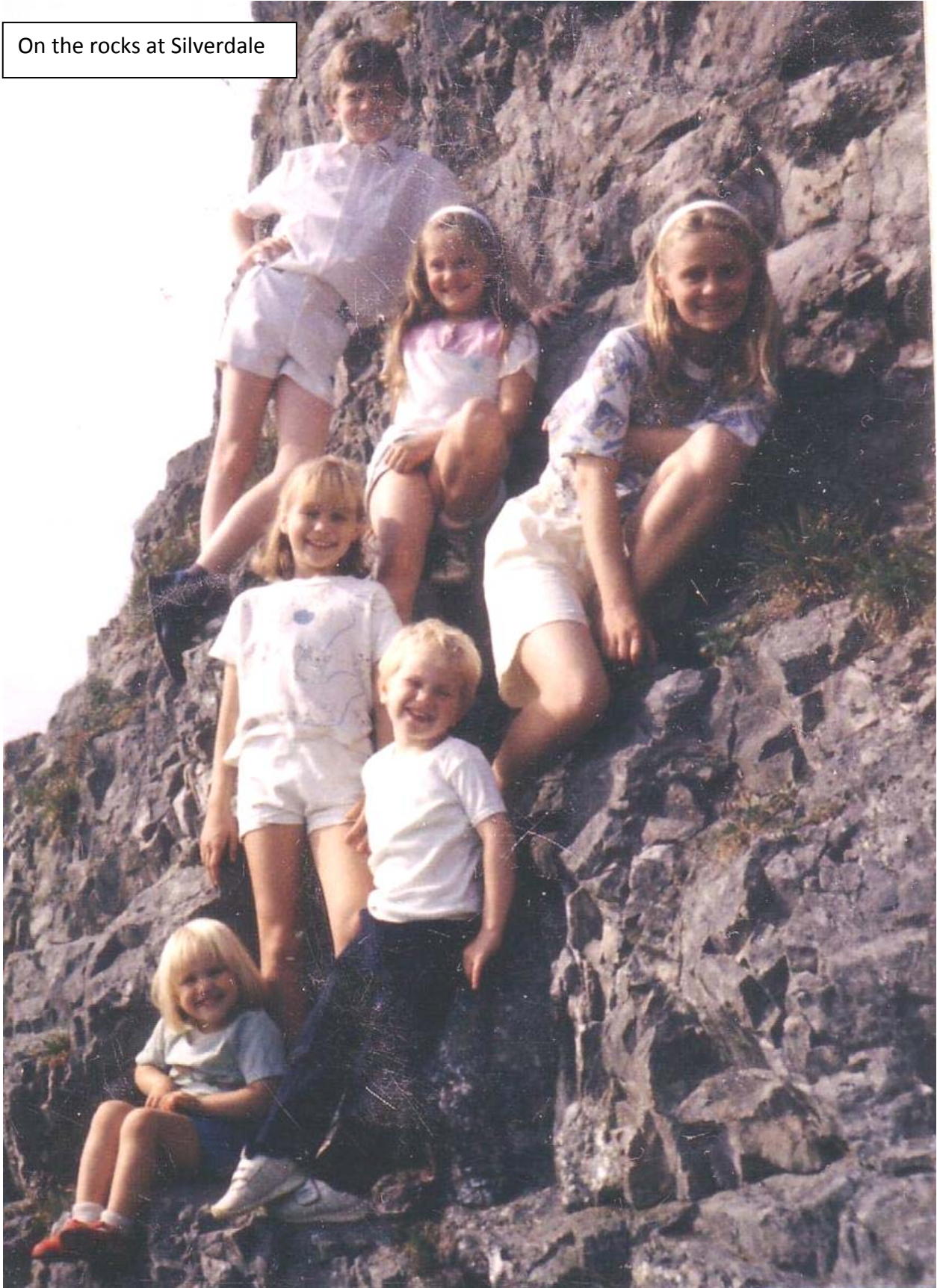
I was so glad mum allowed me to organize the service at his funeral. It was held at the Crematorium in Southend, with Terri's family we sang 'Families Can Be Together Forever' and I gave the talk. I so wanted to speak and was determined to do so with my emotions under control. I felt he was aware of what we said and did and that he was pleased. Was it coincidence that during the year that followed his passing, while doing the same job my salary doubled? I began earning more money than I ever had before and on the very day of the anniversary of his death we moved into this beautiful detached four bedroom home with luxury kitchen and bathroom just a short walk away from where I was working at BAe? Once again, I felt someone on the other side was pulling strings for us.

Not long before my father passed away his brother Reg also died after a long battle with throat cancer. My mum was rather upset at how Dad died, but she told us that one night, soon after he died, he appeared to her and simply told her that he and Reggie were alright. Fay was staying at the house to give mum some comfort and although she never saw or heard anyone, she did feel dad's presence too.

While I was working at BAe I became involved in an organization called Christians at Work. They met for about twenty minutes during lunchtimes, once a week. They usually had a guest speaker so I went along, just listened and received great spiritual benefit. My Sundays at church were rather stressful at the time so this little oasis in the week was a lifeline for me. It also stirred in me a strong desire to build bridges with others not of my faith.

We left Rawtenstall with me feeling I had let the saints down there, had run away when the going got tough. But now, after years have passed, I think that perhaps I was sent there to begin what others were to finish. The next to serve as bishop was Gary Cryer, son of the first Preston Stake president. Strangely enough, he was followed by none other than Ken Leyland who had been accused of aspiring to the position when I was there. Then, about twelve years after my release, my son Samuel was made Bishop of Rawtenstall and he, I feel, finished the job that we were sent there to do.

On the rocks at Silverdale



Despite the cloud which hung over my heart at the time we left, Rawtenstall will

always remain a special place in my heart. Oh and just one other little event. I cannot remember which car it was that suddenly gave up the ghost, but after which ever one it was I needed something so I saw this beaten up old Escort estate which was scruffy because it had obviously been used by a tradesman. It had an old wooden roof rack and a tow bar and was very grimy inside. But for £100 what was there to lose. We were due a holiday so we looked around and there was this place of 'outstanding beauty' not far north of us called Silverdale. We looked up a caravan site and just me and one child, think it was Helen, set off. The car was significantly under powered to pull our old caravan, but we persisted. It was quite late in the day when we began entering Silverdale down this long



steep hill. Not sure exactly where the campsite was we passed it without realizing it. There was no way we could turn round and go back up the hill so we just kept going down. Eventually we came to a rocky bay and the end of the road. Fortunately there was enough room to unhitch, turn and go out the way we came. Eventually we found this small campsite near to Gibraltar Farm. This was

the first of several beautiful holidays and Aaronic Priesthood camps held in that beautiful location. Fortunately we found an alternative route out!

## **The Divine**

Thou art the comforter, the speaker of peace to our hearts,  
Thou art the source of wisdom when ours is deficient or flawed,  
Thou art the light that reveals truth about ordinary things,  
Thou art warmth when all about is cold and frozen.

Thou art perfection in all that grows without mutation,  
The symmetry, the balance, the colour, the scent, the song.  
Thou art truth that leads to more truth that endows man with power and control,  
Thou art the pure, unselfish intents of the heart. Thou art love.

Thou art hope where all is dark with no point to guide each step,  
Thou art the wiping of a tear, the quelling of emotions, mercy and forgiveness,  
Thou art the tender word, the 'you' not 'me', compassion and empathy,  
Thou art the warmth and heart beat found in a longed for embrace.

Thou shows us clearly our weaknesses, which without condemnation inspires us to do better,  
Thou persistently provides wiser alternatives, the outstretched hand, the life-raft.  
Thou never wearies in our redemption, never, never, says we are damned!  
Where even the greatest evil has taken root, in time or eternity it will be replaced.

Thy justice is never vindictive or vengeful, thy punishment but natural consequences,  
Thy forgiveness is infinite, as is thy patience and mercy.  
Universal, eternal life, provides universal, eternal, infinite opportunities.  
Though we can shut thee out, thou wilt never exclude us from thy presence.

It mattereth not, thy form, thy shape, thy appearance,  
Let whatever association inspires us most and represents thy character best be our model,  
Be it father, mother, brother, sister or friend.  
And never may that model find form on paper, in wood or stone, but remain in our imaginations.

Neither does it matter where thou dwellest, for thou art always at our side,  
Thou art ever instantly accessible, without spoken word or gesture.  
We feel thy presence in our heart whenever we call thee to mind.  
When we ask thee to our bedside, while we sleep, we sleep in thy care.

When we leave this mortal toil we will in thy presence dwell,  
And whatever the course of eternal life, in thy hand we will remain,  
In thy presence all relationships will be restored without jealousy and hate,  
Trust, love and forgiveness will be easy when we see thy face.

Then will all the 'hows' that filled our mortal minds be answered,  
Then will all the 'whys' of past and future be made clear.  
Then, in that eternal domain, will our minds for ever expand, our abilities for ever  
increase,  
Then, without limitation of time or space, we will spread our immortal wings!



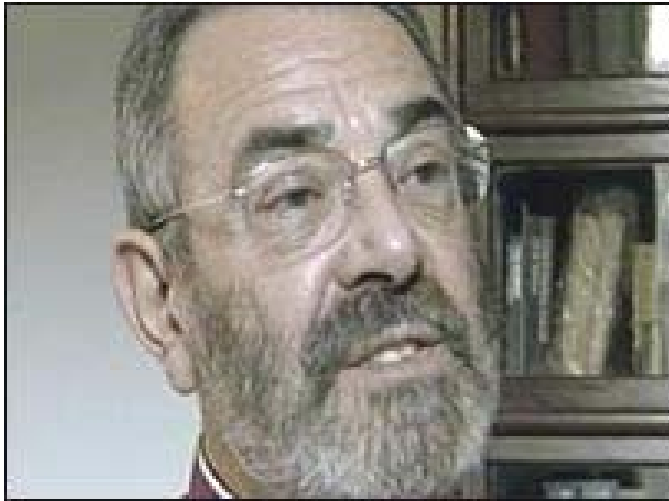
## Chapter 17 Building Bridges



I felt very much at home living in Warton; it was like Essex in many ways, perhaps because it was not so colloquial. People from all over worked for BAe; there were no rows of old terraced houses and we lived in a very smart street with open plan front gardens in a modern, comfortable home, but about fifteen miles from church. We were just inside the boundary of the Preston Ward, the oldest, longest continuously running unit of the church anywhere in the world. Since the missionaries first arrived there in 1837 there has been an organized congregation of saints in that location.

For the first time in my church life I was not prepared to serve wherever I was called. Bishop Steve Hall interviewed me for the position of Young Men's President, but I did not accept. But I prayed with real faith for the Lord to find something for me to do which I could succeed at, I just did not want to fail again. Two things happened; I am not sure in which order. I was at a stake meeting where a new public affairs programme was announced which included someone being responsible for 'building bridges' between the church and other community organizations. I spoke to Bishop Hall of my excitement in the new programme and before long I was called to the Stake Public Affairs committee responsible for Community Relations. The second thing was John Robey, a stake high councilor, asking me if I would organize a concert venue for the BYU Chamber Orchestra which was to tour the UK.

With my involvement with Christian's At Work I was highly motivated to approach other churches and faith communities and find ways of uniting with them in areas we had in common. Not in worship but in improving the community in which we lived. I took to heart the question 'who is my neighbour?' Not as individuals but as institutions. So who were our nearest neighbours? In those days the Preston chapel was in Ribbleton so it seemed logical to phone the minister of the nearest church which was St Mary Magdalene's just across the road from us. I introduced myself, explained what I was trying to do and was invited to a lunchtime meeting with other local ministers at the catholic Presbytery of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a sedate and polite occasion. We ate soup and bread round this antique table in this oak paneled room and discussed lunchtime talks to be held during the forthcoming period of Lent. I was asked if I would like to participate which I accepted. Within a day or two I received a letter from a minister who had been absent explaining that I was not permitted to speak in an Anglican church at Lent or on any other occasion and that I was no longer welcome at any further meetings. But despite this, in the discussions over the soup and bread two Catholic missionaries, Tom and Jim had invited me to join a group called, Church Action on Poverty. I love it how when you have the faith to open the first door, even if that door closes, it always leads to another opening.



Rt Revd Robert Ladds

The way I saw it, finding a venue for the BYU Chamber Orchestra to play in was an occasion to build some more bridges. I soon learnt the accepted terminology which was to foster, 'interfaith dialogue'. From where I was standing at the time, the obvious place for the concert was St John's, the main church in

Preston town center. I met with the rector, Father Robert Ladds and he

agreed to support the concert. His initiative did not go down too well with some of his peers and superiors in the Blackburn Diocese but he obtained permission from the top – well, almost the top i.e. the Archbishop of Canterbury himself. I had some interesting meetings before the date, particularly one with the Bishop of Burnley who helped me understand some of the church politics such an initiative stirred up. Because of the name we use on our publicity, as in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it was felt it could cause confusion in the minds of some as to just what relationship the Church of England was having with us. If we had been Moslem there would have been no ambiguity. But under the umbrella of Interfaith Dialogue it was given the go ahead.

For me, the concert was one of my happiest moments of church activity. As a public affairs committee it was well organized, Peter Trebilcock was a great M.C. it was well attended, though mostly LDS and the music superb. Although the seating was not the best and there were some complaints, the acoustics were ideal for the type of music. I shall always remember a solo trumpeter playing Handel standing in the pulpit. The sound was glorious. We also raised an appreciable sum of money for the Church of England's Church Urban Fund which we presented on a giant cheque to Father Robert Ladds. As a family we became good friends of him and his wife Roberta, they even came to our home for dinner and when he was later ordained a bishop in York minster we were there to

congratulate him. Also, at the ground breaking ceremony for the new Temple, he was the only representative of the local clergy.

About this same time there was some controversy. Roger Kendle, a member of the Preston ward, had applied for the church to be included in the churches procession at the guild celebrations. The Preston Guild held this event only once every 20 years so it was a big occasion. Roger was rather upset at the request being declined, particularly bearing how much of a Church history site Preston was. I was given the letter and sought out the minister who was the spokesman for the Preston churches, Reverend Martin Cripps of St Cuthbert's in Fullwood. I wrote asking to meet with him and went along to an event at the church hall. His was a very well attended, vibrant, evangelical congregation. He dressed normally, no dog collar and had not long been a minister, having been a lawyer by profession. I was able to meet with him one to one, pray with him and talk his language. Although I never changed the minds of the committee organizing the big event, over the months, as I attended some of his weekday meetings we built up a mutual respect and it was sad when he left Preston for pastures new.

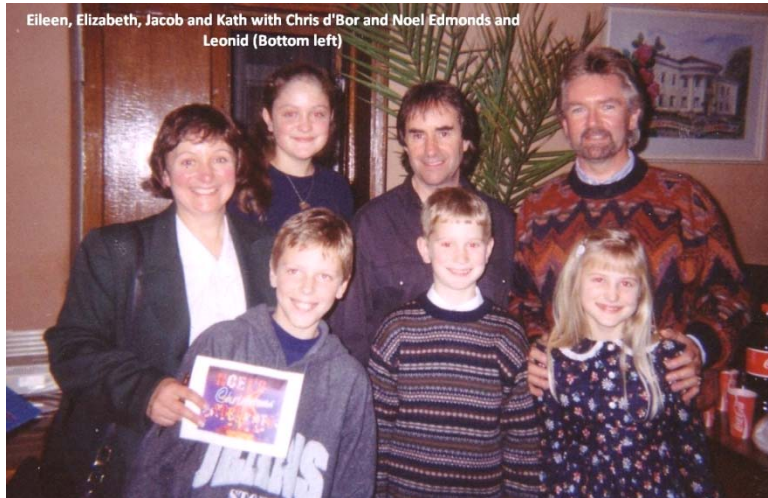
I had many adventures in this exciting work, visiting churches and meeting with ministers. I joined the international group World Congress of Faiths and went to an anniversary held at Lambeth Palace with Archbishop Carey as the guest speaker. I attended multi-faith meetings and got the youth involved in singing at an event. When the building of a new Temple in Chorley was announced I was invited onto the planning committee with responsibility of informing churches in the location. I often met with my counterpart in the C of E as well as others who were prepared to see me. But the group I associated with the most and in which I had the most success was Church Action on Poverty. We met monthly at Catholic Caring Services in Tulketh Road. It took me a long time to really understand what the group was about, but then I became the vice chairman and we split into three groups, each with a specific project to get underway. One was to form a credit union in PR1. These were the days of high interest rates and loan sharks ripping off poor council house tenants by lending them small amounts of money at exorbitant rates of interest. These people could not get bank accounts or cheap loans because they could offer no security. The second group was called local

people local voice. This was started by a national campaign, local people national voice where ordinary people were persuaded to come to a meeting in Westminster to share their perspective on life with government ministers. The third group was to look at starting a service to provide emergency accommodation for 16 to 25 year olds. It was called Night Stop. This was the group I was in.

It was a small group, as far as I remember just me and two women, Ruth Duckworth who was a catholic sister and a representative of the United Reformed church whose name I forget. Later, a representative of the YMCA movement joined us. Over many months with many meetings we secured funding from the NHS, obtained charitable status, advertised and employed a full-time coordinator, worked with the local housing officers and other youth services and referral agencies. But the key to its success was having volunteer families on a list who were willing at very short notice to house a young person for a night or two while more permanent arrangements could be made. We also had an ad on Granada TV with our Elizabeth acting the part of this poor homeless youngster being taken in. As a family, we volunteered. We lost count how many young people we gave a bed to; it was not every week but may have been on average once a month and it was often for more than one night. After a number of years, when I was called again as a bishop, we retired from this service. I must admit that after being robbed a couple of times I did find it difficult to sleep while we had a stranger in the house. Even though these people were checked out before being offered a bed for the night, you never knew just what they would be like. I greatly admire my children, especially Jacob who often befriended those we took in. Towards the end of when we were in Night Stop the service was taken over by Dr Barnardos and we received a special recognition award with us as a family being singled out. Eileen went to London to receive it.

As a family we also became involved in putting up children from Belarus. Because of the fallout from the nuclear power station that blew up the land became contaminated which affected the health of a generation of children. Spending a month per year out of the country helped build their immune system. For a few years we hosted one or two of these children. The youngest was a boy, Leonid

who was such a brave soul. We marveled that his family was willing for this young boy, who could speak no English, to travel so far and live with strangers in a foreign land. He stayed with us two or three times and later Eileen, Elizabeth,



Jacob and Kathy met up with him when they and a lot of other host families had a surprise trip to Minsk with Noel Edmonds for his Christmas TV programme.

There always seems to be some individuals who God puts in our path who need some special help. While we

were living in Warton there were two tragic events and again Eileen responded to their needs. There was a less active sister living in a street near us who we visited and tried to involve in the church. One day, her young son was out playing when the boys he was with doused him with petrol and set him alight. With severe burns he was admitted to Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool. For weeks, until he finally died we ferried his mother to and fro from the hospital and tried to give her some comfort.

Another tragedy was when the mother of one of Elizabeth's friends died from cancer. She left a husband, Jim Etherington, with four children to bring up. He had a piano repair business which he could not close so we would feed him and his family most days and Eileen was so good sensitively yet appropriately supporting this lovely man and his four children after their tragic loss.

In the world at large these were changing times. One of the most momentous events was the end of communism in Russia and the coming down of the Berlin Wall. It also meant an end to the cold war as I had known it all my life. One of the effects of this was a change in defense spending which meant British Aerospace had to cut jobs. Contract workers were the first to be laid off, so after over three years in a job I greatly enjoyed I was suddenly unemployed with a large mortgage and a growing, hungry, family. My brother Richard gave me some weeks of

employment at his copier business down in Southend. Other family members helped us out. But even though as a family we did all kinds of work, I had to depend mostly on the state for survival. In desperation I borrowed £5000 of David my brother-in-law and tried to set up a manufacturing business in my garage. I started to make printed circuit boards, but it was just not professional enough. But then a member called Jack Hurst took me on in his new venture. He set up a trade warehouse selling intruder alarm supplies for installers. He then used my expertise to make printed circuit boards and silk screen stickers for bell boxes.

But after a few months of this I was given the chance of a well paid contract at Plessey down in Christchurch. It lasted for about three months in the summer of 1993. Roger Kendle had given us his old seven seater Peugeot 505 estate which was very useful. We made the most of the location and towed our caravan down to the New Forest. My sister Terri paid for our camping fees and we had one of



our best holidays ever. I remained there, living in the caravan, until the contract finished. But that was my last job ever as an electronic draughtsman. For most of the next year I had no full-time employment. But then in 1994, at one of my regular interviews at the Job Centre, I was told I could sign up for a master's degree course at the local university. Even though I only had an HNC, not a first degree, they accepted this as an eligible qualification for the course in computer

interfacing and software applications. It was for just one year. If a job opportunity came up I would have had to take it, but it did not, so I completed it and so now had letters after my name!

To complete the course you had to spend 12 weeks in a working environment. I was placed at Cardinal Newman College where Samuel was studying for his A Levels. After graduating I applied for a permanent job at the college. I did not get the post advertised but they took me on anyway. Though the pay was not what I was on back in the days of BAe, it could only get better and it was a beautiful and special place to work. I started off doing a bit of teaching and assisted maintaining the computer network. But once I was back at work the tax man and other creditors were demanding their arrears. We just could not afford to remain living where we were. The economic climate was not very good; houses were selling with negative equity, which meant less than the debt outstanding. But then Eileen began chatting with a local school secretary where she helped out and mentioned we wanted to sell and someone overheard who for ages had been trying to buy a house in our street. So we got a buyer without advertising and sold with enough equity to pay our most pressing debts. We searched for a new place to live and the children fell in love with a stream that flowed at the back of a repossessed property in Gregson Lane, Hoghton. It was at the other end of the Preston Ward but much nearer to my new employment, much nearer to church and the temple and the stake centre, it was perfect for our new circumstances and gave us the chance to build some security.

I fondly look back on the Warton years as those when I personally achieved the most. In community service, in my education and employment in coming through a time of uncertainty and financial struggle and in seeing my children blossom into wonderful, talented individuals. So far I have not written much about each of them so I think it is about time I dedicated a chapter to just that.



## A Time to Eat and a Time To...

Is there a dribble down the side of my cheek?  
If there is, please don't stop and stare,  
Do I sound like a slob when I try to speak?  
If I do, well, I really don't care!  
'Cos for more than an hour I've been on my back  
Raised up and down like dough on a rack,  
Enduring the most ferocious attack,  
By a brutal and dastardly masked pair!

"Please lie in the chair," they politely say,  
Lie back, take your ease, just relax"  
"Now open mouth wide while I shove in this tray,  
Need to get an impression in wax".  
Well the stuff aint wax, more like plastic jellow,  
It sets real quick but when your throat wants to swallow  
Seems more like an age, you just want to bellow,  
"Take your hand out or it'll join my last snacks!"

The needle comes next, piercing the gum,  
Squirting its venom all round.  
Your tongue seems to swell while the cheek goes numb,  
You feel you look like a blood hound.  
But then he turns to his weapons with glee,  
And dives into grind out the bad cavity,  
As though on a mission to set the world free  
With his rapier, as it whistles its shrill sound!

For more than an hour they drill and they bore  
Till your jaw feels about to unhinge,  
But then comes the time you've been waiting for,  
It would be *most* ungrateful to whinge.  
For now that your molar is soundly re-built,  
Ceramic replacing decay to the hilt,  
Never again to crumble and wilt,  
You are crowned, so again, though with taste and less vigour..... you can **binge!!**



## **Chapter 18 My Quiver Full**

One of my greatest fears in writing this short biography is for my children to be disappointed in how much I may or may not devote to either one of them. We have been blessed with six of the most beautiful, lovely and extraordinary children I could ever have hoped for. I admire each one of them for their individuality, their personalities, temperament, abilities and spirit. Each is a best friend who I count it a privilege to know, let alone to be the parent of. I never feel worthy to be their father and will always cherish every moment I spend with them. But what memories do I cherish the most and which do I select and record to immortalize in print? Though I fear to highlight one more than another, I must



simply try and take that chance.

Being the first, it was Helen who gave me those first experiences of fatherhood. It was a joy to see her learn the basic skills necessary for a full life; to sit, to walk, speak, read, pray and so forth. But then her individuality began to blossom. It was her grasp of gospel principles at a very early age and her continual increase in understanding that so impressed me. How old was she when she could explain the plan of salvation? And of course she was born to read! Or was it us reading the Lord of the Rings every night for so long that did that for her? Though challenging at the time, I enjoyed her

questions about women and the priesthood and other thoughts she would taunt me with. With Helen I will always enjoy a long drive, I have no problem keeping

awake; we always enjoy stimulating discussion that pass the hours so pleasantly. Over the years her understanding and abilities at teaching the gospel has continued to inspire me. Without doubt, for me her greatest achievements so far have been in the classroom, serving for more than two years at the missionary training centre. Some achievements are easy to identify and quantify, her influence on the minds and abilities of those who went from her classroom out on to the Lord's errand she may never fully appreciate, but I am certain He who knows all, recognizes all she did.

Her sensitive nature, her strong set of values, her heart and imagination I will always love. Her adventures to far away places have also been an inspiration particularly as they have educated us too. Then there is her artwork, each one a



gem displaying such patience and attention to detail. I look forward to all that lies ahead of her. She is and will always be my hero and friend.

From the moment I gave Samuel his name and a blessing I have known he is one of Heavenly Father's choice servants. Life from the start was never easy for him, he was Eileen's most difficult birth and his poor head was misshapen by the forceps used. He has always wanted to follow the right path has seldom if ever rebelled or given us

concern for his behavior. Of course, he has an obvious talent and has brought us all so much pleasure through his musical abilities. There have been so many wonderful seasons and moments, like his winning performances at the Freckleton and Blackpool festivals, the recitals around Lancashire I drove him to, hearing his composition played by the Steve Martland band at Harrogate, War of the Worlds and A comedy of Errors at Newman college, playing his composition E9 with the Royal Northern College of Music Orchestra, his recently playing Rhapsody in Blue when passing out from Kneller Hall or just hearing my own son play the music of

Dave Brubeck that so captured my imagination when a lad of fourteen. But I think the occasion and performance that brought me the greatest joy was at the farewell fireside he gave before his departure to Singapore on his mission. Hannah's Song, the words of Samuel the prophet's mother put to his own music, sung and played at that wonderful fireside I will cherish the most. But more than sharing his musical talent he has shown courage; in facing bullies at school, in preparing for his mission, in choosing his wife, in enduring severe heartache and making hard choices at the birth of Amelia when in the last term of his degree, then valiantly trying to serve and provide for his wife and family, excel in his studies and serve the Lord in a challenging calling, all at the same time. In his chosen profession as a musician he continues to do things the hard way by joining the Army, but this has blessed his family and so increased my faith in the reality of a loving Father in Heaven who blesses His servants for their faithfulness. One moment I would prefer to forget was once hearing his young voice, his pleading cry of "Dad!" that in the darkest moment of my life, of which I am most ashamed, broke my spell of fury. And I love his undaunted and cheerful countenance. He too is one I will always enjoy a gospel discussion with, he encourages me in my creative endeavors and is simply a great friend and like Helen, my hero.



I forget the precise words I used when giving Jennifer her name and blessing, but in my mind I felt that Heavenly Father did not want to let this sweet spirit leave His presence. She is always simply beautiful inside and out and full of enthusiasm. With her arms round my neck I love to feel her spirit that is strong and undaunted. Sometimes I may worry that like me she may jump from one idea

to another, but better that than a stick-in-the-mud! She is never afraid or ashamed of the gospel and in her youth helped others to the waters edge, which has been and continues to be a great talent. In the community too she is not

afraid to become involved and spread her influence. Although sometimes under the shadow of Samuel, as a musician, she has great talent and has always shown so much courage. I will always remember her attempting a challenging Chopin piece before a large audience at a school concert. In church I love hearing her playing the organ, a talent that continues to gracefully mature. But most of all, in the trials of recent years, as she has brought three beautiful children into the world, has tried to establish her home firmly on gospel principles with a real love and vision of the spirit of Zion she is an inspiration and in her is a spirit that seems so lost in the church these days. She truly believes in and wants God's greatest blessings. I see in her the hope of the church in years to come, I see her as one enduring faithful to the end like the pioneers of old battling all the hardships of a new frontier. So my friend Jenny is the third of my heroes.



Elizabeth came into the world ready and raring to go! She has always been up to the task and just needed to be left to get on with it. All the necessary abilities came early and soundly. Her communication skills amazed us and her social skills too! We would be enjoying a family time at the park in Maldon and she would immediately be making friends with whoever was seated near by, much to their delight. In our Warton home, her friends very much became our friends and at each phase in her life she seemed to make up her mind to do things well, not to doss her way through; like doing seminary or in her education. Always she would amuse and entertain us, using her dramatic skills for her own ends or just to cheer us up. Such a happy soul, with so much good nature I wonder if I spent enough time with her, really enjoying who she is. All my children have at some time or other either studied or worked at the college where I worked. Elizabeth really let all her friends know I was her daddy! Never in anyway embarrassed or shy to call out to me. Having so few who would respond in my seminary classes, I used to rely on

her so much, I would hate the very thought of teaching a class without her in it. But then oh how we felt for her when she did not achieve as well as she had hoped in her 'A' level examinations. But that only brought her new opportunities. I will always remember at how at home she seemed as we arrived at the Jewish school Hodyot when we joined her in Israel. So proud we were of her as we came to know those who had come under her influence and charm and also come to love her. Then it was time she felt she was ready for marriage. She sought mum and dad's advice, modified her behavior slightly and before we knew it had met a worthy young man. She continues to get on with things and brightening the lives of all who come to know her. My hero and friend number four.

Jacob had to grow up with challenges those before him never really experienced. He never new life in the south, or was influenced by our Heybridge years. He too, rather like Elizabeth, simply got on with things without complaint. As a youngster



his imagination was always on the go. In his head he would be acting out many a battle and on the badminton court he would again battle giving us both cheer and heartache. I hope I am to blame for some of his creative abilities like showing him how to build spacecraft from Lego.

He never had any peers at church but in Young Men's enjoyed the friendship of those adults around him. I also appreciate his sense of gratitude. Although he had inhibitions, he would

always show appreciation for small things, like for taking him to a Rovers match. My admiration of him has grown so much in recent years. Though not an academic, he endured seminary and at college did as well as the others in his A levels. Then he came to work for me and his appetite for hard work came to the fore. He had the ability to make any tedious task a challenge, a game at which he would compete against himself. He would also see things through. Never showy but always modest, his work rate always impresses whoever he works for. He was never selfish but has generous heart while at the same time would always pay a full tithe and save for the future. He was also ready to take on a foreign speaking mission that would most certainly be very challenging for him. I have never felt the spirit more than when he gave his farewell talk. Overnight he matured in the



gospel and was ready for serving the Lord. My hero and friend number five.

Finally, my youngest. I have never felt more love from any of my children than what I have felt from Kath. For four years I either taught or drove her to seminary each morning when I would get to know and appreciate her. She has always has such a loving heart and generous spirit. As she reached those years of finding things out for

herself she battled, but in the end was humble and teachable, has learnt the Lord's way and what she most wants in life.

Her talents too have delighted me, her bold and thrilling art, her love of literature and being the only one of my offspring to seriously take up the guitar. Hearing her play cool stuff, that I could not play, amazed me! Then her wanting so much to buy me a bass guitar was so appreciated; even if I do not play it enough it will always be treasured. It is Kath too who is most likely to respond to a text or an e-mail. A simple moment I will always cherish was her sitting beside me listening

and following with keen interest the libretto of the whole of *The Dream of Gerontius*, (Newman/Elgar) She is a beautiful, modest, elegant and thoroughly modern girl but shows wisdom and maturity in her choices and decisions. So Kathrine is my friend and hero too.

So my quiver is full, full of arrows for the Lord to use for His eternal purposes. Arrows that have penetrated my heart with gratitude and the sweetest joy anyone could hope for. Who do I thank for this – God of course, but also that beautiful, faithful, companion He has given me and who has brought them into our lives.





## **The Worst Sound in the World!**

There are many sounds that set your teeth  
That make you squirm or give you grief,  
That raise the hairs upon your neck  
Or make you jump or even sick.  
Like the scratch, of nails on glass or slate  
Or the long slow, drag of a fire grate,  
Like the creak of the floor in a darkened room  
Or when alone there's a sudden BOOM!  
Like the hiss of a snake lying near your foot  
Or the splat on your head of rotting fruit  
Like air escaping from a deflating tyre  
Or the plop of a boot stuck deep in the mire.  
But the sound you wish you never would hear,  
That sickens and thickens your heart with fear,  
A sound that turns even a mouny pale  
Is the sound under foot of the crunch of a snail!

When the sun is set and air quite chill,  
Curtains drawn, abodes dead still,  
Out from cleft and hiding place,  
Glide those molluscs at mollusc pace,  
An army marching with savage powers.  
Seeking juicy plants and flowers,  
Munching and chewing till all is gone  
Supping till all the carnage is done.  
But then when full obese and fat,  
Promenade the patio, sit and chat  
Until returning late from work  
The householder with a company perk.  
Worn and tired so glad to arrive  
Steps from car into the drive  
Steps into the gathered throng  
And CRUNCH!

his sanity,

his mentality and emotional stability

in mind piercing agony

in an instant is totally, and utterly

-

GONE!

## The Best Sound in the World!

There are many sounds that waft the ear,  
That raise a smile or dispel a fear,  
That calm and sooth a troubled heart,  
Or send your pulse right of the chart!  
Like the song of a lark in hovering flight,  
Or a babies chuckle of innocent delight,  
Like the roll of drums in a military parade,  
Or summer rain as it gently cascades,  
Like a sacred chant in a lofty nave,  
Or the thunderous cheer for a goalies save.  
Like whispered words from a loved ones lips,  
Or a rods jingle when the float at last dips.  
But the sound you always long to hear,  
That lifts the heart and brings on a tear,  
That thrills and brings you relief with a gasp,  
Are the mechanics four words, "Your car has passed!"

Each year you deliver your treasured four wheels,  
Hoping the rust's not as bad as it feels,  
Wondering if maybe a ticket to United,  
May help make him a little short sighted,  
The list on his clip board is so very long,  
Do the shockers leak, are the lights all wrong?  
Is that chip on the windscreen too big to pass,  
The brakes work most times, if you don't go too fast.  
The steering's fine, s'long's there's not been a shower,  
And exhaust smoke clears, after half an hour.  
So you look at his sheet, try to read his face,  
And squirm a little as your heart ups its pace,  
You wait with bated breath for that sound,  
You look again, is that a smile or a frown?

Then comes the long awaited verdict *And..... "yyyyyyyyyyeSSSSSS!"*  
Your sanity, Your mentality and emotional stability  
In an instant is totally and utterly  
*..... ecstatic!"*

## **Chapter 19 From Warton to Hoghton**

Soon after moving from Warton to Hoghton we began a new phase of life. Our children began leaving home for various reasons so that it was rare for us to all be together in one place. First Helen left for university in Norfolk, (always



remembered for all the snails that came out at night in the garden where she first lived) then Samuel for his mission in the far-east, then Helen on hers to London South and then Jenny, Samuel and Elizabeth getting married. More recently Jacob left for the Paris, France mission and Kathy every year attends a different institution of higher learning, currently it is Leeds. Each of these occasions were a new experience and adventure for us. Though Jenny's marriage has and still gives us heartache, it has brought us the joy of our first grandchildren. James, Isla and Arlen are a delight and enrich our lives so much. Vicky we first met before Samuel's mission, we will always admire her for bravely coming on holiday with us to Tenby in Wales. The first time we went there the weather was glorious, though for me it resulted in severely burnt legs with blisters like melons. This second, the weather could not have been more different, we could hardly step outside our caravan it was so wet and whenever there are many bodies in confined space there will always be some tension. Vicky endured it so well. Their wedding and

first years of marriage would make a book in themselves. But we are so grateful for three more amazing grandchildren, Amelia, Annie and Adam. I just admire their faith and courage. Elizabeth and Christian too are meeting life's challenges with faith and determination and have brought three more precious and beautiful souls into this world, Caleb, Amos and Darcy.

Some of our last holidays we had before the family began to disperse were in Jim Etherington's caravan in the Lake District; an occasion my children never forget because of a minor problem with losing some keys. I had these canoes we stored for the college, Samuel and I raced out to the middle of the lake, I turned too sharply and overturned. For a while I was stuck upside down in this canoe but with some effort pushed myself free. No damage was done to me but being inverted caused my car keys to fall out of my pocket to the bed of the lake down below. With what tools I had it took quite some determination to break the steering lock and over-ride the ignition switch, but I did it. It reminds me of another occasion when I lost some car keys. It was long ago on a Sunday and I was



out in the car with Linda Boltwood visiting Julie. As I got out of the car the keys fell down a drain. There was no way of getting replacement keys so I asked the nearest resident if I could borrow a bucket and a rake and so with the drain cover raised proceeded to empty the drain of water and eventually hook up the keys. It was an amusing sight to passers by seeing me sprawled flat out on my face in the gutter, fishing in a drain; but it worked.

Up until recent years I have always been willing to have a go at anything, but the last time I tried to replace a clutch in a car, after completing the job, the clutch did not work. I gave up and took it to a

local mechanic. It turned out that the shop had supplied the wrong part for my car.

Another little car story is one involving a red Ford Sierra. I had always enjoyed the Sierra's I drove when a salesman so when we were due a replacement car I bought a cheap one. It was fine until we had a long journey to do, I think it was to a niece's wedding. Alas, we only got as far as Keele service station on the M6. The gearbox went, we had to pay for a tow off the motorway and for the car to be fixed. Then some weeks later I was taking a member of the Preston ward to receive his endowments at the London Temple. As well as the two of us I gave a lift to an older couple, the Cranfields, it was a journey I do not think they will ever forget. Once again we never got passed Staffordshire when things started to go wrong with the gearbox again. I should have turned round but not wanting to spoil his day I drove on. The number of gears I could select were reducing rapidly and the noise was unnerving. I don't really know if it was faith or just plain determination but with just one gear for the last 60 miles and the expectation of it completely grinding to a halt at any moment I actually got ourselves there and back.

At this time we were also caring for Eileen's mum. While we lived in Warton dementia became so bad the family agreed for her to come up and live in a rest home near us. She lived first in the Old Vicarage, Freckleton and then across the road from us in Hoghton. It was good for all the family. We occasionally entertained at these homes with our singing and playing, especially at Christmas time. But then she fell ill and in Eileen's arms one evening, she passed away.

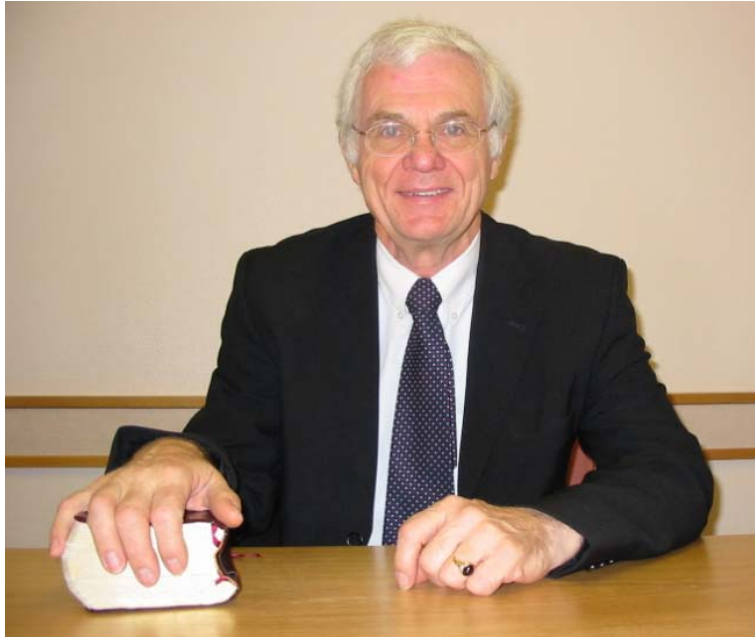
It had been a trying time for Eileen who with her mother on her mind was also working, selling books to schools. But with her passing we were blessed with some money from the estate. With it we cleared the debts that had been put on hold during my period of unemployment, paid back David and extended our home. Then, when Samuel and Elizabeth were studying in Leeds, it enabled us to put a deposit on a big old terrace house. We kept it for nearly six years. Samuel and Vicky made their first home there and Helen lived there while she was working for Leeds council. When there was no longer our family there we rented it out. But although it was profitable it became a burden so we sold it. With equity

from the sale we had just enough money to pay up all our debts including our mortgage. It was a sweet feeling, eighteen years after leaving Essex we now owned our own home.

My work also began to prosper us. Not long after moving to Hoghton I was promoted to the position of Network Manager at the college. It was challenging, but the best job I had ever had. I loved the ethos and spirit of the place, I was good at fixing things and I developed creative programming skills too. I also enjoyed having my children there as they came to study for their A Levels. One year I even taught an early morning seminary class there. Which reminds me; Eileen's inheritance also paid for our wonderful holiday to Israel when we met up with Elizabeth who was there working for an organization called Friends of Israel. We stayed at the Jewish school Hodyot and toured that amazing country. I also had my seminary class with me in Israel. I only had two students, Jacob and one other, Elizabeth Bentley, so we took her with us and I taught some of the New Testament lessons where the events actually took place; by the shores of Galilee, on the mount of transfiguration, at Cana, Nazereth, Capernum and of course, Jerusalem. We have had more overseas holidays than ever during this time. Christmas 2002 I bought a plane ticket for Eileen as a surprise present. In the spring Elizabeth went with her and they stayed with the missionary who baptized her. With Jacob and Kathy we also had holidays in Teneriffe, Spain and Ireland. Then in 2007 Eileen and I went to my nieces wedding in Nauvoo, Illinois. More about that trip can be read elsewhere.

As my interfaith work began to fade, I was moved from one calling to another. But then, quite unexpectedly, in February 2003, Preston Malcolm Beverley called me as the Bishop of the Preston Ward. I found it very challenging but rose to it. As a stake president he was demanding and with its long history, Preston was an interesting ward to lead. But the previous bishop, John Robey had served well and I took over when things were on a high. Five years earlier we had moved into a brand new chapel away from the rough Ribbleton area, it was a good place to be. But after two years there was another surprise. They wanted to divide the Preston stake. Before they could do so they had to create a new ward. So they pulled together members from Preston and Chorley into a new one called South

Ribble. One Sunday morning I was released as bishop of the oldest ward in the church, in the afternoon I was made bishop of the newest.



It was a wonderful ward to get up and running, there were such choice members. Many had moved into the area to be near the Temple or to find employment there. The first Sunday you could have heard a pin drop, it was so reverent. Steve Smith and Fernando Rojas were my counselors and we set to organizing the leadership. I loved serving the saints there

but there were unseen problems in my life; doubts and distractions. I guess I gave into those other influences that are also hard at work but out of sight. At the time the church seemed to be placing all the responsibility for leading missionary work onto the Bishops. Whilst every member has always been a missionary, I had heard it since David O' Mckay's day, but now, because the church was not growing in England, more and more pressure was being put on the average member. I found it oppressive. I also felt I had done the job I was called to do which was to prepare Steve Smith, my first counselor to be a Bishop. He was a long standing member and very capable church employee, managing the up keep of all the chapels in the North West. He has seven children, is a kind and loving father and husband and was and excited about the Lord's work. I felt he was ready and the Lord through the stake president must have agreed, for he was the one called. But asking for my release upset Eileen terribly.

This was also a time of renewing old friendships which I did not handle too well. Sometimes my enthusiasm gets the better of me, I leave Eileen behind in some of the initiatives I take and she feels left out. What happened first was just before

Christmas 2002 when we went to church at Southend. While there, an old friend called Jim Spong came up to me and said,

“Guess who is here at church for the first time in ages? Kathryn Gibson!” This was Kathryn Alexander who my sister had brought to church long ago after her studying in France. I had dated her for a while before meeting Rosemary. We had remained good friends and when I was bishop in Southend I helped her get employment as secretary to Dave Cooke who was the CES coordinator for the UK. She moved up to the Midlands but somehow met up with Nigel Gibson, eldest son of some members who joined the church in Southend. He was a soldier in the Army, in the SAS. They married in the London Temple, I always remember him at the time with his broken leg and crutch having recently fallen out of a helicopter. I then lost touch as they were posted to various locations round the world. But then, while we were living in Rawtenstall, tragedy struck. First she lost her first child Benjamin, soon after giving birth. Then a while later, totally unexpectedly while at home relaxing, Nigel suffered a massive heart attack and died. For many years she had little contact with the church and we heard no news. But then we learnt that at the time she lost Nigel she was pregnant. She gave birth to Rachel and raised her. After living so long away Kate moved back near to her in-laws in Rayleigh, Essex. When Rachel began attending secondary school she made friends who turned out to be members of the church. Rachel began attending Mutual and before long wanted the lessons. Kate decided to return to church and now is fully active. This whole story is another case where I felt those who had passed on, namely Nigel and Benjamin, were pulling strings for Kate and Rachel on the other side. More recently Kate has returned to the Temple and I have assisted in doing the ordinance work for her male ancestors

Three years after this first encounter with Kate, I picked up a family newsletter from Susan Dotan (Benning) who had been instrumental in bringing Eileen into the church; I noticed she had included her e-mail address in the letter so began a correspondence. Interestingly, this was twelve months after Susan's mother had died which was a trying time for her.

After Susan's adventures finding Eileen she went and lived in Israel, married Joshua, had three children and eventually moved to Northampton. I became quite



involved with Susan's family and loved to learn of their Jewish customs and traditions. I was in a position to provide some help with some computers and lent her a hand editing a personal history she was writing, which in turn inspired me to write this one.

Then one week I was involved with an event in our stake called Family History on the Road. I volunteered to assist any of the general public who came to search on the mobile computers for their ancestors. As I had free time between customers I casually began looking up Susan's ancestors. Within a short time I had compiled an extensive family tree that took me to a place I was very familiar with. It turned out that one of her grandmothers came from Lancashire, from the village next to Warton where we lived for seven years. It was a testimony building moment when once again I felt I was not choosing my steps as in the gloom of a late evening I entered the graveyard of a church and instantly saw right near the doorway a gravestone full of the names of her direct ancestors. Many of those I found have since had their temple work performed for them so doors for another family are opened.

I also managed to track down Rosemary and Bob who moved to Australia and occasionally send an e-mail down under. They are happy but have both left the church and have little religious faith left, which is sad. But I am sure that Harold Hunt on the other side is praying hard for them, so I shall leave it to those unseen powers to work their ways.

We have had some particularly exciting holiday adventures in recent years. Once Helen and Samuel returned from their missions we all rented a big house in France, drove there avoiding blockades by striking French lorry drivers. Then with Jacob and Kathy we have been to Tenerife, Spain, where we stayed in Eileen's sisters apartment, short trip to Shannon in Ireland, Scarborough and a round England tour staying at Carlisle in the North, Lowestoft on the East, and the southern and most westerly parts of Cornwall

So in this ongoing adventure I arrive at the current day. Writing this short biography has filled me with gratitude for what I have as I look back on my life and clearly see the hand of God at work. I see it in my parents and the family I

was born into, in those he sent to my mothers door, in the woman he prepared for my wife, in those he sent to us as children, in numerous souls who have influenced me for good or who have given me opportunities to serve. It all has been an adventure both in the flesh and in the mind.



We have new grandchildren appearing at least every year, each one an absolute delight. We have a beautiful home, a little spare money to enjoy ourselves with, good health and many opportunities to serve in the Lord's Kingdom and there is a temple on our doorstep where the 'keys are kept'. We have each other and we have friends. How will I write the next twenty years when I near that age of four score? That I cannot predict but I am confident that I will have witnessed many more times the hand of God and the faith of those who have gone on before us, gently moving us here.

*“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”*

*(Prov 3:6)*

