

## **ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION**

### **THE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER**

**FOREWORD BY SIR JOHN PARKER GBE**

#### **FELICITY OF CHILDHOOD**

My mother gave birth to my sister Mina at our farmhouse in Slievenaman on Primrose Day, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1943. This was 1 year and 11 days later than my arrival into the world. Mina was christened Mary Wilhelmina, the name of my late mother's sister who had died young. Ours was an exceptionally happy childhood, growing up in the shadow of the Mourne Mountains with the famous Hare's Gap just across the Shimna River.

#### **MINA FALLS INTO HOT ASH**

My earliest recollection of Mina, probably when she was about 2 years old, was her falling headfirst into the deep ash pit that received the hot ash from the large open fire with its boiling hot water in pot-bellied kettles. I ran outside shouting to my mother in the farmyard "Mina in fire".



Mother rushed in and pulled her out at great speed! It had happened because my mother who was hardworking and loved everything to be smart, clean and tidy had removed the black-leaded flat steel bars which protected the top of the ash pit for cleaning. At the time of my shock announcement she was pushing the flat bars through a sandpit to create a smooth surface for recoating them with the black-leaded paint.

#### **PORRIDGE CATECHISM BAKING AND BUTTER-MAKING**

As we grew up we were taught good manners and brought up on the Presbyterian Shorter Catechism even though we belonged to the Church of Ireland. We were also given particular jobs for each day around the farm. Because of its mixed nature we were almost entirely self – sufficient except for fish.

Pork, lamb, beef and chicken, good oats for porridge, milk, butter etc were in plentiful supply.

My mother was a very good cook and baked her own homemade bread, soda bread, oven wheaten which was my favourite, pancakes, potato bread and wonderful cakes and sweet pastries.

One job we had to take on was the boring one of milk churning and turning the handle of the churn to make butter. We would take over from each other after 100 rotations, neither of us willing to go to 101. This would go on for probably an hour before the butter would appear for mother to collect it.

### **A SCHOOL AND MISTRESS LIKE NO OTHER**

Our primary school was half a mile up the road with 14 pupils, 7 of whom were Parkers. Apart from the 2 of us our 5 cousins, the children of our Uncle Willie, my father's brother, were present.

We had an outstanding teacher, an American lady Mrs. Fails (Connie) who had a husband called Johnnie and a son named Ronnie!

We virtually had 1 to 1 private education with a very broad based syllabus covering hygiene, manners, etiquette and a lot about travel in an era before



television. Mrs. Fails went back to America each summer and would come back and show us cine films taken in New York and other US cities. That was a long way from

Slievenaman.

*Mrs. Fails had a soft spot for Mina as she too had been born on Primrose Day* and each birthday she would arrive with a bunch of primroses for Mina. Slievenaman school closed when we were around 9 and 10 years old and we then went by bus to Newcastle to Donard View Primary School. The headmaster was the famous Willie Hunter, his wife also taught at the school.

### **A PERFECT ESCHUTCHEON WITH ONE EXCEPTION**

Mina was a very conscientious pupil who made friends easily with her good manners and happy smile.

I can't recall her ever throwing a temper tantrum although once when playing in the stackyard she threw an empty bean can at me and the sharp edge caused a huge gash in my skull with much immediate bleeding which gave her the fright of her life.

### **THE SOURCE OF MINA'S LOVE OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS**

Other jobs we had included carrying water from the freshwater well to the pigs and hens and to help mother with the arrival of boxes each containing 100 one day old chicks to be settled in their snug hoovers heated by oil lamps.

Inevitably every year we would have at least one pet lamb to bottle feed by hand as a substitute for a sick mother ewe.



### **GARDEN COTTAGE AND MISS DUNCAN**

Next door to the farm was Garden Cottage which was home to Miss Duncan, the cousin of Miss Blakeley, a former teacher at the local school. Both came from the South of Ireland.

Miss Duncan was well educated with a fine

collection of books and a beautiful garden. She got her milk, butter and eggs from the farm each day as well as sharing my father's daily newspaper. She would set us various readings from her books and give us tests, rewarding



us with the prize of a new book. At one stage she read us a shorter version of Pilgrim's Progress.

So with that glimpse into our early childhood I now salute the kind, loving, gentle gracious person that my sister became as a wife, mother, grandmother and friend to so many. With much love from Brother John.

### **AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION**

This little narrative covering seven decades was written as a tribute to Mina Coffey (Nee Parker) and befits a lady whose luminous kind and intelligent dark eyes and loveliness bewitched me in youth and unfailingly draw out my



admiration as her husband year on year and day on day and hour by hour of our genuinely rich and abidingly happy marriage. The final sentence of Sir. John's opening foreword really says it all concisely and beautifully and I'm quite certain that any who read those words would be pleased to know what became of the schoolgirl of Slievenaman and how her life's work developed in the four relationships which Sir John mentioned.

All who know Mina realise that she is much more than "a lass from the County Down". Mina is first and foremost a Christian whose allegiance to Jesus Christ is seen in her

life, known in her ever open bible and of that relationship I have incontrovertible evidence in her answered prayers. Mina is a mother whose love for her sons and grandchildren is a delight to me and an unceasing reality of which those sons who share her faith and values in their sterling manhood take frequent stock in appreciation. I may add to the list of those who have never forgotten the shepherd's daughter her quite singularly considerate and talented brother John whose character matches his calibre in such a fashion that we could call him "a chip off the old block" of the fond father and shepherd of Slievenaman. John's story as you might imagine intertwines with that of his sister time and again through their 70 years on this earth though it has been incumbent upon him to walk with kings and supervise business on the international stage he has not lost the common touch. I sometimes think that when the roll is called up yonder there will be a cottage in the corner of glory land or a resting place by the river of paradise where these four will meet again with joy that surpasses knowing and amid grander worship too.

## LOVELY SLIEVENAMAN

Between the twin foci of Newcastle and Kilkeel the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea and in a crescent encircling that majestic range on the landward side lies the exquisite vale of Slievenaman. On the high road overlooking the historic Trassey Bridge with vistas seaward towards Newcastle and upward south-easterly toward the Hare's Gap where the mountains rise to meet the skies stood the home of the shepherd's daughter. Sitting high above the road protected by a copse of fine firs there still stands that snug double fronted homestead of a quiet Christian man whose name was synonymous with integrity and friendship throughout the Mournes and beyond.



### ROBERT AND MARGARET

Bobby Parker and his beloved wife Margaret brought up their family—a boy and girl—with deep affection and gentle discipline—and one knows only too well how that gracious home has since those days carried on the wings of Christianity and commerce beneficial influences, job provision, good counsel and rich kindness throughout the length and breadth of these British Isles. Whilst under God the lineage of divine blessing persists in the continuing branches of this family the names of Robert and Margaret Parker will be lustrous with honour.

## THE SHEPHERD

Before we meet the Shepherd's daughter let me say a little about the Shepherd and his wife. Bobby Parker was one of two sons and was ever solicitous before his marriage at the age of 40 for the welfare of his brother and family. Bobby had two nephews Robert and Willie—fine and very capable Christian men—who with their families are firmly rooted today in the steppes of this lovely valley. One of these, Robert is the present proprietor of the holding and walks in the footsteps of his uncle as rector's church warden in the parish church of the family at Bryansford. The Parker family were very blessed in grandfather Robert whose copy of the family bible was heavily overwritten in the margins—especially in the New Testament with apt personal notes.

That on the Parker side is the source of the deep realities of Christian faith treasured in the Shepherd's home. The Shepherd knew every inch of the Mourne foothills and was the secretary for many years of the Mountain Sheep Farming Association that let out the mountain grazing land and kept its accounts in good order. This favourite Shepherd of the Mournes would visit the sheep fairs and markets in Rathfriland, Kilkeel and Downpatrick and was trusted to buy and sell livestock on behalf of other farmers who might have been fleeced for want of acumen or knowledge of the woolly backed animal that could put bread on their tables or cause them to go without.

## THE SHEPHERD'S WIFE

The Shepherd's wife came into his life when he was a seasoned outdoorsman of forty years. Margaret Bell was a bright woman-with a lightning ability to reckon. She was a small, shy but impressive woman with a deftness in embroidery and refined skills in domestic science. She had a genuineness about



her that has been relayed to her family- a winsome and genuine smile, genuine hospitality, genuine interest in Christ, genuine kindness-this woman poured her life and means into us all. Maggie (as she was better known) was early advised to treat Bobby well for he had already worked very hard and cared utterly selflessly for his wider family. I know that Margaret wouldn't need that bidding and she made a beautiful home. Her unique baking skills and

mastery of cuisine combined with the open door and friendliness of her welcome rendered it the natural evening resort of farmers in the valley and the by path meadow of postmen, egg men, bread men, meal men and friends day and daily. Margaret Bell was one of a family of three sisters and a brother and for gentleness, disciplined work and intellect she was special. In their day the shepherd and his wife represented the best in family life, the warmest friendships of those parts and the highest standards of the Christian faith-never in all the shepherd's years or those of his wife who survived him was a word ever spoken to cast a shadow over these three verities in that happy home or community. The feelings of all Slievenaman and the neighbouring towns was expressed in silence and liquid love at a very large funeral procession of Robert Parker and many an act of kindness upheld that dear wife simultaneously bearing her own separate pain in hospital and a brave young son bearing his own burden like St Paul in youthful years and the shepherd's daughter who had hardly left the bedside of the father she loved to the last. So this dearest of men passed to be with his Lord that Great Shepherd of the Sheep in his 61st year. The rector Rev.Lowry who exercised the cure of souls in that blessed parish with the greatest diligence and grace in those days paid unfailing attention and a glowing tribute to the man he loved so well. At the time of writing this noble churchman and under-shepherd of Christ has but lately passed to join the ransomed in glory and meet the Shepherd in whose footsteps he longer walked on earth than the shepherd of the valley of Slievenaman that he loved.

## TOLLYMORE FOREST PARK

The shepherd of whom we speak lived cheek by jowl with the Rodens – once outright owners of these glorious national heritage landscapes where now the public get to view forest and mountain, rhododendrons and azaleas and stop by where the hermit sat alone along the shimmering Shimna. The river cascades winter and summer over its salmon leaps in Tollymore Forest Park. There amid

nature's grandeur the farmer's son and daughter would oft times stroll and chat in the glory of a Sunday afternoon.

There I too have strolled with the shepherd's daughter not once or twice.

### **A LITTLE KEY TO A BIG REVIVAL**

Let me divert to give anecdotal evidence about the spiritual calibre of a former Lord Roden. In the days when grandfather Parker was a boy the evangelical Earl Roden and his colleague the Earl of Bangor rode throughout Ulster giving addresses in defence of the Trinitarian faith and divine salvation in face of the threat posed by the public orations of an Arian imposter by the name of Smedhurst who had neither place nor time for Jesus Christ and God's Holy Spirit in his teaching. These debates and the question times that went with them laid the foundation for the 1859 revival of religion in the North of Ireland.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE FIRST DECADE 1943-1950**

#### **THE BIRTH OF THE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER**

The shepherd was out in the fields when his second child came suddenly into the world at the top of the stairs. It was, shall we say, a curious place to announce your arrival in the world with life's first cry but like many a sudden and surprising advent it turned out good-really good. Bobby Parker, that good shepherd and his wife Maggie now had a boy and a girl and for a man who lived so unostentatious and sympathetic to the needs of others the Lord had given most everything his soul desired in a family short of the saving grace for these he loved that he would witness in time to come.

As children John and Mina early realised what life on a farm was about. They could hardly wait till Margaret their mum took those lovely cakes from the oven. They early learned to play their part-feeding the pigs –drawing water from the well and running messages to workers in the fields during harvest. Daddy had a flax dam and prepared some raw material for the linen trade. Alas the flax dam in its day was no small health hazard especially in cold weather!

#### **TIME TO PLAY**

Of course there were lighter moments when the happy children careered down the road in John's homemade trolley or played by the nearby Trassey river. They even exercised their very unpracticed arts of a veterinary nature on an undeserving hen though the process of administering the drenching to the bird resulted in an unintended reaction. Because of the acute mathematical precision of their mother the fowl play incident came to light. John became master of his chemistry set and Mina learned her home economics at her mothers side. As for the Shepherd he never visited Newcastle without bringing something home for his beloved children. On Sundays they had "Church in the parlour". Mina would sing and John would preach after the best style of Rev.Lowry.

## **SCHOOLDAYS**

Primary School was quite special in Slievenaman. It was hardly more than 500 yards uphill of the farm. The main contingent of its pupils were Parkers and Morrisons. There would hardly have been more than a dozen pupils and Mrs. Fails was anything but what her name suggests. She never let "Primrose Day"- the birthday of one of her favourite pupils-the shepherd's daughter pass without displaying a fine posy of primroses picked from the mossy bank outside. She produced star pupils who would go on to take first places and armfuls of prizes in their teens at Technical College.

## **THE SHATTERING OF AN IDYLL**

Life in Slievenaman with the little church in the valley below was nothing less than idyllic had it not been marred by illness. We seldom take stock of how much our future is influenced by the health of our parents. When just ten years of age the shepherd's daughter had beautiful ringlets of jet black hair. She was her father's darling but the shepherd himself was not breathing as freely as he had done and he was obviously less vigorous. Increasingly over the next few years Margaret would take over the working of the little farm and the children would play their part rising before school time to help feed the livestock and returning home expeditiously to collect eggs or help feed the animals.

## **ENDOWMENTS OF THE INTELLECT**

The children were bright-not just normally bright - exceptionally so. The author had the unenviable privilege of sharing in class with John. I recall how intrepid this young man was in using lathes and in solving algebraic problems - even then a noted genius. Mr. Downie our school principal would attempt a solution to a problem he had set out on the blackboard and when his wits failed to show the next step he would wander round the room and come to a halt behind John only to discover that the pupil had moved well ahead of his teacher and arrived at the solution. I recall that the shepherd's daughter walked away with one prize after another in her year. We had in one family the apprentice of the year and one of the province's best shorthand typists. At the St John's Ambulance Brigade the shepherd's daughter with her friends Joy Dick and Rosemary Cairns ran away with the junior challenge.

Besides all this the trusty twosome were learning to play piano with Mrs. Nesbitt and John diversified to drums, flute, bugle and mandolin. John would take command of the local BB drill competition squad and bark out the commands so accurately that even within a small lecture hall the squad never ran out of space.

## CHAPTER 2 THE 1950'S

### **RIVER AND HILLS FOR A PLAYGROUND**

For the Shepherd's daughter just growing up on the farm in beautiful Slievenaman commanding an overview of the pass that led into the heart of the Mourne was a real joy. There was great freedom to roam the fields, visit neighbouring farms and play in shallow head waters of the Shimna River. The Shepherd's daughter and her brother John each had jobs to do on the farm. John would milk the cows and clean out the animals and Mina would keep the hens tidy and collect the eggs packing them into chests ready to be collected by Cowdens. As well as sheep that grazed on the mountains and nearby fields there were hens and pigs and cows and horses on the farm and all had to be fed.

### **SODA FARLS AND WHEATEN LOAVES**

The shepherd and his wife kept an open home and loved company. The postman was called Andy Montgomery. He came in for tea every day and his visit was always really welcome. Men driving delivery vans with animal feedstuffs also came in. The Shepherd's wife baked every day! She baked soda farls and wheaten loaves and all sorts of cakes besides. From an early age the Shepherd's daughter was allowed to help. At times of harvesting lots of cooking was necessary. Tea-time was particularly enjoyable. Baskets of food would be taken to the field along with big teapots full of tea. The men would enjoy a break and these would be good times of conversation fun and laughter. Often in the evening neighbours would call in and there would be lively conversations.

### **THE CHURCH ON A HILL IN THE VALLEY BELOW**

The family attended the Parish Church in Bryansford and spent many happy times there. Perhaps the most memorable were the Nativity Plays produced by Miss Davidson. All ages were involved and the final rehearsal was always a bit nerve-wrecking. People came each year from the hills around to sing the old familiar carols and to see the Nativity Play with the Shepherd's daughter cast as the Virgin Mary

During the 50's the Parish Minister was the Reverend Harold Lowry who later went to Willowfield Parish in Belfast. Rev. Lowry and his wife were remarkable for their care and kindly interest in the whole congregation. Mr. Lowry was a most helpful preacher and his love for God's word and his emphasis on its importance impacted many lives.

### **THE ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL FOREST PARK**

Lord Roden's estate was in the parish and the Roden family (whose renown has been earlier remarked upon) -were much involved in the life of the church. A special pew with an open fire was reserved for the family and their guests. The





Shepherd who was also a church warden could recall days when one whole side of the church had been occupied by all the servants of the Roden family who served in the house and on the estate. Sadly the majestic home of the family was demolished on the death of the last earl but one. The Shepherd's daughter recalls going to view the house before it was knocked

down. The sight was indeed a vivid memory as the author who walked there with his own father witnessed shortly afterward when the demolition was in progress. The estate on account of the burden of death duties was now to become *Tollymore Forest Park* and with its spectacular setting, arbors for picnics and riverside walks it is really enjoyed today by numerous visitors the year round.

Another fragrant memory is the old school. The Shepherd's family and a dozen or more children of the valley attended Slievenaman school until the numbers dwindled to seven and the Shepherd's daughter was among that seven who benefited from the intrepid skills and teaching of a gifted lady by the name of Mrs. Connie Fails.



### **PARALLEL LIVES**

Education and the skills that develop with the pursuit of knowledge affect each of our lives. The Shepherd's daughter grew up on a farm and neither she nor her brother entered for the "eleven plus" examination. Instead they chose to pursue a future in the technical stream. The author attended Newcastle Technical College on the year prior to that when the Shepherd's daughter enrolled. The Shepherd's son John and myself became classmates and friends over this period. During those college years the Shepherd's children became legends for prowess and carried off the main awards in their respective years. Mr. Gribben who taught shorthand and typing realised he had in the Shepherd's daughter a real star pupil who was to go on in her early career to the typing pool of the Northern Ireland Lawcourts and then to Stormont to engage her lightning fast skills as a Hansard government committee and debate note-taker.

### **DIGITAL MUSIC?**

Music was deeply enjoyed in the Parker home. I don't mean the sort of music that we now turn on and play digitally. I mean the music that is produced by the digits of both hands. John played the mandolin and flute and both the Shepherd's children went to Mrs. Nesbitt for music lessons. Mina never lost her love for piano and still today she will spend time playing and singing at her keyboard. Her main interest was always Christian music and that love of singing about what the Lord Jesus Christ means to her has never faded but rather found new expressions of purity and sweetness as the years have gone by.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE 1960'S-WEDDING BELLS,**  
**TINY FEET IN THE HALLWAYS OF TYRONE AND ANTRIM**

**NEWCASTLE TECH AND BELFAST**

As a trio John and the author and then Mina gained their early technical training in Newcastle and there also felt something of the flow of God's river in spate as a strong spiritual current was flowing in Christian mission in the late 1950's & early 60's.

In 1964 the author became a student in the (Presbyterian) "Assembly's College", Belfast. The Shepherd's family had left the pastoral scenes and fields behind and two uniquely gifted children of the Shepherd and mother moved to Belfast where they found themselves respective and promising placements in the law-courts and the famous Harland & Wolff shipyard drawing office of Northern Ireland. Still the faithful Shepherd's dog stayed loyal walking the hills above the city with the family and was even once spotted by the Shepherd's daughter restively roaming along Royal Avenue-did his heart also yearn for the countryside he loved though his loyalty to the family hold fast? Left behind now for the author was the town of Newcastle nestling below Slieve Donard with its memories of lots of pals converted and outpoured blessing in the missions of Victor McManus, the CWU missions, the Busman's Testimony Band and the newly formed Baptist Church. Also savoured and soon only history beyond the Glenshane Pass in distant Londonderry were the camaraderie, vibrant church life and IVF campaigns of the Magee College years. Ahead lay theological training and a surfeit of exams on three fronts-for TCD, QUB and the College exam board-but ahead also lay a very significant annual heels up party. The student body threw its life and soul into the party with its traditional games and comedy sketches. In one of these the author and John Lockhart entertained the staff and theologs to a hilarious Anglo-Indian dialect dialogue on "Promoting tea sales in Scotland."

**A PARTY DAMSEL**

There was something of a problem with that party-it was understood that each theolog would provide his own lady partner although for any who were found wanting a bevy of beauties was shipped in from the nearby Presbyterian constituency-and the author as the second youngest theolog didn't have a girlfriend. But providence is kind and information had come to me that one of my school pals was living in the parish where I had come to assist Rev.W.M.Smyth in a busy Church set in then thriving community of the York Road in the vicinity of Belfast's main railway hub. On my first visit to Fortwilliam Parade John Parker (the pal and now drawing office architect at Harland & Wolff's) was away from home and the lovely girl with bewitching eyes who answered the bell was none other than the Shepherd's daughter herself. The party problem that was giving the author more thought than any essay he every wrote came to a crux just a few days later and I picked up

courage returned to Fortwilliam and rang that doorbell again and explained to the shepherd's wife this time that I had come on somewhat different business. The door of No. 70 opened and in stepped the young parliamentary private secretary (alias the Shepherd's daughter) whose eyes and kind smile were no less disarming than before. This young lady was –dare I say it-like a coveted ruby-and her value was to prove far “greater than rubies”. The author soon got round to explaining as mum made a cup of tea for her beloved Mina that there was a party at College and would she like to accompany me? I would pick her up in the little Standard 8 car-a white version of the one her brother owned-and the time was arranged. The party over another date was arranged and another and another.

### **THE “YES” THAT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE**

So began a romance and courtship of four years punctuated two years in by a drive along Cave hill to a little trysting place where the onus was on the delightful young woman the world knows as Mina to answer the question “Mina, would you marry me? All I remember is that the answer was a “Yes”. Never was an election result or a parliamentary vote anticipated with greater enthusiasm. This young woman was an incorporation of the best in life-the best in faith and the best in industry and the best in capability-how blest was I from that moment on. The girl that sat by the ailing farmer would never be a career nurse but she would go on to bear and nurse two of the finest, best raised and most promising boys of their era.

### **SHE OUTSHONE A DIAMOND RING**

A jeweller was found and the typist's finger that held but one allegiance from then till now was measured for a little gold band and a jewel far outshone by her personal radiance. Stopping in a coastal drive at Rostrevor the Shepherd's daughter put on that little diamond ring just over the hills from the fold where the Shepherd kept his sheep.

We shall henceforward call this darling of the Shepherd by the name which endeared her to the Shepherd and to the author and to the world and his wife-the name Mina. This name associated with the Dutch Queen of our youth had also been the Christian name of a sister of her mother's who had emigrated to Canada become engaged but sadly passed to be with Jesus ere her wedding day came round.

Two years passed into history with felicity and increasingly shared hopes and dreams. The 1960's were days of small hardly adequate resources. At the time of engagement my personal estate was a small car and £50 to my name. There is a degree of beauty in a ring but it was far surpassed by the beauty and inner loveliness of Mina-the girl of my dreams.

## THE WEDDING DAY AND THE MEMORY MAN

The wedding took place at St. Catherine's Church, Fortwilliam. Our families and friends gathered in the Church of Ireland and Canon Beacom and



Rev. Martin Smith presided. Mina looked both beautiful and serene. She was on time. She was as Solomon says as beautiful "within" and her brother John stood in the place of the Shepherd echoing his "I do" to the Canon's "Who giveth" firmly in the presence of an adoring mother. All three of us were 25 or just under and we knew our mind and our words were not spoken lightly. God's own Son meant everything to all of us and for that reason this ceremony had the bountiful blessing and smile of heaven. The



reception was in Woodburn House which later was tumbled in the troubles. We were given many lovely wedding gifts in the days when such were not solicited. Mina had saved very hard to help purchase items for our first little rented home—a flat over a bakery in Abbott's Cross. I remember buying and assembling the kitchen table and chairs. Through my father's employer—who was on the Board of Standard Triumph (N.I.) and with dad's help I had bought a little Standard 8. It needed re-bored and over the summer I managed to strip down the engine and re-assemble it. A friend re-bored it for me and another friend towed the little car until it spluttered into life in time to carry the lovely Mina to the bonnie braes of Loch Lomond and other



honeymoon haunts. We would pass this way again often and often on holiday with the boys and long after they were grown and flown. The "sound of Music" was being screened and we got to see it during that time when love was young and our lives became entangled quite hopelessly in the deepest affection and appreciation. To me this young woman had no peer at any stage of her life. But I almost forgot I was going to tell you that some years afterward I met "Bobbie" who had featured on NI Radio for his feats of memory. He asked me when my wedding day was. We

were walking in a funeral cortege. I said it was September 2, 1967. He told me the day began dull but brightened out between 11 and 12 noon and then grew windy by mid-afternoon soon to become quite wet. That was exactly how it was! That's the weather "after-cast" courtesy of Bobbie.

It was in 1968 that we moved as a couple to Co. Tyrone to a home and manse that some thought should be converted into an hotel for its size and stately

position. It was there that the lady of my dreams would settle to nurse two little baby boys over the next four years. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and on looking back it would have been better to live closer to home in those days. With the growing unrest of the troubles and the comparative isolation of a manse our contact with family was all too little. The generous kindness of the Shepherd's wife helped us with wardrobes and carpets at our beginnings and my gardener father furnished our sizable flower beds with the fairest of plants and lilies and both mothers showed us the greatest kindness when we visited with them or they came to be with us. Following the 4 busy years in friendly "Tyrone among the bushes" I received a call to Randalstown in Co. Antrim where just over 100 years before God's river of revival ran in spate.

#### CHAPTER 4

Randalstown on the edge of Lough Neagh was still developing . The manse was by the church and the church was on the edge of town. The congregation was supportive to a man over the 4 years we spent there. The Elders were a Pastor's delight. Prayer was fervent, evangelism was active, development of the church campus was ongoing and a beautiful much needed hall was added and at its memorable opening Barbara Chenault Law –an American conservatory trained soloist sang her heart out and Billy Graham's agent in N.I. Rev. Brian Kingsmore opened a mission at which a well-doing local farmer gave his heart and life to Jesus. Billy Strachan the then principal of Capernwray Bible College preached in a teaching series in the ensuing year. A children's work got under way and best of all during a thanksgiving service for harvest the Shepherd's daughter and myself heard the dulcimer words of our firstborn son John telling us at four years of age that he had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. It was early-but it was real and no-one was more keen to nourish this tender Christian life than Eunice –which is the biblical pseudonym of the Shepherd's daughter. Our departure from Randalstown after four years (occasioned by the author's soul-searching as to God's purposes for the future and directed by the vision to which I refer below) was a wrench for the family and the spectre of uncertainty really told on the gentle Shepherd's daughter thrust into the vagaries of the future with two little boys just like she had been after the shepherd's death.

#### A SLICE OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY

Year by year as a couple Mina and I would spend time in Belfast where the



General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church would meet. *Alongside is a picture of the lovely Newcastle Church well known to the Shepherd's family and the author.* There were the often dramatic debates in the Assembly Hall and May Street Church-a famous church whose 1859 evangelist Tommy Toye was blessed of God with 2000 responses to his open air call to faith in the Botanic gardens. Tom had a vivid engaging style of

oratory He was also something of an actor. On one occasion he slid down the pulpit banister to illustrate the ease with which one could gain entrance to Hell and proceeded to attempt to climb the polished banister to demonstrate the impossibility of entering the kingdom of heaven by ones own efforts. To return to this century and the task on hand Mina would enjoy ladies' day where an enormous gathering of minister's wives gathered to a cup of tea and some delicacies and a keynote address from a notable speaker.

### **"ARTICLES DECLARATORY"**

A debate on downgrading or "articles declaratory of" the Westminster Confession that dominated the 1975 Assembly together with the refusal by use of business committee guillotine to widen discussion on baptism to consider the baptism of believing adults was to terminate the author's interest to continue within the Presbyterian family and set our family on a very different future course. In the great May Street debate alongside the Rev. Warren Porter the author had challenged the doyens and judicial counsel of the Church to win back a fast eroding confessional base. The flow of the proceedings was as follows. Jack Weir ordered the Press to withdraw from the May Street Church and proceeded to threaten to have me "forcibly ejected" for my statement that "the proposition before the house if carried put the Church in a *de facto* position of initial rejection of her confession. The difficulty this simple challenge presented was that it necessitated a meeting of the judicial committee and stalled the debate. A series of young ministers stood up in protest with hands in the air shouting "No, no, no!" The author was asked to withdraw his statement He refused. An unprecedented meeting of the judicial committee was called in face of the Assembly and meantime the deft Mr. Porter made good use of the interim whilst the legal men consulted as to what to do. Warren had prepared a roster of questions (which became known as "Porter's catechism") that added to the confusion of the legal men who now were not about to eject me any time soon. The Judicial Committee had to decide that a stalemate was arrived at. Martin Smyth proposed a further resolution that we move from the issue which was in time defeated so as time was not on the side of the original proposers it was decided the matter be abandoned for one year and sent down to Presbytery under the Barrier Act. That was in June. During the following spring the Synods met and among the 9 Synods one of the first to meet was that of Ballymena and Coleraine. On that occasion the author made a major speech in favour of Retention of the "Westminster Confession" without Declaratory Articles(which downgraded the confessional document) and this motion was carried with an overwhelming majority. From then on in to June 75 the debate carried on and more and more adherents were won over for retaining the Westminster Confession unadulterated at the heart of the constitution of the Irish Church which remains solidly evangelical Church amongst Britain's historic churches based on a document whose every clause was originally adopted upon the basis of scripture. By Dr. Weir's master stroke of expelling the press this debate and its significance never became widely known but it will

I think be reflected in the bible-based evangelicalism of the Irish Presbyterian Church while the church stands.

As for oneself returning to the Randalstown manse after such emotionally draining occasions as the year presented made one very glad of a supportive congregation and ever loving wife. Upon giving my decision to resign as a minister of the church I did have a concerned call from Dr. Weir who was clearly distraught at not fulfilling his promise to broaden the baptismal debate-but that is understandable after the temporary closing of ranks following the set-back I have just instanced. The illuminist leadership of the Church as a whole was over-confident of dunning down the evangelical standards established at the Reformation but the church decided otherwise.

### AN INTERLUDE

#### WHERE THE MOUNTAINS OF MOURNE SWEEP DOWN TO THE SEA CHRISTMAS UNDER TH SHADOW OF SLIEVE DONARD



Leaving this slice of history like a spent volcano and facing cold reality the family by Christmas of 1975 were living with very limited means in No14 Shanslieve Drive-a house Robert Coffey(Senior) had bought for £1400 and for the next six months and more through a pleasant Spring and warm summer we lived in Newcastle Co. Down. We appreciated the practical

help of Derrick Bingham and of Pastor Irvine the redoubtable pastor of Newcastle Baptist Church (Picture of interior inset) . The Pastor took us under his wing and introduced the author to the Baptist churches of the area. It was a humbling but useful experience to be part funded by social security payments. A civil servant most kindly suggested we could get help with moving our furniture to England but happily the Church there undertook that responsibility. One does not forget kindness when one has very little money and the noble gentleman I speak of is the more to be praised because as a onetime novitiate for the Catholic priesthood he understood as the apostle says “how to be in want and how to abound”. The Presbyterian Church and its constitutional issue of “Articles declaratory of the Westminster Confession” was to rumble on towards resolution at the June assemble of the following year. In mid January of 1976 my wife and I were baptised as believers in the Baptist Church just across the road from my old school-St John’s. The future was uncertain and change of churchmanship was not to prove that easy. But as many hard-pressed missionaries have discovered Christian witness is for those God calls as bright as the promises of God and the future was as Peter says “as a light that shines more and more unto the perfect day”. The next instalment of our life began in a fiat car. All we possessed was in that car and what we had to offer God were two pastoral hearts and two promising deeply loved boys for



whom these days were without doubt disruptive but fraught with hope and opportunity ahead.

## **THE VISION**

I had what I can only describe truly as “a vision” during the ephemeral days of our ministry in Randalstown. “One in white” portrayed several stages of my life and ministry as if out of caring interest and by higher direction. The people I would meet and the change from informal and back to formal ministry were set out before my eyes. In that vision I met with a group of men around an oval mahogany table and was ushered in by the chairman wearing a sleek grey silver thread suit. This vision was fulfilled to a detail months later in the home of Stuart Dagleish exactly so attired and I was escorted into a room with men seated exactly as seen in the vision. Stuart, who sadly died recently in Florida was a woollen magnate and one-time president of Gideons International. He was an entrepreneur whose business acumen benefited Church life at Canning Road and the Chapel began to flourish again as God added many newly converted men women and young people-even two Mormon missionaries became faithful attenders. The church doubled and trebled and quadrupled in size over a dozen years beginning as it had done with 30 re-founding members. Besides this two campaigns by Dick Saunders were owned of God to add a few more members to most fellowships in town. In one mission where I was given the task of gathering a body of counselors and preparing follow up 400 people were counseled, over half of whom came to seek Christ as Lord and Saviour. On separate nights whole families-dads, mums and boys and girls came together to the Lord. It was truly inspiring and established what I can only think of as a New Testament brand of Christian intimacy between churches in Southport for years to come.

## **SOUTHPORT MERSEYSIDE**

We loved Southport from the start and found this very special call of God Himself in September of 1976 an extremely happy sequel to the sudden loss of close friendships within the Presbyterian aegis and of lifelong personal acquaintances throughout Northern Ireland. It helped a little that Mina’s brother uncle John and his wife Emma had moved to Sunderland (see adjacent photo of our children) so that the Shepherd’s son and daughter and mum could continue a life link that resumed at meeting as if never severed by distance.



The boys very soon found new friendships and adapted to St.Simon & St Jude’s school with Herbert Whitehead as headmaster. Southport (listed in the Domesday Book)-a town from

which the sea fled (Psalm 14.3) with its schools, seats, spinsters, seaside, sanctuaries, shrimps and shops became our home for the next 14 years.



**CHAPTER 5**  
**THE 1970'S**  
**CONTRIBUTED BY**

**PROFESSOR JOHN COFFEY OF LEICESTER UNIVERSITY**

**DONEMANA & RANDALSTOWN**

My earliest hazy memories are of the manse at Donemana – the two staircases, the tennis court, the cats (who met an untimely end in road accidents), and Mum looking after me – the best mother ever. The memories become vivid in Randalstown. (The picture shows John to extreme right & Randalstown new hall in background) Here I recall walking to school and once soaking my satchel in the stream when I



failed to throw it all the way across on the walk home. I expected to be in terrible trouble, but I think Mum saw the funny side of it. I remember desperately missing her when she went to lead the youth group. One evening I snuck out of the house, across the graveyard and up to the church; everyone seemed delighted that I had turned up. Another memory is of the bomb scare, when we all gathered and watched, waiting for the telephone exchange to blow up. I found it thrilling, and all ended happily when the scare proved false. Once I fell off my tricycle while racing round the house with a boy on a chopper – flew into a rose bush, and was brought inside, screaming traumatized. And always there was Mum to comfort, reassure and apply the plasters. This was especially vital when I was hospitalized and readied for surgery due to a lump on the back of my leg. I had received many consolatory presents, and kept them all when the surgeon discharged me without operating. (Poor Ben has had to go through with his operations).

**THE DIE IS CAST HENRY VIII AND ENGLISH HISTORY**

Mum was working part-time in Ballymena hospital, so we had morning devotions with Dad. But she was very involved in my education. Indeed, I think it was Mum who ensured that I would become an historian. Regularly, she would take me to the town's small bookshop, where I was allowed to choose a Ladybird book. Here I built up my first collection of historical works – the Ladybird History books featuring Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers, Cromwell, and the history of the English Bible. Some of the pictures lodged in my mind – a sailor in the crow's nest of a swaying sailing ship; Native Americans lurking in the forests of New England, their bows bent against the European intruders. Years later, I would teach courses on Indians and English in seventeenth-century New England, and on Oliver Cromwell. I even gave a talk at the Knighton older people's fellowship about the origins of the King James Bible. It all began in Randalstown, with Mum, who instilled a love of books, and stories, and history. These days, I'm doing the same with Ethan, Ben and Ruby – a legacy passed down the generations.

## MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

Then came the move to Newcastle. I had loved Randalstown, but Newcastle was even better, though there was poignancy as we moved into the home where Grandpa and Granny Coffey had passed away. Being on the edge of Slieve Donard Park was wonderful, and I whiled away many happy hours playing with



my friend Gareth behind the great boulders. This corner of Northern Ireland was exceptionally beautiful, and it was a homecoming for Mum and Dad, who had both grown up here. Granny Parker still lived close by in the old cottage in Slievenaman, and Mark and I enjoyed our short

breaks with her, where we were treated like young princes. There was also the famous climb up Slieve Donard itself (See adjacent silhouette)– the first of many peaks that Mark (and I) would climb in later life. This one was a major undertaking though – I was 6 or 7 but Mark was only 4 or 5, and near the top, he had to stop for rest every few paces, and be almost carried to the top. It was a major achievement, and a taste of what our family did very well – expeditions and holidays.



## PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

At home, Dad read to us every evening from a host of books, including *Pilgrim's Progress*. When I gave a lecture on Bunyan recently, I asked Mum about this. My memory told me that my favourite section featured Giant Despair, who had a fit just as he was about to recapture the pilgrims. Mum told me that I also loved the tale of Apollyon, asking her to turn back to it so that I could thump him! On Sundays, after chapel, Mum provided me with tracing paper, and I would trace maps of exotic countries from an encyclopedia. At church, one of my most vivid memories was watching Mum and Dad get baptized – the church was full, and though we were urged to come to the front, I was a bit scared, and held back. It made a real impression – an awe-inspiring moment.

## THE IRISH SEA CAN THROW A TANTRUM

England was calling, however, and our six months interlude in Newcastle was coming to an end. From this period of our lives I remember the ferries: Larne-Stranraer and the all-day or overnight Belfast-Liverpool. On one occasion, the ship was rolling on heavy seas, the queue to the toilet was immense, and Dad was mopping up the vomit from the floors. Smooth journeys could be glorious, but I've always been apprehensive about this form of transport.

## “LIVERPOOL”-THE TOP CLUB OF THE DAY

Mum and Dad loved **Southport** from the start and we settled easily into our new home at 169 Wennington Road next door to the Cranhams and within a stone’s throw of Church and School. Immediately Mark and I had to make new friendships and attend a new school. The problem was solved by Herbert Whitehead the headmaster of St. Simon and St.Jude’s School. Herbert was an elder at Church where dad had come to be Pastor and he was immediately offered us places at St.Simon’s Primary School. It was a culture shock. My accent was mocked (it was hilarious that I talked about watching ‘fil-lims’ and wearing ‘gutties’). And I was quickly given the choice – ‘Who do you support, **Everton or Liverpool?**’ Thankfully, I made the right decision, and a decade of happiness followed. It began badly when I went next door to watch the 1977 FA Cup Final at the Cranhams, only for Liverpool to lose to Manchester United. I returned home sobbing. But a few days later, we won the European Cup.

## DOCTOR MAC AND THE WOOLLEN MANUFACTURER

Our lives revolved around Canning Road Chapel. It became a hive of activity, a warm and vibrant community, thanks in no small part to the energy and affection of Dad and Mum. She threw herself into the Ladies work, and kept an open and welcoming home, where people would pass in and out throughout the week. People like Mrs. Gorse, the local wino John Rimmer, and our surrogate grandfather Doctor Mac. ( Ewan MacIntyre). In Southport, like everywhere she has gone, people loved Mum – her smile, her laugh, her kindness and gentleness, her genuine faith in God. There were moments of embarrassment, two incidents being linked to the Dalgleish family (Proprietors of Comfalux-the woollen manufacturing firm). On occasion with the family and other friends we would be invited to the Dalgleish home and have an evening swim in their private pool. We were bursting to go to the toilet and there was a wee accident; Rosemary (Dalgleish) was appalled and Mum was mortified. On another occasion, Stuart (Dalgleish) made mistake of playfully kicking Mark’s behind and was chased around the church as the boy sought revenge.



## THE OUTER HEBRIDES

We had some great holidays in these years. I vividly remember our trip to the Western Isles, especially Lewis, in 1976. We saw tweed being woven, peat being dug, enormous Atlantic waves crashing in the cove by our cottage, and a shepherd casting a dead sheep into the sea. As a memento of our visit to the Hebrides mum had a lovely little Harris Tweed suit and dad got a tweed coat with the famous orb crest on the inside pocket.

## **DAD'S ANECDOTES - AN INTERLUDE BY THE AUTHOR**

### **(1) THERE WAS A MOUSE IN THE HOUSE**

When we arrived at our Lewis holiday address Mina was taken by the fact that the key was in the door and supplies had been left for us. Nana Parker was first to discover that at night the mice practiced slaloms in the bath-“they ran awa sae hastie”(Burns)

On the butt of Lewis stands Cliff House where Mary Morrison’s father was the light-house keeper. Along the beach in the 1950’s Mary and her young friends would run singing “Now none but Christ can satisfy”. Where the hand-ooms turned out the tweed and the fulmers guillemots and arctic terns wheeled God’s Spirit had granted revival-the last 20<sup>th</sup> century awakening in Britain.

One Sunday we visited the Kirk where the minister was Jack MacArthur’s nephew (At the start of the Revival in which Dougal McPhail’s prayers and Rev. Duncan Campbell’s preaching played a large part) Jack had resisted stopping a dance in favour of prayer and repentance) and his reverence wrong-footed us during the Gallic intercessory prayer. We were left standing as here and there families resumed their seats at intervals. Not till later did we realise that as people found their prayer need covered it was their custom to resume their seats. As a family we quickly followed suit.

### **(2) THE BIGGEST FAMILY IN BRITAIN**

On another occasion we were invited by Revs. Macdonald and Smith to the manse of the former after the preparation for High Communion. Mrs. McDonald and Mrs. Smyth had been baking much in the style Mina herself often did. I well recall Rev McDonald who by then had 10 or 11 children challenging Rev Smith as representative of England’s largest family group in those days that the McDonald’s would be catching up. Mina pointed out a family photo in a Christian periodical years later and indeed the McDonalds had by then something over 20 children.

### **(3) WHALE OIL AND RHEUMATISM**

In these northerly parts rheumatism was the bane of yesteryear. At Shawbost there is a large jawbone of a whale which beached there. I understand that every inhabitant of the island in that 1930 era was supplied with free whale oil for the relief of rheumatism.

### **THE DITTY BOX HOLIDAY: JOHN’S STORY OF THE 1990’S RESUMES...**



At Burton-on-the-Water in 1977, I remember being amazed by the flamingos in Birdland. The same year saw us staying in a caravan (“the Ditty Box”) in Devon, where we explored beaches, moors and caves (Torbay, Torquay, Dartmoor and Kent’s Cavern). After a visit to Widcombe, ‘Mother rounded off a terrific day with hot new potatoes and sweet carrots presented with yam and fresh tomatoes plus mushroom and chicken pie’ – all followed by ‘rice and

prunes and oatcake biscuits with coffee' and 'clotted cream toffees'. (The detail is worth including, because she has cooked us thousands of tasty meals, and continues to do so to this day).

### **DAVID LIVINGSTONE**

In Glasgow in 1978 we stayed at the Foster's house. This was my first exposure to an Art Gallery – I remember Dad staying a very long time and taking notes in the back of his 1978 diary (which is still extant), while I stared up in amazement at Dali's painting of the crucifixion. We also learned a lot at the **David Livingstone** Centre in Blantyre – again, someone else I've ended up writing about, if only a few sentences.

### **UNCLE JOHN AND THE UNBREAKABLE PLATE**

During another holiday in Western-super-Mare, Mum had a health scare. In my mind, the worry is mixed with happy memories of a beach mission and watching a cricket match over the fence, where the young Ian Botham was bowling for Somerset. There were the annual visits to Cleadon, where Graham and I would organize test matches that were sabotaged by the dog, Sheba. It was here that Uncle John famously demonstrated the strength of his unbreakable plates by hurling one against the fireplace where it shattered into a thousand pieces.

### **SILVER JUBILEE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

1977 was the Queen's Silver Jubilee. It coincided with the centenary of St Simon's and St Jude's School, and we held a procession through the streets, all dressed as Victorian school children. I played the part of a mud lark, carrying a sewage pipe, while our teacher Mr. Scott rode a penny farthing. Dad kept a diary of the Jubilee festivities: the state visit of President Carter, the Queen's appearance at the Scottish General Assembly where she was hosted by Tom Torrance, the biggest fireworks display London had ever seen, the procession to St Paul's, the speeches and prayers, the spectacular fly-past at RAF Farnborough, the state visit to a Northern Ireland plagued by the Troubles. And the Queen presenting the Wimbledon trophies to Virginia Wade and Jimmy Connors (my favourite player from that era).

### **ELEVEN AND CHESS CHAMP**

Back home, Mum and I taught ourselves chess with the help of a Library book, and enjoyed playing each other. Dad's diary records that he was 'beaten ignominiously twice by my son John', while Mark called the game 'Chests'. On one occasion, Mark went sleepwalking down Wennington Road at night, and had to be rescued by Dad. We were regularly taken down the street to Wennington Road Library, where I happily browsed the shelves. At Bright Street (where we moved in 1980), I remember spending many evenings assembling my project on 'Ships', with Mum serving as the project manager.

Many evenings were also spent colouring a dolphin for a competition. But perhaps now I'm straying into the 1980s. The boundary is pretty clear in mind, because 1980 was when I began secondary school. But it's time to hand over to Mark who will continue the family story we are telling.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE 1980'S

( CONTRIBUTED BY MARK COFFEY,  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPT. MANCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL)

#### THE FAMILIAR SQUARE MILE INTERSECTED BY CANNING ROAD

It's widely recognised in business that at 40-55, leaders possess the perfect blend of energy and experience. It was at this time in their lives that my parents found themselves several years into pastoring a small congregation in the Lancastrian town of Southport. In today's church growth strategies, how-to business models abound; celebrity events, interactive websites with blogging, tweeting pastors and soft rock worship. Back then, my parents simply served by



praying for and loving people. In that square mile of houses along which my brother and I dropped the Southport visitor through letterboxes on our paper round, you couldn't walk for conversations.

Conversations with people whose doors my father had called at year after year until they knew 'Pastor Coffey and Mina'. With people who in time would in

confidence, open up about their lives and worries over a coffee with the Coffey's. I remember the interviewer Robert Frost saying that his experience of growing up in a Methodist manse developed a listening ear to read people and be at ease in conversation with them. Here too in 169 Wennington Road and then 45 Bright Street, all kinds of people dropped in; young and old, rich and poor, those born and bred in Lancashire, and others from the wider world. The recently bereaved, those getting married; the lonely, the misfits, the widows and youth groups, the bible study group and the church elders. And in all of them, prayer, the bible, and Jesus were present. The Lord's Prayer and the church prayer list were worked through each day of the month over breakfast.

#### A MOTLEY LOT WITH URGENT NEEDS

There were the odd drunks, gypsies, confidence tricksters and even a fire-raiser who called. Church notice boards have a habit of directing traffic to manses. I vividly remember dad offering John Rimmer a camp bed in the front room for the night on the condition that he pour his six pack of lager down the drain. Having no comprehension of what a dilemma this posed for an alcoholic, I saw him struggle with the offer; the pained, sleepy expression on his face as he poured the dregs of each can in turn down the drain in the yard. To this day, that's the reason I don't drink. And alongside dad's no-nonsense care, was

mum's warmth and gentleness. They're two of a pair. Mina has a capacity to trust and to hope all things that gives her ears to hear and eyes to understand. I've never ceased to be amazed at strangers souls opened wider than priestly confessionals or psychiatrists chairs could prise them. At grief, regret, confession, and sorrow pouring out in the light of her empathy and compassion. I'm reminded of that bleak Welsh poet RS Thomas' poem *On the Farm* whose last verse contains the lines...

*Her pale face was the lantern  
By which they read in life's dark book  
The shrill sentence: God is love.*

And so they did.

### **"BY GUM" CICELY AND THE BIGGEST LADIES' MEETING IN TOWN**

This was Thatcher's Britain, the decade of greed, the managed decline of so many Northern industries, of unemployment and individualism. Yet here in this little suburb of Southport, there was the faith, hope, and love of a life well lived, of a listening heart too busy giving to be distracted by itself. And here people discovered that they had souls to be loved and love with. The 'ladies meeting' saw a generation of middle aged and elderly ladies finding faith. Lancastrians long in their habits found their lives broken open by a new hope. One of these ladies was Cicely Gorse. She was the king-pin of the local ladies club. When it shut down Cicely whose niece lived opposite dad and mum and who had given her life to Christ in one of Dad's pastoral calls brought every last one of the clubbers to Canning Road. Mum saw to it that they had love and spiritual help and every social care. Cicely left the proceeds of her home to the church and a fine new hall was constructed which those ladies who lived on- and most of whom had been through the second world war- enjoyed for the remainder of their days.

### **GOD LOVES ORDINARY PEOPLE-HE MADE A LOT OF THEM**

As much as the centurions and synagogue rulers, the children, widows, and outcasts mattered in the kingdom of God. Faith in children is caught as much as taught. And unselfconsciously, authentically, my parents' energy and experience went into loving God and their neighbor as themselves. Augustine taught that if we love God first, all other loves are properly ordered. When parental love is focused on outsiders, on the inconsequential people of an 80's economy, the nature of the kingdom of heaven is understood by a child. I thank God for the life lessons of such a home.

### **MUM -A WOMAN WITH A CARING HEART AND PEOPLE SKILL**

Life must be lived forwards, but is often understood only in retrospect. Looking back, one can imagine the young girl in the village schoolroom eager to learn and thriving under the love and care of her American teacher; enjoying her parents opening their home to their farming community with the sharing of food and stories; the time in the Belfast law courts; the teaching of typing and

shorthand; the young secretary at work in Stormont. Then there were the years of ministry in Belfast, Donemana, and Randalstown. In these settings the people skills and ready recall of names, the sharpness to learn in new environments and the ease with a wide range of people all began to develop.

### THE WOMENS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Along with other Christian ladies mum set up the “Ladies Christian Fellowship” which became a valuable evangelistic tool. She was also involved in the “Ladies Bible Study Fellowship” which attracted just shy of 100 townswomen. The Canning Road ladies meeting made up the third leg of mum’s “woman’s work activities. This weekly meeting drew about 60 local ladies and fostered evangelism and missionary support. Above is a pictorial record of a recent visit of Mina to Canning Road.

### THEY WALKED AN IRISH MILE WITH SORROW

The bible says “When my Mother and father forsake me then the Lord will take me up”. At the Shepherd’s parting with this world and those he loved so tenderly the farmhouse was in the hands of a young boy and girl and some relatives for the Shepherd’s wife was in hospital and could not pay her last respects. Those were heart-rending times. But that boy and girl looked to Jesus and their hearts were not hardened-indeed it could be said they were moulded for the life God had in store.

But one can also see the compassion that grew out of grief. The theologian *Stanley Hauerwas* notes that the hardest thing we find is to be present with people in pain. We want to say we care and to get out as fast as we can. I’ve always admired my mother’s capacity to be a loving presence with people in pain and not to avoid the awkwardness and anguish of grief, but to bear it with them. I’ve seen it in hospitals and nursing homes, in pews and sofas. In the loss of her own father at 14 and her subsequent care of her mother in Belfast, there was a deep insight into what lies beneath the surface of lives. An empathy that discloses the hurts and fears, griefs and burdens of people. And hope and perseverance with the painful process of working this through.

The Christian philosopher *Nicholas Wolsterstorff* wrote *Lament for a Son* after his son had lost his life in a fatal climbing accident. In it, he expresses something of the costliness of this connection between love and suffering... ‘*God is love. That is why he suffers. To love our suffering, sinful world is to suffer. God so suffered for our sinful world that he gave up his only son to suffering. The one who does not see God’s suffering does not see his love. God is suffering love.*

*So suffering is down where the meaning is. Suffering is the meaning of our world for love is the meaning. And love suffers.*

*Love in our world is suffering love. Some do not suffer much, though, for they do not love much. Suffering is for the loving. This, said Jesus, is the command*



*of the Holy One: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In commanding us to love, God invites us to suffer."*

### **A CUPPA AND A CHAT-AND A PROMISE TO PRAY**

Many a poor soul in tears came to our house. There was a shoulder to cry on and a promise of prayer-a promise in which Mina never failed. That was the source of her success. My mother had this heart for broken and marginalized people. She could see what they concealed and in the fellowship of a small church community, her leadership by example became infectious and created a new imagination of what was possible. Growing up you take your home to be normative of what home life is. I didn't at the time realize just how countercultural ours was. Of how much healing happened over cups of tea and the cakes and scones mum baked and dropped around with people. Pastoral visits to hospitals and homes did the work of several social workers.

### **A WONDERFUL EVENING IN GRANNY'S LIFE**

It was also during the 80's that granny Parker came to live with us. She had time to talk, to count the flowers on the carpet, to take an interest in family life as it animated her own. In the counseling tent of the Dick Saunders 'The Way to Life' tent crusade in Southport which dad ran and mum was also involved, *it was thought she'd come for a lift home*. But she made it clear that *she'd come to see the need to make a more personal commitment in her faith in Christ*. In a time of limited means, God provided through her kindness and Dr MacIntyre's generosity, and through the resourcefulness of a mother who could make a meager wage feed a family healthily from 25kg bags of vegetables from market gardens on the Ormskirk road out to Banks. Her capacity to make healthy, delicious meals, to wash and iron clothes, to mend many school trousers whose knees had been worn out in playground football was immense. But there was also a sense that in church ministry, other people's children and the wider needs of the church mattered. She believed that when one humbly served, one grew, and that God can do a lot with people who don't want the glory.

### **ALL JOCK THOMPSON'S BAIRNS**

There's a saying in Scotland that equals Rabbi Burns "A man's a man for all that" and it is "We're all Jock Thompson's bairns." To grow up in Slievenaman was to live in an inter-dependent community. Catholics and Protestants got along splendidly and shared the tough times and the sad times as well as the happy days together.

Nevertheless the Protestant work ethic, evangelical devotion and academic standards were part of the Northern Irish heritage of my parents. But more than this, manners and concern for one's fellow man and woman were also crucial. When I was four, mum tells me that as we walked past a Catholic primary school I informed her (in a word to the wise), that 'those are Catholics in there – they're a bad lot'. She would have none of it from me. Where had I learned

such prejudice? My parents' deep sense of justice and equal concern for all wanted their sons to see God's image in every human being they met. To treat with dignity and kindness the people whom God placed in your path.

### **MUM LIT THE LIGHT OF LEARNING IN OUR LIVES**

The 1980's saw my brother John and I go from St Simon's and St, Jude's Primary School where Mr. Whitehead, the head could lift me up with one hand around my neck (different days!), to university. Over 20 years of teaching and hundreds of parents' evenings, I've come to see how parenting is *the* crucial factor in a child's educational achievement. Time, they say, is the currency of relationships, and there are many exceptional parents who you wish could give 'how to' seminars. I can still remember a little orange mini and a trip to a coffee shop in Northern Ireland as the first signs that I was working hard at school. It's an interest, and encouragement to be organized, to set goals and work towards them that mum instinctively knew. The love and encouragement, the guidance and praise of hard work are the reason behind two sons getting to Oxford and Cambridge. Mum freed us to work on our studies and encouraged and guided us to read, to challenge ourselves to aim higher. She read our exercise books and with dad, was there at every parents' evening. The devotion and encouragement, the help with organization and the trips to the local library to get us reading were all invaluable. To this day I remember the times tables she helped me learn from an oversized print book when I was struggling with Maths. I recall the trips to city bookshops where Dad gave us license to roam and return with schoolbooks for purchase. And the house had its own good stock of books. Pilgrim's Progress which was read to us at night in some distant series of bedtimes. A set of Dickens, and many commentaries and theology books. Dad took to teaching us some New Testament Greek from Mark's gospel on Sunday afternoons which had the air of more of a university than a secondary school class. And inter-church Sunday school / National crusader Quizzes were the focus of several enjoyable Sunday afternoons. Looking back, the love of bible study, of commentaries, of ideas and books was shaping both my brother and I to teach and write.

### **"ALL THE BEST IN LIFE I OWE TO MY ANGEL MOTHER"(LINCOLN)**

This short reflection on a decade is written for the occasion of my mother's 70<sup>th</sup>



birthday. It's a jumble of all too disconnected memories. It's a tribute of sorts in inadequate words that can never repay *the debt of love and thanks I owe to the greatest influence in my life*. Christians are disciples of Christ. But they also need contemporary examples of discipleship. Paul offered his own life as an example to the churches

of Philippi, Corinth, and Thessalonica. He reminded Timothy of the genuine faith that filled his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice.

Don Carson writes of his own home that *“Spiritually speaking, the worst Christian home is the one with high spiritual pretensions and low performance; the best is the one with low pretensions and high performance. I say that out of gratitude and respect to my parents. My parents didn’t think of themselves as anybody. They thought of themselves in many ways as losers and failures, partly because they lived through the tough years of Quebec when nothing much was happening. Yet I cannot remember a day in all my life when my father didn’t pray for at least forty-five minutes, and we knew that he was praying for us and for the church and for his ministry. Burned in my memory is my mother sitting in the kitchen with her open Bible on her knees. My father was never a threat to us from his own ego; he just did not operate on that plane. And when I left home, I could never dismiss them as old fogies or hypocrites: I had been a lifelong witness to the integrity of their lives.”*

I would echo this of my own parents (excepting the ‘old fogies’ reference as they were still young in 1989 when I went off to Oxford). Their integrity and example, the fact that their lives made no sense unless God was at the centre. The integrity of their prayer lives and scriptural study, and devotion to serving others in love all made a deep impression on me to this day. I thank God for their example.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE 1990’S-THE SCOTTISH DECADE

#### OVERVIEW

**1990.** 21/9 Move to Scotland from Bright St.Southport

1. 29/6 John’s BA (Camb) 2-8 BGEA Mission Scotland

2. Mark BA (Oxon), 5-19/5 in Israel .7/9 Good News Club

3. Mark at Westminster College (Teacher training) 13.12 John & Cate engaged

4. 2-13May Holiday Cambridge, 20-27July Margate C.A with Mark. Visit Cambridge

5. 20-26/3 Bill Gilvear Mission, 22/7 John’s wedding.

6. John & Cate living at Flat 8 Shepherd Flats Camb. Mark Flat6 365 Wimslow Rd

7. 29/4-6/5 Greek Visit 3-10 June Belarus Kids Aloft

8. 5-14/5 in Israel, 27-31/7 Childrens’ Club in full swing

9. 3/9 Memorable circuit of Clatteringshaws lake where Robert the Bruce lay low and was inspired by the spider, Y-course course run in Sanquhar

#### JOHN’S TWENTY FIRST (20/5/90)

This happy occasion called for a party and our neighbour Reg got Banks Brass Band together to play a selection of “The Blues” in the hall. There simply was no precedent for such music-but it was lovely. Mina was so proud of her firstborn who was now an undergraduate at Churchill College, Cambridge and she had prepared a lovely cake. Mark and John prepared a hilarious sketch and we all shared a lovely buffet. The fond people of Canning Road gave the lad

£100 in gifts which was a real help now that books had become the tools of his trade and they were costing so much. John graduated in June and we all enjoyed afternoon tea in the Master's garden-and none more than the Shepherd's daughter dressed in a pretty red jacket and a dark hat not unlike that of the master himself. whose early tutorials and constant encouragement now yielded the most handsome dividends.

### LEARNING THE DIALECT

What are ye sayin? Noo much! That's the richt way! How are ye? I dinna ken! Why's that? Ye dinna know wha's wrang inside o' ye!" Verri true, oul yin! The call north of the border to New Cumnock in Ayrshire introduced us to the language of the Bard and we adapted to it varri weel.

So on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1990 New Cumnock and the lovely bungalow manse overlooking a field where cattle gently grazed hard by the gently flowing River Afton became our family home for the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The former mining town was very different from the Merseyside resort. Would the Shepherd's daughter settle? With the welcome we received and the warmth all about us and the freedom accorded to visit our boys now studying well south the answer was "Of course!"

### THE AFTON RIVER

Burns, whose romances pollinated places as far apart as Aberfeldy in Perthshire in the east and Ayrshire in the South West left poetic idylls that introduced his hidden haunts to the hall of fame. One of these poems was "Sweet Afton!

Flow gently sweet Afton among yon green braes  
Flow gently sweet river I'll sing a song in your Praise  
My Mary's a-sleeping among yon green trees  
Disturb not her rest.

The Shepherd's daughter enjoyed almost daily walks along the Afton Road viewing flocks of sheep that grazed on the steep surrounding slopes of the hills that rose to either side of the river and the road in this lovely valley where an occasional crane or deer might also roam.

### 25<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY-IN ISRAEL

What better way of celebrating one's 25<sup>th</sup> *wedding anniversary* year than visiting the Holy Land and walking together where Jesus walked. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May we stepping out on Israeli soil at Tel-aviv's Ben-Gurion Airstrip with 30 swing-wing fighters parked like a welcoming party. We were picked up by Margaret Mathieson with whom we travelled to Tiberias where she had management responsibilities..

Mina and I awoke and stood on the balcony to witness the sun rise high above the Golan and shimmer on blue Galilee below. After breakfast we purchased some fruit for a lakeside walk and trudged in the increasing heat past Magdala

to Capernaum Tabgha, the Mount of Beatitudes and beyond Chorazin to the Bailey Bridge at the head of the Lake. These few hours provided lesson upon lesson. We had seen “Fields white to harvest” and picked corn in those fields. We had spotted fishing boats among the reeds. We had watched huge flocks of birds of the air wheeling above and seen a ploughman working with oxen. The Bougainvillea was in full bloom as we entered Capernaum and we were fascinated by the foundations of Peter’s great round house fully excavated and the remains of the famous synagogue. We had learned how coneys (rock badgers) guard their den and found a sycamine tree. Here was the overland water supply system. There was the “crown of thorns” bush in the hedge and the delicate flowers of the field at our feet.

### AUSTRIA AND ZELL EM ZEE BY COACH

The summer of 1993 gave the Shepherd’s daughter a chance to savour the hills that were alive with the sound of music. We travelled many hours from Scotland passing an ICBM along the German autobahn and by tunnel through the Alps to be dropped at the beautiful three decker balconied chalet-style hotel festooned with summer flowers. The rousing local brass band of Bruck dressed in the traditional garb of the Tyrol white socks brown trousers and dresses with



red waistcoats and white shirts and blouses gave us one of the loveliest musical treats of our lives. The performance was inspirational and as we climbed the hills the cowbells seemed to chime in too. Mina made it to the top of the Kitzteinhorn-all 3029metres of it-by aerial car I should add. She even had a little dance in the beautiful gardens of Salzburg and we were

awarded the Austrian (not grand cross) no-it was the little wooden boy and wooden girl colourfully painted with dangling legs for our walking exploits around Zell-em-Zee, the lovely lake that separated our village from the town that took its name from the lake itself.

One little jewellery store afforded us the chance to bring back an Edelweiss which set the visit alongside our equally enjoyable honeymoon viewing of “The Sound of Music” that was doing the rounds in Britain in the 1967.

### THE CITY SET ON A HILL



Other days were more leisurely –we visited Safed, the artist’s city(Known as “the city set on a hill”) by coach and purchased a few striking examples of Hebrew literature transcribed with the aid of a microscope–the book of “Songs” in the form of a female cameo and “Lamentations” in Violin format. Another day in company with friends

from the Presbyterian Hostel we circled the Lake. Lunch featuring cucumber sandwiches was during a stop off not far from where the Lord fed the 4000 hard by Gergesa and then on to where Jesus baptised and home via the Hammath

hotsprings. Another day visited Nimrod and Caesarea Philippi driven by an Arab Christian friend from Cana. Sunday May 10 we joined the congregation of Nazareth Baptist Church singing the old Sankey songs in lively American style and enjoyed our call at the old synagogue and the Church of the Annunciation with its latin inscription “verbum carne fuit et domum in nobis fecit.” A heavy spring shower produced cascades of water which seemed to melt away in the hot afternoon sun. The ancient graveyard at Nazareth tells us that at the time of Christ the town had no more than 600 inhabitants. Mina enjoyed the neat craft stalls and the little coffee places strewn around Safed on Mt. Canaan and the boat trip on the lake. It was holiday time for the Arab people and a lively Druze party accompanied us on this trip. We paid a special visit to the grave of a Scottish lad who took his life after losing his lovely American girlfriend-it was in a cemetery for foreign nationals in the valley of doves. Our friend Isha from Cana treated us quite special and hosted us to those miniature cups of Arab coffee which one is not in a hurry to imbibe. Bidding farewell to the beauty of the north we set off by coach bound for Jerusalem to explore the glories of the south. Mina was somewhat scared on coming through Jericho where the coach was pelted with stones. The wilderness and Judean Hills were impressive. We stayed just inside the Jaffa Gate at the Christchurch CMJ Hostel and often joined the American Anglican party for city tours. The walls-especially the western wall composed as it was of 24 foot long ashlar standing higher than a man was very impressive. Mina ventured a camel ride and quite enjoyed the forward and backward motion of getting on and off. We wandered all over the Mount of Olives and to Bethphage until overlooking Bethany we heard some shots and retired back across the brow of the hill. We were locked within Dominus Flevit “The church of the teardrop” for several hours surveying the Eastern Gate where our Lord shall return one day soon and observing the chameleons climbing over the old walls of the garden. Excepting Hezekiah’s tunnel there was little we did not see. A very pleasant crafted necklace was found for Mina-it was made by Christian exiles from Armenia who worked in jewels and precious metals just above the Suk. Another day we visited Qumran and Engedi the Dead Sea where Mina had a cautious paddle and we rounded off the day with a swift and very comfy trip home to Jerusalem in the limousine of a United Nations official who had been enjoying a visit to the Sea. On another day we took a bus to Bethlehem and visited the Church of the Nativity and the Shepherds’ fields. To prove that God answers prayer as when Jesus visited Bethesda I responded when the American Pastor asked if any wished to exercise faith to be healed. A nasal problem of six months duration ended that day and as we retraced our steps I could report to Mina that the fragrances of the flowers were again mine to savour.

### **SHE MADE THE MANSE IS A BETHEL**

A church that provides a manse with a well resourced study and hospitable reception room where a couple can minister together provides for all a

constructive atmosphere of safety where anyone in need may access advice or to find spiritual counsel and gradually unburden a heavy laden heart. The manse under Mina's management became a place where people never tired of paying a visit-a Jehovah Shammah place. On one lovely occasion a mother and her daughter arrived stating with full throated conviction that they had come to "get saved". Sadie and Catherine knelt there in the drawing room and found the mercy and salvation of Christ. The Shepherd's daughter was overjoyed for such was the reward of her frequent visits in the scheme. Over a cup of tea and some lovely cakes Mina gave the ladies their first encouragements as they stepped out in faith to guide their husbands and family. In God's favour shortly husband Johnny and their son Billy who lived next door with his wife Janice would lift their hearts to Jesus. Then Johnny junior promised "One day I'm gonna get baptised too"(For mother and daughter and indeed the mother-in-law of that daughter all took their stand in obedience to the Master). I have to say that today Johnny junior too is the Lord's and joyfully delivered from habits that for long held him captive. For year after year the Shepherd's daughter attended these lambs and sheep of the master. They loved her and her example and gentleness were like a light to guide them forward.

#### **ACHIE WITH THE TOUSLED SANDY HAIR**

I well remember the day the bold Achie arrived with a gift. Mina set us down to a wee cuppa tay and our guid frien set his gift fair in the middle of the table. It was a fine turnip and fresh as they come. Achie out of the goodness of his Old Adam nature had secured it from the farmers field and post haste repaired to the manse to offload his suspiciously welcoming gift.

#### **WILLIE WHO LIVED ALONE**

There lived some 2 miles into the hills another man who was considered locally as something of a hermit of the Afton" He kept sheep around a house that had seen better days and lived so remote that sparrow-hawks frequented the barn and trees roundabout. He would pass the manse gate frequently and in time we got to know him as we cut the lawn. Willie would come in for a cuppa. I quietly persuaded him not to buy a tumbledown place he had his eye on half way to Stranraer and was afterward pleased if somewhat astounded like the whole community when he bought "Man-eight"-a substantial hill farm for a large sum of money.

#### **COMFORT IN SORROW**

We still treasure a lovely little art piece of Debbie's but not long after the exhibition where we bought it she was taken to Glasgow for a serious brain operation. The adventurous Australian surgeon asked her father Hugh (Himself a "herd" or shepherd figure in the district) and myself if we wanted to hear the good or the bad news first. Hugh asked for the bad news and the courageous young surgeon replied "Debbie may not be able to see again" Unhappily the

body temperature could not be stabilised and so this young Christian woman went early to be with the Lord. Mina paid many a visit to the stunned couple who had lost their only child as she did to many another family amid their distress.

### **FRIENDS AND VISITORS**

During those years the Baptist Churches dotted along the coastline of Ayrshire and South-West Scotland had an abundance of Northern Irish pastors providing us with fellowship, mutual visits and refreshing interchanges. There was Winston & Anne Jordan in Stranraer, David Greenaway in Girvan, Noel & Mrs. McCullins in Ayr, Foster & Jean Wright in Prestwick and ourselves in New Cumnock. Tom & Sarah Minnis from our native Mourne was working with CEF in Kilmarnock and there were Harold and Anne Drysdale of Sanquhar who went on to do sterling work with seamen based at Aberdeen.

### **COLLEAGUES IN TOWN**

Rev. Andrew and Sheila McGurk were deservedly deeply respected as leaders of the Parish Church and they became firm friends. When Mina had a little faint in the church Andrew was at the doorstep with a bunch of flowers. It was so typical of the man. Clive and Margaret Moore arrived in the village as colleagues in the Evangelical church. Through the years Mina would host these and the friends I have before mentioned on a morning or afternoon and enjoy some Irish humour and laughter with the northern Irish in the parlour. Our mutual friendship went some way toward drawing evangelical churches of the town together.

### **THE KNOCKSHINNOCH DISASTER**

The dedication of a memorial to the “Miners of the Knockshinnoch” 1950 disaster in which 13 miners lost their lives required that ministers pastors and priests share in an event that touched the whole community. The local priest was a Jesuit and thoroughly trained at Rome but he cordially accepted that his prayer should be Christ-centred and leave the souls of the departed in God’s hands. A heavy shower came down during the proceedings and the Rev. Clive offered the exposed Father shelter under his umbrella. The Cumnock Chronicle reporter was at the ready and recorded this evangelical grace as a triumph of local reportage.

### **SINGING, ORGANISING AND ENCOURAGING**

The high standard of Christian music in New Cumnock reminded one of the glorious male voice choirs of the Welsh Valleys. A Ladies Choir was formed and it was soon widely sought after for its ministry in song. The annual holiday clubs brought in a high proportion of local schoolchildren. The weekly Children’s club had an amazing 100 children on the role. Mina’s enthusiasm inspired leaders and encouraged youth everywhere. When we met to plan she was key to it all. Alex led the singing with his accordion and along with Molly,



George and Suzanne, Terry and Nan and Ian and Jean together with younger leaders this lively outreach was long sustained. The church acting with the Scottish Baptist Union also hosted children from Belarus where the historic Chernobyl disaster wrought such havoc. On several occasions as many as 20 children were housed and Mina would be in the thick of catering and arranging for the care of these parties. The church and its deacons worked tirelessly to ensure the young people went home with practical evidences of our love and one of our number Tom, subsequently did his workmanlike and noble part to support the work of the Baptist people of Belarus and sustain links with the church there.

### **PART OF A COMMUNITY THROUGH LOVE FOR ITS PEOPLE**

We were blessed with the best of neighbours. Molly and Matt were neighbours with an every open door. In fact over eleven action packed years Mina would find an open door to any home she cared to visit in the Scheme, in the town, in Town head or along the Afton Road and that says it all. She was loved everywhere she went and the women's meeting with 40-50 attending and developed contacts all over the village. During our eleven years we came to know many of the 2500 inhabitants of the town. It was our privilege to sit where they sat when their lives were touched with sorrow. On reflection over a decade we must have shared with not less than a hundred families in the distress of bereavement and serious illness.

### **THE ACCOUNT OF HER DEMISE WAS MUCH EXAGGERATED**

One reported bereavement did catch us on the hop. News would spread quickly in the village and both the Baptist and Presbyterian minister would be soon on the scene. Mina and I were first there to visit the family of Margaret on the reported home-call of her mother. We arrived to find Jean opening the door. We didn't dare to breath the intelligence we had received. One by one friends arrived amid a hushed and knowing calm. Eventually a caller couldn't resist calling out on sight of Jean "I heard you were deed". Jean turned round and spoke with a smile and shake of her head-"Is that why ye've all come?"

### **THE SEVEN CHURCHES AND CAPPADOCIA**

In 1999 we enjoyed a comprehensive tour of Turkey. Ancient *Smyrna* (now known as Ismir) was our airport of entry. We picked up a Renault at the airport and set off through the crazy streets of the old biblical city where tractors and horse drawn carts jostled for position with trams and ordinary vehicles. We travelled to *Cannacule* to overnight with a missionary who afforded us a dozen Injils (Gospels) to distribute bidding us reserve the one with notes for "A thinking person". En route we visited *Thyatira* and *Pergamum*. The former is a small town with ancient ruins no larger than a town garden on display. The second can boast



grassed mounds of the ancient kings and a fine stadium. We witnessed army unites goose-stepping on their parade-ground. At Cannacule from a window we saw a single guard march on his watch over the entrance to the Bosphorus. The rain passed and next day we visited **Philadelphia** with its ancient church ruins. Here a little lad became our friend and guide and we indulged him with an ice-cream in a café nearby. This second leg of our trip took us to **Sardis** with its great synagogue ruins and series of small shops whose walls still stand and there was selling Roman coins she had dug up. Our journey to Konya (**Iconium** of the book of Acts and city of the whirling dervishes) was long. We travelled further still to

Denizli with the snow like calcified rocks of Pammukale on our distant horizon. The caravanaserai there was most hospitable.

Warm water ran down the trinket in front of the house and cold water thundered down at the rear. Tortoises abound and the mineral waters just above were still accessible to swimmers. Higher still

**Hierapolis** bears its silent witness to the faith in the tomb of Philip. A few miles downhill in the

valley lies Laodicea with many fine arches and great tumbled stone buildings strewn over a field where locals farm the honeybee. The third stage of our 2000 miles trip was to take us far to the east close to Caesarea where St Basil was the ancient bishop. Goreme and the Nevisahir area taught two lessons-first the grandeur of ancient Christianity preserved in the colourful icons on its cave church walls and second the landscape of troglodyte cave houses standing 30 to 40 feet tall and inhabitable today-structures that bear testimony for approaching 5 millennia to the receding waters of the flood. The last leg of our trip took us to Lystra “the land of 1000 churches” as it is still called –a town where today’s inhabitants have somewhat Chinese features –a reminder of the incursions of Genghis Khan. A kind farmer to whom we gave an Injil advised us not to travel the mountain route that night. We found at the shoulder of the hill the tract turned into grass and beyond we were tailed for some mile of so by bandits but our trusty Renault outpaced them. After a cuppa to steady the nerves we dropped from the tableland and the Tauros range to Antalya navigating a tunnel where the unmade road had 6 inch boulders and a policeman to boot and then dropped to an unwalled precipice over which Mina from her side of the car spotted several rusty vehicles 100 feet below. We have to own that divine providence protected us on the most dangerous journey of our lives. It was 11pm and the hotel was full but a lady with two children in need of ready cash afforded us a bed and on the morrow we set off for Ola Denise Kusadasi and Bodrum. Our last Injil in God’s good providence went to a garage owner who washed and refuelled the car. He said “You have given this to a thinking man”. We met up with some Scottish friends and witnessed to a Kurdish family en route to Ephesus. The humble kind family made us a sandwich –the first they had ever made I guess-baking bread so that within it they could put greens and some meat. The mother bade us adieu with tears.



Perhaps the good news we shared touched her needy heart. So to *Ephesus* and uphill past the temple of Diana to the burial spot of John the divine. The great door was open and as we moved toward the holy spot a psychic who had been performing a ritual moved away. Back toward the Great library and uphill we went with a party over a 1/3 gradient to the airy hill under the Eucalyptus trees where the Virgin Mary and mother of our Lord spent her final years. Our last day was spent at Cesme that most English of Turkish resorts.

This then is the land whose leader according to a two well informed and erudite Turkish acquaintances owns to hegemony of the Arab Spring and proposes a new Caliphate. The Lord has removed the candlesticks but even today by Radio Kanal and churches in Istanbul and Smyrna (the most liberal city in the country) God's word goes forth.

### **THE VICTORY OF FAITH**

The event I am now going to relate was perhaps the biggest trauma Mina and I have ever known a Christian family to endure. It features a tragic accident in which Derek -a most promising young man of the village was pulled from the burning vehicle by his cousin Mark. Derek was flown home from Canada and the best modern skills of the Glasgow spinal unit were put at his disposal. Derek recovered and resumed his studies. Amid a hundred setbacks Derek did not lose his faith. He has some of the best parents in this world and that support mattered. But look again at the quiet heroism of this family today. The day came when Derek decided to be baptised on profession of faith in Christ –and that faith was real! I witnessed him commanding a BB drill unit, I watched him take his place Sunday by Sunday in the church where he was loved. Today he preaches and is a leader in the church and he holds down a responsible teaching post. Such a life is plentiful reward for the love and prayers of parents and uncles and aunts and grandparents and for Mina and myself. Mina's input into many young lives yielded opportunity after Tuesday Club to lead not a few in steps of early commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. We live in expectation like Samuel Rutherford who wrote

If one soul from Anwoth I meet at God's right hand  
My heaven will be twa heavens in Emmanuel's land.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

#### **THE CENTURY OF CHRIST'S RETURN**

We'll approach the next few chapters not as a "countdown" but as a "count up" because we both live in anticipation of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. Indeed it is my sincere belief that we are inching daily closer to the midnight hour when Christ shall return for His own-so we count up to the year that will be better called the year of glory than of grace.

## **ONE-WARDEN OF CEDARMORE COURT, CHISLEHURST, KENT**

On a lovely April day of 2001 –let’s call it “Primrose Day” for the 19<sup>th</sup> of April and Mina’s birthday was in the offing the Shepherd’s Daughter took on a new career. Let the story be told with due humility. by the author whose chagrin at failing to be appointed Warden at Cedarmore was soon eclipsed when the committee chose Mina instead.

The story was stunning to experience though you will find it amusing to read. It features the offer of a job that occasioned our move from the South West of Scotland to the South East of England-from one of the wettest parts of the United Kingdom to one of its warmest and driest regions. It began with a sort of restiveness which takes hold when you are far away from family-when you have done what you can where you are-when you are sure the time has come for another challenge in life’s journey.

A friend passed us a copy of the “Christian Herald”. In the Ads columns a warden’s position at Cedarmore Court in Kent appeared. We applied and were offered an interview.

## **A SURPRISING TURN OF EVENTS**

In answer to the application we were invited to meet the committee. We arrived early in Chislehurst and watched the Canada geese and ducks swimming in pond on a warm spring day. The nearby caves had housed World War 2 evacuees. The house that backed the bungalow we were to occupy was once the home of Napoleon the Third. The “Chisel” are a small round stones-in pre-flood days the area may have been England’s sea-coast. The common boasts a pit where one of the last cock-fights in the country took place.

We were ushered into the common room to meet with Reginald Shore, Mary Harding, Charles Tideman, Arthur Grimwade and Ron Dungate-wonderful gifted people-all of whom we subsequently got to know intimately as friends. On the occasion the august body discerned that a man was not in himself over-suited to the care of a mainly feminine body of residents and they sprung a stunning surprise on us by there and then inviting Mina to take on the job. On hindsight it was hilarious. It was a bold gesture on their part-and they had reserve duties in mind for me of course. Mina and I were put on the spot but we went for it. For me it seemed a hide to nowhere and for Mina it seemed a huge workload. In the event I was added to the staffing also and the lovely little home and warm social ethos and the help of Mary Harding gave Mina all the assurance she needed and almost immediately we began to thoroughly enjoy the position. Besides I began the task of writing a commentary on the scriptures and completed the New Testament section during the two Cedarmore years.

## **LIFE AND LEISURE IN KENT**

Christmas was spent at Chislehurst and Mark joined us on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to stop over Christmas. Carols services at Beechmore and a Candlelight service at Bromley Baptist were part of the celebrations of the season. Mina’s duty rota often curtailed such events but where possible we would get to worship together and

often attended the early morning communion at one of two local Anglican Churches. One of the little treats Mina did enjoy was to get to the theatre and to attend a ballet with the ladies

We would very often enjoy a day at Eastbourne (Pictured here) or at Whitstable



which were within an hour or two from Chislehurst. Mina benefited from those regular two days off each week when using our railway pass we would visit such places as Epping Forest and Hampton Court and Stratford market. In March we managed a week's holiday visiting Mark, friends in New Cumnock and Southport, my sister Sylvia and John

on the return trip south.

Over June to October I was receiving invitations to preach at Tottenham Highgate Chapel Bromley Baptist and Welling Baptist. Two of these churches put propositions to me and to accept either would involve Mina retiring from her Cedarmore post and my association & chaplaincy duties there. In a somewhat curious turn of events I had been co-opted to the management committee.

## **TWO-THE SHEPHERD'S DAUGHTER BECOMES A GRANDMOTHER**

The Euro came in on January 1. The old continent seems to be rising like a creature from the middle sea as scripture predicted. ***Our first grandson Ethan was born on May 7*** and we travelled to Leicester where Mina was delighted to be among the first to have the little fellow in her arms at Leicester Royal. Then



once more on his homecoming with his mother we travelled back to see Ethan at home. He is at the time of writing (2013) enthused about his new school at Kibworth. Through the early years he has given lots of pleasure to his parents and grandparents and for many years Mina has shown her care by ironing his clothes and those of his brother and sister. She thinks fondly of each child as

the little garments respond to her careful ironing skills and both the garments and the children are the better for passing through her hands.

By mid October Mina hosted John *en route* to Heathrow, Shannon and Boston. The "bungalow" afforded a warm bed and mum as ever gave her son a good send off-this time to New England. We ourselves immediately set off on the 16<sup>th</sup> October by way of Manchester to Dumfries where we spent the night with Sylvia and Arnold (My sister & her husband) before travelling by Catamaran to Belfast. At Glenavna House Hotel we shared in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration evening of the 58<sup>th</sup> Belfast coy. of the Boys Brigade. It was a short trip but most enjoyable.

We would travel north again to Leicester for Ethan's dedication on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

### **THREE: CEDARMORE IN FULL SWING**

The years 2001-3 were most pleasant years in Mina's life. I got on with practical tasks in the as general handyman and gardener around the Ellenmore and Cedarmore & Southmore campuses, acting as chaplain at Beechmore and Cedarmore to boot and preaching around London, Mina meantime was the caring arm of Cedarmore-visiting each of 17 flats every morning and providing seeing to it that the physical, social and spiritual needs of the community were met. Friendships were formed in Bromley Baptist with Rev. Eric & Lynda & Betty Humphreys and Dr. Arthur and Margaret Wyatt who lived close by. There were outings to half a dozen locations in the year- to association anniversary dinners, to and Pole Hill for morning coffee and shopping, to Ide Hill for afternoon tea and scones, to one peaceful reservoir setting to bask in the sunshine and as far as Whitstable and Folkestone to give the residents a taste of the seaside. On these occasions I would drive the minibus and Mina would follow up driving the residue of residents in our own car. Then there was the weekly Sunday afternoon sing song and scripture talk. The fees and medical needs were sorted weekly. New residents were settled in. A thorough programme of modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms was undertaken and an ongoing redecoration supervised.

### **THE GARDEN PARTY**

Back at Cedarmore as summer suns were glowing the annual garden party brought together friends of the association and the garden (formerly a garden centre) looked superb with roses and bedding plants and ornamental trees and a superb lawn maintained by the official gardener Malcolm Spreckley who with



all the workmen always had their tea and tray bakes at the bungalow. Mina would buy bedding plants at Pole Hill and plant all sorts of colourful flowers in the garden besides coping with admin.

The residents would be in high spirits at the garden party and everyone had tea and a cake-indeed both warden and residents would have baked some cakes for sale in support of the amenities fund.

Mina loved company and with friends of the residents friends of the three associated homes and friends drawn from the churches chatting all around the garden –some seated on deck chairs and some threading their careful way around she was in her element.

### **LONDONERS IN RETIREMENT**

Let me mention some of the characters of Mina's short era. There was Harold from Poplar ("Call the Midwife" township) whose love for the bible became evident the moment you met him. There was Charles the retired London bargeman with a very kind heart. There was Dorothy at No 17 who continued to iron her son's shirts into her mid nineties. There was Eve who fed the pigeons with digestive biscuits until they could hardly fly. There was Irene who

kept her own garden and everything around as neat as nine pence. There was Charles the BB veteran who cooked his daily egg and bacon breakfast and drove weekly to Brigade HQ to parcel badges and uniforms for dispatch throughout the length and breadth of Britain. There was Mary who organised theatre trips and had served brightly as warden for years. There was Gill who had lived like the upper crust but had developed a disconcerting penchant for calling the warden in the wee small hours on the least pretext. There was Clem who had served in Cameroon with Wycliffe. There was Evelyn who had a full collection of J.N.Darby's works and settled amazingly well to the communal lifestyle. Then there was Patricia Wright who dressed charmingly and dispensed communion to the Catholic faithful. There was the amazing artist Cliff who was regaled sports coat and cravat; he bought at Lexus car at 98 and would have it driven to the Ritz "with company". Barbara was the centre of the Lexicon school that met in the common room each week. There was Pat who had spent a life-time in the civil service. There was Marjorie who could be found daily in a deck chair reading a good book or exhaustively devouring *The Times* newspaper. The latter trio were devout Methodists and would attend worship unflinchingly. These and others of their ilk were taken to the heart of the Shepherd's daughter.

#### **TIME TO SAY "GOOD-BYE"**

When the summertime of Mina's care for those residents drew to its close a little party was held in her honour and Marjorie expressed their kindest good wishes in a very touching style. From Reg Shore, the chairman of the Trust a letter (dated February 13) came to Mina. The letter read "You are both experienced in pastoral work and it is only right that you should follow His calling. We fully understand the reasons and pray God will bless both you and Bob in your new venture in His service. You have done a tremendous work whilst you have been at Cedarmore and I am sure that I speak for the residents as well as the Association when I say we are truly indebted to you for all you have done. You have shown real love and care and we are truly grateful". Alfred Grimwade wrote saying "Cedarmore is now a much happier and more united team on account of your encouragement"

The duty of warden entailed a 24 hour availability over a five day span.-and occasionally the mighty scream of the alarm would wake us up mid way through our sleep and a flashing light related to the flat whose occupant had pulled the communication cord would light up. One particular resident was affected by hypos and very often when Mina arrived in her nightgown Gill would nonchalantly ask for a cup of tea.

We had two days off each week and our favourite watering places were Whitstable and Eastbourne either of which could be reached inside a couple of hours. We enjoyed a walk between Whitstable and Herne Bay – and would park at one or other-browsing there for an hour or so in the shops and returning to the car by the coastal path. On a sunny day there was nothing more pleasant and relaxing. Alternatively we would arrive early at Eastbourne - have a walk

along the prom-browse in Hughes' department store for some new summer or winter clothes and have coffee at the Methodist Church. Occasionally we would stay overnight and attend an amateur drama production by local players. Such happy occasions lusted our days at Cedarmore and later the four years at Welling too-for there we interspersed our trips south and east with rail trips around the metropolis.



#### **FOUR- THE BIRTH OF BEN, OUR SECOND GRANDCHILD**

Welling Baptist Church welcomed us warmly and soon we were at full stretch getting to know the members and visiting the streets around the Chapel. We were called on to take a greater role in the Alpha Course and began to develop the Holiday Club outreaches for children.

Powerpoint was introduced and the am service in particular was both lively and very well attended. Lots of ancillary activities were added and new attenders came in steadily. Over the four years of our watch care spiritual and practical development proceeded steadily and Mina's industry and kindness made a widely appreciated contribution within the singing group Youth Alpha and GB/BB work. Along with Gill Riley Mina headed up a girls' bible study which was a valued help in the lives of our teenage girls

We ran and developed the 5 day Holiday Clubs year on year with full church involvement and very real success. In 2005 the club took place in the last week in July. We used the nearby Park for our sports day and it was a huge success. We were even offered a visiting Baptist youth team of students who brought their own skill set into play. The Club was good for the Church and for the Community too. A spiritual foundation was laid over the four years of these clubs in many young lives.



**In May 2003** John and Cate bravely faced a very challenging situation in which the little boy she and John expected would be born with some special

physical needs-indeed as the day of delivery dawned David and Betty Brett and ourselves were present in what can only be described as solemn circumstances on account of gloomy medical advice.

For Mina-whose early life had been deeply marked by the illness of her shepherd dad this new concern brought undeniable sadness but from the Lord she like every member of the two families drew resources sufficient for the time of need. Let it be said to the eternal credit of Cate that she took every right decision to secure for her boy shortly to be born the hope of life. Her very brave determination was rewarded and her attentions and incessant work on Ben's behalf have paid off in a boy whose *joie de vivre* and personality are plain to see. To the high relief of us all on that 11<sup>th</sup> of May day a shift in medical



perception brought us much better news. The sun had come out-we all breathed a sigh of relief. “Better is the end of a matter than the beginning thereof.” Ben may have brittle bones but he is brave and from the outset he showed determination to get on with his life uncomplainingly. He is doing well at school and his general health is good. He maintains high spirits and has in Ethan and Ruby a brother and sister who love him for who he is. Spiritually too Ben is getting his head round the basics of the bible and when he says “I’m famous” make no mistake he is for he is perhaps the best known pupil at his school and he has been all the way to Lapland to see the real Santa and the reindeer. These days (2013) he can count among his achievements swimming and computer literacy and he is always ready to get involved and is never far from the centre of the action.

### ITALY-THE COLISEUM, PAUL'S PRISON, THE VATICAN, GARIBALDI'S CHAPEL



The highlight of the year has to be our visit to Italy. Flying into *Pisa* began a ten day holiday that really excited us both. The shops and tearooms of Pisa were so attractive. We were prevented dropping our feathers like Galileo because they were shoring up the *Tower of Pisa* at the time.

*Florence* gave us some idea of the wealth of the *Medicis* and the texts around the doors of the cathedral still tell the world who Jesus is. There is still a street named after one of the Rosettis -that distinctly Christian family favoured by the muse of poetry. Ice cream was a must wherever we roved.

It was the last week in August and the Forester’s hostel where we stayed had connections with the Waldensian church and a plaque paid tribute to the support of British Christians for their cause. Nowadays half of the facility



houses young offenders who have been recently released and also by night on account of the lack of mosquito nets the bedrooms became the playground of bloodthirsty mosquitoes. During four nights in the place we scarcely had two nights sleep.

*Rome* was a treat. We stayed at the YWCA facility close to the *Stazione Romano* and within fifteen minutes walk of the old city and close to a fruit market. On our way to the forum we visited the church wherein the sculpture of Moses is housed. It is very impressive-the figure of Moses compares favourably with that of Charles Atlas the renowned bodybuilder. History met you at every turn. *The Coliseum* was there with men dressed as Roman soldiers by the gate. The underground chambers of course were out of bounds-how many Christians paid the supreme sacrifice here only God knows-but not one will have fallen



without our Father. At the other end of the forum stands the *Mamertine prison* of Peter and Paul. Midway between is the triumphal *arch of Titus* who



destroyed Jerusalem in AD 69-70. Carved on the stone is the seven branched candlestick. The original is all gold (and is held in the Vatican). It was the chief prize of the Roman armies. Many slaves were brought to Rome at the time.

We took a bus to the *Via Appia* and there Mina and I visited the catacomb tombs of the first century believers which afforded burial and even refuge in life where possible. We stood where Peter met the Master and reputedly heard his “Quo Vadis” which inspired him to turn back to die with the martyrs.

Time would fail me to tell of *Pompeii* - of the awful sights, of little ones and families cut off by the fast flowing lava and deadly fumes of Vesuvius but on the hot afternoon of our visit we enjoyed picking and eating ripe figs at the southern end of the site in place of the usual cornetto. There was a fish and chip supper at *Naples* where we witnessed two lambretta accidents within an hour. There was the glorious bay of Naples and the Isle of Capri just visible in the heat haze.



There is one story I must tell. We always look for a place of worship and on this occasion found the chapel of Garibaldi –the great statesman who unified Italy. He did not gain the Pope’s blessing so he re-housed him as a penalty on the other side of the Tiber. His discernment extended to appointing a Baptist padre which occasioned CH Spurgeon’s daily interest in Garibaldi’s exploits. We met some fine believers after the service where the address was in the English medium and the churchmanship is now of a Methodist order.

Speaking of the Pope we did not get to see John Paul-like ourselves he was off on holiday-in his case to Castel Gondolfo. Entrance to the Vatican is a reminder that this see claims to hold the keys of Peter. A walk within the gilded Chapel whose ceiling was painted by Michaelangelo declares the talent and the huge commitment of that famous artist. We were more content at the Trevi Fountain and more deeply in awe when we set eyes on the Apostle’s chain in the Mamertine. The suffering church has greater glory than the grandiose and worldly church.

For Mina the most enjoyable day of all was our trip to *Venice*. The guard moved us twice en route-first to a grotty saloon and then to quite plush carriage. The journey was a treat in itself and to arrive on a day that brightened into azure above reflected in the blue, blue rippling waters where gondoliers in their grandeur oared their gaudy craft skillfully past other slim painted maidens (some with sun-shading and some without) of the waterways. Near a cute little bridge we came upon an old Italian jeweller whose merchandise was largely glassware. To this day Mina wears with pleasure the lovely necklaces we purchased from this trader. Of course we visited *St. Marks* and the *Bridge of*

*Sighs* and had a look at the *Doges Palace* before it was time to get back to Rome.

In October the penultimate Baptist Men's Movement Conference was one of the very few week-ends Mina and I ever spent apart. The venue was High Leigh the former seat of the Barclay banking family. The theme was "reconciliation".

### FIVE-GREECE –THE YEAR WE HAD TWO EASTERS

Over April 25-May 5 we lead a 22 person church party to Greece where we renewed ties with Thanos Karbonis, leader of the Greek Evangelical Church and stayed at lovely Sounion at the extreme south of the country. The apostle Paul is thought to have stayed there overnight whilst en route to Athens –ships in NT days pulled in during darkness to avoid pirates.) We had celebrated the risen Lord at Welling on Easter Sunday March 27<sup>th</sup>. Now on the first of May - May day in England-we would celebrate it all over again in Athens. The preaching of Thanos came over clearly by translation in our earphones and one of the ladies in the party came to appreciate the glory of the resurrection more intimately for herself and an Alpha Course at home prepared her heart further for newfound faith in the living Lord.



By July of 2005 Mina and I were two full years short of retirement and with a view to retiring in Southport we installed PVC. double glazing throughout. The house had been let to a series of tenants for 15 years and remained a very comfortable home in a street the entirety of which was subject to settlement.

Welling Baptist continued to grow numerically. Ieuen & Angela joined us and grandfather George as well. Ieuen was to undertake and still continues a fine work in Haiti a number of years prior to the earthquake.

In October of 2005 Wednesday Worship for ladies was attracting a good attendance. Mina assisted Jean in this fellowship. A very popular speaker at this meeting was Eddie Gale. Eddie once opened his address to the ladies

with a humorous incident from his romantic past. He told how before he was married he had paddled out into a lake with his wife to be, Miss Storm.

Somehow Miss Storm fell into the lake. This happened on a church outing and the folk were annoyed with Eddie. His supportive

girlfriend soon changed and came to his defense with the immortal words "What can you expect when you put a storm and a gale together on a lake?"

Mina's main mission was to youth and we developed our own power point for Youth Alpha which added sparkle to the course. Lots of girls and lads of the united 14<sup>th</sup> West Kent battalion of the BB came to faith by this means.



### **SIX-MINA RIDES A TANDEM AND DANCES WITH A FRENCHMAN**

We spent several relaxing days with Mina's brother John and his wife Emma in Devon during mid March. These few days near her brother meant a lot to Mina. John on this occasion made a most kind undertaking to relieve our concerns about retirement. The March Lent group came on as we returned. It was an inter-church series over a month. We met in the home of someone of another churchmanship from ourselves. Mina and I greatly enjoyed these venues which climaxed in the Easter march of witness and the address outside one of the Welling churches followed by a soup and cheese faith lunch. Following this we held a highly successful holiday club which was an annual event. Mina was always to be found at the centre of these weeks-she has a winning way with children. The last week of July was spent at Keswick-we would stay with Mrs. Preston at the farm in earlier years but now we shared a holiday cottage with Joan and Bob Foster now of Glasgow.

### **ANNECY NESTLING UNDER THE FRENCH ALPS**

The Welling Baptist friends did something very delightful for us as retirement beckoned. They provided more than adequate money for a short stay in Paris. We commuted this by their leave to a trip that took us by rail via Paris to the Annecy Ibis and by road to Geneva and even included a final stop over in Paris which owing to a mix up ended up with our being awarded the plush honeymoon suite of a fine hotel. Mina will long remember the lovely Paris street market and the 24 mile tandem cycle trip around Lake Annecy is less likely to be forgotten. The rather well cut dress she had donned for a relaxing



day had to double up as bike gear on account of my hair-brained idea of doing a circuit of the 24 miles lake. One evening the Shepherd's daughter danced under the silvery moon with a guy I had met-that made up for getting her lovely party dress caught in the



brakes of the tandem and it made me forget my two left feet. Travelling back from lovely Evion and Annecy we finished up on account of a double booking by Ibis in the royal honeymoon suite of the Accord hotel close by. From there we enjoyed visiting central Paris along the Seine, the artists' quarter and the materials market where Mina found a lovely little pair of shoes. On our way to the Palace of Versailles the happy experience was listening to a musical troupe on the train and the sad item seeing one of Paris' many down and outs -a man with great sores on his feet.

Back home we sold our Bright Street house to the tenant-we had lived there 1980-90 and maintained the property after its re-roofing in 1984 for 21 years. The lead light work of the leafed porch doors featured a church and a ship-very

suitable symbols of our lives. The final Alpha series of 7 finished on November 29. Mina played a valued part both in the discussions and preparation of the weekly fellowship meal we shared. Several including our friends Mary and Wally Lowe and Kevin O'Reilly came to faith during these sessions which proved our best way of progressing evangelism.



### **SEVEN-RETIREMENT TO THE KNIGHTON WARD OF LEICESTER**

The spring of **2007** was generally dry and warm. By May the pleasant house in Knighton on the southern suburbs of Leicester City where the Shepherd's daughter now lives had been purchased and we spent every available Tuesday making the trip from London to No.24, Westgate Road. This lovely home that Sir John had purchased for us in a prime location just needed some TLC. It was a solid structure with a good garage and had excellent accommodation and a nice secluded garden. The problem we had not first noticed was that the previous owner had been a heavy smoker with the result that we had to dispense with existing floor covering and needed to repaint the house throughout. Beyond the entrance hall the house whispered in a melancholy manner "colour me beautiful". It's nice to be able to choose colours and so we hatched a scheme for a purple and grey guest bedroom, a brown small bedroom and a cream master bedroom. Mina was very enthusiastic about living near to John and Cate and the family and threw all her energy into something she enjoyed so very much-decorating her future home.

All the rooms had well finished inbuilt wardrobes and from a closing down sale for the princely sum of £40 we were able to buy 4 fine mirrors which are so useful and such lovely features in the reception and dining area and the two main bedrooms.

### **SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH JOHN NEWTON**

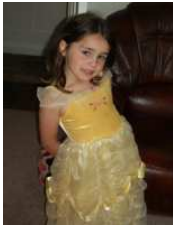
Mina and I had been in Christian ministry now for 43 years-exactly as long as John Newton spent at Olney. By May 2007 we were in our mid sixties and retirement from public ministry became a reality. There would be opportunity now to invest time in the bible, in individuals God sent to us, in Christians who needed encouragement and in care of our little family. Let me quote a limerick written by Welling's emeritus minister Rev. Reg Webb about the four years Mina and I spent in the church there..

Four years ago, in this Baptist Church so the history books will say,  
Bob and Mina came to serve for very little pay  
Hark now hear this choir sing-a ditty just for Bob  
Who came to Welling Baptist Church-to take a Pastor's job.  
Mina left her previous post-caring for the old;  
Now she must care for dear old Bob-in case he gets a cold.

Her hospitality's renowned-you get a good old feed,  
When you visit them at the manse its nothing short of greed.  
Thank you Bob, thank you Mina-you're all that we could've wished;  
Who will we find to fill your boots-you'll be so sadly missed.

### CHURCH LIFE OVER SIX DECADES

We live close to Knighton Evangelical Free Church and worship there. Our 17 years of fellowship amongst Baptists is quite unforgettable and the ministries in Merseyside, Ayrshire and Kent had been without the shadow of a doubt ordered within the good providences of the Lord. For us both this is the 10<sup>th</sup> British church we have attended and for Mina the 6<sup>th</sup> type of churchmanship. We would jointly say we are at home where the word is expounded, the Spirit has liberty and believers have a heart for those needing Christ and a vigilance for the coming Lord.



A few months before our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary a third grandchild born on June 19-a little girl-whose name by the hap of her mother's long anticipated wish now fulfilled was to be "Ruby Ruth". This little girl Mina was to take to her heart from day one. The number of imaginary scenarios they have played out together is in the hundreds. In one of the latest Ruby was one of the queen's corgis-how's that for imagination? Mina was the Queen and I was the Duke. The dog was sent to the Duke and I thought it had better have an injection. It ran away- I thought it might. After a time it came back-I suggested it needed a tooth pulled. It scampered off again. On the third call I changed tack and proposed it go to get brushed. The Queen approved-the dog wagged its tail and as in such charades all's well that ends well.

### EIGHT-A RUBY YEAR WITH A CANADIAN FLAVOUR

In March & early April of the year John and Cate holidayed in the States and in



April as a retirement present Mark paid our fare to Canada so we visited my Cousin Connie Saunders at their ranch in British Columbia and stayed in Banff amid the glorious Rockies. Mina had the equivalent of the Michelin



man's suit to keep her warm in the sub-zero of Western Canada. In Jasper the temperatures lifted and Mina donated the thermal coat to a Church charity sale and we stepped on to a quarter mile long train that was to take us about 1200 miles overland on the silver and grey route from Jasper to Toronto making a two day stop at Winnipeg where there was a peppering of snow. We then stayed at Stratford with another cousin. Mina really enjoyed the good cooking of Marion and the evening at the theatre watching Hamlet. Finally we arrived at Brantford with



Billy and Lily Coffey. We visited the famous Niagara Falls and slept in a seven foot wide bed. Mina relished the lovely candlelit meal in the revolving restaurant. Before this eventful holiday finished we went to the Ottawa Tulip festival-which is an annual tribute to the Canadian nation by the Dutch for housing their monarch during the war. Then we attended a session of Parliament which reminded Mina of her early days in Stormont. This holiday was a very special treat coming as it did on Mina's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **MINA POURS OIL INTO LIVES THAT ARE HURTING**

In all of these fellowships she has working in tandem with me to advance the Lord's work among the people God has given us to care about. Now in retirement her love for people was directed to visiting those who could benefit from a little TLC. She takes a prayerful interest in the youth of the church praying regularly with others for the student body and she hosts groups of young people. Her cakes and kindness add immensely to the study unit that meets at No.24. Her prayers and friendships lead her to pay call on many a soul standing in need of support or facing an uphill climb with life's circumstances in these austere times.

### **NINE-WEDDING BELLS ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup>**

In 2009 Mina supplied numerous cups of tea and we would sit out either on the lower patio or the Study patio for breakfast lunch and tea during the lovely summer weather.

The Biblical Commentary to which the author had set his hand was to go on apace in the year. Thirty one chapters of the Psalms were completed together with the 50 chapters of Genesis twelve of Ecclesiastes and 52 of Jeremiah. To achieve an earlier deadline I was working a 10 hour day translating from Hebrew and making comments painstakingly on the originals as accurately as one was able.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the 9<sup>th</sup> year we attended the wedding of Mina's cousin's daughter Karen Hutchinson. Mina had been in hospital following a serious black out and shoulder fracture resulting from a heavy fall. The journey to Ireland provided just the boost to health and sort of recuperative holiday she needed. We travelled by car and were able to visit Mark in Manchester and Sylvia and Arnold Spence (my sister and her husband) in Dumfries. We have been very kindly treated at both these homes now for many years and the comfort and care afforded was even more welcome than ever this time round. The crossing to Larne is so much faster today by Catamaran. I remember crossings where a good half of the ship's complement were sick-days when you breathed out and in according to the tilt of ships devoid of stabilisers. Our first days of this trip were spent in full view of the Mourne as they sweep toward the sea at the lovely bungalow of Allan Coffey. Allan lives between the twelve arches and the fairy hill. The little road has now been by-passed –and in the fifties I cycled to Downpatrick on this route to visit my very dear friend David Crawford-the preacher who contracted polio and later lost his legs in a crash

with an articulated lorry. Following Jewish custom where friends provide 3 days hospitality we bade goodbye to Allan and Mary and joined a house party at Glenada which nestles in the shadow of a mountain called Slieve Thomas. Robert Robinson of Belfast was leading the party – giving uplifting evening talks and telling lots of Irish jokes. Laughter is as good as medicine and Mina really began to recover well. Her arm was even becoming more flexible. Still ahead was the prospect of meeting all her cousins and then the wedding reception at Belfast Castle.

### **BACK AT BELFAST CASTLE**



The day turned out beautiful and we were back at Belfast Castle. Outside its walls I had asked Mina to marry me. There John and Emma had their wedding reception –there I had chaired several wedding receptions and now we were back. I hadn't seen Mina look brighter or better for quite some time in her stunning pink suit and a flamboyant contrasting grey hat. What's more Sir John and lady Emma arrived almost simultaneously at Seymour St Methodist, Lisburn. The afternoon at the castle began informally with a gifted youth trio playing a harp a violin and a flute in the splendid gardens overlooking Belfast Lough. Mina spent quality time chatting with her brother John and his wife Emma and with her four cousins. It was a splendid photo opportunity and was followed by a lovely meal and a crafted speeches after the style and wit of Ulster folk. After such a memorable visit to the Emerald Isle to return to streaming traffic and leave the seaside and the Mourne was a bit of a wrench but in God's good mercy the holiday had played its part in restoring the spirits of the Shepherd's daughter after that nasty fall.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE SEVENTH DECADE OF A LOVELY LIFE**

#### **HOW TIME FLIES!**



year.

I think you will agree it is a good idea to keep a diary or journal. I have a stack of 43 diaries but the records are sketchy largely because in retrospect life was lived too fast and often too ragged as well. Mina and I are sometimes startled to discover things we did that we had forgotten though Mina's recollections connect readily with family events and dates. For the purposes of the seven Leicester years to date the idea is to set down a selection of events under the Arabic numerals of each



## **MINA AT HOME**

Give Mina a paintbrush or a roller and she will be happy. She loves a bright clean interior and all the years I've known her she has kept the ten homes we have shared beautiful and ironed almost every garment we have ever worn-and not a few of these by the week as long as they deserved the name of "clothing". I can't believe there is a more industrious spic and span lady in Great Britain or even the lands across the seas. She loves nothing better than the routine visit of our three grandchildren who are rapidly growing up and Mina lovingly watches them add to their knowledge and achievements.

Mina enjoys roller painting and was pleased to see the lovely "tobacco" coloured (not infused!) carpet laid in the living area and new carpets laid in the bedrooms. A nice bath was found and installed and a combi boiler too. Such things render later years pleasant and the wetter winters bearable. Despite all this Mina will sit at her desk and read the news or by the table and keep her personal study of scripture up to date daily. She will receive all who come in with the kindest welcome and ask them if they should like a cup of tea or coffee. She will have all the time in the world for those whose joy it is to make her acquaintance or to be her friends.



## **A LOVE OF FLOWERS**

Out of doors the party wall was bearing down on the garage; small conifers and ground cover required to be uprooted to afford light to the frontage but the garden would soon respond to a bit of lawn choreography. Mina simply loves flowers and we would transplant some items we had at Bexleyheath and the lovely doricum from Charles Cottingham the retired partly sighted Thames tugboat-man of Cedarmore. It has bloomed each year just as he said it would.

## **LOCKED IN-PERHAPS I DESERVED IT!**

The garden shed provided 3 months work-raising the roof-insulating it, carpeting it papering it inside and painting it outside and furnishing it as a study. I mention the study or "Commentary Box" as it later became known because over 10,000 hours of translation and word-processing I have had numerous visits from my darling wife with cups of tea and freshly cooked cakes. I don't think any divine since Martin Luther has fared so well. But there is always a price to pay. After one of these trips down the garden path Mina retired after unwittingly locking me in. You see the external bar of the Garden Shed still remained. Quite unlike the door of Holman Hunt this one only locked on the outside. Mina promptly left the house on some errand. When she came back I saw her at the kitchen window and waved frantically with my hands and then as evening came on turned lights off and on. Mina thought I was doing an experiment-perhaps like Michael Faraday. I hear you ask "How did the siege

end?" It ended with Mina to the rescue—her blissful ignorance was broken when she became suspicious of the *northern lights* in the shed. It all ended when my jailor drew the bolt that set me free. Every cloud has a silver lining. I set up a second door which like that in Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" opened only from the inside.

### TEN-I DO LOVE TO BE BESIDE THE SEA

During the spring half term Mina travelled to Devon with Cate and the children where she enjoyed the beaches with the children during several successive days and also enjoyed a trip to Plymouth Ho with John at this time.

The warm early spring weather was auspicious enough to set out the garden furniture and share a cuppa outside the south-facing "Commentary Box".

During this period the Old Testament bible commentary in which I had been immersed for nearly four years was completed down to the Minor Prophets and *Daniel* was finished by April 7 during glorious weather. After finishing another document on "*The Eternal State*" Mina and I travelled to Chislehurst in order to attend the wedding of Diana and William Paulesby. Diana was chaplain to Queen Mary's hospital and her wedding was conducted by Bishop Brian of Tunbridge with whom I had a substantial conversation. A little treat of our stop over was the nostalgic walk from Chislehurst to Pett's Wood margining the pastoral acreage enclosed by the wood. There in reverie we reflected on times we had criss-crossed the heath and woodland watching the sheep graze peacefully and the bluebells grow and sat near the woodland memorial to the local genius and daylight saving time inventor William Willett (1905) during our years in Cedarmore.

Primrose day marked the 67<sup>th</sup> spring that the primrose had blossomed in the life of the Shepherd's daughter. As a matter of interest Queen Elizabeth who was 85 celebrated her birthday just 2 days later on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month.

### HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April 's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!  
And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossom'd pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture



The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

Robert Browning

### **JEW'S FOR JESUS & HYDE PARK CORNER**

Billy Coffey (a cousin of my own and son of Dad's eldest brother) flew in from Toronto to be greeted by continuing glorious Spring weather. It was Mina who had prepared the bedroom for the north American visitor as for hundreds of visitors over her forty plus years in manses up and down the land. Billy would taste the best of breakfasts and Mina's superb cooking ere he travelled to the Emerald Isle by Ryanair. By 2010 I had completed work on the *Minor Prophets* and an *Eschatological trilogy* and the bright Rhododendron and pink Tamarisk were in riotous bloom. Mina and I would rise early and walk to St Margarets to join a national coach for Golders Green and our stay at *The Foreign Missions Club* whilst we attended the *Jews for Jesus* conference on the Old Kent Road this year with Helen Shapiro and Martin Goldsmith as speakers. While Mina did some shopping I would hold forth for an hour at Speakers corner. One dear Christian lady who was handing out gospels asked kindly if I would be coming regularly. She was craving for support for her efforts in the gospel amongst the milling crowds of Hyde Park. I had a good natured wrangle with a Moslem zealot and his fans about God and His grace. Afterward he put his arms round me and confessed that his grandmother was a Methodist and a Christian.

### **ELEVEN-OVER THE SEA TO IRELAND**

Mina's birthday (Primrose Day) fell between Passover and Easter Sunday and on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April we travelled through the Derbyshire Dales to overnight with my sister Sylvia in Dumfries and then onwards by Catamaran to Larne. April under the Mountains of Mourne in superb Easter weather was beautiful. On the eve of Easter Mina and I enjoyed a long walk and chat over the 2.5 miles stretch of beach from Newcastle's Slieve Donard Hotel to the Twelve Arches and on to the home of Allan and Mary Coffey. Easter Sunday we took in 4 diets of worship starting at Bryansford Church-Mina's home parish—where her cousin is now the church warden. Hence to Newcastle Presbyterian-spiritual home of my boyhood. Then to Maghera afternoon Easter service in the cordial company of the daughters of Bond Walker, the Mourne Artist now with the Lord. Our pilgrimage was complete with a visit to Newcastle Baptist in the evening.

On this occasion Billy Coffey of Toronto was in Belfast and in his company we visited Allan and my younger cousin Ritchie was there with an old sundial from 1847 that was owned by great grandfather David Coffey of Cranfield. After a journey to Tyrone when we stayed overnight with Finlay and Celia Gamble we attended the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party of Sam Annett in Moyadd and

visited Tom Minnis in Brackney Hall. It had been less a jaunt than might have been but enabled us to catch up with many friends.

Our Keswick house party strategically located at the lower end of the central precinct above the bookstore was set up by Gill & Jean Riley, friends from Welling. There were six of us altogether and our self-catering worked a treat. Full forty years we have kept in touch with the Keswick Convention-once staying with William Stobart (Senior) who was the oldest living attender at the turn of the century.

### **TWELVE –A TOUGH YEAR**

From Mina's viewpoint we were hardly out of the winter before the author presented some medical symptoms to which she had become accustomed. A third inguinal hernia was to set a whole train of unnecessary alarm bells ringing including a cancer scare. One was not surprised at sustaining a hernia. On top of genetic abdominal weakness I had been wrestling with sap-filled conifer taproots with bow saw and pick and with equal effort using an industrial drill to remove reinforced concrete that threatened the garage boring a series of drill holes in which the confounded thing got stuck not once or twice wrenching arm chest and abdomen. When I presented at surgery believe it or not my GP pooh-pooed the hernia idea and set my course for the year on a wild goose search for cancer. Mina had exactly such an unwarranted scare in earlier life and I knew very well how she would now be feeling about me.

### **SILVER LINING**

After what everyone in prospect of surgery recognises –the virtual 160 day wait -an overnight stay at the infirmary and a piece of good laser keyhole surgery made all the difference in the world; for this we give the Lord our thanks. Instantly next morning following surgery the problem that had dogged me for over a decade was gone and Mina felt a burden lifted. As on several occasions previously days out and visits further a-field could be undertaken with the abandon of years gone by.

Besides this the work of 15 years stretching back to Cedarmore days came to fruition in the completion of The Westgate Bible Commentary. During the lovely summers of 2007-10 Mina and I enjoyed time to relax –often with friends- sitting comfortably under the sun brolly on the raised south facing patio just outside the “Commentary Box” which though originally a very plain garden shed once re-roofed insulated glazed and extended to accommodated computers and a small library of books and tapes it served as an excellent office. We would spend time eating our meals out of doors there from spring to autumn often working together and tending the roses and perennials and hosting the annual neighbourly party in an increasingly well furnished garden.

### **ACORN WAY**

Bound to a catheter and awaiting surgery it would seem utterly non-sensical to purchase a house and spend six weeks of intensive work renovating it inside

and remodelling its garden and sorting its fencing-but that's what we did. The purchase of No.37 Acorn Way from Olivia was one sensible way of heading off the austerity of the times. The good work of Sam Moyeri coupled with our own input resulted in a high spec renovation and the little one-bedroom letting stands testimony to the effort Mina put in working with me and thinking through the issues. Then came the day when the Lord



provided for the needs of a tenant and the bright warm little place was occupied. It has a small garden with a patio, some furniture, an artificial lawn and a shingle path to the clothes line.



On September 8 after very successful surgery and an overnight in hospital our October break at Eastbourne and short stay in Manchester with Mark in November re-introduced Mina to getting about after what for us both was a year of very limited travel.

## THIRTEEN

### THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROPHECY

It had been one of the coldest winters we remember. Financial austerity is real and indeed sovereign debt threatens the world community. Since 1948 and especially since 1967 the Jewish clock has been ticking inexorably toward the coming of the Lion of Judah and the advent of Shiloh-the desire of nations. A frenzied diplomatic ping pong prevents bellicose nations who bay for battle coming to blows. The retirement of Benedict IV and the election of Papa Francis recalls St Malachy's prediction that the see of Peter would have but 112 popes and Francis is No.112. The Mayan calendar has ended and the world goes on-



these at best are but "straws in the wind" for those who dare to think ahead. Recently Mina and I had an overnight stay at St Hugh's College, Oxford. Mina enjoyed the shops-we joined one another for coffee and for lunch and in the Norrington Room of Blackwells. I read excerpts from authors writing from many disciplines on the theme of "the next fifty years". With one mind the scientists, military experts, economists, environmentalists and journalists express it as their view that we are definitively at the end of an era- there is deep unease among some of the best intellects of our time. The James Martin 21<sup>st</sup> Century School at Oxford University is a sign of profound thinking in this connection. A surer word of prophecy is to be found in the bible. The world we live in today begins to identify with prophetic oracles of the bible as never before and it seems we are facing histrionic existential events. The wise will keep their prophetic lamps burning in expectation of our Lord's Parousia or visit to our skies to take His bride to the Father's house. Still as Wesley said in

reply to the question “What would you do if it was the last day?” “I would keep on living just as I ever do!”

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MINA**

With that in mind let me outline the day to day life Mina lives in retirement. She continues to do a huge amount of work. This is a routine based on the events of yesterday and today. We rose at 7.30pm and had breakfast and shared in prayer and



our reading form “daily bread”(a habit of 44 years duration) and then Mina cleaned the house “from top to bottom” and applied oil to the leather suite and then talked over the needs of a friend for whom guidance is of the essence. She baked a cake and a meringue and did a full evening meal with the trimmings for



two older friends. She’s off after breakfast to bring home ironing which will occupy her for an hour or so. We will have a walk and she will list the needs for the family meal we all enjoy. She and I will pick up our grandchildren and Mina will entertain Ruby to the charade of her choice while Ethan helps her with preparations for

dinner. Somewhere in the day “Escape to the country” or “Cash in the attic” will offer her a little relaxing viewing with a cuppa. She will check the news and weather on the internet and keep abreast of e-mails besides. Yesterday she would normally attend a church prayer time –though this week it is our turn to lead a bible study locally. We will generally retire at 10am.

### **THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION**

The commentary on which I had worked for 15 years is finished and offered through [westgatebiblecommentaries.co.uk](http://westgatebiblecommentaries.co.uk) to the world on the web. With this I have had unfailing support from Mina. This “faithful one” I love will fill whatever days and years the Good Shepherd gives her with love and cheer and more kindness and work sometimes beyond her resources of body though not those of her enthusiasm of mind and spirit. What in the world are her sons up to these days? Well, John is tasked with administering the early modern history unit at Leicester University while he juggles this with the duties of his professorial chair besides which he is involved in *The Cambridge Papers* and preaches from time to time at Avenue Community Church. Mark is heavily involved with his head of department at Manchester Grammar writing a textbook for *A level* students on the whole spectrum of ethical issues of our day. He also speaks on “*Thought for the Day*”(Radio4) and on occasion is invited to preach in Platt Church. The Shepherd’s daughter entertains dreams in her soul for those she loves and we look to the Lord for answers to our prayers for those our own who face out into the future with God and pray they may not do so alone. The large responsibilities of her sons benefit tangibly from having a mother who prays daily and caters when she can and still puts herself totally at

the disposal of these young men unstintingly. I have stood by her in the blossom of youth, I have shared in the scriptures and prayed and worshipped with her in the beauty of holiness, I have knelt by her in weakness. In whatever state of life she has been she has lived content and aware that Jesus is enough and that He is our sufficiency for each stage of life. "Now we know in part but then face to face we shall know even as we are known." "If I could fathom all mysteries and had all knowledge and faith so I could remove mountains wanting love my life would be as nothing." Education is an investment of input for the output of advancement of knowledge. Love is specific of investment in lives and in Mina's story this has been the daily accent and glowing success.

### **THE GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP**

John's wife Cate is the eldest of three daughters of an excellent Christian couple, David and Betty Brett of Witham, Essex. Cate herself is a person of sterling Christian faith, integrity and enterprise with a high commitment to her husband and family that will reap kindred results in time. Mina's fondness for our grandchildren is reciprocated one hundred fold. Ethan and Ben and Ruby are folded betimes in the arms of the Shepherd's daughter just like her boys were long ago-just like she once was in the arms of the dear shepherd of Slievenaman. In similar vein we pray this family as it grows and indeed the reader may come into the blessing God promised through the seed of Abraham and experience the salvation of Christ and even beyond that we each may make ourselves ready for the time when the Great Shepherd shall appear.

### **THE WAY AHEAD**

A sheep may be a dumb animal but it is an animal of some intelligence. Jesus said that sheep know their Shepherd. The Master saw the multitudes around Him as "sheep without a Shepherd". He presumes to lead mankind and has every right to lead for He destroyed him who has the power of death and His grace is the only base of recovery that can counteract the issues of the fall. In Christ is life hope peace and forgiveness. While the Shepherd's daughter and I are accorded the privilege of marriage under God as life partners we shall live for Jesus and do so as striking clocks as well as ticking clocks. The gospel flies on the wings of love and a life well lived as an eagle travels far on the currents of the skies. Many good women ministered to the Lord during his earthly witness and still today such woman follow their footsteps. Mina is unmistakably a modern day portrayal of such as these and may her lovely life abide in the countdown to Christ's Parousia (Coming again for His Church) for the joy and growth in steadfastness of those for whom Christ died and rose again.

Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life, the resurrection and the life and the light of the world, the bread of life, the true vine, the door of the sheep, **the good shepherd.**"

Jesus is our Shepherd: Well we know His voice;

How its gentlest whisper makes our heart rejoice”  
Even when He chideth, tender is its tone;  
None but He shall guide us; we are His alone

Jesus is our Shepherd, for the sheep He bled  
Every lamb is sprinkled with the blood He shed  
Then on each He setteth His own secret sign:  
They that have My Spirit, “These”, saith He “are Mine”

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**  
**TO A SISTER, A WIFE AND A MOTHER**  
**BELOVED**

**MARANATHA**  
**EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS**

**Bob & Mina Coffey**  
**Albion Court**  
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