



Memoirs from Ten Decades

1920s to 2020s

Arthur G Chapman

Inside Front Cover



*At McDonagh cousins reunion
at Moyallon Centre, October 2019*

Preface

The decision to write my memoirs arose out of the realisation that I had experienced many years of great change, stretching from the 1920s in the last century to the end of the second decade of the present one. Children and grandchildren expressed curiosity and fascination in regard to memories I related about incidents and events which are now the stuff of history books but which appear unremarkable to me.

Each life represents a unique and individual story. Such a story is hard to encompass as a single unit and can be viewed from the standpoint of the protagonist or the spectator. The chief actor is in possession of the total facts but in his narrative he is in danger of presenting a picture which is distorted through portrayal of the subject in either an over-favourable or else a deprecatory light. How can the experiences of many years be truthfully condensed into the limited space of a few chapters? I have been helped by discussing many of the events with my brother Ross, my sister-in-law Helen and my children, Grace, Elizabeth and Hilda who can recall many of these happenings.

I find a certain reluctance to talk about myself, to bare the intimate feelings associated with many events in my life, yet I recognise a cathartic and therapeutic effect in bringing them into the open and sharing them with others. By putting them on paper I hope I have achieved this result.

As I review my many years I give thanks for the good life I have enjoyed and the Grace of God to me in all my varying circumstances, in times of both joy and sorrow. This has been mediated to me in many ways and I express gratitude:

- * for the security of a good home, the guidance of wise and loving parents, the consistency of lives lived according to professed principles and their friendship over many adult years in their close company;
- * for companionship and support over 18 years of married life with Alice during busy and demanding times and the stimulus, common sense and fun which she brought to all around her;
- * for years in teaching which brought satisfaction and fulfilment as I saw young people develop potential and go on to live useful lives;
- * for colleagues who motivated and inspired me, such as Miss Holmes, 'the Baron', Donald Woodman and the FSL staff in the lonely, difficult years of the 80s;
- * for the world in which I live, the wonder of creation, the universe of nature and the opportunity to travel and see many parts of this fair earth;
- * for children and grandchildren and other close family and friends and the joy which their care and concern provide; and
- * for health of body and mind to an advanced age and a restlessness which causes me to constantly look to the future and seek the Kingdom of Heaven established in the here and now.

The Early Years

I have had a wonderful life so far, having lived in eleven decades spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, a time which has seen enormous changes in every aspect of existence. Therefore I wish to record my memories before incapacity prevents me from doing so. 1928 seems to us in the 21st century a long way ago – midway between the two major world wars - in the fledgling state of Northern Ireland, struggling to assert its identity. My home was at 175 Obins Street, on the edge of a solidly Nationalist and Catholic area in the staunchly Protestant and Unionist town of Portadown.

Of course I have no memory of that year but I understand I was born in the Carleton Home, a maternity unit where local G.P.s assisted in deliveries. I was named Arthur because my parents liked the name and George because it was it was a traditional Chapman name. I was the third George in series and my son and grandson also bear the name. I was a first child, a first grandchild to both families and my birth was therefore a significant event. My aunt, May Hobson used to talk about how excited she was when she heard the news.

My father, George Robert, was an only child, born to elderly parents in 1901 and nurtured with loving care. He went as a boarder to Friends' School, Lisburn and would have enjoyed further study, but because of the economic pressures of the war years his parents were forced to remove him from



With parents at Richhill

school and he became an apprentice to the furniture trade in the firm of T.W. McDonagh at Richhill at the age of 15. He was to spend his entire working life in this business as he went on in romantic fashion to marry the boss's eldest daughter, Annie, his near neighbour and fellow member of Richhill Friends Meeting. The Chapman family had been resident in Ulster since Plantation days. Tradition maintains the first settler had been a captain in Cromwell's army and received a grant of land in lieu of pay in



With younger brother Ross

South Antrim in an area known as Soldierstown. My paternal grandmother's family was also of settler stock from the north Armagh area. An ancestor was the Dan Winter who had associations with the foundation of the Orange Order in 1795. The families of both paternal grandparents had originally Quaker connections and both joined Friends in Brookfield where my grandmother had been Senior Mistress of the Friends School there for many years before her marriage.

My mother's family was of a quite different background. McDonagh is a name associated with the province of Connaught and family lore is that an ancestor escaped the ravages of the Great Famine in the 1840s and settled in Richhill, becoming assimilated into the local life and culture, only his surname betraying his Gaelic roots. My maternal grandmother came from still different stock. The Ross family like many others made the short journey from Scotland to east Antrim and with the booming development of Belfast in the late nineteenth century moved to the city. My great-grandfather was a blacksmith in Richhill but his son Thomas William McDonagh became apprenticed to a local cabinet-maker, completing his time with a firm in Belfast. He gained experience in quality work on liners in the famous Harland and Wolff shipyards and returned to Richhill on his marriage to Madeline Ross in 1903 where he commenced furniture manufacture on his own account.

Thus one can see that my heritage is a mixed one, my DNA containing all the diverse strands evident in the history of Ulster: Gael, Planter, English, Scottish, Catholic, Dissenter, Quaker, farmer, artisan, merchant, teacher.

My first memory dates from May 25th 1931 when I was three years and four months old. My grandmother, Sarah Jane Chapman, who was living with us in Obins Street, took me to see my mother in the Carleton Home and my baby brother, Ross. Our home in Portadown was next to the McDonagh furniture factory and life in the early years was dominated very much by this enterprise. The business had been moved from Richhill, although there was another factory across the border in Monaghan to cater for the Southern market and also retail shops in Belfast and Armagh. My father was in general charge of the Portadown operation and some of my uncles and aunts who lived in Richhill would come each day. On Sundays we would go to the Friends Meeting in Richhill and afterwards have lunch with my mother's family. The meeting had a large Sunday School for children and the company of Lambs, Peiles, Loneys, Pearsons and Mulladry Chapmans developed friendships which have lasted my entire life. My mother was the eldest of a large family of seven children and there was always plenty of fun and activity at 'Homeleigh', or 'The Old Mill' as it was later called, with my youthful uncles and aunts. After my grandmother died in 1934 and my grandfather went to live in South Africa it was a remarkable household consisting of six young people in their teens and twenties. To a quiet town boy it was an exciting place with dogs, horses, fast cars, music, sport and lots of visitors, such as Peggy Unwin from New Zealand and Harold and Anne Kuhn from America.

My grandmother Chapman, who lived with us in her latter years, died in 1932 and my father valued his nearest relatives, Sinton and Wylie cousins, whom we would often go to see. Visits to the Wylie farm at Drumnott, near Annaghmore, were intriguing to a small boy. We would sit in the kitchen at the open turf fire with the kettle singing on the crook and the half-door keeping the hens in the farmyard outside – conditions which one sees nowadays only in a folk museum. Another favourite drive was to Tamnamore to John Henry and Dorothy Sinton, colourful characters who were excellent raconteurs of travels and encounters they had made the length and breadth of Ireland and to America also. They were tireless in their Christian service both within the Society of Friends and in general evangelistic meetings which were a feature of Ulster life in those days.

At the age of four I was ready for school. The first day I was taken by the hand by next-door neighbour, Francie Lester (later Mrs. George Allen), who was a big girl at Park Road Public Elementary School. Most of the children came from the Garvaghy Road, then a staunchly Protestant area, whose parents worked in the numerous linen and other factories in the town. On the way home Mother would often meet me with my little brother in the pram and we would feed the ducks and play around in the Public Park. Classes were large and instruction was formal with much rote learning. Discipline was maintained by the cane and it was also used to punish failure to learn. Only rarely did I receive slaps on the hand, but when I did I suffered more the shame of this indignity than from physical pain. One day when I was going home by myself I was stopped by a group of boys in Obins St. who asked me: 'Are you a Catholic or a Prod?' I had no idea what they meant and nervously answered: 'I don't know.' They were nonplussed by my reply and amazed at this freak who did not know the answer to such a basic question. To be on the safe side they gave me a gentle working over but much less than if I had given the wrong answer for them. When I reached home I told my mother about the incident. Gently and wisely she said: 'That sort of thing doesn't matter. What is important is to love Jesus and follow Him'.

Obins Street from our home to the railway bridge was a strongly Catholic and Nationalist area, but we had no problems with our neighbours. My parents often said they had less trouble than friends from the other side of town whose gardens were constantly raided for apples at harvest time. In early July the traditional Orange parade to Drumcree Church passed down the street without protest or offence shown. The music of the bands brought people to their doors and the sight of the banners and uniforms brought some colour into their otherwise drab existence. On occasions there was some disturbance such as stone throwing on evenings, as when

the windows of the furniture showroom next door were broken, but such incidents were generally alcohol-fuelled.

Living in Obins Street I did not have many local playmates. None of my school friends from Park Road lived nearby, but I played at times with the Henry children, Jim and Harriet, who lived opposite. Their father was a breadserver who drove a box-shaped cart, pulled by a sturdy horse which he would leave with a full nosebag outside the house while he had his lunch break. There was also the Plymouth Brethren family of Johnstons who lived in Corcrair. Later, when I went to Portadown College, I would play with neighbours, Alan and Hazel Hewitt or with Barney Seale whose father was manager of the Belfast Bank and lived on the bank premises in the town centre. Their large garden, enclosed by high buildings, was gloriously unkempt and small boys did not run the risk of damaging carefully tended flower-beds and lawns. When I go to the High Street Mall nowadays I try to figure out the likely position of this remarkable urban garden.



Family outing to seaside

Much time, however, was spent at home, playing with my little brother. My mother with her love of gardening constructed a delightful haven between Lester's builder's yard and the factory sheds. There we would amuse ourselves endlessly and acquire too the love and skill of tending growing plants. Indoors Ross and I were keen games players and progressed from Snap and Ludo and Snakes and Ladders to the sophistication of the new game of Monopoly where we lost all sense of time in the endless thrill of trading. Reading, too, enlarged my vision of the world. The stories of



On the beach at Portrush

R. M. Ballentine's North America fascinated me as did such yarns as R. L. Stevenson's "Treasure Island". Stamp collecting brought awareness of the vast exotic world and letters from cousins at Christmas and missionaries abroad were eagerly seized upon for their colourful stamps.

The empty furniture factory on Saturday afternoons was a fantastic adventure playground. Hide and Seek in the piles of timber and half-made units occupied many hours. The most secure hiding-place was in coffins which were produced in the depression years when the demand for domestic furniture slumped. It got somewhat boring hiding there, for you could never be found, and the excitement of the game lay, after all, in the chase.

Obins Street was a busy thoroughfare. As the motorway had not been built all the main traffic to Dungannon and the West passed through the town of Portadown and along this street. There were lots of heavy lorries and cars as well as horse-drawn vehicles. Beyond the field at the back of the house ran the railway line to Dungannon and onwards to Omagh and Londonderry. Much freight was transported by rail in those days. I remember long goods trains clanking along in the dark, carrying cattle and other livestock to the Belfast port. Some nights I would count the waggons on the train; at times they numbered up to 160.

One recurring problem in Obins Street occurred when a consignment of

pigs was delivered to the Goods Station (where the Passenger Station is now situated) for the Denny pork and bacon factory. The pigs, in batches of several hundreds, were unloaded from their waggons and directed in mass down the street by men wielding sticks. The poor creatures seemed to sense the fate which awaited them, for they frantically dashed hither and thither with piercing squeals. All traffic came to a halt as they made their final journey to the processing plant. Woe betide the poor pedestrian who was caught at these moments! He had to take refuge in shops and doorways until the Gadarene swine-like hoard had passed.

Much of the pre-war housing in Portadown town centre was of deplorable quality and the area between Woodhouse St. and Market St. – now a spacious car park – was occupied by a warren of narrow alleys: Mary St., John St., David St., Irwin St., Fowler's Entry. There was a rule that when we children were going on our own to the town centre we were not to take short cuts through these streets but to keep to the main road. Folk parks romanticise simple rural life of bygone years but such miserable urban housing is best forgotten.

Even as late as the 1950s my wife Alice, who was a G.P. in the Hadden practice, was deeply disturbed by home visits to patients in these streets. As a doctor she saw at first hand how the occupants bravely endeavoured to bring up large families in frightful conditions in a way which those who had not access to these dwellings did not realize. Her mentor and senior partner in the practice, Dr Winifred Hadden, did much through the Portadown Council of Social Welfare to urge the local authority to replace this sub-standard accommodation by new housing estates on the edge of the town.

In the 1930s there was much less leisure time than we have today with our television, computers, social media, facility for travel and opportunities for sport. Housekeeping was a long and constant chore without the labour-saving devices we have today. Imagine the work involved in cleaning and heating a home without vacuum cleaners and with fires and stoves to be lit in each room, fuel to be carried in and grates cleaned out each day. Imagine the preparation and storage of food without electrical gadgets and the boon of refrigeration. Think of the work involved in washing and laundering clothes and in getting them dried without the devices we now take for granted. People today are amazed that we had a maid to assist my mother in her household work, but that was common practice. Girls from the country were often keen to get away from home and live in a town. With accommodation and full board they were happy with a modest wage and made a big contribution to the smooth running of a household.

Supermarkets were unheard of in those years. (I remember the first self-service shop in Northern Ireland in Great Victoria Street, Belfast in the late 1940s.) Goods were not packaged as they are today but weighed out specially to meet the demand of the customer. We had an arrangement by which a staff member of our grocer, John Gibson & Co., would call at the house and take an order for the week's supplies which would then be delivered by bicycle. Bread was brought each day by the breadman in his horse-drawn cart which had a tantalising variety of goodies. Milk came from a farm in the country in a pony and trap. A special churn with a tap at the bottom dispensed the milk into a jug which we would take out to the cart when we heard the vehicle approaching. Shopping was a frequent occupation, for many foodstuffs had a short shelf life. The meat safe with its perforated zinc sides to allow air to circulate and prevent flies from entering stood in a part of the yard which the sun never reached, but even this precaution did not deter food from losing its freshness in warm weather. As a family we had a limited social life. Although my father was a good sportsman at school and captained the football team he showed little interest in later life and I have no recollection of his taking me as a boy to a sporting fixture. We did not go to the cinema but as children our horizons were enlarged by books of all sorts with which the house was well stocked. For success in business it was recommended that one joined a political party, an Orange or Masonic lodge or Rotary Club but my father shunned such organisations. Our social life revolved around family and faith. I have already mentioned the close family ties we enjoyed and for both father and mother their involvement in the Religious Society of Friends was paramount. In the mid-1930s we transferred membership from Richhill to Portadown Meeting. The meeting in Portmore Street was not very child-friendly, but my parents thought it was their duty to support this struggling cause and had the satisfaction of seeing it thrive in the middle years of the century. An elderly Englishman, William E. Coulthart and his wife lived in Friends' Lodge adjoining the meeting house. He was employed by Friends as a Home Mission worker and ministered not only in the local meeting but among all in the area in a sensitive and gracious way. Father was secretary of the Ulster Friends Home Mission Committee and associated with Moyallon Camp in the early years of its formation. From a young age we attended Monthly and Quarterly business meetings and grew accustomed to the traditional routine of these gatherings. Ulster Quakerism in those days might be considered somewhat puritanical and pietistic but I accepted its discipline and warmth and was secure in the reality of the faith which my parents displayed in daily life. Summer Quarterly Meetings on Sundays at Grange or Richhill brought large numbers of children and young people and they were always enjoyable social occasions. Once at Grange my uncle

Bill jokingly said to me: 'I'll give you sixpence if you stick a pin in Muriel Harding'. Such a financial opportunity was not to be missed, especially when I found a pin in my coat lapel. When the mission was accomplished I presented myself to an embarrassed Uncle Bill, demanding payment. Muriel must have thought me a horrid little boy and I was apprehensive that she would remember the incident when I applied for the headship of Friends' School, Lisburn, of whose Board of Governors she was then Vice-Chairman.

We were fortunate in having a car and thus I got to know the countryside and seaside in a way that many did not at that time. I have good memories of holidays in those years, weeks spent at Newcastle or the excitement of summer days at Portrush. The CSSM beach mission was a special feature and a challenge to my growing faith.

In 1935 we had a specially long summer holiday of over five weeks, a good part of which we spent in Ballywalter, but without my father. He announced that he was going to visit his cousins in North America. On his mother's side he had a total of 39 first cousins, of whom 27 went to the USA and Canada. Coming from large families on small farms in North Armagh there was little prospect of advancement and one after another they took the ship across the Atlantic. This emigration was not in the disastrous years of the Great Famine but in the early decades of the 20th century. With the benefit of hindsight I believe his trip was a journey of reconnaissance although this object was never stated. The furniture business was top heavy with four



Three children with Dad at Ballywalter



At McDonagh home in Richhill

McDonagh sons in management as well as my father and perhaps he felt overwhelmed in this family set-up. I was excited as I followed his journey on the SS Samaria as he boarded in Belfast with stops at Derry and Galway to collect other passengers. On docking in New York he stayed with his cousins there and in Philadelphia and Boston before going to other family members in Toronto. It was a great adventure enjoyed vicariously by me as I read his reports avidly and pored over atlases and charts. He must have found the recession as severe in North America as at home for we settled back quickly to the routine of life in Portadown and two years later my sister Avril was born. Thus I did not grow as a little Yank.

1936 was an important year for me in educational terms. Primary education in Portadown was reorganised by the opening of the new Hart Memorial P.E. School to replace four small schools, including Park Road. Ross and I transferred to Portadown College Prep in premises on the banks of the river Bann. Classes were small with children mostly from professional families or those involved in linen or other factory management or large farms. The Kindergarten class where I spent one year was well conducted by Miss Mark who endeavoured to impart some social graces as well as a liberal education. One book which I remember was of inestimable value in later literary studies: Favourite Greek Myths. The following two years were somewhat chaotic. Classes were taken by specialist teachers from the Grammar School who were not equipped to deal with younger children and the lessons often lacked cohesion and purpose. When pupils from the Primary Schools joined at age 11 they were well drilled and those of us who

had come through the Prep department found it hard to keep up.

There were some great characters in those days. Jimmy Chambers, who taught Maths and gave all the boys a love for rugby, was an enthusiast in many fields. I remember him packing half a dozen little boys into his car and driving us to the river Cusher at Knock Bridge where we changed and learned to swim. He also taught woodwork, but Russell Flanigan, whose father had a furniture factory at Richhill, and I did not distinguish ourselves in this discipline. We tied for bottom place in the class! The trouble was we had no experience in sawing or planing wood; if we were making something, we would simply ask a man in the machine shop to do it for us.

Cyril Abraham who taught English lived for Scouting and was keen that I should join the College troop. My father consulted Mr. Coulthart and he advised against it because of the military origins of the organisation, founded by the Boer War hero, Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell. I was never 'one of the lads' at school, never one of the leaders, because of being younger and smaller than my peers, my somewhat retiring nature and consciousness of my Quaker background. The headmaster, Mr. Warren, had served in World War 1 and memories of those events were still strong. On Armistice Day the entire school would march up town to the War Memorial, observe the minute's silence at 11 a.m. and attend the solemn outdoor service.

A speech impediment which came at times also caused me to lack confidence and shun the limelight. To help with this I attended elocution classes on Saturday mornings with Eileen Burke, sister of Joan Sinton. To my surprise I had great success in Verse-Speaking competitions and gained several medals at Belfast, Portadown and Newry Festivals. Eileen Burke had a great interest in modern Irish poetry and I grew to like many of the pieces by Yeats and others which we learned to interpret.

Summer of 1939 came with me being unaware of the impending political crisis. We had a glorious holiday in Greystones the last fortnight in August and came home on the Saturday night to find blackout restrictions in place. The following day we went to Sunday meeting at Richhill. The sky was dark with thunderclouds and torrential rainstorms came. Charles B. Lamb had stayed at home to hear the radio news bulletin and came in at the end of meeting to announce that Britain was at war with Germany. The skies above emphasized the sense of foreboding we felt about the months and years ahead.

The Fearsome Forties

The war was to have an all-pervading effect on every citizen in Northern Ireland but, although there was much apprehension in the early months, life continued in Portadown in a reasonably normal fashion. Blackout and rationing were tedious nuisances and bureaucratic restrictions on freedom of movement were resented. The media portrayed the atrocities of the Nazi regime in stark terms and the effect of total war in areas such as Poland which caused the more perspicacious to brace themselves for ways to withstand the attack on the home front. My father reinforced one of the downstairs rooms with extra wooden beams to give protection in the event of an air-raid, but thankfully it was never used for that purpose. There were constant recruitment drives for the armed forces but on the Western Front there was little action, as the Allied troops dug in behind the Maginot Line and the German forces did likewise behind the Siegfried Line. One effect of war which impacted on an 11-year old was when a Jewish boy, Georg Bloch, arrived in Portadown College, having escaped from Danzig in the nick of time.

Everything changed in the late spring of 1940. Having subdued and divided Poland with the Soviet Union the previous autumn, the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe directed their attention to the West. Denmark and Norway were swiftly captured and a major attack launched against France. The British Expeditionary Force retreated to the port of Dunkirk and back to England;

France was defeated and Britain stood alone, fearing an imminent invasion. Another possibility was an invasion of the neutral state of Southern Ireland to outflank the defences of the south coast of England. It was a summer of great alarm when normal life was impossible. We listened constantly to the BBC and heard of the air-raids on British cities, fearful of Hitler's next move. Some listened too to Lord Haw Haw, a traitorous Irishman with a posh voice, whose broadcasts from Berlin struck terror into the hearts of many with his many threats and his obvious knowledge of events even in our local towns. I cannot remember us going to the seaside for holidays in 1940.

The expected invasion did not come but life continued to be grim. Imported goods became scarce. British cities suffered constant air-raids but Belfast was spared until Easter 1941. Its defences were poor and two major raids that spring caused almost 1000 fatal casualties. Many homes were destroyed and when the alarm siren was sounded people would flock on to the streets and take refuge in the hills, some distance from the built-up areas. Gladys and Billy Mills, whose mother was my mother's cousin, and Lucy Snoddy, my father's cousin's daughter, came to stay with us in Portadown as evacuees. They stayed about six months, attending the local school and swelling the juvenile population of the family by 100%. We were delighted with the extra company but it must have been a heavy responsibility and burden for my mother and a concern too for their parents back in Belfast. The children had bad memories of the Blitz in Belfast and when the siren sounded at night they were filled with fear. I remember one evening when there was an air-raid warning the street being full of people going out the Moy Road to take refuge in an area of open bogland, known as Selshion Moss. We were infected too by this panic, so my mother bundled all six children into the car and drove out to friends near Loughgall until the 'all clear' was announced. Father had remained, fire-watching in the factory. No bombs fell in Portadown in the course of the war or in very few other places outside Belfast.

Against the background of war the routine of school life continued. I was now in the secondary department of Portadown College and excited about the new subjects we were learning – science and languages. Work was now more of a challenge but I enjoyed it and had good success. Rugby was the main sport and although I was on the light side I enjoyed playing on the Under-13 and Under-14 teams. Compared with children nowadays we had considerable freedom and cycled on our own across north Armagh without generating anxiety on the part of parents. Friends Meeting in Portadown was an important element in weekly life and I came to a personal faith in Christ which was independent of the structured religious practice of our home.



With evacuees and maid, Gertie, in garden

Gladys, Billy and Lucy went back to Belfast in late 1941 when it appeared that the threat of bombing and invasion had receded. December of that year saw the entry of the USA into the war and people were hopeful that the tide was turning. American troops came to Northern Ireland early the following year and commenced training for the ultimate invasion of Europe. The presence of up to 40,000 G.I.s touring the country in their jeeps had an immediate impact on the whole population. They were smartly dressed in their uniform, relatively well paid, liberal in sharing gum and candy with local children. No wonder they caused the hearts of many girls to flutter. Large mansions were commandeered for their use and camps erected on estate lands. Even though their stay was temporary and their purpose was to train for the invasion of France they did not neglect their comfort and recreation. In Gilford they constructed an outdoor swimming pool which was enjoyed until the 1960s by the inhabitants of Portadown, Lurgan and Banbridge, as none of these towns had such a facility.

My father, mother and all my uncles and aunts had been boarders at Friends' School, Lisburn, and if conditions had been normal, I would have probably entered in 1939. The School had suffered much disruption when in 1940 it was requisitioned to serve as a military hospital in the event of an invasion of Britain. It was never used for that purpose and so it was returned to the School authorities in 1941. In the summer of 1942 Ross was aged 11, eligible to enter the secondary stage, and I was 14 and had just completed Junior Certificate. As conditions now seemed more stable, we therefore both went to Lisburn as boarders in September of that year.



Arthur and Ross in FSL uniform 1943

As a new boy in Form IV I found this new life somewhat strange. As I was not very streetwise and sexually immature, the boy-talk and smutty stories in the dormitory at night were quite a revelation to me. School work presented few problems and I have good memories of inspiring and dedicated teachers. Several were from England and as conscientious objectors had sought employment in Northern Ireland where there was no conscription. For them School was the centre of their universe and we benefited from their input to community life. Sport in the various forms of rugby, hockey, cricket and swimming occupied much time and evening clubs added spice to the dull routine of 'Prep'. Wartime conditions produced all sorts of problems for schools. Food rationing was a particular challenge to cooks trying to satisfy ravenous teenagers and pupils devised elaborate routines to share out equitably any extra portion that might become available. In many ways we learned to 'make do and mend' and acquired habits of retaining and repairing things instead of throwing them out and getting new ones as is so prevalent in our present disposable culture.

The curriculum was not as dominated by the requirements of public examinations as it is today. I remember in the summer term of the penultimate year every geography class was spent outdoors surveying the school grounds by means of a theodolite and a link chain. Globe Club and the Natural History Society brought knowledge of the world beyond the confines of the classroom and their excursions gave me an enjoyment of nature and the countryside which has lasted my whole life. In the final year I made good friendships and as seniors we were given privileges which we

valued and respected.

My subjects for Senior Certificate covered a broad range from Chemistry and Physics to French and Latin and I reached a good standard in the 1944 exams. I applied to Queen's University for a place in Medical School and was accepted. (How sorry I am that I have lost that precious letter!) I decided to defer entry for one year as I was only 16 and return to school to work for an entrance scholarship.

As the war progressed imported supplies grew scarcer and everything was directed towards the needs of the war effort. No petrol was available except for essential services and our car was off the road for several years. Nevertheless I can recall enjoyable family holidays. One year we went to stay in a farmhouse in North Donegal. We travelled by train to Strabane, then transferred to a narrow-gauge line to Letterkenny. Father, Ross and I had bicycles, so we pedalled over the hills to Dunfanaghy, while Mother and Avril took a bus along with all our luggage. There was plenty of good, wholesome, home-produced food which was severely rationed in the 'North'. Trips across the border were especially welcome because of the more relaxed atmosphere, the absence of blackout and the ample supplies of meat, dairy and sugar beet products. In 1941 Father and Mother acted as Host and Hostess at Moyallon Camp and, as Ross and I were too young to attend, we went to stay with Edna Reid at her home at Tarson on the edge of Portadown. Staying there also were her nieces, the Davis girls. Helen was about the same age as Ross and Alice was a year younger than I. We had a good week-end and this encounter was to have significant consequences! In later years the holiday period in July was always spent at Moyallon Camp with good company and challenging teaching on the Christian faith which had a profound influence on actions and attitudes in later years. In the later war years cycling holidays were also a great delight. In 1943 I had trips with school friends to Donegal and Wicklow where we stayed in primitive Youth Hostels and did our cooking over primus stoves. In late August 1944 I had another hostelling tour to the Boyne valley with disastrous results. The weather was miserable and I arrived home exhausted. I went to bed at once and did not leave it for many months.

As I did not recover after a couple of days' rest the doctor was called but it was some time before the illness was diagnosed. When it was announced that I was suffering from polio the entire household was devastated. An upstairs room was fitted out for my use, fires were lit in the grate and the whole organisation of the household transformed. It was only later when I had a family of my own that I appreciated the agony which my father and

mother must have endured. At the age of 16 it is normal to have dreams and projects for the future. But in my case what could I look forward to? - Perhaps a life of total incapacity, at the best probably an existence as a cripple. As the paralysis was in my lower limbs, I spent the entire time in bed with my legs in wooden splints except when I had gentle exercise in a brine bath each morning. After a month I was taken to the Belfast Hospital for Nervous Diseases to be fitted with a large body frame, but because of wartime metal shortages it could not be procured and I was sent home at the end of a few weeks. During my illness I had no medication; I had no pain and apart from the paralysis was quite normal with a healthy appetite and a keen interest in affairs around me. Dr Robert Hadden ensured that I had some form of occupational therapy and suggested that I get a small handloom and do some weaving. Thus I turned out quite a number of woollen ties and scarfs which gave me immense pleasure. Norah Douglas of Friends' School came to see me and said: 'Arthur, don't just lie there and do nothing. You should exercise your brain. How about learning German?' At that stage 'Auf Wiedersehen' was the limit of my knowledge of the language, but with the help of Linguaphone records, radio broadcasts and Teach Yourself books I took up the challenge.

Without any medication and with regular massage some strength returned to my legs. In January I had the thrill of standing on my feet again for two minutes and gradually the process of rehabilitation progressed. Although the muscles in one leg were permanently wasted, Dr Hadden was keen that



View from bedroom window 14 Elmwood Ave.



Rockmount, Richhill

I should walk without a limp and he devised exercises to ensure a normal gait. My German studies had progressed well and I decided to take Queen's Matric in May. I got to Belfast to sit the exam and passed it comfortably. Fearful of the demands of a medical career I applied for entry to the Faculty of Arts and commenced the course in September 1945.

Much had happened in the summer of 1945 on the international front. Germany surrendered in May but we expected the campaign against Japan to drag on a long time. The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki precipitated the armistice and there was great rejoicing when peace was declared in August. Vanquished and victors had both suffered greatly during the long years of war and rehabilitation was a slow process. Rationing and shortage of supplies continued for many years as the countries readjusted to a peace-time economy.

When plans were being made for me to go to Queen's my mother thought of her cousin, Isabel Carson. She was living in a large house in Elmwood Avenue, just a couple of hundred yards from the main gate of the University with her daughter, Pat, and sister, Nan. Her husband, a surgeon, had died suddenly a few years before and she already had a doctor as a lodger. It was planned that I should board with her and this admirable arrangement continued the four years of my studies. As I started my course I was nervous about over-exertion. I took second year French, German and English Literature in my first year. The work was demanding and I saw little of university life apart from lectures and study in the library. The only extra-

curricular activities I was involved in were the French Society, the German Society and the Bible Union. The latter was an opportunity to meet a wider range of students than I met in lectures. Of course there was no question of sport, but I enjoyed watching rugby at Ravenhill. Queen's had a strong team at the time with several international players, such as Jack Kyle and Ernie Strathdee. International matches were played at Ravenhill in those days and I well remember the excitement of the match against Wales in 1948 when Ireland won the Triple Crown.

Isabel Carson was the eldest of the Campbell family and she kept a motherly eye over her siblings. Her brothers and sisters would often call and I got to know this branch of the family. Tom Campbell worked at Harland and Wolff's and one day he took me to see a launch in the famous shipyard. In the post-war years there was much activity and it was a proud sight to see the large vessel glide gently down the slipway into the sea to the accompaniment of enthusiastic cheers.

Mrs Morrison from the Shankill Road came to help with the cleaning and after she left we used to chuckle at her rich Belfast humour and her frequent malapropisms. 'This place is like Belgium!' she would sigh as she tried to cope with the piles of crockery piled up in the cramped kitchen. She also regaled us with stories of her sister who had married an American serviceman during the war and was adjusting to life in the faraway USA.

In these post-war years the University was adjusting to peacetime conditions and had a boom in student numbers because of the return of ex-servicemen. They were vastly experienced and many had had important responsibilities during the war. With me were Captain Rex Straiton and Major Matt Graham, studying languages with the advantage of having lived and travelled in France and Germany and regaling us callow youths with stories of the fall of Berlin and current conditions in Western Europe.

At the end of the first year I qualified for the Honours course in French and German and took Geology as a subsidiary subject. This was a popular course, open to students from both Arts and Science faculties, and a subject which appealed to me from school days. One of its attractions was a week-long residential trip to Ballycastle in the Easter holidays. Sadly this was cancelled as the spring of 1947 was one of the worst winters on record and the terrain to be visited was covered in deep snow. Although few continued with Geology as a main subject, Professor Charlesworth used to say that we would always view landscapes with a new perspective as a result of these studies. That was certainly so in my case. How sad it is that despite the

growth of so many new disciplines on offer in Queen's University it is no longer possible to study either German or Geology on the campus!

In each of the final two years of Honours School there were about a dozen students, a compact group which worked together in their own departments. The emphasis was on literature and wide reading was entailed. I was still not much involved in the social life of the university apart from frequent refuelling trips to the Students Union (now the Music Department) where I remember tea cost 1d and coffee 2d (old pence)! One's degree depended solely on performance in the final examinations. May 1949 was a tense time and I was nervous about the outcome, especially as I had had an operation for appendicitis in the Easter holidays. However, all went well and I got a Class II, Division I Honours B.A. in Modern Languages. I was profoundly thankful that after such misgivings about my future in 1944 I had reached this milestone, but as ever apprehensive about the next step.

When I went up to Queen's my parents were living in Portadown; when I completed the course our family home was in Richhill. My father owned his own house, Rockmount, on the main Portadown - Armagh Road, but since his marriage in 1926 it had been rented out. Property in such circumstances tends to deteriorate and in order to make it more saleable my parents decided to live in it for some time and carry out improvements. Although they knew the area and had many friends there was a serious lack of amenities. Moving from town to country was quite a shock, especially in the conditions of the post-war years. The absence of electricity was the greatest drawback. At first we used oil or Tilley lamps and I remember going up to a cold bedroom with a candle to light my way. After a year we got a generator and had access to lighting but no power came for several years.

Life had become restrictive in Portadown so close to the factory and the opportunity for new interests gave Father new vigour, as he busily renovated the house and yard and laid out a garden. Attached to the property was an apple orchard which he tended with great care and was thrilled to be awarded a prize in the small orchard category of the Ulster Apple Growers Competition.

For Mother things were not so good, although she was back on home ground. Her health had been poorly for some years and she missed the bustle and activity of the Obins Street factory. She must have been lonely too with Father away all day and the children at boarding school or university. Another family lived in a small attached house and she found lack of privacy irksome.



Queen's University, Belfast

By now all Mother's brothers and sisters had married but her old home was lived in by her brother Bill with his wife Heather and young family. We always enjoyed spending time there. I remember one Sunday afternoon when there were many visitors in the sitting room. Suddenly Henry Pearson, a rather eccentric old Quaker who lived nearby, burst into the room, looking like an Old Testament prophet. 'Is Arthur Chapman here', he called. 'I have a message for him. The Lord has restored you to health and fitness to serve Him'. Confounded with embarrassment, I wished the ground would swallow me up, but I have kept these words in my heart and pondered them. Over the years I have acknowledged God's goodness to me at times when I was tempted to stray from His appointed way.

After graduation in 1949 I sought a teaching post and, as a degree was the only qualification needed at that time, I applied for a position in Regent House School, Newtownards, at that time under the authority of the Down County Council. In due course I was told I was on the short list and was given the names of all the County Councillors. I was also told I was at liberty to canvass them. This course of action was distasteful to me but I was told that Councillors liked to be visited. I decide to go and see the nearest to my home, a Mr. James Blane who lived between Lurgan and Moyallon, just over the county boundary. When I saw him, he asked me somewhat enigmatically, 'Do you know where you are?' He told me I was top of the recommended list, so I did not bother to canvass any others. After the formal interview I got the post which began after the half-term break at Halloween.



Regent House School in 1949

As I was free beforehand it was suggested that I should observe lessons of the departing teacher, Sylvia Agnew (later McConnell) and the head of department, Miss Holmes. This experience quite unnerved me and I felt like running away to Canada rather than taking up the post after the weekend. Miss Holmes was a formidable lady with a traditional, grammatical approach to the subject and had good success with her classes, whereas I had good knowledge of the language but no facility in explaining its structure to keen but ignorant pupils. Since the 1947 Education Act free places at Grammar Schools were available to all children who 'qualified' and numbers grew of bright children who were eager to avail of this new opportunity.

I had the good fortune to share lodgings about one mile outside the town at Milecross Cottage with John Bateman whom I had known at Queen's as we had both been in the Geology class. He had been appointed to teach Latin a short time before and we had a lot in common. His company was a big help to me and his enduring friendship until his death in 2017 is something I value greatly.

Thus at the end of the decade I was established as a teacher of French in a Northern Ireland Grammar School, looking ridiculously young at the age of 21 and instructing pupils only a few years younger. My annual salary for the bottom of Teachers Scale 5 (Honours Graduates) was £350 per year. After Income Tax and Superannuation deductions I received £22 per month! When I looked back five years it was amazing how life had turned round for me and I was excited at the new prospects which opened out before me.

The Footloose Fifties

I spent two years at Regent House; they were good times and I learned much. As already explained, I began nervously but prepared lessons well and tried hard to keep in command of my topics and my classes. As a new teacher I did not have a permanent classroom but travelled around using spaces which were free. One of these rooms was a shed in the yard which had been fitted out for eaching purposes. It was heated by a pot-belly stove which needed to be regularly stoked with coke. If I was teaching there early in the day I invariably forgot to replenish the coke, so intent was I on maintaining full control of the class. That would earn me the ire of someone like 'Jacques' Auterson at lunchtime who would loudly demand, 'What nimcompoop let the fire out in the outside classroom this morning?' Classes went well and results were good. In 1950 I asked the Head if German could be introduced and an accelerated course was devised for those who had already proved themselves able linguists in French and Latin. (I believe I taught the first German class in the School.)

My first visit to Germany was to Munich in the summer holidays of 1950. The evidence of war was still everywhere. I remember the piles of rubble from bombed buildings still in heaps on the footpaths and the pathetic limbless war victims begging in the railway stations. The purpose of the course in Munich was to establish contact between British and German young people and many joint tours were arranged. One memorable visit



Oberammergau Passion Play performance in outdoor theatre

was to Oberammergau where we attended the day-long Passion Play and visited the castles of the gifted but eccentric King Ludwig of Bavaria. Another visit was to the Concentration Camp of Dachau. It was not normally open to visitors, empty, silent and menacing. One could still see the marks of bodies on the walls where they had been piled up in the gas chambers prior to incineration.

Returning for my second year in Newtownards, I was convinced that my future lay in teaching. I realized that I needed to spend time abroad to perfect my oral skills and so I applied for a year in a French school as an 'English Assistant'. I had little choice of location, but I asked for a placement in a university town in the southern part of the country. As most applicants were undergraduates my senior status ensured a most desirable appointment in Clermont-Ferrand.

Clermont is a city on the edge of the Massif Central, dominated by the volcanic Puy de Dôme, with good travel connections to Paris and the South. It has a long history back to Roman times when a local chieftain of the Gauls, Vercingetorix, defeated Julius Caesar. (I had read of this in Latin class many years before). In 1095 Pope Urban II had launched the first Crusade at Clermont cathedral and in modern times it is the headquarters of the international tyre firm of Michelin. I was appointed to the Lycée Blaise Pascal, a boys' day and boarding school, named after the famous mathematician, philosopher and theologian, who was a native of the city. The Lycée was an institution founded by Napoleon for the education of able children and access to it was highly prized. The main building was in a barrack-like structure in the heart of the old city but I was given accommodation in the Petit Lycée, or Junior School, about ten minutes away. The 'professeurs' were a privileged class whose duties were



City of Clermont with Puy de Dôme in background

confined to teaching, whereas the ‘surveillants’ were employed to do all the extra chores so necessary in a school, such as supervision at mealtimes and recreation and in private study time and in the dormitories. Much of my free time was spent with the surveillants who were mostly young undergraduates, supplementing their income by undertaking these duties and getting board and lodging in the school. Other close companions were the Italian Assistant, Mario Basile, and the German Assistant, Adolf Hempel, who also lived and ate in the Petit Lycée. I enjoyed the company too of English students, studying at the university and French students who wished to improve their spoken language.

Duties were not onerous, a mere ten hours a week. Classes were generally small groups, drawn from senior forms and most pupils were bright and



Lycée Blaise Pascal

highly motivated. Once I was foolish enough to ask a class what they wanted to discuss. Imagine my surprise when they suggested 'the Pre-Raphaelite Movement in English Art', probably the subject of a forthcoming essay!

With so much time on my hands I thought of doing some study for a future Master's on the French Regionalist Novel but I never got down to it. Instead I read widely, observed French life and had the sort of lazy social life I had missed as a student in Belfast. I took every opportunity for travel also and spent Christmas in Germany with the von Tucher family who had stayed with us in Richhill a couple of years before. In February I left the icy winds of central France for the glorious sunshine of Provence and was enchanted by the Gallo-Roman buildings of Nîmes, Avignon and the Pont du Gard.

Shortly before Easter I became unwell with nasty ulcers in my mouth and a fever which rose alarmingly. I was transferred to the 'Hôtel Dieu', an ancient hospital run by elderly nuns. The fever continued and sulpha drugs and then penicillin proved of no avail. It was announced that I was suffering from a human form of Foot and Mouth Disease, then prevalent in France among cattle, and that I had probably contracted it from infected milk. I was an object of great interest to medical students and their professor as they did ward rounds, but my condition worsened and I often lost consciousness and became delirious. On one occasion, I believe, a priest was summoned to see the poor Irish boy and give him the last rites, but I was sufficiently aware to decline his services. Finally the use of aureomycin halted the infection which had spread to various parts of the body and slowly I recovered. My brother, Ross, came out to visit me in the Easter holidays. (As a veterinary student his care seemed appropriate!) By early summer I had made a complete recovery and enjoyed the final months in that delightful area. In July Father and Mother drove in their Ford Prefect car across England and France. I met them on the edge of Paris and we did a tour through the mountains of central France as far as the Mediterranean. On the return journey we collected my belongings in Clermont-Ferrand and made the long drive to Calais. The car was hoisted by crane on to the ship at the Channel port and again at Liverpool as there was as yet no roll-on roll-off facility. It was good to arrive back home after my year of adventures.

With my teaching experience and qualifications I expected I would find a job with comparative ease, but such was not the case. Nothing came up and in September 1952 I took a couple of temporary jobs in tough Belfast secondary schools. I then decided to enrol on the Diploma of Education course at Queen's which began in October. At the beginning of December a permanent post became vacant at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution.

I applied for it and was accepted, just in time to mark a full set of end-of-term exams and write reports for boys I did not even know! I continued with the Dip. Ed. on a part-time basis and completed it in 1955.

‘Inst’ as a Boys’ Public Day School has had over the years an important role in Belfast. It had a considerable number of eccentric teachers and there was a fair share of ‘characters’ in my time there. The Head of the Modern Languages Department, W.A.V. Ireland, was one of the most colourful. He claimed to be an Austrian baron and at times he wore a scarlet cloak. One morning he rode into school on horseback in response to a dare by pupils. Nevertheless he was a fine linguist and was capable of bouts of amazing energy; on one occasion he marked the end-of-term exams in French and German for the entire school (about 1000 scripts) and returned the papers so that we could discuss them with the boys. The department consisted mostly of young masters who were highly amused by his antics but it was too much for the more senior Jack Popplestone, who suffered a severe nervous breakdown.

Another eccentric was Hugh Fay, Head of Classics and Belfast Quaker, about whom countless stories abound. Hugh and I were entrusted with the coaching of the under-14 rugby teams. Despite our coaching, boys such as David Hewitt and Ronnie Lamont went on to gain International caps. Inst has always been a powerful force in Ulster Schools rugby and was in the Ravenhill final each St. Patrick’s Day I was at the School.

The group of young masters was very good company and, being in the centre of town, we had every opportunity to take part in the cultural life of the city. I remember going to see drama productions in the home of Mary O’Malley, the great patron of the arts; from these small beginnings the Lyric Theatre developed to the important place it now occupies in Belfast.



Royal Belfast Academical Institution



Inst Form II class

In summer holidays I generally spent some time on the Continent, improving my language skills and acquiring a greater knowledge of European culture. On occasions I would take a group of pupils to France or Germany and I also visited several families in Belgium. When I was a student at Queen's I had made the acquaintance of young Belgian soldiers who were doing their National Service in camps in Northern Ireland formerly occupied by American troops prior to the Normandy landings. When they returned home I received invitations to their homes and I enjoyed staying with them on the North Sea coast and in Brussels. My father urged me to see if I could trace a refugee, August Gillé, who had stayed in their home in Richhill and worked as a cabinet maker with T.W. McDonagh in 1914-15. Amazingly I tracked him down and discovered that he had gone to Art School after World War I and had become a prolific artist. He was delighted to renew the contact with Ireland and gave me some of his watercolours and a retrospective publication of his art work as a memento.

In 1952 my father attended a World Conference of Friends in Oxford and met two American Quaker pastors who later stayed with us at Richhill. When they left Billy Lewis said to me, 'Arthur, it would be grand if you could come over and stay with us some time'. I grinned and said it would be great, but thought no more about it. The following spring a letter arrived from Billy, saying that he understood that there was to be a conference of Young Friends in North Carolina in the late summer and that his meeting was interested in sponsoring me; they proposed to arrange a programme to host me in the Ohio/Indiana area for seven weeks before the conference took place. As I had no special plans for the summer I accepted the invitation and in due course a return ticket arrived for the transatlantic crossing.

On June 30 1953 – the last day of term – I went to Inst and taught a half day before taking the train to Portadown. Father was waiting at the station with my luggage in the car and we drove to Dublin where Ross was waiting for us on the north side to guide us through the city and on towards Cork.

We travelled on roads much poorer than the modern motorways southwestwards through Cork to our final destination of Cobh. There we spent the night in a hotel and they left me on the quayside where passengers went by tender to join RMS Mauretania as others had done in the days of the Titanic. With me were emigrants from the southern counties with their battered suitcases making tearful farewells to their loved ones as had been done all through the previous century. For five days we sailed steadily over a sea at times stormy but devoid human activity.

On approaching New York there was much excitement as we passed the Statue of Liberty and sailed up the river to dock in downtown New York. Above us towered the skyscrapers – an amazing sight after almost a week of flat, featureless sea. Some of my father's cousins met me and I had two days of sightseeing with them before proceeding by overnight train to Dayton, Ohio.

Billy Lewis, his wife and two young children met me and I stayed with them in the 'parsonage' beside the Friends Church. Billy was an energetic and gifted young man and I was impressed with his care for the members of his meeting. He was also much involved with the youth work of Indiana Yearly Meeting and I attended three week-long camps, held at Dewart Lake,



With Philip Jacob at Quaker Camp in Indiana



Mauretania docking in New York

a permanent facility owned by Friends with a number of dormitory cabins and good recreational amenities. Because of my involvement with Moyallon Camp I was impressed by their set-up and vowed to develop similar programmes when I got home.

Although 'Pastoral' Friends' are different in external matters, such as programmed meetings, greater use of music and a professional ministry, their wholehearted generosity, evangelistic zeal and Christ-centred devotion were qualities which I found worth emulating. Time was also spent attending Yearly Meetings and joining in the regular activities of local meetings in the area. Other Young Friends from Europe travelled widely, but I had the benefit of getting to know in depth these most generous and devoted Friends of the Mid-West.



At Western YM in Indiana

Towards the end of August I got a lift to Guildford College, a Quaker Liberal Arts institution in North Carolina where the conference was being held. We travelled hundreds of miles through the Smoky Mountains and finally arrived at 2.00 am. It was a beautiful night and, as all was closed up, we lay down on the ball field and slept soundly till morning. A few days later I was leaving New York on the Queen Elizabeth I bound for Southampton, as this large liner did not dock in Ireland. Thus a wonderful summer holiday came to an end and I was back at work only a few days late.



Home again at Rockmount after travels



McDonagh cousins celebrate Grandpa's 80th birthday

Philip Jacob, a Dublin Friend who had also attended the Young Friends conference in North Carolina, and I invited a group of five Americans to come to Europe the following summer. We held a conference in Newtown School, Waterford, and a work party in Lisburn before they went on to visit West Germany. As none of the party spoke German they asked me at the last minute to accompany them, to which I readily agreed. In the party was Maxine Bond, from Kansas. While in Ireland she met Edmund Lamb. In due course they were married and were good friends of mine the rest of their lives in Dublin.

It was a sharp cultural shock and learning experience for these comfortable North Americans to experience the rigours of post-war Germany. They planned, as Americans would, to travel by car and we picked up a shiny,

large limousine in Rotterdam. They had arranged hospitality with German families in different cities, unaware of the acute housing shortage caused by Allied bombing and the influx of refugees from the East. Imagine our mortification one night when we found ourselves sleeping in the bedroom while our hosts lay on the kitchen floor! The large American hired car was also a source of wonder. Most young people in Germany were lucky if they had a bicycle. The car may have looked well, but it had its faults. The starting mechanism gave constant trouble and to get it going from cold we often had to recruit our hosts to push us off. We soon learned to park the car at the top of a slope some distance from our hosts' home to avoid embarrassment.

In 1954 Rockmount was in fine condition, mains electricity had come along the main road and been installed, the gardens were in good heart and my father had planted a new orchard. The old home was sold and my parents moved from Richhill back to Portadown. The new house on the Lurgan Road was modern and well laid out with sweeping lawns in front and space appropriate for gardens at the rear. Again Father and Mother threw themselves into development of their new home and enjoyed entertaining many visitors. It was more convenient for me and I was happy to have it as a base.

A vacancy for a teacher of Modern Languages at Portadown College was advertised in 1956. The school enjoyed a good reputation under its charismatic Head, Donald Woodman, and my good friend, Garfield England, encouraged me to apply. In a most unconventional interview Mr Woodman cycled out to Firbank, our house on the Lurgan Road, to see me and offered me the post on the spot. Portadown College was a very happy school and Mr. Woodman a most remarkable man. He was personally involved in everything which happened in the school and knew each pupil intimately. He taught 38 periods a week and supervised lunch each day. He taught each division of Form I either Latin or Religious Education and by Halloween any newly arrived child could claim half a crown if he failed to name them correctly! He delegated tiresome administrative chores to a trusted secretary, a retired Primary School principal who sat in the office and dealt with external issues.

With Mr Woodman people, i.e. pupils, mattered much more than things. This was a principle which impressed me greatly and permeated the ethos of the entire school community. I had a good range of classes and some very gifted linguists, such as Desmond Johnston, Ivan Weir, Bertie Stronge, Ronnie Marshall, Alan Smith, David Hunniford and Heather Best.

The Head Girl in my first year was the future Olympic Gold Medallist, Mary Peters. At Sports Day I was in charge of the High Jump. The Senior Girls event was the last of the afternoon and I remember the High Jump going on half an hour after everything else while Mary kept sailing over every time I raised the bar.

There were good companions among the staff with junior teachers such as Garfield England, Sammy Jones and Raymond Purdy and elder statesmen like Jimmy Chambers, 'Bud' Graham and my head of Department, Eric Anderson. The staffroom was such a congenial place that the caretaker had trouble moving us out at the end of the afternoon in order to lock up.

In these years my parents were in their prime and I felt comfortable to be living at home again. Ross was married and living in New Zealand and Avril spent a year on a placement in England and was soon to be engaged. I had a pampered life with few responsibilities.

When I was leaving America Billy Lewis said to me, 'Arthur, you go home and make some young girl happy.' However, I had no serious emotional attachments. An innate shyness and lack of confidence dating from the polio days caused me to avoid intimate commitments with those of the opposite sex. Over time circumstances brought Alice Davis and me closer together: We were on a CSSM beach mission team together in Portrush in 1951; we were both very much involved in Moyallon Camp; her family



Moyallon Camp 1957 Last day clear-up



With John Bateman at Firbank

moved to near Portadown and joined the local Friends meeting; Alice herself took up a post in the Hadden medical practice in the town. I came to admire her enormously, but to me she seemed unattainable – a doctor, an Ex-President of Queen's Bible Union, with main responsibility for an invalid mother and an aging father, with a single-minded commitment to Christian service. In 1959 her missionary doctor sister, Esther, came home on furlough from Nigeria and, as no replacement could be found, Alice volunteered to take her place at the mission hospital. Thus the decade came to an end with me happy and settled in many respects but with a number of unresolved issues.

Settling down in the Sixties

Alice returned in the spring of 1960 as Esther was going back to Nigeria. I was glad to see her again but hesitated lest her time in Qua Iboe had confirmed a call to serve in Africa. It had been a wonderful experience for her. She grew to love and appreciate the warm and enthusiastic African people and it had given her great insight into the issues concerning mission work in a rapidly changing society. However, it had been a lonely time and she had suffered from staff tensions in a small tightly-knit expatriate community.

Unknown to me there was another suitor in the offing. Alice had returned to the Hadden practice but shortly afterwards the senior partner, Dr Winifred, had suddenly died. The practice had always had a strong female presence and Alice was invited to become a partner. This was an attractive offer but it would have meant a heavy commitment and she did not feel she could accept it. In these months we had a frustrating courtship and little intimacy although we often saw each other in public. I remember spending long evenings outside the Thomas St. surgery waiting for the session to end and a very short time with Alice before she returned home to get her mother comfortable for the night. Nevertheless we became more certain of our mutual affection. We were both by now in our thirties and secure in our love for each other; although we could not see our way ahead and had no clear plans for marriage. We became engaged in July. Alice objected that the ring

I wanted to get her was too expensive, so we decided on a simpler one and devoted the balance to donations to mission and charitable work, a principle we tried to follow in later years with regard to luxuries.

In October Alice excitedly told me of a scheme which might make marriage possible. A property had come on the market half way between Lurgan and Portadown. There was a large house with a separate, independent annexe, set on four acres of land with an orchard and greenhouses. She had the insight and imagination to see that this was a possibility which would allow us to marry, give scope for her father to pursue his horticultural interests, ensure that she could still care for her mother and continue her medical work in Portadown. Quite a package! I was not so sure. I had had a sheltered life, free of responsibilities, constantly urged since my polio days to 'take it easy'. Such an undertaking was most daunting. Alice, on the other hand, thrived on responsibility and challenge. When she finished school she had had a 'gap' year, but it was not spent gadding round the world as young people do nowadays. It was spent outside Portadown on the Tarson farm, caring for her invalid aunt, Edna Reid, in the bleak post-war years; she knew and shared the physical and emotional trauma of those who suffered in urban Ulster and in a Third World country; she ran the Davis household and cared for her seriously ill mother day and night. When I think of those days I am humbled that she was prepared to cope with me too.



Wedding group with family at Moyallon



Honeymoon in Edinburgh

The Davis home in Drumnagoon was duly sold, negotiations about finance made with the bank and 'Lyndhurst' in Balteagh purchased. The Davis family moved into the Annexe in early December and the wedding was fixed for December 23rd. Esther came home on a flying visit for the wedding and covered the period of the honeymoon in caring for her mother. Alice used to remind me that we could not have got married but for Esther.

The wedding was a very simple and quiet affair. It was held at Moyallon on a day of bright winter sunshine with a small number of guests from family and intimate friends. Ross and Robina had arrived home from New Zealand with their children a few weeks before and he acted as best man. Alice's sister Helen was bridesmaid. One message I remember from the meeting for worship – 'A threefold cord is not easily broken'. We were reminded that a true Christian marriage was one in which husband, wife and God were closely bound together. The reception was not an elaborate affair; it was held in the Playroom above the meeting room which held so many memories of good times at Camp. Unlike current practice at weddings it was a crisp, business-like affair and after a short stop to see Alice's mother in her new home it was off to the Belfast Airport at Aldergrove. Our destination was Edinburgh, but as it had not yet a direct link with Belfast, we flew to Glasgow and proceeded by train. As it was mid-winter we chose a city location, the St. Andrew's Hotel, just off Princes St. and opposite the Waverley Station. (When I go back to Edinburgh I always look for it. It is no longer a hotel but city offices.)



Abbotsford in Scottish Borders

After all the hectic days behind us and the challenges before us these were blissful days and necessary to cement the bond between us in an intimacy we sometimes missed earlier. We enjoyed the bustle of city life at this season and celebrated the wonder and joy of Christmas at the beginning of our married life. One day we hired a car and toured the Borders; another day we crossed the Forth Bridge by rail and went to Dunfermline; we visited Albert Long and his wife who had been speakers at Moyallon Camp a couple of years earlier; on New Year's Day we went to a performance of the Messiah in the Usher Hall. All too soon we were on our way home to our new life in Balteagh.

The early months of 1961 were busy ones for us as we settled into our new home, especially in the cold, dark days of January and February. At



Lyndhurst and Annexe with adjoining fields



Stephen George in January 1962

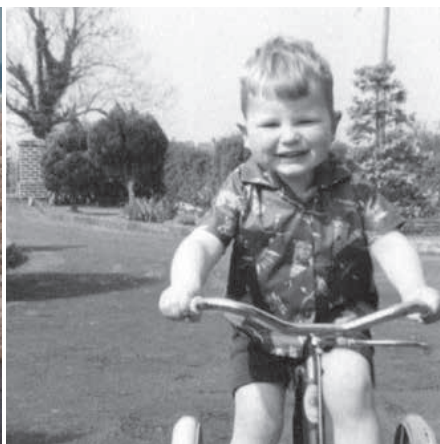
times I was ill-at-ease, feeling it was inappropriate that I was living in the main house, while my in-laws were in the Annexe. Alice's mother's health continued to decline and she required increased attention. A bell was fitted to connect the two houses and often in the middle of the night it would ring and Alice would cross over to the Annexe in the cold. Other nights a phone call might summon her to the Carleton Home in Portadown to assist at an imminent birth.

Crucial to the organisation of the household was Mrs Ray Lockhart who had begun assisting as a carer for Alice's mother when they lived in Drumnagoon. Her life story sounds like a script from an Ulster soap opera. She lived in Portadown with an abusive alcoholic husband whom she loyally stuck by in spite of all she endured. Her elder son, Terry, was a popular Country and Western singer who toured the halls. His wife, an English girl, developed cancer and, in order to halt the progress of the disease, she had a leg amputated above the knee. She lost her life in the IRA firebomb attack on the La Mon Hotel, one of the worst atrocities of the Troubles. Subsequently Terry went to the Philippines, married a local girl and opened an orphanage for the benefit of disadvantaged children there. Her second son, Roger, became involved in a Loyalist paramilitary organisation and was jailed for his part in an attack on a pub. In prison he was wonderfully converted and lived a fine Christian life back in Portadown when he had completed his sentence. Perhaps Mrs Lockhart found some stability even in our complicated and demanding setup! At any rate over the years she proved willing to undertake any task, caring for our children, seeing to all sorts of housework and supporting Esther in later years as surgery receptionist.

Alice's mother died in April 1961 four months after our marriage. It was only because of the superb medical care given by Alice and her sisters Esther and Helen that she was able to be nursed at home. Close family death was a new experience for me and her passing was deeply felt by Alice and her father whose pattern of life had been for years so dominated by their care for her. As they grieved, Alice became more involved in her medical work and her father often had his meals with us and with the better weather occupied himself with his poultry-rearing, gardening work and visits to the Tarson farm to see the lively family of Cuthbert grandchildren. For Alice and me life became more exciting with the realisation that our first child was on the way.



On Portstewart strand Easter 1963



Stephen on his tricycle at Lyndhurst

Stephen was born in January 1962 – a healthy plump baby with fair blond hair. Mrs Lockhart's help was invaluable in caring for him. As he grew up he was his grandfather 'Pom's' constant companion and developed an interest in outdoor life and gardening which always remained with him. One day we lost him and could not find him anywhere. Frantically we searched and eventually found him on his tricycle pedalling along the footpath beside the busy main road. When asked where he was going, he calmly said he was on his way to Tarson. He very much enjoyed the company of his older cousins and the activity of the farm. When one asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up he always said he would be a farmer.

Life at Portadown College continued as normal and gave me much satisfaction in these tumultuous years. I went to school on a Vespa scooter to the new building on the Killicomaine Road to which the College had relocated after leaving the overcrowded site beside the river. Classes did

well and one year my pupils got first and second place in Northern Ireland in A Level German. In another year seven pupils out of a class of ten gained distinctions, again in A Level German. The Scripture Union was flourishing with large numbers attending the meetings and I received great encouragement and blessing from the commitment of the pupils.

My parents lived nearby and I would often call there or they would baby-sit to let Alice and me go out. In 1962 their settled life was rocked by the vesting of their home on the Lurgan Road, on which they had devoted so much time and care, as part of the site for the new area hospital. The search for a new location and planning of a new bungalow occupied much thought and energy before they moved into the new Firbank on the Old Lurgan Road again not far away.



Stephen, Grace and Elizabeth

Our family grew fast with Grace coming in October 1963 and Elizabeth in March 1965. Thus within five years of marriage we had a family of three. Naturally Alice had to reduce her medical work, but she enjoyed entertaining and we had many visitors in our home. Helen and Chris and children would sometimes come from Dublin; other times uncle and aunt Kevin and Chris

Huggard from Greystones would visit for a few days; uncle Herbie Dickson, on furlough from his work in the Qua Iboe Mission, would stay with us during visits to Ireland; Esther would make the Annexe her base during her periods of leave. The visitors book bears witness to the many people who stayed in our home, relatives, missionaries, children on 'sleepovers'; with extra beds in both houses there was always plenty of room. Missionary prayer groups and Moyallon Camp meetings were frequently held in our home, and from time to time Graduate Fellowship evenings when topical issues of general concern were discussed. Portadown Friends Meeting had a good group of parents with young children, so Alice ran the Sunday School which was well attended; she also arranged evenings in our home for parents on subjects such as child development, health, discipline and sharing our faith with our children. My uncle and aunt, David and Helene McDonagh had an afternoon Sunday School in their home and Alice often taught a class there. One special friend of hers, though somewhat older, was



With Cuthbert cousins at Tarson

Jean Corbett; she was severely restricted in mobility as she had suffered polio as a child. From her home she followed the activities of the Qua Iboe Mission with intense interest and prayer and actually made a short trip to Nigeria in 1959, travelling with Alice on the outward journey. In 1975 Esther came home from Africa unwell. The strain and pressures of the work had brought about a nervous breakdown. Alice had a key role in her care at this time. Consultations were carried out with Dr Dawson who was based in Londonderry and arrangements were made for Esther to stay in Gransha Hospital. This was a very long way off and I remember the long journeys and complicated plans for care of the three children for weekly visits to be made. All these things were possible with the backup provided by Mrs Lockhart. We had a varied and interesting life as we watched the children grow and develop their own personalities. There were no more exotic trips to distant lands but lots of fun paddling on the beaches or building sandcastles in Newcastle or Portstewart. Christmas was always a special time with games and parties at Lyndhurst, charades with Cuthbert and Robinson cousins at Tarson or scrumptious feasts at Firbank, Dundalk or Moira.

The Sixties were good times in Northern Ireland. The privations of the post-war period were behind us and new industry was coming to the country to replace the moribund linen factories. The energetic Minister of Commerce, Brian Faulkner, was attracting much inward investment. Portadown had diverse new manufacturing plants such as Wade's Pottery, the Metal Box Company and Ulster Laces. The old housing in the town centre was replaced by new estates on the edge of the town. The British Prime Minister, Harold

Macmillan, boasted that 'we never had it so good'. Another statement is attributed to the same premier. He spoke of 'winds of change' sweeping across Africa, a powerful spirit of self-determination, of which Nigeria-watchers were aware. This global movement for independence and civil rights was becoming evident even in conservative Ulster. I noticed it in inter-school debates, one of the few occasions when pupils from different traditions met. The Catholic schools invariably impressed and overcame their opponents. Their spokesmen were well informed on political and economic issues, whereas our sixth formers had nothing in their heads but girls and sport. The 1947 Education Act had opened the door to opportunities in Grammar Schools and Universities which Catholic children eagerly grasped and which did more for their advancement than the subsequent long weary years of IRA violence.

One ambitious scheme announced by the government at this time was to create a new city in North Armagh by incorporating the towns of Portadown and Lurgan. It was planned to bring additional employment to the area and build vast estates in the countryside for the new labour force. This project was to be achieved by the compulsory purchase of large tracts of land between the two towns. Our farming neighbours were incensed at this proposal and I remember attending protest meetings at which vehement opposition was expressed. Many families had been resident on this land for centuries; they had painstakingly improved the quality of their holdings and did not want to leave. Some farmers even tried to block the movement of earth-movers on to the affected territory, but it was of no avail.

In due course we were informed that our property was to be vested and that we could either move or pay rent until it was needed for development. We decided to leave as soon as possible, for I was never very happy with the responsibility for the two houses and land. A newly-built bungalow was found at Hillside Crescent on the edge of Portadown for Alice's father which would provide a convenient home for Esther when she retired. We purchased a house on the Carrickblacker Road, a few hundred yards from Portadown College. 'Rathlin' was a large, somewhat old-fashioned three-storied house with a delightful secluded garden. It had lots of room and was ideal for our growing children, as well as being convenient for work and for visiting both our families. The four years spent there were undoubtedly the happiest and most serene of our married life. Again we had many visitors, children's friends, relatives and guests from near and far.

Portadown College was chosen by the County Education Committee to pioneer the introduction of language laboratories in the teaching of French



'Rathlin' in the snow

and German and I was busy getting to know new technology and learning new techniques. Other major educational changes were also under way. Stormont was under pressure from the Labour government in Westminster to introduce their new scheme of Comprehensive Schools and the new city of Craigavon appeared to be a suitable place for the experiment. The 'Dickson Plan' was proposed for the area which would turn Portadown College into a 14-18 Senior High School. The scheme was supported by Mr Woodman but vigorously opposed by almost all the staff. Eventually it



The two older girls at 'Rathlin'



Mr Woodman and prefects in PC 1960

gained majority approval in the Education Committee and its implementation began for us by the loss of Form 1 in 1969.

In the same month, September 1969, it was announced that Neville Newhouse, Head of Friends' School, Lisburn, was leaving for a post in England. I thought long and hard about making an application for the position. We were happily settled in Portadown, secure in our work, service and friendships and with family and friends close by. It was the converse of the position we faced ten years earlier. I would be fully occupied in my new situation and challenged by its demands, but Alice might be less comfortable, removed from close contact with family and with a vague and ill-defined role. We talked and prayed about it for many weeks and close to the final date I submitted my application, offering myself for the job but not dismayed if I were not appointed. There had been only one Irish Headmaster in the previous hundred years, as there was a strong tradition of recruiting someone from Britain. I was slightly peeved at the testimonial I received from Mr Woodman. He seemed to go out of his way to stress the contribution which Alice could make to my job and included almost as much about her as about me!

The interviews were arranged for early December. Six candidates were asked to attend with their wives. Four of the six were English, the fifth was the Vice-Principal. Alice and I were called for the early afternoon. I remember going to the Head's secretary's office and saying I had an appointment. She took one look at me and said, 'I don't think it can be for today', not seeing in me a candidate for headship. Alice and I were given a



With French Assistante in Language Lab

tour of the Headmaster's house which had been recently purchased beside the rugby field but told that a tour of the school was hardly necessary as I had been a pupil and probably knew it well. (It had in fact changed very much since the 1940s.) As my interview was the last and not until just before the evening meal Alice and I took ourselves off to the Beechlawn Hotel in Dunmurry for afternoon tea. I had a longish interview and then the whole party had dinner with the governors who watched us all closely for table manners and discussed cultural interests and general background. After the meal the governors went back into session and we candidates all sat awkwardly in a room, as if in an airport lounge waiting for a long-delayed flight. About 9pm someone emerged from the consultations to say that they had not come to a decision and that we should disperse. The English folk took taxis to their hotels and we made our way back to Portadown. About half an hour after we arrived home I got a phone call from the chairman offering me the job. I was quite taken aback because I was convinced I had not been successful and was quite happy to be staying on in Portadown. I asked for fifteen minutes to consider it, for I wanted Alice to be quite sure, and phoned back to accept the post. I heard indirectly that the governors were quite annoyed at my indecision, as it meant that they were kept even later after an exhausting day.

Thus this eventful decade was coming to an end and we were embarking on an even more fateful one.

The Stressful Seventies

Neville Newhouse left Lisburn at Easter 1970. I did not take up duties until the summer, as I had A Level classes in both French and German and did not want to abandon them before their final exams. On leaving he said to me in his bluff North-country way, 'Good luck, Arthur. You've as much security in this job as a football manager! You do realize that two Heads have been sacked already this century?' Some confidence-building assistance for one who was beginning to realize the magnitude of the task! In the summer term I made frequent visits to Lisburn to comprehend the issues before me and received useful advice about boarding matters from Jim Brennan of Armagh Royal and Jim Kincade of Dungannon Royal, both energetic young men who were Heads of these local schools.

We moved to 'Ardmore', the spacious, comfortable residence on the Magheralave Road in the first week of July. I remember the children being excited about the helicopters buzzing overhead as they made their way to and from the nearby Thiepval Barracks, HQ of the British Army in Northern Ireland. After a few weeks we simply did not notice them, as they were such a common sight. The first instruction I gave as Head was to take down the Union Jack which was fluttering in a prominent position close to the main road. (A decision which did not endear me to the caretaking and ground staff!) I judged it was not appropriate for the flag to be flying at the School at this sensitive period. After settling into our new home, Alice and I



Friends' School, Lisburn

had a holiday on our own in Germany, the first time Alice had been on the continent.

From early August I was in school regularly, getting familiar with all that was before me. As a specialist teacher of languages I was not very well equipped for the new administrative task. Portadown College was a Controlled School with major financial and policy decisions taken by the County Education Committee and the day-to-day running of the school in the capable hands of Mr Woodman himself. Friends' was a Voluntary School with direct



Benny and family at 'Ardmore'

powers over finance and policy decided by the Head and Governors. In September 1970 the enrolment reached 1000 for the first time in the school's history – a fivefold increase in 25 years! This growth was entirely on the Day side. Finance for the Day side was no problem, for the government was under a statutory obligation to provide Grammar School places and grants were readily available for this purpose. The Boarding Department was in an entirely different position, as 100% of costs had to be found by the school. In recent years classroom extensions had been made, but old, dilapidated buildings remained in the heart of the campus, some dating from the 1700s, mostly used by boarders. A scheme was under way for the demolition of these old buildings and the erection of classrooms on the lower floors and boarding accommodation on top. These plans were already at an advanced stage, but since they had been originally drawn up day numbers had advanced steadily. An examination of the accommodation schedule showed it would be impossible to run the school when the old buildings were knocked down. Immediate application was made to the Ministry of Education for additional cheap semi-permanent classroom accommodation. As a result Harding House was approved and quickly built.

These early months of headship were not easy as I sought to get to grips with all the issues to be faced. The Vice-Principals, Olive Tait and Hugh Gillespie, wished to ensure continuity of policy and I was sometimes frustrated at ways in which proposed innovations were not accepted. This period was marked by local political unrest and also world-wide student protest and something of this rebellion against authority even reached Lisburn schools. Noel Gilpin, Head of the neighbouring Wallace High School, who was appointed a year before me, had encountered calls for his removal and something of the same nature was directed against me. One evening the window of a front bedroom was smashed by a stone with a nasty note attached. As a classroom teacher I had a close and intimate relationship with pupils; now I was a distant figure on the stage at Assembly or an ultimate threat used by a teacher who could not cope with a troublesome pupil, very far from the image set by Mr Woodman in Portadown.

The Boarding department carried with it considerable extra responsibility and worry. Finance and staffing were constant concerns, but the happiness and progress of the boys and girls were of paramount importance. Boarding was seen by many as a back door into an oversubscribed Grammar School and a number of children struggled academically. With encouragement and hard work most reached an adequate standard, but some simply could not keep up with the work and were in constant trouble. Some teachers would grumble: "This would be a good school, if we got rid of those stupid

boarders!' I believed it was important that every child should be fully occupied both in class and in free time, for idleness leads to boredom and boredom to delinquency. Thus, if success could not be achieved academically, it could come in sport, drama, music or other leisure pursuits. Boarders had greatest advantage of the swimming pool, gymnasium, play shed and general sports facilities. Participation in teams was more important than putting all resources into the 1st XV or 1st XI and in the winter games of Rugby, Hockey, Netball and Soccer we turned out a total of about 22 squads. In earlier years the Natural History Society and Globe Club had played an important role in school life; their position was now taken by The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme with its constituent elements of Volunteering, Physical Development, Acquisition of Skills and Expedition, all challenges which were appropriate to modern life. This ambitious programme was only possible through the participation of enthusiastic staff who undertook this wide extra-curricular schedule in addition to their normal teaching duties.

With the Boarding School there was a seven- day involvement in work, but the Headmaster's house at some physical distance from the main buildings ensured privacy and relaxation. The three children settled into the Prep School very quickly and made good friends there. They had much company with children in the neighbourhood and one of their favourite games, to the consternation and disapproval of English visitors, was to set up army checks and demand identification. Alice enjoyed the spacious house and the opportunities for entertainment. She had many contacts from her childhood in Hillsborough and renewed many earlier friendships. She was often asked to undertake medical cover but only occasionally did she take surgeries, feeling that her main task was to support me and devote herself to Stephen, Grace and Elizabeth. We often had boarders over to the house



Alice and new baby Hilda



Alice with older children



New buildings seen from Ardmore garden

for Sunday tea and Alice supervised girl boarders one evening a week. She felt a responsibility for her father and Esther in Portadown and often visited them there during the day. Traditionally the Head had a role in the Lisburn Friends Meeting and both Alice and I were appointed elders. Alice also assisted Gwen Greeves in the Girls Crusaders class which met in the Friends Meeting House on Sunday afternoons. She was also deeply interested in a YWCA hostel in the University area of Belfast and acted as secretary to the committee. After a couple of years the whole family was excited by the prospect of a new baby and Hilda Claire got a great deal of attention when she arrived in January 1973.

In the summer of 1973 all was ready for the demolition of the old buildings and the construction of the new block. By September the site had been cleared and the contractors worked inside a secure fence in the very heart of the school. For the next two years there was much noise and dirt and frequent interruptions to water and electric services. Boarders were fed in the Day canteen; junior boys were housed in Ardfallen under the care of Jack and Katie Shemeld and seniors in Radley, private houses on Forthill; girls had accommodation in the front wings of the main school and in the cottage;



New junior boys dorm

we had four girls who slept in our large front bedroom at Ardmore and the McClearys had two in Middle House. We braced ourselves for this period of emergency, knowing that the outcome would be worth the suffering.



Bi-Centenary Pageant 1974

Not only did the school lose the old buildings in the summer of 1973 but also the two Vice-Principals, Olive Tait to retirement and Hugh Gillespie to the Headship of Foyle College in Londonderry. In their place came Lawrence Jess, Head of Physics in the School, and Audrey Lamb, from Ashleigh House in Belfast. Lawrence was deeply steeped in the tradition of the school, as a former pupil and talented hockey player, whose entire teaching career was at Friends'. Audrey Lamb was young and energetic and her personal charm cast a spell over pupils, staff and parents. The Bi-Centenary of the School's foundation was in 1974 and there were many special events to mark this date and raise funds to finance the developments. Despite the difficulties under which we laboured we had good results, including the award of the Hans Sloane Medal to Brian Fleck for top place in Northern Ireland for A Level sciences.



Nature ramble with Benny

The 70s were the years of the worst community troubles and it was against that background that the school operated. In the Halloween holidays of 1971 a young Maths teacher, Barbara Burgess, was severely injured in a no-warning bomb in Belfast. For days her life hung in the balance and I remember the strong sense of solidarity as we prayed for her recovery in Assembly. She had a leg amputated and after a slow recuperation she returned to her post at the school before moving on to a more convenient location. In 1973 the caretaker, Billy McCully, was shot dead in his home by an unknown gunman. He had been a prison officer and it was presumed that a former inmate decided to settle an old grudge. Lisburn was considered a safe area compared with city ghettos or border farmlands, but we were never immune from danger. Once during the holidays Alice and the children were with me on a shopping expedition in Belfast. We went for a meal in the Skandia Restaurant in Howard Street and placed our order. The moment the meal arrived on the table the sirens sounded and we were herded out on to the street before we could eat a single bite of the delicious food before us. Almost at once there was an ear-splitting explosion and a pall of black smoke rose in the air a couple of streets away. Hastily we made our way to the car and drove back to the safety of our home in Lisburn.

During the troubles it was often acknowledged that schools were havens of tranquillity in the midst of much disruption and unrest. We did have the tiresome bomb scares when everyone was evacuated from the buildings and had to shiver on the tennis courts or playing fields until the Army declared it safe to return. Because of the proximity of the Army Barracks there was always much traffic on the Magheralave Road. The front gardens of our home and those of our neighbours were frequently damaged by Army vehicles or those of off-duty soldiers. There was also much sensitivity about possible attacks. On one occasion after school I heard the entire road was closed. I walked down to the Prep School and was told that a suspicious object had been reported. On further investigation I noticed a child's schoolbag lying at the side gate, obviously left to be picked up later. When I went forward to lift it the officer in charge of the Bomb Squad screamed: 'Stop, sir. On no account approach that dangerous object!' I smiled and shrugged my shoulders but had to obey military orders. The entire road remained closed until the robot had exploded the innocent contents of the unfortunate girl's schoolbag.

The Chinese pupils continued to come from Malaysia and Hong Kong despite the press reports and we were thankful that they suffered no harm. We had considerable numbers of Catholic children whose perceptive parents wanted them removed from the influence of IRA elements on West

Belfast schools to which they otherwise have gravitated. They became well integrated into our system and contributed much. Once when a pupil gained a minor entrance award to an Oxford college I discovered that he was the seventh son of an unemployed Catholic father. This seemed good justification for our selective system which offered such an opportunity. Because of the constant pressures of school during term family holidays were particularly welcome. In those years it was good to get right away from the restrictions of the Lisburn area and we often went to Ballycastle where we rented a wonderful old house leading directly to the beach on the road to Fair Head. It had lots of space and friends often joined us there. Other years we took the long drive to Co. Clare to stay at the C.E. Holiday home, Clar Ellagh, where the children had lots of company and outdoor and indoor activities to keep everyone amused.

Our most ambitious expedition was to Southern Germany. We crossed from Rosslare to Le Havre and travelled through France and Germany to the shores of Lake Constance. We chose a family fortnight at this German holiday centre and despite language problems made good friends, including the Schick family, with whom we have remained in close contact ever since.

Another year we went to Herne Bay Court in Kent. We had an early departure on the ferry from Larne and were relaxing in mid-crossing when an announcement rang out over the tannoy: 'Would Mr Arthur Chapman make his way to the captain on the bridge for a phone call.' In those days there were no mobile phones and the only means of communication was by radio telephone to the ship. I looked at Alice in alarm and made my way



Lake Constance, Germany



Malbun, in Liechtenstein

to the bridge. 'What emergency was calling me back? Was there a bomb in the school? Had Alice's father had a heart attack? Should I let Alice and the children travel on and take the next ferry home?' All these questions flashed into my mind, as I waited for the line to be connected. When the message came it was what I had least expected. 'This is Benny. I hope you have a good holiday. I didn't have a chance to wish you well, as you left early. Good bye!' It was our good friend and close neighbour, Arnold Benington, merely to wish us 'bon voyage'. Benny half lived in our house, often having meals with us, once staying in the spare bedroom when he had a bout of flu. He brought us on wonderful nature expeditions to seaside and forest and on one occasion for a few days to Rathlin Island in glorious weather during the early summer nesting season. Through his naturalist interests he formed a great friendship with staff and children at a Primary School in the Lower Falls. He did not drive and, as no Lisburn taxi would venture into that area, Alice drove him at Halloween, Christmas and Easter, laden with apples, Christmas cake and Easter eggs according to the season, for each child in the school. I believe this did more for community relations than many of the highly acclaimed public initiatives.

In the second half of the 1970s I hoped for a period of greater stability after the time of adjustment to the new job and the hectic years of rebuilding. Boarding was running well in the new premises and at Easter 1977 Ireland Yearly Meeting was held on a residential basis in the school. Alice and I were extremely busy with arrangements and I noticed that she seemed unusually tired. A few weeks later a medical examination revealed a large lump in a

breast. Without delay Reggie Livingston, a Belfast surgeon and close friend of both our families, was contacted and arrangements made for a biopsy the following week. The 'frozen section' was to be taken under anaesthetic and if the growth was malignant a mastectomy was to proceed. I waited anxiously for the phone call from Reggie and solemnly he informed me that the operation was going ahead. This was devastating news for us all and following her surgery Alice needed much rest. The following months were punctuated by sessions of radiotherapy and chemotherapy at the Purdysburn cancer centre. Good friends arranged for her transport to and from the centre, as I was seldom free to drive her over and wait until the treatment was completed. There were brief spells of remission but no great quality of life as secondaries spread to other parts of her body.

Through the autumn of 1977 and into 1978 the disease continued its relentless progress. We sought the best medical treatment and urgently prayed that she might be restored to full health. Close friends encouraged us to seek spiritual healing and we decided to visit a Methodist minister, Rev Charles Bain, in his home. We had a good time with him during which he laid hands on Alice and prayed for us both. We felt soothed and strengthened by this experience but the ongoing disease was not halted. Meanwhile the routine of school life had to continue for the children and me. One great boon in those days was the arrival of Margaret Stevenson, the crossing patrol lady at the school. She lived on the other side of town and came to Ardmore to do housework between spells of duty in the early morning and lunchtime. Her cheery presence was a great help to all. Joan Mail at that time was in charge of girl boarders overnight and would often come over to keep Alice company during the mid-morning hours. Alice,



At Ruth McDonagh's wedding July 1978



Alice and Stephen at Greystones 1978



Family group autumn 1978



Last major outing Hallowe'en 1978

herself, made a great effort to make life as normal as possible for our family. When summer came she insisted we had a good family holiday in Scotland, in order to see St. Andrew's where Stephen hoped to study in a year's time. We also travelled north to near Inverness but it was obvious that Alice was at times in great discomfort.

As a medical doctor Alice was aware of the likely progress of her illness, but she did not indulge in self-pity. In the long hours of solitude she prayed much for me and the children, not only for the immediate days but for the long years which stretched ahead. With amazing insight into the structure of future society she prayed earnestly that the children would find good spouses and it is a great encouragement to see all four in stable marriages. Prayer is not limited to the present moment but its fulfilment is realized far into the future. I know that through the 41 long years since her death I have been sustained by Alice's earnest prayers for me in her final months.

As Christmas 1978 approached Alice's condition deteriorated. The bones in her vertebrae became affected and she needed to wear a surgical collar to support her neck. As pain increased so the doses of morphine became stronger. At times she was confused, but in a happy positive way. School duties still called for my attention and I remember a Governors Meeting on a Monday evening a mere 30 hours before her death, scarcely aware of the business before me. She died peacefully in the early hours of Wednesday 31st January 1979 at the age of 49.

The funeral on Friday 2nd February was at Moyallon where we had been married 18 years and one month earlier. There was a very large attendance

with many failing to get inside the building. Fine tributes were paid and there was helpful ministry, but I was in a daze. At the graveside a bird sang in a tree top as we silently bade farewell.

The following Monday I was back at school, taking Assembly and engaged in the general issues of every day, seeking solace in the discipline of work. The busy schedule meant that the grieving process was set aside. I was determined that for the whole family life should proceed as normal. In this respect Margaret Stevenson's help was invaluable. We left the house each morning with the breakfast dishes on the table and the beds unmade, but she attended to all. To ensure that Hilda, aged only six at the time, did not return to an empty house my sister Avril came from her work as supervisor of school meals in a Lisburn Primary School to greet her on Mondays to Thursdays; her aunt Eliza from Portadown came on Fridays. Most Sundays we had lunch with the Gilberts in Moira. Grace and Elizabeth quickly developed capable domestic skills and ensured that Hilda was not neglected. Neighbours, too, were most helpful and the children enjoyed good company with the Rowans, Blacks, Flacks and other local families. I gained a new appreciation of family solidarity with support from parents, Ross and Avril, the Cuthberts and Robinsons. The children's cousins of similar ages became their best friends.

Life was so busy there was little time to ask the question Why? However, I did wonder much about the future. Was it fair to the children for me to



Croquet at Kilkee



Stephen at St Andrew's October 1979

devote so much time to the job? Was it fair to the School for me to devote so much energy on care of the children? With four children of school age and 1000 more for whom I had responsibility it was a mammoth task. Living in a school house any move would cause great disruption. For the present I decided to stay put and concentrate on the dual task to the exclusion of any social life.

When summer holidays came I wondered what we should do. We had always enjoyed good times away as a family and I decided we would go again to Kilkee. Those two weeks were a great success with much support from other families and good company for everyone. Stephen completed A levels and qualified for his place at St. Andrew's that summer. He began on the weekend Pope John Paul II visited Ireland and pupils and teachers were granted a holiday if they wished to attend the ceremonies in the South. Normal classes were held at Friends', but some may have been surprised at my absence. I was in Scotland getting Stephen settled into his new life at university!

The final months of this decade were times of adjustment. Life as a Head of a large school is a lonely position and at times I had felt isolated and insecure. It had been good to talk over problems and worries with Alice in the privacy of home and I missed the sharing of these confidences. Now I often had to wrestle with these concerns alone in the long hours of the night.

The Wearisome Eighties

The early 1980s were times of relative calm compared to the drama of the previous years, but nevertheless it was a period of intense activity. Looking back on those days I marvel at how I managed to survive. It was entirely due to the grace of God and the kindness of many friends. We had a very fixed routine at home which led to a sense of stability. Margaret Stevenson saw to the general household chores; Grace and Elizabeth made the evening meal, looked after Hilda and got her to bed. They were busy with homework as they were now in senior classes. I did the week's supermarket shopping early on Saturday morning. There were frequent meetings in school in the



In the headmaster's study



Margaret Stevenson on patrol duty

evenings, but apart from these engagements I was seldom away from home.

The girls received many invitations at weekends and holidays and their photograph albums of the time show the many places they visited and the good company they had with family and friends. Unlike Stephen who did not particularly like his time at Friends' and transferred to Methodist College for his A level course, the girls were very happy at school and were treated by all with love and respect. I was impressed at how Hilda's teacher, Lorna Gillespie, decided not to observe Mother's Day so that Hilda would not be upset. Only recently did I learn that Ruth Jarman, a young science teacher and resident mistress, had invited Grace and Elizabeth to her room in the boarding department for a special visit about the time of Alice's death. They were also invited to the Mournes on a Bible Club event for girl boarders which she ran in school.

Weekends followed a regular pattern: Sunday morning meeting, Crusader class in the afternoon and often the Y-Club or Railway St Presbyterian Youth Fellowship – SNYF – in the evenings. Many people were concerned about Hilda, but she had an important role in holding the family together and the older girls did not wander but were rooted in home because of the need to care for their little sister. In school it was a time of relative stability too. A good core of staff had been in post since before I arrived and they remained at Friends' for most of their teaching careers. I was conscious of their support and friendship. They included John Boyd, Ewing Browne, Noel Clarke, Jim Hunniford, Don Jamieson, Lawrence Jess, Ernie McCleary, Bertie Megraw, George Orr, Brown Shaw, Vida Andrews and Dorothy Barron. Since I arrived they had been joined by such as Ken Armstrong, Maureen Bennett, Elizabeth Dickson (later Principal), Pat Dickson, Hall Irwin, Paul Ferguson, Norman Gamble, Maurice Gowdy, Ronnie Irwin, Gillian Lappin, Denise Mahood, Marian Mateer, Beth McFarland, Barney McGonigle, Philip Orr, Barbara Smith, Lois Stephenson, Hilda Blair, Eric Thompson and John Waring (Head of Prep School). All the above-named spent a major part of their teaching career at Friends' and contributed much to the rich experience of pupils educated there. Jean Hillis came as Vice-Principal just six months before Alice's death and her common sense and tireless industry helped to give leadership with Lawrence Jess to this capable band of teachers.

There are few positions where one is in charge of a group of so highly qualified individuals as is a Grammar School Head. In this case they possessed not only high academic talents, but also had a concern for the welfare and development of each child, something which lies at the heart



Grammar School Staff of Friends' School in the mid-1980s

of the Christian Quaker ethos of the School. Their particular gifts were encouraged and exploited for the benefit of all. Ernie and Gloria McCleary, Joan Mail and the Boarding Duty staff cared for their charges with a mixture of firmness, fairness and good humour; John Boyd gained much credit for the school through pupils' successes in competitions in science, technology and engineering; the games staff through skilful coaching trained teams who won major trophies in Boys and Girls Hockey, Rugby, Cricket, Netball, Badminton, Swimming and Athletics; the Careers teachers inspired wayward pupils to work for a realizable goal; the Duke of Edinburgh staff devoted much free time to planning expeditions which boosted the confidence and self-esteem of many who needed a challenge; producers of School Plays and Musical Concerts gave much pleasure to audiences, but also developed talents not always evident in classroom situations. Conscientious teaching brought success to many and most pupils moved on to universities and other institutions throughout Britain and Ireland.

I saw the role of a headmaster to give freedom and encouragement to the subject teachers in the teaching of their discipline and to shield them from those external forces which would militate against their performance, viz. the interference of bureaucracy, poor teaching conditions and resources, the action of disruptive pupils and the demands of parents.

It would be wrong to think that everything in the school was perfect. In hindsight things acquire a rosy glow and there were always tensions and disagreements. I was probably too cautious as a leader and relied too much on initiatives arising directly from the body of the staff. As a result certain areas tended to be neglected and did not receive the constant challenge

which all organisms need to have a healthy existence. Nevertheless, despite all the pressures and demands of time, my work gave me a degree of satisfaction at that time which I did not think possible.

In addition to the teaching staff I was well supported by many others in the school community. My secretary, Helen Kinhead, had an important role, understanding my vulnerability, organising my diary and at times shielding me from difficult situations. Tom McConnell, the Bursar, took much of the routine administrative work, enabling me to concentrate on staff and pupil matters. Governors were conscious of my domestic situation and I was aware of their support. I was fortunate in having Chairmen with whom I could consult in confidence on difficult matters, Desmond Neill, with his great experience and wisdom in university administration, Billy Sinton and Theo Snoddy, both Old Scholars with a real affection for the school, and Hugh Bass, a former Mayor of Lisburn and highly respected in the local community.

Teenage years are important with many choices to be made about careers, friendships and lifestyles. For many in normal households they can be turbulent times, but Grace and Elizabeth survived these years well. It was a great help to have Esther staying in Lisburn when she returned from Africa on furlough, for she had let her house in Portadown. In the summer of 1981 both girls went back with her for a few weeks to the Leprosy hospital at Ekpene Obom and they opened a nurses' recreation room which had been built in memory of their mother. Living in a rural African setting was a great experience for them, as was an exciting journey home on their own. The following summer Grace was a member of the Duke of Edinburgh team from school which went to Kenya. The day after the party arrived in Nairobi a military coup took place and the rebels seized the radio station near where they were staying. Shooting ensued and a bullet was found embedded in a wardrobe in the room occupied by the female staff members. I was unaware of the seriousness of the situation until I received a phone call from the Foreign Office the next day which informed me in solemn tones that the entire party was safe. The rest of the time was spent in country areas and the expedition was a life-changing experience for all concerned.

That summer Grace left school and started nursing training in Belfast. Stephen graduated in St. Andrews and came back to Ulster to qualify as an accountant with a firm in Belfast. Elizabeth left school in 1983 and went to Queen's to do a degree in Biology. The following year Hilda moved to the main school on completing the 11+ exam. With the older family members now on the move I felt it would be more stable for Hilda to be a weekly



Lough Tay on the way to graduation



Stephen's graduation at St. Andrew's

boarder. She had the company and security of school life and possessed the resilience to adapt well to a variety of different situations.

I continued to live a very quiet life with few outside interests or much travel. My parents, now both in their eighties, were still very active and they often came to Lisburn or I visited them in Portadown. One memorable summer I decided to ask them to come to Clar Ellagh along with my nephew Mark for a week's holiday there with the girls and myself. We travelled in two cars and stopped for a picnic lunch in Athlone. They set out before us with Mark at the wheel. About 20 miles along the main Dublin-Galway road we saw a commotion ahead of us. To my horror I recognised Father's car on its roof on the hard shoulder. Almost at once an ambulance arrived and Father, Mother and Mark were all transported to the local hospital in Ballinasloe. I arranged for the three girls to be looked after in a local house and made my



Sunny days on Kilkee beach

way to the hospital filled with apprehension. Mark had a broken leg and arm, Mother had a cracked sternum (breastbone) which was very painful and could not be set and Father, who was on the rear seat, was badly bruised and caused concern on account of his cardiac condition. Ross was in Waterford and after some time I got a message



Enjoying an ice cream

to him. I phoned Kilkee to explain we would be arriving late. I discussed all three cases with the medical staff and assured myself that none were life-threatening. After many phone calls and much negotiation I picked up the girls and we proceeded to our destination still 100 miles away. It was about 11pm when we finally arrived. The next morning I was back on the road to Ballinasloe to discuss the situation with Ross. All three patients spent a full week in hospital and Ross saw to their return journey on the same day as we went back to Lisburn.

I had little taste for social events and often felt gauche or ill-at-ease at functions on my own. Graduations and anniversaries were times at which I missed Alice most, when we could not share together the joy of celebration. I was very sensitive to my lonely position and remember the real hurt when a letter addressed to Alice arrived on the second anniversary of her funeral. It was from the South-Eastern Education and Library Board, thanking her for her valued service on the management committee of a local Nursery School and inviting her to continue for a further term. Such bureaucratic insincerity and incompetence caused me much distress and I complained to the Chief Executive whose officials should have been aware of my position. I found it hard to talk to the children about their mother and avoided paying visits to or tending her grave at Moyallon. She was not there but in heaven, and we were to honour her by living now as she would have wished.

There has been no mention thus far in this chapter of the ‘Troubles’, but we were still very conscious of their presence and how they dominated our lives. Children were growing up who had no knowledge of normal life. Car bombs and shootings became an everyday occurrence and the hunger strike caused tension to rise in the whole area. The greatest impact on the

school was the death of a Sixth Former, Mark Cochrane, who was killed when a bomb, being transported by a terrorist, exploded on a train between Lisburn and Belfast. Mark was an able boy in his final year, a member of the 1st XV, hoping to study architecture at university. One day after school he had spent time in Lisburn with his girlfriend, also from our Sixth Form, and was returning by a later train than usual. It was only when I visited the parents and talked about Mark that I realized how his life in every waking hour had been dominated by school activities – in study, sport and friendships. It made me conscious of the demands we make on our senior pupils and the pressures they carry in their final year. The entire school was deeply shocked and I remember being intensely proud of the Sixth Form in one incident afterwards. A nosy reporter, sensing a cheap scoop, found his way into the Sixth Form common room and started quizzing them about Mark and his girlfriend. Immediately Mark's friends seized the reporter and marched him to the front gate, telling him never to set foot in the school again.

From time to time I was approached by Social Services to accept into boarding able children who had experienced difficulties in their home life. On one occasion I felt I should take a boy from West Belfast whose life had been disrupted by the 'Troubles'. He behaved reasonably well and conformed to all the requirements of the regime. All went well until the summer holidays when he came with his pals from the Junior IRA and was caught in the act of stealing the school minibus.

Lisburn was a boom town in the Eighties. Visitors from England expected to find a town in misery and poverty. Instead it was a place where money was in abundance. Its wealth was derived largely from the employment created by the security forces and the local prisons, the work of builders and glaziers, the fees of lawyers and insurance assessors and the extortion



Bomb damage in Portadown town centre



ECONI seminar visit to bonfire site



Duke of Edinburgh Award presentation

rackets run by paramilitaries. It seemed there was no will to bring a peaceful end to this wearisome conflict.

I was invited to join the Friends Northern Ireland Committee which sought to break the current impasse by establishing links with politicians of every hue and providing a neutral setting in which dialogue could take place. The country was becoming weary of the continuing abnormal situation in which



Elizabeth at QUB graduation



Parents' Diamond Wedding

we lived and we sought to encourage these leaders to seek an initiative for peace. Another organisation which came into being in the late 1980s was ECONI (Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland), which sought to apply Christian principles in a radical way to the distressing situation in



Reception in Richhill

Ulster. I was asked to join the Steering Group and found much satisfaction in working with a fine group of people who attempted to act with originality in influencing Christian opinion and promoting true reconciliation.

In my work one never knew what emergencies or untoward events awaited one from day to day. One quiet Friday morning in 1986 I received a phone call from the local police superintendent in Lisburn asking me to call at the station. When I called to see him, he told me that one of my staff had been apprehended by his officers in the local park the previous evening with regard to a homosexual offence. When he told me the teacher's name I was dumbfounded. He was a popular and highly-respected resident boarding master, leader of the Junior Scripture Union and capable classroom teacher. I could immediately see the implications of this revelation on the school and its reputation. On return to school I sent for the teacher, told him of my interview and suggested he take leave of absence till the matter was investigated. After discussing the case with the Chairman of the Board we braced ourselves for the oncoming storm. To my surprise opportunist allegations about improper actions did not come from pupils or parents and sneers about Christian hypocrisy did not materialize. What was impressive was the loving concern and support of Christian colleagues for the teacher in question and the continued friendship which many maintain to the present day.

In the latter years of the decade I suddenly realized that my life in Lisburn would not go on for ever. I had set my goal on retiring as soon as I reached 60 and that date was fast approaching. By 1967 Stephen was a qualified accountant and had gone to work in Scotland. Grace was to follow him to do her midwifery course in Stirling. Elizabeth would soon graduate and be independent. These summers gave me a chance to have interesting holidays abroad again. I visited Israel with a group led by Bert Finlay of Portadown; I renewed contact with the Schick family in Germany and had a short tour of Donegal with Werner when he came with his daughter Elisabeth who was to spend a term as a boarder at Friends'. The following summer I went with Hilda to Germany and had a good holiday with the Schicks at a centre in the Rhön hills near the Iron Curtain frontier.

In 1986 Father and Mother had celebrated their Diamond Wedding at a great evening with many family and friends at Richhill Friends Meeting House where they had been married. They were both in good health, mentally and physically active, and needed little care. The prospect of changes ahead filled me with a certain degree of alarm. In one respect it would be good to be released from the burden of responsibility after so many years; on the other

hand the two mainstays of recent life, school and family, would be suddenly removed. I had never contemplated remarriage. But should I start a new life now? All sorts of possibilities presented themselves, but nothing developed.

One Friday at lunchtime in January 1987 I got a phone call from my parents' doctor to tell me that Father had suddenly passed away. I immediately



Mont-Bleu School, Hull, Quebec



With Head and VP of Quebec school

rushed to Portadown to be with Mother and found my father in the living room, fully dressed, sitting in a chair apparently looking out over the garden he loved so well. The following couple of years I spent many nights in Portadown, travelling each day to Lisburn. The way forward was now clear for me. My role was to live with Mother in Portadown

I could have retired in 1988 but as I was in good health, I decided to take another year. Plans for an extension to the science block were progressing well and I thought it would be to the benefit of the school if I got approval to tender before I left. I had the satisfaction of seeing the first sod cut for the extension by the Minister with responsibility for Education, Brian Mawhinney, a former pupil of mine from Inst days, in the summer term of 1969. The final year gave plenty of time to get things in order. Computers



Education fair in Hong Kong



Former pupils Paul and Mary Cheung with parents



Stephen and Lesley on their wedding day

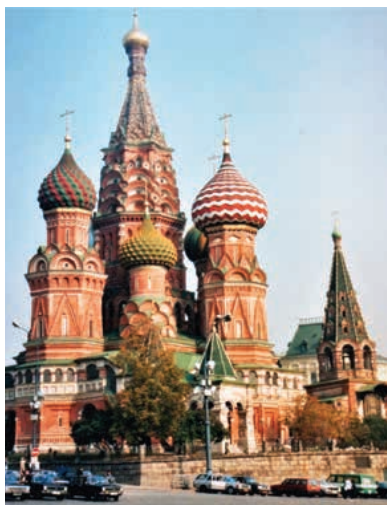
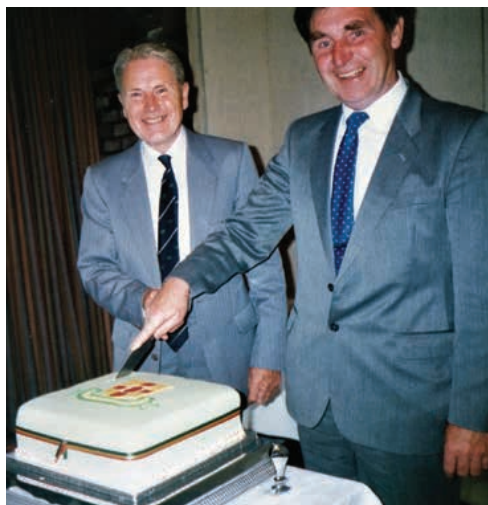
were about to be introduced for administration and I was glad to escape this new innovation. An exchange with a Head from a French-speaking secondary school in Quebec proved an enlightening experience and gave insight into the future of non-teaching administration in a large school. A week in Hong Kong promoting boarding in Northern Ireland at an education fair was another significant event.

In September Stephen's wedding was celebrated at Waringstown to Lesley Ryan who had been a pupil at Friends' some years earlier. Had I been

entrusted with the task of seeking a bride for my son I could not have found him a more charming and suitable spouse. They set up home in Stirling, as both had been studying or working there.

There was plenty of time to plan the move from our home in Ardmore. Surplus furniture was sent to charity shops, some went to Stephen in Scotland, some went into storage. There was little space to bring things to Portadown. Hilda had reached GCSE stage that summer and I offered her a choice of doing 'A' levels at Portadown College, going to Friends' as a day scholar or continuing to board. She chose boarding and completed 14 years as a pupil by being elected Head Girl.

For the children it was hard to think of Firbank as home. To them it was really 'Granny's house' and a base between various temporary abodes rather than their own place. For me it gave space and challenge. I extended the lawn to its former layout and with Jimmy Rice's help kept the fruit and vegetable garden well stocked. Mother continued to take great pleasure in the flower garden she had so lovingly planned.



Farewell dinner with Ernie McCleary June 1989

Holiday in Russia September 1989

The autumn of 1989 was an exciting time in Europe with the demolition of the Berlin Wall and freedom of movement in the Eastern Bloc countries. In September I had a fascinating visit to Russia where our group experienced the signs of the coming 'perestroika'. It seemed appropriate for me, for whom freedom had finally arrived.

The Nineties – Home Again

Retirement was an odd feeling for me, moving as I was from a highly-regulated schedule to a programme devoid of form or structure. How I envied my father who had moved from a five-day commitment to three, then two and finally one day at the office. On moving to Portadown I developed the roof space, installing larger windows and creating a study and bedroom, so that it had good accommodation for the family. However, at that time all three older children were in Scotland and Hilda was boarding in Lisburn. After an interval of 19 years I found Portadown a different place; the new city of Craigavon had greatly altered its character. Portadown College, now a Senior High School, was quite changed and only a few of the staff I had known remained.

Mother was in good general health and I developed itchy feet again. I had many friends from my visit to Hong Kong to promote boarding and I decided to go for a few months and teach English. To this end I took an intensive course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Dublin and booked to go in late January 1990.

About two weeks before that date I was tidying things up in the garden one afternoon. Coming down a slope with an armful of logs I slipped on the muddy surface and twisted my left leg, the weak, polio leg. From the excruciating pain I knew the bone was broken. Slowly and gingerly I hauled



Firbank in winter

myself over the cold, wet ground as far as the back door. When I reached it I heard a car approach. It was my cousin, Anne Davidson, who had come to visit my mother, ill in bed with flu. At once she phoned for an ambulance and I was soon in the nearby Craigavon Hospital. I was quickly passed through the A & E area and after an X-ray which showed a fracture of the tibia and fibula I was sent to a general surgical ward, as at that time there was no orthopaedic department. There a ward sister encased my leg in a massive heavy plaster from hip to toe. As she was carrying out this process she expressed surprise that I did not howl with pain. Stoically I dug my nails into palms of my hands and muttered that it was all right. How sorry I was later that I had accepted the setting of the leg so casually.



Broken leg 1990

After a week in hospital I was sent home, but I had very limited movement. As mother had recovered from flu, it was she who looked after me. Stephen, Grace and Elizabeth were all in Scotland and Hilda came home from Lisburn at weekends. Mother had given up driving the car, but Anne Davidson would call from time to time and do messages. Ross and Avril came when they could, but both were working full-time; Ross came regularly one evening a week and gave me a shower which was a tricky operation. Firbank was in the country and I had few visitors. I felt very depressed during these long, weary days, especially at the lack of progress, for each hospital X-ray check-up showed little

change. One day after about three months I queried a junior doctor about my slow recovery, but she callously replied, 'What can you expect at your age?' As at an earlier stage I wondered if I had any future quality of life to enjoy. Events I really enjoyed were visits from Ernie and Gloria McCleary who had also retired the previous summer. They would come in the late morning, heave me into the back seat of the car and we would go off for lunch.

As progress was so slow and no one showed much interest, I contacted my former Lisburn GP, Dr Brian Huey, and he arranged for me to see a consultant in the Royal Victoria Hospital. His opinion was that it was unwise at that stage to have the bones reset and that the slow healing process should continue. When summer came it was good to have Elizabeth home, for she arranged a placement in Gilford. I was still in the long-leg plaster in July and I booked an Aldor tour to Crieff Hydro in Scotland with Mother and Hilda, knowing that I could negotiate travel in a coach more easily than by car. It was good to see Stephen and Grace and to be in a different environment from the limitations of the Bocombra bungalow.

The autumn months brought some relief, as I had the heavy plaster first shortened to the knee and then finally removed. Physiotherapy sessions at the hospital allowed me to get mobile again and I got an automatic car whose controls were limited to the right foot. I was very nervous of slipping on frosty paths and decided to book a three-week holiday in sunny Tunisia. I arrived at a comfortable, beach-side hotel on January 13th 1991, looking forward to a relaxing time in the sunshine. Only two days later Britain, the USA and other allied forces issued an ultimatum to Iraq to withdraw forces from Kuwait.



Tunisian beaches



U.S. visitors to Lynastown Burial Ground

Because of anti-Western sentiment we were obliged to stay within the hotel building and on the 15th it was announced that all British nationals were to be repatriated. We were transported by coach to the nearest airport and allocated places on planes to London. I had the misfortune to be put on the last flight. We boarded about midnight and waited anxiously. After a long delay we were informed that because of a mechanical problem we could not take off and that a replacement plane would be flown out from Britain. Passengers were herded off the plane, baggage was reclaimed and we toured the town in buses, seeking hotels which could accommodate us overnight. Hostilities were due to start at 5am, so few of us had any sleep. In the late morning we were taken to the airport again and finally boarded our homeward plane. When we arrived at Gatwick we were greeted by reporters, curious to learn how conditions were in an Arab country.

After this brief spell of excitement, I was happy to return to the relatively quiet routine of life in Bocombra and, as I regained strength and mobility, pick up again the diverse activities which retirement afforded. During the busy years at Lisburn I had not been involved in many public or educational bodies, but now I was happy to have these interests. I acted as Secretary of the Partnership of NI Boarding Schools and had good contact with many local schools as well as being involved in promotional exercises throughout Britain and Ireland. I served for a number of years on the Armagh Committee of the Catholic Maintained Schools and gained a good insight into the ideals and objectives of that sector. I had avoided much committee work with the Religious Society of Friends but now I was free and willing

to accept office, especially as Hilda was studying in Dublin from 1991, and had a spell as Clerk of the Yearly Meeting's Committee and as Assistant Clerk of Ireland Yearly Meeting. In the months of recuperation after the broken leg I spent much time cataloguing and classifying the 800-volume library of Quaker books donated by Ulster Quarterly Meeting to the newly-established Craigavon Museum. This historical interest led to research on the Quaker settlement in Lurgan and the publication of a history of Lurgan Friends in 1997. Involvement with ECONI continued during the ups and downs of the Peace Process and the hopes of a return to normality in our country. An imaginative reconciliation project at Darkley near the border, claimed my interest too and I volunteered to assist in office management there for several years. Some teachers in retirement return to temporary or part-time employment, but I never taught a single school class since I left Lisburn. I did attempt to teach French to some young unemployed teenagers in Craigavon for a proposed exchange and possible future placement near Clermont-Ferrand. However, motivation was low and the exchange was not a success.

During these years Mother's health remained good and she led an active and normal life. Mrs Keith came every week to assist with the housework and



Grace and Clive's wedding at Moyallon



With bridesmaids Hilda and Elizabeth



Elizabeth and John's wedding

Jimmy Rice's assistance was invaluable in keeping the garden looking well. Mother's 90th birthday in April 1994 was a happy occasion when many visitors from family and friends called to wish her well. She still enjoyed the garden and care for her alpine was her special preserve. Occasionally she would have a brief TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack) or mini-stroke when she would lose consciousness for a minute or so and have no recollection of the incident when she came round. I was afraid she might fall and do herself

injury at such times and left the house only when she was in bed or when Mrs Keith or carers were around.



Cutting the cake

Weddings of daughters are always important family occasions. Grace and Clive were married in September 1992 and Elizabeth and John in July 1993. They were not easy times for me, having to host the events on my own and not knowing the family of the spouses. However, they were simple and sincere occasions, once again at Moyallon, which had such poignant memories for me and it was good to have the

company, support and friendship of family and friends.

After the disappointment of the abortive visits to Hong Kong and Tunisia I considered spreading my wings again when I was mobile once more. In the summer of 1991 Ross came up with an attractive proposal – a visit to Czechoslovakia, recently open to tourists with the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. We travelled by car to Dover, where Ross and I joined a tour bound for the Moravian city of Brno, while Robina stayed with her cousin in Kent. On arrival at Ostend in the late afternoon we boarded a double-decker coach which travelled through the night along the German autobahns and we reached our destination about lunchtime the following day. Our hotel on the shores of a lake had been formerly used as a holiday centre by top Communist Party officials and was now being developed to attract Western tourists. It was a fascinating time to visit this land and see the sights of Prague and a countryside emerging from decades of Communist rule.

A couple of years later we had another continental journey. Ross and Robina were going by car to visit their daughter, Maeve, near Freiburg, and invited me to go with them. I left them midway along the Rhine valley and made my way to visit the Schicks. Werner was in poor health, but it was good to see him again. Then I travelled by train to Maeve and Walter's home and we all had some time in Switzerland in a holiday centre on the shores of Lake Zurich. At the end of our stay Robina went back with the Jennes and Ross and I toured Switzerland and South Germany, visiting interesting people and places.

In 1993 I had an invitation to visit my friends Billy and Marie Lewis in California. It was they who had arranged my first trip to the U.S. forty years



California church with Billy and Marie Lewis



Batik panel showing the Haydock project in Burkina Faso

earlier. They were now in semi-retirement in Los Angeles, living beside a care home complex, Quaker Gardens, where Billy had a pastoral role. It was good to see this retirement home with several hundred residents and to join in some of their activities. Billy took me to lots of interesting places, Friends churches, a Pastor's Conference, the Quaker Meadow Youth Camp centre and the Yosemite National Park. I also visited a distant Sinton relative near San Diego, who lived close to Billy's son, Paul, and whose next-door neighbours were old scholars of Friends' School.

The other major travel event of these years was in 1998 when I spent three weeks in Burkina Faso at the invitation of Rupert and Janet Haydock, working with Tearfund and supported by Friends in Ireland. This country is one of the poorest in Africa and as an agriculturalist Rupert was bringing improved techniques to increase food production and enhance the living standard of these subsistence farmers. Going out with Rupert each day I was intrigued by the projects, such as sinking wells, providing light oxen-drawn ploughs, encouraging new strains of cereals and livestock. Rupert endeavoured to give maximum responsibility to his African fellow-workers, because he would be in the country for a limited time and sought to ensure that ownership of these schemes was in the hands of local people. The initiative for the development was undertaken by an arm of the local church. They realized how important it was to create conditions to keep young people in their area instead of their

drifting off south to the Ivory Coast with all the temptations of city life there. This church had been founded in the 1930s by pioneer missionary, Stanley Benington, a brother of Arnold, who felt called of God to leave Nigeria and travel hundreds of miles to this remote French colony where the gospel was unknown. There was a prompt response to his message and it was inspiring to attend a church conference at Bouroum Bouroum, the site of Stanley's first station, with about 800 present.

One must not think that all my time was spent touring the world. Between these jaunts I was living quietly in Portadown, organising the household, doing the shopping, planning and making meals as I had already done for many years. My overseas vacations were only possible when Avril was free in holiday time, but when she retired from full-time work she took an increased role in looking after Mother. By that stage the three older children were independent and in their own homes, but they would come frequently at holiday times. Stephen seemed well settled in Scotland, especially when he bought a house in the village of Menstrie. There was great excitement when Orla was born in 1992, the first grandchild for both Chapmans and Ryans. It was therefore a great surprise when Stephen announced in 1994



Stephen and Lesley back to Belfast 1994



Older grandchildren are good company

that he was coming to a post in Queen's University. I had not known he had applied for the position, so it was a great delight to have them living in Belfast. Grace and Clive were putting down firm roots in Edinburgh, especially following the birth of Liam in 1996. I had frequent trips to that city in those years, the more so as Hilda was taking a two-year Social Work course at the University from 1997. Elizabeth began employment in 1991 as a Social Worker in Lisburn immediately on completion of her course and after marriage lived in the town.

Elizabeth was my most frequent visitor, especially in the years when John was working in Ulster Carpet Mills. She would often leave him to work in early morning and spend the entire day at Firbank, putting baby Natasha to sleep in our old cot after lunch. During these days of constant change for the children it was important for them to have a secure base with lots of room to come and stay and I was happy that Firbank fulfilled that role.

In the final years of the century Mother continued to have reasonable physical health but became mildly confused. She required increased care and I was fortunate to get the services of Crossroads Care and also Ray Duke who had been main carer for Helene McDonagh in her last years at home. Eventually Avril decided to take Mother on a permanent basis to the new bungalow they had built at Moira beside Chestnut Hill when Andrew and family moved into the old home.

After Werner Schick died following a long, trying illness his wife, Gisela, came to visit old friends she had known in the British Isles. With her I later



*At the Iron Curtain border in Germany
with the Schicks*



Gisela Schick

did a tour of Ireland, visiting Killarney, Dingle, the Burren, Connemara, Sligo and Donegal, including many places I had never been to. Later in 1999 I went to her home and in her company toured parts of rural Central Germany seldom seen by tourists. We had a good understanding with similar bereavement experiences, concern for children and grandchildren, a shared faith and interest in travel, nature, gardens and history. We maintained our personal independence and our friendship was on an entirely platonic level.

Hilda's Social Work course came to an end in the summer of 1999 and I hoped she would seek a post in Ulster. She had other ideas and took a job in Edinburgh. Friendship with a Canadian postgraduate student in Theology was developing fast and Dave Shepherd was introduced to us at Christmas 1998 and 1999.

As the final weeks of the century approached there was much excitement about the new Millennium. A long time back I had speculated as to whether I might reach this significant landmark. With Elizabeth and John I watched the firework display over the Craigavon Lakes heralding the arrival of the year 2000. It was with much satisfaction that I entered this new era. The three oldest children were married and well established with two children each, Orla and Duncan Chapman, Liam and Katie Parnell and Natasha and Aimée Palmer. I was profoundly grateful to have reached this date in such good health after all the trials I had endured during the past decade and earlier.

The Noughties – Back to Lisburn

After the excitement of the New Millennium life settled back into its normal routine as the year 2000 advanced. Firbank was now a quiet place with no visitors to see Mother who was now settled permanently in Moira, but my new freedom enabled me to involve myself in a wide range of interests and I was at liberty to travel at will. I made frequent visits to Edinburgh as both Grace and Hilda were living there and plans were being laid for Hilda's forthcoming marriage in July 2000. John and Elizabeth had procured a holiday home in Portrush and I often went there and saw the Coleraine folks.

Locally I was busy with the Craigavon Historical Society and Museum, the Crossfire Trust at Darkley, the ECONI organisation and Portadown Churches Together. The publication of the History of Friends in Lurgan had created interest and produced requests for talks on the subject to local groups. Members of Lurgan families such as Bulla, Harland, Hollingsworth and Kirk, who had emigrated centuries ago returned from time to time to seek their roots and it was a pleasure to explore the areas where their ancestors had lived and show them documents with family references. Further afield I acted on the Management Committee of Drogheda Grammar School (a small secondary boarding and day school in which Friends had an interest). I was also a member of a small group entrusted with the task of selling the Quaker Bloomfield Retirement Home and Hospital and adjoining Yearly

Meeting Offices and relocating these facilities on a new site. For several years this entailed meetings at least once a month and I made good use of the free travel pass available to senior citizens.



Pre-wedding barbeque with Canadians

Despite these external interests most of my time was spent in the peace and quiet of Bocombra. I was keen to maintain the garden in good shape, producing lots of vegetable and fruit for the freezer and making jam for all the family. To create interest on the sloping lawn I laid out a pitch



Hilda and David's wedding. Family group

and putt course a safe distance from the windows and using the pond as a hazard bunker. This gave me hours of enjoyment and ensured the grass was regularly mown. I wanted to have the garden looking smart for Hilda's wedding which took place in July 2000. The wedding was quite an operation, as Hilda and David were both in Scotland and his family were of course in Canada. David's parents came to Edinburgh a week before the wedding for the award of his doctorate at the graduation ceremony. Other relatives joined them in Scotland and the party proceeded to Ulster in a hired minibus. We found accommodation for them all in an Armagh hostel and had a great barbecue party a day before the wedding outdoors in the Firbank garden. The marriage ceremony was again in Moyallon Meeting House. David and Hilda returned to life together in Edinburgh and I resumed my quiet days in Portadown.

That year I felt I owed myself a very special holiday and I was not disappointed. On a previous visit to Germany Gisela Schick told me of her desire to see the eastern part of Germany which then had been incorporated into the Federal Republic for more than ten years. Her grandparents had come from Lausitz in Saxony and she had never visited that area, but was reluctant to make the journey on her own. I encouraged her to travel by car and told her I was happy to accompany her if she wished. The result was that she planned an itinerary avoiding for the most part main roads and large cities and visiting places and people off the beaten track. Setting out from her home near Frankfurt, a few hours' drive took us across the former Iron Curtain to Eisenach, site of the Wartburg fortress where Luther was imprisoned. On we went to Weimar, home for many years of the great literary figures, Goethe and Schiller, with stops at castles, gardens and churches. East Germany had been greatly neglected during the years of Communist rule and we made slow progress on the poorly maintained roads. Although efforts were being made to match the prosperity of the West, most buildings were shabby and unpainted apart from the nondescript blocks of flats favoured by the Communist regime. We travelled widely, staying at hostels or occasionally with friends of Gisela, visiting the church in Wittenberg where Luther nailed his famous theses on the door and on to Finsterwalde, ancestral town of Gisela's relatives. We walked the streets and toured the graveyards, but did not find family associations. Over the turmoil of the past century whole populations have been displaced and memories of their erstwhile life and work erased for ever. We spent a few days in Herrnhut, the original settlement of the Moravian Church, where those religious refugees were granted sanctuary by Count Zinzendorff and whose missionary zeal led them to all parts of the globe. Dresden in Saxony was particularly impressive. The city had suffered grievously and



Craigavon Historical Society outing

needlessly from British bombs near the end of World War II and painstaking efforts were being made to restore the fine buildings which had graced it in its heyday. We took our time on our journey, avoiding motorways and experiencing rural life in Central Europe in a way unknown to modern travellers on package tours.

My memoirs give a rather distorted picture of how I spent my time, lingering over the highlights of journeys to exotic parts. In fact, most of the time was



Ross and Robina at pavement café in Co. Louth



Shepherds at FSL Bible Sunday

spent in quiet routine at home, attending to home chores, working in the garden and devoting much time to reading, sudoku and crossword puzzles. Although I had left school just before the arrival of the computer era, I learned the advantage of communication by Internet and found it invaluable in keeping in touch with Hilda when she went to Canada and with other friends worldwide. Portadown Friends Meeting was an important source of inspiration and service in those years and I found fulfilment in ministry



Centenary event at Portadown Friends Meeting 2004

there and in Bible studies and talks I was asked to give to Friends across Ulster. Back in 1998 I had given the Public Lecture at Ireland Yearly Meeting on the subject 'Listening and Responding'. Studies on Lurgan Quakers had also brought invitations to local historical and heritage groups and the approach of the Portadown Friends Meeting centenary prompted more research for a book on its origins and development.

At this time Mother was well settled in Jim and Avril's new bungalow in Moira, close to Chestnut Hill, into which Andrew and family had moved. She now required more care and Avril as her only daughter could supply her needs in a more appropriate way. However, she was becoming more frail and was spending short periods of respite in the Laurelhill Home in Lisburn. Finally plans were made for her to go there on a permanent basis in April 2001. Although in her middle years she had constant ill health, she had reached the age of 97 and through her later years had remained happy and contented, if slightly confused. In May, when she was settled in Laurelhill Home, Jim and Avril went for a week's break to Lanzarote. Shortly after they left she became unwell and I could see she was quite weak. On the Friday I stayed most of the evening with her and spent the night at Elizabeth's home close by, asking that I should be sent for if her condition deteriorated. At 6.00 am the phone rang to tell me that she had passed away. Avril and Jim were contacted and they got a flight back the next day. Ross and I saw to funeral and other arrangements. She was laid to rest at Richhill beside my father and my four grandparents, all of whom she outlived by over ten years. Her siblings, May and Bill also reached the age of 97 and John 92 years. How blessed I am to have good genes!

Other changes were in the offing in 2001. David Shepherd was appointed to a post at Briercrest College in his native Saskatchewan, so in the autumn they took up residence in Moose Jaw, the nearest large town in the wide-open space of the prairies. I was not surprised at such a move, but it caused me to question my future in Portadown.

As I had plenty of time on my hands I decided to go and visit Hilda and Dave in Canada the following May. When I arrived the cold Arctic winter was just coming to an end. There was not a leaf on a tree and the first spring flowers



Giant elk outside Moose Jaw town



Golf at Firbank

were just coming into bloom. The country consists of a flat, featureless landscape with fine agricultural lands alongside straight, monotonous highways. I remember Dave pointing out the one bend in the road on the 30-mile drive from Regina airport to Moose Jaw. It was good to see them so well settled in their spacious home and to explore the town at leisure while Hilda was at work in hospital and Dave was at college. I did not go to the more spectacular parts of the vast country, but visited Dave's parents in Saskatoon and cousins in Regina and Swift Current. The season of spring is almost non-existent. In my last week the temperature soared to 30C, but the following day it plummeted to zero and I was afraid that weather conditions would make it difficult to reach the airport in time for my early morning flight.

The next year news came that Hilda was expecting a baby in December in the heart of a Canadian winter. I was concerned about her so far away on her own, especially as Dave was going to India soon after the birth. I would be of little use to her, but I suggested that Grace should go in early January and I should help to look after Liam and Katie in Edinburgh. Consequently I crossed to Scotland in the car, did the school runs each day and supervised homework, so that Clive was free to go on with his work unimpeded. Grace did a good job in Moose Jaw and saw baby Anna well established in her routine.

John and Elizabeth were very fond of the Causeway coast and spent much time in the summer and at weekends at their holiday house in Portrush. I would go from time to time, as it was a good opportunity to see Stephen,

Lesley and family in Coleraine. While they were there at Halloween 2004 I joined them for a few days. One of my favourite walks was on the cliff path from Portstewart town to the strand. On a grassy bank near the strand I slipped and fell. As I went down I heard a crack and knew that my leg was broken again – the same leg in the same place! As I lay waiting for the ambulance the realization of the miserable months ahead of me flashed through my mind. In the Coleraine hospital the young houseman asked me if I was a doctor, for I knew all about the tibia/fibula fracture and the action to be taken. This time I took the initiative and determined the course of action. When I discovered that fractures were transferred to a specialist unit in Londonderry, I positively refused and insisted that I should be taken to the Royal Victoria in Belfast. John put me gingerly on the back seat of the car and I was accepted into the fracture ward the same evening. This time I urged the doctors to get the leg carefully set regardless of the pain I suffered and again I found myself with the heavy long-leg plaster. After a week I went to stay with Elizabeth in Lisburn for a few days and then home to Portadown, on my own with an elaborate home-care package. Carers came regularly morning and evening, supplying my basic needs and many good friends called to see me during these difficult months. Television, radio and reading were my chief occupations, but my expectations of good mobility were low after my slow recovery from the similar fracture 15 years earlier. Bureaucratic delays in arranging physiotherapy sessions at the nearby Craigavon hospital meant that they did not begin until well into 2005 and I began to despair of ever walking properly again. To my surprise the long plaster was removed much earlier than on the previous occasion and I was given a large boot attached by Velcro which made me look like a moon astronaut, but which gave me support and a reasonable degree of mobility. Again I traded the car for an automatic model and in due course was freed from the isolation of the house.

Many pointers now indicated that it was now time to leave Firbank. The house and especially the garden were too large and now burdensome to me. The housing market was buoyant and the Old Lurgan Road a desirable residential area. Lisburn seemed a more sensible option with Elizabeth and family settled there and with many friends from FSL days. While considering what I should do news came that David had been appointed principal of Belfast Bible College in Dunmurry and Hilda and family would be in the district too. I wondered what sort of property I should move to. Should it be a retirement home, an apartment or an individual residence? I looked at all sorts of different possibilities but felt I would lose independence if I did not have a separate house. When the bungalow in Addison Park came on the market I knew it was right for me. It had enough rooms for



48 Addison Park Lisburn

family visits, a garage for good storage and an easily-maintained garden and a greenhouse for year-round pottering. I moved at the end of October 2005 and despite being burgled after a few weeks I have found the house ideal with its quiet location, easy maintenance and good neighbours.

I had little difficulty settling back to life in Lisburn. It was good to have Elizabeth living in Lisburn and Hilda only a few miles away in Dunmurry. I was often with them, sometimes baby-sitting for Natasha and Aimée or Anna and collecting them from school. There was much excitement when red-haired Sophie arrived in 2006, the only child in the Shepherd family to be born in Ireland. Evening classes at the Bible College proved stimulating and I met several friends from earlier years. I became somewhat involved in



Moirá Friendship Group holiday in Connemara

Friends' School again; it was now 16 years since I had left and there had been great changes. I was very keen that records dating back well over 200 years should be classified and brought together in one place for consultation. After some lobbying, a room was made available for this purpose and historical enquiries received by the School referred to me. The establishment of an Archive Room encouraged interesting donations to be made and promoted interest in the School and the Old Scholars Association. I had good memories of the Lisburn Friends Meeting and I soon felt at home there in its new site on the Friends' School campus. I was fascinated with many records of the meeting since its foundation in the mid-1650s and wrote a history of Quakers in the area which was published with the support of the local council to mark the 400th anniversary of the foundation of Lisburn.

Many of my friends were now becoming frail and I enjoyed visiting them, sometimes in their homes or going out for a meal together, if they were able; such included Ernie and Gloria McCleary, Philip Harding, Jim Snoddy, John Bateman, John Sturgeon, Garfield England, Eva Gross and my sister-in-law Esther Davis. More active near contemporaries were Noel Clarke, George Orr, Brown and Pat Shaw, Frank McCorry and Finny O'Sullivan and their stimulating companionship was constantly valued. Ross and Robina were outstanding in the latter category and visits to Newry, rambles in the Mourne or forays across the border to historical sites were occasions of great delight. Jim and Avril introduced me to the Moira Friendship Group and especially the fortnightly programme of walks. This appropriate physical exercise and companionship of a range of new acquaintances have been a source of immense pleasure, as have been also the day tours and residential weekends in which I have participated.

I continued my trips to Edinburgh, especially to see my youngest grandson, Finlay, born on 12th July, 2005 and whose birthday I have no trouble in remembering. As I got stronger I decided to visit Germany again. I met Gisela in Berlin and we visited the sights of the inner city as well as the rural areas with the canals and lakes in the west of the city. In Spandau where we were staying I met Norbert and Birgit Tischkau with whom I have remained in close touch ever since. In 2007 I decided to visit Clermont-Ferrand which I had not seen since 1952. The ancient city centre had not changed



Henri and Jeanne Chauchat



Volcanic mountains from Puy de Dôme

much, but the Lycée was now on a different site in modern buildings unlike the barrack room atmosphere of the original school. It was good to take a bus to the summit of the Puy de Dôme and see something of the delightful Massif Central plateau in summer sunshine. I also met Henri Chauchat who had been a student of English at the University in 1951-52. Henri was blind but with great tenacity he overcame his handicap and had retired after a successful career as a teacher of English. This trip was such a success that I repeated it once more in 2008.



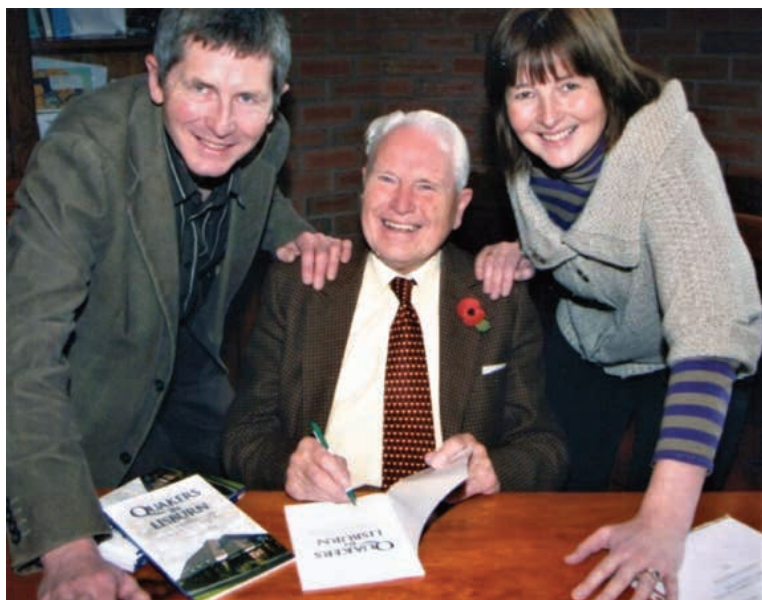
80th birthday in Ballsbridge, Dublin



Celebrations with the family

2008 was my 80th birthday and in February Stephen organised a weekend for us all in Bewley's Hotel in Ballsbridge, Dublin. It was a surprise for me and it was good to have nine grandchildren and nine adults all arriving from different parts for this half-term weekend. Dublin was an excellent centre and could cater for sport, shopping, culture and play parks as one wished, allowing us all to come together for games and chat in the evening. I found it hard to realize that after all my trials during these long years I had reached this milestone. I certainly did not feel my age and gave thanks for my continued mobility and physical and mental alertness.

The decade seemed to be coming to a quiet end in 2009 when suddenly and unexpectedly in mid-December tragedy struck. On a Sunday afternoon I had arranged to go to the Palmers. When I arrived John said, "Take a seat", which I thought odd and sat down on a chair right in the middle of the kitchen. Elizabeth told me the news that Stephen had been drowned in a canoeing accident on the River Bann. Having been at a concert at which Duncan was playing the oboe the previous day, I knew of this expedition which Stephen was leading, but the news seemed like a bad dream. I said, 'We must go to Coleraine at once', so we all set out on a silent journey, each one preoccupied with our own fears, thoughts and prayers. Family and friends gathered to support Lesley, Orla and especially Duncan, who had been a participant in the outing and had witnessed the distress of the incident. Wearily we returned to Lisburn that evening and I returned to Coleraine the following day to be with them in their sorrow. Plans were



Stephen's last visit to Lisburn November 2009

made for the funeral to Moyallon on the Wednesday morning followed by a service in Coleraine in the afternoon. That Wednesday seemed the longest day of my life. Moyallon with its many memories brought comfort and reassurance, but I was weary when I reached Coleraine in the Parnell car as darkness was approaching. With difficulty we found a parking space and made our way into the large crowded church. I mentioned to the usher



Esther Davis's 90th birthday party

that I was Stephen's father, but he made no response. I asked if Lesley and the children had arrived and was told they were in a special room but there was no offer for me to join them. After standing for some time in the draughty hall I made my way into the church with a feeling of isolation, dereliction and detachment, although there was no one but I in that vast congregation who could understand so well what Lesley, Orla and Duncan were going through. It was an uncanny 'déjà vu' experience, for I had lost Alice at almost the same age as Stephen, and Orla was mid-way through her final year at school as Stephen had been at his mother's death. After the service we spent some time with Lesley, Orla, Duncan and Chapman and Ryan family members in Forest Park before I made the long journey back to Lisburn utterly worn out.

I had been invited to spend some days at Christmas at Coleraine and Palmers and Shepherds were to join us for lunch together on the 25th. Lesley insisted that the arrangements should stand and we spent a rather subdued Christmas, drawn together for comfort and support by the strength of family ties. As the decade came to an end I experienced the truth of a statement which Edna Irwin, a close psychiatrist friend and colleague of Alice, once said: 'The greatest grief one can suffer is the loss of a grown child.'

The Contented Teenies

The winter days after Stephen's death were bleak ones. Unlike the situation after Alice's death in 1979 I had too much time on my hands, so I mourned not only for Stephen but also for Alice in a way I had not done 30 years previously. Because press reports had concentrated on Stephen's Coleraine connections many of my acquaintances did not know of my sorrow and I bore my grief alone. I had little energy and little interest in life or future plans. I gave up all duties in the Society of Friends but as I did so my personal faith seemed to grow and a sense of God's comfort became stronger.

Stephen had been much involved in the work of Mission Africa and had travelled a couple of times at his own expense to visit the hospital where Esther Davis had worked and to advise on its finances and development. In his memory a fund was set up to support the project and to my amazement a sum of £20,000 was subscribed. This was proof of the esteem in which he had been held by his colleagues and friends and the integrity and unselfishness he had shown in public and home life. As had been the case with me and the children at Alice's death, much prayer was centred on Lesley, Orla and especially Duncan who had been a witness of the dreadful accident.

Young people are resilient and live in the present moment. For them life



Hiking in the Cairngorms 2011

went on with the demands of each succeeding day. Lesley returned to work and the demanding task of sorting out legal and financial affairs; Orla studied diligently and gained good A levels which earned her a place at Glasgow University.

Duncan organised his life well, progressing steadily at school and enjoying outdoor pursuits and youth fellowship activities with good friends.

Gradually I emerged from my torpor and began involving myself again in my previous interests. This family tragedy had caused us to come together more closely and visits to Coleraine, Edinburgh, Newry and Moira became more frequent, as well as constant local contacts with Elizabeth and Hilda. In 2010 also I made a long tour of Germany, staying first of all in Berlin with Norbert and Birgit, then calling with Gisela in Büdingen and finally spending some time with my niece Maeve near Freiburg.

All through this hard time my general health was good and I needed little medication. I was pleased that I was self-sufficient and independent in what I planned and undertook. Since moving to Lisburn I had dispensed with gardening and house-cleaning help, as little needed to be done and the work involved was



Norbert and Birgit on the Spree in Berlin

useful exercise. Elizabeth felt strongly that I should have help in the house and arranged for an agency to provide a service for one hour a week. This was not a success. The first week the cleaner broke my toaster and a pedal bin. The second week she turned up half an hour late and, as I had arranged to go out for lunch, I dismissed her after half an hour. The third week she phoned half an hour after the agreed time, saying the car had broken down, that she had lost my number and had got it my phoning Elizabeth's mobile in Portrush. I told her she need not come that day, or in future, and I have been spared such worries since. The only thing I am dependent on is the ironing of shirts which Elizabeth attends to most assiduously each week.

My present independence is assured by being able to drive a car and thus to access a variety of places and events. In the past ten years I had two minor accidents but, in both cases, the other drivers were at fault and I was cleared of all blame. I did, however, pick up a conviction for speeding. One quiet Sunday morning in May 2011 when I was showing my German friend, Norbert, the North West 200 circuit in Portrush I was spotted by a camera doing 38mph in a restricted zone. I felt a first conviction for speeding at the age of 83 was worthy of an entry in the Guinness Book of Records!

David and Hilda moved to Chester in the summer of 2011 and a third daughter, Sarah, was born shortly after they arrived, bringing the total of grandchildren to ten. It was good to visit that ancient city and see the girls growing up and developing their own personalities.

2013 was an important year for birthdays. I was 85, Grace was 50, Hilda 40 and Orla 21. I decided we should go for a weekend in February to the Crieff



Crieff Hydro, Perthshire



Occupants of one of the chalets

Hydro in Perthshire. Three chalets were booked and filled to capacity. The Palmers, Lesley, Duncan and I came from Ulster, Shepherds drove north from Chester and Parnells and Orla the shorter distance from Edinburgh and Glasgow, all converging on this spot on the edge of the Highlands. We had a great time together with lots of activities suitable for all ages: swimming, tennis, football, rambles, and lots of good fun and food in the chalets, in the hotel dining room and in the Winter Garden tearoom.

Grace's birthday in October was a very significant occasion too. Neither Alice nor Stephen had reached 50 and so her anniversary needed to be marked in a very special way. She decided to invite many friends to a tea-party in their church and instead of presents for herself to ask that gifts be given to a Leprosy Mission project to renovate the Ekpene Obom hospital in Nigeria in which Esther and Stephen had been so much involved. Over



*Grace on 50th birthday
with Finlay and Liam*



*Clive and Grace
at the Forth Bridge*

£1000 was realised for this worthwhile scheme in one afternoon.

Changes were coming for the Coleraine Chapmans. In September 2013 Duncan began his final year at school and was appointed Head Boy of Dominican College in Portstewart - quite an achievement especially in a Catholic school. Lesley had sold the large house in Forest Park and had moved into a rented bungalow nearby. In October she and Wes Gilmore were married in a quiet ceremony in Ballynahinch and moved to Lisburn when Duncan finished school in June 2014. Wes had been principal of Ballymacash Primary School in Lisburn. His first wife, Hazel Megaw, had been a pupil at Friends' in my early days as Head and he had had the heartbreak of losing her to cancer in his first year of retirement. I was very glad to share in the newfound bliss of both Lesley and Wes and to welcome them as neighbours in Lisburn.

For Hilda further changes were coming too in 2013. David took up a post in Trinity College, Dublin, and they were no longer dependent on ship or plane for travel to Lisburn. It was convenient for me to go to Dublin on the Senior Travel Pass or for them to do the easy motorway drive to Lisburn. I was not doing so many independent expeditions but enjoyed many tours with Moira Friendship, Quaker or historical trips or short hops over to Edinburgh. I got great pleasure in participating in a vicarious way in the travels of others, such as Orla's visit to India in 2013, Liam's work for Habitat for Humanity in Romania or Duncan's expedition to Mount Kenya with the Scouts in 2014 before he commenced studies at Lancaster University.



Presentation of pictures in Monaghan museum



Relatives of Gillé at houses in Belgian Square

In the autumn of 2014 talk of the First World War stirred memories of how Father had spoken warmly of a Belgian refugee, August Gillé, who had stayed in their home in Richhill in 1914-15 and worked as a skilled cabinet-maker in the McDonagh furniture factory. In the early 1950s, when I was staying with the family of a Belgian soldier I had got to know when he did his military service in Ulster at the end of WWII, I visited August in his home town of Mechelen. Research on the Internet revealed that he had come to Richhill via Monaghan and that he had become a famous artist in later years. It was moving to attend a function in Monaghan town where the presence of the Belgians during World War I was celebrated and to meet relatives of August who had come specially for the event.

The winter of 2014-15 was a quiet one. I had little energy and not much interest in travelling and occupied myself by starting to compose these memoirs. Grace and family spent a lively Christmas with me and Hilda would often call as she found the Dublin - Lisburn motorway so convenient. Grandchildren seemed to be obsessed with studies culminating in summer exams. The following June I had two visits to Scotland. The first was early in the month which coincided with warm, sunny weather. Happy days were spent in Grace's garden and I met my German friends, Norbert and Birgit, who were touring Scotland at the time. The second visit was a short one to Glasgow. Orla invited me to attend her graduation and I was delighted to see her being awarded a First Class MA in English at the imposing ceremony in Glasgow.

In September 2015 three of my grandchildren commenced courses in Belfast: Orla doing a PGCE to qualify her as a teacher, Natasha gaining a bursary to take a Social Work course like her mother and Liam coming from



Natasha's graduation at Queen's



Orla's graduation at Glasgow Uni

Scotland to take a degree course in Theology at Belfast Bible College. As they excitedly told me of their plans and experiences, I was transported back 70 years, for it was in 1945 that I began studies as an undergraduate at Queen's. I vividly relived those September days when I found my way round the much smaller university and recalled the haunts and characters from that far-off era.

In September too an exhibition of the Quaker Tapestry, based at Kendal, came on display at the Lisburn Linen Centre and volunteers were required to be on duty during the opening hours. Many old friends were encountered at the exhibition and at an evening talk which I gave on the history of Quakers in the Lisburn area. I was somewhat surprised to receive an invitation to attend the Yearly Meeting of German Friends, for I thought my days of European travel were over. However, I made my way to Bad Pyrmont, near Hanover, and really enjoyed my time there. It was refreshing to visit a lively, youthful group and learn of their efforts to accommodate the vast waves of refugees seeking asylum in their country. It was a challenge too to become involved in initiatives back home in our own country. In these years I was not travelling so widely but life seemed full with a busy routine of local interests. The small garden and greenhouse gave me enjoyment without the burden of constant toil which had been needed in Portadown and 'Green Thumb' ensured that the lawn was kept in good condition. Regular work in the FSL Archive Room I found fulfilling and talks and lectures which I attended in Lisburn and Belfast enlarged my interests.



With Parnells in Brittany



On a ramble near Fair Head

I seldom missed short tours with groups such as Moira Friendship and Lisburn Historical Society.

When I spent 1951-52 in France I always headed south on holidays, saying I could always visit the northern provinces easily in later years. However, I had never done so until an opportunity arose in the summer of 2016. Grace and family invited me to join them in Martin Mail's holiday house in rural Brittany where they were staying. I decided to join them there and made my way by air, bus, underground and finally train to that distant destination. It was hot and sunny the entire week in contrast to indifferent weather back home. I really enjoyed being in this district seldom visited by tourists.

That autumn I pictured Orla teaching English in Bath, in an independent school, Kingswood, founded by John Wesley and set in some 250 acres of delightful parkland. Duncan, meanwhile, was in Holland on an Erasmus scheme, studying in a Dutch university and specialising in water management. On his graduation he took up a post with a water consultancy firm in Newcastle-on-Tyne. By the end of 2017 only four grandchildren were at school, the three Shepherd girls in Dublin and Finlay at secondary school in Edinburgh. Aimée was following her grandfather in studying French and German, but, as German is no longer available at either University in Northern Ireland, she opted to go to Glasgow. Katie, who had difficulties at school, as she was on the autism spectrum, got a place on a catering course at Edinburgh College where she learned to turn out delicious dishes enjoyed by the entire family. Natasha and Liam were both in the final semester of their courses, Natasha gaining a Foundation Scholarship on her second year performance and Liam widening his life experience by a part-time job in Starbucks.



Opening of Forth Bridge 2017



With Katie and Elizabeth at Famine Village

2017 was a good year in many respects. Healthwise I had no problems. Blood pressure was controlled with minimal medication; less pain was noted in arthritic finger joints; exercise was enjoyable on Moira Friendship walks and Rathlin rambles on stormy June days and in September when Grace got me a ticket for the special walk over the new Queensferry Bridge to mark its opening. To keep myself fit I took my physiotherapist niece's advice, purchased an exercise bike and dutifully carried out her prescribed instructions.



90th birthday in Dublin with three daughters

As the date of my 90th birthday approached on 28 January 2018 I decided it should be marked in a special way to give thanks for my long life, sound health and good friends. For my 80th birthday Stephen had arranged a weekend for the whole family in Dublin which everyone enjoyed greatly. This time I took charge of the planning and booked us into the Haddington House Hotel on the Dun Laoghaire seafront. Coming from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, we were 20 in all resident in the hotel, three daughters and spouses, ten grandchildren, Lesley and Wes Gilmore, Liam's fiancée, Rebecca Whiteside, and myself. The younger folk were free to organise their own activities, but everyone came together for a ramble on Bray Head and afternoon tea at the Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel on Killiney Hill on Saturday and lunch on Sunday at the Shepherd house just a couple of miles from Dun Laoghaire before we all dispersed.



Cake baked by Grace

Joining us at the Fitzpatrick Hotel were my brother Ross and Robina, sister Avril and Jim who travelled all the way by train to the hotel, also sister-in-law Helen Robinson, former school pal Ken Haughton and old friends Philip and Brigid Jacob, all from the South Dublin area. The birthday cake which had been baked and iced by Grace and carefully transported from Edinburgh was duly cut and enjoyed by all.

By going off to Dublin with the family I realized I was missing the company of a wider circle of friends - cousins, former pupils and colleagues, neighbours and acquaintances. So I decided to have 'Open House' at 48 Addison Park the following Saturday with sessions in the morning, afternoon and evening. In the course of the day I had, appropriately, 90 visitors. It would not have been possible without the assistance of the three daughters in the kitchen who kept up a never-ending flow of tea, coffee and buns. An Irish Wake is a wonderful tradition when the life of the departed is recalled and celebrated. Sadly the main participant has no part in the proceedings. This day was like a living wake for me, who could give thanks with my friends for the many blessings I had received and share with them the good times I had experienced.



A Wallace Fountain in Paris



Aimée with the Shepherd girls at Downhill

After the excitement of the birthday season life returned to its regular routine, but spring was punctuated by a Moira Friendship tour to Westport with good company, delicious meals and the exhilarating scenery of the Wild Atlantic Way. Occasional trips to the North Antrim coast do good to the soul and Ross and I had walks along the rugged cliffs of Fair Head in warm early summer sunshine.

With a certain degree of trepidation I joined a group from Lisburn Historical Society visiting Paris in June on the trail of Sir Richard Wallace, former landlord of vast estates in this area and benefactor to the citizens of Lisburn, London and especially Paris during the Franco-Prussian War. In sweltering heat we visited churches, hospitals, cemeteries, chateaux and numerous fountains erected by Wallace for the suffering populace during the siege of Paris. It had been many years since I had been in the French capital and it was good to be back in old haunts. This time I realized that the Metro stations had so few escalators and so many flights of stairs!

The summer was graduation time for Natasha who completed her Social Work at Queen's and Liam who was awarded a B.A. in Theology from the University of Cumbria. Aimée went back-packing in Thailand in the early part of her vacation before getting a temporary job at the Giant's Causeway. I followed with interest her plans to spend 2018-19 as a Language Assistante in a Primary School in Lyon, as I recalled my year in Clermont-Ferrand in 1951-52.

The major family event in the autumn was the wedding of Liam to Rebecca Whiteside of Markethill in Windsor Baptist Church, Belfast, on 13 October.



Parnell family including bride and groom

Liam and Rebecca had been students at Belfast Bible College and had been close friends since Liam arrived in Ulster. The large reception in a Ballymena hotel was a happy time of reunion for our family and also the Whiteside family from Markethill, some of whom I had known as pupils at Portadown College. I was quite surprised when my Scottish grandson and his wife took up residence in Lisburn, not half a mile from my home, and pleased to have another family member living close by.

During the autumn of 2018 and the following winter my thoughts were often with the Greeves family of Dungannon whose son, Patrick, had been seriously injured in a rugby accident with the Royal School, Dungannon, touring team in South Africa in the month of August. After the scrum



With three daughters at wedding

collapsed Patrick's neck was injured and he became paralysed in the back and lower limbs. He was taken to a local hospital and the distraught parents flew to Port Elizabeth to be with him. When he was stabilized he was flown home to the Royal Victoria Hospital and subsequently to Musgrave Park. The initial prognosis was not good. It was a matter of satisfaction when some feeling was detected in his toes. Members of his home Quaker meeting at Grange were constant in prayer for his recovery, as were many in both South Africa and Ireland.

When I heard of his condition I was greatly moved, as his situation was so similar to my own 74 years before. Like Patrick I had just finished school when illness struck; like him I was about to begin studies and all future plans were put on hold. As I thought of those distant days I was profoundly grateful for my recovery and empathised with Patrick in his long days in hospital. The specialist team of therapists in Musgrave Park worked tirelessly at his rehabilitation. His mother and father made the long journey from Dungannon each day to visit him. News came of slight improvement, of movement in limbs and ability to leave his bed. He was allowed to spend Christmas at home and in January he stood again on his feet.



Outdoor café at Arcadia Portrush



A summer's day in Castlerock

At each stage I re-enacted my own recovery for it was on New Year's Day 1945 that I had stood at the end of my bed for the first time since the previous August. I rejoiced at my own recovery and earnestly prayed for his complete rehabilitation. At Easter 2019 he was finally discharged from hospital and continued to recuperate in his home outside Dungannon. The summer months brought further progress and in September he commenced a course in Music Technology at the Southern Regional College in Armagh, fully mobile and driving independently. It was a wonderful experience tracking his recovery and relating it to my own almost 75 years before.

In the early months of 2019 I noticed a slight deterioration in hearing and night driving became more onerous. A cataract problem was diagnosed and in May and June I had operations in both eyes which somewhat curtailed my mobility. However, the treatment was a great success and everything once again appears sharp and colourful. Hearing came back to normal after a session of microsuction.

In October 2019 the work of my sister-in-law Esther Davis was recalled at an event hosted by The Leprosy Mission to celebrate the refurbishment of the hospital in Nigeria where she had spent many years as a missionary doctor. Grace, Elizabeth and Hilda all came for the event, as well as several of Esther's nephews and nieces from England, Dublin and Ulster. It was particularly significant to have Liam's wife Rebecca present, as she had recently joined the staff of The Leprosy Mission (NI) as Church Partnership Officer.

Later the same month a reunion of the McDonagh grandchildren took place at the Moyallon Centre. All 23 descendants of T.W. and Madeline are still alive and all but six were present. I was the doyen at 91 and the youngest had had his 60th birthday. We had a good time recalling memories of growing up in this closely-knit family and the genetic, intellectual and spiritual heritage we share.

While I have dwelt on the highlights these past months, in reality, more and more time is being spent at home, reading, following current affairs on radio, television and in newspapers, exploring the world through the internet, tracing the exciting lives of grandchildren as they meet new challenges in study, travel and employment and reflecting on my past experiences over ten decades. Life in Lisburn continues its normal active pattern with on-going involvement in Lisburn Friends' Meeting, Friends' School archives, Lisburn and Craigavon Historical Societies, Moira Friendship Group and visits to many friends. One of the great interests now is following the plans of grandchildren as study and travel possibilities develop. Each day brings fresh delights and challenges and a sense of contentment through memories of the past, activities in the present and anticipation of the future. Truly I give thanks for the wonderful life I have experienced thus far and look forward to the challenges and opportunities of a new decade. However, the incoming year was to disrupt life across the world for the entire population in a way which none had previously known or imagined.



The entire tribe in the Shepherds' home at the 90th birthday celebrations

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