

A STEADY GOING-ON

Autobiographical jottings by
David Matthew



Introduction

I am well into my seventies as I begin to write. This means that a lot more of my life is behind me than in front of me. It means, too, that I am old enough to see, beyond the details, the bigger, overall picture of my life.

As I do so, I notice a couple of parallels between my own life and that of someone with the same name: the David of Old Testament fame. The first concerns my life so far. Paul said of David that 'he...served God's purpose in his own generation', and that is what I, too, have tried to do since I came to know God personally at the age of twelve. The other concerns my future. My life has been marked by God's blessing in a big way, and I expect this to continue as I affirm, with the other David: 'Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

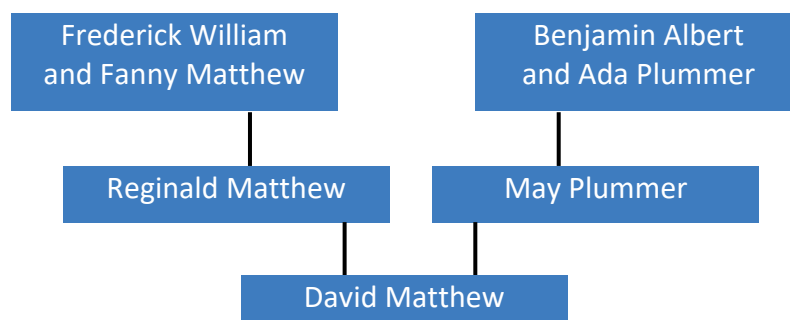
The big picture is made up of lots of details, and in what follows I will put together a string of detailed incidents that stand out in my memory. I hope you, the reader, will find them interesting, entertaining and occasionally inspiring.

My parents

My father, **Reginald Matthew**, was born, along with his twin brother Cyril, on 20th June 1914, just six weeks before the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918).

His parents were Frederick and Fanny Matthew, who lived at 13 Vine Street, Norton, Malton, in the then East Riding of Yorkshire. The twins had an older sister, Amy, who would be described today as having special needs—of a psychological nature. We never knew how she came to be that way. My Uncle Cyril's unscientific diagnosis was that "she fell and clattered her 'ead on t' schoolhouse stove and went mental'.

The family were staunch Methodists, attending the Bethel Primitive Methodist Chapel in Commercial Street, Norton. It was there that Reg married my mother, **May Plummer**, on 7th September 1939, just a week after the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945). He was 25. She was 23. I was to appear just over a year later.



May was the younger of the two children of Ben and Ada Plummer of Norton. Her older brother was named George. Ben had never been a churchgoer, but Ada regularly attended the Methodist chapel, taking the children with her, and it was through this connection that my parents met as children.

My father left Malton Grammar School in 1932 to take work as a clerk at the local brewery firm, Russell & Wrangham, where he remained until his 1939 war call-up to serve in the army. As a result of his army service he was absent from home for several years. On my birth certificate, under 'Father's occupation', it says: 'Of no occupation, formerly a brewer's clerk.' I had been born on **16th September 1940** and so spent my early childhood in the care of my mother alone. Dad just got home

for the odd weekend's leave from time to time.

I recall his return at the end of the war. He seemed like an intruder upon the steady life enjoyed by Mum and me, and I thought, 'Who is this man who has taken over?'

Babyhood – as related by my mother

'What your bloody husband needs is a bayonet shoving up his arse!'

The woman screamed the words at my mother across Commercial Street, the main shopping street in Norton. I was there, too, blissfully unaware of Mum's reaction of embarrassment and fear. Only a couple of months old, I slept peacefully in the pram she was pushing to the meagrely-stocked shops.

It was 1940 and Britain was at war with Germany. Following the fall of France to Hitler in June of that year, the Nazis had thrown the full force of their military might against the British, who remained their only undefeated enemy in Western Europe. The conflict took place chiefly in the air, and I had been born at the height of the Battle of Britain. Young airmen in Spitfires took on the Luftwaffe and

won, but at the cost of many lives. Churchill declared of those young men, 'Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.'



March 1942. Me being wheeled in Malton by my mother, May, accompanied by Nora Matthew.

My father was not one of 'the few'. Indeed, he was not part of the British fighting forces at all. He had been called up, of course, like all the young men in Norton and neighbouring Malton. Like them, he was away from home, involved in the war effort, but in a non-combatant division, the Pay Corps.

When the call to arms had come, he had registered as a C.O.—a conscientious objector. At the age of 25 he was a staunch, active Methodist, and when call-up came he engaged in some serious soul-searching about the rights and wrongs of killing people. Many Christians of equal

integrity took up arms with conviction and a clear conscience, but Dad could not. Even though Hitler was unquestionably evil and the German plan to conquer Europe morally unacceptable, he could not in good conscience aim a rifle at anyone—not even a German soldier—and pull the trigger.

Registering as a C.O. was not a soft option in the strongly patriotic atmosphere of the time, though many saw it that way. In their view it was the coward's way of avoiding conflict and possible death in action. In many respects the opposite was true. In social terms, it was easier to go to war than to swim against the tide of public opinion for conscience's sake.

The public were not the only ones to make it a tough choice; the authorities did the same. Dad had to stand before a tribunal manned by clever officers adept at exposing unworthy motives and dismissing the common arguments for conscientious objection. Some young men, their appeal turned down, still refused to fight and spent the war years in prison. But Dad's appeal was accepted. His openness and sincerity saw him through the obstacle course of questions and he was posted to non-combatant duties in Bradford, in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

The tribunal's decision, however, did not please the women of Norton, some of whom were already war widows. As the wife of a C.O., my mother was highly unpopular, and the venomous cry across Commercial Street was only one of many that stung her as she wheeled me back and forth to the shops.

Violent encounters

We lived in a little terrace house, **29 Sutton Street, in Norton**, until I was six years old, which is when we moved to Bradford. I had a little bedroom that jutted out at the back of the house, overlooking the local cemetery, and I well remember the cot that I slept in as a small boy.

Malton was just 22 miles from the east coast and as an occasional treat we would go on the train to Scarborough. The very first time my folks took me there, complete with bucket and spade, I apparently gazed in wonder at the vast expanse of the beach and exclaimed, 'Eee, what luvly muck!'



*At the door of 29 Sutton Street,
age 1 (Dec 1941) on Dobbin.*

Next door to us in Norton lived Mr and Mrs Kirby and I would regularly toddle round to their house, where I was always welcomed with titbits and lots of attention. Mr Kirby, a railwayman, worked on the steam locomotives. Often, when I found him in, he was still wearing his dark blue railway overalls and peaked cap. His face was black with coal dust and his white enamelled tea-can—kept hot by the heat from the loco's boiler when he was working—was on the kitchen table.

I also had friends who lived in the street. One boy was a little older than me but he was what my mother described as 'simple'. One summer he was pestering me and a couple of other friends, who were taking it in turns riding my green tricycle up and down the street. Every time I rode past him he clamoured, 'Let me have a ride!'

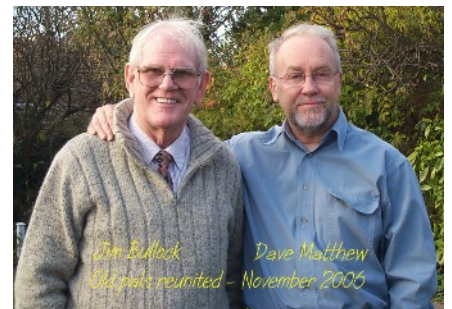
He was sitting on the edge of the kerb with his feet in the gutter. His voice and manner were loud, strident and annoying. So the next time I was in line with him as I rode down the pavement I stopped and told him to shut up. When he refused, I got off the tricycle, knocked him over and deliberately banged his head on the pavement. He ran home screaming and I came into our house wondering what I had done and what the consequences would be.

To my relief our parents sorted it out, but I was required to make a formal apology to the poor boy—who never again asked to ride my bike.

Jimmy Bullock

Another unintentional act of violence was soon to follow. I met and befriended a boy called Jimmy Bullock, who lived round the corner on Langton Road, and we would often meet up to play at either his house or ours. One day we were at his place playing cowboys. We had toy revolvers and were shouting, 'Bang! Bang!' as we aimed at each other from behind the armchairs. I'm not sure what happened, but we got into a strong disagreement so that the shouting was no longer playing but serious and we came to blows.

I held my revolver by the barrel and gave Jimmy a crack on the head with the butt. He fell to the floor screaming, with his hands to his head and blood beginning to run between his fingers. Astonished at the effects of what I had done, I made a hasty departure and once again entered our house to wait for judgment to fall. I remember the knock on the door as Jimmy's mother arrived seeking justice for her son.



*Old playmates: Jimmy Bullock and I,
reunited in November 2006*

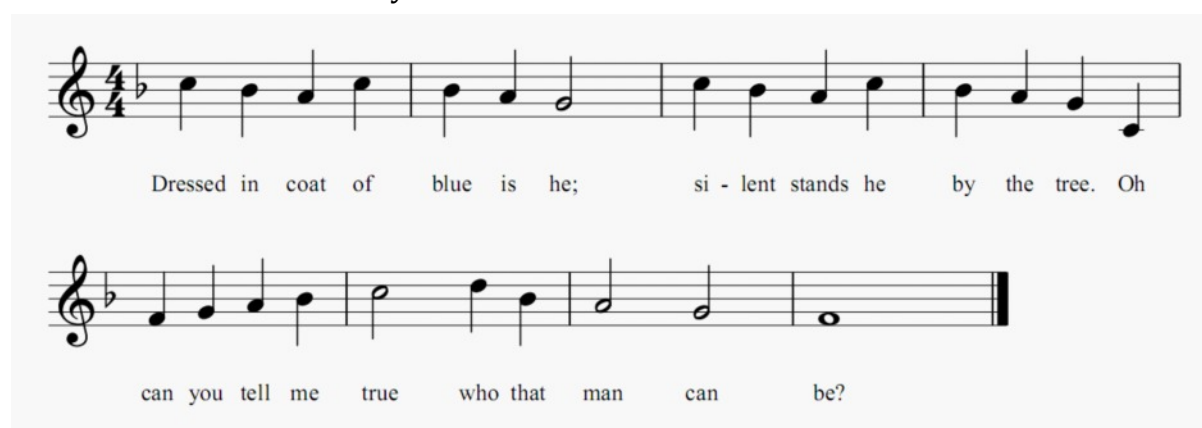
Once again, to my relief, our two mothers sorted things out, but it was a long and wearisome walk up to Jimmy's place, where I found him sitting looking sorry for himself with a blood-stained bandage round his head. I liked Jimmy and my apology, though formal, was sincere.

I lost contact with him after our move to Bradford when I was six. Amazingly, I made contact with him again sixty years later. We met up for a day and exchanged reminiscences. I was relieved to discover that he didn't recall the cowboy incident!

The scarecrow

I attended Norton Infant School where my teacher was Miss Rosamund Burnett. She regarded me as one of her star pupils.

Singing was not especially my forte, but I could keep in tune and at one school concert I was lined up to sing a song about a scarecrow. I don't remember the concert itself, but I do recall some of the song's words and the tune to which they went:



Victory celebrations

The Second World War wasn't a big issue for me. It took my Dad away from the family home, of course, but I was too young to know that this was anything unusual. Malton and Norton, being in rural surroundings, didn't attract the attention of German bombers, so it's fair to say that the war passed me by. If we'd lived in Hull—barely 50 miles south of us—it would have been a different story.

I do, however, have recollections of the celebration of the war's end in the early summer of 1945, a few months before my fifth birthday. I remember all the children going out onto the school field. There was a band of some kind playing and the boy scouts were there in force. Union Jacks were everywhere and everyone was very jolly.

Somebody no doubt explained to us youngsters that these were victory celebrations marking the end of the war, but if they did their words didn't get through to me.

Frederick and Fanny Matthew

My paternal grandparents lived in Vine Street, Norton, and I visited them regularly with my mother. Frederick worked all his life for W.H. Smith & Son. At that time, long before they opened high street stores, Smiths were known for their bookstalls on railway stations, and Grandad Matthew ran the one at Malton station. Sometimes he would bring me home comics to look at.

Fanny was a slightly-built and rather timid lady, who looked up to Frederick as the undisputed head of the household. I recall her on many occasions looking at the clock on the living-room mantelpiece and announcing, 'The master will be home soon!'

Fred had a weakness for a kind of sausage called polony. The meat was beigey-white and had a paste-like consistency. You bought it by the pound from the butcher, who would cut you a length from the long salami-style sausage on his slab. Polony always had a skin that was pillar-box red. I remember Grandad peeling this off and spreading the meat on his bread.



Frederick William Matthew, my paternal grandfather (2nd from right) at his bookstall on Malton station, 1931. Cyril Matthew is second from left.

Frederick's illness and death

In those days people weren't as health-conscious as we are today, and his diet overall was probably not the best. He died from heart disease, age 66, when I was just five years old.

Before he died I remember being at the house and Grandma telling me not to make a noise because he was ill in bed. A few days before his death they took me upstairs to see him. He lay there, gaunt and white as a sheet, and barely able to speak, though he looked at me and uttered

a few words. I hope they weren't 'famous last words' because I can't remember what he said. He died a day or two later.

Sadly, Fred never got chance to retire. He would normally have retired from W.H. Smith's at 65 but the company asked him to stay on for an extra year to allow their younger men—like Arthur Simpson, the manager already signed up to replace Fred—to get back from their war service. Fred agreed but, towards the end of his extra year, suffered a stroke and his son, my Uncle Cyril, who was also a W.H. Smith employee, stepped in as relief manager at Malton's station bookstall.

Fred, meanwhile, was getting no worse, but neither was he showing any real signs of improvement. During that time, Cyril later told me, the auditors were in at the bookstall. When the audit proved OK, Cyril said to his mother, 'I'll go upstairs and tell Dad the good news, and I think it will send him either one way or the other.' He was right. At 6pm he gave the good news to Fred, who died around 11pm the same evening—on the very day he was to have retired.

Ben and Ada Plummer

My maternal grandparents lived at 11 Beverley Road, Norton, and my mother often took me there.

Ben was a lumbering, taciturn individual. I believe he was quite an intelligent man but, never having had the chance to further his education, he went into manual work. When I was small he worked at a local factory where they ground animal



Ben and Ada Plummer, c. 1912

bones from the local abattoir into bonemeal for fertiliser and he always came home smelling of the product. During the First World War he had been a driver of horse-drawn vehicles in the Army Service Corps, serving in France. He had become a chain-smoker in the army and I hardly recall seeing him without a cigarette in his mouth. He was a champion at coughing and spitting.

Ada was a highly intelligent and active woman. She had been one of the prime movers in seeing the Co-operative Society established in Malton. For many years before that she had been in domestic service at various farmhouses in East Yorkshire and so had become an excellent cook.

A well-dressed highwayman

Granny Plummer was also a bit of a hoarder. Her many cupboards were, to my young eyes, full of unspeakable treasures, and I recall one occasion when this turned out to my benefit. By this time we had moved to Bradford but I was staying with Granny and Grandad during the summer holidays.

I had a friend called Malcolm Boyes who lived on the estate close to their cottage and we decided, one day, to play at highwaymen. Malcolm's mother found an old curtain to serve him as a cloak. We made masks out of cardboard. And of course Malcolm had his toy pistol. So there was I, a highwayman with nothing but a mask. I felt very much a second-class highwayman. Would Granny be able to find anything among her treasures to remedy the situation?

The cloak she came up with was superb. This was a proper gentleman's cloak made of heavy tweed with a chain fastening at the neck, a cloak that would have made Sherlock Holmes proud. I had no hope of a gun to complete my outfit, because my father, as a conscientious objector, had barred me from owning such a thing. I looked at Granny, the great cloak-provider, and asked in despairing tones, 'I don't suppose you've got a gun as well, have you?'

A mischievous twinkle came into her eye and, without a word, she went upstairs—slowly and heavily, for she was a well-built woman. And yes, after a few moments she came down with a gun for me! It was made of cast iron and weighed a ton, but it was a replica of a real one, with far more charisma in my eyes than the lightweight specimen that Malcolm held. Playing highwaymen had never been so good!

The move to Bradford

During his war service in the Pay Corps in Bradford my Dad had found himself with conscientious objectors from a whole variety of Christian denominations. Their discussions led him to question why he was a Methodist. After a while he got close to some people from the Brethren and later joined that movement out of conviction that their way of meeting was more in line with the New Testament pattern than that of the Methodist Church. So he now attended the Gospel Hall in Bolton Woods, a village that had grown up around the stone quarries on the outskirts of



Jowett Javelin

Bradford, near Shipley.

When he was demobbed he found office work in Bradford with a mechanical engineering firm called Henry Lindsay Ltd. It was time to move his family—which now included my sister Christine, born in June 1945—from Norton to Bradford. Our furniture went in a removal van and Dad's boss, Mr Lawrence Lindsay, sent a car for us. It was a black Jowett Javelin—one of the very first to come out of the Jowett factory at Idle, Bradford. I felt I had never travelled so fast in all my life as it sped along the A64 towards our new home. This was the summer of 1946.

We moved into **102 Exeter Street**, a stone-built terrace house in the Otley Road district of Bradford. This street, long since demolished, was famous for being the longest terrace in the city without a break.



Exeter Street, Bradford, c. 1950

Ladles renamed

My father had a relative of his generation whom I knew as Aunt Olive. She was housekeeper to a wealthy businessman and, some years after he was widowed, she married him. They lived in a large and well-appointed house in Esholt, on the outskirts of Bradford, and when I was very small we went there from Malton to visit them.

In the extensive gardens was a circular pond with a statue in the

middle with a fountain coming out of the top. The pond fascinated me, especially as I could see lots of little creatures in there. The tadpoles had recently turned into frogs and there were lots of them to be seen. Noticing my interest, Aunt Olive went into the house and emerged with a large soup-ladle, which she dipped into the pond and brought out a froglet for me to examine more closely.

A year or so later, after we had moved to live in Bradford, my parents took me one day to Bolling Hall, a one-time stately home that had been turned into a museum and opened to the public. Our tour of the place brought us eventually to the great kitchen with its fine display of copperware and old utensils. Hanging on one wall was a whole array of ladles. According to my mother, when I saw these I gasped, pointed at them excitedly and exclaimed, 'Ooh, look, Mam—frog spoons!'

Hanson School

It was a good twenty-minute walk from Exeter Street to Hanson Junior School, but I was soon doing it on my own. I came home for lunch, so it was four times a day.

On the way I had to pass one of the old red telephone boxes—the only kind that existed at that period. It had the word 'Telephone' across the top on each of its four sides. Early on after our move, when I was still learning to read, I used to try to sound words that I saw, and I tried this with the word at the top of the phone box. I knew it was a telephone box and wondered why on earth the word at the top said telep-hone. My curiosity led me to mention this to my mother, whose response triggered a memorable breakthrough in my learning: 'ph' is pronounced 'f'.

It took some time, even after the move to Bradford, to come to terms with the fact that my Dad was

now around, and that he was apparently the boss. I had a set of painted wooden skittles that my Uncle George had made me. One day I was playing with these in the back yard at Exeter Street when I threw the ball a bit too hard. It hit a wonky paving stone, jumped into the air and sailed over the wall at the far end.

At the other side of the wall was a twelve-foot drop to the back lane of the next street of terrace houses, so there was no way I could retrieve my ball. Dad came out of the house and was cross with me. I felt completely overwhelmed by his telling-off and once again thought, 'Who is this man who continues to carry on as if he runs the show?'

'Our little Doris'

We shared our back yard with the house next door, where the Smiths lived. They had a daughter named Doris, about my age, and we got on well together. They all referred to her as 'our little Doris'. All her family were smokers and, like many youngsters at one stage, she used to collect cigarette packets. Not surprisingly, I started a collection too, much to my parents' disgust, but I liked the packets' smell and enjoyed looking out for the less common brands: anyone could find a Woodbine or Capstan packet, but it was a triumph to find a Camel or a Passing Clouds. Maybe that encounter



with the world of smoking was all I needed to keep me from the habit itself; I have never smoked in my life.

Doris's family also drank a lot of beer and ate things I had never heard of. I was in their house once and they were all eating tripe, sprinkled with plenty of salt and vinegar. I was offered a piece to try but didn't care for it. When I later found out what tripe was I determined it would never pass my lips again.

Sometimes Doris would knock on our door to see if I would like to play out. When my mother answered, Doris would ask, in her roughest of Yorkshire accents, 'Is your David lakin'?' Many years later, when talking to a Norwegian friend, I learnt from him that to 'lake' is a Scandinavian term to this day and it means to play. It had been introduced to Britain by Viking invaders and had become part of the Yorkshire dialect.

The cig packet collecting didn't last long. I got into stamp-collecting for a while, though it was always a background interest rather than a passion. Later, when I was fourteen, I would begin collecting newspaper headings—the strip across the top of the front page carrying the paper's name, date and other basic information. Within a few months I would have a collection of well over 300 of them from all parts of Britain, plus a few sent over by my French penfriend, Jacques Vandenbussche, who lived in Lille.

Classroom hierarchy

But back, first, to earlier times. When I moved up from Hanson Infants to Hanson Junior School the academic side of things became more serious. I remember spelling tests, comprehension tests, mental arithmetic tests and a whole lot more. The marks we gained for these were carefully recorded and kept tallied by our class teacher. The person with the highest marks overall was 'top of the class' and the one with the lowest 'bottom of the class', and we were regularly informed of where we stood in the pecking order.

To rub it in, the classrooms were tiered, with the four or five rows of desks getting higher as you got towards the back of the room. The pupils with the highest scores sat at the back—‘top of the class’ literally—and the duffers sat on the front row, within reach of the teacher, who would often deliver a quick clip round the ear if their attention wandered. Every couple of weeks the updated marks were read out, and we all changed places to reflect the current academic hierarchy. I was always on the back row.

During my time in the Junior School I came to suspect that one of the male teachers was perhaps a Christian. He took some of the music lessons and taught us a song that included some terms I was used to from Sunday School and church:

*There is a balm in Gilead that makes the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul.
Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.
There is a balm in Gilead...*

I know now that it's a negro spiritual and that the teacher who introduced us to it may not have been a Christian at all. I never found out for sure.

Pros and cons of Exeter Street

One of the hazards I had to face each day on the trips to and from school was Jimmy Crompton, a boy a couple of years older than me. He too lived on Exeter Street, but at the end nearer to school than our house, which required me to pass his house four times daily. For some reason he took a dislike to me and would sometimes lie in wait until I was passing, then come charging out of his passageway shrieking war-cries at me. I learnt to run very fast!



With my sister Christine and the famous scooter, 1948, in the back yard at Exeter Street

At the end of Exeter Street nearest to our house was a fish and chip shop. Sometimes as a treat I was allowed to go and get myself ‘two penn’orth of chips’—that is, a portion, which cost two pence.¹ Very occasionally we would have fish as well, and a portion of fish and chips was known as ‘a fish and two’. I remember the local outcry when potato prices went up and it became ‘a fish and three’.

For several years after the end of the war in 1945 food was in short supply, far from varied, and rationed. Each person had a Ration Book full of coupons that had to be handed over with your money to ensure that food was fairly distributed. Sweets in particular were in very short supply and it was an outstanding treat to have some. Fruit, too, was limited in variety. I remember well the occasion—shortly before our move to Bradford—when I was in bed recovering from measles and someone brought me a banana. What a novelty! I had never seen one before.

Plastic and pens

Two other novelties touched my life in our early years in Bradford. One was plastic. It's hard to imagine life without it now, but in those days it was new and most people were unaware of its existence. I remember we somehow came into possession of a plastic cup, dark green in colour. It used to be kept in the scullery (tiny kitchen). I went in there one day feeling thirsty and spotted the plastic cup with some liquid in it, which I assumed to be water. Once I had downed it, of course, I

¹ That was the old pre-decimal money, with 240 pence in £1.

realised it wasn't. It turned out to be Amami Setting Lotion, used by my mother to set her hair in waves. I felt queasy for a while but mercifully there were no long-term effects.

The other novelty was the ball-pen, known in the early days as a biro (after the surname of its Hungarian inventor). The biro was first patented in Britain shortly before I was born, but it took several years before mass production got under way. The burgundy-coloured one my Dad brought home from work one day was amazingly 'modern' to us: it combined a new writing technology with plastic! I



told my friends at school about it and they found it hard to believe that such a wonderful thing existed.

Transport

In those days there wasn't much traffic on the roads as most families didn't have a car. That meant that Exeter Street was great for bicycles and 'bogies'—home-made carts cobbled together with bits of wood and old pram wheels. But I got a scooter one Christmas. Dark green it was, and I was able to go faster on it than any bike in the street. The road surface, unusually, was concrete, which made for good smooth running. I also kept the scooter wheels well oiled and I could really fly along.

To get into the town centre we took the tram. The child's single fare was one halfpenny and the ticket was green. Near the tram stop on Otley Road was a treasure-trove of a shop. It sold Dinky Toys, and I used to save up my pocket money for new ones. On one occasion I took my money into the shop and told the man behind the counter that I'd come to buy a new Dinky. 'Which one?' he asked, and I replied, 'The refuse wagon.' But I pronounced it 'rifYOOZ' rather than 'REF-yooce'. He smiled and served me.

Bradford Grammar School

When I was a boy all children at the age of ten or eleven sat an exam called 'the scholarship' or 'the eleven-plus'. Those who passed went to a grammar school, where the emphasis was academic; those who failed went to a secondary modern school, where there was a more practical and vocational emphasis.



A tram in Bradford city centre. The open section upstairs was my favourite.

I'd always been considered a fairly bright pupil in primary school, so my parents were pleased, though not surprised, when I 'passed my scholarship'. The question now was which grammar school I would go to. The very best in Bradford was the great Bradford Grammar School on Keighley Road. It was a 'direct grant' school, with a greater degree of independence than ordinary grammar schools. But there were two barriers to entry: you had to pass an additional

entrance exam and you had to pay fees. My parents decided to put me in for the entrance exam, which was held at the school one Saturday morning.

To everyone's delight I passed this and, what's more, achieved a standard that entitled me to a bursary. That meant that the fees would be paid, not by my parents, but from a special fund administered by the school. I later learnt that my Dad's income at that time would not have stretched to the school fees anyway, so even though I had passed the entrance exam I wouldn't have been able to go to that school. But the bursary solved that problem and I started there in September 1951, just as I was coming up to eleven years of age.

We still lived in Exeter Street, so it was a long trip to and from school: the tram from home into Bradford town centre, then the trolley-bus along Manningham Lane to the school. But that was soon to change, because we moved from Exeter Street to a house much nearer the school: **49 Queens Road**.

The move to Queens Road

From this house I could walk to Bradford Grammar School in about twenty minutes, and I walked there and back twice daily until I was eighteen and a half years old.

The house in Queens Road was a Victorian terrace, on a busy hill that was soon to become part of the Bradford Ring Road. Central heating was not common in those days and our house had none, but there was a gas fire in every room. That didn't mean, however, that we were snug and warm all the time. The ceilings were high, the gas fires not very efficient, and I remember sometimes being very cold. One February night in 1956 my mother took a glass of water to her bedroom in case she wanted a drink during the night. She didn't, but when she woke in the morning the water was frozen solid!

The house was much bigger than the one in Exeter Street. It had extensive cellars, a ground floor with two reception rooms plus a kitchen, a first floor with three bedrooms, a bathroom and separate toilet, and two large attics. I had the front attic—a very spacious room with plenty of storage, my own gas fire and a dormer window giving good views up and down Queens Road.



*View from the front garden of 49 Queens Road,
looking west down the hill*

Some years later—in April 1957, when I was 16—I was allowed to choose my own colour scheme for my room. I went for deep blue wallpaper with a white motif and, for the paintwork, pillar-box red—reminiscent of my Grandad's polony. There was a lot of woodwork because of the beams supporting the roof, so the result was pretty lurid. But at least I'd put my own stamp on the room. This colour scheme remained unchanged until I left for university.

Bolton Woods

Since we'd moved to Bradford I had been a regular attender at the Gospel Hall in Mexborough Road, Bolton Woods, the home of the Brethren 'assembly' (church).

Dad had in due course become one of the elders there and, among other things, ran the Sunday School and a midweek children's meeting. He did both with competence and they were well attended by local children; there would regularly be 120 at the Sunday School, which was at 2pm every Sunday. Mum was a teacher there. She also ran a Girls' Class once a week and sometimes sang solos in the Sunday evening meeting.

We didn't live in Bolton Woods ourselves. It was a good half hour's walk from our house. Or we could catch the red West Yorkshire bus that ran along Canal Road from Bradford to Shipley via Bolton Woods, but there was still a steep hill to climb at each end of the bus section.

Busy Sundays

The Sunday meeting schedule was astonishing by today's standards. It began with a Prayer Meeting at 10.15am, followed by the 'Breaking of Bread' (communion) at 11 o'clock. After a quick lunch the room was re-set for Sunday School at 2pm. That lasted till 3pm, when we again reset the room for the evening meeting. Before that, however, we nipped home for a quick tea and went back for—at least in the summer months—an open-air sing and preach in one of the village streets at 5.30pm. Then came the 6.30pm Gospel Meeting, which was where we tried to reach non-Christians with the gospel and often had visiting preachers from other Brethren churches in the county. After that there was a young people's meeting, normally held at someone's house, or occasionally a visit to the open-air gospel meeting held in Forster Square in Bradford city centre. A long day! But we considered it normal; it was what we did.

One of my duties, from the age of fifteen, was to teach a class at the Sunday School. It was the Third Class Boys, a dozen nine-year-olds—a real lively bunch. After some initial difficulties I got the hang of controlling them and trying to interest them in the Bible stories I related. I was beginning to realise that I liked teaching generally, and my diary from that time records my determination to be a schoolteacher one day.

At the Sunday morning Breaking of Bread we never used any musical accompaniment. Singing was *a capella*, my Dad using a tuning fork that he kept in his top pocket to strike up the hymns from *The Believer's Hymn Book*. Fortunately, quite a few of the members were musical and

the singing was always full-bodied and harmonious. In the evening Gospel Meeting we used the *Golden Bells* hymnal and Dad played the pedal-organ (harmonium) to accompany the singing. I wondered what the reasons were for this difference of approach.

One day we were visiting a couple who lived across the city, members of the Odsal Gospel Hall, named Mr & Mrs Norris. Something in the conversation must have triggered this issue in my mind, so I asked the assembled group why we didn't have the organ in the morning meeting. Mrs Norris took it upon herself to reply: 'Because the organ is the wooden brother who hasn't been baptised.' I was probably about eleven at the time, but even then the theology seemed a bit questionable. And I didn't think that baptising the organ by full immersion would do it much good.



Mexborough Road, Bolton Woods. The Gospel Hall is at the far end of the left side of the street, just before the tree.

The Christian challenge

During these years I was exposed to the Christian message regularly and I quickly became aware of the claims of Christ on my life. I knew I needed to make a personal commitment to him and thus to become a believer, like my Mum and Dad. I wanted to do this, yet I didn't. It was a tug of war in my heart.

Things came to a head with the visit of Tom Brayshaw, popularly known as Uncle Tom. He was a chimney sweep from Harrogate. That town was a popular tourist spot, with many large hotels, and Mr Brayshaw had won the contract to sweep the chimneys of most of them. He employed many sweeps and had become quite a wealthy man—one of the few people we knew who owned a car, a Hillman Husky. That left him free to pursue what he loved doing best: reaching children with the gospel message.

He came to our Gospel Hall to do a week of children's meetings and I, of course, went to every one. He used a flannelgraph to illustrate his talks. This was a large flannel-covered board onto which he placed picture cut-outs and words. These had some kind of material on the back that made them stick to the board, but they could be easily removed and moved around. Television was unknown to most people at that time, so the flannelgraph was an attractive novelty for children—you had something to look at as well as a good storyteller to listen to.

It was during this week, at the age of twelve, that I made my personal commitment to Jesus Christ. I did it all alone in my attic bedroom. The floor was covered with cold lino, but I had a rug by the bed, so I knelt down on that with my elbows on the bed, closed my eyes and prayed something like: 'Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner who needs to be forgiven. Thank you for dying to make that possible. Father God, will you please accept me as your child, not because I'm good enough—I'm not—but because Jesus is good enough. Accept me, please, for his sake. Amen.'

Nothing particular happened. No flashes of light or anything. But I climbed into bed knowing that God had heard my prayer and accepted me as his child. I had committed lots of Bible verses to memory over the years, and as I began to slip into sleep I remember saying to myself, 'Well, Jesus said, "He who comes to me I will not cast out." I've now come to him, so he hasn't cast me out. So that means I'm in. Good.' And off I went to sleep.

Some time later I told my parents what I'd done and they were quietly very pleased; they had been praying for a long time that I would reach that point. Looking back, I can say that this was the major turning-point in my life. From then on I was no longer piggy-backing on my Mum and Dad's faith; I had chosen for myself to follow Christ, to be a Christian. A good move.

I was later to discover that Faith—who was to come into my life shortly after—also became a Christian during that week as a result of Tom Brayshaw's ministry.

That girl

Another major turning-point took place soon after this. I arrived at the Gospel Hall one day—7th



1952, age 12, with the family at Queens Road, Bradford. My younger sister, Hazel, had been born in February 1948.

February 1954 in fact—to find that someone had been chalking on its sandstone steps. Lots of children played round there and this wasn't unusual. Among the scribbles I saw 'DM=FG'.

In those days this was how you indicated who was someone's girlfriend or boyfriend. DM was clearly me, but FG didn't ring any bells and I was intrigued to know who people were linking me with romantically. I made a few discreet enquiries among the kids at Sunday School and they pointed out a little girl called **Faith Gall**. She lived right opposite the Gospel Hall, they told me, at number 30. I looked her over as she sat with her friends at the girls' side of the central aisle and I liked what I saw. A seed was sown that was to change my life, and in due course I was to marry her.



Faith aged 11, at the back of their house in Mexborough Road, Bolton Woods

It turned out later that DM wasn't in fact me. It was a local tearaway called Dennis Mavin and any girl who wanted to be spiteful to a friend she had fallen out with would link her initials with his. That's what had happened here, but in God's providence it led to something wonderful for me! I soon got to really like Faith and would chat with her often in the Gospel Hall. Love was stirring in my young heart and before long I decided I had to declare it to her.

I wrote a love letter to her, jumped on my bike and rode from our house in Queens Road into Bolton Woods expecting to find her playing out with her friends somewhere in the village. But she was nowhere to be seen. At the local recreation ground, however, I came across one of her friends playing on the swings and asked if she would deliver the letter for me. The die was cast—I cycled home elated, with my heart going like the clappers. That was the start of a friendship that was to prove life-changing in the very best sense.

It was 24th February 1954. I was thirteen, she was twelve.

The bike—and sport in general

I mentioned cycling to Bolton Woods to deliver my love-letter. That bike was my pride and joy, a gift that for a long time I'd hinted to my parents would be a great birthday present.

Sure enough, it arrived for my twelfth birthday—a maroon Coventry-Eagle Exemplar with four-speed derailleur gears and lightweight frame, a real beauty. It arrived with a handbook on bicycle maintenance. I kept the bike in the cellar at Queens Road and from the back door, which was at that lower level, pedalled far and wide. All good for my cardio-vascular health.

Rugby and cricket

Sport in general, though, I disliked. At Bradford Grammar School we were obliged to take part in rugby during the autumn term, cross-country running in the spring term, and cricket in the summer term. These activities were on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and, to make up for the loss of lesson times, we had normal school classes on Saturday mornings.

Rugby I hated with an intense hatred. I saw no appeal in venturing onto a muddy pitch on a cold, drizzly afternoon with a bunch of crazy lads, most of whom were bigger than me since I was the youngest in my year-group. I was selected as hooker, so I was at



the very centre of every scrum, trying to hook the ball back while the opposition did their best to kick my shins to prevent it. It was awful.

Outside of the scrums I quickly became good at looking busy and involved in the game while in reality staying as far away from the ball as I could. What was the point, I figured, in picking up the ball when that instantly made you the target for fifteen stout lads whose one aim was to leap upon you and bring you crashing down, winded, into the mud? So I kept my distance from that wretched ball. On one occasion, though, there was no escaping it. By some freak, there was I at least ten yards from the nearest player and even further from the centre of the action, when the ball flew into the air and landed almost at my feet.

'Come on, Matthew!' yelled the games master, whom I hated. 'Pick it up, boy, pick it up!'

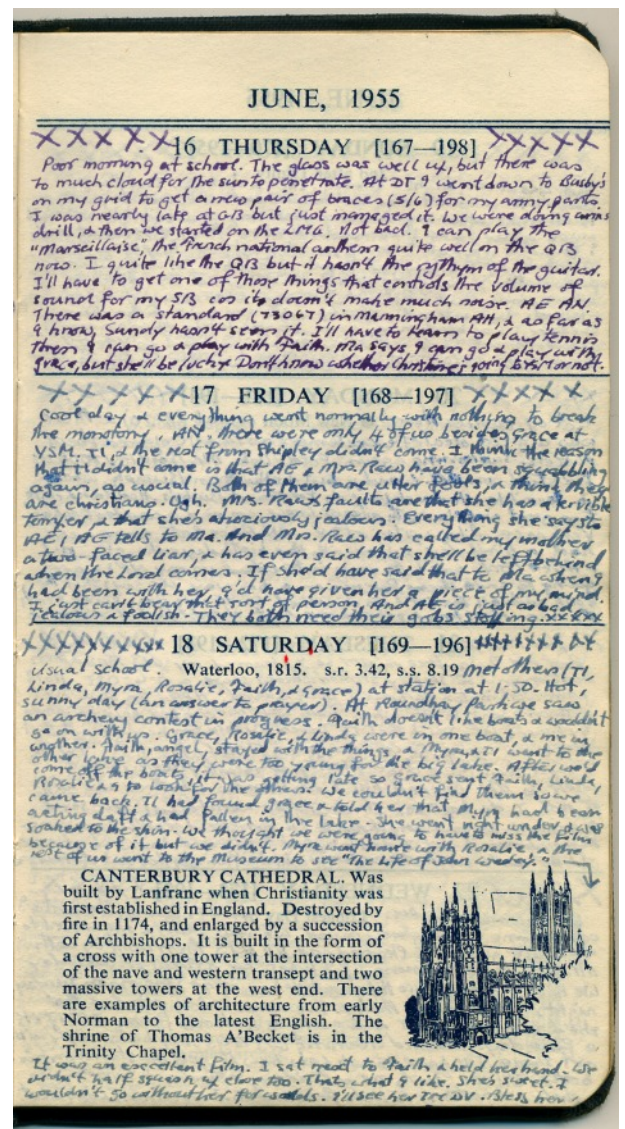
I looked down at the muddy object at my feet, glanced sideways at the gang of opposition players now bearing down on me with evil intent, and replied in firm but pitiful tones, 'I don't want it, sir!' He nearly had apoplexy. I'd never been very popular with him anyway, but from that time on I was definitely *persona non grata*. And I didn't care one bit.

Cricket never appealed to me either. I found it boring. Hand to eye coordination had never been my strongest point, so I was poor at taking catches and no better at hitting the ball with the bat. I quite liked bowling, but there were always better bowlers than me. I thus spent many frustrating hours, bored and lost in thought, on the wide green playing-fields of BGS every summer.

Cross-country and swimming

Cross-country was the only one of the school's three official sports that I came close to enjoying. Maybe that was because it wasn't a team game like the others. I could go at my own pace and choose my own way of climbing the dry-stone walls and jumping the streams without 'letting the side down'. Unlike cricket, there was no boredom because I was moving all the time and watching out for obstacles. Unlike rugby, there was no brutal physical contact. I was never one of the front runners, but I did reasonably well and always felt good while taking the post-run hot shower at the end. This enjoyment of running was to remain with me into adulthood.

Then there was swimming. I hated this even more than rugby. Neither of my parents had been able to swim, so I had received no example or encouragement from them. My Dad once told me why he had never learnt to swim. The opening of the first swimming pool in Malton had taken place when he was a boy. He had broken the news to his mother Fanny, asking, 'Can I go to the new baths, please,



Typical 1955 diary page, when I was 14. My eyesight was good then! Note the daily kisses - dedicated to Faith.

Mam?’ To which she replied, ‘No, Reg. You’re not going into the water until you can swim.’ His appeal to her to see the faulty logic of this reply fell on deaf ears.

From Hanson Junior School we were bussed to a nearby pool for weekly swimming sessions. The very prospect of climbing onto the bus used to make me feel ill. When, on arrival, the smell of chlorine hit my nostrils I felt worse and was often hard pressed not to throw up on the spot. I don’t know the reason for this strong aversion. Certainly I’d had one or two bad experiences early on—slipping under the water, or being pushed under. But whatever the reason, I never progressed from the non-swimmers’ group.

At BGS things got worse because the school had its own swimming pool. Interestingly, because it was an all-boys school at that time, there was a tradition of swimming naked; swimming trunks were not allowed. This wasn’t in itself a problem for us lads, though looking back now I can identify a couple of teachers who were undoubtedly homosexuals and enjoyed eyeing us up. My problem continued to be the pool itself and the swimming sessions there. I became expert at avoiding even getting into the shallow end and on several occasions made it back into the changing room at the end of the session completely dry.¹

The games master was harsh with me, but his tirades were like water off a duck’s back. He and I endured each other till I was fifteen and a half, when he asked a sixth-former named Garside to give me some personal tuition, to which I reluctantly agreed. He was a patient young man and eventually got me floating on my back and flipping my way across the pool. But I felt dreadfully vulnerable on my back, fearing being engulfed by the water, and I hardly progressed from there. And I certainly never went anywhere near a swimming pool by choice.

All this is well documented because I began keeping a detailed diary in 1954 and continued for many years.

Visits to Malton

But cycling was different, and the bike remained one of my great loves. When I was just fourteen I first used it to visit my Granny and Grandad Plummer for a fortnight during the long summer holidays.

Thinking back to it now, it was really quite a major undertaking at such a young age. From our house I cycled through Shipley and eventually onto the northern stretch of the Leeds Ring Road until I reached the A64 at Seacroft and turned east towards York, whose winding streets I had to negotiate before tackling the last stretch of the A64 that brought me to Malton. There were some serious hills on that stretch, not least Whitwell Hill, where I always had to dismount and push the bike to the top. In all, it was 70 miles. And the bike was laden: a saddle-bag containing my puncture outfit, basic tools and my yellow oilskin cape for wet weather, plus two panniers with everything I needed for two weeks away from home. I did this every summer holiday for several years.

Regular cycling, plus my school cross-country runs, kept me fairly fit. We also had a table tennis table in one of our big cellars where I often played with my sisters, and sometimes my Dad. These activities also made me hungry. My diary for early 1955 records regular visits to the fish shop. I would have ‘a fish, a cake² and three’, followed at home by several biscuits and slices of cake. My weight stayed reasonable: on 18 June 1955 (age 14) I weighed 8 stones 2½ pounds.

At the end of one of my Malton visits I was cycling home and stopped to sit on a grassy bank at the

¹ One such occasion appears in my diary for Mon 28 Mar 1955. As punishment, the games master Mr Eaglestone made me stay on after school until 5.30pm helping move equipment needed for the Sports Day.

² A fish cake: two slices off a very large potato with flakes of fish in between—the whole item battered and deep-fried.

roadside to eat the packed lunch that Granny had prepared. One item was a hard-boiled egg. I bashed this on my hand to break the shell and got a messy surprise: she'd put the wrong egg in—one that hadn't been boiled!

Granny made first class apple pies and always made sure there was a steady supply on my visits. I normally had a good slice every day. She also had a huge collection of *Picture Post* magazines stored in the back bedroom where I slept. Most nights, when I snuggled down in the real feather-bed, I would have half an hour browsing through a few magazines and broadening my outlook on the world before putting the candle out.

Yes, the candle. There was gas-lighting in the cottage, but only downstairs; you needed a candle to light you to bed. It was not until the summer of 1956 that I arrived to find that electricity had been installed—modern and convenient, but lacking the quaint appeal of the candlelight.

It was even later before a proper toilet arrived. Before that, you had to leave the house by the back

door, cross the yard and enter the small toilet building. After dark you took a candle to light your way. To one side hung the toilet paper. This was sheets of torn-up newspaper threaded onto a loop of string and hung on a nail. The toilet itself consisted of a horizontal plank of wood with a large round hole in it. Beneath it, to receive your offering, was a free-standing square metal box, open at the top and with a handle at each side. Once a week a council van would call. Two men would open the separate small door at the rear of the toilet-room and drag this box out, carry it out of the yard to the road and empty its smelly contents into their special truck. The arrival of a proper plumbed-in and flushable toilet was a very welcome development, though you still had to cross the yard to reach it.

One of my strong memories of staying at that house was the Sunday routine. In the morning I would go to the Methodist Chapel with

Granny. When we came home she would cook the Sunday lunch, which was always a roast, served with roast potatoes, home-grown vegetables and gravy. Followed by apple pie. After eating this we would wash the dishes and retire to the front room—the only time each week when this room was used. Granny and Grandad would settle in their respective armchairs either side of the fireplace and read the Sunday papers. Granny was a fervent socialist, so these were all the ones with a left-wing slant. I would sit on the settee and read my book or a comic. Nobody talked.

The soporific tick of the grandfather clock would be disturbed at intervals by two other sounds: the rustle of newspaper pages, and regular belching and farting, particularly from Grandad, who I was sure must be a world champion. Eventually both of them would nod off and a further sound would break the silence: loud snoring from both armchairs.

Two types of religion

Granny's Christianity, I quickly discovered, wasn't as legalistic as that of my parents. Her faith was utterly sincere, and I never doubted that she truly knew the Lord the way my parents did, and the way that I myself now did. But she was broader-minded than them.

Mum and Dad put as much emphasis on what Christians shouldn't do as on what they should. There were lots of 'Thou shalt nots' hanging over my childhood. Christians didn't drink, for a start. They



The view from the back bedroom of Granny & Grandad Plummer's house, where I stayed each summer. Grandad's veg garden was the area this side of the path.

didn't smoke, either, and my parents frowned on both my Grandad Plummer and my Uncle George, who did. Christians didn't dance. They didn't play cards. They didn't gamble. And they didn't go to the cinema.

The cinema

The only one of these that bothered me was their opposition to the cinema, or 'the pictures' as we called it then. My friends used to talk about the films they had been to see and I felt completely out of touch with what, for them, was a regular part of their lives. In particular, they used to go to the Saturday children's matinee at the local cinema to see the latest episode of Laurel and Hardy or a Roy Rogers cowboy film. I was ashamed to admit that I'd never ever been inside a cinema and didn't really know what one looked like. Friends sometimes invited me to go with them, but my parents always said no.

I once asked my mother why they wouldn't let me go to the cinema. Her reply was: 'Well, the actors and actresses live very wicked lives, so Christians shouldn't have anything to do with them.' I argued that the films were surely about the characters they played, not their own wicked lives, so what was the harm in going? But it got me nowhere.

So I despaired when, on one visit to Malton, my friend Malcolm's parents invited me to go with them to the local cinema to see the latest blockbuster, *Ivanhoe*. I would need to ask my Gran, I said. I trudged back to her cottage and said, with no vestige of expectation, 'I don't suppose I could go with Malcolm and his parents to see *Ivanhoe* at the pictures tonight, could I?'

I'm pretty sure Granny knew the score. She was well aware of my parents' objection to cinema-going. I suspect she also viewed their attitude as a bit extreme and felt sorry for me in my deprivation. And she knew I was seventy miles from the parental reach. Anyway, she replied, in her strong East Yorkshire accent, 'Aye, I dooan't see why not. Get thi-sen ready.' I let out a whoop of delight and, that evening, went to see *Ivanhoe*. It was marvellous, and I suffered no corruption from those wicked actors.

Parental priorities

One of the things my parents did do was attend the weekly Wednesday-night prayer meeting and Bible study at the Gospel Hall. This was a pity, because throughout my time at Bradford Grammar School the parents' consultation evenings were also always on Wednesday nights, which for my parents posed a problem. But not for long: such was their commitment to the church that they had little difficulty choosing, and to my knowledge neither of them ever attended a consultation evening at the school. My form teacher would sometimes ask, the following day, why no-one had been. I didn't mention the prayer meeting but said they had been otherwise engaged. I felt bad about it.

My relationship overall with my parents was a strange one. Materially, they provided well for me and



The original Ivanhoe poster, 1952

my sisters. Dad was doing well at Henry Lindsay Ltd. He worked hard, doing lots of extra hours, and was eventually promoted to be Company Secretary. Any spare time he had was devoted to church activities. Mum was an excellent cook and also saw that we were well clothed. She made many of our clothes, especially for the girls, herself.

But I remember very little parental warmth. I don't recall my mother ever giving me a hug or a cuddle. And Dad, being constantly so busy, always seemed somehow a distant figure. But my everyday observing of the fact that they were utterly sincere and committed in their Christian faith meant that I wasn't put off from my own faith, and I really did want to grow as a believer in Jesus.

One step in that direction was to be baptised. A date was arranged when five of us in the Bolton Woods church would be baptised together, and Uncle Tom—children's evangelist Tom Brayshaw—would be the guest speaker. The day before, I wrote in my diary: 'I expect the baptism to make us all different people.' My dislike of water meant that I wasn't looking forward to being immersed, even for just a second or two. In the bath at home I practised holding my face under the water without holding my nose.

The big day was 11th December 1955. The baptistery at the front of the Gospel Hall was opened up, the tap turned on and the water heated. A crowd filled the building and Uncle Tom was on good form. I was the first of the five to be baptised; the fifth one was Faith. That night I wrote, 'It was a wonderful experience.' To mark the occasion my parents presented me with a monographed, leather-bound music edition of *The Believer's Hymn Book*.

Teenage years

My bursary-backed start at BGS at the age of eleven hadn't led to the expected progress. I started well enough, coping with most subjects, including Latin, which was compulsory for all pupils.

Before I completed my first year—in Form 3E—we had to choose the general direction we would take when we moved up into the Fourth Form in September. The three broad choices were Classics, Arts or Sciences. I had done well in Latin so, since my form teacher had not been able to consult my parents, he put me down for Classics.

Classics

Thus it was that, at the age of just twelve, I joined Form 4C (C for 'Classics') and began Greek, as well as continuing with Latin and all the usual subjects. A combination of some poor teachers and the lack of parental involvement meant that I soon lost my impetus, beginning to waste time and skip homework assignments.

The school sent a letter to my parents, and my Dad gave me a pep talk one evening. I resented this strongly and failed to change my ways. So, from the Classics stream—considered the best—I was relegated, the next year, to the General stream, where, with Latin dropped, the plan was to get me and the other lazy, unmotivated pupils through as many 'O' Levels¹ as possible and then say goodbye to us.²

My academic awakening

It was, I well remember, six weeks before the 'O' Level exams in the summer of 1956 that I saw the light. It suddenly dawned upon me that, once these exams were over, I'd be leaving school. And what

¹ The equivalent of today's GCSE's.

² My academic sloth wasn't total. A diary entry for 11 Jan 1955 records: 'With God's help I'm going to be top this next term.'

then? I had absolutely no idea. What several pep talks from my Dad and one-to-one lectures from various schoolmasters had failed to achieve, this awakening achieved. Up to this point I had been lazy. I had regularly skipped homework. I hadn't done any exam revision at all. And I had been entered for a whole string of subjects. Now, for six weeks I worked like the clappers.

Amazingly, I managed to pass English Language, English Literature, History, French, Maths, Chemistry and Art, failing only in Geography. Phew!

But if my awakening had brought a change of attitude, the six weeks of hard work brought an even deeper one. During that period I realised for the first time that I really quite enjoyed studying. And I had enjoyed the language side of things—the English and French—more than any other. I even had twinges of nostalgia for those early Latin lessons. So during the six weeks, in consultation with my parents and teachers, I agreed to stay on at school for another two years instead of leaving, and to work for my 'A' Levels. I would go into the language stream and attempt 'A' Levels in English, French and Spanish.

After two sisters, a brother

An important family event took place while I was in the midst of the build-up to my GCE exams. My mother was pregnant and, as her time drew near, her mother (my Granny Plummer) came over from Malton to be with her after the birth which, as was common at that time, was scheduled to take place at home rather than in hospital.

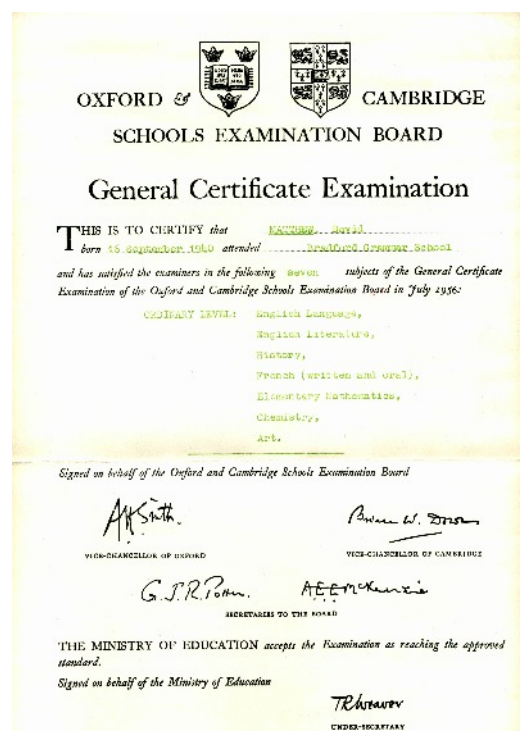
I came home for lunch one day after my morning's revision-programme work. Mum was in bed resting. Granny provided lunch, then, as I said goodbye to return for the afternoon session, she said, 'I think you should have a brother or sister by the time you get home.' She was right. I arrived back at teatime to find I had a baby brother, Stephen, born on 29th June 1956.

After two sisters I was delighted to have a brother at last. But in many respects it was too late, and the age gap between us was too large for much of a relationship to develop. When, much later, I got to spend time with Stephen, I was more like an additional parent to him than a brother. But we had some good times camping together.

Cadets

BGS had a thriving Combined Cadet Force—a junior branch of the armed forces. I joined this at the age of fourteen, with a view to getting into the Air Force section of it, but it was compulsory first to do a year in the Army section.

Dad, with his background as a Conscientious Objector in the war, wasn't keen for me to join, especially as the programme included rifle training, but in the end he agreed to it. The regular sessions were on Thursday afternoons, under the direction of one of the schoolmasters, Captain James, whose nickname, reflecting his build, was Paunch. I quite enjoyed getting my uniform spick and span, and the parade ground drill sessions were satisfying when you got everything right. Getting a mirror-like shine on my boots using spit and polish took a while to master, but once I'd achieved it



I enjoyed the nod of approval I got at the weekly inspection.

We used to shoot with .22 rifles at an indoor range at Belle Vue, but on one occasion¹ we went to the outdoor Hawksworth Range for a shooting session using our big .303 rifles. It was misty up there on the moors, making the 200-yard targets invisible, so we had to stick with the 100-yard ones. The noise from my first shot deafened me quite severely and it was two or three days before my hearing returned to normal. I sat on the front row in class for a couple of days afterwards so as to be able to hear the teachers. On subsequent visits to the range I made sure I took cotton wool to stuff in my ears, which did the trick.

After completing my statutory period in the army section I was able to transfer to the RAF section—shortly after my fifteenth birthday. I handed in my khaki uniform in exchange for an air-force blue one. The drill and rifle training sessions continued, but we also began doing the basics of aerodynamics and meteorology, and I looked forward to getting in a plane for the first time. In those days holiday flights hadn't been invented and most people had never been anywhere near a plane, never mind up in one, so this was a big deal for me.

Our first flight as air cadets was from RAF Linton in an ancient Avro Anson, propeller-driven. There were no rows of seats, just fixed benches along each side, so we had to twist round to look out of the windows. The thing rattled like a bucket of stones but it was great to be airborne at last. The pilot took us over Fountains Abbey and banked steeply to give us a good look at the ruins. Later I was to fly in a three-seater Auster Autocrat. That pilot took me over Bradford and came down low enough for me to identify Queen's Road, the Grammar School and the area where I lived. In April 1956 we went for a week's residential training at RAF Gaydon near Leamington Spa. There we were shown round one of the Air Force's latest aircraft, the Valiant bomber, designed to deliver nuclear bombs.

I expected my time in the cadets to come in useful later on because, in the years after the war, all British young men were required, at the age of 18, to do two years of National Service in the military. In my teenage years, however, there were rumours that this might be discontinued and one diary entry commented, 'I might get out of National Service.'² And indeed I did; but it was close—had I been just a few months older I would have had to do it.



Avro Anson - the first plane I flew in

There was an unspoken understanding that I would probably join my Dad at Henry Lindsay Ltd and pursue a future in the world of business. I was happy to do a bit of holiday work there now and then, but those stints were enough to convince me that this was not what I was cut out for. Not long after I reached the age of fifteen I made a definite decision on this and felt that I would probably become—as I wrote in my diary—'a junior school teacher instead'.³

The CCF stressed the importance of looking smart and well-groomed. In the spring of 1955 I began worrying about the need to start shaving 'cos I'm like a hairy monster'.⁴ I raised this with my Dad a

¹ 24 March 1955

² Diary entry, 9 May 1956.

³ Diary entry, 27 Nov 1955



*Age 14, in the
army section of
the school Cadet
Force*

month or two later, but he said the longer I could put it off, the better, because once you started you had to keep going for the rest of your life. I was relieved when, at last, some sympathetic relatives bought me a razor for Christmas. And a couple of months before that a school friend called Naylor had taught me how to fasten my tie in a Windsor knot. I thus entered 1956 clean-shaven and smartly-knotted.



*With the Cadet Force at RAF Gaydon, 17 April 1956, with a Valiant bomber.
I'm 4th from the right in the middle row, age 15.*

Introduction to the Dales

Though we had lived in Bradford since I had been six, we had never ventured into the Yorkshire Dales. When at last we did—on 23rd July 1955—it was to stay for four days with Ron and Rene Humble, friends of my parents from the Malton days, who had moved to Sedbergh.

We went by train from Manningham Station, just at the bottom of our street, and I'll never forget the impact the scenery made on me as we wound our way up into the Dales via Keighley, Skipton and Settle. We crossed the wonderful Ribbleshead Viaduct and eventually alighted at Dent Station, where Mr Humble, a grocer, met us in his work van to ferry us down to their bungalow, 'Sunridge', in Joss Lane, Sedbergh. They couldn't sleep all of us, so I stayed next door with an older couple, Mr & Mrs Waller.

It was Mr Waller, a former fell-runner, who that very first evening took me to the top of the nearest peak, Winder (1551 feet), the path to which started at the end of their road. What an exhilarating experience! I just loved the wild openness of everything, the fresh air, the challenge of the route to the top, the thrill of reaching the summit and being able to see right across to Morecambe Bay, about thirty miles distant. From that time on I was smitten with the Dales and was to return regularly.

The next day, after church, I went up Winder again, on my own this time, then on to Higher Winder a short distance beyond and a few hundred feet higher. It was great to be alone up there, feeling small but vitally alive amid the grandeur of the hills under a clear blue sky. I ran all the way back down. The day after, Mr Waller took me up there again and we conquered the four highest peaks in the district, including Cautley Crag, running most of the way. Wonderful!

Our final day saw the whole family taking the bus up to Kendal and on to Windermere and Bowness. The Lakeland fells were even more rugged than those around Sedbergh, but while I enjoyed my taste of the Lakes, nothing would ever surpass the attraction of the Dales.

The following summer I went back to Sedbergh, but alone this time, taking my bike on the train and cycling the last ten miles from Dent Station. Over the next few days, in addition to my solitary walks into the fells—including a 16-mile hike to the summit of Whernside—I cycled up into the Lakes, visiting Bowness and Windermere, Kendal, Ingleton, Lancaster and Kirkby Lonsdale. It was a wonderful relaxation after the rigours of my GCE 'O' Levels.

⁴ Diary entry, 24 Feb 1955

Music

My Dad was a competent pianist and my Mum a trained singer, so I grew up with music. Often they would have friends round on a Sunday night to sing hymns round the piano. Even though my bedroom was in the attic the music wafted up the two flights of stairs. One of my mother's favourites was *I shall know him*, by the blind American hymnwriter, Fanny Crosby.

Dad's preference on the piano was to play by ear. He was well capable of reading music, and he even wrote a few songs for use in the Sunday School, but he was at his best when improvising. Once he had a tune in his head he could play it in any key.

Piano lessons

With this musical background it was inevitable that they would send me for piano lessons. I was ten years old when I started and my teacher was a grumpy old man called Mr Tewson who lived in Barkerend Road with his equally grumpy old wife. He had no natural empathy with children and little teaching ability, so I struggled from the start. Then, of course, there was the daily practice, which I hated. 'Have you done your piano practice yet?' my Mum would call. I never had, and I would trudge through into the cold front room, where the piano was, and do my allotted twenty minutes without enthusiasm. I managed to pass my Grade One exam, but never progressed beyond that.

I endured this routine for three years. Then, to my delight, Mr Tewson retired and went to live in Ormskirk. I was off the hook at last and stayed well clear of the piano. I fancied the guitar much more, and my parents graciously bought me a second-hand Spanish-style one for Christmas 1954. I loved the orderliness of the chord positions on the fretboard and would fiddle around playing and humming to myself for hours in my bedroom. Those were the days before guitars were common, and most people had not seen one before.

I wasn't finished with the piano, however. Dad formed a quartet of singers from the church. He himself sang bass and my mother soprano. The need was for someone to accompany them, since it was neither convenient nor normal for one of the singers to play as well. They persuaded me that I was capable of doing it and I accompanied them in several performances at church. But I was always up-tight about it and certainly didn't enjoy it.¹ Later, my Dad got a piano accordion, and when I was coming up fifteen I began to try to play it. I could manage the normal keys, but the buttons for the left hand posed a bit of a problem. It was a change, however, and before long I would master those buttons and play the accordion regularly.

As for singing, I enjoyed it, particularly harmonising a bit. I didn't have a particularly good voice, but I could hold a note, and this resulted in my being persuaded, when I was fifteen, to become one third of a male voice trio that sang in church meetings now and again. The other two members were my Dad and a Scot called Bill Gibb. Our output was pretty mediocre, and it didn't last.

Breakthrough on the piano

My piano breakthrough came not long before I was fifteen. One day Dad was having a half-hour on the piano in the front room at Queens Road. I wandered in and listened for a while. As usual, he had no music in front of him but was playing with total confidence, and I marvelled.

'How on earth do you do that, Dad?' I asked.

'It's easy, really,' he replied. 'It's all based on chord-patterns—a bit like the ones you use on the guitar, except that they're on the keyboard. Come here and I'll show you what I mean. Let's start with

¹ The peak of my playing for the quartet was early 1955, when I was fourteen.

something simple in the key of C so we don't have to worry about the black notes.'

I pulled up a chair and he launched into *The Bells Of St Mary's* in C. He showed me the 'shape' of the chord of C major, and of G major, and of F. Then he showed me what a seventh was. I understood it



Playing the piano at the Gospel Hall, with my best friend in the background - knitting.

all clearly. Hey, maybe I could do this! He walked out of the room and left me to it. Within a short time I was managing a passable rendition of *The Bells Of St Mary's* in the key of C. I realised quickly that the chord principle could be applied to any tune I knew, and in no time I was playing lots of tunes—all in the key of C, of course. I was elated and used to spend hours tackling new tunes and becoming more adventurous with the upper and lower extremities of the keyboard. It was most enjoyable.

Dad went on to explain about different keys and their respective chord-patterns, and how one key related to others. It was a marvellous challenge. I loved music's orderliness and predictability. I had the bit between my teeth and never looked back. I found I had the same ability as my Dad to play a tune—once it was in my head—in any key, and soon I was playing regularly at the Gospel Hall. At home I would play the piano for hours on end just for pleasure. Certainly music ranked among the loves of my life shortly after I became 16, when I wrote, 'I love music, poetry and Faith, particularly the latter'¹

During the following summer holidays I noted that I was 'playing the piano four hours a day nowadays'.²

I also liked the organ. At church we had a very basic instrument, but I would often spend an hour or two playing it when I had cleaned the Gospel Hall stove out. Occasionally I got the chance to have a go on a 'proper' organ with several manuals and foot pedals. The Brethren's annual Sunday School Conference was held in April 1957 at the huge Gillingham Methodist Church in Bradford and, between sessions, I was allowed to play its superb three-manual organ with its full set of foot pedals. I loved letting rip and feeling the whole building around me reverberating with the sound. There was an even better instrument at the Wibsey Wesleyan Reform Church in Bradford, and whenever one of the Bradford Brethren assemblies hired the building for a conference I made sure I got on the organ. In due course I played it for the conference meetings—not half as much fun as playing around and making the great bass pipes really snort!

My parents' music was pretty well limited to the kind of songs we sang at church. Dad, however, was also an admirer of the piano style of Charlie Kunz, who had a distinctive way of using thirds in the bass, and Dad often jazzed up some of the regular hymns and choruses in the Kunz style. But I don't recall either of my parents ever listening to classical music, so I didn't either.

The classics

Then one day³ a Marconi radiogram appeared in our living room. It was a unit containing both a radio

¹ Diary entry, 19 Nov 1956

² Diary entry, 23 Aug 1957

³ 13th October 1958

and a gramophone (only later was the name 'record-player' invented). My Dad's boss, Mr Lindsay, had owned it but for some reason it had become surplus to requirements and he had given it to my Dad. It now sat on top of a walnut-veneered cupboard that came with it to house the substantial number of twelve-inch diameter 78rpm records that were also part of the gift.

Many of these discs were of classical pieces. Over a period of time I listened to all of them. I grew to love, in particular, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, which I put on again and again. It was a bit of a nuisance having to change the record several times during the performance, but that was normal with that early type of record. Soon I knew every movement by heart and would whistle along to the orchestra, even though Mum said it sounded better without the whistling! It has remained my favourite piece of classical music throughout my life.

Friends

I always had school friends, of course, but the transient nature of school life means that such friendships rarely last. Of all my friends at BGS I have strong memories of only one: Brian Sunderland. His parents ran a fish and chip shop in Eccleshill. Every day, twice a day, for several years he and I would meet up at the bottom of Queens Road and walk together along Woodview to school. It was as we began one of those walks that a memorable conversation took place.

Sometime earlier, my Dad had suffered a bout of serious kidney trouble but, even though he had been in hospital a couple of times, the medics didn't seem to be getting to the bottom of it. He began to explore some alternative treatments, particularly naturopathy. He spent several weeks at Kingston Clinic, the naturopathic residential clinic in Edinburgh, and felt so much better as a result that he was sold on naturopathy ever after. This meant a change of eating regime for the whole family, with far more fruit and vegetables. Mum had always been a great cook, so this was a challenge she rose to with enthusiasm. She tried out new recipes and new vegetables. She baked wholemeal bread. It was all good, tasty food and none of the family complained.

It was against this background that the memorable conversation with Brian Sunderland took place as we sauntered back to school one day along Woodview about 1.30pm. I began it:

—'What've you had for dinner, then?'

—'What do you think? Fish and chips, worse luck. What did you have?'

—'Stuffed aubergines.'

In those days most British people had never even heard of an aubergine, never mind tasted one. Brian was flabbergasted.

Trainspotting and chemistry

Brian was my companion in several shared interests, particularly around the age of fourteen and fifteen. We were both keen trainspotters, prompted in part, no doubt, by the fact that our daily rendezvous on the way to school was Manningham Station and its engine sheds, just at the bottom of Queens Road. Soon we were taking trips—on the train, of course—to cities like Leeds, York, Manchester, Crewe and Doncaster, spending the day there with our Ian Allan books of loco numbers and looking for previously unspotted locomotives to mark off by underlining them in the list. A couple of times we even went down to London for the day.

We were also into chemistry. Down in one of the big cellars at our house we set up a chemistry 'lab' where we conducted experiments that had little to do with our school chemistry lessons. We would

regularly call in at a chemist's shop in the city centre to buy chemical supplies. Bangs and smells from the cellar were familiar to my family.

Photography became another hobby, though unlike the other two a solitary one. Mum and Dad bought me my first camera for my fifteenth birthday—a German model, a Digna Dacora.¹ It's no surprise that some of my first subjects were railway engines!

Church friends

My best friends during my teens were my church friends. Paul Varley came on the scene when I was sixteen. He was my own age, soon made a commitment to Christ and became my closest friend. He lived on Midland Terrace and came from a non-Christian family, who were glad to see the back of him for an hour or so every Sunday afternoon when he came to Sunday School in Bolton Woods.

I remember the shock I had when I first invited him to come for tea with us after the Sunday afternoon activities at church. We had to pass his house to get to ours, so he said he would call in and ask his parents if it would be OK. I waited outside the door, which he left ajar as he went in and asked permission. His Dad's string of profane language shocked me to the core. The atmosphere was thoroughly unpleasant, but Paul got permission and after that was a regular visitor to our house.

Most of the other youngsters at church, however, were girls. There was Faith, of course, who was special, but she was just one of half a dozen girls of similar age. The group of us did lots of things together. An unmarried schoolteacher called Grace Lines was our unofficial youth leader. She organised walks and outings of various kinds for us. She even changed her car for a minibus so that we could all travel together for trips into the Yorkshire Dales and elsewhere.

A small group of us went to her house, 25 Bolton Lane, most Friday evenings, when I was fourteen and fifteen, for a session of the Young Sowers' League. These sessions were chiefly dedicated to working through the YSL system of Bible questions and memory verses, so it was heads down at the table most of the time with our Bibles (1611 Authorized Version) and notebooks open, but with plenty of chat as well. Faith was a regular and I always sat next to her. Just to be in her company was a delight. At the end of the session Mrs Lines would usually provide us with supper—often chips fried in butter.

Marske Camp

Each summer we all went to a children's camp for about 150 youngsters run by some Brethren people in Leeds. It took place in a collection of wooden buildings on the cliff-top at Marske-by-the-Sea, near Saltburn on the Yorkshire coast. I first went when I was twelve. My Dad soon got involved in the running of it, and later my mother, so I went every year until I left for university.

We had lots of fun together, especially after lights-out in the dorms, where we occupied rows of bunks. Giggles, jokes and various escapades kept us awake, though as the week progressed and we got increasingly tired the silly periods grew shorter.

The food was very basic, though there was plenty of it. The teatime meal was always bread and jam. Some rascals used to sing a skit on the children's hymn *There is a happy land*:

*There is a happy camp far, far away
Where they get bread and jam three times a day.
Ham and eggs they never see,
Get no sugar in their tea,*

¹ It cost £4.10s.0d

*And they are gradually
Fading away.*

There was always a 'camp padre', usually a missionary on furlough, who would speak at the morning and evening meetings. An outstanding one—at the 1957 camp—was Horace Coleman, a missionary from Northern Rhodesia (later called Zambia). Out there he and his family lived on a motor launch called *The Galilee* that sailed around Lake Bangweulu stopping at villages and holding evangelistic meetings.

Accompanying Mr Coleman at the camp was his son Kenny, who impressed me by the seriousness of his faith and the fact that he was studying an advanced Emmaus Bible Study course. I had no idea at that time that I myself would later become a regular visitor to Zambia.

My friend Paul went to the camp with me.

He played the mouthorgan, so we would often sit on the fence and play together to anybody who cared to listen, he on the mouthorgan and I on the guitar.

The special friend

Faith had been my special friend since I had declared my love to her at the age of thirteen. Our friendship grew steadily, though not without its setbacks.

One of our problems was my parents' objection. At that early stage they had nothing concrete to object to—all our time together was in the company of others. As a bunch of youngsters we would go on outings and visit other churches all over Yorkshire together, especially in the conference season.

On 12th December 1954 we all went to see an evangelistic film entitled *Oil Town USA*. We sat in the balcony, and Faith and I took advantage of the darkness to hold hands for the first time. Wowee!

Once it became apparent that we were seriously sweet on each other Mum and Dad began to reveal their disapproval. One Saturday in October 1955 a group of us had travelled to Leeds on the diesel train to attend the Marske Camp reunion at one of the Brethren churches. As we walked across Leeds city centre from the station to get the bus to the Gospel Hall, Faith and I naturally held hands. But somebody split on us to my parents and the following day my Dad gave me a stern lecture on the inappropriateness of my behaviour. I listened dutifully, but I'm afraid it went in at one ear and out at the other. In my diary I noted, 'I didn't take it too seriously'. Certainly I had no intention



A group of Bolton Woods young people at Marske Camp, 1955. Faith and I are on the back row next to my mother. I was nearly 15, Faith 13½. My two sisters are at either end of the front row: Christine on the left (10) and Hazel on the right (7).



My friend Paul Varley and I making music at Marske Camp, August 1957.

of stopping.

At the Marske camp itself in the summer of 1955, when I was fourteen and she thirteen, we had walked into Saltburn and Redcar with our arms around each other's waist and held hands walking on the beach. We were serious about each other, as my diaries from that period testify almost daily! But our first real kiss wasn't until Saturday 15th October 1955—a date to remember! Things looked up from there, and I noted a couple of months later that I reckoned I had kissed her twenty times!

Opposition to our friendship

There was an older lady in our church called Emily Lines. Older than my parents, she was a domineering, manipulative character who had learnt to twist my mother round her little finger. She considered herself a friend of our family and used to boast to people about the features that she reckoned made us a cut above the ordinary: in particular my Dad's job, and the fact that I attended Bradford Grammar School. What's more, it now looked as if I was headed for university, which in those days was something of a rarity, so she became a self-appointed champion of mine.

But she didn't like the fact that I was going out with Faith, whom she considered socially inferior. She looked down on her for being born out of wedlock and for being part of a 'poor' family. She couldn't understand why I stuck with such a girl. In her view I would be far better marrying a 'legitimate' girl from good Brethren stock, and preferably one with a better social and educational pedigree. Her frustration came to the surface one day when I was about seventeen. 'That girl Faith isn't good enough to clean your shoes!' she blustered. I replied firmly that she was—and that was the end of the conversation!

For some time Faith and I had been managing to get a bit of time together now and then. I would sometimes walk up to the grassy area of stone quarries above Bolton Woods. By some strange coincidence she would be up there already! Also, we often had the Gospel Hall stove to thank for a chance to be together. The stove was a cast-iron pot-bellied affair that burned coke and was for many years the only source of heating in the building. After a Sunday's use it would need to be emptied of the cinders and laid out with paper and sticks for its next use. I made it my job to come on to Bolton Woods on the Monday or Tuesday evening to do the stove-cleaning in readiness for the Wednesday night children's meeting and the prayer meeting that followed it, and as often as not Faith, who lived right opposite, would come over for a spot of canoodling in the Gospel Hall porch.

My parents continued to be kind and pleasant to Faith, but their basic disapproval of her as my girlfriend continued right up to my departure to university. I said to them as I was about to leave for Bristol in September 1959, 'Look after Faith for me.' But they made it clear that they intended no such thing, and I know they hoped I might meet someone else once I got away from home. As for me, I knew I never would, and of course I didn't.

Working for 'A' Levels

From September 1957 I faced two years of hard work if I was to get the three 'A' Level subjects I was entered for: English, French and Spanish. At this specialised stage the classes were small—with obvious advantages—and the teachers were good.



*My gorgeous Faith,
age 17*



10th Sept 1957 – on holiday at my Uncle Cyril and Auntie Nora's in Whitley Bay just before my 17th birthday.

In addition to the 'A' Level subjects, they felt I should also get a qualification in Latin, so I received one-to-one coaching (at the extortionate price of 15/- per hour¹) for the Latin 'O' Level exam held at the end of my first year in the Sixth Form. My teacher for this was Mr H.A. Twelves, who I had come to appreciate as a man of fairness and integrity as well as being skilled in his specialisms, chief of which was French. He was a prominent Christadelphian. His son Peter was in the school and a member with me of the group of three students working for 'A' level Spanish—we were starting the language from scratch and taking the exam after just two years. The other boy was Kenneth Booth, who had a posh voice and used to declaim Shakespeare like a professional actor.

Love of language

By this time I had come to love and appreciate language in general very much. I loved its subtleties and its precision. I enjoyed linguistic jokes, and one of these passed between the French teacher and me in March 1958 without anyone else

catching on—a very special moment for me.

Mr Twelves was teaching us, a class of about fifteen. We were studying the *Lettres* of Madame de Sévigné, a courtier at Versailles in the era of Louis XIV. We were expected to work ahead, reading a chapter or two in advance of our next lesson, looking up and noting down any new words we came across. Mr Twelves—popularly known as Monsieur Douze, or Douzy for short—was very sharp at finding out if we had done so.

In the chapter in question Mme de Sévigné was describing the attire of some lady at court who was 'tout habillée de point de France'—'*point*' meaning 'lace'. M. Douze, at his desk facing the class, raised his beady eyes from the textbook in front of him, fixed his gaze on a hapless student and asked him, 'Ah, Monsieur Brown, "*point*", qu'est-ce que c'est?'

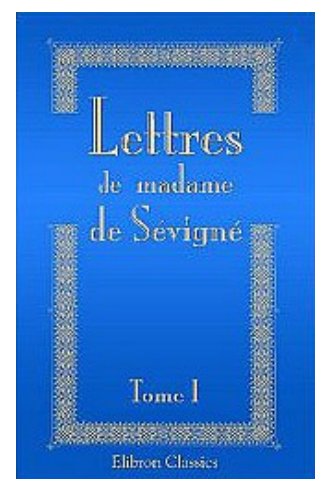
The poor lad clearly didn't know, having failed to prepare by looking it up and writing it down. He dug himself deeper into M. Douze's disfavour by making a couple of wild guesses and then resigned himself to further probing about his lack of preparation. Douzy pressed him with, 'Alors, Monsieur Brown, vous n'avez *point* écrit?'

The boy was silent, as were all the others, who kept their heads down, fearing that sir might ask them instead. But I got the clever play on words, which M. Douze had made very consciously. I looked up and caught his eye. He gave me a surreptitious wink and I knew that something special had passed between us. Brill!

Poetry

I had a love/hate relationship with poetry, which formed a substantial part of my English studies. I disliked the pretentiousness of much of it, especially where the poet's personal arrogance came through. I disliked what seemed to me like the forced use of language. Yet I had to concede that, from

¹ 75 pence in today's money! These coaching sessions lasted for only a term, after which I was able to join a regular class.



time to time, poets succeeded in expressing in most memorable ways truths and observations which, had they been in prose, would have been banal.

I loved Wordsworth. I loved the lilt of his language, and his descriptions of walks in the high fells of the Lake District struck a chord with my own rambles and runs in the Yorkshire Dales. The only difference was that, whereas he invested nature with an almost god-like personality of its own and sometimes walked in fear, I saw, beyond the grand terrain, the true Creator God and worshipped him. I also took a liking to Gerard Manley Hopkins. He, of course, was a committed Christian himself whose faith shone through in his poetry. I delighted in his 'sprung rhythm' and tightly-crafted use of words.

So it was inevitable that I had a crack at poetry-writing myself. My teenage diaries record on several occasions the frustration I struggled with as my literary efforts fell far short of the quality of Wordsworth and Hopkins. But I did persist, trying to capture in words my moments of particular wonderment, agony or joy. Some also expressed my longing to know God better. Here's one of the better non-spiritual ones, recorded after I had taken Faith home to Bolton Woods one stormy night and we had lingered for a spot of kissing and cuddling at the top of Bolton Hall Road. There the street lamps stopped and the road petered out into a track leading up into the grass-covered slopes of the high quarries. I was just eighteen:

The Wall

I can recall a howling, windy night,
When darkness, damp and blustering, swiftly sped
Across the low grey sky; the hill rose bare
Against the roaring clouds, and rustling there
The waving grass soon darkened out of sight;
A stark, black pylon reared its steely head
Above the wind-whipped earth. — We neither spoke
Nor moved.
The cables hung low, humming as they swung,
Now whining as the wild wind whistled high;
The damp stones shivered in the biting air,
And all seemed cold and bleak and moving there.
And we were there that night, but we were young;
We scarcely heard the lonely wind's long sigh,
For we stood in the angle of a wall
And loved.¹

Trip to Spain

In the summer of 1958 I went abroad for the first time ever. Neither of my parents had ever been out of the country, so this was a first for the family. In order to further develop my Spanish I went to Spain. In those days travel agents were few and far between, but Thomas Cook had a branch in Bradford and they arranged an itinerary for me. I would be away for two weeks, spending the first week in San Sebastián and the second in Madrid. The bill came to £51 and I was truly grateful to my parents for parting with such a huge amount of money for my trip.

Holiday flights at that time were as rare as travel agents, and my journey was to take me instead by train to London and on to Dover, by ferry to Calais, then by train again down through France, across

¹ Written on 24th Sept 1958

the Spanish border at Irún and on to San Sebastián. I was only seventeen and would be travelling alone—an exciting prospect.



One of my San Sebastián photos, taken on 35mm slide film – the view from Monte Igueldo.

I had a great week in San Sebastián, staying at the Hotel Regina. It was sunny and hot, the surroundings were exotic and there was something new and exciting to discover round every corner. I wandered around the town and along the beach day after day, munching *churros* and talking to people as often as I could to improve my Spanish. Grace Lines had lent me her 35mm camera—a Kodak Retinette—for the trip and I took pictures on Kodachrome colour transparency film.

At the end of the first week another long train journey took me across central Spain to Madrid. My meals on these journeys were part of the deal, and I was duly summoned to the dining car for dinner. I made my choice from the menu, then the waiter caught me by surprise by asking if I would like wine with my meal. My parents' Methodist background meant they had always been strictly teetotal and they had drilled into me the evils of drink. So now I was pulled two ways: their brainwashing made me want to say no, but the desire to try the forbidden fruit inclined me to a yes. I recalled, too, that my visit to the cinema hadn't polluted me, so maybe a small drink of wine wouldn't either. Anyway, my Mum and Dad were hundreds of miles away so I said yes. 'Red or white?' the waiter asked. I had no idea of their respective qualities, so chose white.

The meal arrived, and a half-bottle of white wine with it. I know now that it was an extremely dry one and probably not the best for a novice. I didn't get through very much of it, but I had the satisfaction of having broken a new boundary—and the meal itself was excellent.

Arrival in Madrid saw me soon installed in the Hotel Magnus in the Ronda de Toledo. My first meal there was dinner and I had a chat with the waitress who had brought me my steak and chips. She asked me who I had come to Spain with and was astonished to learn that someone so young as myself had travelled all that way alone. Eyes wide open, she looked at me as I sat there at the dining table with its crisp white tablecloth and exclaimed, '*¿Solito?*'—which means something like 'All on your poor little owny-o?'

My first full day in Madrid was a Sunday. With my parents' encouragement I had already been in touch with the elders of the Brethren assembly there and in my wallet I carried a 'letter of commendation' from my own church elders in Bradford. I found the meeting place, located at 32 Trafalgar Street, and had a great time in the meeting. I was delighted to find that I understood most of the proceedings.

The elders assigned Joaquín, a young man of my own age, to look after me and, after the meeting, he and a couple of his friends offered to walk me back to my hotel. As it was swelteringly hot they soon veered off the pavement into a bar and ordered a round of *cerveza*. I'd never had any kind of beer before but the day was too hot to fuss and I knocked the glass back with relish. It was ice-cold and delightfully



In my hotel bedroom in Madrid, with Joaquín and the botijo.

refreshing. They ordered a second round and I downed this glass more out of politeness. When I stood up to continue the walk to my hotel I nearly fell over. One glass of wine and two of beer in twenty-four hours was probably too much for someone who had never drunk alcohol of any kind before. Joaquín and his friends found my reaction amusing but, to their credit, they grouped themselves closely around me and kept me upright till we arrived at the hotel, where I promptly sagged onto my bed and slept.

Joaquín led me into further sin a couple of days later. I had mentioned to him that I was keen to see that most typical of Spanish activities, a bull-fight. He pointed out that the church leaders didn't think Christians should be seen at such places but added, with a twinkle in his eye, that he would see what he could do. He obtained two tickets, which I paid for, and so it was that I found myself with him in the vast Madrid bull-ring. I can't say I enjoyed it. It was a bloody affair and, while the toreadors ran a real risk of injury or death, the dice were loaded against the bulls from the start. It was an interesting experience but I would never go again.

Otherwise I had a great week. I visited the Prado art gallery, the Retiro park and the impressive Plaza Mayor. I walked for miles exploring the city and taking in the sights. I took the bus or train out of the city to visit places further afield. Being alone was no problem at all—I had always enjoyed my own company. As a typical Spanish souvenir I bought a *botijo*—an earthenware water-cooler—and somehow managed to get the brittle object home in one piece. In fact it survives to the time of writing, living now in our bathroom.

The whole holiday was wonderful, and my Spanish improved no end by the time I made my way to the station for the long journey home and the start of my year in the Upper Sixth at Bradford Grammar School.

Upper Sixth Form

At the start of the term I was appointed a prefect—a position of real honour at that prestigious school and one that carried considerable clout, including the authority to impose punishment on younger boys who misbehaved.



*My Bradford Grammar School
prefect's badge*

Appointment was a formal affair in the presence of the assembled school and staff. When my name was called I stood forward. The headmaster, in full cap and gown, shook my hand and pinned the prefect's badge to my lapel, intoning: 'You are appointed a prefect. I invest you with this badge, distinctive of your office, and congratulate you on your appointment.' Shortly after, I wrote in my diary about looking forward to being with Faith the following evening: 'I will hold her tight, and she will lean her head against my prefect's badge!'

It was hard work those two years. At the same time as working through a string of English literary texts I was also grappling with French works by the likes of Racine, Corneille and Molière and a string of Spanish ones, including *Don Quijote* and Bécquer's *Cartas*

Desde Mi Celda. But it all paid off. I passed the Latin 'O' Level at the end of my first Sixth Form year, then Spanish, French and English 'A' Levels at the end of the second, with a Distinction in Spanish.

Aiming for university

Around the time of my 'A' Levels it was agreed between me, my parents and the school that I would

aim to go to university. I would stay on at BGS another year after 'A' levels to prepare for this.

In those days only about five per cent of the British population were privileged to receive a university education. Certainly nobody in my family—in fact nobody at all that I knew, apart from pupils who had graduated from Bradford Grammar School—had ever been anywhere near a university. So this was a big thing for me.

It would be an expensive challenge for my parents, but there was a system of entrance examinations and, with it, the possibility that if I reached a high enough standard I might be granted a scholarship covering at least a proportion of the fees. The school entered me for two such exams, one at Bristol, the other, more prestigiously, at Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge.

I travelled down to Bristol first, in January 1959, and sat the exam. It seemed to go OK, but I knew my chances of a scholarship were slim—there were only 21 available for 420 candidates. I stayed overnight in Keynsham, just outside the city, with Ron and Betty Pitman, a couple whose friendship with my parents dated from the two men's wartime service together. Mr Pitman wisely took my mind off the exam, once it was over, by taking me to nearby Bath, where we visited the Roman baths and other tourist spots. We went into the famous Pump Room¹ and I suddenly remembered that my Dad used to boast he had once unofficially played the piano there. Dare I match his exploit? There, at the end of the room, stood the very grand piano he had played. Small groups of tourists were wandering around admiring the architectural features. Taking my courage in both hands, I walked up to the piano, found that the lid wasn't locked so drew out the stool, sat on it and played a couple of hymn tunes. *Touché, Dad!*

So that was the Bristol exam over. I would now have to wait a couple of months for the Cambridge one. Then I was suddenly faced with a dilemma. I received a letter from the University of Bristol offering me not only a place but also an Open Exhibition in Modern Languages—which meant a scholarship to pay the bulk of my fees. The problem was the strict deadline by which I had to tell them whether or not I would accept the place, and the deadline came before the Cambridge examination! After some thought and discussions with family and school staff, I decided to accept the place at Bristol and forego the possibility of doing a degree at Cambridge.



The Pump Room, Bath, today. The piano is visible at the far end.

Encounter in a field

So things had moved forward for me on the academic front, but on the spiritual front I remained—in my own assessment—distinctly average. Sure, I continued to be regular at church and Sunday School and I certainly hadn't kicked over the traces or become a tearaway. In April of 1955 I'd been on a week's Christian houseparty in St Anne's, Lancashire, organised by a Dr Johnson, who was a psychologist.² And my diary records that in March 1955 I prayed publicly for the first time at one of the Young Sowers' League meetings. Several times during 1957 I exclaimed in my diary, 'How great

¹ These days it is a restaurant, but at that time it was used chiefly for chamber music concerts.

² The return train fare from Bradford was 13/8d (about 70p). I had received pocket money for a few years, but it was around this time that I started earning a bit by going into Henry Lindsay Ltd. to help out with some basic typing and other office duties. My first 'wage' was £1, which prompted a diary comment: 'Not bad, eh?'

to be a Christian!’—and I meant it. I expressed more than once my desire to grow as a follower of Jesus: ‘Wish I was a more lively Christian so that I may be more of an example to those at school.’¹

It was in terms of my Christian witness at school that I was particularly unhappy with myself. I sometimes gave in to the pressure to be ‘one of the lads’ by swearing and telling dirty jokes. But gradually things improved. Early in 1958, aged 17, I became a founder member of the Junior SCM (Student Christian Movement), an informal occasional meeting on Christian topics for any pupils who were interested. Many were, and we often had 40 or more attending. I became one of the regular speakers. Eventually the teachers all became aware of my Christian convictions and one of them, Mr Newhouse, a Quaker, regularly used to address me in class as ‘Bishop Matthew’.

On one occasion Mr Newhouse, who taught English, asked me to address the class for fifteen minutes on ‘What I believe’, then for the remaining thirty minutes to answer the class’s questions. It was tough, but I did my best. About five years later I had occasion to recall it:

‘It was a tremendous ordeal for me at the time, and I remember Dad and I having prayer together about it before I went to school. We prayed that the Lord would use it to the blessing of many of the lads. The ordeal passed. The interest and curiosity were encouraging, but that was all. No souls flocking to be saved! One day during this last summer vacation as I was going to town on a trolley-bus, someone tapped me on the arm. It was a boy called Wedgworth who had been in my year at school. He is at Oxford now, I believe. He asked whether I remembered speaking one afternoon on my Christian faith. Yes, I did. That was the first real link in the chain of events leading to his conversion, he said. So we praised the Lord together. God answers prayer!’²

Another Christian milestone was when the whole school learnt to sing Stanford’s version of an early Christian hymn, the *Te Deum*, for the Founders’ Day service and I loved both the soaring majesty of the music—sung by over a thousand boys and their teachers to the school’s magnificent organ—and the piece’s solid affirmation of the Christian faith and of the continuity of present-day believers with those who had gone before:

The glorious company of the apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.
The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee,
the Father of infinite majesty.

So while I continued to feel less than happy with myself in terms of my overall Christian effectiveness, the demanding ‘A’ Level work schedule soon helped take my mind off things. From time to time, however, it would surface again and I began to yearn for a deeper experience of the Lord. In June 1958, when I was 17, I wrote in my diary: ‘I am a feeble-spirited wretch and a very poor Christian.’ Then I added a quotation from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins that I felt expressed my spiritual aspirations: ‘Oh, I’ll leap up to my Christ!’

The situation changed dramatically when in 1959 my parents sent me, aged eighteen, on an Easter Retreat. They didn’t ask whether I wanted to go, and if they had done I might have declined. They just booked me in and presented it as a *fait accompli*. I was more than a bit annoyed but felt obliged to go along with it.

¹ 29th May 1956

² Diary entry, 29th Jan 1962

Thus I found myself at the home of Mr Stanley Warren in Allerton Road, Bradford. He was a good Brethren man, a member of the Kensington Hall assembly, and was the Assistant Postmaster of Bradford, a prestigious position with a good income enabling him to live in this huge house which, with its stable block, was well able to accommodate the fifteen or so young people who came to the Retreat.

Mr Warren and George Skelly—a jeweller from Leeds—took the teaching sessions. My job was to play the grand piano for the singing.



*Mr Warren's house in Allerton Road, Bradford,
where the Easter Retreat was held
when I was 18.*

The weekend's main theme was the desert experience of the Israelites described in the Old Testament. They had escaped from their slavery through the shedding of the Passover Lamb's blood and its application to their homes. Now they were free at last and, having passed through the waters of the Red Sea, were en route to the Promised Land, that place of conquest and prosperity that God had undertaken to give them. But they were not yet there; they were stuck in the desert, thanks to their waywardness and disobedience.

The challenge came to us: 'Are you like the Israelites? You may be truly redeemed, thanks to the shed blood of Jesus. You may even have been through the Red Sea of baptism.

But are you living a life of victory, which is what God intends for you, or are you stuck in the desert? If you are in the desert, God wants you to be obedient to him, to cross the River Jordan and to press on into the Promised Land.'

Chellow Dene

This challenge hit me like a sledgehammer. To my mind I fitted the desert-dweller description to a tee. Like the Israelites, my spiritual life was one of barrenness and defeat. Maybe, in line with my personality, I was dwelling a bit too much on the negative side, but that's how it seemed at the time.

I felt dreadful. All I knew was that I needed to get away from everybody at the retreat. So as soon as lunch was over, when we were given a period of free time, I left the house and headed up the road. I didn't really know the area so I headed for where some of us had been for a walk the day before. It was an extensive area of woodland around a couple of Victorian reservoirs, called Chellow Dene. I just walked and walked, churned up inside and desperately wanting to get out of the spiritual wilderness. Eventually I came to a field with a few sheep in it, climbed over the fence and sat on the grass at its edge.

It was a quiet spot and no other human being was within sight or sound, so I prayed out loud, and prayed as I'd never prayed before, with almost violent earnestness. I told the Lord that I really did want to be an out-and-out Christian, not the two-faced approximation I felt I'd been, but that I couldn't manage it on my own, just as I couldn't conquer my besetting sins. I needed to cross the River Jordan, to get out of the desert and into the Promised Land. 'If I'm going to get anywhere at all, Lord,' I concluded, 'you're going to have to help me, because I just can't do it by myself. Help, Lord! Help!' I almost shouted the last bit.

Then it happened—the nearest I've ever been to a direct encounter with the Lord. He overwhelmed me with a sense of his presence and love. It was as if a soothing mist enveloped me, assuring me that

all was well and that my prayer had been not only heard but answered. A profound joy began to bubble up from deep inside me and I smiled. I just knew that the Lord was with me and would never let me go. He would help me. He would sustain me. He would use me. I rose to my feet and felt as if I was walking on air. God was truly wonderful! I just sat there enjoying his presence.

A changed person

Then I looked at my watch. To my astonishment time had flown by and I would need to move fast to get back to the house for the next session. I jogged back with utter joy, as if in heaven itself. I nipped



The woodlands at Chellow Dene, Allerton, Bradford. Later, we would live nearby and walk here regularly.

into the dormitory to pick up my Bible, then went into the meeting room and took my seat on the piano stool without getting the chance to speak to anybody. Almost immediately, Mr Warren entered the room, his Bible tucked under his arm. He stood in the doorway and looked around to check that everybody was present.

His eyes took me in and were moving on round the room when he suddenly did a double-take. His eyes settled back on me and, without a word, he came quietly over. Leaning towards me, he whispered, 'What's happened to you?'

It didn't occur to me at the time, but how did he know that *anything* had happened to me? Something of my blessed encounter in the field must have hung around me to catch his attention. I whispered back, 'I've got over Jordan!' He looked at me intently for a moment, said, 'Praise the Lord!' and took his place to conduct the meeting. I was still smiling and intensely happy.

Things were different after that. I took a bolder stand at school and became active in my Christian witness there. I found a new pleasure in personal prayer and in reading the Bible, which came alive to me in a dramatic new way. I reviewed my life, my activities, my priorities and made some major changes. Life was different. Life was good. I was in the Promised Land—the place where there would always be a degree of conflict with evil, but where victory was there for the asking. I had asked, and I had received.

Looking back, I believe that the encounter in the field was my baptism in the Holy Spirit. Certainly it transformed my life the way Pentecost had transformed the lives of the early Christians. I didn't speak in tongues or prophesy, as they had done. That was no doubt because, in the Brethren, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were viewed as given to the church just for the period up to the completion of the canon of the New Testament, after which they became redundant. I'd been raised with stories of people speaking in tongues who, a Chinese visitor declared, had been cursing God in fluent Mandarin. So I wasn't open to any of that stuff. But God had been gracious and baptised me in his Spirit anyway. The tongues and prophesying would follow some years later.

The change in me was immediately apparent to my parents and the other folk in the church. I gave a testimony about my experience to the rest of the young people's group and most of them, too, were baptised in the Spirit. The first one was Faith, who was by this time my serious girlfriend. Eventually virtually everyone in the church came to enjoy the same experience, and our church was never the same again.

That fact did not go unnoticed by the other Brethren assemblies in the county, who quickly gave us the cold shoulder. Invitations to conferences dried up. Speakers who had been coming to preach for

years now made their excuses. We were on our own, through no choice of our own. But we continued to enjoy God and each other and went from strength to strength.

As for me, I threw myself into everything and had a settled conviction that, sooner or later, the Lord would draw me into full-time Christian service. I'd had that feeling from the time I'd made my commitment to Christ at the age of 12, but it had received a huge boost with my recent experience. I got from Mr Warren a copy of Nunn's *Elements Of New Testament Greek* and began teaching myself the language of the New Testament.

Earning some money

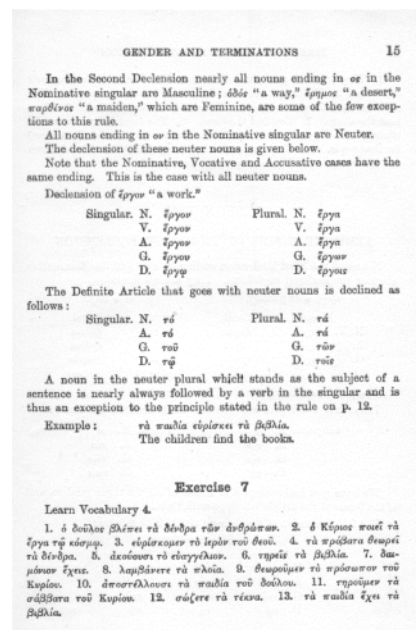
I left school in July 1959, aged eighteen, and enjoyed the summer break. But I also felt I should make some effort to earn a bit of money. My parents had always been good providers and I had never gone short of anything on the material front. Dad had won steady promotion at Henry Lindsay Ltd, with salary-increases to match. I had earlier earned small amounts of money myself by doing a few stints at that company in the school holidays, but I began to feel that I didn't want to be tied into Lindsays, so I looked for alternative work as university loomed.

I got a job for a few weeks at Allied Industrial Services at Lidget Green Bradford. This was a huge factory complex in Cemetery Road where they washed and dry-cleaned boiler suits by their thousands for big local companies. The strong smell of solvent pervaded the place and it took me a day or two to get used to it in my lungs. The work required no brain-power at all. I had to go up to a long table upon which were piled thousands of dry-cleaned and folded boiler suits, pick up a stack of a dozen or so and carry them through into the vast sorting room with its miles of Dexion racks and shelving. Sewn inside each boiler suit's collar was a fabric tag with a number on it. I had to look at the number, find the shelf with same number and deposit the suit there. I walked miles each day. No problem with that, but the boring nature of the work numbed my mind. Never in my life before had I suffered such a lack of intellectual stimulation.

The nine-hour working day began at 7.45am, with just 45 minutes for lunch and one fifteen-minute break mid-morning and mid-afternoon. The highlight of each day was a half-hour radio programme called *Workers' Playtime*, which the company played over the tannoy system. I met people who had done this same boring job for years and years—to me a fate worse than death. Happily, I knew that I was there myself for just a few weeks, so I could pace myself. I also used to set myself targets for how many boiler-suits I could rack in a set period. One day I managed 1,467 in all. My wage for this dreary work was £5.10s.7d per week,¹ and 9s.11d² of that was deducted for insurance. But the money, I knew, would come in handy for my big move to Bristol, and that prospect kept me focused.

Arrival in Bristol

To help me with my studies, for Christmas 1960 my Mum and Dad bought me a portable Imperial typewriter, a Good Companion 5, with a Spanish keyboard. It came in a zip-up carry-case and with a course booklet on touch-typing. I realised from my experiences on the typewriters at Lindsay's that



A page from Nunn's *Elements Of New Testament Greek*

¹ Just over £5.50 in today's money.

² 50p

having to look at the keys would always be a major drawback to speed and efficiency, so I set myself to work through the booklet. I worked systematically through the exercises for three hours a day for three days, at the end of which I had got it mastered. I've been able to touch-type ever since—one of the most useful skills I have ever acquired, and one that would stand me in good stead when, many years later, computers came on the scene.



The autumn of 1959 arrived at last and I prepared to leave home for university. Bill Elliott, an ex-missionary to China, gave me a stout trunk. Into this I packed the items I needed for my new life and Lindsays' car took me with it down to Forster Square Station in Bradford city centre, where I paid for it to be sent down to Bristol—along with my bike for getting about down there. I would follow a few days later.

It was on 2nd October 1959 that I left Bradford on the *Devonian*. It left Forster Square at 10.05am and deposited me at Temple Meads Station, Bristol, at 4pm. Mr Pitman met me there and I went to his home for the first night, but I was too excited to sleep very much.

Some time had passed since my encounter with the Holy Spirit at the Easter retreat, but I was still living in the good of it and had therefore been keen to make contact with other Christians in Bristol. Learning that the Christian Union at the university had arranged a few days of fellowship and meetings before the term began, I had fixed to join them. Mr Pitman took me the next day to Clifton Theological College, where the retreat was to be held, and we had a great time of worship and teaching together before settling into the academic routine.

My home for the next three years was Burwalls, a small hall of residence for about sixty students near the Avon Gorge, just across Brunel's famous Clifton Suspension Bridge. This was a toll bridge, even for pedestrians, so along with all the other Burwalls students I was issued with a pass. My first year was in the annexe—Bracken Hill—half a mile up the road in the grounds of the university's botanical gardens, then I moved down to the main building for the remaining two years.

Students in those days didn't have the luxury of single en suite rooms. During my first year I was housed in a large bay-windowed room on the first floor with two other students, with the bathroom and toilet along the corridor. One of my room-mates, Roland, was a Geordie lad from Hartlepool who smoked heavily, the other a Londoner named Roger with a laid-back manner and plummy accent. He was studying maths and planned to become an actuary and make lots of money. Neither of them had any trace of Christian background or interest, so it was a challenge from the start. But we got on well most of the time. I nailed my Christian colours to the mast right at the start and, while neither of the lads embraced the faith themselves, they respected my own position.

The Burwalls evening meal every day was a formal affair. We had to be smartly dressed, complete with jacket and tie, and to wear our student gowns. When the gong sounded we would troop into the oak-panelled dining room and stand behind our chairs. Then the Warden, a geography professor called Mr Graves, would march down the central aisle and take his place at the top table, pronounce grace with the



The Dining Room at Burwalls

words *'Benedictus benedicat'* (I knew the Latin I'd learnt would come in useful—it means *'May the Blessed One bless (the food)'*, then we would take our seats and the meal would be served. When the Master reckoned everyone had finished he would push his chair back and rise to his feet. At this signal we, too, would rise, bow our heads and close our eyes. He would then pronounce, *'Benedicto benedicatur'*—'By the Blessed One it (the food) has been blessed'—and sweep down the aisle towards the door, his gown billowing out behind him, whereupon we were free to leave at our leisure.



Burwalls hall of residence, Bristol University

After the meal, in warm weather we would spend time hanging around in the extensive gardens chatting and laughing. For those who fancied a walk to shake down their dinner, Leigh Woods were on the doorstep and through them you could walk right down to the banks of the River Avon and along the riverside path. Burwalls was a charming place, though a fair distance from the main university complex where we had our lectures. That was a good half-hour's walk away and the bus service at that time was not frequent, so it was good to have my bike for the daily trip into the centre and the mainly uphill trip back. It also helped keep me fit, as did my regular use of chest-expanders, bed-lifts¹ and joining the university's judo club.

University life

I quickly got stuck into the pattern of lectures and working in the Arts Faculty library. My course was primarily Spanish Studies, with French as a subsidiary subject. The head of the Spanish Department,



Bracken Hill House, Bristol, where I lived during my first year at university. The arrow indicates the bedroom I shared with two other students.

Professor J.C.J. Metford, had spent a lot of time in South America, and his enthusiasm for that part of the Spanish-speaking world was infectious, so it was no problem to me when we started studying Paraguayan poets and Nicaraguan novelists. There was a small amount of spoken Spanish in the timetable, mostly discussion sessions with a Spaniard called Don Jesús Méndez. He was a lively and amusing man, and some of the essays he required us to write were very thought-provoking, like the one on *'¿Por qué Dios se esconde tanto?'*—'Why does God hide himself so much?'

But most of the course focused on how the Spanish language developed from Latin, plus the detailed

study of a large number of literary works of every genre. My time at BGS, I found, had prepared me well for all this and I had little difficulty keeping up with the workload.

¹ A popular exercise with students and their metal-framed beds. You moved your bed-head away from the wall, then laid flat on your back on the floor with your head just under the foot of the bed. You grasped the bottom rail of the foot of the bed with both hands, just above your ears, and pushed the bed upwards till your arms were vertical before lowering it again. For a long time I did 60 of these a day!

The social life was lively. At the lightweight end, we did lots of practical joking, like the time we kidnapped the girl-friend of a third-year Burwalls student and locked her in a cupboard, then tied him up to frustrate his attempts to rescue her. The first few weeks of my time there saw some very hot weather, which prompted several large-scale water fights on the lawns. At the more serious end,



University of Bristol main building and tower.

it was common to become engrossed in profound discussions on politics and religion, often into the early hours of the morning. I described one such conversation in my diary:

‘We covered every subject imaginable—art, history, morality, research, Matisse, the history of Israel, university lecturers, social taboos, Hitler, primitive peoples, oratory, mental telepathy, Richard III, Tony Hancock, the Queen, the warden and the decline of Britain as a world power.’¹

Christian life at Bristol

Alongside my studies I got heavily involved from the start with BIFCU—the Bristol Inter-Faculty Christian Union. They held a regular Saturday evening meeting, which drew some excellent speakers, like Jim Packer—whom we nicknamed Jam Picker. There were also group meetings in various parts of the city, and specialised prayer meetings like the South America one, which I joined to find out about, and pray for, missionary work in that part of the world.

Right at the start I befriended a second-year student named Harry Godden, a Baptist studying engineering. He was a delightful lad and we became strongly supportive of each other in our Christian witness. He would later become my best man and, after a few years in engineering, a Baptist minister.

Good though the Christian Union was, I knew instinctively that it couldn’t offer everything I needed. By its very nature it was a group with a constantly-changing membership as students finished their courses and moved away. I needed the stability that only a good local church could provide, so I linked up with the main Brethren assembly in the city, which met in a large building called Bethesda in Alma Road. The Sunday morning Breaking of Bread regularly saw well over two hundred people there, so it lacked the intimacy and family feel I had grown accustomed to back in Bolton Woods.

The teaching, however, was excellent. One of the elders there was Melville Capper, a nationally-famous surgeon and first class Bible teacher. He would open his large Victorian house to students every Sunday afternoon and I went most weeks. Often there would be well over fifty students sitting around, talking and enjoying the snacks that Mrs Capper provided for free. After a while the big man would call us all to order and give a short devotional talk before sending us off with a prayer of blessing. Later, I started going most Sundays to a smaller Brethren assembly, Charleton Hall in Lawrence Hill, which had more in common with what I’d been used to back home.

¹ Diary entry, 15 Feb 1962

Goodbye, King James

Up to going to Bristol I had followed the norm and used the Authorized Version of the Bible—sometimes called the King James Version. Its language dated from 1611, when it was first published, but since I had been brought up with it, its archaic tone was no barrier to my understanding. I should mention also that, being from a Brethren background, I had been nurtured on a particular edition: the Scofield Bible. My diary records that, among the presents I got for Christmas 1956, were the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*—to broaden my grasp of the English language in general—and a zippered pocket edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible*—to keep me on the doctrinal strait and narrow. Scofield was the man, of Brethren stock, who had built into the Authorized Version detailed notes setting out the Dispensational view of God's purpose in history.

Arrival in Bristol, however, brought two challenges on the Bible front. First, most people in the CU seemed to be using the Revised Standard Version (RSV) rather than the AV and, second, one or two

mentioned that they didn't reckon much at all to Scofield's views. I responded to the first challenge by buying a copy of the RSV on my third day in the city; it cost me 15/-¹ at Evangelical Christian Literature, the big Christian bookshop that I had discovered in Park Street, near the university main building. Responding to the second would be a longer-term affair, but by the end of my first year as a student I had rejected the whole Dispensational view for good as an artificial imposition on the Scriptures' revelation.

Indeed, I had for some time been questioning certain aspects of the doctrine my Brethren background had

fed into me. As far back as Easter 1957, when I was sixteen, I had engaged in conversation with a Mr Williams who was a speaker at one of Dr Johnson's retreats, this one in Bridlington. He had spoken on the work of the Holy Spirit and had challenged me to be open to the possibility that the Brethren line on the subject did not do full justice to the biblical data. Now that I was at university, surrounded by devoted and active Christians of every possible denomination with varied ideas on some of the fundamentals, it was a good time to review where I stood on many key issues.

Communication

There was one down-side to life in Bristol. Being so far from home meant that there was no chance of coming home at all during term-time. The motorways hadn't yet been built,² and nobody I knew had a car anyway. It was the train or nothing, and the trains were expensive, so for ten weeks at a time I was separated from Faith.

Since her family didn't have a telephone we both became good letter-writers. She later got me the number of the phone box in the village, and I would ring her there at a prearranged time, feeding coins into the meter at my end, but this was expensive and I didn't have a lot of money to spare, so the letters remained our main means of communication. There were some very attractive girl students in Bristol, of course, but I can honestly say I never wavered in my commitment to my one-and-only back in Bradford.

¹ Fifteen shillings, that is 75p.

² The first section of Britain's first motorway, the M1, opened in 1959. The M5, which takes in Bristol, didn't appear till close to 1970.



Bethesda, Alma Road, Clifton, Bristol

I took the train back to Bradford, my first term behind me, on 15th December 1959. It was wonderful to see everybody again: Faith, my parents, sisters and brother, all the folks at church, and even Mickey the cat. My diary entry for the very last day of 1959 summarises the year as follows:

‘A memorable year. Ebenezer.¹ Easter’s unforgettable experience. Rich blessing in the assembly. Strengthening of my devotion to the Lord. Victory over the sin that held me so long. A deepening of my friendship with Faith and guidance, after many difficulties, as to how far it should go. I am realising now that only God’s will counts. All else is vanity.’

The lure of South America

By the time I got into the swing of my second term in Bristol my fascination with South America had become strong. Professor Metford’s enthusiasm, my reading of Latin American history and literature and my involvement in the prayer group for missionary work there combined to draw me ever more strongly in that direction. I bought an antique copy of Prescott’s *The Conquest Of Peru* and devoured it eagerly.

It was almost inevitable, I suppose, that the underlying desire I had been feeling for a good while to serve God full-time would link up with my South American interest. And it did. Early in March 1960, while reading the first few verses of Jeremiah, some verses seemed to jump out of the page and grab me:

‘Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.”’²

I took this as confirmation of God’s call. Now all I needed was clarity about where exactly in the world that call would be worked out. Two days later I felt I had got it. At the Wednesday night South America Prayer Group we had a visiting speaker, a missionary from Peru called Mrs Milne. She was no hype merchant but spoke gently and warmly about the work she was involved in. After she had fielded our questions she brought things to a close by stressing the great need for, in particular, young men to go and strengthen the work in Peru. That night I wrote in my diary: ‘After my recent prayers I just cannot ignore this. The Lord said on Monday, “...to whoever I send you” and tonight he said, “I send you to the Peruvians.” Praise the Lord for his goodness!’

The fact is, I got it wrong—though it took me a fair few years to realise it. I had put two and two together and made five. I had seen what I wanted to see. The root element of a call to serve God remained sound enough—that had been forming for quite some time. But on the rest I was quite mistaken, and understandably so. For a start, my Brethren background meant that full-time Christian service could only mean being a missionary; the Brethren had no full-time pastors or teachers, so it was missionary or nothing. Then my growing interest in everything Latin American meant that I couldn’t resist anything I saw as a pointer to going



¹ A Hebrew name meaning ‘The Lord has helped us so far’.

² Jeremiah 1:6-8 RSV

there.

As it is, God had mercy on the Peruvians and didn't send me as a missionary to them; I would have been disastrous in that role. Later, God would work out the call to full-time service for me in a totally different way. In the meantime I would have to go through a good deal of internal confusion before I got my mind straight on the issue.

But for the time being all I knew was that I believed God was calling me to be a missionary in Peru. One immediate problem was whether Faith would need her own specific call, separate from mine. This was a big issue. I raised the question with Bill Elliott, who had been a missionary in China, and whose wife had left him. Clearly his own painful experience coloured his reply, which was that unless Faith had a clear personal call of her own, it would be asking for trouble for her to go to Peru with me on the back of mine. I also raised it with Mr Warren at the second Easter retreat at his house in April 1960. He had a totally different view. Faith and I were, he said, clearly an established pair, in love and planning to marry, so my call was good enough for the two of us. We could go to Peru together and expect God to bless us. Understandably, we found his advice more acceptable, so Faith began night-school classes in Spanish.

Capernwray Hall

That summer—1960—we both went for a week to a Christian conference centre near Carnforth, on the fringes of the Lake District. Capernwray Hall was a cross between a castle and a manor-house, a fine old building owned and run by a group of Christians whose speciality was the encouragement of believers to grow in their Christian faith and devotion to the Lord.

I myself had been there for a week the previous summer with Irvin Asquith, a young man from the Kensington Hall assembly in Bradford who spent as much time with our church as with his own, and who had become a friend of mine and a regular eater of meals at our house. We had really enjoyed our stay at Capernwray: good fellowship, first-class teaching, lovely scenery and exciting activities. So it was good to go back and let Faith also enjoy these things.

We had a great time. The ministry was very challenging to us both. One of the areas of our friendship that we had struggled with was how far to go in our demonstration of physical affection. We both

knew that sex before marriage was not what God wanted for us, in spite of the strong temptations in that direction. As a result of the teaching that week we reached agreement on this issue and set ourselves some clear limits and guidelines. It was a liberating decision that strengthened our friendship on every other front.

Then it was back for my second year at Bristol. It went well. I worked hard and had a great time. Dad used to write most weeks with an update on everything that was happening with the church and people back in Bradford. I



Capernwray Hall, near Carnforth, Lancashire

called it his bulletin. It was great for keeping me in touch with family and friends. He was always honest and direct about the problems and difficulties people were facing as well as their joys and triumphs.

One such bulletin brought me some sad news concerning Mickey, the family cat, who had been with us for a good number of years. Queens Road carried a lot of traffic, especially since it had become part of the Bradford Ring Road, and we had always known there was a risk that Mick, on his nightly wanderings, might wander into the road. This, Dad wrote, he had evidently done, and he had gone under the wheels of some heavy vehicle whose weight had flattened him and split him open. He was a gonner. Poor moggy. All the family were very sad. My sisters had both cried. I wrote back expressing my own sadness and urging the family to press on with life regardless, saying, 'It's no good crying over split Mick.'

Engagement

During my time in Bristol I got to know a retired Christian couple called Mr & Mrs Bennett. They lived at 19 Roman Way and belonged to Bethesda, a Brethren assembly in Lawrence Weston, out towards the coast at Avonmouth. They ran a kids' meeting there on Wednesday nights and I soon got into the routine of cycling out to them for tea, then going on to the meeting to play the piano and help out with the youngsters. On Sundays, though, I continued to divide my time between the Charleton Hall and Alma Road assemblies.

The Bennetts very kindly invited Faith to come down to see me and to stay with them for a long weekend, which she did.¹ It was her only visit to me in Bristol during my three years at the university there. While I enjoyed showing her around and introducing her to many of my friends, the visit backfired a bit in that Faith began to lose her self-confidence, feeling that she couldn't measure up to these intellectual student-types and that I might be better off with one of them. The fact is that she was an intellectual match for any of them; it was just that she hadn't had the opportunity to take her studies further. In any case, I knew she was the right girl for me and I wasn't open to alternatives of any kind!

My parents also came down from Bradford to visit me early in May that year, during my final term in Bristol. It was good for them to see for themselves the places I had become familiar with, and I was able to introduce them to my Bristol friends, including the Bennetts and Professor Metford.

Early in the long summer vacation of 1961 Faith and I went on holiday together to Cornwall, where she had spent her early years. We stayed with her Uncle Kit and Aunt Pat in their bungalow in Hayle. The hot sunny weather meant we could enjoy the beautiful coast, and we spent hours sunbathing on The Towans, reading, talking and just enjoying each other's company. It was in Hayle that I ate my first proper Cornish pasty, made and cooked by Pat. It was fat and long, overhanging the large dinner plate at both ends, and its taste was as great as its size.

One of our conversations in the sun was about our future. It was clearly time to take our friendship up to the next level: engagement. We had both assumed for years that we would eventually get married, and we had talked about that happy prospect from time to time. But Faith was evidently getting a bit alarmed that I hadn't taken the obvious next step in that direction by formally asking her to marry me. She didn't beat about the bush but asked me outright, 'Is this friendship going anywhere?'

I was a bit taken aback, but I got the message and assured her that, once we were back in Bradford, I would get a job and earn some money to buy her an engagement ring. I never formally proposed to her, either then or later. Perhaps I should have done. Instead, I just assumed that our future together as man and wife had never been in question. So I applied again to A.I.S. and, breathing in another

¹ 4 March 1962.

chestful of solvent, began a second mind-numbing stint of packing boiler-suits.

I then went to see Mr Gall, Faith's grandfather, to ask his permission to marry her. I had known him and his wife for years, so it wasn't as if I was approaching a stranger, but I still had to muster my courage to broach the issue with him. I decided to cut straight to the chase: 'Would you be agreeable to Faith and I getting engaged?' He was a man of few words and he chewed his gums in silence for a moment or two before replying, 'I s'pose so, David, boy.' So that was it. We were on!

We enjoyed looking in the jewellers' shops in Bradford and choosing the rings, one for each of us. Faith's ring set me back what seemed a huge sum: £16. But the sight of her contented smile left me in no doubt that those long hours in solvent-ridden air earning the money had been well worth it. Her ring had to be left with the jeweller for a size-adjustment. On the day it was to be ready we went into town to collect it, then got on the bus to spend the day in York. It was a warm, sunny morning as we rode along the A64 on the upper deck, sitting close together and very excited, the rings in their respective boxes tucked safely away till we got there.

Once we arrived we made our way down to the riverside path and sat down on one of the many benches overlooking the water. Out came the boxes and onto our fingers went the rings! We were engaged—yippee! It was the 19th of August 1961; I was 20 and Faith was 19. We went into a nearby restaurant for a coffee, very conscious of our rings, which we felt must surely be so prominent that nobody there could fail to notice them!

Madrid

Now it was time for my third and final year at university. I was to spend the first term of it, however, not in Bristol but in Madrid, where I would pursue a literary project, do some classes at the university there, and improve my spoken Spanish as much as possible. It meant that Faith and I, newly engaged, would not see each other for a full three months. Oh dear!

I booked into a rather tatty lodging house on the third floor of No.16 Calle del Príncipe. It had no lift and there were 78 steps up to it from the front door. This was the Pensión María Luisa, run by the aged María Luisa herself with the help of her niece, whom she and everybody else simply called *la chica*—the girl. I agreed to share a room with one of my fellow-students from the Spanish Department at Bristol, John Rice, whose main interest in life was basketball. We each paid 72 pesetas a day, full board, and the exchange rate at the time was 168 pesetas to the pound sterling.¹

The food María Luisa provided was very basic. As was normal in Spain, she served each item at dinner separately. So a plate would arrive in front of me with one fried egg on it. I would eat that, then *la chica* would remove the plate and bring another, on which was a slice of meat. After I'd eaten that, a third plate would bring a few chips. Yet another, some cabbage.

One day a plate arrived with a soggy green mess on it. John and I peered at it with suspicion and asked María Luisa what the stuff was. '*Acelgas*,' she replied. Our Spanish vocabulary by this time was quite extensive, but neither of us recognised this word. I excused



Ready for off for my three months in Madrid. Note the lurid colour-scheme of my attic bedroom. The botijo, a souvenir of my earlier visit to Spain didn't go with me—it's just to add a Spanish flavour to the departure picture!

¹ So in today's money we were paying about 45p a day!

myself from the table, leaving the green mess steaming on the plate, and fetched the Spanish-English dictionary from our bedroom. There it was: '*Acelgas*'—'chard'. We were none the wiser. Even the breadth of food knowledge I had acquired in my parents' nature-cure days didn't include chard. We picked at the soggy green mess with little enthusiasm. It might have been more palatable if we'd had the meat and potatoes with it, to help it down, but that wasn't the Spanish way. The old lady, meanwhile, stood in the doorway watching us. She made 'Mmm! Yummy!' noises and said, '*Son buenas para la sangre*'—'It's good for the blood.' We decided we preferred second-rate blood to eating *acelgas*.

My main study project in Madrid was to work on the text of a little-known play by the 17th century Spanish playwright and monk Tirso de Molina. It was entitled *La Mujer Que Manda En Casa*¹ and was based on Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab of Israel, whose story is told in 1 Kings chapters 16 to 22. From the few extant manuscripts and early editions housed in the Biblioteca Nacional² in Madrid I was to work the variations into a definitive standard text. It was the kind of fiddling, detailed work that by this time I had come to love and had recognised that I was good at. I found myself signing out old manuscripts from the Rare Books section and, keen to escape the attentions of the raging homosexual librarian who issued them to me, carrying them through to study them in the reading room.

But the main joy of being in Madrid for a prolonged period was that of immersing myself in local life and culture. I was able to revisit the places I had first seen on my trip to Madrid three years earlier and get to know them better. With my room-mate John and another student, Robert Kinsella, we explored both the city-centre tourist areas and the down-at-heel suburbs—this was the Franco era, and there was a great deal of poverty and unemployment there. We also took trips by train to places like El Escorial, Avila, Toledo and Segovia.

In the Plaza Mayor we discovered a tapas bar where we would drop in regularly for a small glass of red wine and a *bocadillo de calamares*—a squid sandwich. At another local eating-place called El Patio we developed a taste for *patatas españolas* and became good customers there.

I became a regular attender at the Brethren assembly that met at Trafalgar 32. There, an elderly widow took me under her wing. Mrs Biffen and her husband had been missionaries in Spain and had been instrumental in seeing the Trafalgar church established and built up. She lived in a nice flat in the same building. Part of her furniture was a piano, so my regular visits for tea with her enabled me to keep my piano skills alive while away from England. I noted in my diary that her flat was 'like an oasis in the desert for me'.

My brush with the law

As my term in Madrid was drawing to a close my money was just about running out. I had received my scholarship money for the term, of course, and Dad had sent me a bit extra from time to time, which I exchanged for pesetas at the local branch of Thomas Cook. But I had understood for some time that it was God who was my ultimate provider and that, as long as I handled my money sensibly, I could rely on him to take care of things. Just a couple of days before I was due to leave Spain and travel home for Christmas I faced a financial challenge which, at the time, caused me to cry out to God with great urgency.

I was in Sol, one of Madrid's main squares and a very busy place, buzzing with both people and traffic.

¹ Loosely translated: *The Woman Who Rules The Roost*.

² National Library.

I needed to get to the news kiosk on one of the islands in the centre of the square to buy some stamps, so I watched for a gap in the flow of traffic and nipped across. I heard a shrill whistle behind me, then,



The premises at 32 Trafalgar Street where the Brethren assembly met.

as I approached the kiosk a heavy hand fell on my shoulder. I looked around to find myself looking into the face of a uniformed traffic policeman who saluted me politely before informing me that I had infringed one of the city's traffic bye-laws and would therefore have to pay a fine. A fine! That meant money, and spare money was the one thing I didn't have at this stage of my visit.

It turned out that I had crossed the road at a point controlled by traffic lights that included mini-lights for pedestrians, and I had crossed at red. I was therefore a law-breaker. I must pay the fine. I smiled at the officer and assured him that I was both a Christian and a law-

abiding citizen, and that the only reason I had crossed at red was because, as an ignorant foreigner in his beautiful country, I had not known about the pedestrian-lights system. Now that I knew, he had my solemn assurance that never again would I cross at red. 'And thank you', I added, 'for explaining the system to me, and for doing it so politely.'

My smiles and pleas got me nowhere. The law had been broken, he insisted, and a fine was payable: '*Hay que pagar una multa.*' So I prayed a silent prayer to God, my great provider, gulped and asked the policeman the critical question: how much is the fine?

He replied, without smiling, '*Diez pesetas, señor*'—ten pesetas. I did some quick mental calculation; ten pesetas wouldn't break even my impoverished personal bank. It was, in today's money, around six pence! Hallelujah! I breathed a quick thank-you prayer to the Lord and then, struggling with the temptation to hug the policeman and cry, 'Is that all? Oh, give me half a dozen, please!', I kept a poker face, reached into my pocket and handed over the money, for which he gave me a receipt that became the envy of my friends.

God has a sense of humour, that's for sure. Later that same day a letter arrived from my Dad. He mentioned Clara Perkins, an elderly spinster who had spent most of her life as a Brethren missionary at Kamapanda, out in the wilds of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). She had originally been a Bradford lass, so over the years much of her support had come from the Brethren churches in that city, including ours. I had met her a time or two when she had been home on furlough. Now retired and back in Britain, she had somehow heard about my own missionary aspirations and, to encourage me, had sent me a cheque for £10.

So on the same day I'd, first, had to part with ten pesetas for the fine but, second, had received the sterling equivalent, albeit back home, of 1,680 pesetas. Thank you, Lord!

Back in Britain

The journey up through Spain and across France was long and tiring, but getting home was wonderful. Faith met me, with all my luggage, at Leeds Station. We caught the diesel into Bradford, chatting all the way, and took a taxi to Queen's Road.

Following our engagement Faith had received quite a few 'bottom drawer' presents from people, and now I was able to show her the items in that category that I'd brought from Spain: a table-cloth with matching serviettes, and some tea-towels printed with bullfighting scenes. She had also been putting

part of her salary each month towards items of crockery, so we were doing nicely.

Faith was working as a Tax Officer in the Inland Revenue office at Britannia House in the centre of Bradford, and within a few days of my arrival home I went with her to the office Christmas dinner, a sumptuous affair with good food and plenty to drink. One of the higher-ranking officials, a District Inspector, engaged me in conversation as we stood around sipping our drinks. He obviously thought well of Faith and reckoned that I, too, might be a likely lad to enlist for the service. He effectively offered me a job in the Inland Revenue, which was a very well-paid profession at that time. 'Money is the most important thing in life,' he assured me, adding that an IR job would generate it for me.

This was my cue, obviously, to thank him for his offer but also to observe that, while money is indeed important, it is not the most important thing. I talked about my Christian faith and spiritual fulfilment. I talked about a sense of purpose and destiny, and mentioned our plans for Peru. He listened in amazed silence before exclaiming, 'What Peru needs is a revolution, not missionaries!' He clearly regarded me as a bit of a nutter and wandered off with his drink to talk to somebody else.

Last leg as a Bristol student

Once I got back to Bristol in January 1962 I was on the run-down to the end of my course. The final exams would be in May. Before then I had a vast amount of work to do to complete the Tirso de Molina project begun in Madrid and get it typed and bound for submission to the professor, as well as keeping up with all the regular lectures and their associated essays and translation exercises. I spent long hours day after day with my head down.

To bring some relief from all this, and to help keep myself fit, I took up running again. Since my cross-country days at BGS I had only been for the odd jog now and then, nothing serious. But on 27th January 1962—Faith's twentieth birthday, which probably highlighted the fact that she was 220 miles away and fuelled my frustration—I went for a four-mile run from Burwalls and really enjoyed it. Thereafter I gradually got into the pattern of interspersing my tedious hours of study with longish runs, and I was soon up to ten miles.

The approach of my course's end focused my mind on what might lie beyond. I had decided by this time that teaching was definitely my thing and that I should prepare properly for it by doing a further year's study for the Graduate Certificate in Education. So I applied to both Manchester and Leeds universities and was quickly offered a place at Leeds for the 1962-63 academic year. That was good; the proximity of Leeds meant that I could commute the ten miles or so from Bradford each day and thus avoid yet another year of separation from my lovely fiancée. So that was settled.

Marriage plans

All that remained now was to think about when we might be able to get married. Faith and I had by this time been the closest of friends for eight years, so naturally marriage came at the top of our priority-list. It was during the Easter vacation that we got down to some serious discussion about the options. Faith had been working for a few years by this time, but out of her wages she had to support her aging grandparents, who still had monthly mortgage payments to make. So while she had been able to save money regularly towards our own future it was not a large amount. As for myself, I was still a student and had no money at all. Our major expense, of course, would be somewhere to live; whether we rented or bought a property we would first need to find a deposit, then the cash for regular monthly payments. We could wait till I had been working for a while, when we would gradually get into a better financial position, but the thought of postponing our marriage for a further year or two didn't bear thinking about.

Then we hit on a possible solution. Wherever we lived it would have to be fairly close to Faith's grandparents, since they were becoming increasingly dependent on her help with everyday living, so why not actually stay in their house with them? They had a good-sized attic that we could convert into a sitting-room for ourselves, and Faith's bedroom could become our bedroom. We would share the house's other facilities with them. That way, we could marry in December that year and our only major expense would be the wedding itself and a short honeymoon, which I hoped my parents might help us with. As for living expenses, I would be able to claim a married student's grant which, along with Faith's income, would be enough to support us until I finished my Education course and got a job.

With some trepidation Faith put the proposition to her grandparents and I to my parents. There was some discussion of details, but fundamentally the idea went down well with all concerned. Then we hit a snag. On scanning the information sheet about student grants, we suddenly realised that, for me to qualify for a married student's grant, we would have to be married before July, otherwise I would still be considered dependent on my parents. Oh no! Marriage before July was obviously impossible. Was there any way round this problem?

One way, we figured, would be for me to postpone my Education course for a year and in the meantime take a teaching post—which in those days was possible for graduates, even without an education qualification. I contacted Leeds, who agreed to the postponement. At last the way was clear for a wedding on 8th December! We came to this happy settlement on Easter Monday, the 23rd of April 1962, which meant that, starting from scratch, we had just 32 weeks to get everything organised—less than eight months. But we were deliriously happy that a date had at last been fixed, and preparations began in earnest—mostly by Faith since I still had my final term at Bristol to do, including my finals.

These seemed to go reasonably well, in spite of the fact that there was a heat-wave throughout the exam period and I sat most of them in a room with glass panels in the roof. It was like a greenhouse and several students fainted and fell off their chairs.

Then it was a case of winding things up in Bristol, saying fond farewells to the many good friends I had made over the three years, engaging in a few daft escapades to let off steam after the tension of the finals and buying my last ticket from Temple Meads to Leeds. I arrived home on 22nd June, with just five and a half months to go before the wedding. Within a couple of days I was at a desk at Lindsay's typing invoices to help pay for the big day.

First teaching post

I had to take time off work to be interviewed by Mr Parker, the Chief Inspector Of Schools in Bradford, about a teaching job for September. There were no grammar school teaching vacancies left for the coming academic year, he informed me, but he could slot me in at Woodroyd Secondary Modern School to teach thirty periods a week of Scripture, plus a bit of English Language.

The next day I caught the West Bowling bus from Union Street up to the school to meet the headmaster, Dr Heavyside. At well over 20 stones he was well named. He told me he had been a submarine commander in the war years and I couldn't help wondering how a man of his girth had managed to get through the conning tower hatch—though I thought it best not to ask. He introduced me to the staff, one of whom, when told I was coming to teach Scripture, informed me that he was a communist and an atheist. I also got a good look at some of the pupils, whose ages ranged from twelve

to sixteen. Many looked a bit rough, to say the least. Some of the lads were like Teddy Boys,¹ and I realised that the school's catchment area was socially quite deprived. What's more, all the pupils there had failed their scholarship exam, which meant that many of them had little if any academic inclinations and were at school under sufferance, with no desire to learn at all. It would be quite a challenge, I could see. But my salary would be a substantial £800 a year, so the effort would be worthwhile!

Before I left Dr Heavyside's office I mentioned that I was due to get married on 8th December and would he be agreeable to my taking a week off, since it would be in term-time? He said that he'd be more than happy to honour the arrangement that Faith and I had made and that he would make a note to arrange cover for that week. So, with a teaching post secured for September, temporary work in the meantime, and a week off granted for the honeymoon, I was feeling very happy.

A memorable summer

In July Faith and I enjoyed a week in Cullercoats, on the Northumberland coast, with my Uncle Cyril and Aunty Nora. From there I telephoned home on 4th July to get the results of my degree exams, which the postman was due to deliver that day. I managed a 2:1, so that was good. I was secretly pleased that I could now officially put B.A. after my name! We celebrated with a Chinese meal at the Wah Kin Restaurant in Newcastle.

Graduation

Soon after the holiday we took the train down to Bristol for the degree ceremony—the midweek return fare was £3.13s.0d each. We stayed with the kindly Mr & Mrs Bennett. At the university

Professor Metford put on an informal get-together, with snacks and sangria, for his students and their guests, and he informed me as we mingled that my edition of *La Mujer Que Manda En Casa* was to be published in the *Clásicos Castellanos* series. The money from that, he reckoned, would pay for a nice holiday in Spain. I don't know what happened, but I never received a penny!



Woodroyd Secondary Modern School,
West Bowling, Bradford – a typical
sandstone-built older school of the period

The following morning, Wednesday 11th July 1962, all capped and gowned, I received my degree in Bristol's Colston Hall and, after a celebratory Chinese lunch at the Lunar, we caught the train back to Bradford. Faith had a cold which soon went to her chest, leaving her wheezy and short of breath. This had been a fairly

regular occurrence for some years and, worryingly, the bouts seemed to be getting worse each time.

The trek

Plans were being made, in the meantime, for what we were calling 'the trek'. A bunch of us young men were about to tour some villages in East Yorkshire—the area between Beverley and the Humber—for a couple of weeks, preaching the gospel and holding meetings for children. It began on 21st July in the village of Skidby, where I erected our tent in a local farmer's field with my two companions, Desmond Hodgson and Jim Dainty. For the first few days there would be just the three of us, then

¹ A teenage subculture of the period. Boys wore Edwardian-style (hence Teddy) clothes with long jackets, fancy waistcoats and thick-soled shoes, and wore their hair long and wavy. The Teddy Boy movement was closely associated with the new rock and roll music popular at the time and thus represented rebellion against the status quo.

Keith Bramham would join us for the rest of the fortnight, with others coming to support us for the odd day.

We spent part of each day knocking on doors, giving out gospel leaflets and engaging people in conversation, as well as advertising the children's meetings that would take place on the village green. I was the musician for those meetings, playing the accordion. On Sundays we attended the local parish church or the Methodist chapel; all made us very welcome.

We prepared our meals outdoors on two Primus stoves, and we moved camp using a two-wheeled cart provided by a Christian lady in Hull. The wheels were wooden-spoked with iron rims. It was really made to be pulled by a horse but we found that, with two of us gripping each shaft, we could move the thing along at a decent pace. It had no brakes. Each move was some ten miles, so it required more than a little effort. From Skidby we trekked on to Little Weighton and Walkington, where, on leaving, we paid the farmer ten shillings for a dozen eggs, five pints of milk and three nights' camping on his land.

We had some great times. Often we would have more than 30 children gathered on the green, singing Christian songs ('choruses' we called them) and listening to the talks. On again with the cart, via country lanes, this time to Newbald and South Cave. Mercifully, the weather was mostly warm and sunny. Then on again to Ellerker and Brantingham. My first port of call when we entered a new village was the local Post Office, where there was usually a letter from Faith waiting to be collected.

At Brantingham we were joined by another supporter, Keith Clayton of Ossett, bringing our number to five. That posed a problem, because our tent could sleep only four—and even that was a squeeze. So I offered to sleep outside, tucked up in my sleeping-bag under the cart to get some shelter. After a good, deep sleep I was woken at 5.30am by strange sounds. I opened my eyes to see a slobbering cow's face just half a metre from mine. A whole herd of about 30 cattle were gathered round, curious, it seems, at my presence and rather restless. With my arms zipped inside the sleeping bag I felt very vulnerable. So I whistled as loudly as I could, and Desmond eventually appeared at



Grace Lines's minibuss, here parked in Bolton Hall Road, Bolton Woods. Faith is looking out of the far-left window, with my young brother Stephen.

the tent-flap, took in the scene at a glance and boldly shooed the bovine menace to the far end of the field. I unzipped myself from the sleeping-bag with some relief but stood no chance of sleeping again, so Desmond and I went for a far-too-early pre-breakfast walk. Later in the day we pushed on to Brough, camping on the back lawn of a Christian couple who lived in nearby Elloughton.

On the final Saturday some of the girls from Bradford—including Faith—came to Brough in Grace Lines's minibuss to ferry us back home. It had been quite a fortnight! Apart from the other benefits, it had greatly helped my confidence in public speaking, and I soon began receiving regular invitations to preach at Gospel Halls in Bradford, Leeds and district. Faith and I were busy in the meantime preparing the attic at 30 Mexborough Road to become our living-room.

An African connection

One international development around that time was the trouble in the Belgian Congo (which later would become known as Zaïre and is now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Its south-eastern province, Katanga, had in 1960 broken away from the central government and declared itself an independent nation under president Moïse Tshombe.

But this move never enjoyed full support and things began to get difficult for President Tshombe, who sent some of his family abroad for safety. Two of his nephews, Paul and Gaston Tshombe, aged 16 and 14, ended up in Bradford, staying for a few months with Mr & Mrs Warren (of Easter Retreat fame). The two boys spoke only Lunda—their tribal language¹—and French, and their uncle was keen for them to learn English. Mr Warren, knowing that I was competent in French, enlisted me to be their teacher. I would do two hours a day with them until further notice. The boys were keen to learn and made good progress, and the money I earned (ten shillings an hour—£17.5.6d was my total for the month of August) was a welcome addition to the wedding and honeymoon fund, supplementing what I was earning from my work at Lindsay's.

For the boys, of course, England was a culture shock. The first time I met them I took them for a walk near the local golf course and through the woods. Noticing that they looked very on edge, I asked what was worrying them. It turned out to be two fears: bandits and poisonous snakes! I assured them that they need not fear on either score.

Teaching—in at the deep end

My first day as a teacher at Woodroyd Secondary Modern School, West Bowling, Bradford, was, in the words of my diary entry that night, 'dead rough'. It was Monday 3rd September 1962 and I was 21 years of age.

Few of the youngsters had any real desire to learn, and they regarded the Scripture classes as a natural excuse to fool around. My only consolation was that Mr Gupta, an Indian teacher who occupied the classroom nextdoor to mine, was finding it even tougher. But I still felt sick every morning at the prospect of facing yet another day of recalcitrant kids and psychological pressure. I couldn't relax in the evenings, either, because each day saw me, after the evening meal, travelling over to the Warrens to give the Tshombe boys their English lesson, then on to Bolton Woods to do some decorating in our attic sitting-room.

At the end of the first full week I was worn out and seriously under pressure with the teaching situation. I wrote:

'This week has been tremendously hard going, and the thought of a whole school year lying ahead has nearly made me sick this weekend. Anyway, at tea-time I flopped into an armchair in the front room with Nave's Topical Bible, and looked up *Affliction, Consolation in*. The Lord comforted me in an amazing way through some of those scriptures, particularly the Psalms. Perhaps Psalm 42 was the greatest help of all. I have left the matter with the Lord now and feel much more relaxed and confident about starting another week tomorrow. The Lord is a very present help in trouble.'



Gradually I became more comfortable with the situation and even began to enjoy it—or at least some

¹ Little did I realise that, over 20 years later, I would become a regular visitor to Lunda-speaking Africa!

of it. The headmaster, Dr Heavyside, wasn't much of a help. He was in fact an objectionable man. He would regularly swear at the kids, sometimes publicly in school assembly, and he would barge into the staffroom at lunchtime and tell dirty jokes. But the staff in general were helpful and encouraging to me as a new teacher.

At that time the curriculum in British schools was totally flexible. Provided I kept on top of the kids and looked to have everything under control when the headmaster came in, I could teach whatever I wanted. So my Scripture lessons ended up with some very frank talking about what it means to be a Christian, and I began to have some great conversations, especially with some of the 16-year-olds.

But there were some setbacks. One boy asked a question about the virgin birth and the only way I could answer him sensibly involved a simple explanation of what at that time were usually called 'the facts of life'—how babies are conceived. I thought I had done a pretty good job of it, as the class listened and took it all in with great interest and negligible embarrassment. Sex education had not been introduced into schools at that time, so I felt I was doing the kids a useful service. But the following day one irate father came into the school to complain to the headmaster. I was summoned to his office to explain myself to the angry parent, who I'm pleased to say eventually left in a calmer state. It helped that, for once, Dr Heavyside was clearly on my side. And the parent appreciated my question, 'Would you prefer your son to learn the facts of life in a balanced and sensible way from a teacher like me, or in the usual furtive manner from other boys in the school playground?'

Meanwhile, wedding preparations were going on in the background. In addition to preparing our two rooms at Mr & Mrs Gall's house we were busy planning the order of service, sending out invitations and organising flowers, the wedding cake, cars, bridesmaids' dresses, photographs and the reception. I ordered my bespoke wedding suit, in a fabric described as 'blue bronze'. It cost all of £11. An expensive time—but we still managed to get out for the occasional meal at the Fung Ying Restaurant where, my diary notes, 'they give a first class lunch for 3/6d.' By October the Tshombe boys had mastered enough English to be able to start at a local school, so the frequency of my English sessions with them reduced, bringing my income from that source to a gradual end, but my teacher's salary, plus Faith's from the Inland Revenue, provided a steady income as our wedding approached.

Our wedding day

My best man, old university friend Harry Godden, had arrived the day before the wedding. It was good to catch up with him. I spent my last night in my lurid red and blue attic bedroom at 49 Queens Road in his company, chatting till the small hours—which was probably not a good idea.

The **8th December 1962** dawned grey and drizzly and the weather was bad all day. We had wind, rain and fog, but mercifully no snow! The wedding took place, of course, at the Gospel Hall in Bolton Woods. It was right opposite Faith's house, so no car was required to bring her to the ceremony; she merely had to walk the 20 metres or so across the road. The road, however, was an unmade one, muddy with the rain and very uneven. But with the help of her four bridesmaids she made it across unscathed to stand at my side in a packed hall, looking absolutely gorgeous.

Our old friend Bill Elliott, the ex-missionary, conducted the service. We had been through the legal part of it with him in advance, so knew what to expect. Everything went smoothly and, to our relief, nobody chipped in when he declared, 'If anyone knows any just cause...' We knew he was down to give a sermon and we expected that he would do the usual short wedding homily. He disappointed us, preaching for a full hour! We perhaps should have suspected a more lengthy sermon when we were asked to sit down for it. The sad thing is, neither of us can remember a single word he said!

Tape-recorders had been around for a few years at that time, but the recording of weddings had not been thought of, so we have no way of discovering what gems of wisdom he shared on the occasion.

But eventually he wound up, then we signed the register and paraded down the aisle to stand outside in the rain for the photographs. The nice Daimler we had ordered had struggled slowly up the unmade road and we climbed in for the drive to the reception. This took place at the Co-operative Emporium, a mirror-walled and plush-curtained hall nextdoor to the Co-op department store in Bradford city centre. We had 85 guests.

After that, a quick change out of our wedding gear and off to the railway station to leave for our week's honeymoon in Kendal, a small town at the edge of the Lake District. Several friends came to the station to see us off and, to our astonishment, one of them, a man in his 50s called Mr Franklin, told us that he was booked on the same train! So we were stuck with him in our compartment as far as Skipton when, to our relief, he said his goodbyes and left us to ourselves at last for the rest of the journey.



December isn't the best time for a honeymoon in Britain. But the weather, though cold, was mostly sunny and bright, and we enjoyed some lovely walks by Derwentwater and other local beauty-spots. We stayed in a little guest-house where they provided us with a comfortable bay-windowed bedroom and good, substantial meals.

One day was drizzly and grey, so I astonished Faith by suggesting we go to the local cinema. Having grown up in an anti-cinema culture, I don't think that, up to this point, the two of us had ever been

to the cinema together before. Anyway, we were a married couple now and could please ourselves, so in we went to see *Jason And The Argonauts*. Another day we went to a performance of Handel's *Messiah* in a local chapel. We had attended much bigger presentations of the *Messiah* before, but we loved this one for its intimacy and enthusiasm—a memorable occasion.

Trouble back home

It was nice to get home on Saturday afternoon and settle into our little two-roomed home. We had a bedroom on the first floor and our sitting-room in the attic on the second floor, sharing the kitchen with Faith's grandparents. There was no bathroom. The toilet was outside, at the far end of the back yard, and the bath was in the cellar, standing on stone flags and sharing the draughty room with grandad's carpenter's bench plus lots of tools, tins of paint, a supply of logs and coal for the fire, and an army of spiders. But it was home!

As you will recall, when being interviewed for my teaching job it had been agreed with the headmaster





Official wedding photo outside the Gospel Hall. L to R: May Matthew (my mother); Reg Matthew (my father); Ann Hebson (Faith's half-sister); Stephen (my brother); Harry Godden (best man); me and Faith; Dorothy Holtby (Faith's friend); Christine Matthew (my sister); Hazel Matthew (my sister); Ernie Hebson (Faith's stepfather); Mary Gall (Faith's Granny); Juanita Hebson (Faith's Mum); John Gall (Faith's Grandad).

that I could take the week off for our honeymoon since our wedding arrangements had been made before I applied for the job. He would arrange cover for that week, he had said. As the wedding drew near I decided not to tell my colleagues about it, not wanting any fuss, so when I left after school on the eve of the wedding none of them but the headmaster knew what the weekend had in store for me.

Now the honeymoon was behind me and over the weekend I began to turn my mind towards returning to school on Monday morning. But I was contacted by Philip Lodge, one of my fellow-teachers. Dr Heavyside, he told me, was fuming with anger at my failure to turn up for work the previous Monday and at his failure to get hold of me during the week. I should stand by for a rocket on Monday morning! Oh dear, it sounded as if the good doctor had somehow forgotten our arrangement!

I arrived at the school in good time on Monday morning, to be greeted by a red-faced Dr Heavyside, who hauled me into his office, shouting and swearing at me. He didn't want me in his 'damn school', he spluttered, eyes popping and foaming a little at the mouth. Instead, I should get myself down to the Town Hall sharpish and report to the Deputy Director of Education, who would be expecting me and who would pronounce upon my fate. I pointed out to him that we had agreed he would give me the week off for my honeymoon, but he would have



At Forster Square Station about to leave for our honeymoon. Note my Gannex raincoat.

none of it and didn't want 'any of your bloody explanations'!

So I took the bus back into town and found my way through the gothic corridors of the Town Hall to the Deputy Director Of Education's office. He was the very opposite of Dr Heavyside: tall and slim, with greying hair and, mercifully, a calm and open demeanour. He had heard the headmaster's account of the situation, he told me, so could I now give him my own perspective, please. This I proceeded to do and, apart from interjecting with a couple of minor queries, he listened carefully. I gave him a full account and finished by apologising for apparently causing an unintended upset.

I suspect he wasn't a great fan of Dr Heavyside. He accepted my account fully and said that no action would be taken. I should return to school and resume my normal duties there. My week off would be unpaid, of course (as I had always known it would be), but otherwise that would be the end of the matter and nothing more would be said about it. He would talk to Dr Heavyside on the phone while I made my way back to the school.

I arrived there to be received by a still-fuming but slightly more self-controlled headmaster and returned to the teaching of my classes. The other staff found the whole thing quite hilarious. They didn't like Dr Heavyside at all and were secretly a bit chuffed that he had been so discomfited by my absence. When they heard my story they expressed delight that I had got married and immediately arranged a whip-round to buy me a present! I don't think the good doctor himself contributed.

Back to university

The school year went by quickly. In spite of the challenges I had made some good friends among the staff and had eventually come to enjoy good relationships with most of the pupils as well.

Leeds University had held over the place they had given me the previous year for the Post-Graduate Certificate In Education course, so I was all lined up for the 1963-64 academic year. Having been a teacher for a year, I was now to become a student once more. I would be eligible for a married student's grant which, along with Faith's salary, meant that we could live fairly comfortably while still covering the course's costs, including daily travel the ten miles from Bradford to Leeds and back.

Getting mobile

Getting there by public transport would be a long and arduous business, requiring several changes of bus and/or train, and it was too far to cycle. So we decided to buy a motor-scooter and we put our order in for a Lambretta 150 at the local dealer's.

I had never been on the road on anything other than my bicycle before, so this would be a new experience. Always one for reading a good manual, I bought myself a little book entitled *Riding Motorcycles And Scooters*. It explained the workings of accelerators, brakes and clutches and I took it all in, mentally going through the motions of gradually letting out the clutch-lever while at the same time opening the accelerator. It seemed easy enough. As for gears, I was familiar with the way they worked from the gears on my bicycle. So no problem.

On the day I was to collect the Lambretta I turned up at the dealer's on Manningham Lane with my new crash helmet and leather gauntlets and settled up with him. He then took me out to the delightful object that stood gleaming and new-looking in the yard pointing towards the gate to the main road. Had I ridden a motorbike or scooter before, he asked, and did I need any instruction or other help? I assured him I knew what I was doing and that he could leave me to it.

Donning my helmet and gloves, I kick-started the scooter and revved it up a time or two. Lovely noise! Then, fixing my eye on the gate, I for the first time attempted to do in reality what I had done

so many times in my mind. I kangarooed the first few yards, but managed to steer the scooter out of the yard and into the traffic on the main road, where I got into third gear before having to pull up at traffic lights. Another jumpy start when they turned green, but I quickly got the hang of it and made it safely home.

When the university course began early in October it was a delight to ride the scooter door-to-door each day and not have to worry about buses. I bought wet-weather gear and a waterproof cover for my briefcase, which I used to strap on the back. As winter arrived it was a bitterly cold drive sometimes. In spite of a pair of woolly gloves worn inside my gauntlets my hands would be numb with cold when I arrived. I would go into the men's washroom and hold them under the hot tap, wincing at the pain as the circulation returned. Then I would join my fellow-students for the nine o'clock lecture wide awake and my face glowing with the cold, in contrast to those who lived close by, many of whom would be still half asleep.



The Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, where my classes were held.

Learning to teach?

The course proved interesting but very theoretical. It was fascinating to have to think about what 'education' really means, and to look at the many different definitions of 'intelligence'. I enjoyed the psychology lectures, in particular its relevance to how children develop at different stages and what they are capable of learning at each stage.



Our Lambretta 150 in Mexborough Road, Bolton Woods, where we lived. Note the unmade surface and the smoking chimney of the wool mill in the background.

But there was nothing at all about 'how to teach'. In this respect I had a double advantage: I was a little older (and therefore hopefully wiser) than most of the other students, and I had a year of real classroom experience under my belt. The professor and lecturers told us bluntly that if we wanted to be told 'how to teach' we were on the wrong course! So after classes I often found myself in conversation with fellow-students sharing some of the practical insights I had gained from my time at Woodroyd School. Some said they learnt more from those conversations than from the lectures!

As Christmas approached our psychology lecturer, who was popular with us all, invited the whole year-group to a social evening at his house in Leeds. Faith and I drove over on the scooter. After dismounting and removing our helmets we made our way to the front door, where the students, with drinks in hand, were spilling out onto the steps. There was a buzz of conversation, but at the same time there was something unusual in the atmosphere; something was clearly 'going on'. As we joined the others they quickly told us what it was: the news had just come through that President John F. Kennedy of the USA had been assassinated in downtown Dallas, Texas. It was 22nd

November 1963. Our social evening, though enjoyable, wasn't as fun-filled as we'd expected.

The course, in spite of its largely theoretical nature, did include a few weeks of teaching practice. For that I was sent to Abbey Grange School on the outskirts of Leeds to do some of the Spanish classes. This was my first chance to pass on some of the language skills I had acquired, so it was quite a challenge. But the staff were good and most of the children well-motivated, so I enjoyed my time there and got a good write-up when I finished.

At the end of the academic year I qualified with a Distinction and was now fitted to apply for teaching jobs of any kind. I was accepted for a post teaching mostly French, plus a few lessons of general subjects, at Lapage Junior High School in Bradford, starting in September 1964.

Teaching—again

I got on well right from the start at Lapage. The headmaster, Mr David Hall, was civilised, supportive and encouraging, as were the rest of the staff, and I enjoyed every day.

One teacher was notoriously grumpy and critical with everybody. His name was Stanley Garnett, a man in his late fifties. But I got on with him as well as anybody did—until just after the October half-term break. One lunchtime the headmaster came into the crowded staffroom with its atmosphere full of cigarette-smoke and reminded us that Christmas was fast approaching and we would need to give some thought to things like parties and a school concert for the parents. A great groan went up, and somebody ventured, 'Well, I suppose we could do the usual nativity play.'

At this, Mr Garnett spoke up loudly from his armchair in the corner, nearly spilling his mug of tea. 'We don't want all that bloody nonsense again', he declared. 'Nobody these days believes that rubbish about baby Jesus, angels and the virgin birth, so it's time we packed it in for good.'

Aha! Since starting at the school I had been looking for, and praying for, a natural opportunity to declare my allegiance to Jesus Christ so that all the staff would know where I stood. This was clearly it, so I tried to keep my voice steady as I replied, 'As a matter of fact, *I* believe in the virgin birth of Jesus—and in his death and resurrection, too.'

For a few seconds there was pin-drop silence in the smoke-filled room. Mr Garnett, I think, was not used to being challenged and was clearly stunned into silence himself by my comment. But it didn't last long. 'Whaaaaaat!' he exploded, rising to his feet. 'You bloody idiot—and you a teacher!' He stomped to the door and blustered out, slamming it behind him. One of my colleagues observed, 'Well, Dave, you've put the cat among the pigeons there, that's for sure!' And everybody had a good laugh as the bell rang to summon us to our afternoon classes.

Mr Garnett had it in for me from that time on. He would do anything to find fault with things I did and said. He would openly snub me when we passed in the corridor. And more than once he acted quite unprofessionally by saying negative things about me in the presence of pupils. Sometimes in the lunch hour, if I had a few spare minutes, I would sit at the piano in the school hall and play a bit, including some well-known hymn tunes. He would walk behind me and swear as he went past. In spite of all this I found the Lord gave me a real love for the man, and I was always on the lookout for ways to help him—an approach he just didn't know how to handle.

Something definitely changed in the school's atmosphere after my encounter with him. It was as if he'd had a stranglehold on the dynamics of relationships within the school community and my challenge had somehow broken it. The atmosphere was lighter and more friendly.

Learning some Urdu

Bradford at that time had a very large Asian population, mostly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis whose native tongue was Urdu. Every class in the school had a fair proportion of Asian children in it, who were for the most part hard workers and very polite.

One of my star pupils in the French lessons was a cheeky-faced little lad called Mohammed Mossadeq.



Lapage Junior High School, Bradford Moor, Bradford.

He always breezed into the room with a grin on his face and a chirpy ‘Bonjour, Monsieur!’ Then came a time when the roles needed to be reversed because I wanted to learn some Urdu. At one church I had visited to speak, somebody had said, ‘You’re from Bradford, aren’t you?’ Yes, I was. ‘And you have loads of Asians there, I believe?’ That is correct. ‘Ah, good. Well, I’ve got a pile of John’s Gospels in Urdu that I need to get rid of, so I’ll get them to you if you like—I’m sure you’ll be able to hand them out to the right people.’

Thus it was that the pile of Urdu Gospels arrived, about 100 of them. If I was to hand them out personally it would make sense to greet the recipients with a few words in their own language, I surmised, so I asked Mohammed Mossadeq to teach me the Urdu for ‘This little book is for you; it’s free’. I won’t attempt to transcribe it, but suffice it to say that the phrase is engraved on my memory for all time.

So one weekend I ventured into the Lumb Lane area of Bradford, locally known as Little India, where there was a high concentration of Asian Muslims. I knew enough about Asian culture to avoid speaking to any women I met, so I walked along with my pile of booklets looking for passing menfolk. As one approached me I would smile, hold out a booklet and rattle off the phrase I’d learnt. He would generally look surprised but pleased, and not one booklet was refused. The only problem was, he clearly thought I spoke his language and would gabble back to me in Urdu, whereupon I would retire as gracefully as I could, saying, ‘Thank you very much for taking the booklet. I’m sorry I don’t speak any more of your language. Goodbye!’

I got rid of the whole pile in no time at all and headed back home with a prayer that the Lord would use them to point some of the recipients to Jesus.

Peru calling still

Faith and I still expected at this stage to be going eventually to Peru. But Faith’s grandparents were both increasingly unwell and needing ever more looking after, and that of course fell to us. After all, they had taken Faith in when her mother had left her, and had devoted themselves to bringing her up in their old age, so the least we could do was return the care now that they were the needy ones. So Peru had to go on the back burner. We trusted God to open the door at the right time, and in the meantime we both had steady jobs to pay our way.



Faith with Fred the dog on our Lambretta outside the Gospel Hall opposite our house

There was plenty to keep us busy, too, at the Gospel Hall. The baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit were accepted and practised without question now and we had some lively sessions. A few diehards still clung to the Authorized Version of the Bible, but most had followed my lead and adopted the RSV. I had become part of the broader leadership team by this time, helping with some preaching and administrative tasks, and Faith was a wonderful help and encouragement in all this. I was enjoying my teaching, and we had a dog, a small brown mongrel called Fred, who sometimes came running with me. We had a nearby allotment, too, where I struggled to grow fresh vegetables. Life was pretty good.

The family grows

Then, to our delight, Faith became pregnant. In the summer of 1964 we went on a camping holiday to France with our friends Paul and Pamela Varley. The four of us, plus two tents and all the other camping gear, squeezed into Paul's dark green Mini and toured Brittany and the Loire Valley. Travelling in such cramped conditions was enough to make anybody queasy, but Faith suspected that in her case there were other causes. She was indeed pregnant, but our delight was short-lived because she had a miscarriage in the autumn.

Strangely, though, the signs of pregnancy continued, and the medics confirmed in due course that she must originally have been carrying twins—no surprise because my father was a twin, and it often jumps a generation—and that she had miscarried one and kept the other. There were no problems with this one, and at 1.40am on Friday 5th February 1965 her waters broke and an ambulance came to take her to St Luke's Hospital. She had a long and painful labour. **Jonathan Vere Matthew** eventually arrived, all 6lb 15oz of him, and I had to make do with looking at my tiny, wrinkly son through the window of the babies' room, as the practice at that time was to keep the newborns separate from their mothers for the first eight hours. We had some telegrams of congratulation and over 40 cards. Dad's boss, Mr Lindsay, sent us an expensive cellular cot blanket with a ten-year guarantee!

When Faith and Jonathan were allowed out of hospital they went to my parents' place, 49 Queen Road, to convalesce for a few days. To make things easier, I slept over there too. But it was good to come home and be a real family in our own place at last. Jonathan gradually settled into a routine and we began to get more sleep. On occasions, though, when he continued yelling in spite of all our efforts to calm him, I would carry him up to our attic sitting room to tire himself out while we were able to get some sleep on the floor below.

Health issues for Faith

Faith managed wonderfully well as a mother, though she didn't enjoy the best of health at times. Breast-feeding had its difficulties and she had several bad bouts of milk-fever. We were in touch with Leslie Harrison, a naturopath in York, who prescribed some practical remedies to help her through these bouts. To help things along, we gradually started introducing Jonny to cow's milk and he took to it well. Unfortunately we could only get the pasteurised variety in Bolton Woods, so we added our order to my mother's, and I called to pick up our raw milk each day on my way home.



Doing a presentation on Peru at Bolton Woods Gospel Hall – long before computers and PowerPoint were invented!

Faith also began to have recurrences of the bronchial trouble that had been with her on and off since childhood. Some episodes were quite alarming as she really struggled for breath and was too weak to move, let alone look after a baby. But they would pass after a week or so, and life went on. We would walk around the village as proud parents, wheeling Jonathan in his flashy Pedigree Madelaine pram, which was navy blue and white with a little oval of flowers on the side.

The naturopath, Mr Harrison, felt that if Faith's bronchial issues were to be properly sorted she would need to embrace a stiff regime for quite a long time. For a start she would need to go onto a near-vegetarian diet, with lots of fruit, vegetables and wholemeal bread. And she would need to stimulate her blood circulation to encourage her body to eliminate toxins more efficiently. This would mean a regular 'morning splash'. Before going to bed she should run three or four inches of cold water into the bath. First thing the following morning, she should kneel in the cold water and splash it up all over her body and down her back for several minutes. Then a quick rub-down with a crisp towel before getting dressed. As we listened to all this I winced, thinking, 'Wow, I'm glad it's her and not me!'

Then Mr Harrison dropped his bombshell. Looking straight at me, he said, 'I strongly recommend, David, that you embrace the same regime yourself. It's much easier if you are both doing the same thing, and you can encourage one another in it, too.'



Proud new father, with Jonathan aged 2 months. Outside the back door at Mexborough Road.

And so it was that we got into a new way of life. The diet part was no problem as we were both comfortable with healthy eating, but the 'morning splash' wasn't easy. Our bath, you will recall, was in the dank and spider-ridden cellar with its stone-flagged floor. There was no heating of any kind, and right next to the bath was the door to the back yard. It never fitted very well, and a cold draught blew in most of the time. We would take it in turns to go down the stone steps in our dressing gown and slippers and, one at a time, kneel in the ice-cold water as the draught from the door blew around, and, taking a deep breath, splash the water onto our bodies, front and back. It took our breath away completely and in no time we would be shivering violently. But the rub-down with a towel soon had the blood coursing through our veins and we quickly realised that the brief discomfort was well worth the sense of wellbeing that followed.

We stuck with this daily regime for many months, and Faith's bronchial problems eventually ceased, never to return.

Moving house

I began to get a bit restless with my teaching job. The Peru door remained firmly closed, but Faith's grandparents were actively looking to move back down to Cornwall by now, and they assured us we would not need to take their needs into consideration once they got down there. So on the grounds that any overseas post would be good experience for when Peru opened up, I applied for a three-year post in Freeport, Grand Bahama. I didn't get it, so it was back to business as usual at Lapage.

Living with Faith's grandparents had its advantages, for sure, but there was a downside, too. We began to feel that Granny in particular was undermining our attempts to bring Jonathan up the way

we felt best. She tended to pick him up whenever he cried, for instance. So we decided it was time to look for independent accommodation.

Northdale Road, Frizinghall

We found this at **2 Northdale Road, Frizinghall**, about two miles from our previous base. It was a large sandstone Victorian property, right on the busy Bradford-Keighley road, the A350, and was owned by a dry-cleaning company. They had turned the large downstairs lounge into a shop, sealed off from the rest of the house. The latter they rented to us in September 1965. It was rather a spartan place, but we did our best to make it home. It was on four floors, with dingy cellars. The small bathroom was on the first floor and the toilet on the top floor—tough if you got taken short.



Reading to Jonny, aged 17 months, in our lounge at Northdale Road. Notice my home-made bookcase and the botijo.

It had no heating, so we made do with the couple of two-bar electric fires we had used at Bolton Woods. As winter drew on it became apparent we would need additional heating, and we bought two paraffin heaters, one for the kitchen-diner and one for

Jonathan's bedroom, which was in the attic. We would buy Esso Blue paraffin in large cans from the hardware shop just a few doors away. Paraffin heaters generate a lot of moisture, so the walls were always streaming with condensation.

We would always go up and check on Jonathan before we retired for the night. One cold winter's evening we went up there. He was hard on, sleeping on his back and well tucked up under several layers of blankets. And the top blanket was covered with a layer of frost!

Faith had finished working at the Inland Revenue before Jonny was born, but she was kept very busy. Apart from running the household, every morning she would wheel Jonny in his pushchair the two miles to her grandparents' house in Bolton Woods to help them with some of the jobs as they were both now getting frailer. Then two miles back home again. And in both directions there was a steep uphill at the end. I would go over on the scooter in the evening to stoke up their coal fire and do any additional jobs they needed doing. All this, plus my schoolteaching and the responsibilities at the Gospel Hall, meant that we both lived very busy lives.

The property at Northdale Road had sufficed to get us away from Bolton Woods, but it was far from ideal, and we were keen to find somewhere cosier and a bit more modern. We approached the council and put our names down for a property, noting that we were keen to move as soon as possible. Several blocks of brand-new maisonettes were being built in Bolton Woods at that time, just round the corner from where we had lived before, and we were delighted in due course to learn that we had been allocated one: **3 Alwinton House**. I don't have a firm record of the move, but we reckon it was probably mid-1967.

Alwinton House, Bolton Woods

It was sheer pleasure to experience the modern fittings and the luxury of electric underfloor heating. Ours was a ground-floor maisonette, with lino-tiled floors, a fitted kitchen, two bedrooms and a nice bathroom. There was, however, a downside. First, the lady who lived in the maisonette above us didn't have a carpet over her lino-tiles, and she always wore stiletto heels. And she and her husband

liked to watch the late-night movie on TV. So we would lie in bed trying to get off to sleep while able to hear every word of the movie on the telly just a few feet above our heads. Then the lady of the house would get up to make a drink or whatever and the click, click of her stilettos across the floor nearly drove us mad. I myself could cope with these noises OK, being able somehow to 'switch off' and filter the sounds out, but Faith had always been a light sleeper and very susceptible to disturbing noises. She had a hard time of it, especially as our attempts to draw to the attention of the folk upstairs how hard it was for us fell on deaf ears.

But there was more. The block had a basement where the dustbins lived, and these were served by a central metal chute with heavy, pull-back metal doors on both the ground floor and first floor. One wall of our maisonette backed onto this chute. At all times of the day and night we could hear it in use. Somebody upstairs, for example, would decide around midnight to get rid of half a dozen glass bottles. 'Clang'—the heavy metal door was opened. 'Clang' again as they let it go and it shut noisily under its own weight. Then a seemingly endless 'boing, boing, boing...' as the bottles tumbled their way the ten metres or so down the metal tube to end up with a bigger 'boing' than ever in the bin in the basement. It was not a quiet life.

Learning to drive

It was while we lived at Alwinton House that I booked in for driving lessons and eventually passed my test. There was no prospect of our being able to afford a car in the foreseeable future, but we felt it would be useful to be ready for when the time did come. So I had a series of lessons and managed to pass first time. That was 1968, when I was 27 years old.

Faith never considered that it might be a useful skill for her to acquire, too!

We have a daughter!

It was here that our second child was born, between the boings and stiletto-clicks, early on Tuesday **5th March 1968**. In between that and Jonathan's arrival three years earlier, Faith had suffered a miscarriage, at Easter 1967. That had been a difficult and emotional time, of course, made all the more difficult because the day after it happened I'd had to leave to take a party of schoolchildren on a trip to France. But the family rallied round and Faith was over the worst by the time I got back. In those days, of course, mobile phones and texting had not been invented. Indeed, many people did not even have a landline, so being away in France meant that I had no way of getting in touch.

We were delighted to have a girl this time: **Rachel Yvette**, 7lbs 4oz. Jonathan was just three, so old enough to be excited at the prospect, and I had to hold on to him until such time as the medical folk in the bedroom with Faith were ready for me to take him in to see his sister for the first time. I don't know what he expected to see, but I'll never forget the different looks that passed over his face as we entered the room and he set eyes on her. He went in grinning with anticipation. Then, as I pointed her out, the grin gave way to a look of complete shock, then to one of deep puzzlement as he realised that she wouldn't be going out to play with him for a few days!

School trips

Talking of school trips to France, I must have organised half a dozen of those over the years, including one skiing trip to French-speaking Switzerland. In those days Health and Safety legislation and formal Risk Assessments didn't exist; you were simply expected to use your common sense to look after the children's interests and to take out suitable insurance. So it was quite the norm to give our bunch of 12 and 13-year-olds a couple of hours on their own in central Paris to do a bit of shopping

at Galeries Lafayette or other big stores. Mercifully they always turned up at the rendezvous afterwards. We had some great times.

We would normally be housed in a local school and ate in the school dining-room. Some of the kids were a bit reluctant to try items of 'foreign' food they had not tasted before. I remember one boy poking his food around on his plate and muttering, 'I don't fancy this stuff at all. Why can't we have proper food?' Another boy—surnamed Green and one of my star French students—paused from his own enthusiastic eating and said to the lad, 'Get it down yer, yer daft thing. Yer need to venture into life!'

Buying our first house

Having a good, regular salary from my teaching job, we realised that we would do well to buy into the property market rather than pay out rent each month. Having our own property would provide us with a solid financial asset for the future. So we began to look around.

We eventually bought, for the vast sum of £3,650, a three-bedroomed semi-detached house at the bottom of a quiet cul-de-sac: **16 Hilton Avenue, Shipley**. We moved in early in 1970 and were thrilled to be house-owners at last. We bought the property from a retired Methodist minister, and when we went to view it I commented on the fine collection of theological books he had in the front room. 'Mr Matthew,' he said, 'if you buy the house I'll gladly leave the books for you, if you'd like them, as I don't intend keeping them.'

I took this as a seal of approval on our proposed purchase and, true to his word, when we moved in the books were there waiting for me.

Not long after, my parents sold 49 Queens Road and bought a bungalow just a stone's throw from our new house, making it easy for us to see plenty of them.

A new school

Having moved house, I was also beginning to think it was time for a change of jobs. I'd given a lot to Lapage, and the French in the school was now to a good standard. I needed a new challenge, and as nothing had changed on the Peru front, that meant looking for a new teaching post.

Bradford Education Authority was at that time restructuring its system by introducing Middle Schools for pupils aged 9 to 13. A brand new one had just been built at Nab Wood, Shipley, just a mile and a half from our new house and due to open in September 1970, so I applied. They offered me the post of Head of Fourth Year, which meant being in charge of 120 kids aged 12-13 and their teachers. I would also have responsibility for organising French throughout the school. And so I began at Nab Wood Middle School.

The Fourth Year wing of the school, like the other three, comprised four classrooms grouped round a 'shared area'. Three of the classrooms had no doors, but were permanently open to that area. One of the perks of being year head was that my classroom had doors! It was all new, challenging and



*Faith with Rachel, aged 5 months, in the lounge at Alwinton House.
The door led onto a small balcony.*



Our house at Hilton Avenue from the back garden with the living room window on the left and the kitchen window on the right. Summer 1971.

exciting. The fourth-year staff were all keen as mustard and responded well to my leadership, getting things off to a great start.

The lack of doors on most of the classrooms created problems at first, and there was a concerted effort by the staff to persuade the Education Authority to install some. But no, this was a new departure in educational practice, and a flagship building, so the teachers would have to get used to it. For the most part they did, in time, but if the truth be known they would have had doors fitted right away given the chance. All sorts of noisy activities would be taking place in the shared

area, sometimes when, in one of the classrooms, a frustrated teacher was trying to read something to the children. I penned the following limerick to help those frustrated folk raise a smile:

Supervisory staff should be wary as
Woodwork, cookery, painting and various
Aspects of sewing,
French, maths and glass-blowing
All take place at once in shared areas.

I had a great time at Nab Wood. The 9-13 age-group were for the most part a delight to teach, free from the pressures to grow up too soon exerted by older children. We had some fun-based after-school clubs. I had an origami group and another for singing rounds. My fourth-year colleagues had a wide variety of skills between them and our children, we like to think, went on to Upper School well prepared.

A thorny issue

In the Bolton Woods church we had a fine young man, slightly younger than me, who was a keen Christian and at the forefront of our exploration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit like speaking in tongues, interpretation and prophecy. His name was John Thompson. He came from a troubled background, with both of his parents having committed suicide. It was John himself who had found his mother's body, and these grim experiences had had a marked effect on him. But he was in good shape now and said he felt God's call to full-time Christian service.

He confided in me on one occasion that he had never really fancied girls but was attracted to other males. I had little to offer him, I'm afraid. I was from a pretty sheltered background and had never had to confront this issue before. Certainly it was not in the public eye the way it is today, and many British people had, I suspect, hardly heard of homosexuality, let alone come across it personally. Until not long before this, homosexual acts had been a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment, and it was not until between 1967 and 1982 that their legalisation took place in stages across the UK.

Anyway, John pressed on with his studies, attending a Bible College in France, where he learnt the

language, and looked for opportunities for Christian service in the French-speaking world. Not finding a suitable opening, he came back to the UK and got into social work. He parted company with the Bolton Woods church, but retained his faith and kept in touch with quite a few of us. During this time he mentioned his condition to me again. Nothing had changed in that respect, and he was getting weary of the struggle with what he considered his own unacceptable desires.

A few years later he asked Faith and me round to his flat for a meal. He was a good cook and put on an outstanding spread, with appropriate wines chosen to accompany each course. We didn't realise it at the time, but this was his farewell meal to us. Not long after, he drove his car up onto the moors, put a pipe from the exhaust into the car and killed himself. I was devastated, and this turn of events has coloured my attitude to homosexuality ever since.

Fading of the older generation

Faith's grandparents were both now in their mid-seventies and quite frail. Grandad in particular had been struggling for some time with cancer. It then developed strongly in his bowel, and all thoughts of moving from Bradford down to their native Cornwall had to be shelved. Indeed, the time had come for them to be looked after, and so they moved in with us. We adapted the front room as a bedroom for them and looking after them became quite a demanding job. Not long after coming to our place Grandad grew really ill and had to be taken into hospital, where he died in September 1970. Granny stayed on with us, occupying the third bedroom, and lived another five years.

My mother, too, was not well. For most of her life May had been fighting fit, and this had made her very unsympathetic towards people who were ill. We kids rarely had a day off school; she would pack us off even when we were in the depths of a heavy cold or suffering a tummy upset. But when she was in her fifties she began to have some problems with rheumatism, and later developed Parkinson's Disease.

Around that time we as a church were open to the Lord's gifts of healing, and we had seen several people touched in answer to prayer. Mum latched onto this and became obsessed with the notion that the Lord was going to heal her in a dramatic way, taking her in an instant from pain and immobility to robust health and fitness. Because of this, she foolishly regarded the taking of medication for her condition as unimportant and was quite slack in it. She also refused to do any of the mobility exercises prescribed by a kind lady in the church who was a physiotherapist. As the years passed she became increasingly unable to move about.

The new money

From time immemorial Britain's currency had been pounds, shillings and pence, or LSD, as it was popularly called—£ (L) was the pound sign, 'S' was shillings, and 'D', short for 'denarius', was pence. There were 12 pence in a shilling, and 20 shillings in a pound, so 240 pence in a pound. We had all been brought up in this monetary environment and never considered it difficult at all. We could do calculations in our heads, no problem. So if you bought three items costing 18/11 (eighteen shillings and elevenpence), 2/6 (two shillings and sixpence, or half a crown) and £4.12s.3d (four pounds twelve shillings and threepence), we wouldn't take long to work out that the total was £5.13s.8d.

But the powers that be wanted to bring us into line with broad international practice by having just two categories, pounds and pence, with 100 pence making one pound. There was a huge programme of education to get us used to the idea, and then came Decimalisation Day itself: 15th February 1971. I was 30 years old. For quite some time after that date old and new coins were in circulation together, and we had to remember that the two-shilling piece, or florin, for instance, was now worth ten pence.

Most people took the change in their stride, though some found it hard. Faith's Granny announced that she'd decided not to bother with the new money and would stick with the old kind!

It did take some getting used to, though. Some unscrupulous traders raised their prices, gambling on the fact that many people wouldn't remember that one penny was now worth 2.4 times what it used to be. I had a chart stuck in the back of the notebook I carried around so that I could consult it when necessary.

New contacts

Since becoming open to the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Bolton Woods Brethren Assembly had become an ex-Brethren Assembly. Not because we particularly wanted that, but because the other Yorkshire assemblies regarded us as having gone off the Brethren rails. We were proper heretics in their view, and they gave us the cold shoulder. But we pressed on with vigour and enthusiasm and had some great times together, seeing new people make a commitment to Christ and all of us growing in our faith by leaps and bounds. I ran a bookstall and was thus able to channel into people's awareness the kind of books that I believed would keep our momentum going.

Gradually we began to hear of preachers from non-Brethren connections and invited some to come and preach in the early 1970s. Dutchman Goos Vedder was one. We knew of him from Brother Andrews' book, *God's Smuggler*. Goos had worked with him smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain into Russia, so we were delighted when he agreed to come and visit us. It was a memorable time. We also welcomed Welshman Gwyn Daniels, whose approach was very different from anything we had been used to before. But it all stretched us and kept us hungry for more.

Other names began to be heard: Hugh Thompson, Arthur Wallis, Dennis Clark, Gerald Coates, Graham Perrins and others, but it would be a while before we met these men.

Meanwhile I was kept busy preaching and teaching in our own church, and every few weeks travelling to speak elsewhere. A few Brethren churches were still willing to have me, but I regularly went to independent churches locally, as well as to those of other denominations. I also did visits to student groups at various colleges and nurses' homes. The scooter clocked up a lot of miles.

Another step up: school

The years were rolling by and there was still no opening for Peru. My 'temporary' teaching job had begun to look more like 'permanent' as we were still looking after Faith's Granny.

I had done a few years at Nab Wood Middle School, and some of my colleagues there were saying it was time I started applying for a Deputy Headship. This put me in a dilemma. Looked at one way, that was not the way forward. If my ultimate calling was full-time Christian service, as I knew deep down

Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p	Old £sd	New £p
1	1/2	2/-	10	4/-	20	6/-	30	8/-	40	10/-	50	12/-	60	14/-	70	16/-	80	18/-	90
2	1	2/1	10 1/2	4/1	20 1/2	6/1	30 1/2	8/1	40 1/2	10/1	50 1/2	12/1	60 1/2	14/1	70 1/2	16/1	80 1/2	18/1	90 1/2
3	1 1/2	2/2	11	4/2	21	6/2	31	8/2	41	10/2	51	12/2	61	14/2	71	16/2	81	18/2	91
4	1 1/2	2/3	11 1/2	4/3	21 1/2	6/3	31 1/2	8/3	41 1/2	10/3	51 1/2	12/3	61 1/2	14/3	71 1/2	16/3	81 1/2	18/3	91 1/2
5	2	2/4	11 1/4	4/4	21 1/4	6/4	31 1/4	8/4	41 1/4	10/4	51 1/4	12/4	61 1/4	14/4	71 1/4	16/4	81 1/4	18/4	91 1/4
		2/5	12	4/5	22	6/5	32	8/5	42	10/5	52	12/5	62	14/5	72	16/5	82	18/5	92
6	2 1/2	2/6	12 1/2	4/6	22 1/2	6/6	32 1/2	8/6	42 1/2	10/6	52 1/2	12/6	62 1/2	14/6	72 1/2	16/6	82 1/2	18/6	92 1/2
7	3	2/7	13	4/7	23	6/7	33	8/7	43	10/7	53	12/7	63	14/7	73	16/7	83	18/7	93
8	3 1/2	2/8	13 1/2	4/8	23 1/2	6/8	33 1/2	8/8	43 1/2	10/8	53 1/2	12/8	63 1/2	14/8	73 1/2	16/8	83 1/2	18/8	93 1/2
9	4	2/9	14	4/9	24	6/9	34	8/9	44	10/9	54	12/9	64	14/9	74	16/9	84	18/9	94
10	4 1/2	2/10	14 1/2	4/10	24 1/2	6/10	34 1/2	8/10	44 1/2	10/10	54 1/2	12/10	64 1/2	14/10	74 1/2	16/10	84 1/2	18/10	94 1/2
11	5	2/11	15	4/11	25	6/11	35	8/11	45	10/11	55	12/11	65	14/11	75	16/11	85	18/11	95
1 1/1	5 1/2	3/1	15 1/2	5/1	25 1/2	7/1	35 1/2	9/1	45 1/2	11/1	55 1/2	13/1	65 1/2	15/1	75 1/2	17/1	85 1/2	19/1	95 1/2
1 2/1	6	3/2	16	5/2	26	7/2	36	9/2	46	11/2	56	13/2	66	15/2	76	17/2	86	19/2	96
1 3/1	6 1/2	3/3	16 1/2	5/3	26 1/2	7/3	36 1/2	9/3	46 1/2	11/3	56 1/2	13/3	66 1/2	15/3	76 1/2	17/3	86 1/2	19/3	96 1/2
1 4/1	7	3/4	17	5/4	27	7/4	37	9/4	47	11/4	57	13/4	67	15/4	77	17/4	87	19/4	97
1 5/1	7 1/2	3/5	17 1/2	5/5	27 1/2	7/5	37 1/2	9/5	47 1/2	11/5	57 1/2	13/5	67 1/2	15/5	77 1/2	17/5	87 1/2	19/5	97 1/2
1 6/1	8	3/6	18	5/6	28	7/6	38	9/6	48	11/6	58	13/6	68	15/6	78	17/6	88	19/6	98
1 7/1	8 1/2	3/7	18 1/2	5/7	28 1/2	7/7	38 1/2	9/7	48 1/2	11/7	58 1/2	13/7	68 1/2	15/7	78 1/2	17/7	88 1/2	19/7	98 1/2
1 8/1	9	3/8	19	5/8	29	7/8	39	9/8	49	11/8	59	13/8	69	15/8	79	17/8	89	19/8	99
1 9/1	9 1/2	3/9	19 1/2	5/9	29 1/2	7/9	39 1/2	9/9	49 1/2	11/9	59 1/2	13/9	69 1/2	15/9	79 1/2	17/9	89 1/2	19/9	99 1/2
1 10/1	10	3/10	20	5/10	30	7/10	40	9/10	50	11/10	60	13/10	70	15/10	80	17/10	90	19/10	100
1 11/1	10 1/2	3/11	20 1/2	5/11	30 1/2	7/11	40 1/2	9/11	50 1/2	11/11	60 1/2	13/11	70 1/2	15/11	80 1/2	17/11	90 1/2	19/11	100 1/2

The conversion chart I pasted in the back of my everyday notebook in 1971.

it was, teaching was just a means of earning a living in the meantime. What would be the point of going for a more advanced post that would require more time and commitment? Looked at another way, I knew I operated best when being stretched, and a Deputy Head's job would do exactly that. And anyway, Scripture urged, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,' so maybe I ought to bring that approach to my teaching.

On that basis I applied for a Deputy Headship at Wyke Middle School—Bradford's largest Middle School with 630 pupils and 22 teachers. It was a searching interview, but I got the job in December 1973 and in due course began working under the headmistress, Mrs Zillah Lloyd. Hers was a no-nonsense approach, with strict discipline imposed in an atmosphere of fairness and encouragement—a good environment. My post was a 50-50 split between teaching (mostly French) and administration, and for the latter I had my own office.

It was around this time that electronic calculators began to appear in Britain. They were considered an absolute wonder! Though they were expensive, I invested in one to help me with the detailed book-keeping I had to do in connection with requisitioning school supplies, which was one of my responsibilities at Wyke.

Mrs Lloyd believed in corporal punishment but hesitated to administer it herself, so it fell to me to carry it out when required. I had a black gym-shoe ('pumps', we used to call them) on my office mantelpiece, with a French tricolor ribbon threaded through the lace-holes. This was applied to many a backside of misbehaving boys during my time at the school, and no-one bore me any ill will



*Headteacher and Deputy: visiting Zillah Lloyd in 2001
after not seeing each other for 30 years.*

as a result. In fact when I eventually left that post I received many written tributes from the children, and one boy wrote, 'Mr Matthew gave me three of the best for throwing stones in the playground. I knew it was wrong, so I deserved it, and it did me good.'

I had some good conversations with Mrs Lloyd about what it means to follow Jesus. The two of us got on really well together. She was a good-living person but sceptical about Christianity in general and, while she respected my own views, told me she could never be a committed Christian like me. But I continued to pray for her after my life moved on—and discovered, thirty years later, that my

prayers had been answered. I looked her up and visited her for a day in 2001, by which time she was 79 years old, and the first thing she was keen to tell me was that she had found a place of living, personal faith in Jesus Christ and was an active member of her local church. Brill!

Another step up: church

Around this time we began to take some fairly radical steps to move the Bolton Woods church forward. We were realising that, while we had lots of meetings, we didn't really do much 'meeting' in the sense of having real personal time together. If church is 'family', as the New Testament shows it to be, then time together should be central, we reckoned. So we started cutting back on some of the organised activities to make more room for meals and fellowship together. It was a good move.

My own thinking was stimulated by a series of meetings held locally from time to time for church

leaders, where the speakers included names like Peter Parris, Alan Vincent, Arthur Wallis and Bryn Jones. These men seemed to be utterly committed to God and to the church's welfare, were well-read in the Scriptures and open to the Holy Spirit. Coming from church backgrounds quite different from our own Brethren one, they often shared insights that challenged our traditions. It was all very exciting, and some of these men came to Bolton Woods to see us in our own situation and minister the Word. New songs were circulating, expressing some of the old truths in new and challenging ways. Here's one I heard and wrote down in 1974:

We are being built into a temple
Fit for God's own dwelling place,
Into the house of God which is the church,
The pillar and the ground of truth,
As precious stones that Jesus owns,
Fashioned by his wondrous grace.
And as we love and trust each other
So the building grows and grows.

Holidays

Package holidays were just beginning to become more popular at that time, and once, before the children came along, Faith and I, since we were both at that time bringing in a wage, stuck our necks out and booked a week in Benidorm, Spain. But we never got there. Faith suffered one of her debilitating bronchial attacks and the doctor said it would be foolish to fly in the circumstances. Luckily our insurance meant we got our money back, but we were disappointed not to get to Spain.

When Faith was in the main phase of her naturopathic treatment we went for a week to Ilfracombe. Keen to maintain our healthy regime there in order not to set back her progress, we booked in at a vegetarian guesthouse. It turned out to be a dreadful place, with the most unappetising meals, all of which seemed to be based on varieties of pseudo-meatloaf made of lentils. Many of the other guests were rampant vegans, who regarded our own approach to food as a bit slack, to say the least. On a couple of occasions, after barely touching the near-inedible evening meal, we walked into town and bought fish and chips. These we ate, with great relish, from the paper, well sprinkled with vinegar and salt, as we walked along by the sea. We kept our eyes skinned to be sure that none of our fellow-guests spotted us!

When the children came along, most of our family holidays were in static caravans on the east coast of Yorkshire. We had one in Filey in 1965, when Jonathan was only a few months old, but most were on the south cliffs at Whitby, a town we grew to love. Like most people, we had no car, so we had to use the train and bus, with a taxi to take us from the station to the caravan site. We would send our main suitcase on by train in advance and pick it up at the left luggage office.

We had some lovely walks on the windswept clifftop pathway. To get into the town we had to walk a mile or so north along the coast path, then down the famous 199 Steps to sea level. It was easier going down than up, especially with two young children.



On the Three Peaks Walk with Jonathan, aged 8, in August 1973 (I was training for the Lyke Wake Walk).

But in the mid-1970s we were both pretty fit and did quite a bit of walking whenever we could. I had already done the Three Peaks of Yorkshire Walk many times—a 25-mile circular walk from Horton in Ribblesdale and taking in the summits of Penyghent, Whernside and Ingleborough. In August 1973, with several friends, I tackled an even longer one, the Lyke Wake Walk, from Osmotherly across the North York Moors to Ravenscar on the east coast, a distance of 40 miles. To ‘qualify’, you had to complete it in under 24 hours, a feat we managed with some time to spare.

A car at last

By 1974 my mother was becoming more immobile as her arthritis and Parkinson’s Disease grew in severity. She and my father had never owned a car and had never learned to drive. As my Dad had progressed up the ladder at Henry Lindsay Ltd, the company had provided a chauffeur-driven car for him whenever he needed it. The chauffeur’s name was Beaumont. But clearly Dad didn’t want to use this facility for non-work travel very often, so, with Mum needing transporting to church meetings, the dentist’s and other places, he made a suggestion to me: he would buy a car, which I could look after and drive, on the understanding that, in return, I would ferry him and Mum about as required.

This sounded a good idea to me, and soon I was driving a cream-coloured second-hand Triumph Toledo, registration number LKY156G. A lot better than the scooter, especially in bad weather, and it made our busy lives a lot easier, especially as we could now transport the children. It was written off in September 1974 when somebody rammed into the rear of me at speed on Canal Road. I had a stiff neck for a while afterwards but was otherwise OK.

First VW Passat

Dad then decided to replace it with a brand new car and consulted me on what would be a suitable make and model. I’d always fancied a VW Passat, and to my delight that’s what Dad bought. It was in Lofoten Green with a light brown interior, registration RUG113R, and I was proud to drive around in such a swish vehicle.

We did many miles in that car, including a long drive down to Cornwall, where I was the guest speaker for the week in 1977 at *Corestin*, a Christian guesthouse in Port Isaac. I had to do a short devotional for the guests each morning in the lounge, then a more meaty talk after the evening meal.

The movement that had become known as the Charismatic Renewal was underway in Britain by this time, with people from mainline (as distinct from Pentecostal) denominations getting baptised in the Spirit and exercising spiritual gifts like prophesying and speaking in tongues. It was an exciting time but, inevitably, not without its nutty extremists.

The couple who ran *Corestin* seemed to be in that category: they had an obsession with alleged dangers from demons. On the first evening of the houseparty, when providing the new intake of guests with information about where to go and what to see, they strongly advised avoiding Tintagel because, they said (in suitably hushed tones), there are all sorts of spooky goings-on there, and a strong demonic influence. To me, if that were true, it was all the more reason for Christians to go up there and give the place a good spiritual clear-out. But they were running the place and I was just the guest speaker, so I felt it prudent to keep that to myself. I didn’t let on, but we ourselves visited Tintagel that week!

Come in, No.3!

We had felt for some time that it would be good to have a third child. But with Faith’s Granny increasingly unwell and occupying our small bedroom, and Jonathan and Rachel together in the



Our first Passat, here in Port Isaac, Cornwall, in July 1977. Peter had arrived by this time and was two years old.

second bedroom, living space was tight, even in our nice semi, and our schedule very demanding. But you can't wait for ever, and in the end we decided to go for it. **Peter Benedict Matthew** was born at 6.10pm on Sunday 23rd February 1975, weighing 8lbs 1oz.

Granny Gall was becoming very frail by then, and we think she held onto life only to see the birth of her latest great-grandchild. She died less than two months after his arrival.

Our new son proved easier to manage than the other two. This was because, with ten years' experience of parenting under our belts, we were much more confident in our approach. Also, Jonathan being 10 and Rachel 7 meant that the baby effectively had four parents instead of two. So life was good and we rejoiced to be a truly happy family.

Struggling with people

I had always been a bit of a loner, happy with my own company and rarely feeling the need to be with other people.

The downside to this aspect of my personality is that sometimes I found socialising with other people difficult. In particular, I really disliked small-talk. Give me a good discussion on some deep doctrinal issue and I'd be thoroughly at home, but the everyday chit-chat about something and nothing used to really annoy me, and I had long been skilled at avoiding people unless I knew they had something of substance to say. I was, in a word, unsociable.

This continued until I was reading the Bible one day and came to Ephesians 5:1, which said, 'Be imitators of God...as his beloved children.' I said to him, 'Is there any particular way, Father, that you would like me to imitate you?' And his answer, while not audible, was as clear as if it had been. He replied, 'Well, son, you could start by being more sociable.'

This stung me to the quick. 'Is God sociable?' I pondered. And it didn't take long for me to realise that a love for people and having plenty of time for them was revealed in Scripture as one of his major characteristics. Oh dear! I was going to have to change in an area of my everyday life where I least wanted to change. This was foundational stuff and wouldn't be easy.

I decided to be practical about it. One thing I could do, I figured, was change how I typically acted at the end of meetings. I would normally be at the electronic organ, having played for the closing song, so I would tend to stay there, playing quietly while people got up, moved around and chatted. Sometimes, if a person came over and tried to catch my eye with a view to talking, I would pretend to be deeply absorbed in what I was playing, ignoring them until they got tired and went away. I would change this now, I decided. Instead, I would close the organ lid, get up from the seat and mingle.

I tried it and it was very difficult. Being totally inept at chit-chat, I just didn't know what to say to people. So I sat down at home one evening with a pencil and an A4 pad and tried to think of questions

that I could ask people—ones that couldn't be answered by Yes or No. That would require them to talk to me a while, during which, I hoped, I would be able to think of what to say next. This is no exaggeration; I really was that bad.

I came up with a dozen or so questions, like, 'How are things going for you at work these days?' And 'What do you think Bradford City's prospects are this season?' I memorised them and put them to use in the after-meeting mingling as best I could. I was determined to please the Lord in this and so stuck at it even when, as often happened, I really felt like leaving the crowd and going home.

Gradually I became more skilled and confident with small-talk, but it took a couple of years before it became anything like natural. I would always be happy with solitude, but at least now I could be sociable when required!



March 1975: Peter, just a few weeks old, in his new red pram.

Church developments

While all this was going on there were exciting things happening on the church front. We had got to know and appreciate a man called Peter Parris, who was leading a group of Christians who met in his house in Shipley. He was a man of considerable experience in church affairs, and as leaders at the Gospel Hall we more than once sought his advice.

I approached him one day regarding a particularly thorny divorce case that was troubling us at the time and needed decisive action. We thought we knew the right course to take, but felt that the seriousness of the case pointed to our getting confirmation from outside our immediate circle. Would Peter, I asked him, be willing to come and sit in on one of our leaders' meetings and give us the benefit of his wisdom and experience? He said he would, but added that he knew a fine Christian man called Bryn Jones whose experience was wider than his own; would we be happy for Peter to bring him along, too? I said we would.

Getting to know Bryn Jones

This led to our initial personal meeting with Bryn, who was the same age as me. From a Welsh pentecostal background, he had studied at the Bible College of Wales before working as an evangelist in Cornwall, then as a missionary in British Guyana, South America. More recently, he had settled with his family back in Britain and now lived in the Bradford area, where he drove a laundry van for his living but spent the rest of his time in Christian work locally.

We quickly sorted out the divorce issue that had triggered our get-together, then went on to have a fascinating time of discussion of various church-related topics. We warmed to Bryn's charisma and wisdom, and before long he was visiting us at Bolton Woods to preach and to sit with the leaders.

At that time there was a lot of talk in Christian circles about apostles and prophets. We all knew that, according to Saint Paul, the primary ministries given by the risen Christ to build up the church were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.¹ Our Brethren heritage, like that of most denominations, had taught us that, of these five, the first two had been transitional, a temporary expedient pending the completion of the New Testament canon, after which they were no longer

¹ See Ephesians 4:11-13.

needed as their inspired writings were permanently available as part of Scripture. The other three, by contrast, had an enduring role towards the church in every generation. This view had come under serious challenge in recent times, and some were declaring that the ministries of apostles and prophets were as valid, and as necessary, today as at any other time. Today's apostles would not, of course, have the same clout as The Twelve and Paul, but would, like the several others given that designation in the New Testament, have a church-planting and church-building role.

Many people had for quite some time recognised the apostolic gift in Bryn Jones and were drawing fire from more traditional church quarters by daring to say so. As leaders in our own small church, we clearly needed to decide where we stood in all this. After much study and debate we concluded that the apostolic and prophetic gifts were alive and well in our day. What's more, we were happy to recognise Bryn himself as an apostle, and before long we invited him to take an apostolic oversight towards us as a church.

This had a marked effect on our sense of purpose and direction. I remember our sitting with him in an elders and deacons' meeting discussing leadership. 'I suppose,' he remarked, 'that, being from a Brethren background, you chaps believe in plural leadership in each local church?' We most certainly did; we had always been opposed to the dreaded 'one-man ministry' practised in many denominations.

Bryn smiled. 'And I suppose,' he went on, 'that, being of good Brethren stock, you also believe in equality of eldership—that no one of the group of elders carries more authority than any of the others?' Yes, we were strong on that, too. 'I question that,' he said, to our surprise, and went on to point out several New Testament passages in support of his view. We discussed this long and hard, and gradually came to concede that he had a valid point. Certainly our emphasis on equality had meant that it sometimes took us a very long time—sometimes months or even years—to reach unanimity on an issue and move forward on it.

Bryn went on to ask us about ourselves. 'Suppose there had been, say, a serious disciplinary issue in your church and somebody had to be expelled. Who,' he queried, 'would be the one among you to announce this to the congregation and explain the reasons for it?' 'Oh, that would be David,' they



Bryn Jones, 1979

replied, pointing at me. He asked a few other, similar questions, and got the same answer. 'Well then,' he concluded, 'it seems to me that the Lord has given David a degree of spiritual authority among you that goes beyond that of the rest of you. All I'm suggesting is that you have the good sense to recognise that and make room for Dave to bring you to a place of corporate decision on debatable issues, even if you aren't all of the same mind.'

This was radical. But that's the way things developed, and I found wisdom and grace to steer the leadership team forward in making some major course-changes, and the church at Bolton Woods grew and prospered.

But the Gospel Hall property in which we met had developed some structural problems in the foundations, raising questions as to its suitability for continuing as a meeting-place. We began to look at possibilities of selling it and finding accommodation elsewhere. Everything was up in the air now. With our new understanding of leadership, new links forming through Bryn Jones with different groups of Christians in Bradford, and now questions about the building's viability, everything seemed to be indicating that major change was just around the corner.

Church merger

Already there were three churches in Bradford, including ours, that were looking to Bryn for apostolic direction. The others were the one led by Peter Parris and a group pastored by Keri Jones, Bryn's younger brother. Under Bryn's guidance we began to have various joint meetings, which were exciting and challenging as we represented different emphases and sometimes clashed as a result. But all this came to a head when, by common consent, we merged to form a single church in the autumn of 1975.¹ We would meet on Sunday morning in Bradford's Library Theatre and midweek in housegroups arranged geographically. Peter, Keri and I would be the elders, with Keri as the 'first among equals', all under Bryn's apostolic oversight.

What a giant step this was! And the excitement was palpable. The worship and ministry in the Sunday meetings were outstanding, and people loved the housegroups, where there was chance for everyone to share insights and testimonies, with plenty of room for prayer and praise, or just socialising, and for bursting into song whenever we felt the need, or to discuss a passage of Scripture. It was great. We were about 150 people at the start, but it wasn't long before numbers started to grow quite fast.

It was a hectic time for me. My working notebook from the summer and autumn of 1975 is packed full of school staff meetings and church planning meetings. Visiting and pastoral work was becoming ever more demanding. Bryn had a fast-growing network of church contacts all over the country who were wanting someone to visit them, and some of our leaders were being co-opted to help him, increasing the pressure on the rest of us. Then at home I was also part of a family with three children needing lots of love and attention, plus a wonderful wife to cherish. Something was soon going to have to give.

'Dave's not a preacher...'

After the church merger I was the speaker at the main Sunday meetings from time to time. It was quite something addressing such a large crowd after being used for so long to the smaller numbers at Bolton Woods, and I enjoyed it immensely.

A few months after the merger Bryn announced that it was time to review, in the light of our experience so far, who 'has what it takes' to preach the Word in the Sunday morning setting. All those who had done a session or two were invited to a meeting to discuss it. I thought I had done pretty well myself and looked forward to perhaps getting a few compliments.

With seven or eight of us present, Bryn asked if anyone would like to start the ball rolling by making a comment on how any one of us had done so far. One of them chipped in with, 'Well, I don't think Dave is a preacher.'

I was utterly shocked. Was there maybe another Dave here? No, there wasn't, so he must be speaking about me. As I reeled from this realisation, another one spoke up: 'I agree. I don't think preaching is



Bradford Library Theatre, the venue for meetings of the new 'merged church' in the city.

¹ The first 'merged meeting' was held in the Library Theatre on 28th September 1975.

really Dave's thing.' A double whammy—I couldn't believe it! Then a third man made his comment: 'I agree. Dave's more a *teacher* than a preacher.'

That observation changed my life. I will always remember it as one of the major milestones of my Christian experience. He was right. If a preacher, by definition, was an emotion-stirring, 'go for the jugular and press for a response' type of person, I was certainly no preacher. No, I liked to explain things and see the lights coming on behind people's eyes, and I couldn't care less whether or not they came forward for prayer, fell on the floor, said 'Amen', started crying or whatever. I just wanted them to *understand*. And that, I began to see with startling new clarity, is what being a teacher is all about.

So I determined henceforth to be what I was, and to get better at it, and never again to try to be the preacher that I wasn't. It was a liberating step, and one I continued to benefit from ever after, to this very day.



229 Bradford Road, Shipley - our 20-room dwelling - as it is today. Views of the front (top) and of the side and rear (below). Note also the huge garage, which had a full-size inspection pit.

Space and to spare

In addition to all this, Faith and I were thinking it was time to move house to get more room. We looked at several possible properties but none enthused us. It was my Dad who spotted **229 Bradford Road, Shipley**, in the local newspaper ads and drew it to our attention.

It was a huge stone-built semi-detached property built in 1889 on a lavish scale, with 20 rooms, to house one of Bradford's many prosperous wool-merchants, his family and his servants. It was on four floors. The cellars were vast, and would originally have been the servants' 'below stairs' quarters; there was a bell-pull system to summon them to various upstairs rooms. The other three floors contained, in addition to many smaller rooms, three that were 45 square yards each, and another three that were 35 sq yards each. Our bedroom was big enough to do a cross-country run in without going outside.

The smallest bedroom, which was baby Peter's, was twice the size of your average double bedroom in a modern house. A couple of people in the church with artistic skills came and painted one of the huge walls with a jungle mural—with a red tractor in the middle because tractors were his passion at the time. I had an enormous room as my study. The stairs were five feet wide and very shallow, the kind on which you could imagine a lady in a crinoline descending in style. The place was on the

market at the astronomical price of over £13,000, but Dad was clearly doing well with his job at that time and said he would contribute as necessary, which he did, including some extra money for repairs to the vast high roof, bless him. Completion took place on 26th March 1976 and we moved in

on 2nd April, just a few months after the merged church meetings began.

What the house didn't have was central heating. There was a series of large gas fires, and we went ahead with installing some additional gas heaters. But I don't think I was properly warm in the place in the two and a half years we lived there—except when I climbed the stepladder to change a light bulb in the high ceilings; it was nice and warm up there, but perishing cold back at floor level!

The kitchen was tiny, no doubt because the house's occupants would have had servants doing all the meal preparation below stairs. But we went to some trouble to make it nice. We didn't have enough money, though, to cover the floor with the cork tiles that we fancied. Jonny and Rachel were disappointed at this, so before they went to bed one night we prayed with them, asking the Lord to help us finish the job by somehow providing the funds required, which was about £14. We told no-one else about our need. The following morning I went into the huge conservatory-style porch to check the letterbox, and there was an envelope containing £15, put through by an anonymous well-wisher. We bought and laid the cork tiles and praised God for his faithfulness!

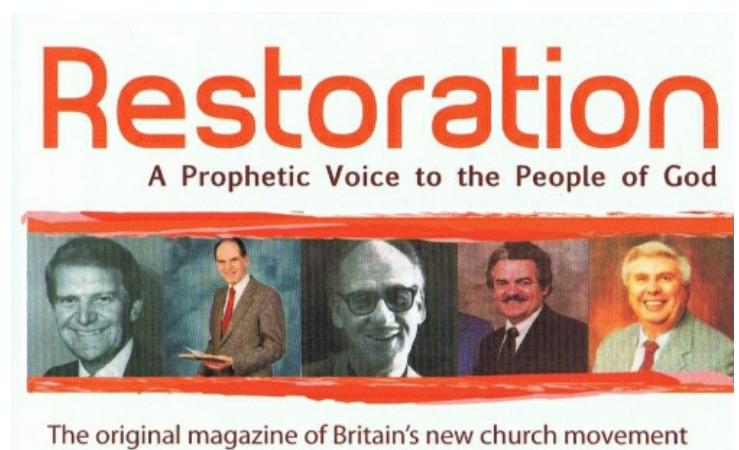
The space was well used by the church for various activities. Sometimes we would have two meetings going on in different rooms, but such was the size of the place that this didn't impinge on family life at all.

Bible Week, Harrogate

July 1976 saw the first Dales Bible Week take place at the Great Yorkshire Showground at Harrogate. Organised by Bryn Jones's network, which had adopted the name Harvestime, it drew several thousand active Christians from across the UK, plus a smaller number from overseas. These were people who either belonged already to one of the churches attached to Harvestime or were visiting to see what it was all about. They camped on site in hundreds of caravans and tents. Many were readers of the bi-monthly magazine *Restoration* that Bryn had started publishing the previous year. It was edited by Arthur Wallis, who was viewed by many as a reliable 'elder statesman' in Christian circles and whose involvement calmed the fears of many who might otherwise have been a bit wary of this 'new thing'.

The Dalesweek highlight was the big evening meeting each day, which saw the huge Floral Hall packed with worshippers. The sound of several thousand voices raised together in praise to God was for many of us something completely new and wonderful. The main speaker was Canadian Ern Baxter, whose grasp of the Scriptures and winsome manner were the means of leading many to expect God to do something bigger in our nation than the existing denominations had ever seemed to envisage. The whole week was pervaded by a sense of being on the crest of a wave, at the very forefront of what God was doing in our generation. Exciting days!

Faith and I had a great time there with our three children, enjoying the activities and the lovely sense of calm and safety in being surrounded by thousands of other likeminded believers. For the next



Early advert for the magazine. The pictures are of some of the prominent figures at that period, from L to R: Terry Virgo, Arthur Wallis, Ern Baxter, Bob Mumford, Bryn Jones

twenty years we would attend the Dales Bible Week every summer—and from 1984 go straight on to the Wales Bible Week held at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells. For several of the early years I got involved in the music, playing a beautiful Hammond Organ with Leslie speakers alongside Ian Frost from Leicester, who played the Steinway grand piano. It was a delight to lead the singing of such a large and enthusiastic crowd of people.¹ I also took special-interest seminars on a variety of



My seminar on ecology, Bible Week 1984

subjects ranging from courtship to a Christian approach to ecology.

Church House

Back in Bradford we as a church were growing steadily. Many people were becoming Christians for the first time, and we used to baptise them by immersion, often a dozen or more at a time, in the River Wharf at Ilkley. More than once I was numb with cold from the waist down as I helped baptise rejoicing believers accompanied by the singing of a couple of hundred folk standing on the river bank.

Some people were also coming to us from other churches. These were mainly Christians who had enjoyed a liberating experience of the Holy Spirit but then found that their traditional church wasn't too happy about it. The 'old wineskins' proved unable to hold the 'new wine'. They either had to quench their enthusiasm or find a church where their liberty could find fuller expression. Many took the latter course and came our way, which didn't make for good relations with the ministers of mainline churches in the city. One of these was interviewed on local radio and denounced us as a bunch of heretics who were more of a threat to true Christianity, he thundered, than the Jehovah's Witnesses! Sadly, he had never visited us to see for himself, nor had he raised his concerns with our leaders. Many of his accusations were totally off the wall. We tried to meet him afterwards to talk it through, but he made it clear he wouldn't touch the likes of us with a bargepole. Sad.

We were now facing the limitations of renting the Library Theatre and so started looking for a building large enough for our growing congregation of several hundred, preferably one with additional rooms for our booming children's work and other activities. We eventually settled on The Church House, in North Parade in the city centre. It had been previously owned by the Church of England but was now redundant, a bit run-down and up for sale. We took up special offerings to raise the money, and by the middle of 1976 were beginning a programme of renovation work to make it usable.

It was a huge task, but we finished the big main hall first, with the Lord Mayor attending the official opening, and our first Sunday meeting there was on 9th January 1977. The new plastic chairs were bright orange, reflecting our joy and optimism! The rest of the building, with its many rooms, would be brought up to scratch in stages over the next couple of years. Meanwhile, the old Gospel Hall in Bolton Woods, with its structural problems, had been sold to a burling and mending² company,

¹ Several Bible Week tape recordings of the worship, many with me playing the Hammond, have been digitised and can be downloaded free at www.vintageworshiptapes.com.

² A process in wool production.

ending what had been, at least for some of us, a very long association with the village.

After a while, a Steinway grand piano became available and, to my delight, the church was able to buy it. It was my joy to lead the worship from this beautiful old instrument. Sometimes singing in tongues would really take off, and it was such a pleasure to make music on the piano that blended with the voices and enhanced the quality of the worship.

On one occasion I introduced a short chord-sequence, with variations. The other musicians quickly took it up, then also the singing group, singing in tongues to it. Soon the whole congregation joined in and the thing just rolled and rolled for more than ten minutes, rising and falling in an indescribably beautiful way. During the week after, Keri Jones put some words to the sequence—he called it the ‘tune’—and it became the song ‘When I feel the touch of your hand upon my life’.

Somehow the song got out and spread around the country, eventually finding its way as a copyrighted song under my name and Keri’s into compilations like *Mission Praise*. I have had a couple of hundred pounds in royalties from it every year since! A few years later we made a live worship tape at Church House called *Oil Of Gladness*, with me on the Steinway.¹



*Church House, North Parade, Bradford.
The shop was for many years our own:
Harvestime Books & Crafts*

About twenty years after this Faith and I had a weird experience when we were living in South Africa. We had taken some English visitors to a restaurant in Pretoria and, as we took our seats at the table, we realised that the background music was ‘When I feel the touch’, being played—instrumental only—on a couple of Spanish guitars. Much to the disgust of our friends, who proudly introduced me to the manager as the composer, it didn’t get us a free meal!

Peru out, Bradford in

My involvement in the developments in Bradford meant that the Peru issue had gone on the back burner. But my sense that God had for years been calling me to eventual full-time Christian service never waned at all. Things came to a head within a year of the new church being formed. Bryn and the other leaders approached me and asked whether I would consider leaving my teaching job and going full-time with the church. There was a great deal happening and they believed my skills needed releasing so that I could serve God’s people with no distractions.

I knew immediately that this was right. Suddenly everything fell into place. I wouldn’t have been a good missionary, but I could do a good job right here in my own city as the church developed. Faith was in full agreement, so I told them yes, even though it meant taking a 50% cut in salary. Some things are more important than money! I gave my notice in and ended my 13-year schoolteaching career in July 1976, saying goodbye to Mrs Lloyd, her staff and the children of Wyke Middle School, who gave me a fine send-off.

Into full-time Christian work

Technically, I was employed until the end of August, and was paid till then, so my new job with the

¹ Digitised version downloadable free at www.vintageworshiptapes.com.



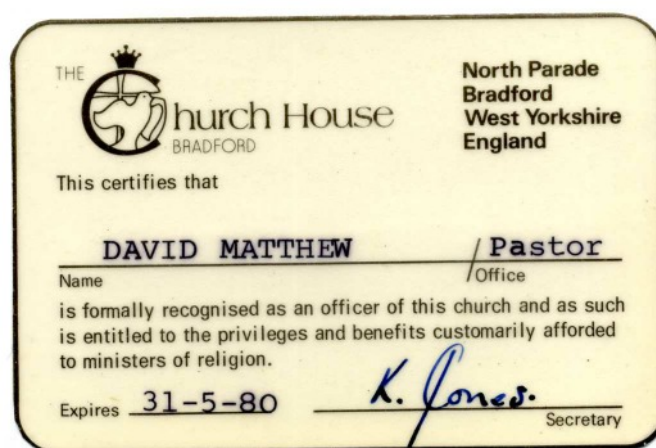
ONE of Bradford's fastest growing churches received a civic send-off at the weekend. The Lord Mayor of Bradford, Coun. Danny Coughlin attended the opening of the newly refurbished Church House, belonging to Bradford Church. The church was formed after three other Christian groups got together and the congregation has increased to more than 600

adults and 300 children in seven years. The 110-year-old building, formerly the property of the Church of England, has been redecorated with flair. Picture shows, from the left, David Matthew, one of the church's full-time elders, the Lord Mayor and Peter Stevens, a house group leader, at the opening ceremony.

church began the first week in September, and it began with a week's holiday! The church paid for me and the whole family to have a week at Moorlands, a Methodist guesthouse on the north cliffs at Whitby. What a way to start this new phase of my life! We had a marvellous time, and when we got back it was great to be able to give myself to church affairs without the heavy responsibilities that my Deputy Headship had entailed. I was 35 years old, and would continue in full-time Christian work right through to my retirement—a wonderful privilege.

For now I was caught up in a whirl of pastoral activity, visiting the housegroups, a good deal of admin and regular teaching commitments in the church. At the same time, I was frequently visiting other churches and Christian groups to speak. The danger was that I would get over-busy. Now, of course, I didn't have the structure of my schoolteaching job to provide a framework for my day, so I had to concentrate on structuring my own life, including building in some time for relaxation and family life. I soon got the hang of it, once I'd got over the feeling that, if I went for a walk one sunny afternoon or spent half an hour on the piano, one of the church members might say, 'I thought we were paying you to work, not to take walks and tickle the ivories?'

At the same time I was beginning to do a bit of writing and my first article, written jointly with Peter Parris and entitled 'The Apostles' Doctrine', appeared in *Restoration* magazine in September 1976. I got the apostrophe in the right place, and reading the article again today, I reckon it was good, sound stuff and quite well



I carried this card, which helped when needing to visit hospital patients out of visiting hours.



Working in my office at Church House, Bradford, September 1981. Still using the good old Imperial typewriter!

written. My first 'solo' article appeared six months later, and thereafter I was a regular contributor.

I was also responsible for an ongoing teaching programme for the church, ensuring that everyone grasped the basics of Christian truth and its outworking in everyday life. Many had done no formal study since their school days, so it was important not to frighten them off with anything too heavy. So towards the end of 1977 I put together a study course called *Milk Of The Word*. Liz Priestley, a church member with training as a book illustrator, drew simple illustrations to make it more appealing. Almost all the church members went through the course in small groups, each with a tutor

who steered them through the material and the simple homework assignments. It went down really well and some were in tears when they received their certificates, especially some older folk who couldn't remember ever having received an award for anything!

The USA

In April 1977 I went with colleague Gwyn Daniels to America for three weeks. Bryn had proposed the trip to educate and stretch us—and it was to do both. I kept a detailed diary of the trip.¹

St Louis

Our first port of call was Saint Louis, Missouri, where Christian friends met us with their huge white Cadillac and drove us to their swish house in St Charles.



With Gwyn Daniel in California, 1977

We had new experiences at every turn, starting with going to a restaurant for breakfast the first morning. We were taken to meet Bob Beckett, the one-legged pastor of the church (he had lost his other in a shooting accident), which was called New Covenant Church, but their building was named The SheepShed.

Some months before, Bob's house had been burned to the ground and Christians from all around had taken up a collection to help him replace it. The new place was enormous, with a large swimming pool in its extensive grounds, more like the home of a business tycoon. When I asked Bob where the toilet was he replied, 'Brother, this house is a six-holer!' Six toilets—this was something new to little old me!

It was in Bob's swimming pool that I finally learnt to swim properly. Gwyn proved to be a patient and understanding teacher, especially appreciating my fear of my head going underwater.

Soon I was away, and even diving in to retrieve objects from the bottom of the pool. But in spite of this breakthrough I would never be a keen swimmer, always preferring dry land!

Everything in America was larger than life. We got up at 5am on Easter Sunday for the Sunrise

¹ I have transcribed my travel diaries for this and many later trips to different countries, and they are available elsewhere.

Service, attended by 2000, of whom 1500 stayed for a breakfast of fruit salad, doughnuts and coffee. Then followed the normal Sunday morning service at 10am, with 3000 in attendance. During the week we attended a Bill Gothard seminar in St Louis city, with a couple of thousand people in each session.

California

Then on to Los Angeles. We arrived in the small hours at our hosts' house and fell straight into bed. When I awoke I discovered that less than half a metre from my head was a glass tank with a live snake in it! The churches we visited here, too, were large and well organised. But I couldn't shake the feeling that relationships were much shallower than I'd been used to at home.

We had a full day in Disneyland. Great fun! Bryn had said it would be important for us to learn from it the importance of bringing a spirit of excellence into everything we did. It sounded like as good a reason as any for such a great day out! Other enjoyable trips were to Sea World and San Diego, and to Melodyland Christian Centre. Then a 2000-mile flight to the city of Detroit, where we attended several days of the Rhema Seminar at Bethesda Missionary Temple, another huge church, pastored by Jim Beall. There were lots of women in leadership, which was something new for us, but Pastor Beall reckoned the NT was well capable of being interpreted in favour of that.

The church car park, we learned, was manned full-time whenever there were meetings going on, because of the high crime rate in the area. Detroit, they told us, had the highest crime rate in the USA, with five murders a day!

One peculiarity of the church was their emphasis on foot-washing. I couldn't myself see that this was a serious requirement in today's society, but nevertheless found the episode of it that we took part in strangely moving.

Chicago

Then on to Chicago, where we met yet more lovely Christian people who were lavish in their hospitality. We also visited the Sears Tower—at that time the world's highest building at 1500 feet tall, with 100 storeys. The view from the top was amazing. And it was in Chicago, at the Oakbrook Shopping Centre, that I bought our first ever electronic game console, a Philips G7000. By today's standards it was quite primitive, but at the time it was a wonder. Certainly our kids thought it was brilliant.

As we flew home I wrote, 'In these last three weeks I have travelled further (7 jet flights), seen more, eaten at more restaurants and drunk more CocaCola than in the rest of my life put together. It has been a good trip, simulating and faith-building. I praise the Lord for the privilege. But "East, west, home's best." Amen!'

Norway

At our church we ran, from very early on, a 'Commitment Class' for people wanting to become members. It went through the basics of what it means to be a Christian, plus an introduction to the privileges and responsibilities of membership. At the end of it one or two of the elders would meet with each person individually to answer any personal questions, then they would be formally welcomed into fellowship, with prayer and communion, in one of the Sunday meetings.



Our first ever video game console, the Philips G7000, brought back from America.

The system worked well, in that people knew what they were coming into and so threw themselves wholeheartedly into it. We had a highly-motivated membership!

News of this began to get around, not just in Britain but overseas, too. Thus it was that, in October 1978, Keri Jones and myself found ourselves in Stavanger, Norway, for ten days addressing sessions to Christian leaders there on the role of elders, the workings of church life in general and the commitment class in particular—the latter difficult in that apparently the Norwegian language has no word for ‘commitment’! Keri stayed with Erling Thu and his family, and I with Tom Erlandsen, a prominent leader in the Pentecostal Church in Norway. He insisted on calling me Matthew Henry! We had met both these men when they had visited England earlier, so they were good friends, not strangers.

We also did some teaching at Troens Bevis, the Bible and Missionary Training Institute at Kvinesdal, up in the mountains. We stayed in a couple of homes up there that were outstandingly luxurious, a match for the best I had seen in the USA. By contrast, we had a night in Erling’s cabin right out in the forest, well away from the nearest road. Snug and warm, with the log-burner bringing out the scent of the pinewood walls, and with a well for water and a toilet with a soakaway, we felt like forest pioneers.



Kvinesdal, Norway

Erling’s youngest child, Ruth, was quite poorly, with a bad cough. I told them that it looked very much like whooping cough to me. I knew what it looked like because our own youngest child, Peter, had been suffering badly with it for nearly six weeks just before the Norway trip. This diagnosis was later confirmed as correct.

Norway was my first experience of speaking publicly with an interpreter. It took a bit of getting used to, but Erling, who did most of the interpreting, had a good grasp of English and seemed to move along fluently. The hard part was learning that, at the end of each block of speaking, I needed to suspend my thought-processes while the interpretation was given, so as not to start speaking again in a way disconnected from the previous bit.

Again it was fascinating seeing a different culture and lifestyle, quite different from the USA. Most of the buildings were built of wood rather than brick or stone. Trees were everywhere. Huge coffee tables were the norm. Candles were lit on the table at every meal, even breakfast. Dinner was served around 3pm. Redcurrant juice accompanied every course. And it was here that I first came across a reverse-action cheese-slicer. I bought one to take home.

I would return to Norway several times. This reflected the increasing overseas interest in what was happening among us, and pairs of leaders from what was beginning to be viewed as Bryn’s ‘apostolic team’ would soon be travelling to many countries to share our insights and experiences. The process also happened in reverse: we ran an International Training Programme for a few weeks each summer. This brought church leaders from abroad for a week’s exposure to our church in its everyday living, plus some teaching sessions to reinforce the principles. They came from many countries.

About this time, though I was still going running on and off, I took up the game of squash. I'd never been good with bat and ball games, finding it hard to get the two to make contact, but somehow I found squash different. It also provided a lot of exercise in a short time—always a consideration when life is busy. The busyness was not just local. In addition to meetings all over the north of

JANUARY 1979				
PRAYER WEEK				
Mon	1	Bank Holiday (U.K.) HGL's Party @ Ukley (Tm)	Week 01	1
Tue	2	Bank Holiday (Scotland) 11.30 J. & R. to dentist. / 3.30 B. Shult.		2
Wed	3	Prayer in HGL (new sense of God's presence) / To Ring of Belle HGL / P. Stevens 12.30. / 2pm Dentist.		3
Thu	4	Sue Beare returns. / To Arthur's 4.00. / R. Turner 12.00		4
Fri	5	To Tatham for supper 7.30. / Priestleys 3.30.		5
Sat	6	United church prayer meeting 7.30		6
Sun	7	Elders (cc deadline for applications). 6pm Film for elders / * PM speak am. 1/2		7
Mon	8	Bible School (Sunnys - lesson 10) / DAY OFF	Week 02	8
Tue	9	9.30 P. & F. Dentist / N of E Ministers 10.00 / 2.00 Bryn team report.		9
Wed	10	* Write to Bryn / 4.30 TP meeting / P. Stevens 12.30		10
Thu	11	pm Photo with A. Wallis		11
Fri	12	Buntings for meal 7.30 (678823)		12
Sat	13			13
Sun	14	Andrew Clark for lunch. / * PM speak am. 3/2		14
Mon	15	Meal at Ukley with Lws HGL. / Local Ministers 10.30	Week 03	15
Tue	16	C. Crawford comes pre-CC interview (day & eve)		16
Wed	17			17
Thu	18	9.30 + Henry & Margaret Field Hill mid-pm. / 8.30 Neil Fish / 3.15 Collect C. Stevens & Belle Vine.		18
Fri	19	P. J. Stevens for meal 7.30 / 3.30 to W. G. B. / 1.30 Margaret / 12.00 C. Tindall		19
Sat	20			20
Sun	21	Colin Crawford (to stay)		21
Mon	22		Week 04	22
Tue	23	Tea meeting 7.30 @ W. B. S.		23
Wed	24	10.30 P. Horsfall / 4.00 B. S. G. S. S. S.		24
Thu	25	To H. Field's 12.30.		25
Fri	26	CC1 (pick with HGL) + bill / 3.30 to G. S. S. / Collect D. J. M. K. & Charles Town 11.00.		26
Sat	27	Celebr. Eve. - Bryn John Shelbourne } Elders Day 9.00		27
Sun	28	Meal with Marina & John (post-marriage) 7pm		28
Mon	29	1.30 Mr. Kettlewell to Shipley.	Week 05	29
Tue	30	6.30 Peter Swift.		30
Wed	31	12.30 P. Stevens.		31

A typical page from my appointments diary of that period

England, I was travelling further afield within the UK now to preach and teach: Norwich, Swansea, Wallingford, Chester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Leicester, Bath, Ross-on-Wye, and many others. The car clocked up a lot of miles. Sometimes Faith would come with me to do seminars on marriage and parenting.

More on the magazine

Arthur Wallis still edited *Restoration* magazine, with Hugh Thompson as his Copy Editor. But Hugh was getting caught up in other responsibilities and I was invited to take over his role in 1979. I still had all my other responsibilities, so life got even busier.

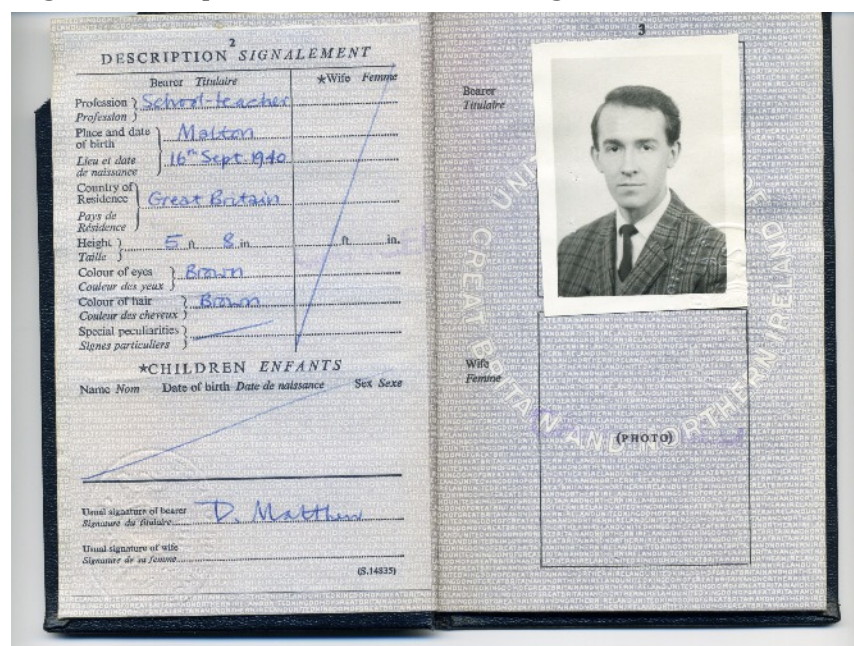
Copy editing appealed to my nit-picking nature and I loved it. I would check through all the manuscripts submitted by the contributors, using a green pen to correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and improve readability—the red pen was Arthur's privilege. Some of these men, I discovered, were far better in the pulpit than they were with the pen. But they had valuable things to share, and I counted it a privilege to make their insights easier to read. It was a complicated business,

as we were also producing an occasional special issue for the USA (requiring US spelling), and one in Spanish: *Renovación*.

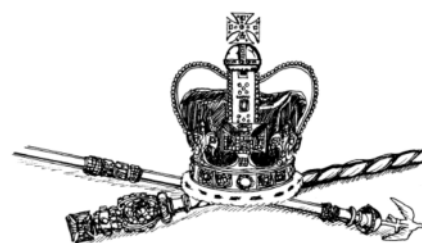
I was also needing to call in at my parents' house more often. Mum was becoming less and less mobile, and although Dad was now retired and therefore around to help her, some of the lifting was a strain on him, especially worrying as he had heart problems. So I was there virtually every day—often more than once. Indeed, life was very busy indeed. I was working long hours in the church, teaching, organising, dropping in on the growing number of housegroups around the city, and visiting people to pray with and counsel them. I was travelling to teach and preach in other cities across the country, and we regularly had visitors to stay with us in the big house on Bradford Road, some of them from overseas. Plus having people for meals virtually every week.

Also, Bryn had delegated some oversight of churches to me. Such were the demands on him in his apostolic role that he asked several of us to be responsible, on his behalf, for some of these churches. I had Blackpool (Lancashire), Chesterfield (Derbyshire) and Wallingford (Oxfordshire). I also spent a lot of time in Southport with the new church there. My job was to visit these churches regularly and spend time with their leaders, dealing with any issues that came up, offering guidance and direction, and passing over to Bryn any matters that I felt unable to deal with myself. It was enjoyable work but involved a lot of travelling. I was doing about 24,000 miles a year in the car—I had a series of VW Passats, all good cars, comfortable and reliable.

Around this time Bryn moved to live in the USA for a few years to establish the growing network of churches there. He came back for a week in the UK every couple of months to follow up issues here. I wrote to him monthly with an update on the churches I was involved with on his behalf. Also on my plate was much of the organisation, plus some of the teaching, for the International



My passport, 1968-1978



Who Rules?

David Matthew

"Right, lad. If you and I are going to get on together in this office, you need to know what's what. To start with, I'm the boss. So you do what I say, OK?" Famous first words, familiar to a million school leavers on the first day of that first job. But at least the new boy knows where he stands. Strong security marks a relationship where the terms of reference are clearly defined.

For that reason I am glad my God is a God of law. He makes it clear that He is the Lord (in today's language we would say 'Boss'); that we, as His creatures, are His subordinates; and that, as in every unequal relationship, the Boss makes the rules.

God without law is like a balloon without a skin. Once we grasp the impossibility of such a notion we shall be less likely to misrepresent the Lord by painting a one-sided picture of His character. Law is as much a part of that picture as love; goodness mingles inextricably with severity; "Come now, let us reason together" must be seen against the background of "I am the Lord your God . . . you shall have no other gods before me".

This God of ours, totally committed to the welfare of His people, sets His welfare programme into action in a spirit of love, but gives it clear direction through law. So when Paul urges us to maintain our human relationships on a basis of "speaking the truth in love", he

The opening page of my first 'solo' article for Restoration magazine, March 1977



In Portland, Oregon, USA. Note the Russian-style hat for keeping out the bitter cold!

Training Programme in Bradford. Never a dull moment!

I was never officially employed by either the church in Bradford or the 'team' around Bryn. They guaranteed me a working wage, which was supplemented by the honorariums I received from the church visits I made. For tax purposes I was self-employed and was able to claim allowances for items like petrol and hospitality. I found it rather a bind to have to keep detailed tabs on our incomings and outgoings, but managed to stay on top of it.

America again

January and February 1980 saw me in the USA again for nearly three weeks, this time with Hugh Thompson, Goos Vedder and my younger brother, Stephen, who took some of his holiday allowance as he was working as a surveyor at the time.

Portland

Stephen and I flew first into Seattle en route to Bible Temple, a church of several thousand in Portland, Oregon. They were famous for two things: their Bible school (with 400 students doing a four-year course) and their worship, and we were to check them both out to see what could be helpfully brought back to our own setting.

Again, everything was larger than life. The choir numbered 80 people, and the worship, much of it relaxed and spontaneous, was accompanied by a band of 35 musicians. I noted in my diary that the band comprised: '...an Allen computer organ, grand piano, 7 violins, 2 cellos, 1 bass (bowed), 4 clarinets, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, a bassoon, French horn and flugel horn, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, 2 saxophones, one (only one!) acoustic guitar, a bass guitar, marimba, conga and bongoes and drums.'

We had meals with lots of the leaders, including the Principal of the Bible School and learnt many valuable lessons from them about leadership and training. What we weren't so keen on was the Christian day school run by the church using a programme called Accelerated Christian Education. I noted: 'Children work at their own pace with printed materials liberally sprinkled with quotes from the AV. There is little social life or opportunity for learning interaction, no lab work, little language teaching, and I felt the kids (age 6 to 18) were rather like academic battery hens.'

St Louis again

From there we flew on to St Louis, Missouri, where we joined up with Hugh and Goos. Bryn was living there at that time and leading New Covenant Fellowship, so we had a lot of time with him. He kept us busy. Among other things he had us preparing a series of broadcasts to go out over local radio. I prepared and recorded twenty of these, often sitting up until the small hours fine-tuning and rehearsing the script to fit the allotted recording time. We drove around in a huge Mercury station wagon that did nine miles to the gallon. One trip was an evening visit to a ten-pin bowling alley, which was a new experience for me—at that



*The famous Gateway Arch, St Louis.
I have been to the top of it twice.*

time there were none in Britain.

But there was always a flip-side to these exciting new experiences. On 5th February I wrote: 'This afternoon I telephoned home to wish Jonathan a happy fifteenth birthday and spoke to Faith as well. These calls play havoc with one's emotional equilibrium.'

Winchester

Stephen flew home to get back to his job, and I spent the last few days on a farm out in the country in Winchester, Illinois—a town of just 1700 people. The pastor I stayed with led a church of just 75, a far cry from the huge urban churches I'd visited previously. Seven of the 75 were his wife and children! The people were warm and welcoming, but very parochial in their attitudes. Many seemed hardly to realise that there was a world beyond the USA. One man I talked to thought cricket was a game you played on horseback! No horse-riding for me, but as there was a thick covering of snow I had my first go at driving a snowmobile.

Our last port of call was South Holland, Chicago, where Hugh and I stayed with dentist John Sullivan and his family in their swish split-level house. They served wine with the meal—a rarity in Christian circles in America, where most people are teetotal.

I would visit the USA several more times in the years that followed, and will spare you the details as the diaries tell it all.

A smaller house

We lived in the huge house at 229 Bradford Road, Shipley, for only two and a half years. The work involved in keeping on top of it, especially with so many guests coming and going, began to tell on Faith.

I took her to the local cinema one night to see *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, based on the John Buchan novel. We didn't take the car as it was only half a mile away. The trailer-film came to an end and the titles for the feature film were just coming up when Faith told me she wasn't feeling very well. I held her hand and assured her she would be alright. But I was wrong. Seconds later she made a funny grunting noise and fainted, slumping in her seat.

I tried my best to bring her round, but to no effect. My efforts to revive her were drawing the attention of the people seated around us, some of whom were looking as if they resented having their entertainment interrupted. Unable to rouse Faith, I appealed for help and one kind man came and took one of her arms, while I took the other, and between us we managed to frog-march her up the steps to the rear of the auditorium, where the usherette pulled down her folding seat for Faith to sit on. She was still out for the count, eyes closed and making odd noises, and she had to be held on the seat or she would have slid to the ground.



8 Hazel Walk, Daisy Hill, Bradford. Our silver Passat outside.

The kind man offered to help me get her out to our car. But I didn't have the car; we had walked. So he said he would go and get his car from the car park and bring it to the main entrance and drive us home, bless him. She came round a bit as we manhandled her into the house and, saying a big thank you to the good Samaritan, I managed to get her into bed, where she slept for most of the next three days. It appears she was just absolutely worn out, and my friend and colleague Arthur Wallis was right when he said, 'Brother, I think the Lord is telling you it's time to move to somewhere more manageable.'

That move took place on **26th October 1979**—to a nice dormer bungalow, **8 Hazel Walk**, in the Daisy Hill area of Bradford, close to Chellow Dene where I had been baptised in the Holy Spirit twenty years earlier. It was much cosier than the big house and easier to keep on top of, but large enough for each of the three children to have their own room. And Faith and I were able to enjoy an en suite for the first time! Central heating, too. It was to this nice home that I returned from the America trip. I



The caravan site at Hawkswick, Littondale, where we spent several happy family holidays.

was 39 years old, Faith 38, Jonathan 15, Rachel almost 12 and Peter nearly 5. A couple of years later, my parents moved from Shipley to a bungalow just five minutes' walk from our place, which made the increasingly frequent dropping-in easier.

Mercifully, not all my travel was work-related. In April 1980 we had our first family holiday abroad, in Spain. It was wonderful to relax together in the sunshine! We also enjoyed a couple of weeks that August at some friends' caravan at Hawkswick, in Littondale. What a wonderfully peaceful place, with the River Skirfare burbling along the valley, the fells

rising up steeply either side of the valley and the bleating of grazing sheep the only sound breaking the silence. A great place to go running, too, and my favourite route was over the fell to Kettlewell and back.

College setup

It was in the spring of 1980 that Bryn mentioned to me casually one day that we could do with getting promising young men together for training in the Scriptures and in church leadership. When I agreed that it was a good idea he replied, 'I think you could set that up for us, Dave. We could start this autumn.'

Setting up what was in effect a Bible college from scratch in six months is no small undertaking, as I soon discovered. I had to plan a curriculum, decide who would teach it, advertise for students, arrange their accommodation, start to build a theological library, determine fees—and a host of related tasks. The course would be called the International Christian Leadership Programme, or ICLP for short, and I would serve as Principal—a fancy way of saying that I would have an ongoing responsibility for the donkey-work.

I worked extremely hard during those six months, and the one-year course launched with the first batch of eleven students (including four married couples) on 22nd September 1980 in Church House, Bradford. Most were British, the rest from the States and Norway. It's satisfying to know that most of those students eventually became prominent church leaders, and several have said how much they appreciated that foundational year together. Among them were David Hadden, Ian Rawley, Steve

Ottolini and Robert Erlandsen. I certainly learnt a lot from it myself, not least the need to depart at times from the original plans and change things in the light of the demands of experience. Student numbers increased after that first year, and I was privileged to run the college for several years thereafter.

All this meant, of course, that I couldn't possibly continue doing the same amount of pastoral work in the Bradford church, so others moved in to take on some of that. I continued to run the course, and also to travel the country to minister in churches anywhere from Inverness to Ilfracombe, and to continue as Copy Editor of the magazine. In effect I was no longer part of the church staff but a member of Bryn's 'apostolic team'. The transition was never formalised; it just happened. But it suited me fine, and I continued to relish the varied responsibilities that were now mine.

Some of my few remaining pastoral tasks were interesting, to say the least. One involved a young couple who had recently become committed Christians. They had been living together for some time, so it was a delight to marry them and help them build a more solid relationship. They were slightly 'hippy' in their lifestyle, and had a chequered history. One day the husband, David, confided in me that he was feeling guilty about the 'thefts' he had been involved in and wanted to put things right.

It turned out he had lived in a whole series of cheap furnished bedsits for a year or two. Whenever he reached a point where he was in arrears with his rent he would 'disappear' by moving out very late at night. A friend with a van would pick him up with his personal belongings. But David would, in addition to his personal stuff, take a piece of furniture or other item with him and eventually move it in with him into his next bedsit. He had accumulated quite a stack of stolen items this way.

So one evening I arranged for a Transit van, into which we loaded them all. Then we began our tour of bedsits looking for the landlords. Each time we found one David would tell him, 'You may not remember me, but I occupied your bedsit eighteen months ago, and when I did a moonlight I took your bedside cabinet with me. I've become a Christian now and so I've brought it back.' Whereupon we would take the item out of the van and plonk it down in front of the bemused landlord, then drive off. We spent a couple of hours that night returning property to at least half a dozen addresses in the seamier areas of Bradford. Afterwards, David thanked me and said he felt tons better for doing it!

The rigours of Cosh

The ICLP was going well. Each year I had made tweaks to the system and things were running smoothly. One danger of such a course, however, is that it can become rather inward-looking and intense. Too much study does not make for a healthy life. So I started building into the course a long weekend away that would provide a total contrast for our students. My colleague Richard Syms and I took them to a remote bunkhouse barn at Cosh, up in the Yorkshire Dales—in winter.

The barn was totally isolated, about a mile from the nearest accessible point for vehicles. Extremely basic, it had cold water and calor gas but no electricity. The toilet was chemical. There was no insulation, so the calor gas heater soon had water streaming down the inside of the bare-stone walls. Particularly for our American students it was a complete shock.

From this spartan base we went on long hikes with map and compass. We arranged with a local



Bedtime at Cosh, November 1982

outdoor pursuits centre to go potholing, abseiling and gorge-scrambling. We had devotional times each day, but short ones. No study was permitted. We slept like logs in our sleeping bags at night and ate our plain but substantial meals with relish, our appetites stirred by the fresh air and exercise. And we always arrived back at college with the desire for more study and learning renewed.

Later, we started going to a more sophisticated and less isolated bunkhouse barn at Hubberholme. One time we arrived there with difficulty because of the falling snow, and soon after we were snowed in completely. We couldn't get to the outdoor pursuits centre, so the potholing and abseiling were out. Instead, we obtained some empty plastic cattle-feed sacks from the local farmer and used them as sledges, creating our own Cresta Run several hundred yards long down the side of the fell and having a marvellous time, with lots of horseplay and laughter.

One student didn't seem to be entering into the fun. When I asked him why, he replied that it didn't seem right for us to be enjoying ourselves so uproariously when millions of people were heading for hell. I told him there wasn't much we could do about it as we were snowed in, so he might as well relax and have fun. I didn't mention it at the time, but I was beginning to have second thoughts about the traditional evangelical portrayal of hell anyway. Those thoughts would gradually crystallise over the following years.

The Castleford connection

I was in my office in Church House one day in 1982 when the receptionist rang to say there was a man with her who had called in hoping to speak to Keri Jones. Keri was away that day, so would I see him? I would. And into my office walked a man who would become my best friend: Trevor Jones, from Castleford.

Trevor pastored a small church in the town which had once been affiliated to the Congregational Church but was now independent. He had taken his people a long way towards active commitment



*On holiday in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, in August 1983.
Back row L to R: Andrea Jones, Rachel, Peter, Trevor Jones.
In front: Faith, Lynn Jones*

to the Lord and to each other, including openness to the Holy Spirit and his gifts, but had been feeling for some time that he needed outside help if he was to take them further. Rumours of what had been happening in Bradford—just 25 miles away—had aroused his curiosity, and he had attended one of our 'finding out' days for interested church leaders. With plenty to think about as a result, he had come over to Bradford hoping to speak to Keri. But he got me.

We had some good conversation and got on really well. Later that year I would go with his church to be the speaker at their weekend away at a hotel in Scarborough.

Faith and I became firm friends with

Trevor and his wife, Lynn. In due time, Trevor brought his Castleford church into Bryn's network, so our opportunities to be together increased. Their two children were of similar age to our oldest two, which was another linking-factor, and we all went on holiday together to Cornwall in the summer of 1983. Trevor and I were utterly different from each other in just about every respect but, far from

making us uncomfortable with each other, it seemed to have the opposite effect. I will always be grateful to God for bringing us together.

Into Africa

In our Brethren days we had always been missions-conscious. The Yorkshire assemblies had their annual missionary conference in Leeds where, from childhood, I had listened, fascinated, to missionaries from the Far East, Africa, South America and other distant places telling us about their work, often illustrated with coloured slides on a big screen.

One country that figured prominently was Northern Rhodesia. A British colony, it gained its independence in 1964 and became Zambia. It figured prominently because of a veteran lady missionary there called Clara Perkins, based in Kamapanda.¹ She was a Yorkshire woman, and when she was on the verge of retiring, a young man from Bradford, Barry Haigh, felt God's call to go and replace her. We at Bolton Woods knew Barry well and got heavily involved in his preparations to go out there, including helping fund his voyage out.

The Sucklings

Through these links we also knew of a man named Gordon Suckling, who was an established missionary in the North West Province, based at a place called Sachibondu. We kept hearing rumours that Gordon had 'gone off the rails' doctrinally, getting mixed up in 'this Holy Spirit business' and that, as a result, some of his support from Brethren sources had been withdrawn. We could sympathise with him! So when he got in touch to say he and his wife Peggy were on furlough in the UK and would like to visit, we were quick to say yes. They spent a day in our home in November 1982 asking non-stop questions, especially about church leadership and the character qualities it required. As they left, Gordon said he would speak to the leaders of the denomination—Christian Fellowships in Zambia (CFZ)—about the possibility of inviting me over to teach them some of these things.



Gordon and Peggy Suckling, October 1983

Their invitation duly came, and I went out for almost three weeks in October 1983. I was accompanied by Tony Ling, a member of Bryn's team with a prophetic slant to his ministry. The team had been at a retreat at Apeldoorn in Holland for four days immediately before, providing the chance for them to pray for and prophesy over us. So, having just been away from home in Europe for five nights, Tony and I flew out of Schipol Airport into Heathrow and straight out from there on our flight to Lusaka. This was tough on Faith and the children as, with Holland and Zambia together, I would be away for almost a month. I did, luckily, manage to have a phone conversation with Faith before we left Holland. She said they were all missing me already—including our little black mongrel, Filbert, who had been getting used to going running with me!

Zambia

One's first arrival in Africa is always memorable. As soon as the plane's door opens you catch the ubiquitous smell of wood fires and burning charcoal, on a rush of warm air. Wonderful! Then an onward flight to the Copperbelt on a clapped-out Zambia Airways turbo-prop aircraft with—I

¹ Clara is the one who had given me £10 when she had heard of my missionary aspirations many years before.

noticed from my window—a bolt missing from the canopy of its Rolls-Royce engine and another halfway out.

We were let into Zambian society gently. In Kitwe we stayed the first night with an English-born businessman and his black Zambian wife, who were clearly well off. So we had comfy beds and an en suite bathroom. At lunch we were introduced to *nshima*, the African staple made from either maize or cassava. We also had water melon, bananas and paw-paws all grown in the garden. As darkness fell the patio lights drew the insects, and the insects drew the geckoes. Never had I seen so many insects in my life. They were everywhere, including at least a dozen ants in the sugar-bowl.

We dropped straight into an endless series of meetings on the Copperbelt, first in Kitwe, then in Chingola, before heading north to Gordon's patch. The people were hungry for God's Word, and if you only spoke for an hour they were disappointed! Afterwards, when we needed to sleep, we were kept awake by the 'outside dog', who roamed the garden to deter thieves and seemed to dash from one end to the other, right under our bedroom window, barking loudly.

It was 350 miles up to Sachibondu in the North-West Province. The road cut straight through the savannah, with an endless succession of trees, 20-foot anthills and undergrowth at either side, with an occasional grouping of mud huts with grass roofs. We stopped occasionally to greet the folk from local churches. They were there at the roadside to meet us, with not a sign of civilisation or human habitation in sight. At one such stop we were presented with a live chicken. I asked Tony to receive it on our behalf so that I could take a photo. He took it by the legs like a bunch of flowers, and of course the bird's weight meant that it immediately fell upside down and flapped its wings wildly in Tony's face, much to the amusement of the Africans, who couldn't believe anybody could be so ignorant about how to handle a live chicken! Gordon trussed its legs and put it in the back of the pickup to be killed, plucked, cooked and eaten later.



A roadside break while travelling in Zambia, 1983.

From L to R: me, Darrell Rea, Tony Ling

Eventually the tarred surface came to an end and we were driving much more slowly on red dirt with lots of ruts and potholes. We crossed several crocodile-infested rivers on flimsy wooden bridges, were scrutinised carefully at an army checkpoint, then drove through a vast cloud of flying ants that got in our hair and ears, eventually pulling into the small town of Mwinilunga and finding the home of white Zambians Darrell and Helen Rea, retired business people. Over a nice meal they told us that two years before they had been stopped on a remote bush road by five robbers, who had tortured them, sexually assaulted Helen

and driven off with their Peugeot and all their belongings. Then the last leg of 20 miles to Sachibondu, to be greeted by the Sucklings. Quite a day for this Englishman! We fell into bed with insects crawling all around.

This was the real Africa. The nearby lake had many crocodiles, and one man told us he had seen a six-foot water-snake the day before in the vegetable garden on the lakeshore. Baboons leapt around in the trees. Insects were everywhere, including two-inch yellow wasps, enormous hairy spiders and

other grim creatures. Cockroaches came up out of the plughole in our little bathroom. Our problem was that we didn't know which insects would bite and which were harmless. We asked about this and soon learned what to avoid. I kept a detailed diary throughout our stay in Zambia, and you can read that elsewhere.

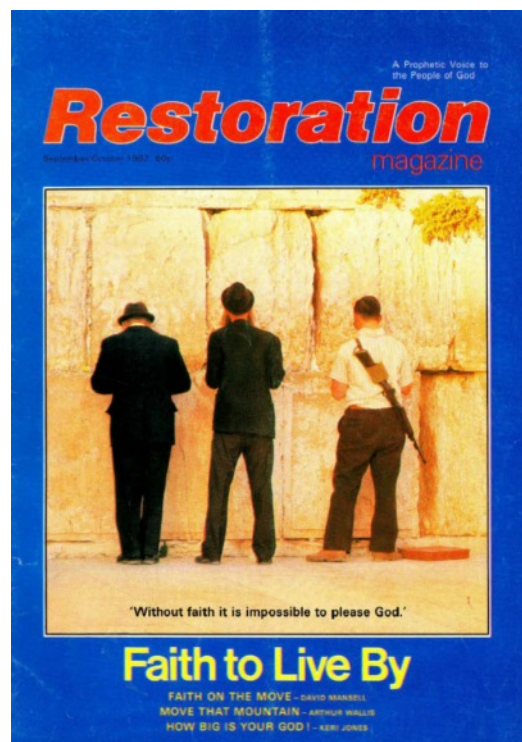
We had some great meetings, starting with a riverside retreat for about 30 people, mostly white but with a few Zambians, then a Bible School with 200 in attendance, many having cycled 100 miles to be there. Finally, a series of special sessions for Zambian church elders. We had a great time, in spite of various distractions, including an invasion by army ants and some of the people going down with malaria. All our teaching was done by interpretation—into Lunda, the native tongue of Paul and Gaston Tshombe, to whom I had given English lessons many years before.

This was the first of many visits I would make to Zambia over the next fifteen years. Often I went twice a year, and always accompanied by some other team-member. I grew to love the country and its warm-hearted people.

Restoration magazine

Having been Copy Editor of the bi-monthly *Restoration* magazine for some time, and having regularly contributed articles to it, I was asked by Bryn and the team in 1982 to take on the role of Editor previously played by Arthur Wallis.

Arthur was widely respected in Christian circles as an elder statesman in the Charismatic Renewal, and his editorship had been a major contributor to the magazine's success and wide readership—its print run was 12,000 copies per issue at that time. To step into the shoes of such an editor was no small challenge, but I took it on, with some trepidation, and the first issue I edited was September/October 1982, whose main theme was 'Faith to live by'. I quickly found my feet and



enjoyed editing the magazine for the next eight years. Roger Day became my Copy Editor and, his skills in that area being second to none, I could confidently leave most of the donkey work with him while on trips like those to Zambia.

It was a busy life. I was editing the magazine, running the Bible college, travelling all across the UK preaching and teaching, taking regular ministry trips overseas, maintaining involvement in the Bradford church and, not least, raising a family! But I loved it all. Every day was an adventure and I felt deeply privileged to be paid for doing the things I loved.

A typical month was October 1982, when my diary has me engaged in the following activities, among others: speaking with Faith at a Family Life Seminar in Nelson, Lancashire; teaching at the ICLP two days each week; partaking in a three-day fast; having my in-laws for lunch; speaking at a weekend in the Ridgeway Church, Wallingford, Oxfordshire; attending a two-day team retreat at Ilkley; doing a two-day

visit with Faith to Norwich, where she did a women's morning and I a session for single men on the Saturday, and I preached at the main meeting on Sunday; doing a day's final proof-reading of the contents for the Jan/Feb 1983 issue of *Restoration*; taking two evening sessions in the Bradford

church on courtship and marriage; having several counselling sessions with individuals; doing a Marrieds' Weekend with Faith in Swansea, South Wales; speaking at an evening session in Leicester; and doing a Sunday evening preach at a Brethren assembly in Wyke, Bradford. Apart from anything else that's 1500 miles in the car!

Three Peaks of Yorkshire

I loved the Yorkshire Dales, and one of my favourite walks was the Three Peaks of Yorkshire. This was a circular walk, usually starting and finishing at Horton-in-Ribblesdale, and taking in the summits of Ingleborough, Wharfedale and Pen-y-ghent. The distance was just short of 26 miles. I did this walk at every opportunity, in all kinds of weather.

If you completed the circuit in under 12 hours you were qualified to join the Three Peaks of Yorkshire Club, which I did early on, usually doing it in around ten hours. Two circuits in particular stand out in my memory.

One was done with my brother-in-law, David Lupton, and a group of youngsters from the church. We had cleared Pen-y-ghent and Wharfedale and were close to the summit of Ingleborough when a grim realisation struck me: the light was fading. Normally I did this walk in the summer, when the daylight hours were long, but this was well into the autumn and I had completely failed to take account of darkness falling much sooner.

As we began the long descent from Ingleborough I hurried the party along, anxious to get down as quickly as possible. But clearly we weren't going to make it in time. The path was steep and very treacherous, with deep drops over limestone crags if one strayed from it. As the light faded it became difficult to make out the path. None of us had brought a torch and the clouds obscured any moonlight. We were in big trouble. In those days, of course, mobile phones had not been invented, so there was no way of letting anybody know our predicament. For a while we walked in single file, each person with their hand on the shoulder of the person in front so that we stayed in contact. But soon even that didn't help. To move on would be to risk serious injury.

There was only one thing to do: pray. I gathered the group into a tight circle and we all squatted down to get some shelter from the wind that was blowing keenly across the exposed landscape miles from the nearest human habitation. I prayed something like, 'Lord, here we are, in a difficult situation. I'm sorry for not being more thoughtful and for failing to foresee this. But, Lord, there's absolutely nothing we can do right now except bring our predicament to you. So help us, please, I pray. Amen.' The echoing amens from the group were heartfelt.

Never have I known such a clear and instant answer to prayer. We rose to our feet and immediately saw, in the enfolding pitch blackness, a couple of little lights twinkling in the distance, uphill from us. The lights were moving. Then a third and fourth light appeared with them. At my instigation we raised our voices together and yelled 'Help!' We heard a shout in response, though it came from too far away to make out what it said. So we continued to shout from time to time to indicate our position,



and the lights gradually made their way towards us. You can imagine the relief we felt!

Eventually the voices assured us help was on its way, and suddenly four men were with us. They had head-torches and large flashlights in their hands. They were potholers who had spent the day underground exploring the extensive limestone cave-system under Ingleborough and had come to the surface, heading for home, at the very moment we had prayed. 'Thank you, Lord!' we all said with grateful hearts.

With their bright torches and their familiarity with the route, the men guided us down to their base in Clapham, from where they kindly drove us back to where our own cars were parked in Horton. A memorable occasion, and one that deepened my own faith as well as making a deep impression on the youngsters with us.

My other outstanding memory of the Three Peaks was when I decided to run it—on 26 October 1985. I was 45 years old. By this stage I was used to doing long runs. The previous year I had done the Bingley half-marathon (1 hr 41 mins) and then the Leeds marathon (3 hrs 41 mins), so I knew I was capable of doing the distance, though the Three Peaks run also included several thousand feet of steep climbing.

Jonathan, who was now 20, drove Faith and me up to Horton and I set off on my solo run in bright sunshine. They would rendezvous with me at the three points where my route crossed a public road, to supply me with drinks and chocolate.



Approaching Ribbleshead Viaduct on my Three Peaks run, with Wharfedale beyond

It was a tough assignment, but I loved every minute of it. There's nothing quite like running freely over the fells, with glorious scenery all around, the fresh air in your face and feeling the springy turf under your feet. It wasn't until making the long descent from Ingleborough that I began to feel really weary, but I knew I could make it, and what a pleasure it was to climb the final stile and drop back into Horton, where Faith and Jonny were waiting to greet and congratulate me. It had taken me six and a quarter hours.

Over the years I have hiked the Three Peaks 37 times—but run it only once!

Sticking with Castleford

The Castleford church, led by my friend Trevor Jones, had been part of the Harvestime network (now called Covenant Ministries) for a couple of years but had begun to have some reservations about some of the emphases. Then rumours began to spread that Trevor, along with a couple of other Yorkshire pastors in the network, had been speaking negatively about Bryn and Keri. As a result Bryn 'released' them from his 'covering'—that was the kind of terminology commonly used at the time.

As I had been Bryn's link-man with Castleford I found myself in a difficult position. I had no desire to break contact with the Castleford church in general or with Trevor in particular, who I thought had

not been handled well in the situation. Nor did I wish to see change in my strong working links with Bryn and Keri. These men put quite a lot of pressure on me to let the Castleford connection go, on the grounds that (as they put it) ‘your covenant is with us’.

Personally, apart from its expression in marriage, I had never been as convinced as they were of the importance of ‘lateral covenant’—that is, a covenant (or committed agreement) between individuals, as distinct from the one between God and his people called in the New Testament the ‘new covenant’. My covenant, I told them, was in my opinion with *all* of God’s people and I would not be pressured into choosing one party over another in the Castleford situation. I held my ground here and continued my friendship with Trevor and the church. Eventually Bryn and Keri realised that nothing was going to change in that respect, so I was happily able to continue ‘business as usual’ with both sides.

Not long after this, and at least in part because of it, Trevor suffered a serious nervous breakdown. His capacity to lead the church was severely reduced for several years, and so I found myself travelling over there very regularly to support the other leaders in keeping the church going, and giving all the comfort and encouragement I could to Trevor and Lynn. This served only to deepen our friendship, to the blessing of both them and us.

Computers

One useful thing I gained from my work on the magazine was an early familiarity with computers. When I first got involved with *Restoration* all the layout was done by pasting printed text onto master-pages. Then we began to hear about exciting developments in technology including such wonders as word processors and desktop publishing.

The first computers we used at Harvestime House—the base for Covenant Ministries’ publishing and retail operations—were pre-Windows and pre-hard disk drives. We had a few Amstrad machines with black and white screens. These computers had two slots that took the original five-inch floppy disks—so called because they were made of thin, bendy plastic in an equally thin and bendy case. One disk held the DOS operating system; the other held your data. We used to marvel at being able to



Sinclair QL with microdrives (which fitted into slots in the front of the square section at the right-hand end, where the computer's 'works' were housed).

insert a few extra words into the middle of a paragraph and see the lines move along to accommodate them! I ran several writers’ seminars at the time and always had a session introducing word processing as a writer’s best friend. It always produced lots of ooohs and aahs from those who watched.

Then we moved on to Apricot machines. These were more advanced in every way and had a ‘hard disk’ with a huge capacity of

20 megabytes. That seemed an unbelievably large amount of disk-space, and I remember somebody saying, ‘Wow, I can’t imagine anybody *ever* needing more than twenty megabytes for anything!’ But even these were not WYSIWYG machines: what you saw on your green screen was not necessarily what you saw when you printed it out on the noisy dot-matrix printer.

The next leap forward came with early editions of Windows—version 3.1, I remember, was hailed as a massive advance. What's more, colour monitors began to arrive! Soon we were into something more like the technology I am using to write this. But I still have nostalgic feelings when I see a good old DOS prompt.

Computers remained very expensive for a long time, and there was no way I could afford one at home in the early years. What I did buy was a Sinclair QL, with a little black and white monitor and a thermal printer that took rolls of special heat-sensitive paper. I kept my accounts on this machine for years. It stored your data on tiny little tape-cassettes called microdrives.

Riddlesden College

In the mid-1980s the ICLP moved from Bradford to premises at Riddlesden, near Keighley, and took the name Riddlesden College. Since I was still running the college this meant leaving my office in Church House and re-establishing my office-base there. I had a nice room on the first floor.

In addition to running the standard one-year course there, plus a second year for selected students, we also ran some summer schools, particularly for overseas church leaders who couldn't leave their churches for an academic year but could manage a few weeks.

Zambian visitors

Half a dozen Zambians came over in the summer of 1987. I met them off the plane at Heathrow with a minibus and drove them up to Yorkshire. It was their first time out of Zambia and the thing that staggered them most was the volume of traffic on our British roads. As we made our way out of London one voice from the back said, 'David, where are all these people going?' When I told them this was normal traffic they could hardly believe it.

Pauline Gravenor was the cook at Riddlesden. Warm-hearted and outgoing, she went out of her way to welcome the Zambians and make them feel at home. During one of the morning coffee breaks a couple of them wandered through into the kitchen to talk to her. One of them began staring hard at an object on the worktop, then pointed to it and, with a voice full of alarm, cried, 'Pauline!'

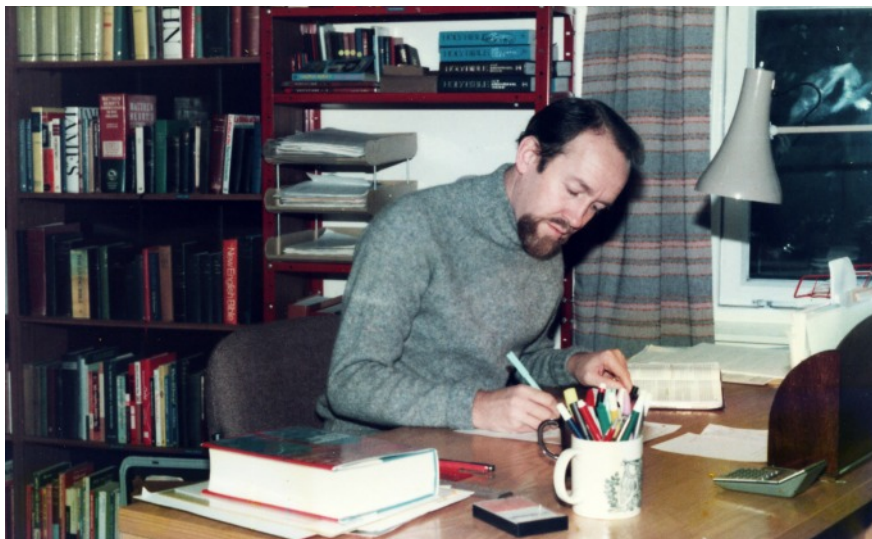
'What is it?' she asked, thinking that maybe he had seen a rat, or the building was on fire. With a face full of wide-eyed concern he said, 'Pauline, a large cup is going round and round in your cupboard!' He was pointing at the microwave cooker, and I suspect he thought there was some witchcraft going on. We all had a good laugh, but it brought home to us how unsettling a clash of cultures can sometimes be.

Ticker trouble

Earlier that year I had been in Zambia for two full months. I was worn out before I went as I had to make sure that arrangements were in place to cover all my bases during the extensive absence. And I was straight into teaching and preaching from the moment of my arrival, with retreats, conferences and elders' sessions one after the other with little respite.

Faith and our youngest son Peter came out to join me for the second month, starting with a week's break in South Africa before heading up to Zambia for yet more meetings. It was great to have them around and be able to show them the people and places I had long been familiar with from my earlier visits. Peter loved seeing the army ants and riding the zip-wire into the river up at Sachibondu. Faith had a less positive experience with insects: she was bitten on the thigh by a poisonous spider and was quite ill for a few days as a result. She bears the bite-mark to this day.

By the end of the two months I was pretty shattered and was grateful that some South African friends paid for us to end our stay in Africa with three days at the Victoria Falls Hotel, on the Zimbabwe side of the Falls. It was a lovely, luxurious hotel and we felt like royalty. Mongooses could be seen in the garden, monkeys chased each other across the roof, and the glorious Falls were just down the road. Peter and I took the Flight of the Angels, zooming low over the



In my office at Riddlesden College

crashing water in the light plane and getting marvellous views of the whole natural spectacle.

One afternoon we were lounging in the gardens, reading and just enjoying the atmosphere, when I noticed that my heart was beating unusually fast. It wasn't distressing, just puzzling, and after ten minutes or so it stopped. The odd thing to me was that I hadn't consciously done anything either to trigger it or to cause it to stop. My heart was in generally good condition, I reckoned, because of the cardio-vascular benefits of my regular running. My heart was used to beating fast, but it was strange that it was doing so in these conditions. I thought little of it, even though the same thing began to happen fairly regularly after that. I put it down to being a bit run-down, what with being tired before even going to Zambia, working very hard while there, and then struggling to catch up with the overspill from my two-month absence when I got back to Britain. But it seemed to have no obvious effect on me, so I just ignored it. Later it did become a problem, as we shall see.

Writing books

My series of articles on church history in *Restoration* magazine had stirred up a lot of interest in Christian circles, and Marshall Pickering, a publishing company, approached me about expanding it and turning it into a book. This I agreed to do, and it was published in 1985 as *Church Adrift*, with the subtitle 'Where in the world are we going?' Arthur Wallis kindly wrote the foreword.

I didn't make much money from it. But I had been prepared for that by Arthur—already an established writer—who had said, 'David, if you write a book, write it not to make money but because you have something worthwhile to say. That way, any money that it does bring in will be a bonus, not an expectation.' It was wise advice.

Soon after that, Bryn's Covenant Ministries network established a book-publishing arm to its Harvestime operation, and it was they who produced my subsequent books: a study-book in the School of the Word series, *Christian Manhood* (1985); *Dead Dreams Can Live*, subtitled 'Your hopes fulfilled' (March 1987); *A Sound Mind*, subtitled 'God-governed thought life' (May 1987); *The Covenant Meal*, subtitled 'Meaningful communion' (March 1988); and *Belonging*, subtitled 'Local church membership' (August 1988). Two of them, *Christian Manhood* and *A Sound Mind*, were also published in Dutch.

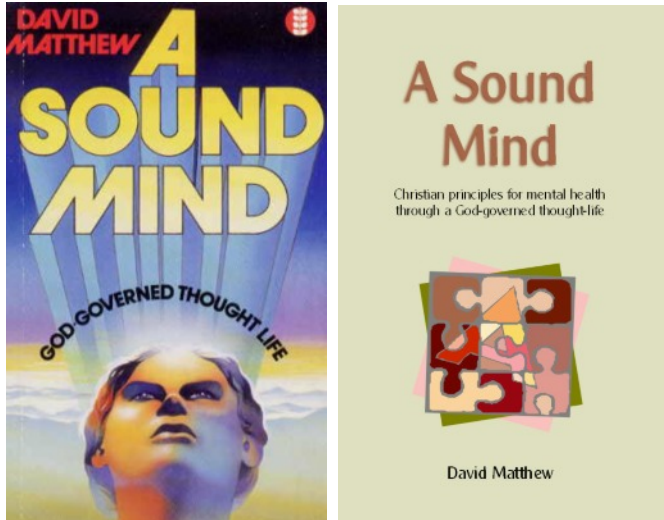
Some copies of these were sadly lost in a fire at the warehouse of the book distribution company who handled them, but copies continued to circulate and turn up in unexpected quarters for many years

after that.

Much later, in 2006, when 'print on demand' became a reality, I set up my own one-man company, Leaf Publishing, and updated and relaunched *A Sound Mind*, *Dead Dreams Can Live!* and *The Covenant Meal*. So these books had a new lease of life and were well received. I finished with hard copies when I retired, but these three titles are still available as Kindle e-books.

Under a cloud

A Sound Mind has a section on depression. Like the other sections of the book, this echoes aspects of



First and second editions of my book 'A Sound Mind'

my own experience. Not that I was ever prone to depression in general, but there was a two-year period during our time at Hazel Walk when it did become a real problem. Oddly enough, Faith suffered it too around the same time. It came on gradually, then altered in intensity before finally leaving. At its worst, I sometimes lay in bed wide awake struggling to stop myself sitting up and screaming in despair, fearing that I was about to go completely round the bend, and inwardly crying out to God for help.

I managed to keep going with my life-routine and work, and as far as I know neither family (apart from Faith) nor friends were aware of what I was suffering. To this day I have no idea what caused

it. Certainly there were no circumstantial factors that I could identify, and no major changes in diet or lifestyle. It may have had spiritual roots, or it may have been glandular; I just don't know. But the horrors of it, and the utter impossibility of doing anything to shake it off—especially the proverbial 'pull yourself together'—remain as vivid memories and have made me sensitive now to people I meet suffering from it in its clinical form.

The sad thing is, some Christians at the time felt that, as a believer, you shouldn't suffer this way if you were really walking with God. That's a complete fallacy, as ridiculous as saying that you shouldn't have a broken leg. Even those Christians who conceded you might suffer from depression would have advised against taking any medication for it. That's a fallacy, too. A plaster cast doesn't heal a broken leg; it just supports it while it's mending. And medication doesn't heal depression; it just supports the mind and emotions while they are mending.

Mercifully, like the kidney stones I'd suffered with on and off, my bout with the 'black dog' 'came to pass' and I've not been troubled with it since, in spite of my basic 'melancholic' temperament.

Unsettled with the team

While I continued to work busily as part of the Covenant Ministries team, I little by little began to become aware of becoming out of step with their mainline thinking on some issues.

Bryn had invited an American called Buddy Harrison to Bradford for a weekend, and then to the Bible Week. His wife was the daughter of Kenneth Hagin, who had become a prominent figure in what became known as the 'Word of Faith' movement, and Buddy followed that line. This emphasised the notion that God wants his people to be healthy and to prosper. No-one in their right mind could argue

with that in principle, but in my view these people took it to an illegitimate extreme. Sickness, they believed, had to disappear if you just quoted the right Bible verses and refused to accept your symptoms. And the blessing of God could best be seen in the wearing of a Rolex watch, driving a top-of-the-range Mercedes or owning a private jet.

I was unhappy about this, believing it was out of step with the fundamental message of the New Testament and a dangerous perversion of the Christian faith. A simple look at the facts showed that sickness, poverty and loss were the experience of perhaps a majority of Christians across the world, yet these dear people held onto their faith regardless. So I made my convictions known to some of my fellow-team members, most of whom were shocked that I would question anything that Bryn had approved.

One Bible Week brought things into sharper focus. Buddy Harrison asked Bryn if he could 'minister to' all the team men and their wives in a private session. We all trooped into the large room and Buddy had us stand in a large circle. He announced his plan to go round the circle and pray for each of us in turn, and prophesy over us. I knew what this would mean. Already he had introduced the practice of laying hands on people to pray for them, whereupon they would apparently go out like a light and keel over backwards, ending up flat on their backs, allegedly 'resting' in the Lord's presence.

I suspected there were two dodgy elements in this. One was the tendency of the pray-er to give the one he was praying for a backwards push. That seemed ridiculous to me. If the Holy Spirit wanted to lay them out he would do it unaided by human hands, I was certain. The other was the (as I saw it) learned behaviour of people who dutifully keeled over because that was the expected thing—enhanced by the knowledge that a 'catcher' was lined up behind them to lower them gently to the ground.

Sure enough, as Buddy began going round the circle of leaders and their wives, each one keeled over backwards into the catcher's arms. Faith and I were waiting about half way round. I turned towards her and indicated that I was unhappy with this procedure and that, when it was my turn, I would not willingly keel over for him or anybody else. So when he got to me I told him I was open to as much blessing I could get, but that I'd take it standing up, please. He prayed for me, then brought a wishy-washy 'prophetic word' that left me totally unmoved.

Obviously I did quite a bit of heart-searching after this and assured the Lord that I was genuinely open to his blessing but that I was sure he didn't want me to be an unquestioning and compliant yes-man. We are the sheep of God's pasture, yes, but we are not to be totally daft.

I raised my concern with my colleagues in the team's customary review session after the Bible Week, but it didn't seem to cut much ice with them. I was increasingly out of step with them on other issues, too. They insisted, for example, on a literal interpretation of Paul's command¹ for women to cover their heads in worship, and that practice was insisted upon in all the related churches. I felt, in spite of my Brethren background which had taught the same line, that this was mistaken. Bryn asked several of us to do a study on the subject and submit our papers to a team discussion, which we did, and mine was the odd one out.

I was also having some questions about the view of spiritual authority that the team taught. I saw some serious instances of what later came to be called 'heavy shepherding', and I took every opportunity to point them out and do what I could to minimise their effects. It did not go down well with some of my colleagues.

¹ In 1 Corinthians 11.

But all of this was in the background. The day-to-day business of teaching, counselling, travelling, preaching and editing continued as before.

The Dalesway

As a family we had always enjoyed walking, and we introduced all our children to the joys of the Yorkshire Dales from an early age.

In August 1988 I decided to walk the Dalesway with our Peter. This is a 90-mile walk from Bolton Abbey to Bowness on Lake Windermere, winding its way up through some of Yorkshire's most beautiful landscapes. We carried everything on our backs and did the walk over six days, staying at pre-booked BandB places each night.

We had a great time. It was mostly sheep country, of course, and our game throughout the walk was to aim to touch a sheep. This was difficult, because they were nervous of humans and were quick to scurry away if you approached—and there was space galore to scurry into. The best tactic was to approach quietly from behind some unsuspecting grazer, but they always detected our presence and got away. Except once—and it was I who finally got the all-important touch of a sheep's woolly backside. I consider it one of my life's outstanding achievements.

Having enjoyed the walk with Pete so much, I suggested to Faith that she and I do it, too. We finally did it in November of the following year. The weather at that season obviously wasn't as good, but we had a brilliant time anyway. One bit was quite scary: walking across the wide-open side of Cam Fell in a thunderstorm, with lightning striking all around and absolutely nowhere to shelter!

Thanks to my regular running and walking—I'd run many hundreds of miles with our black mongrel, Filbert—plus the good balanced diet that Faith maintained for us, we both kept pretty healthy. For me the only exception was some trouble from time to time with kidney stones. As anyone who has suffered from these knows, the pain is agonising. I had several episodes on and off over the years. In most cases it would be over in two or three days when the stone finally passed through my system. One stubborn stone had me in Bradford Royal Infirmary for a couple of days, but eventually that one, too, 'came to pass'.

From Yorkshire to the Midlands

In late 1989 Bryn moved his base from Bradford to a new location in the Midlands. The team bought a property near Coventry called Nettle Hill and refurbished it to house offices, the college, a conference facility and the team HQ. The magazine, retail, publishing and tapes base was set up a few miles away in Markfield, near Leicester.

Faith and I faced a dilemma now because our youngest son, Peter, had just started his two-year build-up to his GCSEs and it would have harmed his prospects to move him to a new school at that stage. We decided to stay put in Yorkshire until he had completed his exams. So early in 1990 I moved into an office in Keighley, above the main hall used by the Airedale Church, and shuttled up and down the M1 every couple of weeks to deal with *Restoration* matters and teach at the college, which was



Peter and I at the end of our 90-mile Dalesway walk in 1988. He was 13, I was 47.

now called Covenant College.

Unsettled with the church

Faith and I were still part of the church in Bradford during that time. It had moved from Church House and now occupied a large, warehouse-style, purpose-built complex near the town centre and, under the leadership of Paul Scanlon, had renamed itself (excrutiatingly, in my view) the Abundant Life Church. I did not enjoy the meetings very much. The whole thing was too performance-oriented for my liking and the big setting ruled out any individual vocal participation from the congregation. There was a 'driven' feel to everything. Faith wasn't enamoured with the new setup either, but she was less dramatic in her reactions.

I became deeply unsettled, and would sometimes need to sneak out, allegedly to the toilet, and stay there a long time. My main defence-mechanism, though, was simply to accept more of the many invitations that came my way to preach and teach in other churches across the country, and in time I managed to be away most Sundays. Aided by that ploy, we were able to maintain our membership until we moved house.

Workwise, operating from the Keighley base worked well enough for me to keep on top of my responsibilities until we moved to the Midlands in the summer of 1991. My brother-in-law, Bryan Shutt, had been pastoring the church in Leicester for some time and I had stayed with him and my sister Hazel overnight while preaching there one weekend. While there I had gone out for a run, just following my nose around the local area, and had come across a delightful modern housing complex in Narborough called The Pastures. I loved its style and thought how marvellous it would be to live

somewhere like that. I told Faith about it when I got home.



11 Camelot Way, Narborough, Leicester

When it came to looking for a property in the Midlands, therefore, it was natural to look at The Pastures, and sure enough, we were able to get enough from the sale of our house in Bradford to buy a nice detached house there: **11 Camelot Way**. We moved in in the early summer of 1991 and settled quickly into both the area and the Leicester church.

I now had an office at Nettle Hill, and the eight-mile commute there and back each day on pleasant country roads was a real pleasure. I think we had both felt that Leicestershire was a bit of a nondescript place that wouldn't be able to compete with the beauties of our home county of Yorkshire. But we were delighted to find our expectations overthrown: the countryside proved delightful and we enjoyed exploring our new environment. I was still travelling a lot, and this new base in the Midlands made many of the southward journeys much easier, but didn't help when driving to commitments in Inverness or Glasgow!

Theological writing

Soon after arriving in the Midlands I was asked to oversee a major new project for Bryn and the Covenant Ministries team: the production of teaching materials for Covenant College's distance learning programme. A series of ten modules of theological material—the Modular Training Programme, or MTP—was agreed upon by the team. It was for me to find writers (including myself), to assign sections to each person, provide them with guidelines and set schedules for their writing to



Covenant College's Class of 1994 on graduation day. I am at the far left. Peter, who did the course that year, is seated at the right-hand end of the front row. Jonathan had done the course earlier - in 1987/88 when it was at Riddlesden.

be in my possession.

I would first do an initial edit to bring a degree of uniformity to the style and presentation, then submit the edited version to a panel for scrutiny, and finally make finer editorial adjustments. I also had to put together the self-test units and essay assignments for each section until, after a great deal of work, the manuscript was ready for typesetting. With the magazine, this is where I passed the job on to others. But now, instead of sending the material off for typesetting, I was provided with a typesetting programme (Corel Ventura) so that I could do it myself. Then it went off to be printed and bound.

At the same time I was setting up the mechanics of the Distance Learning Programme by getting students signed up, recruiting tutors from among the leaders of related churches, getting these to Nettle Hill for training sessions on how to mark assignments and allocate grades, and generally running the whole scheme. It was a demanding task, but I enjoyed it immensely.

Eventually nine large volumes of theological material were published and a fair number of students did the course, receiving their diplomas at the end of the college year alongside the full-time students. The tenth volume—on the roles of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—never got produced, chiefly because our apostles couldn't agree on the extent of an apostle's authority towards local church elders!

Then money ran short and the reprinting of the materials was put on hold. At the same time the leaders decided not to pursue the distance learning side of the college. So, as 1995 began to draw to a close, the project to which I had devoted close on six years of work was effectively kicked into touch. Later, the material was digitised and began to circulate in the PDF format that was by this time becoming the norm for electronic document distribution. Many copies are in use to this day. The

termination of the programme was disappointing, for sure, but I didn't let it get me down and, instead, looked forward to what the Lord had for me next.

During those six years I continued to travel all over the country doing weekends and some midweek engagements with related churches, including a variety of seminars (on topics as varied as marriage, the environment and hermeneutics) as well as the standard Sunday preaching slots. Places visited during 1992, for instance, included Southend, Lancaster, Alfreton, Castleford, Darlington, Boston, Chesterfield, Blackpool, Loughton, Bath, Inverness, Nottingham, Loughborough, Durham, Southport, Prestatyn and Chester—some of them several times in the year—plus a week's ministry in Czechoslovakia, lots of input into my home church in Leicester, team meetings galore and regular teaching at Covenant College, where I was at this stage specialising in New Testament Greek. It was a busy life, but a good one.

VW to Nissan

It was in 1992 that I stopped driving VW Passats, which were getting too expensive. I went instead for a Nissan Primera hatchback, and I took with me to the local dealer's my good friend and retired car dealer Ted Kent. The way he bargained with the salesman was a revelation. With persuasive charm he managed to get one discount after another, or yet another item thrown in for free—to the point where I was nearly curling up with embarrassment and felt quite sorry for the salesman! But the car turned out to be a good buy and it kept us mobile for the next six years.



Our Nissan Primera, outside 11 Camelot Way

Contacts

I had a friend called David Derbyshire, whom I had known from our Bradford days, when he was part of the church there, having come to Bradford from his native Wirksworth (Derbyshire) as a student.

Dave was intelligent and always good for a stimulating conversation on matters of Christian conviction, doctrine and practice. Unlike some of the 'team men', he wasn't afraid of expressing unorthodox opinions, and I found my discussions with him a good outlet for my own frustrations and questions regarding Covenant Ministries and its emphases. Dave had had a difficult upbringing and was a little inept socially, so part of our friendship was the opportunity it gave Faith and me to help him in that department of his life.

By the time we moved to Leicester, Dave had already moved to Birmingham to help establish a church-plant there. So he and I used to meet up half way in the small town of Atherstone, where we would catch up over a meal and a half of lager at the Indian restaurant. Faith and I were delighted when, in due course, Dave married and eventually became father to a daughter. He continues to do well, and we still keep in touch, though more loosely now.

Another source of useful contacts was my annual attendance at the Charismatic Leaders' Conference. This drew together leaders from every branch and expression of the Charismatic Movement, as it had been called since its heyday in the mid-1970s. There were charismatic Roman Catholics, 'restoration' types like us, representatives of the renewal movement led by Michael Harper, a motley assortment of charismatic believers from Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and a range of other denominations—united in their openness to the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Bryn Jones, being the leading

figure in our particular expression of life in the Spirit, was always invited, but he made it clear early on that he wasn't interested in attending.

The reason he gave was that he had no time for compromise, especially on key issues like the nature of the church, and so felt he could use his time more profitably on other things. He did agree, however, that I could represent him at the annual conference, which I did with pleasure, providing the team with a detailed written report each time on my return. It was good to hob-nob with the likes of Alex Buchanan, David Pawson, Roger Forster and Terry Virgo and to observe their different emphases and ways of working.

Filbert

On 3 March 1994 we lost contact with a key figure in our lives: Filbert, our black mongrel. He was fifteen and a quarter. Technically, he belonged to our Peter, his 5th birthday present, but in practice he was my dog and we had enjoyed many a 'conversation' while out running together. When training for running events we would often do 12 or 15 miles and he loved it. As he grew older, of course, he wasn't up to that, and I trained for the 1993 London Marathon without him—sorely missed. He died peacefully in his bed under the kitchen table at our house in Narborough, and Faith and I wept at his loss.

A couple of years before he died, while I was in America, Faith called upon the service of a gifted sculptor called Terry Amos, who was in the Leicester Church with us. He modelled Filbert's head lifesize, complete with the one floppy ear, and gave it a bronze-look finish. This became my surprise Christmas present and it still graces our hallway.



Filbert in his prime

Back in 1987, when we lived at Hazel Walk in Bradford, I'd been out for a run with Filbert and was almost home when I spotted a young man with a camera, which he pointed in my direction as we approached him. I thought nothing of it at the time. Then six years later I was in Chesterfield one Sunday morning to preach at the church there, and in the hob-nobbing over a cup of tea afterwards a lady approached me and said, 'I saw your photo in the *Nursing Times*.' I assured her she must be mistaken, but she was adamant about it and said she would send me the cutting.

When it arrived I realised that this must have been the photo taken by that young man all those years before. Clearly it had been lodged with a photo agency and the *Nursing Times*, when seeking a picture to illustrate an article on keeping fit, had bought and used it. I wrote to them, explaining the situation, and they sent me a nice black and white print, which now hangs in our hallway under Filbert's bronze head.

The 'Toronto Blessing'

The 1990s saw a strange phenomenon in the churches. It was something that began in a church in Toronto, Canada, and then spread across the world to affect churches of many types in many countries. Called 'the Toronto blessing', it was trumpeted as a sovereign move of the Holy Spirit, and the most common feature was people being 'slain in the Spirit'. That meant that, often after being personally prayed for but sometimes spontaneously, people would keel over backwards as if in a faint and remain on the floor in a semi-soporific state for some time, after which they would wake up 'refreshed'—so in our particular circles the movement became known as The Refreshing.

There were other strange phenomena. Some, in the course of being 'refreshed', would break out into hysterical laughter which would go on for quite some time, with lots of thigh-slapping and staggering around as if drunk. More controversially, some would start making animal noises and crawling around on all fours. It was most odd and, for a fairly rational type like myself, disconcerting. I didn't know what to make of it and so stayed on the fringes as much as I could.

Bryn Jones felt that, in spite of the unanswered questions, there was definitely something of God in it, and he arranged meetings specifically for his folk to 'wait on the Lord' and see what happened. I and the others based at Nettle Hill were invited to such a session, with our wives, at Hesed House, Leicester. So Faith and I made our way there, I with a distinct lack of enthusiasm. The chairs were moved from their rows and stacked at the sides, which wasn't a good sign.

Before long there were people laid out in rows on the floor, others laughing their heads off or wandering around as if in a daze. There was lots of noise, a mixture of raucous laughter, weird sounds, some hallelujahs and occasional spontaneous singing. I got myself a chair and sat tight, with my eyes shut to avoid the chaotic scenes around me. I decided to focus on the Lord instead and silently express my love for him.

After a while I became quite sleepy and my backside started slipping forward on the seat until, eventually, I slid down onto the floor. Most strange. I don't know whether I fell asleep and dreamt (I have dreamt vividly every night of my life, so that's quite likely) or whether I had a vision. But from my position, with my right ear on the carpet, I noticed a pair of brown male, hairy shins and sandalled feet about a metre away from me. I just knew it was Jesus. So I looked up and saw the rest of him. He smiled down at me, and he had a roguish twinkle in his eyes as he did so, a twinkle that I knew was saying, 'I've cracked it, David—through death and out the other side. And if you stick with me, you'll crack it too.' Very comforting and reassuring. It didn't tell me anything I hadn't known before, but the personal nature of it was special.

After a while I became more conscious again of what was going on around me. I opened my eyes and sat up. They told me I'd been 'out' for an hour and a quarter! Soup and rolls were being served in the side-room, they said. And so I was quickly back to normal after my unusual encounter with the Lord. I was so glad he had respected my personality and made himself known to me without my having to keel over backwards or laugh like a pig.

South Africa

I had visited South Africa several times and loved the place. I had done one trip specifically to introduce the Modular Training Programme to the apostolic leader of the Southern Harvest network of churches out there, and some of his key helpers, with a view to getting the MTP up and running in the country.

In the summer of 1995 it was clear that my work on the theological modules of the MTP would soon be finished, and it was not clear what my next major project would be. Then a knock came on my office door at Nettle Hill one day and this same leader, who was in the UK for the Dales and Wales Bible Weeks, came in. He asked—with Bryn's permission already given—if Faith and I would be willing to move to South Africa for a couple of years to set up a Bible college for Southern Harvest. He knew I had originally set up what was by this time Covenant College, so he reckoned my experience qualified me for the job. We would need to commit to doing the two years, but if during that time we felt the Lord would have us stay on, there was no reason why we shouldn't do so.

This was a bolt out of the blue. Moving to another country at the age of 55 and 53 wouldn't be easy,

but the idea had an instant appeal. Faith and I discussed it at length over the next few weeks and looked into some of the practical issues that such a move would raise. Like what would we do with our house in Narborough? Would we be able to continue paying our National Insurance contributions while out of the country? How would our kids feel about us being so far away?

In the end we felt it was right to go and began to make arrangements. A reasonable salary was arranged for us, which various businessmen in the church in South Africa would contribute to and which would kick in as soon as we arrived. Our old team-colleagues, Ron and Barbara Tempest, agreed to rent our Narborough house for two years. The kids were OK about our going: Jonny was, of course, married; Rachel was settled in her house in Hinckley and in the church there; and Peter was a student in Cardiff.

So we flew out of Heathrow on 21 January 1996, en route to Johannesburg, to begin the adventure. Already we'd had intimations of the rocky road ahead. Just a few weeks before our departure the leader we were going to work for had been in touch to say that some of our salary-sponsors had left the church and would not therefore be contributing. My salary, therefore, would be reduced by one third before we had even started work!

Living in South Africa

But we arrived safely, with high expectations. We would spend the first few weeks lodging with the leader and his family while a suitable house could be found for us to rent.

Over the first month or two we discovered that many things were not at all the way they had been sold to us. We had been assured that a building had been obtained that could be developed for the college; in fact it hadn't. The church, we had been informed, was a large multi-racial church; we arrived to find it riddled with tensions and haemorrhaging members of all races very fast. The leader, we had understood, was a respected apostle to the Southern Harvest network; we discovered that many of the church leaders were in fact deeply disillusioned with him and his approach. There would be money available, we had been told, for the college's furnishings, fittings, equipment and a library; in fact no money was made available for these things. But we pressed on anyway. The plan was to spend the first year planning and preparing the whole setup from scratch, and the second year taking an initial batch of students through a one-year course based on the Covenant College modular materials.



5 Irislaan (Iris Avenue), Irene, South Africa

As for our home, we eventually found a nice property to rent at **5 Irislaan** (the Afrikaans name; in English, Iris Avenue) in a nice suburb of Centurion (formerly Verwoerdburg)¹ called Irene, and it was good to move in with our own furniture, which had come over in a container. The Nissan Primera had come, too. I had taken it to Hull docks before we left and it arrived at Durban, where I had to fly down to in order to pick it up and drive it the 425

miles back. Some friends in the church kindly provided me with a mobile phone so that I could summon help were I to break down out in the country—the *veldt*, as they called it. They told me it

¹ Named after the architect of the *apartheid* system and thus, in the new South Africa that had come into being after the 1994 election of Nelson Mandela as president, a dirty word. Centurion Park had for a long time been the name of the local cricket ground, so the name Centurion was given to the town.

had been known for motorists who had broken down in remote areas to be murdered by locals and their body parts taken to be used for witchcraft. Mobile phones were only just beginning to become available at a reasonable price, both out there and in the UK, and this was my very first. Mercifully I didn't break down, but I did need it to find a garage where my flat battery could be replaced before driving back to Irene.

My Dad's death

So we got stuck in, working hard at planning the college and its course. Then a phone call from my brother-in-law, David Lupton, informed us that my Dad had died suddenly on 1st April, at the age of 81. We needed to make hasty plans to get back to Bradford for the funeral. Being the Easter period, most flights were full, and in the end we had to fly with Balkan Air, via Sofia, Bulgaria. It was a grotty plane and the service was desperately poor, with a long wait after dark in the marble-floored but otherwise grim and empty terminal building at Sofia Airport. But we made it back and the funeral went fine.



The living room of our house in Irene

My Dad was much loved by many and there was a big turn-out for his send-off. He had mellowed a lot in his later years, especially when he could relax more after Mum died, and had made several trips to the USA with his twin brother, Cyril. We discovered, when going through some of his things at his flat in Shipley,¹ that he had been looking into coming out to see us in South Africa, bless him.

Then it was Balkan Air again and back to setting up the college. It was November before we found a suitable property on the fringes of Centurion and, thanks to money made available by some of the church people, we were able to put in some basic furnishings like beds, cupboards and desks. No money was available to fund a library of reference books—until my Uncle Cyril moved from the north-east of England into the flat where Dad had lived. He made it known that he wanted to tithe the proceeds from the sale of his house in Cullercoats, and he agreed that it be ploughed into a library for the students. We changed the pounds into South African rand and had a great time buying a good stock of essential volumes, with some nice shelving units to house them.

In the meantime we had a stream of people from the church coming to our house, sitting on our sofa with a coffee and breaking down in tears as they explained how they had been badly treated by the man we were in South Africa to set up the college for! They viewed us as disinterested third parties and thus a valid shoulder to cry on. We had to tread very carefully! But increasingly he realised that he had effectively lost the trust of the church, and he asked us if we would be willing to step into his shoes and pastor the dwindling group. This we agreed to do, but it quickly became apparent that it would probably be less a case of rebuilding the church and more one of helping the members find a spiritual home elsewhere. Happily, there were some good lively churches in the area to direct them to and by the time we left all had been successfully integrated into one or another of them.

As the year rolled on and things were coming together in the planning, Faith and I set off on a tour of the related churches to talk about the college and encourage people to consider doing the one-year

¹ The flat was called *Dad's Pad* and was an annexe to the home of my sister Christine and her husband David.

course scheduled to begin in January 1997. We had sessions in places like Sasolburg, Bethlehem, Bloemfontein and Beaufort West (spending a night nearby in a superb lodge in the Karoo) before arriving in the Cape, where we had meetings in Somerset West, Bizweni, Mossel Bay, Atlantis and George. These were all evening sessions, which left us free during the day. So we had a wonderful time exploring the beautiful Cape area. We stood marvelling at the waves crashing on the shore at the Cape of Good Hope, for instance, and visited lots of vineyards on the famous Wine Route, filling the



Faith and our Nissan Primera at the Cape of Good Hope

car boot with top quality wine at ridiculously good prices. It was thanks to the many tastings we did there that Faith began to enjoy red wine for the first time. Then we came back via Kimberley in order to see the diamond-mining area and the Big Hole. Altogether we had covered over 3000 miles as we pulled into our drive back in Irene.

The church surprised us by generously offering to buy us air tickets so that we could go home for Christmas, which we did, this time flying more luxuriously with Virgin Atlantic. Coming from the heat of the South African summer to a chilly British winter was a bit of a shock, but it was great to catch up with friends and family before heading back to start the college as a going concern.

Southern Harvest College

We had four students in our 'guinea pig' group—the Class of 1997. Ryan was a white South African, the other three were black men: Jack from Zambia, and Thabo and Jeremiah from Lesotho. I did the vast majority of the teaching. Faith did the admin and acted as cook and housekeeper. The students were keen to learn, and during the year we established a strong bond of mutual affection and appreciation.

Things were not going well in our dealings with the man we were working for, though. He seemed to have lost interest in the church, the college and us, and eventually he and his family upped sticks and moved 1000 miles away down to the Cape, leaving us to get on with both church and college on our own. It was a very difficult time spiritually and emotionally for Faith and me, but we were well supported by the few remaining church folk, who made sure we were well looked after. And we were able to relax in between times by visiting lovely places like the Jo'burg Lion Park and Warmbaths.

We became famous in the village of Irene for walking around rather than driving, and for our willingness to chat to the black housemaids and so-called 'garden boys' who could be found sitting on the grass outside their employers' houses in their breaks. A lot of the racial attitudes from the apartheid era were still prevalent on both sides and most whites, especially the Afrikaaners, didn't speak to blacks unless they really had to.



*Our students at Southern Harvest College.
From L to R: Thabo, Jeremiah, Ryan and Jack*

Dangerous society

It is a miracle that, after the collapse of apartheid, there hadn't been a bloodbath in South Africa. But there was a great deal of unrest as the economically-deprived black population sought a fairer share of the wealth enjoyed by the whites. Violence became widespread. We learnt to keep our car doors locked at all times and to look side-to-side whenever approaching red traffic lights, because it was often here that robberies took place. As the car pulled up, a robber would run over and throw the door open, shoot the driver and any passengers, haul their bodies into the road and drive off

with the vehicle. This happened many times at junctions within a few miles of our house.

Our house in Iris Avenue didn't have the spike-topped ten-foot walls or electric fences that were commonplace, but it did come with a sophisticated burglar alarm system. Not long after we moved in I one night unwittingly pulled a plug out of a wall-socket, not realising it was part of the system. As we went through to the bedroom to get ready for bed I noticed lights moving across the venetian blinds. I opened a gap in the blind and peered out, to see four men with pistols and three huge dogs crossing the lawn towards the house. They were from the alarm control centre and were responding to our alarm being triggered there. I rushed to the front door to assure them that all was in fact well and they retired graciously.

We heard gunfire in the streets most nights when we were in bed. Danger was ever-present. In the next street the housemaid's boyfriend turned up one day at the house where she worked, when the house-owners were out, and set about robbing the place. She managed to get to the phone and call the police who surrounded the house and, as soon as he appeared behind the patio doors, shot him through the head.

But the danger came closer than that. The lady of the house next door to us was car-jacked at gunpoint in her driveway as she brought her two children home from school for lunch one day. The robber demanded the car keys and threatened to shoot the children if she didn't hand them over. She gave them to him and said goodbye to her car. The house at the other side of us experienced something worse. It was a new build in progress and a watchman spent each night in the property to guard the fittings and the workmen's tools. Robbers broke in one night, shot the watchman dead and left with the tools.

Mercifully, we ourselves were kept safe amidst these dangers, and we identified with the statement in Psalm 91:7, 'A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.'

Home for Peter's wedding

We had one more trip back to the UK before we finished our two-year assignment, and that was for our son Peter's wedding in Sennen, Cornwall, at the end of June 1997. It was a great day all round, and we also had time to catch up with family and friends at large.

With only a few months of our assignment left, our thoughts were naturally turning to what we might do when we got back to Britain. The situation with the church in Centurion, plus the break-up of any meaningful relationship with the man we had gone to do the job for, meant that we were not considering staying on in South Africa once we had done what we went out to do. So while we were in the UK for Pete's wedding we arranged to call in at Nettle Hill and talk to Bryn Jones about the options.

We had a long chat with him and Alan Scotland. We could pretty well take our pick as to which church we wanted to be part of, Bryn assured us, and room would be made for me to be supported as part of the local full-time leadership team.

That suited us fine, and it seemed as if there was nothing more to discuss. Then I mentioned something that turned the whole thing around. I can't remember how it came up, but somehow 'the Refreshing'—which by this time had largely faded away—came into the conversation. I remarked that I had been unhappy with the way it had been handled in some of the Covenant Ministries churches, where the elders seemed to me to have hijacked it and made it just another item in their repertoire: 'Let's clear the chairs, then you can come forward. We'll pray for you and you'll fall over (with trained catchers to lay you down gently) and start laughing, or whatever.' I told Bryn that, were there to be a second wave, I would not be happy, as part of a local eldership team, to treat it that way.

Bryn's response was immediate: he told me that this changed the situation completely and that, with this as my position, he didn't see how I could possibly be part of any Covenant Ministries eldership, since they were all earnestly praying that the Holy Spirit would do it again. I knew for a fact that this wasn't the case, but it now seemed immaterial, and in that instant I felt that the ties that linked me with Bryn and his network were severed.

As we were leaving, he enquired after Trevor Jones and the Castleford church—from whom he had tried so hard to separate me all those years before. I assured him they were doing fine, but didn't tell him we were actually en route to stay a few days with Trevor and Lynn. So that was the end of my 23-year working relationship with Bryn and Cov Mins! I felt a strange mixture of alarm—what would we now do when we finished in South Africa?—and relief. Looking back, it was a positive development.

Our last six months in South Africa

So we returned to Centurion for our final six months. The busyness of college life kept us both involved, so there wasn't a lot of time for thinking about all that had happened. But in spare moments we wondered where our lives would be headed next. The man we were running the college for had more or less cut us off, and now we were no longer part of the network of longstanding relationships back in the UK either. No wonder we felt mentally and emotionally weary.

A life-saver for us had been the visit that Trevor and Lynn had made earlier in the year. Their love and friendship remained unstinting and made up to some extent for the traumas we had been experiencing. Now they came out for a second time and, in our aggravated circumstances, did a great deal to make us feel better. We felt settled that, once back in Britain, we would sell our house in Narborough and move up to Castleford to be with them and the church there.

We pressed on and saw the college year to a successful end. The leader we had been working for initially refused to come to the graduation ceremony on 27 November, but in the end Alan Scotland—who, as Bryn had been quite ill, had taken on more of a liaison-role towards the South African connection—persuaded him, and he flew in from the Cape for a brief stay of several hours, just long enough to hand out the diplomas, make a short speech and shake a few hands. Then he was off back

to the airport and out of it. A sad state of affairs.

Christmas in the sun

That left us a few weeks to make arrangements for our return to the UK. Our eldest son Jonny, with wife Joanne, came out to us for Christmas. It's the middle of summer out there, of course, and it was odd walking together round the shopping area in Centurion wearing tee-shirts and flipflops, in baking sunshine, with Santas and Christmas trees all around, and 'Walking in a winter wonderland' playing over the tannoy!



Southern Harvest College graduation day, 22 November 1997

Christmas itself was spent at the Gomo Gomo lodge, a private game reserve on the fringes of the vast Kruger National Park. Faith and I had been there the previous year when our Rachel and a friend came to visit us, so we knew we would have a wonderful time. I've never been a morning person, so getting up at 5.30am for the sunrise safari was difficult, but always well worth it. To see all the 'big five' at close quarters in their natural surroundings is unforgettable. And the evening drives were no less so. Standing out in the bush by a pool with a glass of cold white wine, watching hippos and, at the far end, a rhinoceros grazing upwind and thus unaware of our presence, with the setting sun turning the sky red, was amazing.

On another occasion we tracked a leopard on its evening hunt. And one morning we came upon a pack of wild dogs. One had been wounded in a wire snare, and the vet in our party shot it with a tranquiliser-dart. Then we all got out of the Land Rovers and stood around as he stitched up the wound, with some twenty other dogs from the pack watching us warily from a safe distance. On Christmas Day itself the temperature in the shade was 37°C, and as we went in for dinner a couple of exotic birds were worrying a snake in one of the courtyard trees.



Leopard-tracking

From there we drove down to the Drakensberg Mountains for a few days in a nice hotel with fantastic views of the surrounding peaks, before seeing Jonny and Joanne off and turning our minds to the challenge of our own return to

Britain. All our furniture needed packing into a container and, because of regulations, the car, which we had hoped to sell in South Africa, would have to be returned to Britain as well. But our good friends in the church pitched in with help both practical and financial, and we flew out of Johannesburg Airport on 16th January 1998.

Back to the UK

We arrived back in Britain in a worn-out state. The broken relationship with the man we had gone to South Africa to serve, with all its knock-on effects, the knowledge that there was no longer any

opening for working with Covenant Ministries, plus the sheer hard work of planning our return, had taken their toll. We were no spring chickens: I was now 57 and Faith a year younger. The psychological and emotional pressures had affected us physically and we felt absolutely drained.

To make things worse, the irregular heartbeat problem I'd first noticed over ten years earlier had been showing up more frequently and often made me feel weak and light-headed. While in South Africa I had gone running regularly with Chris Burger, a young man from the church, and had enjoyed it, as I always had. But not long before we came home we arranged to do a local race together, the Om Die Berg half-marathon. In the event, Chris injured his ankle and couldn't take part, so he waited at the finish line for me. Before the race began I noticed my heart beating fast but, expecting it to pass fairly quickly, I set off hoping to do a good time.

As it was, the episode did not pass quickly at all, and I really struggled to complete the course, turning in a terrible time. I decided that, once we were back in England, I'd get it looked at. Now we were back, our Leicester house was on the market and we were in Yorkshire for a while. Trevor and I knew a Christian doctor, Kingsley Reid, who offered to take a look at my condition. Of course, while he was examining me I felt perfectly normal, so there was nothing for him to go on except my description of the recurring symptoms. He gave me a letter and said that next time my heart started racing I should go to the hospital and present the letter.

One morning we were all set to have a day in Bridlington with Trevor and Lynn. As we got into the car my heart started racing and I felt weaker and fainter than usual, so instead of taking us to the east coast Trevor drove me to the hospital in Leeds. There I presented my letter, was quickly given an ECG and ended up being admitted while they tried various ways of bringing the atrial fibrillation under control. In the end it was beta-blocker tablets that did the trick, and I have been on Sotalol twice a day ever since, with no further problems in that area.

Life at Barwick

In the Castleford church—Five Towns Christian Fellowship—were some longstanding friends from our Bradford days, David and Brenda Rathmell. They had a nice bungalow in Barwick-in-Elmet, near Leeds, and they invited us to live with them rent-free for as long as we needed, until our future became clearer. As things turned out, we were with them well over three months, and we will be for ever grateful for their love and generosity.

We were in a strange position. We had no income of any kind. I signed on at the local Job Centre and started applying for jobs of all kinds, as did Faith. But neither of us even got an interview, never mind a job. Unemployment in Britain was very high at that time, with fierce competition for the few jobs available, and our age was against us, plus the fact that most of our previous work experience had been in church circles, which wasn't seen as fitting us for very much else.

Even worse, the state would not give us any financial benefits except to pay my National Insurance contributions. We had been out of the country for two years and we had some savings (chiefly from my Dad's estate), which, though very modest, took us over the line beyond which we were deemed ineligible for state help. It's an odd position to be in, having no income at all. But I had preached to others that our ultimate source of supply is God himself. Sure, he may use normal sources of income to meet our needs, but it was he, not those sources, that we should look to. Now we were in a position to practise what I had preached!

I can testify that he did not let us down. Gifts arrived from all sorts of unexpected quarters. For instance, one man, whom I'd not had contact with for years, sent a cheque for £50 with a note saying

that, after leaving the South African midsummer for a chilly British winter, we would no doubt be feeling the cold, so here was money to buy ourselves a warm sweater each. While we didn't have anything to spare, we were able to live and eat.

We were also able to run a car. A London friend had contacted us while we were still in South Africa to ask if there was anything he and his wife could do to smooth our return. I told him that, since it would be several weeks before our Nissan arrived back in the UK, could he please look into car-hire deals, because we would need to be travelling quite a bit between the Midlands and Yorkshire. He kindly replied that he would let us have their second car for as long as we needed it. So it was they who met us at Heathrow and led us to the car park where he introduced us to a huge Jaguar XJ6, all chrome and leather, and handed us the keys.



The Jag - and Camelot Way up for sale

So we drove north in this six-cylinder giant, which, we soon discovered, did about 15 miles to the gallon. Also, it used up oil in vast quantities, so visits to the filling stations proved expensive. But it was smooth and comfortable, even if, when waiting at red lights, it spewed out great clouds of blue smoke from the exhaust. We were grateful for the use of this vehicle and were quite sad to say goodbye to it as we returned it to its kind owners when our Nissan Primera arrived back in Britain.

New church, new home

We settled quickly and happily into the church in Castleford: Five Towns Christian Fellowship.¹ Soon, because of my longstanding connection with the church, I was invited to be involved with the leadership, which I was glad to do. But they were not in a position at that time to take me on staff, though they hoped that would change fairly soon.

It changed in August of that year when, after being unemployed and income-less for seven months, I was officially taken on board and started getting paid. This step had the full support and encouragement of David Shearman and John Pettifor, the two men from Nottingham who provided the church with apostolic oversight, so I felt safe and very blessed in it all. And so began my next decade of ministry, all of which would be a real pleasure—even the spells of difficulty and challenge. At the same time, I began to travel again, mostly visiting churches around the UK. Most of the Covenant Ministries churches never invited me, which was sad, but I found openings to teach and preach in a variety of different groups and denominations.



24 Broomhill, Castleford

Eventually we also found a house in Castleford: **24 Broomhill**. We moved in on 23rd April 1998. It needed quite a bit of work to bring it up to scratch—including a new kitchen, expertly fitted by our friend Dennis Burton from Leicester—but it was spacious and comfortable, and

¹ The 'five towns' were Castleford, Pontefract, Normanton, Knottingley and Featherstone—all ex-coalmining communities in close proximity to one another.

we would be very happy there. We needed a small mortgage, which I would be paying up to the age of 65.

Trevor and I both needed to change our cars, so we visited the Skoda dealer in South Milford and ended up both settling for an Octavia. It turned out to be a wise choice. I've stuck with Skodas ever since.

And so, for the next few years, life settled at last into something of a regular going-on, for which we were grateful after the ups and downs of our South African experience. Faith got a part-time job as a sales assistant at the local outlet village, working first for Damart, then for Jacques Vert and finally for Le Creuset. I was busy with church affairs in Castleford and more widely. Our home was in regular use for housegroups, meals and hospitality, and we were up and down the motorway to South Wales, where all three of our children were now living.

Each summer we would have a couple of weeks in Cornwall with Trevor and Lynn. These were always fun times, with good food, lovely places to visit, and the best of company. We always stayed at the same place, rented from the Rodda family¹: Chy Keryn in Bethesda Place, St Ives. Because of the figure in the stained glass of its inner porch door, it became known to us as 'the mermaid house'—the name given to it by our granddaughters when they first visited us there.

Overseas travel again

In July 2000 I ventured abroad again—to Norway. I had kept in touch with a couple I had met many years earlier, Rolf and Tone Eriksen. They had moved up into central Norway where they ran a mountain lodge called Femund Fjellstue, right on the shore of Norway's second-biggest lake, Lake Femund. At their invitation I went over for a week in July to take a series of meetings to help unite the widely-scattered Christians in that very remote, rural area. I had a great time, with opportunity during the day to enjoy some fantastic walks in the forest—where elk could often be seen—or by the lakeside.

I would return for more meetings the following year, this time also spending a few days at a much larger church in Moss, in the south of the country.

Poland and Zambia



The students in Szczecin, Poland

The following month saw me in Poland, teaching for a week at a Bible School in Szczecin set up with the help of my Dutch friend Goos Vedder. He had earlier been part of the Covenant Ministries team like me, and he also had moved out of those circles, in his case to develop his interest in the church in Eastern Europe. So I had a busy time speaking with an interpreter and eating beetroot soup. Szczecin is close to the German border, so I had chance to look around Berlin while I was there.

Then it was back to Zambia. I had received quite regular invitations to return, but after doing so many visits in the 1980s I had felt my time there was to be drawn to a close. I was sure I would return one day, but that would depend on being convinced it was in God's timing. That sense of God's timing

¹ Famous for Rodda's clotted cream.

came to me in 2001, and I accepted the invitation to go for 16 days in September. I took with me John Tyrell, a pastor from Hednesford, Staffordshire, whom I had got to know through our church's Nottingham connection and through going to preach for him on several occasions.

My old friend Gordon Suckling, the veteran missionary to Zambia, had died by this time and was buried at Sachibondu, so the invitation came from the local denominational leaders out there.

As always in Africa, we found ourselves thrown into a busy schedule of meetings, first in Kabwe, where we stayed with the long-time German missionary, Traugott Hartmann, and his wife Kristl. Then north for a stint on the Copperbelt, and finally up to Mwinilunga and a big bush conference nearby, with several thousand people sitting under the trees hanging onto my every word—very humbling. I had a wonderful time in every place. It was great to renew



A small part of the crowd at a typical meeting at the bush conference near Mwinilunga

fellowship with old friends from my earlier visits and to be blessed again by the warmth and friendliness of the African Christians, to be moved again by their unique singing, and to be encouraged by their responsiveness to the teaching of the Scriptures.

On our way back south we spent the last couple of days back in Kabwe with the Hartmanns. We were just coming to the end of our meal together on 11th September when the phone rang. When Traugott came back into the room from answering it he told us a friend had just informed him there had been a terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. He switched on the TV and, while the quality of the picture was poor, we were able to see the appalling devastation caused by the aircraft flying into the towers. Security at Lusaka Airport was very tight when we flew out two days later.

In addition to these overseas trips and regular responsibilities in my home church in Castleford, I was still travelling around the UK quite a bit. A check through my diary for 2001 shows entries for meetings in South Wales, Bradford, Nottingham, Harrogate, Manchester, Southport, Dunstable, Lancaster and London—visiting some of these five or six times in the year.

The Bradford engagement was to teach the Church History course at the Bible school run by my brother Stephen at the Abundant Life Church. I did this for a good number of years. I had other Bible college engagements, too. I went regularly at this period to Swansea to teach at the Bible College of Wales, which was part of Alan Scotland's Lifelink network, and also up to Andrew Owen's college in Glasgow.



The EDMF group of October 2001, Castleford

The French connection

Trevor's daughter, Andrea, had married a Frenchman, Gabriel Alonso—Gaby to his friends. They were part of Five Towns Christian Fellowship and were keen to share some of the understanding and blessings we enjoyed in Castleford with French-speaking Christians.

And so began the EDMF: Ecole des Ministères Francophones, or School of French-speaking Ministries. Up to twenty French-speakers, mostly young

people, would come to Castleford, mostly from France, but also some from Switzerland, Belgium and French-speaking Africa, and stay for a week—some of our folk jokingly referred to it as the plague of frogs! During the day they would have classes in the church building, plus a few trips out to local places of interest. They were put up by folk in the church, which led to some interesting experiences when they didn't speak each other's language!

Gaby asked me to teach a few of the classes—and to do it in French, if possible. That was a challenge. It's one thing to be able to chat to somebody for a few minutes, but to present an orderly message, with lots of technical vocabulary, is something else. But with much prayer and careful preparation, including French PowerPoint presentations, I overcame my misgivings and, in the end, became quite fluent and comfortable in that setting. These week-long sessions took place twice a year for many years, so I got plenty of practice.

In February 2001 I accompanied Gaby and Andrea on a trip to Gaby's home town of Annecy, near the Swiss border and a most beautiful place, where the mountains surround the lovely lake. I did two sessions on spiritual gifts with a small church there and had a good time with the young pastor and his family, with whom I stayed. French children, I discovered, were as entranced by origami flapping birds as were English ones!

Russia

March 2003 saw me in a new place: Russia. My old colleague Goos Vedder's involvement in Eastern Europe had brought him into touch with a Ukrainian Christian who had planted a church in the city of Novosibirsk in Siberia. The church progressed rapidly, in spite of resistance from both the government and the Russian Orthodox authorities, and it soon established a Bible college. Goos felt it could benefit from my teaching a full Bible overview there—which would take a couple of weeks to cover in the kind of detail required.

And so I flew into Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. But that was just a staging point: I still had 3250 miles further east to travel. At Sheremetyevo I had to change to its other terminal, which was several miles away, and I had been warned about the high prices charged—in US dollars—by the taxi drivers

who did the transfer. The official Russian currency was the rouble, but no British bureau de change would issue any to me; the only currency that foreign visitors could expect to use, they informed me, was the dollar. In the end I parted with 40 of my stash for the twenty-minute taxi transfer.

I then boarded a Tupolev aircraft belonging to the state airline, Aeroflot, for the second leg of the journey, a 4½-hour flight eastwards to Novosibirsk in the heart of Siberia. I think I was the only non-Russian passenger on the flight. All the announcements were in Russian, but one of the stewardesses, it turned out, could manage some fractured English, and she got into the way of coming to me and giving me a personal translation.

When we landed in Siberia in the middle of the evening and the doors were opened, a chill blast blew into the plane, quickly dispelling the warm, fuggy atmosphere we had become used to. Down the steps I went, noticing the deep snow everywhere, and the first thing to catch my attention was a large



The view from my window in Novosibirsk

illuminated thermometer telling me that the temperature was minus 29°C. A young man approached me, gave me his Russian-style furry hat, and introduced himself as Iaroslav Adamovitch. It would be his pleasure, he said, to look after me during my stay in Novosibirsk.

A lady in the church, he told me, had vacated her flat and gone to her mother's so that I could have it to myself for the fortnight. The flat was up several flights of stairs in a huge concrete block that looked desperately sombre and forbidding. Iaroslav led me into the flat using a bunch of huge keys. There were two doors, one

immediately inside the other, the outer one steel-clad and very heavy. Each door had two separate locks—it was like getting into a prison. But, inside, the flat was warm, brightly decorated and well-appointed.

The following morning I was able to see my surroundings in daylight. The main room looked out onto a run-down square with grim grey apartment-blocks on each side. The view epitomised everything I had imagined of communist Russia. A bit further away I glimpsed what looked like a power station, though smaller. This turned out to be the source of the heating for many of the dwellings in the area, including mine. It pumped hot water through insulated pipes into every block. There were no individual temperature controls in the apartments. No on/off controls either. The state in its wisdom decided when winter started and began pushing out the heat, and when it reckoned spring to have arrived it turned it off. But the system was effective, and I was snug and warm throughout my stay there.

The following day I was taken by Iaroslav in his car—a Lada Sputnik—to the church's premises, where there was a lecture-room for the forty students doing the college's one-year course. They proved a keen bunch, and lapped up the



Teaching at the Bible School in Novosibirsk

teaching. I had emailed my PowerPoint slides to someone in the church a few weeks earlier, and they had re-jigged them in Russian. It was odd having slides on the screen behind me that I couldn't read, all in Cyrillic script. I just had to make sure I pressed the button at the right time to move them on. The interpreters seemed confident and over the two weeks of both morning and afternoon classes I developed a good rapport with both them and the students.

It was hard work. I did 43 fifty-minute sessions with them. But I also addressed several meetings of groups within the church, plus preaching at their main Sunday meeting, held in a local theatre, with about a thousand people present. And Iaroslav drove me to a couple of other towns to speak to Christian groups there. One was Iskitim, fifty miles south east of Novosibirsk and the furthest east I went on the trip. Iaroslav told me to dress warmly for this one. 'You should wear two of everything, including two woolly hats,' he insisted. When I asked why he explained that the road crossed some very bleak and unpopulated areas of steppe. If we happened to break down, he said, we would probably die of cold before help could arrive. So I wrapped up well!

Mobile phones were widely available by that time. I had mine with me and was delighted to find that Faith and I could send and receive texts. One such text informed me that I had just had a new granddaughter, Kate, born to Pete and Joanne on 21 March.

France again

In 2004 I was invited by one of the pastors who had attended the EDMF to take a weekend away with his church, teaching on the return of Jesus. So I flew into Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris, and was driven to the conference centre, which was a chateau in Normandy. We ate well and enjoyed some good times together, including some fairly deep counselling sessions alongside the pastor.

Unlike most of the others, who were in small dormitories or shared rooms, I had a bedroom to myself. Though it was only September, it was perishing cold and the blankets were few and small, so I had to sleep fully clothed. But the meetings went OK, with my French holding up to the demands of both the sessions and the question-times afterwards.

I was 64 years old, and that was my last overseas ministry trip. At Paris airport on the way back I bought a paperback edition of Marcel Pagnol's *La Gloire de mon Père* to read while waiting for my flight to be called. I had read it many years earlier and was again entranced by his vivid descriptions

of his childhood. After getting home I acquired the three sequels to it: *Le Château de ma Mère*, *Le Temps des Secrets* and *Le Temps des Amours*—brilliant stuff, and I've reread them several times since. My other favourite non-English book, also read many times, is a Spanish one, Blasco Ibáñez's *La Barraca*, a much darker tale but equally gripping.

School governor

A while before this I was beginning to see in a new way the importance of being 'salt and light' in society at large, and so looked for opportunities to work that out. This led to my becoming a school governor at Airedale



The plaque reads: 'We celebrate the opening of our new classroom on 17th March 2005 opened by Mr D Matthew, Chair of Governors.'

Infant School in Castleford. Trevor and Lynn's daughter, Andrea, often did supply teaching there, so we had a connection.

Julie, the headmistress, was dedicated and hardworking, totally committed to improving the lives of the pupils, a majority of whom came from a council estate with a dubious reputation. Many were seriously deprived, their parents being into drugs, crime and prostitution. It was good to get involved by bringing some Christian common-sense into some sensitive situations. Eventually I was elected Chair of Governors, a position carrying considerable responsibility. My church work meant that I enjoyed a degree of flexibility in my use of time, so I was able to be involved during school hours and be available to the staff as a support-figure.

Computers in schools were still something of a novelty at that time, but computing was slowly being introduced to the curriculum, and my experience in that field meant that I was able to help out in lessons taken by a teacher who was far less at home with computers than me.

I was a governor at Airedale for over ten years and look back on my time there with real pleasure.

Trying to retire

Around 2006 we began thinking actively of retirement and what that would mean. Faith and I both felt that, much as we loved the Castleford folk, and particularly our now-longtime friends Trevor and Lynn, it would make sense to be nearer our children. Two of them—Jonny and Rachel—were in South Wales and the other one—Peter—in Cornwall. Oddly enough, from our house in Castleford to the kids in South Wales was 230 miles, and from them to Pete's in Cornwall was also 230 miles, so whichever destination we chose, we would be 230 miles from the other location.

Wales is pleasant enough, but we had never felt strongly drawn to live there, whereas Cornwall had a double appeal: Faith had been brought up for the first seven years of her life in Hayle, so it was her old stamping-ground; and our regular holiday-visits to Cornwall had convinced us that there were few lovelier areas in the whole country. Also, we felt that, if the circumstances were right, it wouldn't surprise us if either of the South Wales kids took a job elsewhere in the country, or even overseas, whereas Peter and Joanne were unlikely ever to move out of Cornwall. So that settled it: Cornwall it

would be. Then there was the question of timing. The church was beginning to see some promising young leaders emerging who were being trained to eventually take the place of Trevor and me, both of whom were now at retirement age. When would they be ready to take things on?

In March 2007 we put our house, 24 Broomhill, on the market. The leadership team agreed that they would keep me on staff until such time as it sold and we were ready to move, then they would officially retire me. Little did we realise that, at the very time we put the house up for sale, a great economic recession was already gathering pace. Money rapidly became short for many people and the



24 Broomhill for sale. It would take a long six years to sell!

housing market slumped. Two and a half years later we still had no buyer. Several people had viewed the property, but the ones who liked it had a house to sell first, and they were in the same boat as us: waiting.

So it was agreed that I would officially retire at the end of 2009, by which time I was 69 years old. The Nottingham men who provided the church with its outside oversight came down for the occasion and I was 'prayed out' in a fairly low-key way which felt good—I'd never been one for a big fuss.

In addition to the state pension I had a couple of pension schemes that I had paid into for many years since entering full-time Christian service, plus a teacher's pension for the 13½ years I had done in state schools. Together, with Faith's state pension too, they meant that we could live quite adequately. So we adjusted our lifestyle accordingly and got on with living, waiting for the house to sell and, in the meantime, staying closely involved with the church—though now without any official responsibilities.

The Greek preference

For many years most of our overseas holidays had been either to Spain or to one of the Spanish islands: the Balearics or Canaries. We had enjoyed ourselves immensely, but felt it was time for a change, so we began to visit Greece and some of its many islands, starting with Corfu. Later we would pay visits to Rhodes, Kos and Crete, and to Halkidiki on the Greek mainland.

Whereas Spain was culturally Roman Catholic, Greece was Greek Orthodox, and I enjoyed the chance to visit some of the Orthodox churches, shrines and monasteries to get a flavour of the great heritage of the Eastern church, which before had been known to me only through my reading.

We found the Greeks generally more easygoing and helpful than the Spaniards, though that is perhaps too much of a blanket statement. I suspected that maybe the Greek Orthodox influence had put something into society at large that was more wholesome than what Roman Catholicism had given to Spain.

It was in Kos in September 2008 that Faith and I threw caution to the winds and went parascending. Sitting side by side on a mere strip of webbing several hundred feet above the tiny boat on the sea below was quite an experience for a 68-year-old like me!

Photography

That was also the holiday that saw me sporting a new camera: a Sony a350 digital SLR, bought out of the lump-sum element of the pension arrangement.

I'd always enjoyed photography and had first started taking it more seriously when I got a Pentax SLR and a couple of extra lenses. This was a film camera, of course. You bought a film that would provide 24 or 36 shots and loaded it into the camera. After each shot you had to wind the film on ready for the next shot. When all had been taken you rewound the film back into its cassette and took it to a local chemist's shop to be developed and printed. Collecting your prints was always exciting because it was the first time you saw what you had taken—film cameras provided no instant way of seeing what you had just shot.

Then digital cameras began to appear. The purists scorned them as cheap and nasty, affirming that



Parascending in Kos, September 2008

they would never catch on with serious photographers. How wrong they were! I received my first digital camera, a Kodak DC280 with a 2.2-megapixel sensor, from Faith and the children for my sixtieth birthday in the year 2000. It was marvellous to be able to shoot as many pictures as I wanted without having to worry about the cost of developing and printing.

I could, of course, print my own as and when I wished, using my inkjet printer. This technology had made enormous strides since its invention some years before. I remember the day, probably back in the 1980s, when the first inkjet arrived at Church House, Bradford, the property of one of the men in the accounts department. He invited several of us to his office to see it in action, and many were the oohs and aahs as it turned out its first full-colour sheets! Prices were astronomical to begin with, but soon they came down and these machines became affordable to the average computer-owner like me.

As for digital cameras, the trend was for them to get smaller and smaller. Following that trend, I eventually swapped my DC280 for a tiny Kodak V610 dual-lens model with a massive 6-megapixel sensor. But soon I began to yearn for a 'proper' camera again, the digital equivalent of my old Pentax film camera. And that's when I got my Sony, with its 14.2-megapixel sensor and it has served me well. Faith later bought me a lovely Zeiss lens and I've had enormous pleasure from that combination. Humping a backpack around with all the equipment is well worth it, I reckon.

Waiting

Waiting for the house to sell was a real pain. We tried our best to give ourselves enthusiastically to what we were doing at Castleford, but really our hearts were in the south-west. But we couldn't follow our hearts fully because there was still a 'For Sale' board outside.

Faith's Mum had died in 2004, but my Uncle Cyril was still soldiering on, now in his nineties. He was staying with us over the Christmas-New Year break at the end of 2007 when he suddenly lost the ability to take his weight on his legs, and we had to get him to hospital. There it became clear that he would not be able to return to his flat in Shipley, which had steps, and so my sister Christine and I toured local care homes to find one where he could comfortably spend his last days. We found The Raikes in Riddlesden and saw him settled in there. It proved a good choice.

For me, visiting him was a 70-mile round trip, but I tried to get over there every two or three weeks. Towards the end he wasn't usually aware that we were there, and wasn't capable of much conversation, but it was a privilege to stick with him up to his death in April 2013, just a couple of months short of his 99th birthday. It was a privilege for me, too, to conduct his funeral, which drew a large crowd of people who, over the years, had come to appreciate his gentle and faithful life as a real man of God.

Meanwhile, we continued to wait. The recession had bitten deep and house sales had slumped to an all-time low. We were getting older and itching to be off to Cornwall, frustrated at our situation. I kept busy with a variety of activities.



The former school in the East Yorkshire village of Harton, where my great-great-grandfather, William Matthew, was the schoolmaster.

One was genealogical research. Years earlier I had begun to dig into our family tree using online research tools, but there were lots of gaps. My sister Christine and I made several trips out to East Yorkshire to visit the villages—like Harton and Barton-le-Willows—where our ancestors had lived. We also went a few times to the Borthwick Institute of Archives in York to stare for hours into a microfilm reader, working our way through old parish records looking for the Matthew line. We did pretty well and managed to establish a solid line back as far as George Matthew, born around 1685.

I researched Faith's line as well. Her forbears were Cornish, of course, mostly living in St Ives and Lelant, some of them fishermen. At the same time I had been keen to get some firm info on her biological father, Jack Beevers, whom she had never known, and who had died in 1988. By various means I was eventually able to track down one of his daughters, who provided us with some photos. Faith wasn't too fussed about the whole thing, but I found a lot of satisfaction in bringing this little project to a successful conclusion.

The Exminster connection

Then I was contacted by Karrie Drake, who had worked as a receptionist years before at Nettle Hill and who, after a spell in Canada with her family, had settled in Exminster, Devon. She started a business called Family Detective, doing genealogical research. Knowing my own interest and experience in the field, she invited me to become one of her researchers, doing the donkey-work of finding and transcribing censuses and records of births, marriages and deaths. She paid me a modest hourly fee for this. The work appealed to the nit-picking side of my nature, and the money that came in enabled us to afford one or two little luxuries that otherwise would not have been possible.

Karrie and her husband Adam led a small church in Exminster, and I travelled there to preach from time to time. A couple of times they flew me down from Leeds-Bradford to Exeter, saving me a very long drive.

On one of those occasions they took me out to lunch at a local pub after the Sunday meeting, then drove me to the airport to catch my plane back. There was some confusion about the flight at the check-in. A volcano in Iceland had erupted, spewing huge quantities of dust into the atmosphere, dust that apparently could clog an aircraft's engines. After some deliberation the flight was cancelled, so I had to go back and spend another night with my hosts. The atmosphere cleared and I was able to fly back the next day.

Another time, I was on the plane heading back north when the captain announced that the winds at Leeds-Bradford were too strong for a safe landing. He would therefore proceed straight to Aberdeen, which was the destination of the scheduled second leg. We landed in a windless Aberdeen, where there was snow on the ground, before taking off for the return flight, scheduled to touch down at Leeds-Bradford—where my friend Trevor was already waiting to pick me up—before the plane returned to its base at Exeter.

As we approached Yorkshire the captain came on again. The winds below were even stronger, he said, so a landing at Leeds-Bradford was out of the question. He would therefore divert to Manchester. There, a coach picked us up and brought us back over the Pennines to Leeds-Bradford, where a faithful Trevor waited patiently—well, he waited, anyway. From Exeter to Leeds via Aberdeen and Manchester had not been the best way to do it, and it was late when I got back to Faith in Castleford.

Golden Wedding

The years continued to tick by, our house still awaiting a buyer, and so came 2012, when, on 8th December, we celebrated fifty years of marriage. We decided to mark the occasion with a family get-together in a lovely thatched cottage near Watchet, in Somerset.

Jonny was there with the children, Gruff and Anwen. By this time he and wife Joanne had separated and were in the midst of divorce proceedings, so as special guest we had his girlfriend Karen—a good chance for her and us to get to know each other better. Rachel and Ian were there, too, with grand-dog Reg. And Peter and Joanne with their girls, Ellie and Kate. The rental terms of the cottage specified a limit of ‘one well-behaved pet’, which is why Reg was there. Pete’s dog, Maisy, had to go to the kennels, and Joanne kept jokingly reminding us that Maisy was also well-behaved and more than a bit miffed at being pushed into second place in the dog pecking-order.

We had a cracking weekend there. The place was spacious, warm and well-appointed, the highlight being the hot tub on the veranda. There Faith and I soaked among the bubbles, a glass of champagne in hand, and enjoyed a real sense of gratitude to God for his many blessings over fifty years, not least the blessings of a loving family, and particularly the company of our four grandchildren.



Celebrating our Golden Wedding, 8 December 2012

After the weekend Faith and I travelled up into Wales and had a few days in a nice little hotel in Saundersfoot, on the Gower. Pembrokeshire was a new area for us and we had a great time exploring it in the car and on foot.

We enjoyed some other times away, too, around that period. The children gave us a useful present: membership of the National Trust. This enabled us to visit some wonderful places around Yorkshire and occasionally further afield. Then our good friends David and Brenda Rathmell on several occasions kindly set up their caravan on a pleasant rural site and we enjoyed a week in a different place, mostly in the Dales or North York Moors. We also had some good times in the company of Trevor and Lynn. We spent a few days with them in Edinburgh, including a memorable visit to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, by then retired from service and moored in Leith as a tourist attraction.

And of course we made regular visits to Cornwall. The hardest part was always when, at the end of the visit, we had to pack up, point the car up the A30 and drive the 400 miles back to Castleford. It seemed sometimes as if we would never sell our house and move. Some Christian friends questioned whether we were in fact ‘meant’ to move. Surely, they argued, if it was God’s will for you to move he would have opened the way long before this?

We had no ideas as to why things were being delayed, but I had always believed that we should act out of conviction rather than be ruled by circumstances. We just knew Cornwall was the right move for us, so we stuck to our guns and kept waiting. Most of the time we were OK, but from time to time

one of us would get quite downhearted and a bit depressed about the delay. The other one would then be doubly supportive. But when, as happened a few times, we were both down at the same time, it was very tough indeed.

Singing

Then Trevor decided to start a male voice choir affiliated to the Festival of Male Voice Praise. It began small, with men mostly from our own church, then slowly grew as men from other churches also joined.



In full flow with White Rose Male Voice Praise!

At first I held back from joining as we hoped any day to have a buyer for our house, after which we'd be off south. But as time continued to pass with no developments, I eventually gave in to Trevor's persuasion and signed up, singing second bass. It was a good decision.

I was never a quality singer, but I could hold a note and had a good sense of pitch. Also, being able to read music made learning the parts much easier. I enjoyed the choir's activities immensely. We sang at concerts in a whole

range of different churches, at weddings, at funerals, in schools, at old folks' homes and in Full Sutton Prison, to name just a few. We rehearsed twice a week. There was a lot of good-natured banter among the lads and we had a lot of fun, especially on Thursday lunchtimes when, after the morning rehearsal, we would enjoy a bacon sandwich together.

Things start to move

We spent Christmas 2012 with the family in Cornwall and, at the end of it, steeled ourselves for yet another long drive north. Maybe 2013 would be our moving year...

We were still getting the occasional viewing, but people either had their own place to sell before they could make an offer, or they didn't bite the cherry. One couple in particular were very keen on our place, but they had a sizable house to sell, and it was properties in the middle price band, like theirs and ours, that were proving the most difficult to sell right across the nation. But we lived in hope.

One couple came in March, along with the husband's elderly parents, to see the house. They kept their cards close to their chest and didn't make any particularly favourable noises, so we assumed it was another non-goer. Then, a couple of days later—and six years to the week after putting the property on the market—we were just about to go out when we had a phone call from the estate agent to say that these people wanted to buy our house. What's more, they were willing to pay the full asking price! We had been waiting six years for this, and when it happened we were a bit stunned, to say the least!

The first thing we wanted to do, of course, was whizz down to Cornwall and find a property for ourselves. But we couldn't because we were looking after Reg the dog while Rachel and Ian were on a three-week holiday in Vietnam—and they had only just gone! So we had to possess our souls in patience yet again. But we eventually made it down there and looked round several properties. Even though we planned to downsize, the fact that property prices in Cornwall were a good bit higher than in West Yorkshire meant we were limited in what we could realistically reach for. In the end,

however, we made an offer on a lovely bungalow in Heamoor, Penzance, which was accepted, and we started the legal ball rolling with a view to the big move—at last!

Knee trouble

Trevor and Lynn, knowing that our forthcoming move would mean that they and we would be seeing far less of each other, invited us to join them on a final coach holiday to the Isle of Bute. We had a great time together, enjoying a part of the country that was new to us all.

On the way back the coach pulled in for a break at some services near Newcastle-on-Tyne. As we were getting back into our seats for the final leg of the journey, Faith twisted to get into her seat and felt something give in her knee. The pain was excruciating, and she was blacking out with it on and off as we travelled south. We informed the driver and, as a result, the moment we pulled into the depot at Normanton there was an ambulance to take Faith to hospital.

She emerged a few hours later on crutches and was limited in her movements, and still in a lot of pain in spite of pain-relief medication. Then she felt something click in her knee—as if something was going back into place—and she immediately regained some mobility and found the pain much reduced. Soon she was more or less back to normal and was happily able to play a full part in getting ready for the big move.

Last-minute pressure

The final stages of the build-up to the move were stressful. The solicitors at both ends dragged their feet. We eventually had a date and on the strength of it we booked a removal company. Then it was changed and we lost our slot, having to renegotiate.

In the end, exchange of contracts and completion took place within twenty-four hours of each other and the day dawned at last when the van arrived and our stuff started disappearing into the depths of it. It was 18th June 2013 and sweltering hot.

The move would be a three-day affair. On Day 1 the people buying our house arrived before half of our stuff had been loaded, so the driveway had outgoing items stacked up at one side and incoming items at the other, with two lots of men in and out of the house together. But at last, well into the afternoon, we were all loaded up. We handed over the keys to the new owners and almost collapsed with exhaustion at Trevor and Lynn's, where we were to stay the night.

Day 2 saw us driving the familiar 400-mile route down to Cornwall, where we stayed the night with Terry and Jennifer Jackson, our daughter-in-law's parents. We slept fitfully and on Day 3 were up and at our new home—**8 Treneere Lane, Heamoor**—to welcome the removal van at 7.30am; it had travelled down overnight. Again, it was a blisteringly hot day and we were weary by lunchtime, even though we were just handling the lighter items.

But we were in! Amazingly, we had at last moved to Cornwall. Hallelujah!

Settling in

We were both run down and quite unwell for the first few weeks. That was no surprise. We'd had to cope with six years of frustrating waiting, followed by the high tension of the last few weeks with its postponements and uncertainties. Then three days of exhausting packing, travelling and unpacking.



Sold at last—after a six-year wait!

No wonder we were feeling poorly!

But gradually we got back to normal and enjoyed putting our stamp on our lovely new home. It was great, too, to be able to spend time with Peter and the family. Just a few weeks after moving we joined them on the beach at Sennen Cove on a hot August afternoon. As it was the holiday season we had to park at the top of the hill. And that meant that, at the end of the day, we climbed back up the hill to the car park. Faith felt no particular effect from that, but the following day it was clear that her knee had 'gone' again. She was in constant severe pain, just like on the coach from the Isle of Bute, and had to see the doctor.

For the next three months she was seriously incapacitated: unable to walk more than a few steps, and in particularly bad pain when in the sitting position. Horizontality was the only condition that brought any kind of relief. I would take her out in the car, but she had to be on the back seat with her legs up. To eat her meals she sat in the folding camp-chair because it had a leg-rest. Eventually she saw a specialist who operated on the knee at the Duchy Hospital in Truro, and once she had recovered from that she was able to sit and walk again. In due course we took up walking sections of the South West Coast Path and she did remarkably well.

Church

One of our priorities after moving was to find a local church. We had just begun visiting some of the possibles when Faith's knee problem occurred, so I ended up doing most of the checking out. Not until after the operation was Faith able to be comfortable with the sitting that attendance at Sunday meetings required.

We settled in due course in Hope Church, affiliated to the Apostolic Church. For me it was lovely—for the first time in decades—to be able to go and enjoy just being with God's people there without the kind of expectations that people can put on you when they know you well. Here, nobody knew either me or my history in Christian work; I was just another new person who had moved into the area.

That didn't last long: the pastor, discovered my website, and the cat was out of the bag. But I was happy to become involved in some of the preaching and teaching without any of the responsibility that comes with formal leadership, and I have been blessed to be a part of the church ever since.

Spiritual pilgrimage

For a year or two before moving I had begun to face up to some challenges regarding aspects of the Christian faith that I had previously never questioned. Being the kind of personality I am, I needed to be intellectually convinced before embracing any major changes, and I spent a lot of time studying the Scriptures with my beloved Logos Bible Software.

I changed position on the hell question. I had never really been comfortable with the notion of hell as endless conscious torment. Surely no sin deserves that! It was a relief to settle provisionally for conditional immortality and its corollary that, real as hell might be, it terminates in annihilation. But as time went by, I found myself leaning more towards the hope that, in the end, all might be saved, since, according to Revelation, the gates of the eternal city stand open even after the final judgment, and the call is still being issued for the thirsty to come and drink.

I also changed position on the role of women in the home and in the church. From my Brethren days I had been led to believe that the New Testament insisted that a wife was subordinate to her husband, and that primary leadership roles in the church were for men only. Realising that many questioned this led to me to scrutinise my hermeneutical principles. What Scripture *says* is not the point; what

matters is what it *means* by what it says. I came to see that the New Testament, far from being a 'frozen in time' manual of finalised truth, was just a staging-post on the journey of revelation. The likes of Paul, for instance, did not condemn slavery, which was endemic in first-century society, but encouraged Christians to live with it in ways that best commended the gospel in that society. But in time people would see that slavery was totally unacceptable and would come to work for its abolition. One could take a similar view, I realised, with the role of women, and I came to adopt, with solid conviction, the egalitarian position.

This questioning of views hitherto considered unassailable continued after we moved, and I had more time then to read up on various issues, usually posting book reviews on my website. These led some to believe I was backsliding! I accepted that Genesis 1-2 was not a scientific account of the original creation, and that evolution was so well accredited that only a naive obscurantism could doubt it. I remain a modified creationist, but have no problems with accepting the realities of evolution at the same time.

My deepest questions, though, were about the nature of the Bible itself. I could not escape its 'pervasive interpretive pluralism'¹—the fact that, for two thousand years, Christians of equal godliness, sincerity and commitment to its divine inspiration had reached widely differing conclusions as to what it taught on election, the intermediate state, Israel, church government, the kingdom of God, free will, the nature of the atonement, divine sovereignty, the end times—and a host of other topics. I shifted position on these issues and many others, but overall adopted a less dogmatic stand than previously and became far more willing to accept Christians with different views.

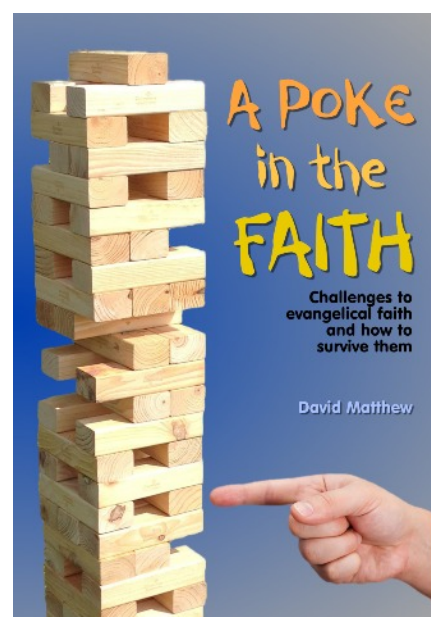
A Poke In The Faith

There came a point when I felt I needed to put all this in writing, partly for my own benefit—writing things down has always clarified them for me—and partly for others. In particular, I was hearing of more and more once-solid Christians, including church leaders, who had given up any semblance of active Christian faith. Enquiries showed a pattern: most had been locked into a framework of beliefs like a Jenga tower, and as blocks were pulled out the whole lot faced the increasing danger of collapse. I myself had escaped the 'tower of beliefs' trap, and felt I could help others make adjustments to their beliefs without losing everything. So I wrote *A Poke In The Faith*, with the subtitle *Challenges to Evangelical Faith and How to Survive Them*.

No publisher that I approached was willing to take it on, so I decided to settle for distributing it free of charge in electronic form only. It went up on my website in 2016, from where it has been accessed and downloaded many times. I have had a large number of letters and emails from people of all ages, all around the world, saying the book has been a life-saver for them—plus a handful writing me off as a vicious heretic! I'm gratified by the former, and couldn't care less about the latter. I have continued to add to it, and modify it, and the book is now in its fifth edition.

In all this reassessment of beliefs, I found a new place of rest and peace in the fundamentals of God's love and his desire for all to relate to him. I began to enjoy what Paul Ricoeur called a 'second naivety'

¹ A phrase coined by Christian Smith in his book *The Bible Made Impossible*.



First Edition cover

in my love for the Lord and my daily walk with him. I plan to keep things that way!

‘Know thyself...’

The advice to ‘know yourself’, attributed to various ancients including Socrates, is sound. Only as we know ourselves in the sense of understanding what kind of individuals we are can we be at peace with ourselves and helpful to others. And we discover this, of course, through mingling with other people and spotting the differences.

I’ve long been pretty settled in knowing who I am, and I hope this has made me more able to help others. I’m an intelligent man, but my intelligence is second-order, not first. I’m a details-person rather than the ‘broad brush-stroke’ type—but I need to have a clear idea of the bigger picture within which I’m working on the details. I’m comfortable with my own company and, while I need some interreaction with other people, I’m not dependent on it. I’m more of an implementer than an



‘Know thyself’

initiator: ‘Tell me what you want doing, and I’ll do it for you—and do it well’. I’m a linear rather than lateral thinker; thinking ‘outside the box’ does not come easily. I like things neat and tidy—I have mild OCD tendencies, I think!

I enjoy communicating in both speech and writing, but writing would always be my preference. I’m big on reason and

short on emotion. I’m not very imaginative, preferring hard facts to maybes. I’m not an addictive personality; I could give up (and several times have done) alcohol, tea or coffee, say, for two years without being troubled by it. I’m not a morning person: I don’t enjoy breakfast, and please don’t bring me a cuppa in bed—I won’t be able to drink it. I’m only clear-headed after mid-morning, and my brain is at its freshest in the mid to late evening. I’ve never in my whole life woken up from sleep, long or short, feeling better for it.

I don’t like surprises, and my biggest horror would be a surprise party. What I like most is ‘a steady going-on.’

I enjoy the beauty and precision of mathematics, but prefer the magic of words and delight in finding *le mot juste*. I don’t understand dance in any of its forms and can’t begin to imagine why anybody would want to do it. I don’t like musicals—except *My Fair Lady*. I don’t like being ‘entertained’. I am repelled by hype and shrieks of enthusiasm. I like novels and films that move sequentially from beginning to end, but can’t cope with ones that have repeated flashbacks. I watch detective shows on the TV but at the end can rarely tell you who’s who or what the motive for the murder was; sometimes I’m not even sure who did it.

If there was one thing I would change if I could, it would be to stop dreaming. Every single night I dream with startling vividness, and most mornings I could talk at length about the details. That’s the main reason I always wake up worn out: in my dreams I’ve used physical, emotional and mental energy equal to those expended in the real world. It’s an absolute pest, my equivalent, I think, of Paul’s ‘thorn in the flesh’. So, like him, I’ll need to keep drawing on God’s grace to live with it.

As is true for everyone, my greatest strengths are also my greatest potential weaknesses. My love of solitude, for example, means that I can crack on with work for hours on my own but, if unchecked, it can make me unsociable. Similarly, my love of precision and detail are an asset when doing

genealogical research, proof-reading or Greek word-studies, but a liability when I go to a restaurant with Faith, look at the menu and immediately start moaning about the five typos I find there. Learning to recognise such factors in my make-up enables me hopefully to keep at the never-ending task of becoming a more balanced and Christlike person. I still have a long way to go.

As for the future, I remain an optimist in spite of the glaring horrors in world society. I am more convinced than ever that God's kingdom will grow like yeast in dough until, ultimately, the whole of society is pervaded by it. Sure, it will take Christ's return to bring the process to completion, but I'm still confident that we shall see a substantial move in that direction before then—and I want my own small part in the vast workings of it to be a help rather than a hindrance.

Enjoying retirement



In the meantime I'm blessed with a good life. Faith and I are in pretty good health, though 2022 saw some setbacks. A benign tumour on Faith's pancreas began pressing on her bile duct. She became extremely jaundiced and lost two and a half stones in weight (nearly 16 kilos). Eventually she spent a fortnight in Treliske Hospital, Truro,

where they fitted a stent in the bile duct. It did the trick and she gradually regained her strength and some of the lost weight. But she was discharged from hospital infected with the dreaded covid. Mercifully, the vaccinations we had received meant that her symptoms were very mild indeed.

Meanwhile, I had been having regular recurrences of the debilitating irregular heartbeat problems I had first suffered over twenty years earlier, and which had been kept in check with medication. Now the episodes included severe dizzy spells, and I often felt on the verge of passing out. ECGs showed this to be the result of my heart sometimes stopping completely for two or three seconds. I was told to stop driving in August 2021 because of this, and I gladly went along with that, in spite of its being a huge inconvenience. Eventually I was booked in to have a pacemaker fitted. This took place successfully at the end of July 2022 and immediately stopped the dizzy spells. But it took a long time for the DVLA to get round to giving me back my driving license.

We continued to enjoy getting out and about in lovely Cornwall. Somebody once said, 'Yorkshire is God's own country, but he takes his holidays in Cornwall.' I'll go with that, and we aim to explore as much of it as we can while we remain fit enough to do so.

Six months after moving down I joined Marazion Apollo Male Choir. It's a privilege to be a part of it, and I enjoy both the rehearsals and the concerts. We rehearse on Monday evenings in Marazion Town Hall. Sometimes I can hardly believe how privileged I am when I park the car in the beach car park right opposite St Michael's Mount and amble up to the Town Hall sniffing the fresh sea air and listening to the lap of waves on the sand and the cries of the gulls. 'Some people pay thousands of pounds to experience this,' I say to myself, 'but I live here!'

In September 2016 I joined a local Cornish language class. Having always enjoyed languages, I thought Cornish would be a challenge, and would help keep the little grey cells active. I loved it and, over several years, completed all four grades of the Cornish Language Board's examinations, all with Distinction. Exams are never much fun, and I admit to having wondered why, at the age of 80-plus, I

had been putting myself through this level of stress! The oral exams—which always account for 50% of the marks—were quite daunting in view of my hearing difficulties. But the examiners proved to be understanding in allowing me to sit close to the speakers, and I managed OK.

I quickly got drawn into teaching the language to others. The covid pandemic meant that, for a couple of years from March 2020, the classes had to be online. But I managed fine with that medium, and enjoyed the weekly sessions with some able and keen students. As a result of all this, I received an invitation to become a Bard of Cornwall. To be admitted to the Cornish Gorsedh is a very great honour. It is an exclusive group of people honoured for their work to promote Cornwall and its Celtic heritage, and I was invited to be a 'Language Bard' in recognition of my proficiency in the language and work in teaching it to others.



Being received into the Gorsedh Kernow

So, on 3rd September 2022 I found myself in Hayle, kitted out in the traditional blue bardic robes. There, in the presence of the company of bards and a large audience, I was formally inducted into this august company by the Grand Bard, who publicly announced my new bardic name: *Tas Lowen*. It means 'Contented Father'. It is customary to choose a name associated with one's occupation or interests—something that epitomises who you are. I didn't have to think about it long. Of all the many blessings I enjoy, the one (beyond being married to Faith, of course) that I consider top of the list is having three such wonderful kids, who

bring me nothing but joy. So, *Tas Lowen* I became, and the announcement of it drew a long appreciate 'Ooooh!' from the audience!

Faith joined a couple of local sewing groups and has made huge progress in developing her skills, making beautiful items for our delightful bungalow and gifts for other people.

We enjoy a warm friendship with Jim and Diane Roberts, the couple whose bungalow we bought. They moved into the next street. Jim introduced me to the choir, and Diane introduced Faith to the sewing groups, so we have common interests. It's fascinating that they spent six years doing up the bungalow so that, when they put it on the market, it was in pristine condition. Those, of course, are the same six years that we spent in so much frustration waiting for our Castleford house to sell. Maybe there's some significance in that!

A few years back, our younger son Peter and his family moved from St Just into a bungalow in Heamoor, just ten minutes' walk from our place. And our daughter Rachel, divorced from Ian, moved into the cottage she bought just 100 yards from us. So in our old age we have family closer and closer. What a blessing! All this means, too, that we have two grand-dogs to share: Rachel's mongrel, Reg (named after my father), and Pete's Jack Russell, Maisy. Faith and I enjoy having them to stay regularly, while the kids have the final responsibility and pay the vet's bills—a good arrangement!

The year 2020—as mentioned earlier—saw the emergence of coronavirus and a series of social lockdowns with full legal backing as the dreaded covid-19 disease wreaked havoc across the country

and the world. Over 125,000 people died of it in the UK.

Faith and I tried to be sensible in it all. Our social activities ceased, for the most part, though the Cornish classes continued online using a video-conferencing tool called Zoom, which nobody had heard of until the virus came along. For the 2020-21 academic year, my Wednesday evenings were busy. I taught the 2nd Grade Cornish class from 5.30 until 6.45pm then, after a quick breather, sat down in front of the screen again at 7pm as a student for my 4th Grade class, which finished at 9pm. Ass en vy skwith wosa henna! (How tired I used to be after that!)

I managed to get out with my latest camera—a wonderful Sony RX10 IV—from time to time, when the safety rules permitted. Often, I would compile a day's pictures into a visual 'walk' and post it on Facebook. At the same time, early in the pandemic I began putting up one photo a day from my large collection, just to brighten people's lives up and enable them to appreciate views that being stuck indoors prevented them seeing for real. I did this for 400 consecutive days, ending only when there were signs of an end to the restrictions. I was amazed at how many people, from all over the world, expressed how they had been touched and encouraged by both the daily photos and the virtual walks.

Since we moved to Cornwall, our church family have been a blessing. We have been privileged to be part of Hope Church and to host a housegroup at our place for some years, as well as getting involved in the church's other activities. Sadly, some upsetting events took place just before lockdown, preventing us all from continuing to meet in the normal way, and resulting in the pastor quitting. Covid brought a halt to meetings all together, of course, and for a couple of years we had to be content 'meeting' on Zoom. A new pastor arrived during the summer of 2021 and things slowly began to move towards normalisation. How Faith and I will fit in with that remains to be seen; we are keeping our options open.

In spite of these setbacks, life continues to be pretty good! We take life one day at a time, grateful for the blessings each day brings. Looking back, I can trace God's hand of blessing in so many of the twists and turns of my life, and I don't expect that to stop. Goodness and mercy are still sniffing at my heels. Thank you, Lord!

[Last updated: 6 December 2022, age 82]