

RODDY EVANS

*Glimpses  
into the  
Past*

MEMOIR OF AN IRISH ANGLICAN

James Roderick Evans was born in Co. Meath, Ireland, in 1923. He graduated in medicine from Trinity College, Dublin and the Adelaide Hospital in 1947 and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 1951. He practiced medicine in Dublin and London and later in Asia and South America and has travelled widely in the Middle East and Southern Africa. In 1971 he returned to live in Belfast, where he has experienced at first-hand the unfolding of the historic developments in Northern Ireland over the last thirty years.

*Other publications by the same author:*

**The Second Conversion of Dr. George Dallas (1999)**

**Where I sensed the Breath of God – A footnote in Anglo-Irish History (2002)**

**Reminiscences from a Province in civil conflict – a personal experience (2004)**

# GLIMPSES INTO THE PAST

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## PART 1

# Glimpses into the Past

### Ancestors

**M**y paternal grandfather, James George Evans, arrived in Dublin from England in 1884. He became an apprentice at Eastman's, a well-known butchery firm in the city. He later brought his family over to join him and in the course of time, established his own butcher's shop in Ranelagh. This proved to be a thriving business. Grandfather's own father had been a tea merchant and draper, who lived at Hilltop House in Iron Bridge, in the English county of Shropshire. From there, he travelled the countryside in a pony and trap, selling his goods. He was an active Methodist lay preacher and married twice, raising two families. When his first wife died, he married her niece; the law in those days made the children of the second marriage illegitimate and James Evans was the youngest child of this second marriage. My grandmother was Maud Myra Taylor and she and James made their home in Dublin. Three of her brothers also came to Ireland from England and all three established butcher shops; George in Malahide, James in Dublin's Baggot Street and Harry in Bray.

Some time before the First World War, James Evans bought *Julianstown*,\* a large country house and farm forty miles north of Dublin, near the village of Nobber, Co. Meath. It was a magnificent three-story building, with a basement, advantageously situated on a rise overlooking the river Dee. There was a weir, with a millrace and a corn mill, complete with a traditional waterwheel. Some distance from the house was a farmyard and a large walled garden. Many improvements were made to this property; an extensive apple orchard was added, along with forestry plantations by the roads bordering the farmland; there were stables and a forge, with all the necessary facilities for a stud, and stallions were

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\* For easy identification, the family homes and farms are in italics throughout the book

acquired, including Wildair, a half brother of Cicero, winner of a previous Epsom Derby.

Grandfather was one of the first in the country to own a motorcar, in which he was driven from Dublin to *Julianstown* and back each weekend. This was in the days when the owner of a motorcar was obliged to employ a chauffeur, who drove and cared for the vehicle. However, Grandfather's chauffeur was regularly drunk, so the motorcar was just as regularly off the road for repairs in a local garage. Grandfather strongly suspected that the chauffeur and the garage owner were in league to cheat him, so the chauffeur was sacked and my father was ordered to drive the car. Grandfather's butchers shop in Dublin worked late on Saturdays and he always liked to set out early on Sunday mornings for the drive to *Julianstown*. My father had never driven a car before, so he got up extra early that Sunday morning and did some anxious practice driving. He then found himself faced with reversing the car down a narrow lane at the back of the shop before reaching the street, at which point Grandfather climbed into the back seat, with a stick in his hand, which he used to direct his son all the way to *Julianstown*! Father said that when he reached the front door, his legs were so weak he was unable to get down from the car!

My earliest memory of my Grandfather was of a rather stern old gentleman. I can still see him sitting at the head of the dining room table at teatime, in a large room full of strange, dark oak furniture with fearsome carved gargoyles and satyrs. Timber logs always seemed to be burning brightly in the large fireplace. We children at the table were allowed butter or jam on our bread, but not both.

For us youngsters, *Julianstown* was a source of endless adventure, there was so much to see and explore. There was a large kitchen in the basement with a black coal-burning range. A dumb waiter hoisted food from the kitchen to the dining room upstairs, which we used to hoist ourselves up and down on, when no one was looking! Billy McIlwaine, for many years the general factotum in *Julianstown*, would arrive in the kitchen in the evening to prepare a meal for himself on the range. One evening I watched fascinated as he placed a frying pan on the fire, added suet and then proceeded to cut up several eels, which he must have caught that afternoon in the river. He then added three eggs to the pan and all were fried up together.

A dark passageway ran from the kitchen door to a rear exit and up a flight of stone steps to the outside of the house. To us children, mysterious dark rooms opened on to this passageway. One was a storeroom for coal and another room contained a large clothes mangle where the laundry was done. Father told us that each year his mother had made twelve plum puddings. There was one for Christmas day, one for New Year's Day and one for each of the children's

birthdays; these were stored away and brought out for each of the birthdays in turn. Another memory from those days was a food item at Christmas time, which I have not seen since; this was cold spiced beef, probably a delicacy brought over from England by the family.

On Sunday afternoons, we were sometimes treated to the sight of a sleek, well-groomed racehorse being paraded around the gravel driveway at the front of the house. One day when I was aged three or four, I went missing. After an extensive search, I was discovered in the orchard, stroking the nose of a rather fierce looking stallion. Grandfather sneaked down, using the apple trees as cover and snatched me literally from the horse's mouth. This was not my only escapade: at the age of about six, I decided to go and visit grandmother Evans one afternoon but neglected to inform anyone of my intentions. Grandmother suffered from a debilitating form of rheumatoid arthritis and she was cared for by two of her daughters, Aunt Ina and Aunt Marjorie. On most good days, she would sit in a gazebo on the lawn in front of the house, warmly covered up. I was eventually located at *Julianstown*, having walked the five miles from *Kilbride* to see my granny; there I was, chatting with the old lady and clutching a penknife she had given me. I prized that gift, in spite of cutting my finger with it!

I can't remember ever using a toilet in the house at *Julianstown* but I do remember the privy in the woods, which was a hut straddling a stream, with a seat with holes in it, over one of which you sat - the results were carried away in the stream below. As children, the farmyard was a source of wonder and fascination. The large waterwheel turned when a sluice was opened and this drove whirring belts in a long building, as they worked the corn grinding and turnip cutting machines. There was a circular saw and steel saw bench, also powered by the waterwheel: there were no safeguards for this saw but I never heard of a serious accident.

Billy McIlwaine shoeing horses at the forge was another attraction. He often allowed us to pull the lever that worked the bellows and we watched as the fire made the shoes red hot so they could be hammered into shape on the anvil. This was followed by the sizzle of steam, as the shoes were plunged into cold water and then finally clamped and nailed onto the horse's hooves. A weir dammed the river Dee, which flowed close by the house, and this had a pool in which we learned to swim on summer evenings. In one way or another, through the various phases of its life, *Julianstown* has remained associated with the family ever since.

## **Granny O**

My mother, Constance Elizabeth and her younger sister, Harriet Selina, were the two daughters of Richard and Harriet O'Neill. Granny O, as we called Harriet

O'Neill as children, was the only daughter of Francis McKeever of *Clontail*. Her maternal grandfather, Rev John Rankin and his father, Rev James Rankin, were both Ministers of Ballyalbany Presbyterian Church, outside Monaghan town. Altogether, father and son ministered to that congregation for no less than 75 years from 1794.

The manse, 'Drumcaw', was three miles away from the church. A few years ago, my brother-in-law, Willie McKeever and my sister Hazel and I went to see Ballyalbany church. We found that it was being beautifully kept up and we saw the tablets on an inside wall commemorating the two Rankins. However, the old manse was a ruin; the walls were still standing but there was no roof, which was probably of thatch. Surveying the remains, I concluded that the original house had only two rooms. John Rankin and his wife raised seven children in that house. It seemed a very small house for such a large family.

In 1895, Granny O's father, Francis McKeever, began work on a new house, *Clooney*, near the village of Castletown, Co. Meath. It was a very modern house for those days, boasting an indoor toilet and bathroom! A horse and cart hauled the bricks for the building the fourteen miles from a brick kiln in Kingscourt. When it was completed, Francis moved out of *Clontail*, which was then passed to his son Eddie.

Harriet McKeever was tall and must have been strikingly handsome, perhaps even regal looking, in her youth. Her husband was Richard O'Neill of *Hounslow*, which was close to the village of Fore, renowned in Celtic legend as the 'Village of the Seven Wonders' and the site of a Celtic monastery founded by St. Fechin.

At this time, tuberculosis was endemic in Ireland and few houses escaped this awful scourge. Generations of O'Neills lived in *Hounslow* and many contracted the disease. It was not known then that the tubercle bacillus was a hardy organism that survived long periods in dry and dusty conditions. *Hounslow* must have harboured the bacillus in the many nooks and crannies in the house. Mother always maintained that the tick mattresses used on the beds were the source of the infection. Not surprisingly, Richard contracted the disease and Harriet nursed him until he died, still a young man in 1899. He was buried in Loughcrew churchyard's cemetery and from that day onward, Harriet always wore black, until she herself died 60 years later in 1959 and was laid to rest beside Richard at Loughcrew. This has now become a place of pilgrimage through its association with St. Oliver Plunkett, the martyred Archbishop of Armagh.

Granny O remained in *Hounslow* until her mother-in-law, old Mrs O'Neill died, when she moved with her two daughters to *Shane Lodge* in Wilkinstown, Co. Meath. This house was the property of her brother, John McKeever of

*Gravelmount*. The two girls were sent as borders to The Hall School, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Selina (my Aunt Ena) was considered to be 'delicate' and her recurring illnesses were thought to be due to damp conditions in the school. To remedy this, Granny removed the girls from The Hall and entered them in a Ladies Academy in Belfast. The two Rentoul sisters, the proprietors of this establishment, devoted themselves to turning out young ladies of 'refinement and elegance'. A full-length portrait of one of the Rentoul sisters, attired in the dress she wore when she was presented at Court, hung on the stairway leading up from the entrance hall. Mother loved her time at the Ladies Academy, especially as no such annoyances as examinations existed! And she was very proud of a leather bound book of poetry she won as a prize.

I understand *Hounslow* is now owned by a family who offer B&B accommodation. When I knew it, the house was vacant and as youngsters, we would climb in and out and explore the rooms upstairs and downstairs. We discovered several large steel bins in the ground floor, which we were told had held Indian corn during the 1840s potato famine in Ireland. A local woman, Mary McCormick, who was associated with the O'Neill family for many years, lived in a cottage by a lake, approached by a narrow lane, or as Mother would say, a *boreen*. Each Christmas time, Aunt Ena would fill her car with presents, which would be taken down to Mary. She lived into her nineties and I remember we were all taken down to attend her funeral at Fore.

On leaving school, the two young ladies, Con and Ena, seem to have had a very full and enjoyable social life. They travelled considerable distances, by pony and trap, to attend innumerable parties and dances in the houses of friends and relatives. As we children were growing up, Granny O exercised considerable influence in our lives, until the time came for us to be sent off to boarding school. She made and mended our clothes and was continually knitting pullovers and re-knitting heels and toes of endless pairs of socks that inevitably developed holes - often with different coloured wool! The sewing machine in her workroom was constantly whirring. And she was a stickler for correct grammar and elocution: I was often reprimanded for saying 'yeiz' instead of 'you'. Polite and correct behaviour also commanded her attention: my sister Hazel recounts an occasion when my father, driving Granny, with my mother and Hazel in the rear seat, passed the local squire, Major Pollock, on the road. Granny angrily berated her son-in-law for not raising his hat, to show proper respect for that worthy gentleman. Hazel recalled the journey continuing in stony silence!

Thankfully, Granny seemed immune to tubercular infection. Having nursed her husband with the disease, she next moved to live in *Clooney*, to take care of her youngest brother, Eddie, who also contracted TB. As we grew older,

Sunday afternoons were no longer spent at *Julianstown* but in *Clooney*, where children were expected to stay outside the house and not disturb the adults within. Hazel recalls that some time during the afternoon, a maid in a black dress and white apron would come out with a plate of oranges, carefully cut into quarter sections, which we politely sucked!

Grandmother had the first three-wheeled bike we had ever seen, then or since; one of us tried to ride it but it ran away and ended up in a stream at the end of the avenue.

I remember one occasion with Uncle Eddie, who usually retired after lunch to a small sitting room off the hall, where we saw him helping himself from a bottle of Guinness. We watched, goggled eyed, as he uncorked the bottle and poured the dark brown liquid slowly into a glass; as it's frothy head gathered, we asked, 'What's that?' to which Uncle Eddie replied, 'Its goat's milk.' We, poor innocents, believed him.

During the First World War, Mother enlisted with the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), which amounted to being a nursing assistant. Her first assignment was in Dublin Castle and it seems that she had to undergo some kind of oral examination for VAD volunteers, so presumably, she must have attended a course of lectures. Mother always maintained that the examiner unfairly asked her a trick question: how would she deal with breadcrumbs in a thyroid patient's bed? Mother gave a lengthy explanation of how to make up a bed in the approved hospital style. The correct answer, however, was that there couldn't have been any crumbs in a typhoid patient's bed, since such a patient would not have been given solid food!

While in Dublin Castle, Mother contracted scarlet fever and was confined to hospital herself. One of the fellow sufferers in the hospital at the same time was a young medical student, Russell Warren. Many years later, I chanced to meet up with Russell in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he was the head of a large private hospital. He turned out to be a Good Samaritan to me, as at that time I was medically responsible for a large international group, which included Japanese and Americans. Russell was generosity itself, putting his hospital entirely at my disposal for any of my sick patients. He once told me that as a student in Patrick Dunn's Hospital in Dublin, he had been present at the operation of the famous Constance Markiewicz, who had a burst inflamed appendix and peritonitis. As this was before the discovery of antibiotics, the Countess died.

Later, after recovering from scarlet fever, Mother moved from Dublin Castle to Bray, where her patients were convalescing shell-shocked soldiers. Then, by the grace of God, her husband-to-be returned from the front line, safe and well, at the conclusion of the hostilities in 1918.

## **Father**

My father, Thomas Harry, was the third of the ten children, six boys and four girls, of James George Evans. Three of the boys, Gerald, Walter and John Stephen, died young. When the first baby, James, was christened in church, he bawled so lustily that Grandfather there and then decided that any others he might be blessed with would be baptized when they were older and could behave themselves! As the three boys, James, Harry and Samuel grew up, Grandfather must have worked them hard with the horses on the farm. In any case, my Father decided that he had had enough and with the outbreak of the First World War, he ran away from home to enlist with the Irish Guards, with whom he served and survived four years in the trenches on the Western front. He was offered a commission but refused, reasoning that commissioned officers had a very short life expectancy in the war.

Commanding the Irish Guards was a Colonel Harold Alexander, who later became a famous Field Marshal in the Second World War. Father remembers him sitting in a deck chair on sunny days, twirling his moustache. At that time all officers and men were required to wear moustaches in the Guards and were forbidden to trim them, which became a source of resentment. Father said that his moustache was so big that its ends could meet behind his neck! In retaliation, men soaped the ends to make them stand up, in imitation of the Kaiser. The troops in the trenches had to contend continually with dirt, mud and lice. Whenever they could, in warm dry weather, they removed their uniforms and ran the flame of a lighted candle along the seams, to kill the lice and their nits.

The slaughter of troops on the western front was appalling. Father described a battalion of 1000 men going over the top and when the fighting ceased, only 80 men remained unscathed, with the rest killed or wounded. On one occasion, Father risked his life by advancing cautiously into no-mans-land to bring back the body of his immediate commanding officer. In gratitude, the family of the officer presented Father with a large gunmetal pocket watch. This remained in the family as a treasured possession for many years and I remember bringing it with me to college.

Sometime in 1916, when Father was on leave from the front, he met his cousin Jim Griffiths in London. Jim was serving with the Royal Canadian Flying Corps and he persuaded Father to spend the rest of his leave in *Julianstown*, to make things up with his father. Many years later, I met Jim and his wife Elsie in their weather-board house in the middle of the sprawling modern city of Calgary, Alberta. On a wall of the sitting room was the picture of a bi-winged plane, a model of the one he flew in the war. The house was the one his father had lived in from 1911 when he came with his family to Canada, when Calgary was a small village. It grew into a city as a result of the expansion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Demobbed after the war, Father returned home to *Julianstown*, just as the Anglo-Irish war began. He recalled two personal incidents about that time. The first was when he was travelling into Kells in a sidecar pulled by a rather spirited horse. As he approached the narrow bridge over the Blackwater River on the outskirts of the town, he noticed that a section of the bridge's parapet had been blown away. As he proceeded warily over the bridge, controlling his flighty horse, suddenly he saw a drunken Black & Tan soldier with a Mills bomb in his hand. Trying to keep his horse quiet and convincing the man with the bomb that he was indeed a loyal citizen, took some anxious, tense moments, and the incident ended happily. In the second episode, he found himself arrested by an IRA patrol and taken to its army headquarters. When he was brought before the commanding officer, he and Father recognized each other, as both of them had served in the war in France. The officer issued an order to all his units that Father was not to be arrested or hindered in any way again.

It was at this time that Father became engaged to Constance O'Neill, who lived with her widowed mother and sister Ena, in *Shane Lodge*. David Kenny, who lived in *Knightsdown* nearby, was heard making some disparaging remarks about the O'Neill girls. Father was so incensed, he called at once at *Knightsdown*. Mrs Kenny answered the door, whereupon Father angrily demanded to see her husband. She pointed up the stairs, so Father rushed up, found the culprit, grabbed him, shook him fiercely and shouted, 'If I ever hear you say anything like that about the O'Neill girls again, I will come back and kill you.' As Father came down the stairs to leave the house, Mrs. Kenny was waiting in the hallway, clearly approving of Father's action!

By 1922 the Anglo-Irish war was over and on the 11th January of that year, Thomas Harry Evans and Constance O'Neill were married in Dublin.

### **Early years**

Father and Mother's first home was *Clontail*, Co. Meath, where my grandmother Harriet O'Neill grew up. I was the first offspring, born on 25th January 1923. At that time, the civil war was raging in Southern Ireland. Units of the anti-treaty forces had seized the Four Courts in Dublin. Michael Collins, Defence Minister of the Irish Free State provisional government, was loaned a battery of howitzers from the retiring British army. Collins positioned these guns on the far side of the Liffey, facing the Four Courts and he demanded the surrender of the besieged forces inside the building. When they refused to do so, the guns opened fire: a feature of that bombardment was the vast cloud of Land and Property deeds and all else seen floating over the city, to be lost forever. One of the leaders in the Four Courts, Roderick O'Connor, was captured and executed. Since his name was prominent in the newspapers at the time and Mother rather fancied the name, I was christened James Roderick.

Many years later, when two friends were visiting me in Ireland, I arranged for them to meet Paddy Hilliard, the TD for Navan and the then Fianna Fail Minister of Defence. One of the visitors was a Swiss watchmaker and the other was a Greek Cypriot Customs Officer, who had been a member of Eoka in the war against the British army for Cypriot independence. As soon as we entered Mr Hilliard's office, he looked at me and out of the blue, he asked, 'Are you any relation of Samuel McKeever of *Rahood*?' I replied that I was his nephew and Mr Hilliard remarked, 'Your uncle loaned us his car in the civil war: we returned it – with a bullet hole in it.'

I was very young in those early days in *Clontail* and there are a couple of things I only remember rather vaguely from that time. One was a serious illness I contracted, which I learned much later was diphtheria. This was in the days before the discovery of the successful inoculation against that disease, which affected mainly young children and was often fatal. Fortunately, a Dr Ross, who came out from Navan, suspected diphtheria and took the precaution of injecting me with anti-toxin serum, which probably saved my life. The second memory was of a motorcar, which because of the sound it made, we called a choo-choo. It was a two-seater, with a dickie seat at the rear. Instead of a boot, the back of the car folded down to reveal an extra passenger seat; anyone occupying it was thoroughly exposed to the weather. However, I suppose cars didn't travel very fast in those days.

The family stay at *Clontail* was short. Father had acquired a farm, *Kilbride*, near the village of Nobber, as a wedding gift from his father, which unfortunately carried with it a crippling mortgage that Father never managed to repay. In the evenings after a days work on the farm, Father and Billy McIlwaine spent the time making the house more habitable, with a lean-to kitchen being added at one end. The house was at the end of a row of farmyard outhouses, with a small dairy in between the house and the outhouses. There were just two rooms downstairs, one of which was the sitting room and the other the master bedroom and a single bedroom took in the whole of the upstairs floor. A long lane led from the road to the house and as you approached the entrance, there was a vegetable garden on the left and a small orchard of apple and pear trees on the right. At the far end of the garden there was a dry hole privy, with newspapers used as toilet paper.

Larry McEntee and his brother Phil owned the two grocery businesses in Nobber. Each Saturday evening, Larry would arrive, driving a van drawn by a horse. Mother would have the grocery list of the needs for the coming week at the ready and Larry would supply these from the rear of the van. In time, the horse drawn vehicle was replaced with a motorcar. Father was a heavy cigarette smoker, so the weekly grocery list included several cartons of 'Craven A' filter-

tipped cigarettes and these, with the rest of the groceries, were stored in a cupboard under the kitchen dresser. I knew that when he opened one of those cartons, each containing twenty packets of cigarettes, he would be unaware of how many packets remained and so would be unlikely to miss one packet. With this in mind, one day I stole a packet and crept upstairs with my ill-gotten goods, where I smoked three cigarettes, one after the other, before going downstairs - and bumped into Mother. She obviously smelt me and asked if I had been smoking, to which I promptly replied 'No', the first barefaced lie I can remember - a lie that is seared into my memory ever since.

Mother was not fond of housekeeping. She preferred outdoor activities, such as keeping poultry. So she employed a maid, who made the kitchen her own. One of these maids, May Hand, was the bane of our childhood existence. Not only was she in charge of the kitchen but she took charge of us as well. Hail, rain or sunshine, she drove us out of the house, denying us entry except for meals. To us children, she was a fearsome dragon! Another maid also comes to mind: we boys had set up a carpentry shop in a shed in the orchard where we made feed-troughs for the sheep with wooden planks and nails, which earned us some pocket money. Once while at dinner, which was always at 12 noon, we omitted to safeguard our till and in our absence, a sister of the maid, so my brother Neil tells me, stole our money. Thus we received our first lesson in the ways of this world, learned the hard way.

A young lady, Kathleen Gilsean, lived in a cottage nearby and she undertook our early schooling. Each morning, Neil and I would cycle five miles, accompanied by Kathleen, to the farm at *Mitchelstown*, where our cousin Ivor lived. Kathleen would then sit the three of us down around the dining-room table for two hours of gentle tuition. Halfway through this session, Ivor's mother, Aunt Ena, would enter the room with cups of tea and Marie biscuits and a special delight was dunking these biscuits in the tea. In the afternoon, tuition took place at our home, where Kathleen did her best to instil a love of poetry in us. I can still remember some lines of 'The Ode to Autumn' by John Keats.

Saturday afternoons were spent in the rectory of Castletown church. There, Mrs Alment, the Archdeacon's wife, taught us the rudiments of Christian knowledge in preparation for a Sunday school examination. When the time for examinations came around, a clergyman would arrive at the rectory and arrayed in our best clothes, faces scrubbed and hair brushed, we would sit facing him in the drawing room. I can still remember the Rev James McCann, who later became a Bishop, as a large, corpulent gentleman who surveyed us over the tops of his spectacles and spoke in a deep, gravely bishop-like voice. He once asked Neil, 'Who was the father of John the Baptist?' The answer should have been Zechariah but Neil made a good stab at it with 'Baghariah'.

On Sunday mornings we drove again to Castletown church in a pony and trap, which was stabled in the rectory yard and we walked up the hill to the church. Our family occupied the very back pew on the right of the aisle, while Uncle Johnny and Aunt Ena with our cousins, Ivor and Avril, occupied the back pew on the other side. Most of the congregation in that church were either near or more distant relations.

Christmas time in the rectory, with a lighted tree and Christmas food, was a yearly event. It was one of a number of parties we children enjoyed at that time of the year. However, there was one blot on these happy occasions: each of us was expected to recite a poem while standing before an audience of seated and proud mothers showing off their offspring. My memory goes back to one hasty effort to try to memorise 'The Law of the Jungle' by Rudyard Kipling. Today, I can recall just one line of that poem: 'And the female of the species is more deadly than the male.' Maybe the sentiment expressed in that line has had the subconscious effect on my remaining a bachelor, who knows?

### **More memories of *Kilbride***

Now some vignettes of those days in *Kilbride* that linger in the memory and which are recalled in no particular chronological order. I once saw my father sowing a field of corn in the ancient biblical manner. He paced up and down the length of the field with a large sheet-like sack, containing the seed, suspended in front of him from his shoulders. At each few strides, he scattered the seed onto the ploughed soil with his right hand.

The village of Nobber was about three miles away. As far as I know, its one claim to fame is its association with the last great Irish harper, Blind Turlock O'Carolan, who was born at nearby Spiddal. My many memories of Nobber include Tobins, the sweetie shop run by Mr Tobin and his sister, two very stout people. There we bought packets of imitation liquorice cigarettes, which we pretended to smoke before they were finally eaten. On one occasion we were sold a packet of genuine Woodbine cigarettes by mistake: I can't recall how we dealt with that situation.

Nobber possessed a village hall, where we attended Irish dancing classes, learning some of the basic steps. On another occasion we went to our first movie, put on by a travelling cinema company. One Saturday afternoon we were invited to a children's fancy dress party in the hall. I went dressed as Mahatma Gandhi, wrapped in a white sheet, my face blackened by burnt cork and clutching a packet of salt. This must have been about the time when Gandhi had organised a march to the sea at Dandi in India to make salt, in defiance of a law imposing a tax on salt. Churchill once described Gandhi as 'that naked fakir'; little did I know that many years later I would get to know members of Gandhi family well.

In June each year, Father and Uncle Johnny rented a house beside the beach at Laytown. Everything needed for living in the house, which was empty except for some basic furniture, was loaded up: sheets, pillows, mattresses, pots and pans, crockery, cutlery etc, all of which was then transported to Laytown. Mother and her sister Aunt Ena set up house and we children enjoyed a whole month at the seaside. In later years we enjoyed visits to the seaside at Laytown, Bettystown, Termonfeckin and Clogherhead as we grew up through childhood and into our teenage years.

Besides bathing in the sea, bathing at *Kilbride* was a Saturday night event. A large tin bath was placed before the range in the kitchen and filled with hot water. The same water had to make do for everyone, so there was much competition for who was bathed first in the clean water!

Two elderly bachelors named Eogan lived in a cottage close to *Kilbride*. These two old gentlemen took care of their nephew, George, the son of their sister. For some unexplained reason, she had left him with his uncles. Later in life, George became a distinguished Professor of Archaeology at UCD; he excavated Newgrange and was a world authority on Ireland's ancient burial tombs. Despite his fame, he never forgot or neglected the two uncles who raised him.

Being country born and bred, we always lived with animals. At one time we each owned a cat. Mine had a multicoloured fur coat, so I called him Joseph, after the Bible character. Joseph was a clever cat. There were lots of cats at *Kilbride* and on cold days they would congregate on a wood-pile opposite the kitchen door, in the fond hope that someone would leave the kitchen door ajar, offering them the opportunity of trooping into the kitchen to sit by the warm range. Joseph worked out how to open the kitchen door: he would jump up, putting one paw round the handle of the latch to support himself and then press the latch lever down with the other paw. All the other cats were marshalled to line up at the bottom of the door and when they heard the latch click, they would give a combined push. Synchronising this operation was the key to success and it often took several attempts to get it right, but when it worked, all the cats would rush in to the warmth. Joseph met a sad end: he became a little too friendly and curious, wanting to take part in all our various activities and one day Neil was chopping sticks with an axe and the cat jumped up on the chopping block, just as the axe was coming down...

A neighbour, Jack Sellery, lived in *Cellar*, a farm adjacent to *Kilbride*. Father was by way of being an amateur vet and had devised a treatment for a condition in calves called hooves, a persistent cough caused by small worms in the animal's lungs. The remedy consisted of an injection into the calf's windpipe of a potent concoction made up of various ingredients, two of which were

methyated spirits and creosote. Jack asked my father to treat his calves and in return, he gave us all a short cruise in his de Haviland Moth aeroplane, which he flew from a field in front of the house. Dad went up first and then it was the turn of Neil and me. As there was only one passenger seat beside the pilot, Neil, being younger, was consigned to the luggage space behind the seats. This was our first experience of flying, though Neil felt somewhat cheated by been crammed in behind the pilot and me!

The final vignette concerns a most distressing occasion. One afternoon we all arrived home from some outing and beheld a sight we shall never forget. The paddock, and the hedges all around it, were strewn with more than 100 dead hens, which were Mother's pride and joy. Obviously, it was a fox that had done the damage. There was a covert, close to the farmyard, in a field called the 'Big Bransa' and this was a favourite visiting locale of the hunt when they wished to raise a fox. This was a sad family tragedy but perhaps it was just a prelude to more serious and painful events that would take place in the very near future.

### **Hard Times**

The boom years in farming following the First World War gave way in the 1920s to bleaker times. The Wall Street crash of 1929, leading to the Great Depression, worsened farming prospects. In Ireland the tragedy was compounded by another event, the Anglo-Irish economic war that began in 1932 and lasted six years.

The roots of this war go back to the land agitation in Ireland of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, culminating in the Wyndham Act of the Westminster parliament in 1903. This enabled the British government to buy out landlords in Ireland and gave the tenants the freehold of their farms. In return, the administration in Ireland undertook to pay back the financial loans to the British government required for the buy-out. The repayment to Great Britain of these loans was scheduled to be completed over a fixed number of years, stretching into the middle of the twentieth century.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed in London on the 6th of December 1921, established the Irish Free State the following year. For the next ten years, Liam Cosgrave and his pro-treaty side in the civil war were the government of the State. Then in the general election of 1932, Eamon de Valera led the anti-treaty forces into power for the first time in Dublin. This new government refused to honour the terms of the land repayments, known as the Annuities, as de Valera took the view that Ireland should not have to pay a British government for land that was rightly the property of the Irish people. In retaliation, the London government slapped a 20% tariff on all Irish goods entering Britain. This hit the Irish farming industry very hard indeed.

1932 turned out to be a landmark year for the young, independent Ireland. De Valera and his Fianna Fail party were to remain in power for the next sixteen years. The economic war was ended in 1938 with an agreement between Dublin and London, brokered on the British side by Malcolm McDonald, on behalf of Neville Chamberlain and by de Valera for the Irish. In the negotiations to reach that agreement, de Valera also sought the return of Irish ports that had been handed to Britain under the terms of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. Amazingly, he managed to win them back and this made it possible for Ireland to remain neutral throughout the Second World War.

Some events in that fateful year of 1932, when I was nine, remain in my memory. On the day the general election results were declared, we were visiting Uncle Sammy and Aunt Myra in *Rahood*. In a field beside the barns at the back of the house, we found a great bonfire blazing, a spectacle we children enjoyed enormously. Uncle Sammy, unlike his Protestant relations and neighbours, was an active supporter of de Valera and Fianna Fail.

Another of my memories was the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress, when every town and village in Ireland was decorated with Papal flags and bunting. Many years later, I came to know Paddy Little very well; he was a close friend of de Valera and served in the government as Minister of Post and Telegraphs. Paddy told me how the Vatican in Rome had been appalled by the news of the change of government in Dublin. The Church feared that a beloved Catholic country had fallen into the hands of 'uncivilised and savage rebels'. They were amazed when de Valera, with his Ministers and government, played their full part in the events of the Congress.

Returning to the plight of the farming community in those harsh economic times. Father's position in *Kilbride* was jeopardised by loans and mortgages held by a Mrs Janie Onions, who had the title deeds of the farm. When she decided to foreclose the debt, overnight Father was without a home or any means of supporting his family. Even the improvements Father had made to the farm and buildings at *Kilbride* received no compensation whatsoever. I can still remember seeing all the farm machinery laid out in the back paddock in preparation for a public auction. Father left with only £5 in his pocket. The resulting animosity between the two families was long lasting. Shortly before her death many years later, I asked Mother if she had ever hated anyone and she snapped back, 'Yes, two people - and one of them is dead.' The dead one was old David Kenny and the living one was Janie Onions. About this time Father's sister Ina celebrated her 25th wedding anniversary and gave a small dinner party in her house for close family relations. By chance, Mother and Janie Onions, both now widows, were placed opposite each other at the table; however, I was seated too far away to hear what, if anything, the two ladies said to each other.

*Julianstown*, where Father had been brought up, had two redbrick attached cottages and these became our home during the time our family faced those very difficult years. Father took up butchery, for which he had earlier been trained in the Dublin shop. He converted some of the buildings in the yard to meet his needs: one became a butchers shop, another an abattoir and a third where he made sausages. Because of the prohibitive tariffs on Irish livestock entering Great Britain, the Irish government was compelled to find other outlets for Irish meat. In those days, the diet of most families in rural Ireland consisted of bread, milk and potatoes with the occasional addition of bacon. The government issued meat vouchers, so families could add fresh meat to their diet, many for the first time.

Father was assisted in his new endeavour by his sister Marjorie, who worked in the shop and a local man, Mick Cluskey, travelled the countryside supplying rural households with fresh meat. Later, Father expanded into poultry and eggs; every Friday he drove to Dublin with a van supplying at first his relatives and then a wider range of customers. He worked very hard and put in long hours, over a number of tough years. We children hung about at the *Julianstown* yard, watching all that went on, such as the slaughter of the cattle, sheep and lambs.

### ***Clontail***

Some time during the 1930s, Mother's uncle Eddie McKeever died and Mother inherited *Clontail*, the home where her own mother grew up and where several generations of her family had lived. So Father and Mother returned to the farm where they began their married life and they remained there to the end of their days. Thankfully, this move eased the financial situation for the family; however, Father continued his butchery business right up to the beginning of the 1940s, although the meat tailed off and he was left with mainly poultry and eggs.

In the years leading up to the Second World War and through the war itself and onwards, there were so many facets of family life in *Clontail*, that space, and perhaps the patience of the reader, dictates that only some of these can be recorded.

Neddy Fitzpatrick took care of the farm horses, as tractors were still in the future. Jimmy Carolan looked after the farm machinery and Peter Young was the general factotum, available to Mother when she needed him. Every morning he carried two pails of household drinking water on a yoke a quarter of a mile from a well. He tended to the garden and helped with the poultry and there were two or three other men who made up the farm labour force. Each day, work began at 8 a.m. and finished at 6 p.m., six days a week, with one hour between 12 noon and 1 p.m. for dinner. Wintertime was the standard time all year round, so if asked the time, the reply had to be defined as 'old' or 'new'. On Saturday night,

the men came in and signed for their wages of £1 a week and the maids earned 10 shillings.

Neil and I did our share of farm work, particularly in the summer holidays and summer and autumn were the busy seasons. First came haymaking and on fine days, work in the hayfield went on until dark and on such days, food would be brought out about 5 o'clock - tea, buttermilk, bread and jam. Next came the harvesting of the wheat and corn. During the war, known in Ireland as the Emergency, each farm had to produce an allocated acreage of cereals, known as the tillage quota. Harvesting was by a binder, which tied the corn and wheat in sheaves, as the combine harvester had not yet been invented. Like haymaking, binder harvesting was labour intensive. The hay was first made up in haystacks in the fields, then brought in on sleds and packed into the hay sheds. The wheat and corn was brought in and built into outside ricks. Finally, the thrashing machine arrived, hauled into the haggard by what seemed like a 'fire-breathing' diesel traction engine called a Titan. It usually took three days to thrash the wheat and corn. All the men involved in this operation were fed a midday meal.

Mother hated the thrashing days and kept well clear of the kitchen. Happily, an elderly lady, Mary McGurk would come in to help and unlike Mother, she loved this work. Mary also came in every Monday to do the laundry. Detergents and washing machines were unheard of, so the washing was done in a large tin bath of hot water, with lots of Queens or Lifebuoy soap and a scrubbing board. Then on Tuesdays, Mary returned to do the ironing. Mary had what are known as 'dinner fork' deformities of both wrists, indicating that at some time in the past she had sustained untreated Collis fractures. However, as far as I could tell, this didn't seem to impede her in any way. These were also the days before vacuum cleaners, so spring-cleaning could be a very dusty business. Carpets were lifted, taken outside and hung on a line, where they were then beaten vigorously. A dry windy day was best for this procedure and the beater would be wise to attack the carpet on the windward side!

Mother kept lots of poultry: laying hens, chickens for the pot, turkeys for Christmas and at one time, guinea fowl and ducks. She would often have as many as 30 dozen eggs in a week and these were taken to James Slevin's shop in Ardee, where they were bartered for the family groceries. Hens that developed into hatchers were treated by immersion in a bucket of cold water: this prevented them from spoiling the nests of fresh eggs. When hens had passed their egg-laying life, Mother would send for the hen haggler, who arrived in an old lorry loaded with empty crates and a weighing balance. As he weighed a hen with his spring balance, his opening gambit would be, 'This is nothing but a bunch of old feathers,' then the bargaining would begin. I remember one occasion when Mother, in frustration, locked the haggler in the hen house!

During the Emergency, Mother also reared pigs. When the current fattened pig was ready for slaughter, Podge Farrelly was brought in. The carcass was first immersed in salt, then cut up into pieces, which were each wrapped in muslin and hung from hooks in the kitchen ceiling. Mother was also a butter maker. One of our chores was turning the churn until the cream inside became butter: there was a round window in the top of the churn and as soon as this became clear, the lid could be taken off and there the butter would be, floating in the whey, the reward for our efforts. On one occasion, a mouse was found in the churn - the poor little creature must have fallen into the cream and drowned; none of the ladies would eat the butter but we boys were not put off. Mother's butter was another bargaining item for groceries from James Slevin.

Neil and I shared a bedroom, which faced the front of the house. Throughout the Emergency, there was severe rationing of certain items, such as sugar and tea and in our bedroom there was a cupboard known as the 'black market'. Mother had various sources from which she could purchase extra supplies of these scarce commodities. Father frowned on this but never the less benefited from its existence! He enjoyed cups of tea at intervals throughout the day, with milk and sugar; Mother tried unsuccessfully to wean him on to saccharine. He was once heard to remark, 'This Emergency has made liars and blackguards of us all.'

In the early years in *Clontail*, lighting was by paraffin lamps. These had adjustable wicks and when the wicks were raised too high, the glass globes were blackened by soot or would crack, so cleaning lamp globes was one of the household chores. An advance on the paraffin lamp came with DIY electric light: Father erected a tall wooden post at the back of the house, on the top of which was attached a specially adapted car dynamo and wind fan. This contraption hopefully maintained a series of 12-volt batteries in a fully charged condition – the precursor of the now common wind turbine generator.

One of the first major projects undertaken by the newly established Irish Free State was the Shannon Hydro Electrical Scheme. This was followed by a campaign to supply electric power to all of rural Ireland. As soon as a sufficient number of households requested electrification, a supply was installed. Father personally called on all the families in the *Clontail* area, seeking their agreement for electric power to be supplied. However, his first attempt failed because too many were daunted by the thought of paying a regular electricity bill, but his second attempt succeeded and our home was finally connected to the grid.

Fuel for cooking and heating was another factor during the Emergency. Some time before the war, Father had acquired an Aga cooker from the old Baggot Street butchers shop in Dublin. With considerable foresight, he bought five tons of anthracite and stored it in an old quarry at the back of the house. This

turned out to be sufficient to fuel the Aga throughout the four years of the war. In addition, every year Father went to the Ardee bog with a tractor and trailer and brought home a load of turf; this helped to keep an open log fire in our sitting-room cheerfully alight.

As is well known, the Irish Free State declared itself neutral at the outbreak of the Second World War. Father had received a small pension from the British government for his service in the First World War. This had often been a lifeline for Mother in the harsh economic times between the wars. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Father felt that it was his patriotic contribution to the war effort to forego his pension; however, he took this decision without Mother's blessing.

Realistically, de Valera had little option but to declare the Irish nation neutral, a decision that greatly incensed Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister. Early in the war, Churchill tried to offer de Valera the North of Ireland if he would bring Ireland into the war; this met with no response. In 1938, the Chamberlain government had returned the Irish ports and this denied Churchill any legal pretext for seizing them, which undoubtedly he would have attempted, with dire consequences. The whole episode resulted in lasting animosity between de Valera and Churchill.

To meet possible threats of invasion, the Irish government launched a programme to train civilians in the use of arms and Neil and I both joined the LDF (Local Defence Force). Neil was part of the LDF near Clontail and I was in the Trinity College Force. Father enthusiastically took up training civilians in the principles of First Aid. After first mastering a basic course, he then taught night classes in all the local schools. At the close of the Emergency, the district and many of his pupils made him a presentation in gratitude.

Our amusements in those days were much simpler than those of today, but just as enjoyable nonetheless. We had the radio but, of course, no television and there was no telephone, so very urgent messages were sent by telegram. If you wanted to send one, a visit to the Post Office in Lobinstown was essential. As they were not common, the arrival of a telegram was usually associated with bad news. There was strict petrol rationing, so travel was mostly by bicycle or pony and trap. An old van or car could be fitted with a heavy, bulky contraption that produced gas from charcoal and a spare sack was always carried in reserve.

Saturday night was picture night and we cycled in to the cinema in Ardee and took our seats in the front row of the balcony, which were known locally as the 'Protestant' seats. However, this didn't prevent the seats from visitation by fleas! On other evenings, following our 6 o'clock high tea, we would all sit around a turf fire in the sitting room and read. Father's reading was cowboy Westerns, which he loved and Mother would bring back several each week from

a lending library in Ardee. She was a devotee of happy romances - she hated a book that ended sadly, everything had to have happy endings! At 9 p.m. sharp, tea would arrive in from the kitchen and we listened to the BBC news on the radio. Other radio 'musts' were Churchill's wartime speeches, the All Ireland Gaelic football finals from Croke Park and cricket test matches. I remember the summer afternoon when we followed Len Hutton's record-breaking innings of 364 runs at Headingley, Leeds.

### **School Days**

In 1934, Neil and I and our cousin Ivor were sent as weekly boarders to Preston School in Navan, under the care of the headmaster, Mr Kirk. Here we were prepared for the entrance examination to The Kings Hospital School and in due course, we were enrolled in this Dublin school. We spent the next six years coming home three times a year for school holidays. Our sister Hazel also went to Preston and then to Alexandra Girls School in Dublin, where all the girls were from Protestant families.

The School, in Blackhall Place, Dublin, was founded in the reign of Charles II. The King's portrait looked down on us as we took our meals in the dining room. Previously known as The Blue Coat School because of the distinctive uniform the boys wore, it was created for the education of poor Protestant boys and catered solely for boarders. The two most senior Church of Ireland clerics, the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, were on the Board of Governors and at one time, this included the famous Dean Jonathan Swift. By the time we went there, the school had become so well endowed the annual fees were ridiculously low and in addition, all the boys received a new suit of clothes and a pair of shoes every year.

The building was a listed Georgian edifice, and my clearest memory is of the long and rather forbidding cold stone-flagged corridors. These were particularly chilly in winter, especially during the Emergency, when fuel was in such short supply. At the rear of the school there was a military barracks on one side of the playing fields and a hosiery factory on the other side. The games played were hockey, rugby and cricket and we competed with the other Dublin schools. I enjoyed the sports side of school life much more than the academic, being captain of rugby and vice-captain of cricket and was selected to play for Leinster schoolboys in both.

In our day, corporal punishment was widely practised. Prefects were permitted to administer two to six strokes with a strap on the backside of an erring boy, the number of whacks depending on the seriousness of the offence. There was also 'fagging', where senior boys could order juniors to clean and polish their dirty rigger boots, etc., while as prefects, we only had to put our

1 Father as a Guardsman in the First World War



2 Mother as a young woman





3 A family portrait of the wedding of Thomas Henry Evans and Constance Elizabeth O'Neill on 11th January, 1922

- 1 Grandfather James Evans
- 2 Mother
- 3 Father
- 4 Grandmother Harriet O'Neill
- 5 & 6 Ted Wilson and his wife Nora, father's sister
- 7 & 8 Sam McKeever of *Rahood* and his wife Myra, father's sister
- 9 Kathleen Wilson, bridesmaid and Sam's sister
- 10 James Evans, father's brother
- 11 & 12 Johnny McKeever of *Mitchelstown* and Ena, his wife and mother's sister



4 The marriage of my brother Neil to Joyce Griffin on 30th March 1952. On the left is Harriet O'Neill and my father and mother and on the right are Mr & Mrs George Griffin



5 The wedding of my younger brother Jef to Marion Cooper on 22nd March 1962



6 My sister Hazel and her husband William McKeever with their eldest son Stuart on the right, with Eric and Andrew

- 7 *Hilltop House*, Ironbridge in Shropshire, England, where my grandfather James Evans grew up.



- 8 *Julianstown*, the home of my grandfather and grandmother Evans, where my father grew up. My nephew Eric lives there now, with his wife Carola



- 9 *Kilbride* as it is today, a run-down farmyard shed. Note where the lean-to kitchen built by my father used to be, against the gable end





10 *The Red Houses* attached to *Julianstown*. Our family lived there in the 1930s. Hazel and Jef are at the gate and my mother is gardening

11 *Clontail*, which was built by my great-great-grandfather Sam McKeever and is now the home of my brother Neil and his wife Joyce



- 12 *Clooney*, built by my great-grandfather Francis McKeever, at the turn of the 19th century



- 13 *Hounslow* as a B&B, which it is today. It was the home of Richard and Harriet O'Neill, where my mother spent her early years



- 14 *Shane Lodge*, the home of my grandmother Harriet O'Neill (Granny O) and her two daughters, my mother and Aunt Ena. I stayed there as an infant



heads out of our study door and order the first small boy who came along to come in and make toast at the fire, while we prefects sat and enjoyed our afternoon tea.

When boys reached the 4th form, they were summoned to appear before the Headmaster, the Rev. J.J. Butler, in his study. Each boy would be asked what they intended to do by way of a career when they left school. To those who were vague about their future, J.J. would suggest that they might consider the Church; thus the Head became an ardent and successful recruiter to the ministry of the Church of Ireland. Many worthy young men went on for ordination and graced the profession, but the Church also received its share of some very unlikely characters from this process!

The school had a beautiful chapel, with a stained-glass east window designed by Evie Hone. Each school day began with prayers in this chapel before classes commenced and there were morning and evening services every Sunday. At the beginning of their school life, every boy was auditioned for the choir; being a chorister meant some extra privileges. Neither Ivor, Neil or I could sing in tune, so we didn't make the grade; indeed, when the choirmaster asked me to sing 'There is a green hill far away' at my audition, he interrupted after only the first line with, 'I think that will do, thank you, Evans.'

There was an exeat system that allowed boys to visit their families or relatives on Sunday afternoons once a month. During our first term Ivor, Neil and I took advantage of this facility and on the first few exeats, Kathleen Wilson took us out (she was Mother's bridesmaid). She did her best to entertain us but being small boys, we were bored, so we next tried Aunt Florrie, who was Grandmother O'Neill's sister-in-law. Again, we had to endure a couple of afternoons of sheer boredom. So that was the end of exeats for us!

However, we discovered that remaining behind in school, when all the other boys had gone out, turned out to be great fun. We were an elite group who could do what we liked and there was an extra bonus: at teatime large, earthenware jars of jam appeared on the table as a special treat. As well as enjoying jam on our bread, we would arrive at tea with an empty jam pot hidden inside our coats and when no one in authority was looking, it was a simple matter to fill up the hidden pot! Of the three of us, Neil was the one with the natural entrepreneurial talent, which he exercised particularly on exeat days: he discovered that some boys were always short of pocket money, so he would meet their need with a loan which had to be repaid to Neil with interest as soon as the boys returned to school!

Father decided that Neil should try for a job with the RCB (Representative Church Body), the business office that administers the Church of Ireland. Neil went for an interview, during which he was asked to speak into a microphone for three minutes on any subject of his choice. Afterwards, in describing his response

to this request, Neil told us he went into a complete fog and didn't re-emerge until the interview was over! As later events in his life turned out, it was just as well he was not considered suitable for a post in the RCB.

As was the custom, all the boys were given the choice of studying either commerce or science in their final year. Neil chose commerce and I opted for science. Both Ivor and Neil probably studied diligently but I managed to get away with the minimum of work, just scraping through. Undaunted, I decided to try for a university scholarship at Trinity College, Dublin. Not entirely surprisingly, the teaching staff at the school didn't particularly encourage me from attempting this, but neither did they make any effort to prevent me. So I had to do the best I could without any help and in the event, although I didn't win a full scholarship, I did do well enough to earn half fees for four years.

### **University**

In the autumn of 1941 I enrolled at Trinity College Dublin and cousin Ivor decided to join me there, as his mother was keen for him to study for the Church. I felt that Aunt Ena's real motivation in urging her son to consider ordination was that there was a certain social caché in being ordained into the Church of Ireland. Anyway, Ivor and I were allocated rooms at 13 Botany Bay, a well-known square in the College.

By modern standards these rooms were primitive in the extreme. On entering, there was a short passage leading to the sitting room. Immediately on the left was a recess containing a large bin for storing turf, as no coal was then available in Ireland. On the right was a shelf with a gas ring, the sole method for cooking; the Dublin Gas Company only supplied gas at certain periods of the day. The only means of heating was a small fire grate in the sitting room. The furniture in this room consisted of a table with a few chairs and some built-in bookshelves. Any other furnishings, such as a carpet, had to be provided by the students who occupied the rooms. Usually, the outgoing students were eager to sell-off the extra furnishing to incomers, commonly at a knockdown price. Two single bedrooms opened off the sitting room, each of which had a washstand with a basin and water jug. Toilets were outside, at the back of Botany Bay and at the far end of the Bay there was a bathhouse: students were entitled to one hot bath a week, arranged on a rota basis. An elderly manservant, known as a 'skip', came in after breakfast to wash up, make the beds and generally clean up; he didn't overly exert himself. Bicycles were the standard means of transport; they were never stolen but were often borrowed without permission. However, they could always be found somewhere around the college, wherever the borrowers had left them.

A renowned lady, Miss Montgomery, supervised catering in the college. How she managed to procure the food in the times of severe rationing, I will

never know. At midday she ran a buffet in the dining hall, where any economically hard-pressed student could get half a scotch egg and a mound of mashed potatoes with gravy for nine pence. It was mandatory for students living in the College to attend Commons at least four times a week. This was an excellent meal served at 6 p.m. in the dining hall, at which gowns were worn and the dinner began with a role call by the Head Porter, followed by a long grace, rattled off at high speed in Latin by a Scholar. At 9 p.m., a Porter, carrying an ancient lantern, would escort the Junior Dean from his rooms in the New Square to the porch of the College Chapel in the front square. There, a role call of resident students would be made and the rule was that all students had to be in the College at least four times a week.

There were strict rules for ladies, who were obliged to be out of the College by 6 p.m. However, the New Library was open until 9 p.m. and since it had a reading room for study, women students who wanted to use this facility were only allowed to enter the College after 6 p.m. if they clocked in at the Porter's Lodge, walked across the square, which only took a couple of minutes, and clocked-in again at the Library. The whole procedure was then reversed when they left. If it happened that a lady took too long, where was she and what had she been doing? Of course, this tedious folderol was to insure that women didn't secretly visit men's rooms in the College; if they did want to visit men friends, they had to seek permission and couldn't stay beyond 6 p.m.

At that time the Long Room in the main Library building was always open. This was where the famous illustrated medieval Book of Kells rested in a glass case on a table in the centre of the room. It had no protection whatsoever and anyone could walk into the room to view it, whereas today, it is in an environmentally controlled room, watched over by special attendants and there is an entrance fee, often with a long queue. In our day, during the Emergency, we resident students were on a duty rota for all-night patrols of the grounds and College buildings, in case of air attack from the Germans and the possibility of incendiary bombs landing on the Long Room.

### **Medical School**

My years of academic idleness in The Kings Hospital sustained a severe jolt as soon as I entered the medical school - I was expected to study hard and diligently. At the end of the first year, besides doing the medical examinations, a few of us, including a distant cousin, Stuart Strong, took an examination in Natural Science. Top marks in this examination earned a student £5, which in those days was a princely sum, really worth something. With it we bought our medical textbooks for the next year. Ivor had embarked on Honours in Mental and Moral Science, a course favoured by students entering Divinity School and he also began studies in Hebrew.

All medical students in Trinity were obliged to do a four year Arts degree, which included philosophy, ethics, English, two languages and science and this course ran concurrently with the medical degree. At the end of four years, we potential medics were conferred with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Our examiners in these Arts subjects came from true academia and had a low opinion of the intellectual abilities of medical students. However, this worked to our advantage, as they tended to be lenient towards us in marking our exam papers, which, of course, we played up to.

The College chaplain at this time was the Rev George Otto Simms, who happened to live in the rooms next door to mine. He was very good to me during my time there and often invited me to join him for supper. In the years that followed, he continued this helpfulness: he was that kind of man. He later became Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

Stuart Strong and his elder brother Trevor were leading lights in the Evangelical Students Union, which they invited me to join, but their form of evangelism was not something I was familiar with. There was another similar group, the Student Christian Movement; although their objectives seemed worthy to me, at that time in Trinity their meetings were not particularly inspiring. Then, one evening while I was reading in the Library, an engineering student, Fred Abraham, whom I knew well, as we had played rugby together for Leinster school boys, offered to lend me a book called 'Innocent Men', by Peter Howard, the English Fleet Street journalist.

This book described the work of the Oxford Group, which presented Christianity in a way that appealed to me. I will always be grateful for two immediate practical results. Firstly, I gave up smoking: most of us at Medical School smoked and since the harmful effects of tobacco were not then known, I had followed suit. Thankfully, I have managed to keep clear of the habit ever since. Secondly, I renewed my decision to stick to the Pledge, which we had signed up to as a family many years before, with Archdeacon Alment at Castletown church. To my surprise, Ivor strongly objected to this turn of events, going to the length of walking out of the room whenever any of my friends came to visit. Some years later, I learned he had been saying unpleasant things to my family about me. However, in later life, we became good friends again and nothing was ever said about this distasteful episode. Indeed, I was asked to give an address at his funeral service.

One of the interesting facets of life at Trinity was that the College had a mission on the Shankill Road in Belfast, catering for working class families who lived in the narrow streets of the neighborhood. There was a comfortable residency in Bootle Street, not far away from the little tin church and Trinity students were encouraged to visit and work in the parish. I made several visits to

Belfast during the war, where I did house and hospital visiting as well as attending services in the little church. This also gave me an opportunity to attend clinics in the Royal Victoria Hospital. Of course, Belfast was a world away from Dublin; the blackout was strictly observed and parts of the city were in ruins from German bombing raids. It was the first time I had experienced seeing policemen going about their normal duties armed with revolvers.

During my time at medical school, my youngest brother Jef was a boarder at The King's Hospital School and I would take him out on occasions, with our cousin Jimmy Evans, for a mixed grill at Jury's Hotel, always provided my finances were equal to meeting the outlay! I owe Jef a debt of gratitude for kindly typing this manuscript you are now reading: thankfully, he managed to decipher most of my illegible handwriting.

### **Adelaide Hospital**

Towards the end of our third year at Trinity, Stuart Strong and I, along with two others, decided to take the first of two examinations that would lead eventually to Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons. These were open to medical students before they had taken their finals. All four of us passed and by June 1951, I had completed the second part of the Fellowship exams. On that occasion, five of us were successful, including an old friend who studied with me, Jack Coolican. His father was head surgeon at the old Mercers Hospital and we both attended his clinical lectures. All these old hospitals in Dublin have now gone and Mercers is the library of The Royal College of Surgeons.

At the end of the third year, all students began their clinical ward rounds in Dublin hospitals and I decided on the Adelaide Hospital for my clinical experience. Internship in the hospital followed and we would cycle from there to attend lectures in the College: since there was limited petrol for cars in those war times, everyone in Dublin rode a bicycle. After more than fifty years, I am still a member of the Adelaide Hospital Association.

It is extraordinary by today's standards what we students were allowed to do back then. We were in charge of the outpatient casualty clinic; if we were completely stuck, we could ask for help from the house surgeon, who was not always pleased to be called on. All hospitals in Dublin treated many cases of tuberculosis, which would manifest itself in all organs of the body, lungs, bones, kidneys and brain. There were no antibiotics then effective against the tubercle bacillus. Geoffrey Bewley specialised in the pulmonary infections. As students our role in these cases consisted of doing the regular blood tests and examining sputum samples under a microscope for the bacillus. So even as students, we had plenty of hands-on experience, which is something that is not possible for today's students of medicine.

Obstetrics and gynaecology entailed a period of residency in the Rotunda Hospital. While there, students were sent out to deliver babies in the tenements of Dublin. Whenever a call came in to the hospital, a bell would ring in the Residency – and another bell would ring in the pub across the road! This was a summons for the next two students on the rota to set off on their bicycles, with a small medical bag, to do the delivery. A fellow student and I answered one such call and we arrived at a typical tenement flat, to find the woman in the final stages of labour. The baby presented itself as a breech delivery. Fortunately, I had read the textbook describing how to effect delivery in this situation. Although I knew technically what to do, I had never actually done it. It was too late to send for expert help and my fellow student didn't have a clue, so with fingers crossed with fervent hope and applying the textbook instructions, the baby duly arrived, normal and healthy. Again, I can't imagine students today being allowed to do what was then routine work for us.

The senior surgeon in the Adelaide was William Pearson, who was also Professor of Surgery in Trinity. His surgery lectures were modules of excellence and provided us with a thorough grounding in the basics of the discipline. However, he suffered from a condition common to surgeons in those days – except that he had it in a marked degree, namely, megalomania: Willie Pearson considered himself to be lord god almighty. He had married a theatre Sister in the Adelaide who seemed to have been the one person who could stand up to him. There is an apocryphal story about them: one day in the operating theatre, a fly was buzzing around as Mr. Pearson was operating and he complained to the Sister. She turned to a nurse and said, 'Nurse, see to it that a cap and gown is put on that fly.'

Willie Pearson could be extremely sarcastic to students he took a dislike to. There was no apparent reason for this attitude towards any particular victim of his displeasure. Every student lived in fear of his tongue. I followed Stuart as a house surgeon in the Adelaide. Pearson never once spoke to Stuart, during his six months as his assistant; instructions were given to someone else to be relayed to Stuart. When Stuart was leaving the Adelaide, he asked Pearson to give him a letter of recommendation: these were the forerunners of today's CVs. However, Pearson told him, 'Any letter I would give you, boy, would do you no good.' In compensation for this outrageous attitude, two other surgeons at the Adelaide, Nigel Kinnear and Stanley McCollum, presented Stuart with glowing letters. Later, when Stuart went for an interview to join the famous Leckey Clinic in Boston, Frank Leckey told him that when he had read those letters, he rather expected Stuart to arrive walking on water!

To be selected to serve as a house surgeon or physician at the Adelaide as the first post when qualifying as a doctor was regarded as a singular honour.

However, what that honour actually conferred was free board and a salary of £6-8 shillings a month - and a work schedule of twenty-four hours a day!

### **A narrow escape!**

There is one incident in my tour of duty as house surgeon at the Adelaide Hospital which I feel I can relate now, as more than fifty years have lapsed.

An old man was admitted with a fracture of the shaft of the thighbone sustained in a street accident. Collis Somerville-Large had arrived back from the war with new orthopaedic ideas. In the old days this type of fracture was treated by erecting a frame around the patient's bed and attaching the injured limb to a system of weights and pullies. The patient was then confined to bed, lying on his back for six months or until some mending of the broken bone took place. It was not a very satisfactory solution, particularly for old people, who often died from the prolonged immobilisation.

Somerville-Large was keen to try a new approach, a method that is now standard practice for this type of fracture. The procedure entailed passing a steel rod down the medullary cavity of the thighbone through the site of the break, thus firmly holding the two sections of the bone together. The patient could then be helped out of bed very quickly. But in this case, as the old saying goes, 'the operation was successful but the patient died'. Somerville-Large ordered my fellow house surgeon, Leslie Archer, to make absolutely sure that the thighbone was removed with the steel rod in situ before the body was taken from the hospital.

About 6 p.m. that evening, Leslie and I were doing our ward rounds of the hospital, signing up drugs for patients. We had planned to head out later that evening to a cinema in Greystones, as Leslie owned a Morgan Roadster and we were looking forward to a drive into the country. When we were on the top landing, we happened to look out the window and to our horror, saw a hearse drawn up outside the mortuary exit doors, with a group of relatives standing around. What should we do? There were two possibilities: the first was to try to delay the removal of the body and the second was to go to the chapel of rest when we got back from Greystones and attempt to remove the bone there. The first option seemed the best. Leslie rushed down the stairs and managed to persuade the Porter to delay opening the doors of the mortuary for as long as possible. Then Leslie and I slipped through a rear door in the mortuary and took the body into the post mortem room, where we removed the thighbone with the inserted steel rod as quickly as we could. However, we were then faced with an unexpected difficulty - what was to be done about the gaping hole in the thigh that had been occupied by the bone? We looked around the post mortem room and there on a top shelf we spied a two-pound jam pot and a green flower vase. Together they

fitted perfectly into the cavity, so we inserted the two objects, stitched it all up and had the body back in the mortuary before the outer doors were opened. Congratulating ourselves, we cleaned up and drove off to Greystones.

About three weeks later, a policeman arrived in the hospital making inquiries about the deceased. It appeared that because the old man was the victim of a road accident and had then died, an inquest was necessary. On learning that the man was already buried, the policeman indicated that the body would have to be exhumed. A vision of the two-pound jam pot and the green vase being revealed was something that didn't bear thinking about. To our immense relief, the police accepted Leslie's argument that the medical evidence at the operation would be sufficient to satisfy the coroner – a narrow escape!

### **London**

When I was due to leave the Adelaide Hospital, Stanley McCollum suggested that I should apply for a surgical post at a hospital in East London, where he had served during the war. I accepted his advice and was duly called for an interview. Arriving at the hospital, I was ushered into an imposing boardroom to meet the medical superintendent, Dr. James, sitting at a table. He asked me to sit down and the interview began. I was asked only two questions, 'Do you play cricket?' and 'Are you a batsman or a bowler?' To the first I replied that I did and to the second, I told him I was a bowler. Thus was I elected to the medical staff of the hospital! Later, I discovered that the hospital team had lost their bowler, so for the next three years, it fell to me to open the bowling every summer Saturday afternoon. I will now make a small boast: I made the headlines in the local newspaper on the day after I took 10 wickets in an innings!

London in 1945 was still recovering from the war. Travelling to and from the West End on a Greenline bus from the hospital, I could see miles and miles of wasteland and it needed very little imagination to understand the extent of the destruction caused by the German bombing. Three years on from the war, the bricks and rubble had been cleared, leaving vast gaps where people's houses had been. Whole streets had vanished and it was a depressingly drab scene. During the war, all energies had been directed into the war effort, so there was neither time nor money to properly maintain property. Another dreary feature of London at the time were the pea-soup like fogs; I recall one lasting a fortnight.

Britain came out of the war on the winning side but the cost of victory was horrendous. In some ways, it was a pyrrhic victory, as the price paid was the burden of a crippling debt and the loss of a great empire. A certain euphoria that the war had been won obscured from the people the awful price they had paid. In 1949, Sir Henry Tizard, the chief scientific adviser at the Ministry of Defence, composed a telling minute, contesting the current spirit of the times:

We (in Britain) persist in regarding ourselves as a great power, capable of everything and only temporarily handicapped by economic difficulties. We are not a great power and never will be again. We are a great nation, but if we continue to behave like a great power, we shall soon cease to be a great nation.

On the evening of 9th May 1950, an event took place in Paris that was to change the face of Europe. To a gathering of two hundred journalists, Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, outlined a Coal and Steel Plan, which would eventually oversee both those industries of Germany and France. This seemingly routine press conference turned out to be the birth of the Europe we know today. Ernest Bevin, the powerful British Foreign Secretary, was furious with Robert Schuman, as he realized that he and the British government had lost control of events in post-war Europe. This sour beginning has dogged successive British governments' attitude to Europe ever since.

My job in London coincided with the establishment of the National Health Service. Most doctors resented losing their professional freedom and felt they were being compelled to become nothing more than glorified civil servants. Patients, on the other hand, welcomed the opportunity of free medical attention. I was surprised and delighted to find that my salary was fifty times what I had been paid at the Adelaide!

My boss was Mr M.R. Ernst, an unusual and slightly eccentric gentleman. He was a Barts man and held the view that a doctor who had not been trained in St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Medical School was not properly qualified. I suffered from another disadvantage in that I was Irish - Mr Ernst was not sure that anything good came out of Ireland. However, in spite of these disadvantages, we got on very well together and he taught me a great deal of surgery. In those days, a general surgeon was not confined to one specialty, so he did everything. As a result I had a first class training in many facets of surgery.

Local hospitals in East London had an emergency rota whereby each hospital would take in all the emergency cases on one day of the week. Our day was Friday, so after lunch on Fridays, we would begin operations and often didn't finish until early on Saturday morning. We would then adjourn to a ward, where the nurses would often obligingly cook us a substantial breakfast. This would be followed by a round of the surgical wards, to see those patients who had undergone operations that night. On one occasion, I diagnosed five cases of acute appendicitis that had been admitted to the hospital in the space of half an hour. On Saturdays in the summer, I'd have a quick lunch and be off for another cricket match in the afternoon.

A major event in my time at that hospital was the last polio epidemic in England, before the advance of polio vaccination. We were taking in four new cases every day and our two iron lungs were in use all the time. I worked in two

other hospitals in London, including one in Highgate, where I was under a very fine surgeon, Will Davey, whose brother Ray founded the Corrymeela Reconciliation Centre, on the north coast of Co. Antrim in Northern Ireland thirty years later.

### **Britain's docks and coalmines**

In the 1945 General Election in Britain, the Labour Party won a huge majority and Clement Atlee became Prime Minister. This was at a point when the country's economic survival depended on an industrial revival. Exports became a priority and since industry was dependent on coal, this meant that the docks and the coalmines were key.

Rather unexpectedly, I found myself entering into this industrial scene, firstly through a friendship with Eric Turpin, a fellow Irishman with whom I had been at school. His younger brother Claude was my direct contemporary at The King's Hospital School and Eric was a prefect in our first term there. He also had an elder brother, Lex, who became a British Ambassador, while Claude became a GP near Oxford. All three brothers went to Trinity. Eric had qualified as an organic chemist and after doing post-graduate work, had joined the staff of a food factory in Belfast, where he continued his research work during the war years. He joined the union of the Association of Scientific Workers and became interested in the trade union movement generally.

Then one day, Eric was invited to London to see an MRA musical, 'The Good Road'. As he later told me, in the middle of it a voice seemed to speak in his ear, so loud it appeared to come from the stage, 'You are not doing your maximum to remake the world and you are not in the right place to do it'. He took the radical decision to resign his job in Belfast and take on the dockers of the world. At that time, there was a nationwide dockers strike in Britain, over the Canadian ship, the *Beaverbrae*, which resulted in a great deal of lost exports. The port of London was particularly affected and Eric began to befriend the militant docker's leaders. In between jobs in hospitals, I gave Eric a hand in visiting these men in their homes in East London. We found that many of them were descended from Irish families who had come to England looking for work and to escape the harsh conditions in Ireland. I learnt a lot from these experiences.

An industrial play, 'The Forgotten Factor' was running in London at that point. This play had been shown widely across America during the war, particularly to help with morale in industry. After London, it went on a tour through the coalfields of Wales, England and Scotland, and I joined a group of about thirty people from different backgrounds accompanying the cast, for part of this tour.

We had a number of interesting experiences and I will relate an amusing one with an unexpected outcome. We were visiting Merthyr Tydfil in South

Wales and a friend and I called on the home of the local doctor. It was a Sunday evening and the doctor was out but we were invited in and asked to wait in his study. The first thing I noticed was a picture of Lenin over the mantelpiece. As we waited, others entered the room and sat down, including a man we recognized as the head of the Welsh miners union and also a formidable white haired lady, who turned out to be the Mayor of the town. The room was quite full by the time the doctor arrived, when suddenly we found ourselves attending a committee meeting of the local Communist Party: we had been taken for two visiting comrades down from London! Of course, we had to come clean but were treated kindly and allowed to do what we were there for, which was to invite them to attend a performance of 'The Forgotten Factor'. Then we said our goodbyes and left them to get on with their business.

## PART 2

# A Peripatetic Life

### Travels in Asia

In the autumn of 1952, my life took an unexpected turn, but before I describe this, here are some brief comments on the far-reaching changes that had been taking place at that time. The twentieth century had witnessed the overturning of a world order that had existed for the previous five centuries. The two World Wars were largely instrumental in effecting this change, where the hegemony of the European colonial powers was finally ended and the newly independent nations took their rightful place on the world stage.

At this point, I want to look particularly at the Asian continent. Here, the countries formerly ruled by Britain, France, Portugal, Spain and Holland had become free and were largely blessed by the quality of their new leaders; such men as Gandhi and Nehru in India, U Aung San and U Nu in Burma, Senanayake in Ceylon, Sukarno in Indonesia and Yoshida in Japan, with perhaps an exception being the rise of Mao Tse-tung in China.

A particularly interesting development was the decision of the former British colonies to become members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, while at the same time adopting republican constitutions. India, which had just become the world's most populous democracy, led the way. These profound and far-reaching constitutional changes are extensively covered by the writings of Professor Nicholas Mansergh, who held the Chair of Commonwealth History at Cambridge University and was Master of St. John's College. Another historian wrote of him, 'Professor Mansergh is indisputably among the most important Irish historians of the 20th Century.' His Oxford educated son, Martin, became the special advisor to three Irish governments on the constitutional and political situation in Northern Ireland through the turbulent years of the 1970s and 1980s and is now a Senator in Dublin.

It was the British Labour government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee that presided over the birth of these new Asian nations. This government was faced with a serious question, namely, could a republic be eligible for membership of the Commonwealth? Twenty years earlier, the same question had faced a British administration over the future of Ireland and the decision then was that it was not possible for a republic to be a member of the Commonwealth. Instead, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 conferred Dominion status on Ireland, hence denying it the republican status it aspired to achieve. Eamon de Valera, the Irish leader, had offered the British government a way out which envisaged a republic that would join a free association of nations, acknowledging the King as its head. This offer, known as Document No. 2, was turned down by the British negotiators, a decision that led directly to a terrible civil war in Ireland.

When de Valera and his Fianna Fail party came to power eleven years later, his government passed the External Relations Act, which in essence was Document No. 2. This enabled him to write a republican constitution and at the same time allowed Ireland to remain within the British Commonwealth.

Moving fast-forward to 1947: Professor Nicholas Mansergh, who had just returned from India, gave a lecture in Chatham House, London, to a large audience, including members of the government, senior officials and diplomats. His subject was, 'The Implications of Eire's Relationship with the British Commonwealth of Nations'. On hearing this talk, Sir Stafford Cripps, then a senior member in Attlee's cabinet, persuaded the Prime Minister to appoint a Committee with the specific remit to investigate how to help in the developing Indian situation. In the event, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaysia and Singapore, but not Burma, were admitted to the Commonwealth, despite being republics. It is perhaps ironic that the Irish Taoiseach, John Costello, chose this moment to repeal the External Relations Act, taking Ireland out of the Commonwealth. The motivation for this was undoubtedly political spite – because that Act had been de Valera's inspiration, it had to go.

It was against this background that the leaders of India, Pakistan and Ceylon asked Dr Frank Buchman, who had met Mahatma Gandhi in 1924 and knew Asia well, to come and assist them in their nation building. In the autumn of 1952, a group of about 250 people from some 30 countries and many different backgrounds accompanied Buchman to Asia. With them, they took several stage productions that illustrated a straightforward Christian message in music and drama. Interestingly, this caused no offence whatsoever to people of Hindu, Moslem and Buddhist faiths, the only minor opposition coming from some small communist groups.

Doctors and nurses were needed to care for the health of such a large number of people ranging in age from teenagers to 80 year olds. I volunteered to

go and was joined by a Canadian, Dr Evelyn Fleming, formerly a missionary in India, and two able Australian nurses as our assistants. In preparation, my first port of call was at the School of Tropical Medicine in London, for advice on what to read up on tropical diseases and they recommended four books. Next, I visited a clothing store specialising in tropical clothes. Then I joined a party on a chartered plane that flew us from London to Colombo, the capital of what was then Ceylon. The plane was an old York, which I think was a wartime bomber converted to carry civilian passengers. It was noisy and un-pressurised and could only fly during daylight hours. It took all day to reach Malta on the first leg of the flight; then day two took us as far as Cyprus, day three to Karachi and we landed in Colombo on day four. I sat in the rear of the plane and used the time to catch up on my newly acquired textbooks on tropical medicines. In the following years I travelled on many such planes.

As events turned out, the eight-month tour of Ceylon, India and Pakistan was an extraordinary triumph; so much so that Dr Buchman decided to cancel intended visits to Burma and Japan and stayed on in India. In the next chapters I will describe events as they unfolded for me.

## **Ceylon**

When we landed in Colombo, I little realised that my future would include ten years in Asia, years full of many rich experiences, not only in medicine but also in appreciation and understanding of other peoples and their cultures. For me, Ceylon was the beginning of this new chapter in my life and I returned there several times over the next decade or so.

For an Asian country, Ceylon is unusual. The ruling elite are Anglican Christians; Bishop Heber, in his hymn 'From Greenland's icy mountains' takes the Ceylonese to task with the verse: 'What though the spicy breezes/Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle/Though every prospect pleases/And only man is vile.' Europeans imposed colonial rule on the people of Ceylon for 450 years. First, it was the Portuguese, then the Dutch and finally, a hundred and fifty years of British control.

As had frequently happened elsewhere, when the British Empire finally folded its tent, the people of the new country, now known as Sri Lanka, found they were faced with inter communal strife. The Singhalese Buddhist majority live in the south and west, while the minority Tamil Hindu community live in the north. The British administration had favoured this Tamil minority and when colonial rule ended, the Tamils felt very insecure.

In Colombo, I was made welcome in the home of Surya and Nelun Sena. Surya's father was James Peres, the first Speaker of an independent Ceylonese parliament. Surya was a renowned musician and a collector of his country's folk

music. He was also a member of the Singhalese Christian elite. On one occasion, I accompanied Surya on a visit to Jaffna, the capital city of the north, where he sincerely apologised to the Tamils for his superior attitude towards them as a Singhalese and this was greatly appreciated. However, it could not halt a growing conflict between the two communities and Ceylon was beset by civil war fifteen years ago. Upwards of 60,000 have been killed and in spite of sustained efforts, assisted by Norwegian mediators, the bloody conflict continues.

At home in Belfast, I regularly call on a Ceylonese family that was caught up in the fighting. Their eldest son was shot dead and the rest of the family had to flee for their lives. By means of an underground network, they were smuggled out of Ceylon and on a cold winter's night three years ago, found themselves dumped from the back of a lorry in a street in Belfast, a city they had never heard of.

## **India**

My first host in India was an unusual doctor, Dinshaw Mehta, who lived on Malabar Hill in Bombay. He was the doctor to Mahatma Gandhi and he practised a form of medicine which he called 'nature cure'. My bed was the operating table in his clinic; I lay on the metal table top, covered by a sheet, with a ceiling fan overhead. It was not as bad as it sounds, because in the tropical heat of India, it kept me cool. Dr Mehta was a kind host and took me to see his clinic in Poona where he had treated Gandhi.

As our group travelled through India, from Madras in the south to Kashmir in the north, we stayed in people's homes wherever possible. Dr Fleming and I laid down strict rules on what should and should not be eaten and drunk, but with so many staying in homes, this was difficult to supervise. However, if and when cases of dysentery or malaria occurred, we were able to treat them promptly.

The textbooks I had brought with me were useful, but they were no substitute for seeing and treating patients. In India's hospitals, I met patients with diseases that we had only read about in medical school but never expected to see. I had the privilege of watching skilled surgeons performing operations that gave leprosy patients the use of their hands and other limbs. In one small town in the countryside, I was asked by an Indian doctor to help with some emergency operations; his operating theatre was scarcely bigger than the operating table. Anaesthesia was induced by a young woman, which I took to be a nurse, using a cloth mask over the patient's face, on which ether dropped from a bottle. Although I wasn't entirely sure of the qualifications of this young man, it was clear he was a very competent doctor. He possessed just one textbook, which resided on a shelf in his theatre, 'Hamilton Bailey's Emergency Surgery'. I rightly presumed it was on hand for consultation whenever he found himself in difficulties.

The published account of that eight-month Asian tour recorded that ‘the group travelled the length and breadth of the sub-continent with hardly any serious illness’. My memory is somewhat different! Thankfully, however, I can only remember making one bad diagnosis; a young Norwegian girl developed back pain and I decided that she had a form of arthritis. Hydrocortisone had just become available and this relieved the pain. However, it was a false relief, as on returning to Norway, it became apparent she had a serious bone infection. This is a case that will always live with me.

There were some amusing incidences while we were on the road, and two come to mind. In Delhi, four ladies were invited to stay with a wealthy industrialist. One of the features of India is the existence of great houses, where large, wealthy joint families live, attended by many servants. A fortnight had gone by before the person who had arranged the accommodation for the four ladies asked them how they were managing. It transpired that the ladies had gone to the wrong house and had been staying there very happily, while nobody in the house seemed to have thought it strange that four foreign ladies should turn up uninvited and remain there as guests for two weeks! In another incident in Madras, three ladies were sent to a certain home where their host on greeting them said he only objected to people from three countries, Britain, Australia and South Africa. The ladies had to confess that they actually came from all three countries! However, they won over their host and had a happy time with the family.

Probably the most memorable occasion on that tour was celebrating Christmas in Delhi. Dr Frank Buchman had known Pandit Nehru from 1924. Nehru had been a student at Cambridge in England, where he had been influenced by Marxist ideas, unlike Gandhi, who had a moral and spiritual view of the world. But Nehru respected Dr Buchman and arranged for the Maharajah of Jaipur’s Palace to be put at Buchman’s disposal. This was a beautiful modern building in the heart of New Delhi, a city built as a worthy capital for India in the 1930s. The British considered India as the jewel in the crown of their Empire.

Christmas was a time dear to the heart of Dr Buchman. A giant Christmas tree was erected in the hall of the Palace, lit with real candles. Distinguished guests came to dinner each night and afterwards carols were sung round the tree and the crib. Dr Buchman always remained until the last candle had finally burnt out. On Christmas Eve, a play called ‘The Cowboy’s Christmas’ was put on in the largest theatre in Delhi. At the midnight performance, the theatre was packed with an audience that included all faiths.

On one afternoon, Pandit Nehru came to tea. The chorus lined the double staircase up from the front hall and sang the Indian national anthem to greet him as he arrived. Later, Nehru told his sister, Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, how much he had enjoyed the afternoon. An interesting aside on Nehru came in a letter from

my mother, while I was still in India. She wrote that while the Indian Prime Minister was attending the Commonwealth Conference in London, he decided to take a break and came to *Aclare* near Drumconrath, Co. Meath, which was the owned by a Mr Lindsay. I don't remember if his sister, who was then the Indian High Commissioner in London, came with him. Apparently, his only protection at *Aclare* consisted of a sergeant and a single garda on bicycles!

## **Calcutta**

Calcutta is a vibrant, cultural city, which I loved and often visited. I was a friend of Bishop Lakdasa de Mel, who welcomed me to his large palace, just across the street from St. Paul's Cathedral in the heart of the city. Bishop de Mel, a Ceylonese, was the last Metropolitan to oversee the combined Anglican churches of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon. After him, the four churches went their separate ways. Any friends who visited Calcutta with me were also welcome to stay at the palace.

Calcutta is associated with Robert Clive, who defeated the French and Indian forces at Plessey in 1757, securing India as part of the British Empire: but for Clive, India would have been part of the French Empire and not British. An Englishman, Job Charnock, established the city in 1690 on the banks of the Hoogly River. Charnock was the representative of the Honourable East India Company and the site was chosen because of its suitability for ships that came up from the Bay of Bengal. In Calcutta, they could dock to load nitre safely aboard, nitre being an essential ingredient for the manufacture of gunpowder. Decades later, it was opium that was loaded aboard the ships, bound for Hong Kong and Canton in China, where it was bartered for tea, a brew that became increasingly popular with people in the British Isles.

It is reported that Job Charnock's wife was an Indian woman that he rescued from suttee, a custom where the wife, or rather the widow, was burned on the funeral pyre with her dead husband. Charnock's grave can be visited at St Georges Church's in the administrative centre of the city.

Whenever Dr Buchman visited Calcutta, he went up to the tea-growing hill station at Darjeeling to visit the grave of his old friend Metropolitan Foss Westcott at St Paul's School. Foss Westcott was a saintly man and it was in his home that Dr Buchman had first met Mahatma Gandhi. On this visit to St Paul's, Dr Buchman was asked to speak to the boys in the school chapel. He told them he had been a rascal when he was at school and he asked them, 'Do you cheat at school? I did and got caught once. I used to steal money, too, to buy candy for the girls.'

Some days later, Buchman was asked to unveil a bust of his friend Foss Westcott. This time he told the boys of his own experience of change. He had

been a young Lutheran pastor in a poor area of Philadelphia where he ran a home for orphan boys. He was determined to make it a home for them, not an institution. However, there were six members of the school board who were more concerned that the home paid its way, so they ordered a cut back on expenses. In the disagreement that resulted, Buchman resigned. He fell ill and went on a tour of Europe to recover but the anger he felt towards those six men stayed with him.

When he was in England, he attended a little chapel in Keswick, where there were only seventeen people present. A lady preacher spoke about the Cross. Buchman told the boys:

I had never experienced the Cross. It just didn't mean a thing to me. I had six people I didn't like. But in that little chapel, I actually saw Christ on the Cross. It was a vision. I left that place a different man.

Dr Buchman told the boys that after leaving that chapel in Keswick, he wrote a letter to each of the six men on the school board in Philadelphia, asking their forgiveness for the ill-will he had harboured towards them.

One of the boys at St. Paul's was then asked by Dr Buchman to read out the inscription on the memorial tablet to Foss Westcott. On it were the words: 'A great saint, yet the friend of sinners and loved by so many of them.'

A friend of mine, Jim Baynard-Smith, acted as an aide to Dr Buchman on that tour of Asia. Jim told me that Dr Buchman's main sources of poise and strength were the old hymns, which Jim would hear Buchman repeating to himself again and again: 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling'; 'Jesu, lover of my soul'; 'At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light'; 'Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed, yet in love He sought me'; 'O for a passionate passion for Souls, O for a fire that burns' and many more. At bedtime he often repeated: 'Jesus, I Thy cross have taken, All to leave and follow Thee; Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be.'

### **British trade unionists in India**

I conducted overseas visitors around India on several occasions and on one such visit, it was a party of senior British trade unionists. We spent a morning in New Delhi with Pandit Nehru's sister, Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. In Calcutta, Bishop de Mel put us all up in the palace. The Bishop was a bachelor and had a Moslem cook, who had cooked for four Metropolitans. As far as I could tell, he knew just four different European recipes and this suited the trade union men, who were not familiar with Indian food. However, they might not have been so happy if they had been aware of the hygiene in the kitchen, which I ventured into one night. When I turned on the light, the floor was concealed under a blanket of scurrying cockroaches.

As well as visiting Indian union leaders in Calcutta, I also took my visitors to Mother Theresa's first hospice, where the dying from the streets of Calcutta were cared for by her nuns, in their last hours on earth. This was a profound shock for the men, who probably thought that they already knew plenty about the conditions of destitution back home in Britain.

One evening, I arranged for them to meet the Prime Minister of West Bengal, Joti Basu, who had graduated from Cambridge University and returned to India a dedicated communist. He is still Prime Minister of the state, more than thirty years later, a most remarkable man. I knew his cousin, Mrs Arati Ghosh, who was a widow; whenever I wished to see Mr Basu, she would invite him to come to her apartment and he always accepted. On this particular evening, he sat for the best part of an hour without uttering a word, just listening to the men. I could see him weighing them up and assessing their quality: it was a somewhat unnerving experience.

### **Indians visit Ireland**

I had another friend in Calcutta, Dr Chunder, a lawyer who could trace his ancestry back to the village that his family had owned before it was acquired by Job Charnock to found Calcutta. Dr Chunder, who later served as Indian Minister of Education, came to Ireland with a party from India, led by Rajmohan Gandhi, a grandson of the Mahatma. My sister Hazel and her husband William McKeever were the hosts of an occasion at their home *Shanlis* and Hazel writes:

When we were notified about this special party coming to visit us, we were encouraged to invite some friends to meet them and there was much excitement at the prospect. Unfortunately, the afternoon of the visit turned out to be wet and the coach, with about twenty Indian guests, was unable to drive up the long avenue leading to *Shanlis*. You can imagine all the splodging through the puddles and the rain, in their beautiful saris! All our friends had brought along contributions for the tea and there was a jolly atmosphere and much laughter, until suddenly, there was a dreadful hush: someone had produced chicken sandwiches and as these were high class Brahmins who would not eat meat, there was consternation. Fortunately, another of our friends had given me a gift of nuts etc., so these were passed around and to our great relief peace was restored. The Indians were charming guests and everyone enjoyed a happy afternoon.

### **Assam**

Assam is the most eastern state of India. I visited it often. There is just a narrow land corridor joining Assam to the rest of India, rather like an apple attached to a tree by its stalk. The capital of the state is Gauhati, on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra River, which joins the Ganges before the water from both rivers

- 1 Pandit Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi



- 2 Two friends. On the left is George Fernandes, a leader of the Indian Portworker's and Railwaymen's Union and later Minister of both Industry and Defence in the Delhi government. On the right is Kedreghar, Chairman of the Socialist Trade Unions of Bombay



- 3 Myself sitting with the Governor of the Punjab and his daughter, watching a performance of a play by Peter Howard, in the former Vice-Regal Lodge in Simla, India





4 Myself on the right, with British trade unionists at the Taj Mahal, India



5 Indian visitors at *Shanlis*. Second from the left is Niketu Iralu, from Nagaland



6 My sister Hazel and her husband William McKeever, with their youngest son Mark, entertaining Rajmohan Gandhi at *Shanlis*

- 7 Stanley Nichols Roy,  
Khasi businessman and  
political leader



- 8 Madame Irene Laure,  
French socialist leader  
(Photo: D. Channer)



- 9 U Nu, Prime Minister of  
Burma  
(Photo: D. Channer)





10 Margaret Barrett,  
granddaughter of David  
Lloyd George

(Photo: A. Strong)



11 Chateaubriand (on right) Brazilian  
newspaper and television magnate, at  
dinner in his home at São Paulo

12 General Seán MacEoin (left) and  
Sean Moylan

flows into the Bay of Bengal. The river basin is surrounded by hills inhabited by tribal peoples. The Naga hills are on Assam's eastern border with Burma and it was here that the Japanese advance into India was halted in the Second World War. Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, was the scene of a six weeks battle, when British and Japanese forces fought each other across the tennis court of the British Residency.

When India declared independence in 1947, the Naga people also declared their independence. They had been converted from headhunters to Christianity by Baptist missionaries and felt they had no kinship with Hindu India. The new Indian government refused to accept Naga secession from the Indian state. A Naga, known simply as Phizo, led a Naga war of independence that began in 1954 and is still not settled. His nephew, Niketu Iralu, has been a friend of mine for fifty years. Niketu's father was the first Naga doctor and his mother, a sister of Phizo, is today 105 years old. Niketu has been working with the Naga chiefs to bring a resolution to this sad state of affairs.

Shillong, the beautiful capital of the Khasi people, is set 5,000 feet up in the southern hills of Assam, where whispering pines and eucalyptus trees abound. Welsh Presbyterian missionaries converted the Khasis to Christianity; they were also in dispute with India over their desire to be an independent state. I was in Delhi at the time when the Khasi leaders arrived to conduct negotiations with the Indian government. The French MP for Marseille, Madame Irene Laure was visiting Delhi; she was the General Secretary of three million French socialist women and during the Second World War had been a leader in the French resistance. I knew the deputy speaker of the Indian parliament, G. G. Swell, who was a Khasi and I suggested to Mr Swell that he might like to bring the Khasi delegation to meet Madame Laure. He agreed and I arranged a dinner in the home of an Indian family. One of the Khasi group was a businessman, Stanley Nichols-Roy.

During the dinner, Irene Laure told her story. In the war, the Gestapo had tortured her son and she had developed such a hatred for the Germans that she fervently wished that the German nation could be exterminated from the face of the earth. When she visited the Moral Re-Armament \* conference centre in Caux, Switzerland in 1948, she found Germans were present and immediately decided to leave. In the corridor on her way to her room, she met Dr Buchman. He asked her how she was going to rebuild Europe without the Germans.

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\* In 1938, when Dr Buchman was at Freudenstat in the Black Forest in Germany, he had the thought that what the world needed at that crucial point was 'moral and spiritual re-armament'. He launched this idea at Interlaken, Switzerland that year and in 1939 in East Ham Town Hall, London and the Hollywood Bowl, California, where 30,000 packed the arena.

This simple question stopped her in her tracks. The next day, she asked to speak at the conference. The Germans were prepared with answers to what they thought would be a bitter attack. In the event, she apologised to them for her hatred, which she saw was divisive. This had a dramatic effect on the Germans.

In the following months and years, Madame Laure visited the ruined cities of Germany, where she talked to the women whom she found were labouring to clear the rubble with their bare hands and also met their leaders, who were struggling to resurrect a broken nation. Everywhere she went she apologised for her hatred of them and their nation. Clearly, Madame Laure's efforts were one of the key contributions towards laying the foundation of the Europe we are part of today. This began with the rapprochement between the old enemies, France and Germany, who had fought three wars in seventy years.

As it turned out, Stanley Nichols Roy was the man who was instrumental in saving the negotiations between the Khasis and the Indian government from descending into war. The Khasis now have their own state, Meghalaya, which is part of the Indian Federation of states. Nichols-Roy has since died but I keep in touch with his widow, who lives in California.

### **U Nu and Burma**

While travelling in Asia, I periodically returned to London and usually stayed in Dr Buchman's home at 45 Berkeley Square, a house that was once the home of Lord Clive of India. While there on one occasion, I received an urgent request to come to Rangoon, Burma, to give medical assistance to a party of mainly Americans, who were guests of U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma.

As I have said earlier, Burma was the only Asian country to remain outside the British Commonwealth of Nations when it declared its independence in 1947. In July of that year, the young independence leader, U Aung San, was holding a cabinet meeting when a man walked into the room with a machinegun and shot Aung San and six members of his cabinet. U Nu was one of the cabinet ministers not at that meeting and he took over the government of Burma. He was a devout Buddhist and a saintly man, who remained Prime Minister for many years, being a contemporary of Nehru and the other Asian leaders who had led their countries to independence.

When I arrived in Rangoon, Burma was facing difficulties with insurgents and U Nu had appointed General Ne Win as the new head of the Burmese army. Shortly after our visit, the General staged an army coup that toppled the government and U Nu was placed under house arrest, which later became solitary confinement. Some years later, Indira Gandhi, then the Prime Minister of India, paid a state visit to Burma and asked to visit her father's old friend U Nu.

Mrs Gandhi then informed General Ne Win that India would render U Nu any assistance he might request.

A medical consultant at Rangoon hospital, who happened to be a friend of U Nu, arranged to give him a medical check up and this examination included an electroencephalogram, which records the mental capacity of a patient. The test conveniently recorded that U Nu was suffering from failing mental capacity and the consultant prescribed a course of Ayurvedic treatment, which was only available in India. General Ne Win, no doubt deciding that U Nu with failing mental powers was no longer a threat, granted permission for him to travel to India. U Nu was accompanied by his wife, son and daughter-in-law and a retainer.

I knew an Ayurvedic doctor, a Mr Sharma, in Bombay. One day when I was visiting him, he told me that U Nu was on his way to see him. In this system of medicine, the practitioner feels the patient's pulse and from that makes his diagnosis. Later, when I visited Mr Sharma again, I asked him what he had discovered about U Nu and he told me he had found him perfectly healthy. Some weeks later, out of the blue I received a request that U Nu wished to see me. When I called on him, he asked me for a complete medical overhaul, which I arranged in a very good private hospital in Bombay, where I was well known. They gave him a thorough medical check up, including a repeat electroencephalogram. U Nu then asked me for three copies of the hospital's medical report, which I later realised he had needed in order to prove to the world that he was completely sound in mind and body. I think he planned to stage a counter coup against Ne Win, with American help, but nothing came of it.

I saw quite a bit of U Nu's wife and daughter when he was in hospital. They lived on together in India for the next twenty years, where U Nu died not long ago, aged 82. He was a delightful and charming man to know and led a very simple way of life.

### **The Congo**

In 1960, I was back in London and staying again at 45 Berkeley Square. The Belgian Congo, led by a charismatic young man, Patrice Lumumba, had just declared its independence. However, the province of Katanga, rich in minerals and backed by certain western powers, had seceded. Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the UN, in an effort to bring stability to a volatile situation, had requested the Irish government for troops to go to Katanga.

It was at this point that I invited Rajmohan Gandhi to visit Ireland. In Dublin, he had time with the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, and with Liam Cosgrave, the leader of Fine Gael. Frank Aiken, Minister of External Affairs, invited him to lunch at the old Russell Hotel to meet Connor Cruise O'Brien, who was about to

be seconded to Dag Hammarskjold for service in Katanga. Our final meeting in Dublin was with President de Valera; at one point, de Valera took Rajmohan off into another room for a private tête-à-tête.

I had met de Valera several times before, both as Taoiseach and President. On one occasion, he remarked, 'We are a slave people. It will take three generations.' On another visit, he said to me, 'Including a small Protestant community in this state was not a difficult problem. In the North, a large Protestant community is a different matter.'

On Sunday morning, I drove Rajmohan to the North, where we had an appointment with the Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Wakehurst and Lady Wakehurst in Hillsborough Castle. The four of us sat down in the large dining room for a leisurely lunch, after which Lord Wakehurst took us on a tour of the Castle gardens.

### **At 45 Berkeley Square**

During the various occasions I stayed at 45 Berkeley Square, I met many interesting guests who were also staying there. Two very good friends were Rev Harold Taylor and his wife Ursula. Harold had been Headmaster and owner of Cheam Preparatory School and I accompanied him when he drove down to visit the school.

Prince Philip, later Duke of Edinburgh, was one of his pupils. Prince Philip's father was Prince Andrew of Greece and his mother was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. She became an Orthodox nun and entered a convent in Jerusalem and packed her son off to England, where he was taken care of by different relations.

After Cheam, Prince Philip was sent to Gordonstoun in Scotland. The founder of that school was a German Christian Jew, Kurt Hahn, whom I got to know in unusual circumstances. Alec Fraser was a renowned Christian missionary who with his wife Beatrice was associated with Christian colleges in Burundi, Uganda, Ceylon and Ghana, where some of the future leaders of Asia and Africa were educated. At one point, Alec was a patient of mine in London. Kurt, who was a rather autocratic gentleman, regarded Alec as a special friend and he would ring up from Germany to give me detailed instructions on how I should treat Alec; he would then arrive in London to visit Alec and I would be expected to give him a full report on his friend's progress!

As well as creating Gordonstoun, Kurt Hahn also founded a similar school at Salem in Germany for Prince George of Hess, whose brother, Prince Richard, would sometimes stay in 45 Berkeley Square. Prince Richard recalled as a child looking out of a window in Hess Castle and seeing two cousins talking together in the garden, King George V of England and the German Kaiser. As this was

prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Prince Richard often wondered if those two men could not between them have prevented that war.

Another Royal couple that sometimes stayed at the house were the exiled King Michael and Queen Ann of Romania. King Michael was keen to know about Northern Ireland and I did my best to explain it to him.

### **A life spared**

When Dr Buchman was not staying in London, Mr and Mrs Michael Barrett often acted as host and hostess at 45 Berkeley Square. Michael was a Scot who had served in the American army in the Second World War and his wife Margaret was a granddaughter of David Lloyd George, the former British Prime Minister. On one occasion when I was staying there, an interesting story about Margaret developed. This involved Sean MacEoin, known as ‘the blacksmith of Ballinalee’, who was interviewed on RTE radio in Dublin about his life. MacEoin had served as Minister of Defence in a Fine Gael government and had twice run in the Irish Presidential election: what follows is the story he told.

During the Anglo-Irish war of 1919 to 1921, General MacEoin was a leader of the Irish Republican Army. In the spring of 1921, he was captured following a gun battle in which he was shot in the chest and severely wounded. He was tried by a British military court and sentenced to death. Michael Collins, who was a close friend, made several unsuccessful attempts to spring him from prison. As it happened, negotiations between the Irish and the British government on terms for a truce in the war had reached a crucial stage and the impending execution of Sean MacEoin threatened to end the negotiations. An official, a certain Mr Hemmings, from Dublin Castle, the centre of the British administration in Ireland, was sent post-haste to London to see the Prime Minister. In those days travel from Dublin to London was by mail boat and train. Mr Hemmings arrived in London on a Sunday morning, to discover that Lloyd George was preparing to leave for Paris the following day to attend the Versailles Treaty negotiations. So Hemmings went straight to 10 Downing Street and there he found Lloyd George playing a game with his granddaughter in the garden.

Hemmings related what happened next to Sean MacEoin many years later, when they met by chance one evening in Geneva. When the Prime Minister had to leave his granddaughter to speak to Hemmings, the child complained bitterly, so her grandfather said to her, ‘This is important, my dear. It concerns whether a man lives or dies.’ The child replied, ‘Then why don’t you let the man off and come back and finish our game?’ Lloyd George turned to Hemmings with: ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings - there is your answer.’

After Sean MacEoin had told this story on RTE radio, journalists began searching for who the child was. Margaret Barrett conferred with her sister as to which of them it could have been and both agreed that it was Margaret. When Sean MacEoin heard of this, he invited Margaret and her husband to be his guests in Dublin and I was invited to join them. It turned out to be a most enjoyable weekend. I recall Sean taking us on a drive to Glendalough and a dinner party at which one of the guests was Countess McCormick, the widow of John, the famous singer. One afternoon, the head of RTE arrived for tea and brought the tape of the radio interview with him. This was played while we sat around; it was quite moving listening to Sean MacEoin tell the story, in the presence of the woman whose timely complaint to her granddad as a little girl had probably saved his life, all those years ago.

### **To South America**

In the summer of 1960, the American President Dwight Eisenhower planned to visit Japan, at a time when Japanese-American relations were at a particularly low ebb. When news of the impending visit reached Tokyo, Japanese university students organised riots to prevent the President coming. Members of the student union, the Zengakuren, formed themselves into long columns and snake danced through the streets of Tokyo, bringing all normal life in the capital to a standstill. The Japanese government was obliged to inform President Eisenhower that they could not guarantee his security, so the visit was aborted. It was a humiliating climb down for both the American and Japanese authorities.

That summer, Dr Buchman was in Switzerland and he arranged for the leaders of the Zengakuren to be invited to Caux and a sizeable delegation accepted. When they arrived, Dr Buchman encouraged them to find a new approach to addressing their grievances. They responded and decided to demonstrate this fresh approach with a stage presentation in the form of a review, using their experiences in the Tokyo riots. Their review was entitled 'The Tiger' and one of its features was a dramatic re-enactment on stage of the snake dance.

The Japanese were then invited to various cities in Europe to present 'The Tiger' and the students decided to take time off from their studies so they could accept these invitations. This was followed by an invitation to visit America and put their review on in the famous Carnegie Hall in New York. From there they went on to Washington, where they met with Eisenhower, who had just completed his second term as President. Listening to their story, he told the students, 'This is the last act of the June riots and it has a happy ending.'

A Brazilian general and diplomat, General Hugo Bethlem, was visiting Washington when the Japanese students were there. He was so impressed that he urged them to come with him to Latin America. This was at the point when the

newly elected American President John F. Kennedy had just launched a new policy, 'Alianza para progreso', which was designed to establish greater co-operation between the U.S.A. and the South American countries.

I was in London when I received an urgent request for medical help to take care of the Japanese and those travelling with them on their South American journey. Without many second thoughts, I packed my medical bag and some clothes and caught a plane for Miami via New York. There I joined the main party on a charter flight bound for Sao Paulo in Brazil. While on that flight, we got the first news of the 'Bay of Pigs' fiasco, President Kennedy's failed attempt to oust Fidel Castro from power in Cuba.

Sao Paulo is the capital of Estado de Sao Paulo (State of St Paul), the richest state in Brazil. Today, Sao Paulo has a population of more than 20 million people. Brazil itself is a vast country comprising nearly half the continent of South America; it was Portuguese explorers who colonised Brazil at the beginning of the sixteenth century and today it has a population of 160 million people.

From the start, I instituted a strict regime of what everyone in the party should and should not eat and drink; as a result, there was very little serious illness. Happily, I had the full support of Russell Warren, who had met my mother when he was a student in Dublin; he was head of a private hospital in Sao Paulo and he generously made all the facilities and staff of his hospital available to me.

The Brazilian response to the Japanese was overwhelming; everywhere great crowds came to meet them and to see the 'Tiger'. We were flown from city to city by the Brazilian air force. From Sao Paulo, the next stop was the former capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, where another private hospital afforded me its full support. Rio is everything you can imagine it to be, exotic in the extreme, magnificent scenery, glorious beaches and everything exuding vitality and romance. But the city is also scarred by the expansion of shantytowns, known as favelas, after the first shantytown was built on a hillside called the Morro de Favela.

From Rio we flew hundreds of miles into the interior of Brazil, to the new capital, Brasilia. A clause in the Brazilian Constitution had stated that a capital had to be established in the interior of the country. In the first years of Brazil's existence, the colonisation had taken place only along its extensive coastline and as the population grew, it became imperative that the country's vast interior be developed. A capital city situated in the interior would be needed to facilitate this development. In the 1950s, President Juscelino Kubitschek employed Oscar Niemeyer, a Brazilian architect who was a disciple of Le Corbusier, to design and oversee the construction of the new capital city. As we flew over endless

savannah, we finally caught sight of a great city with wide thoroughfares and magnificent buildings, situated beside a man-made lake, all in the middle of an empty landscape. President Janio Quadros received us graciously in the Presidential Palace.

If we think we have a problem moving civil servants out of Dublin into the Irish countryside, think of the Brazilian civil servants moving out of the delights of Rio into the back-of-beyond, hundreds of miles from the civilisation they were accustomed to! From Brazilia, four great highways have been bulldozed for thousands of miles, north, south, east and west to reach the furthest corners of Brazil.

Our next destination was the city of Recife in the north east of Brazil. The government was anxious for us to go there because of unrest caused by leftwing peasant revolts against large landowners. Everywhere we went there was the same popular response. Then we went to Jao Pessoa and thence to Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte, not taken this time by the Brazilian air force, but by the navy on a corvette. This class of warship is not noted for comfort and we were tossed about on a monsoon sea. I had dosed everyone heavily with seasickness tablets including myself and although we survived, we were happy to drop anchor after a rough day at sea.

While in Belem at the mouth of the Amazon, I stayed with a Jewish family. On Friday night before the evening meal, the husband, as head of the household, put on his little circular flat hat (the yarmulke) and special prayers were said before the Jewish Sabbath the following day.

The Amazon is 200 miles wide at its mouth and its thousands of miles contains one fifth of all the fresh river water in the world. From Belem, the air force flew us the 1000 miles up river to Manaus. For hour after hour we flew over green rainforest, the trees of which are 100 or more feet tall. If, by ill fate, the plane had been forced to crash land into that impenetrable jungle, it would be unlikely to be seen or found again! Manaus is situated at the junction of the Amazon and its mighty tributary, the Rio Negro. When we were taken out on the river, it was a spectacle to see where the brown waters of the Amazon met with the black waters of the Rio Negro. A part of Manaus extends out into the river, with the houses built on stilts and from their verandas brown skinned children dive into the water and swim about like the fish that abound in the river.

Manaus has a jewel of an Opera House, which I understand has recently been renovated and is a Brazilian national treasure. This Opera House goes back to the wealthy days at the beginning of the twentieth century, when all the world's rubber came from the rubber trees that grew wild in the Amazonian forest. The Manaus rubber boom ended when an Englishman smuggled some of the rubber trees out of Brazil and cultivated them in London's Kew Gardens,

before transplanting them to Malaya. In Manaus, an estimated 90,000 came to see 'The Tiger'.

## **Peru**

From the north east of Brazil, our party was flown by the Brazilian air force to the city of Iquitos in Peru. This lies in the part of Peru that is in the Amazon basin. The Peruvian air force then took over and flew us across the Andes in C47 planes. As these planes have a maximum ceiling height of 18000 feet and the lowest part of the Andes mountain range is this height also, the planes strained somewhat to make the crossing. As they were non-pressurised, oxygen was supplied to each individual by means of a rubber tube situated on the back of the seat in front. Whenever oxygen was needed, the passenger grasped the tube and held it in front of his face, breathing in a flow of the oxygen.

We landed in the oil town of Talara on the Pacific coast in the north of Peru, close to the border with Ecuador. Travelling south in coaches, we were received by municipal authorities in the towns of Chiclayo, Trujillo and Chimbote, before reaching the capital, Lima. A Spaniard, Francisco Pizarro, founded this city in 1532 and for a time it was the Spanish Imperial capital of South America. Early in the sixteenth century, a small band of Spanish Conquistadors, led by Pizarro, had overthrown the Inca empire and treacherously murdered the Emperor, Atahuallpa. Before killing him, Pizarro first helped himself to a room full of gold, then he made sure that the priest travelling with him converted the Inca ruler to Christianity before he was executed. It is said that the Incas had their revenge by persuading the Spanish to locate their capital where Lima stands today: along the coast of Peru, the cold Humboldt Current runs from the Antarctic and envelopes Lima in a perpetual mist for six months of every year.

Peru is split down the middle by thousands of miles of the Andes. Between this mountain range and the Pacific Ocean is a narrow corridor of land, with rivers running down at intervals from the snow capped mountains and this creates rich cultivated lands, with large towns. The population of this costal corridor is mainly of Spanish descent. Then there is the high Andean plateau, the Altiplano, which stretches from the north to the south of the country. Finally, to the east of the Andes lies the tropical lowland, which is part of the Amazon River basin.

The population of the Altiplano are Incas, descendants of the former Inca empire. Their language is Quechua, not Spanish. Following a stay of some weeks in Lima, we flew to the Inca capital, Cuzco, which is situated at a height of 10,000 feet on the Altiplano. Before leaving Lima, I consulted a doctor about the problems that high altitude might pose. His advice was not reassuring. He told

me that 20% of the party would suffer from sorocho, which is a Peruvian word for altitude sickness. We know much more about this condition today but at that time the dangers were not so well appreciated - maybe it was just as well that I did not know them. The doctor also told me that many would have severe headaches over the first few days and he recommended the drug I should use for this.

The snake dance which the Japanese students had used to bring Tokyo to a standstill and which they re-enacted in 'The Tiger' was very strenuous and this caused me considerable concern with the rarefied atmosphere of the Altiplano. Fortunately, a Swedish company loaned me a large oxygen cylinder. I then went to a medical supply company and bought lengths of rubber tubing, together with glass T connections. Next, I bought small glass funnels, the kind used in cookery. With the tubing attached to the oxygen cylinder and the glass funnels leading off it at intervals at right angles, I was able to give the Japanese a good supply of oxygen before they began their snake dance and another supply when they had finished, out of breath.

I was obliged to draw the line on anyone over fifty years old travelling to Cuzco; regretfully, they had to stay behind in Lima. My last precaution was to make all those who came to Cuzco, including myself, spend the first twenty-four hours in bed. The first few days were the trickiest but soon everyone became acclimatised. However, even for the rest of the tour, I never managed to wean the Japanese off the oxygen for their snake dance, they liked it so much! I only had one serious case, a young Japanese, Deko Nakajima, who during the war had trained as a human torpedo. Fortunately for him, the war ended before he was sent to his certain death on a mission. Deko never acclimatised and couldn't do without a continuous supply of oxygen. Fortunately, I had bought an extra smaller cylinder of oxygen, in its own wooden box, which I carried around with me for use with individuals. Deko was a case in point; however, whenever the oxygen was switched off, he became breathless and turned blue. I eventually got him on a plane back to Lima; it was only years later that I understood how fatal altitude sickness could be.

The Inca fort of Sacsahuaman is on a hill overlooking Cuzco. The Incas were remarkable builders. They didn't have the benefit of the use of the wheel, being so cut off from the rest of the world and they never learned to write. However, they ruled an empire that stretched over a thousand miles from the north to the south of Peru, on the Andean plateau. The llama, the Andean camel, was their main form of transport. The stones that built Sacsahuaman were carved to fit so close that a knife blade couldn't be inserted into the joints. Some of these stones weighed upwards of 100 tons; no one knows how they were transported, let alone carved. Thousands of Incas came from miles around to see the Japanese presentation of 'The Tiger' at the old fort.

Some miles from Cuzco lies the ruined city of Machu Picchu, the capital of the Incas that had lain undiscovered for centuries. The Spaniards never found it but in 1911 an American, Hiram Bingham, later to become a Senator, discovered the hidden city while he was investigating a tale from local villagers about some ruins on the top of a mountain. Today, tourists visit it, literally on the peaks of the mountains, from all parts of the world.

The Peruvian government put a train at our disposal to take us to Machu Picchu. Travelling with our party was Mitchell Bingham, a son of the Senator; his mother was a Tiffany of New York's famous store. Over the years, I got to know Mitchell well; he was our generous host when we came to America with groups of people from Northern Ireland and he also came to Ireland with a party of Americans, who arrived in Belfast on the afternoon of Bloody Friday, the day bombs exploded all over the city, killing many innocent people.

Arriving on the mountaintop, our party visited a restaurant for lunch before exploring the ruins. There were only three other people at lunch there, Randolph Churchill, son of Winston and his son Winston Jr with a girl friend. Randolph, in a loud English voice, objected to the arrival of what he considered to be a rabble disturbing his lunch. After our lunch, Mitchell decided to stay behind, while the rest of us went to visit Machu Picchu. When we returned later in the afternoon, we found Mitchell and Randolph still sitting on the restaurant terrace, chatting. The terrace overlooked a magnificent view of the valley down below, with a roaring river, a tributary of the Amazon. On the train back to Cuzco, I asked Mitchell what he and Randolph had talked about and he replied, 'The problem and disadvantages of having famous fathers!'

Leaving Cuzco, we continued south by train. The engine and the carriages belonged to another age but were none the less serviceable. The altitude varied between 11,000 and 16,000 feet; the sky was azure blue and the air seemed so much sharper and clearer. Everywhere flocks of llamas could be seen. At each little station where we halted on what seemed an empty plain, crowds of Inca women would gather from seemingly nowhere, offering craft items and food for sale. The women were dressed in ankle length woollen skirts dyed in the brightest of colours. Wool from the llamas would have been woven in the villages. On their heads they wore felt hats, the sort men usually wear.

Towards evening we arrived in the town of Puno, situated on the northern shore of Lake Titicaca, which at 12,500 feet, is the highest freshwater lake in the world navigable by large ships. Two ferries plied the lake, one of which was built in Dumbarton on the Clyde in Scotland at the turn of the century. It was carried up the mountain in numbered boxes by llamas and re-assembled before being launched on the lake. We boarded one of these ferries for the night journey across the lake and found the cabins were comfortably furnished in a pleasant Victorian

style. On waking in the morning, we were greeted with views of snow-capped mountains and the sun shining on the waters of the lake, a truly magical sight. One small incident remains in my memory: we were served toast and marmalade for breakfast.

## **Bolivia**

When we had reached the south side of Lake Titicaca, we disembarked in Bolivia and made a short coach journey to the capital La Paz. On the way we made a brief stop at an Indian village, where a festival was in progress. Here again, the bright colourful costumes caught the eye. The language of these people was not Quechua but Aymara, which indicated that they had been subject people in the Inca empire.

The President of Bolivia was Victor Paz Estenssoro, who had led a lightning rebellion against the country's landowning oligarchy. During our stay in La Paz, we awoke one morning to an unsuccessful attempted coup against the government. For a few hours the streets of the city were not safe because of stray bullets. An abiding memory of our visit to Bolivia was a train journey arranged by the government to the tin mining regions of Catavi and Siglovente, where we were the guests of the tin miners who controlled the whole region. Their leader was a man called Escobar and government rule did not operate there; there were no police and no army, only an administration run by the mining union. The whole place had an eerie and rather menacing atmosphere.

An Indian friend of mine, R. Vaitheswaran, whose home I had stayed in years before, was in charge of our party there. Vaitheswaran was a gold medal student at university and came from Hyderabad, where he had taken part in a communist rebellion. His home was in a poor area of the city, approached down a narrow dirt lane and I had been given the only bed in the house to sleep on. I remember a herd of buffalo being driven down the lane in the mornings and Vaitheswaran's mother would come out with a vessel, which the herdsman filled with milk from one of his herd.

Familiar with revolutionary situations, Vaitheswaran was the ideal person to handle the situation we were now in. All went well until our train was leaving. A few miles out of Catavi, it was halted by miners threatening to blow it up with dynamite. In effect, we were hostages, and the miners then began negotiations with the government. There was not much we could do but I was glad that Vaitheswaran was in charge. The morning wore on and it was not until later in the day that we were allowed to continue our journey to La Paz. I could only guess that the government must have given way, as the miners held all the trump cards.

## **Chile**

From La Paz, we travelled on south by train, arriving in the town of Antofagasta in northern Chile. On the way to the capital Santiago, we visited the nitrate fields of Pedro de Valdivia. This region had supplied the world with nitrate fertiliser before other countries learned to manufacture their own. We also visited the largest open cast copper mine at Chuquicamata. The Republic of Chile was liberated from Spain in the early nineteenth century by an Irishman, Bernado O'Higgins, who is venerated everywhere.

Following several weeks in Chile, the Japanese students had a brief visit to Buenos Aires in Argentina before flying to Rio de Janeiro for an international conference. They then flew home to Japan and it was at this point that my medical responsibilities ended, thankfully with all our party in good health. One of my last patients was a gentle old lady from the USA who was attending the conference, Mrs Nixon, mother of Richard Nixon, the former American President.

After the Japanese had departed, I decided to stay on in South America, which is a fascinating continent and I really enjoyed my time there, with many adventures, some of which I will now relate.

## **'Men of Brazil'**

A group of militant port workers of Rio de Janeiro had made a documentary film, with the help of a BBC producer, entitled 'Men of Brazil'. It was the story of change in the lives of the port workers, as told by themselves. The Governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Lacerda, requested that the film be shown in the favelas (shantytowns) of the city. These shantytowns, where thousands lived in makeshift dwellings without any civic amenities whatsoever, scarred every hillside in the city. Carlos Lacerda had launched a programme to bring electricity, water, sanitation and proper roads to the favelas and he felt that 'Men of Brazil' would supplement this programme. A group of Brazilian army generals met each week with the dockers and leaders of the shantytowns to plan the screenings of the film. I was included in these meetings and enjoyed visiting the areas where the film was shown and working with these men.

The city of Sao Paulo asked Rio for their advice on tackling their slums. A popular politician, Dr Adamar de Barros, was Governor of the state of Sao Paulo and also a medical doctor. On one occasion, he invited the Rio dockers to a lunch at the Governor's palace, to which I was invited. At one point in the conversation around the table Dr Barros asked the dockers, 'What do people say about me?' to which, quick as a flash, one of the dockers, Damasio Cardoso, replied, 'Dos piores, Adamar e o melhor.' ('of the worst, Adamar is the best') The whole table erupted with laughter, including the Governor! As you might guess from this, politicians in Brazil were not held in very high regard.

The Portuguese were the first colonists of Brazil, so the official language is Portuguese. Today, the Brazilian population includes large numbers of other nationalities. The state of Santa Catarina is largely German, so German is the common language. Rio Grande do Sul is Italian and Sao Paulo has one of the largest Japanese urban populations outside Japan. Like the USA, large numbers of Africans were brought from Africa in slave ships. In America they worked in the cotton fields, while in Brazil they worked with the sugar cane. Freedom for slaves came to Brazil in the 1880's. A feature of Brazil is the degree to which miscegenation took place, resulting in a mixed race population with all grades of colour. But even with this racial mixture, colour prejudice does exist in Brazil.

### **'The Crowning Experience'**

A colourful musical film, 'The Crowning Experience' was on release in the cinemas of Brazil while I was there. This film was made in the USA and it told the true story of the life of the renowned educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, who was born of slave parents and became the advisor on education to American Presidents. The star of the film, Muriel Smith, was a talented black American actress with a beautiful voice. She visited Brazil to promote the film and I had the opportunity of travelling with her to various parts of the country, along with the son of a New York banker, Parks Shipley.

An extraordinary Brazilian, a newspaper and television magnate, whom I knew only as Chateaubriand, took responsibility for her visit. He arranged dinners, receptions and TV appearances. I had met him first in London when he was the Brazilian Ambassador and he had come on one occasion to dine at 45 Berkeley Square. Since then he had suffered a stroke that had left him paralysed from the neck down but this didn't stop him from running a vast empire. His home in São Paulo was called Casa Amarela and the front of the house was a vast cage, full of humming birds. Inside the house, an army of nurses and secretaries attended to his every need. I had the responsibility of showing the film for him in his house as he lay on his bed.

A memorable episode on that tour of Brazil with Muriel Smith was a visit to the state of Rio Grande do Norte in the north east of the country. We were the guests of the Governor, who put two small planes at our disposal so we could visit the towns in the interior, to show the film. The pilots navigated by following the dirt roads and as we approached a town, we could see the Mayor and leading citizens driving out to meet us on a dirt runway. We were then driven around on a series of official engagements: I was younger then but it was an exhausting schedule.

### **Back home to treat Mother**

When I arrived back home in Ireland from South America sometime in 1963, I found that Mother was gravely ill. Father had died five years previously from heart failure. Mother was suffering from secondary cancer in her bones and other organs. Fluid had gathered in her chest cavity and a thigh wound, resulting from an operation to pin a broken hip, had refused to heal and was an open sore. Her doctor considered she had only a few weeks to live. I consulted with the cancer specialists in Dublin's St Anne's Hospital and we decided to try an experimental treatment; this was before the advent of chemotherapy. Mother first had radioactive iodine injected into a vein, which allowed it to circulate throughout her body. The hope was that this radioactive iodine would lodge in the cancer deposits and kill the cancer cells. This treatment was combined with injections of anabolic steroids every few weeks and X-ray therapy as soon as pain developed in any of her bones. With this regime, Mother made a good recovery, sufficient to allow her to get about the house and to go out on visits and car drives. She lived for three more years, rather than the few weeks her doctor had feared.

I remember there was one outing she was very keen to do and that was to see the film, 'The Sound of Music'. I drove her to a matinee in a cinema in Talbot Street, Dublin and she thoroughly enjoyed the performance. However, she had one complaint: why did they have to bring in those Nazis at the end? It reminded me of the earlier days at home, when the books she read had to have a happy ending!

During Mother's treatment, I consulted Cecil McDowell, who had previously pinned her broken hip. He X-rayed the hip and this showed that the fracture had healed well. He felt it would be safe to remove the steel pin, which he did, and this allowed the wound to finally heal up. While he was at it, he had tissues taken for examination and this revealed that cancer had caused the original hip fracture. Mother's extraordinary medical case featured in a major article in the Irish Medical Journal, along with the X-ray photos

### **Rescuing Australians**

Towards the end of 1966, I received a medical SOS from a group of Australians touring India. They had reached the most southerly state, Kerala, when members of the group had succumbed, one by one, to acute infective hepatitis. Nowadays, those travelling in certain areas of the world can receive an inoculation that protects them from this infection, but at that time, there was no such vaccination, so the only protection that could be used was a large injection of serum taken from patients who had recovered from the disease and had developed antibodies against it. I knew that the Swedes had perfected the production of this serum, which was called gamma globulin, but it was very expensive.

I should mention, at this point, that it is the type A virus that causes the most common form of acute infective hepatitis, from which most people make a complete recovery, although it can be fatal. The source of this infection is from poor food and water hygiene. The two other types B and C are much more serious infections, usually contracted from infected blood transfusions and dirty syringes used to inject illegal drugs.

Generous friends in Sweden donated a quantity of gamma globulin and I flew post haste to India. Arriving in Kerala, I was greeted by Mr and Mrs Coulter who were in charge of the Australian group; they were among those who had not fallen sick. I injected gamma globulin into all who were still well, although a few who were already incubating the infection fell ill. The next task was to get the invalids, together with all the others, out of Kerala. This meant a long and arduous train journey to New Delhi, where fortunately I was lent an old castle, which we turned into a temporary hospital. All my patients made a complete recovery and I thankfully saw them off back home to Australia.

### **The flooded Jumna**

I stayed on in India, a country that grows on you - its energetic people, its brilliant colours, its many smells and its astonishing variety. In Delhi that summer there was an unusual occurrence. The city is built beside the Jumna River, a large tributary of the Ganges, India's holy river. There have been fourteen cities of Delhi, while today there are two, Old Delhi, the city of the mogul Emperors, and New Delhi, built beside the old by the British Raj to replace Calcutta in 1912.

In hot weather, the snow on the Himalayas melts and often causes serious flooding of the plains. That year, the Jumna flooded, burst its sandy banks and changed its course. The outcome was unexpected and drastic. The intake of the city's drinking water changed places with the sewage outflow, which polluted the drinking water. An epidemic of acute infective hepatitis engulfed Old and New Delhi. People then opened up old wells, setting off a cholera epidemic. In the middle of one night, I was woken by a man who had arrived in a taxi and he asked me to come to visit an ill patient. We drove out of the city together to a nearby village, where I found a man seriously ill, whom I suspected had cholera. We bundled him into the taxi and took him to the nearest hospital; on the way, I discovered the patient was the cook at the Russian Embassy!

### **A Brahmin meal**

I have been privileged to stay in many Indian homes. My time with one such family, where I was a guest for several months, is worthy of description in some detail.

My host was Sri C. S. Rangaswami, who lived with his joint family (that is, many of his close relatives) in Calcutta, where he was the owner of the 'Indian Finance', a weekly newspaper. He was a south Indian Brahmin, the highest Hindu caste, and of course, a strict vegetarian. The family lived in a large three-storied house built around a central courtyard. On the upper two floors, a continuous veranda went around all four walls of the courtyard, with doors leading onto this veranda from every room. The newspaper offices and the printing presses occupied the ground floor. At one end of the first floor, there was a large sitting room and opposite it on the other side of the courtyard was the dining room, with the kitchens off it.

South Indians drink coffee, not tea, and this coffee is taken at intervals during the day but not at meals. It is the custom in Indian families for the men to eat first, while the women eat later. Also, conversation at meals is not encouraged - one can talk before or after but not while eating. There are two main meals in the day, the first at 10 a.m. and the second at 6 p.m. and the same menu is served at all meals, every day.

At each mealtime, I assembled in the dining room with the other men of the household, while Mr Rangaswami sat at the top of the table. In front of each person was a round metal tray with a raised rim, called a trolley. Beside Mr Rangaswami's trolley there was a plastic soapbox, where he kept his dentures, which he would remove from the box and carefully fit into his mouth. This was a signal that brought one of the two male cooks in from the kitchen, carrying a large pot of cooked rice and a ladle.

In a Brahmin household, such as this one, the cooks must also be Brahmin. South Indians cook rice so that it is sticky and gelatinous, not as separate grains like north Indians. The cook places a large dollop of rice in the centre of each trolley and this rice is then mixed with hot chilli water; the mixture has to be eaten with the right hand, using the palm, not the fingers, as is the custom in north India. With a little practice, one gets the hang of it. When that course is eaten, the cook arrives a second time and places another dollop of rice in the trolley. This time, the rice is eaten with curried vegetables, which are served in little metal pots around the edge of the trolley. For a final course, the cook puts yet another dollop of rice in the trolley and this is mixed with a yoghurt called dahi. This dahi is made daily by putting some of the fresh dahi in a vessel of milk and the hot climate makes the milk curdle overnight.

The final act of the meal was when Mr Rangaswami removed his set of teeth and placed them in the trolley, which was then taken away, the teeth cleaned and replaced in the soapbox, ready for the next meal. I immensely enjoyed my stay with that family, despite an attack of appendicitis. Happily, a good friend, Dr Kumar, kindly did the necessary appendectomy.

### **Snakes alive!**

Before leaving my time in Asia and South America, I would like to describe another series of interesting experiences I had - with snakes!

In tropical countries, I always carried polyvalent anti-snakebite serum in my medical bag. This was a serum with an anti-toxin for the bites from common types of poisonous snakes. Fortunately, I never had to use it, but I did have several encounters with snakes. I once visited a man in a village in the Maharashtra hills in India who specialised in treating snakebite victims. He had no medical training but his treatment was on a par with modern medical practice. I asked him how many cases he treated in a year and he replied that he would see about 80 new cases. He said that most were from bites on the legs and feet of those planting rice in the flooded paddy fields. Often the patients travelled to see him from considerable distances. He told me he had a patient with him at present and asked me if I would like to see him. I said I would, whereupon he conducted me to a tin shed at the back of his house, where a man was lying on a bed in a coma. The snakebite healer pointed to the man's ankle where the skin punctures made by the snake's two fangs were clearly visible.

### **A king cobra**

On another occasion I was in the Bengal countryside with the District Commissioner. We arrived at a village where a snake catcher had been hired that day to catch a king cobra. We were invited to come and view the snake he had caught. We were taken to a house in the village, where we made ourselves comfortable sitting cross-legged on the stone floor of the living room. Facing us in the middle of the room was the snake catcher and beside him an earthenware pot, with its lid securely tied down. When the lid was removed, a beautiful king cobra reared its hooded head, which it held back in the striking position and hissed venomously at us.

The snake catcher poked the snake out of the pot with a stick so that we might see it better. Then holding the earthenware lid in one hand, he presented it to the cobra, which angered it further, so it kept darting at the lid, attempting to bite it. We made sure we maintained a safe distance away.

To get the cobra back in the pot, the snake catcher made the snake continue to attack the lid, then he reached behind it with his other hand and with a quick movement, seized the snake by the neck, lifted it up and put it in the pot.

### **A hungry snake in Brazil**

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, I visited an Institute where anti-snake venom serum was produced. Brazil is home to many types of poisonous snakes. In this Institute, the venom is taken from the snakes and injected into horses in non-lethal doses.

These animals manufacture antibodies in their systems and blood is then taken from the horses and the serum is separated. On this particular afternoon, crates of snakes had arrived at the Institute from the countryside. I watched as the crates were opened and the snakes tipped out to form a wriggling heap on the ground. Sitting on a stool was a secretary with a ledger; she had a brightly coloured non-poisonous snake wrapped round one wrist. Her job was to record the contents of each crate as the snakes were sorted out.

The only other person present was a man in a white coat and knee-length leather boots. He held a wooden pole in his hand, which had an iron hook attached to one end, with which he would lift up a snake and examine it. If it was non-poisonous, it went into one of two containers beside him and if it was poisonous, it went into the other container. A short distance away were two pits lined with stone walls and when the containers were full, he emptied them into the pits, poisonous into one and non-poisonous into the other. Picking up a snake from the pile, he said to me, 'This snake is non-poisonous and it eats poisonous ones and if it's hungry, it will eat one for us now.' With that, he threw it a poisonous snake as big as itself: immediately, the snake wound itself around its victim and starting with the head, over a period of about ten minutes, it swallowed the whole of the poisonous snake. The man then said, 'If it's really hungry, it will eat another.' So a second snake disappeared after the first and still the glutinous snake didn't appear to be any larger, even although it had swallowed two others its own size.

### **Milking snakes**

Before I left the Institute, the man showed me how to milk venom from the snakes. He caught a snake by the neck with one gloved hand and with the other, held a small glass container to the mouth of the snake with its two injecting fangs over the edge of the container. As he pressed on the venom sacks in the snake's neck, I could see the drops of venom being extruded into the container. Finally, the man told me how to recognise non-poisonous from poisonous snakes. Poisonous snakes have a distinct neck between their head and their body, which non-poisonous don't have. A person bitten by a snake is advised to kill it if they can and bring it with them to the hospital, so it can be identified and the appropriate anti-venom serum used.

I hope it isn't stretching the imagination too far to suggest that perhaps there is a moral in this that might be applicable to my description of the next chapter in my life: always be certain of the correct diagnosis before attempting to treat the patient!



## PART 3

# Northern Ireland

### The constitutional crisis

When the campaign for civil rights, ‘one man, one vote’ began in Northern Ireland towards the end of the 1960s, I was in Bombay. There was a downtown bookshop that sold the English Sunday newspapers, which I bought as soon as they came in. I instinctively sensed that what was happening in Northern Ireland was the beginning of important developments in Irish history. It is interesting that the civil rights demonstrations in Northern Ireland coincided with student unrest in the American universities and student riots in Paris. In a similar way two hundred years earlier, the 1798 rebellion in Ireland had coincided both with the American war of independence and the French revolution.

In 1947, the Westminster parliament had passed the Butler Education Act and one of the effects of this was to enable numbers of young Catholic nationalists in Northern Ireland to get a university education. Twenty years later, there now existed an articulate Catholic population, which would no longer tolerate second-class citizenship or be deprived of jobs and decent housing.

I belonged to that generation born in Ireland, north and south, which had never known a country that was not partitioned. In the south, we had largely become inured to the injustices in the North and had accepted the status quo. Senator Martin Mansergh, who comes from a southern Protestant land-owning family, wrote:

When the troubles broke out in Derry in August 1969, I was with my family in County Cork. Nightly, with other guests and locals, we crowded around the hotel’s television. My brother and I discussed the significance of what was happening with my father, who had grown up in Tipperary during the war of independence and who was convinced that sooner or later the IRA would re-emerge and dominate events. Having been in college during the time of student unrest and familiar with the international culture of protest of the 1960s, we

argued strongly that this was about civil rights, and was completely different from old-style nationalism. With the typical critical, but not self-critical assurance of youth, we felt that my father who was a historian understood Ireland of the 1920s much better than the Ireland of the late 1960s. We all know now who was right and who was wrong!

There was another man who had the foresight to see what was about to happen: the French President, Charles de Gaulle. In 1961, with the Algerian war at its height, de Gaulle was pressed by some of his ministers, including the young Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to aim for 'two Algerias'. They proposed that a line be drawn around the Algiers area to include most of the French settlers, while the Algerian Arabs would be offered the rest. They argued that this had worked in Northern Ireland. De Gaulle would have none of it and told his ministers, 'Northern Ireland may be quiet now, but the British will pay for that folly with a generation of woe.'

Just two years after that prediction, Northern Ireland began to unravel. It was the election of Terence O'Neill in 1963 as the Prime Minister in succession to Basil Brooke that started the rot. O'Neill attempted to reform a province mired by years of stagnation. Another renowned Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, the 19th century traveller, writer and politician wrote, 'The most dangerous moment for an oppressive government is at that moment when it begins to reform.'

In the previous violent political conflict in Ireland, from 1912 to 1921, Protestants in the north of Ireland had insisted that the union with Great Britain should be maintained on a par with the Scots and the Welsh. Instead, what they got was six of the nine counties of Ulster as a separate political unit. The only distinguishing feature of this unit around which the unionists could organise politically was its Protestant majority. In order to preserve the union with Great Britain, they were obliged to prostitute their Protestant faith to achieve political ends.

All attempts by well-meaning people to reconcile the communities in Northern Ireland have come up against this need to use inbuilt constitutional bigotry to keep the union safe. In other words, sectarianism is an integral part of the way the six counties were originally set up. The sad consequence is the lasting damage inflicted on the Christian faith of a whole community, who learn early in their lives to hate and despise, as well as fear, fellow citizens of another community.

From the British standpoint, the constitutional arrangements made in 1920-21 had the important merit of removing the disruptive distraction of the Irish problem from the Imperial parliament at Westminster and as far as they were concerned, this worked admirably for sixty years. Under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 that partitioned Ireland, Westminster 'was responsible for all persons, matters and things in Northern Ireland', but in practice, they did nothing about it. Northern Ireland's affairs in Whitehall were administered by a single civil servant, from a small room in the Colonial Office. When the province

finally blew up, both London and Dublin were caught totally unprepared. The British Home Secretary James Callaghan finally had to send in the British army to restore order in Belfast and Derry.

The Westminster government were appalled at what they found when they took over. Reforms were instituted but they proved to be too little too late. Dublin, on the other hand, had their fingers badly burned with the arms trial and the bombs in Dublin and Monaghan. Irish Governments had a policy of staying well clear of Northern Ireland and for the next twenty years followed that policy, fervently hoping that the contagion would remain in the North and not spread to the south.

I arrived back in Belfast in August 1971. Brian Faulkner had just become Prime Minister, after the two previous Prime Ministers, Terence O'Neill and James Chichester-Clark had failed to stop the slide to further civil unrest and crowd conflict. In a last throw of the dice, Faulkner sought permission from London to introduce internment without trial, which was reluctantly given. In the early hours of the morning of the 9th August, 342 men were arrested and taken into custody, all except one being Catholic. Because of poor intelligence, the wrong men had been rounded up and the whole operation was a disaster. To compound the failure, the British army then tortured the suspects, which later resulted in the British government being convicted of inhuman treatment by the European Court of Human Rights, with hefty compensation being paid to the victims. In the meantime, the Provisional IRA could hardly cope with the rush of young men volunteering to join their ranks. For days, Belfast was engulfed in riots. On one Sunday afternoon, I walked around Belfast; the streets were empty and only my footsteps were audible in the eerie silence. Everywhere was littered with burnt out cars and buses and the gaunt ruins of smouldering houses on each side of the street.

For many years, the British government's policy was driven solely by security considerations, dealing firmly with criminal activity and the restoration of law and order, while tackling the underlying political problems was not a priority. This short sighted policy led to a series of fundamental mistakes, such as the shooting dead of fourteen unarmed civilians in Derry by British Paratroopers and ultimately to ten prisoners dying on hunger strike. Eventually, it became necessary to seek assistance from outside: first, Dublin's help was sought, then Washington became involved. Northern Ireland was no longer solely an internal matter for the United Kingdom: it had become an international affair.

### **Initiatives in a conflict situation**

As an ordinary concerned citizen, where can one begin to make a small contribution to the resolution of an impossible situation? Looking back over the past thirty years, it is heartening to see how a handful of people found themselves

in the place where the first tentative drafts of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 were being worked out. This was completely unplanned; all they did was to do each day what they thought was right and one thing then led to another. \*

Who were the people involved in this undertaking? I will begin with a remarkable and formidable English lady, Dr Winifred Hind, who lived in a large house off the Malone Road in Belfast. Her husband was Bishop John Hind, who had worked for forty years in the Fukien Mission in southern China, a mission supported by Trinity College. Winifred was one of the first women to graduate from medical school and as a doctor, she joined a missionary society and went to practice in China in 1920. There she met John, who was a widower and they were married. When the Bishop retired from China in 1940, he brought his wife back to live in Northern Ireland and when he died, Winifred was alone in a big house. She was active in the Church of Ireland and was president of the Mothers Union; in the church circles she was often referred to as 'the spiritual tank'!

When the troubles began, Winifred wanted her home to be used to help in some way. Two old friends from Trinity days, Bill and Muriel Porter had returned to Ireland from Italy, a country that Bill loved. He was a classics scholar, like his father who had been classics professor in both Trinity College and Cork University. Winifred, by this time into her eighties, decided to invite the Porters to stay with her and assist her in using her home and I will refer again to this later.

### **Protestant hegemony**

I first knew Brian Hewitt when he was an architectural student in Belfast. He became a partner in an architectural firm in Belfast and married Margaret McDermott, the younger of two sisters who were looked after by Hazel in Alexandra College when she was assistant matron there.

Brian grew up in Portadown, a very Protestant town and his father was an Orangeman. However, Brian was the first Ulster Protestant I knew who realised that things in Northern Ireland were wrong and he also understood the powerful establishment forces that kept it in existence. His architects firm was a part of that establishment and the firm's contracts were with its leadership. For example, Brian did work for both of the Henderson brothers, one of whom owned 'The Newsletter', the newspaper read by the Protestant community and the other brother owned Ulster Television. Indeed, Brian planned and built the new UTV station in Belfast. Protestant firms like Brian's did not employ Catholics. However, because of pressure of work, the firm found itself needing to employ

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\* I have written three booklets about the unfolding events in Northern Ireland over the past thirty years. The names of these can be found at the beginning of this book. Copies are available on loan from the Linen Hall Library and Central Library, in Belfast, and one of these is also available in the UK university libraries. These booklets cover in detail my own experiences during that period and some of what is described in the following pages repeats these stories.

another architect and Brian had the job of interviewing applicants for the post. The most qualified man was a Catholic, Dennis Haslem, so Brian appointed him.

Previously, Dennis had been employed by the Belfast City Council; one day his boss had taken him aside to give him a quiet word of advice: as a Catholic, Dennis shouldn't be hoping for promotion. As a result, Dennis had decided to emigrate to Australia with his family, but before doing so, he felt he should at least try for a place with a firm in the private sector. Because his qualifications were so good and he was exceptionally gifted, he was accepted for the first job he applied for. However, almost as an afterthought, the interviewer had asked Dennis what school he had gone to. In Northern Ireland, this question is an indirect way of finding out which religion a person belongs to: for Catholics, it is very humiliating. Dennis picked up his coat and walked straight out of the interview. Nevertheless, he decided to try one more time for a job in Belfast before leaving Northern Ireland and as it happened, Brian was the next interviewer.

Dennis turned out to be a huge asset to the architect's team and when the senior partner retired, Brian made Dennis a partner, with a 50/50 equal share of the firm. Brian's family were strongly opposed to this, as such a position was contrary to the unwritten laws of Northern Ireland: Catholics could never be allowed a position of control in a Protestant firm.

Both Brian and Dennis went on to hold top positions in the Royal Society of Ulster architects. Among his many talents, Dennis Haslem was an authority on the preservation of historic buildings and the firm became involved in the restoration of some of Belfast's finest buildings, such as the Castle and the City Hall. Following all the bomb damage in Belfast over the years, Richard Needham, one of the direct rule Ministers in Stormont, appointed Dennis to the job of advising the government on the restoration of the city and also appointed him as Chairman of the government board responsible for historic buildings. This was over the heads of some establishment figures that might have expected to get the job.

### **Presbyterian heritage**

George Dallas was a medical student at Queens University when I was at Trinity and we were friends from those early days. His parents were teachers in a Presbyterian school in Co. Monaghan. When partition came, the family moved to Dromara in Co. Down, where they were neighbours and friends of Bill Willis and his family. George grew up fervently attached to his Presbyterian tribal roots. He would describe himself as an adherent of those Presbyterians who rose in rebellion against the establishment in 1798. Like many Presbyterians, he regarded the Anglican church with a distinctly jaundiced eye and especially those who came from the south of Ireland.

The Presbyterian church came to Ireland in 1641 when the Scots army arrived in Ulster during the War of the Three Kingdoms. With that army came

their chaplains. The Anglican church treated these Scots Presbyterians as intruders and subjected them to penal restrictions. No Presbyterian was allowed to hold any public office and they were compelled to pay tithes towards the upkeep of the Church of Ireland, similar to the Catholics. I had personal experience of how even today Presbyterians nurse considerable antipathy towards the Church of Ireland. One Sunday morning Kitty Montgomery took me to service in her church, First Derry Presbyterian church. In the porch on the way out after the service my eye fell on a marble tablet on which were inscribed a column of church elders. As I was standing reading the names, a man came up behind me and told me firmly that those were the men ‘who refused to bow the knee to the Thirty Nine Articles.’ In other words, they refused to recant and so were deprived from holding any public office in Derry.

George contracted pulmonary tuberculosis when he was a student. The first line of treatment in those days was to rest the diseased lung by collapsing it by introducing air into the pleura on the affected side. As students in the Adelaide, we had many patients undergoing this procedure and on Saturday mornings, we would top up the air for them, like car tyres. If the lung refused to collapse, the final resort was an operation called thoracoplasty. Sections of the ribs were removed, enabling the whole chest wall to collapse in. It was a horribly mutilating procedure but the best we could do. As a house surgeon in the Adelaide, I had assisted Nigel Kinnear with this operation. Today, there are antibiotics effective against the tubercle bacillus that thankfully has made this method of treating tuberculosis obsolete.

However, George was one of those patients who needed thoracoplasty. When he qualified as a doctor, he had hoped to become a medical missionary but because of his health, this career was not possible. Instead, for his entire professional life, George worked as a chest specialist in the treatment of tuberculosis in most of Northern Ireland’s hospitals.

### **The City of Belfast**

Belfast is a city of the industrial revolution, not unlike Birmingham, Coventry, Sheffield and Glasgow. However, Belfast possessed one significant difference from the others – its industries, by in large, employed only Protestant workers. This was true of the Harland and Wolfe shipyard, Shorts Harland aircraft factory, the engineers Mackies, who manufactured jute and textile machinery and the Rope Works. Only the linen and cotton textile factories employed Catholic women to operate the looms, and lung disease and tuberculosis in the damp, hot atmosphere of those mills was common.

History records that over the years since the 1970s, only one of those firms has thrived. The Canadian Bombardier company bought over Shorts aircraft from the British government for a give-away price; under pressure from American

investors, it is now employing more Catholic workers. Harland and Wolf shipyards, which once employed more than 20,000 men, was bought by a Norwegian, Fred Olsen, to service his oil rigs and now is reduced to a skeleton staff of one hundred men. The Rope Works, at one point the largest in the world, has closed, as has Mackies. Davidson's Sirocco factory, which made fans for all the tea factories in India and Ceylon, is now owned by an English engineering conglomerate and has re-located to a smaller site on Queen's Island as Howden Power, making power station equipment. Very few of the textile mills remain and more are going.

The Shankill Road, which was a bastion of the Protestant working class, today is a very sad place to visit. Boys, who left school at fourteen, were able to walk straight into any job, without the need for further education. Now, without work and unprepared for the age of the new technology requiring a high level of education, they have drifted into the Protestant paramilitaries and crime, extortion and drugs, with rival gang warfare now being a feature of life. The University of Queens, which gave young middle class Protestants a good third level education, now has a majority of Catholic students and the young Protestants go to English and Scottish universities instead, with only a very few returning to work in Northern Ireland.

### **Where the conflict was fiercest**

In looking at the conflict between the communities, it was clear that it was fiercest at the working class interfaces. The middle classes largely took fright and withdrew from politics and 'the troubles', taking care of their own affairs. In seeing this situation realistically, we decided to meet the trade union leaders on both sides of the divide who were most heavily involved. Over time, we made some very good friends with Catholics in West Belfast and Protestants in East Belfast.

Eric Turpin, who had returned to Belfast at about the same time as I had, knew trade unionists in Britain, and on one occasion, we invited two of his English friends to visit. Jack Carrol was a militant dockworker from Bristol, and Les Dennison was a building worker from Coventry. Les had been a dedicated communist and while serving in the British army during the war, had been taken prisoner by the Japanese in Singapore. He was one of the thousands who were put to work on the Burma railway and he survived through sheer will power and his communist faith, while many others gave up and died. Back home in Coventry, he met a fellow worker who convinced him to turn to militant Christianity, and this had helped him overcome his hatred of the Japanese.

We organised a meeting in a hall in downtown Belfast so both these men could tell their stories. Sitting at the back of the hall was an east Belfast Orangeman who was the deputy convenor of the trade union in the Sirocco engineering works. This was Tommy Elwood and he was fascinated by the story of the man from Coventry. There and then, Tommy decided that if Les Denison

could get over his hatred of the Japanese, he could get over his hatred of Catholics. A few years later, we met Jim McIlwaine, who was the convenor of the union in the same factory and one of the leaders of the 1974 workers strike that had brought down the Faulkner power-sharing government at Stormont. He decided to join his fellow trade unionists in working with us.

### **Outreach and consequence**

George Dallas, who had a gift with words in the local idiom, wrote a short sketch or play portraying how changes in attitudes could happen. This was used as a play reading, with Catholic and Protestant trade unionists reading the parts and there were several performances for invited audiences.

All this interested a Canadian doctor, Paul Campbell, who lived with his family in London. Dr Campbell had been Dr Buchman's physician for many years. He was particularly concerned about the rise of the Quebec separatists in Canada. I also had an interest in this, as I had shared a prefect's study in The Kings Hospital School with Jasper Cross, who became the British Commercial Attaché in Montreal. Quebec terrorists kidnapped Jasper at the same time as they kidnapped the Minister of Labour, Pierre Laporte. Sadly, the Minister eventually turned up dead in the boot of a car, but thankfully, Jasper was released alive after 45 days in captivity. Later, the BBC made a documentary about Jasper's ordeal.

After his visit to Belfast, Dr Campbell felt that these men with George's play could be helpful in Canada and this began a series of visits to Canada and the USA. Before that first transatlantic visit to North America in 1971, Eric Turpin and I went down to Armagh with George Dallas to consult with George and Mercy Simms. As I have mentioned earlier, I had first met George Simms when he was Chaplain at Trinity. By the time of these events, Dr. Simms was the Archbishop of Armagh. We visited him before each subsequent visit, to get his advice and blessing and he was always a great support. Another leading clergyman who was a supportive friend was the Bishop of Derry, Charlie Tyndall whom I knew when he was the Rector in North Strand, Dublin.

On the first occasion, the party went to Quebec City, Trois Rivieres and Montreal in Canada and to New York and Washington in America. Two years later, after yet another visit, there was an interesting aftermath: some weeks after our return to Belfast, we received a visit from a young French Canadian, Laurent Gagnon. He had come to see for himself what was going on in Northern Ireland. We arranged for him to stay with Billy and Ivy Arnold. Billy was Secretary of the Boilermakers Society in the Harland and Wolfe shipyards and his wife Ivy sang in the choir of St Barnabas Church of Ireland, where Billy was a churchwarden. As Billy was an Orangeman, having a French Canadian Catholic as a guest presented Billy with a problem: he didn't feel he could introduce him to his Protestant friends, so he decided to take him to meet some of the local Catholic priests.

On the third such visit, Billy called on the Redemptorist Clonard monastery off the Falls Road with his young guest. There they met an unusual priest, Fr Christopher McCarthy, who had recently returned from a theological post in Villa Nova University in Philadelphia. He had served in India, Sri Lanka and Australia and had earlier been a much-loved Director of a large men's confraternity in Clonard church. Fr Christy, as he was affectionately known, loved people with an abiding interest in everything about them, who they were and what they did. He was a man of God, with a fervent belief in the leading of the Holy Spirit and with it all, a happy sense of humour. A fellow priest once described him thus: 'Some priests are pastors and some priests are explorers but Fr McCarthy is the arch-explorer!'

### **An unexpected outcome**

One day, Laurent invited Fr Christy to the home of Winifred Hind, who was entertaining visitors that evening. Fr Christy, always eager to investigate something new, accepted the invitation. However, he later told us that he felt he was something of a 'fish out of water' in that company and was not overly impressed. But then, in the course of the meeting, Mrs Ellie McDermott expressed how sorry she was for the way her family had treated the Catholics in Derry over the years. Fr Christy said, 'Those words of that old lady struck me like a blow to the chest. I never thought I would ever live to hear a Protestant admit to such a wrong.' In a province where gerrymandering was routinely practiced, Derry was the worst case of all. The city had a Catholic majority but for generations, Protestant councillors had dominated the city council. They had achieved this by dividing Derry into three wards, with each ward electing four councillors to the city council. The trick was to consign all the Catholics to one ward and this required controlling the allocation of housing to people on the basis of religion and not on the basis of need. Mrs McDermott's father, Sir Frederick Simmons was the Mayor of Derry during this period and as she once remarked, her father kept all the housing lists in his coat pocket.

### **Father Christy McCarthy's apostolate**

Shortly after the event described above, Fr McCarthy was posted to the Redemptorist monastery in Limerick, to set up a men's confraternity there. However, in his heart he felt he ought to go back to Belfast, where he was convinced that his true mission was to bring healing to the two divided communities.

Eric Turpin and I happened to be guests in the monastery in Limerick about this time, where we found that Fr Christy was then having second thoughts about taking on such a task in Belfast: it seemed an impossible undertaking. However, Fr Gerry Reynolds, who was then the Rector at Limerick monastery, convinced Fr Christy to overcome his doubts and return to Belfast, which he did shortly afterwards.

There, he was tireless in his efforts, in his words, ‘to dispel the myths in the minds of Protestants about Catholics.’ His health was not good, but he didn’t allow this to hold him back. Sadly, he died in 1983; later, I will relate how he created the Bible study groups that he organised in several parts of greater Belfast and the many other extraordinary events Fr Christy initiated, in the ten years that we knew him.

First, here is an extract from an appreciation of Fr McCarthy’s life and work, which his friend and colleague, Fr Alex Reid, wrote in *The Irish News* in Belfast:

He will be remembered with esteem and affection by the many people, Protestants and Catholics, who came to know him and to work with him when, in Belfast, he inspired and directed a magnificent apostolate for Christian reconciliation and peace ... This was the last, and many would say the most glorious chapter in a story of his missionary enterprises because now he was braving the pain and difficulties of a crippling illness and at the same time, breaking new paths across the dangerous lines of prejudice and misunderstanding that so divided the people of Northern Ireland ... Showing all the old drive and initiative and with a dauntless trust in God that enabled him to rise to heroic heights of courage and determination, he helped to organise new points of contact between Catholics and Protestants so that, by praying and studying regularly together, they might share their hopes and plans for peace.

### **‘Thursday ladies’**

A number of elderly Protestant ladies met with Winifred Hind in her home every Thursday morning. Their weekly meetings became known as the ‘Thursday Ladies’. Fr Christy took them on and would often join in. The ladies became very fond of him and looked forwards to his visits. They often travelled with him when he took George’s play and the trade union men to various meetings organised in Derry, Dublin, Limerick and Wexford, as well as occasions in Belfast. Ellie McDermott and another lady joined a party he took on a visit to the Holy Land.

At about this time, Ellie asked me to drive her to Derry, the city she grew up in, as she wished to see Bishop Edward Daly and put things right with him. I dropped her off at the Bishop’s residence and collected her again two hours later. Although she never told me much of what had happened, my impression from her expression was that it had been a good time. I suspect Bishop Daly gave her full absolution!

On another occasion, Fr Christy arrived at a ‘Thursday Ladies’ meeting with Fr Aiden Cusack, a fellow priest and friend, from the Cistercian Monastery in Roscrea. Fr Cusack had written a book on the Blessed Gabriella of Unity, an Italian nun who died young and whose life was devoted to the unity of the divided Christian churches. Pope John Paul II had just made her a saint, to be known as the patron saint of reconciliation. Fr Christy thought that the ladies

would be thrilled to hear about Saint Gabriella – but he didn't appreciate that saints, even when elevated to sainthood by the Pope in Rome, didn't go down particularly well with Protestants. This hiccup, however, did not detract in any way from the regard the ladies had for Fr Christy.

### **'Belfast Report'**

In 1974, a decision was made to make a documentary film about the trade unionists from both sides of the divide that had been meeting and working together. A sum of money was raised from all and sundry and a BBC man, Hannan Foss, was engaged to make the documentary. He made an excellent film, entitled 'Belfast Report'. Fr Christy decided to have a showing of the film in Limerick and laid on a weekend there where we were to meet the town council, both Catholic and Protestant Bishops and other dignitaries in the civic life of Limerick. Winifred Hind, in spite of being nearly ninety, decided she would join the party; I drove Ellie McDermott down with Kitty Montgomery.

On the car journey from Belfast, I explained to Ellie that Limerick had suffered a similar siege to that in Derry, except that in the case of Limerick, it was the Catholics who were within the walls and the Williamite forces were besieging the city. Our first engagement in Limerick was with Dessie O'Malley, at that time the Minister of Justice. I recall meeting in the sitting room of Hanratty's Hotel, in front of a roaring fire. In the middle of the general conversation, Ellie McDermott suddenly said, 'Mr O'Malley, I understand that Limerick had a siege like Derry, except that the wrong people were on the inside.'

Ellie was guest during the weekend in a convent; she had visions of sleeping in a bare cell. Instead, she found herself in a pretty bedroom, where the nuns had put a hot water bottle in her bed and brought breakfast up to her. On the way home in the car, Ellie was very thoughtful. Finally she said, 'How can those girls be so nice when their religion is all wrong?' She had been pondering on those nuns in the convent who had taken such good care of her.

### **Ireland and England**

Showings of the documentary film 'Belfast Report' had some interesting consequences. On two occasions we met with the Presidents of Ireland at Aras an Uachtarain. Following our time with Erskine Childers, he requested Taoiseach Jack Lynch to arrange a showing for the Fianna Fail T.D.s in Leinster House. A group of the men came down from Belfast for the occasion; what the T.D.s made of it all, I don't recall, except to say that they were informed at the introduction that they were being shown this film at the express wish of the President.

One Saturday morning in Clonard monastery, Fr Christy arranged a showing of 'Belfast Report' for Gerry Adams and his uncle, Liam Hannaway. After seeing the film, Adams told us that he thought it was one of the best

presentations of its kind he had seen. However, he then added that it missed out on the fundamental issue, namely the relationship between the two nations, Ireland and England, with the sectarian division in the province being only a secondary issue. We spent the rest of the morning discussing this. At that point, which was some years ago, I recognised in Gerry Adams that we had met a formidable political intelligence and I have watched his progress with interest.

### **The missing factor**

People in England, like those in the south of Ireland, shied away from having anything to do with Northern Ireland. We were aware that we had no worthwhile entry into England and found, rather to our disappointment, that most of our English friends with whom we had worked with previously were now reluctant to have anything to do with us. We had become pariahs.

In the early days of the troubles, I had been in London on a number of occasions. Jim Lynn and I had lunch in the House of Commons with two MPs who were their party's spokesmen for the province. We were astonished at how ill informed they were. That evening, I had dinner with John Whale, a journalist who wrote editorials for *The Sunday Times*. He asked me whom we had been meeting and when I told him about the ignorance of the two MPs, he said, 'What did you expect? Money is what will settle it in the end.' He was referring to the four billion pounds sterling the Treasury forked out every year to keep Northern Ireland afloat. Such largesse could not go on indefinitely.

On another occasion, I was invited to lunch in the Westminster apartment of a friend, who had asked his cousin Lord Gowrie to meet me to discuss the situation in Northern Ireland. Lord Gowrie had just been appointed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as assistant to Jim Prior, the new Secretary of State at Stormont. Jim Prior and Lord Gowrie had between them concocted a scheme they called 'rolling devolution'. This was to be a panacea to solve all the problems. We had a two hour ding-dong debate, during which I assured Lord Gowrie that in my view, the scheme wouldn't work, while the noble Lord was adamant that it was a sure fire winner. However, I had a sneaking feeling he didn't fully believe his own arguments.

### **The right entry**

Like often happens in life, when human effort and foolishness seem to be leading nowhere, the right entry into England came about most unexpectedly. The Rev Desmond Parsons, the Rector of All Saints parish church, Dulwich, London, conducted a weekly men's discussion group in his parish. At one such meeting, Jake Ecclestone, who headed the journalist's chapel at *The Times*, raised the matter of the continued strife in Northern Ireland. He pointed out that their group had discussed many topics but nothing had ever been mentioned about a part of the UK that was obviously in difficulty. He asked the group if anyone had any

contacts in Northern Ireland and if so, would they consider inviting them to come and speak to them. One of those present, Leslie Fox, replied that he did have some contacts and he would be happy to make enquiries to see if someone would come over to meet with them. Desmond Persons himself also had a connection with Ireland, in that he was a cousin of the Earl of Rosse, who lived in a castle in Co. Offaly.

Fr McCarthy brought a party of Protestants and Catholics to Dulwich in answer to the request from All Saints Church. They stayed with parishioners and met with the church group in the home of Tom and Ida Garrud. Tom was a lay reader in the church and a director of *The Daily Mail*. From this beginning, a working link grew between All Saints Church and Clonard monastery, with visits back and forth between London and Belfast.

### **John Austin Baker**

At the time of Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Ireland in 1979, the first made by any Pope, the Rev John Austin Baker was rector of St Margaret's Church, Westminster. He was also a sub-Canon of Westminster Abbey and the Anglican chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. As he watched the Pope's visit to Ireland unfold, he felt moved to make a response, so the following Sunday he preached a sermon in the Abbey in which he expressed his shame at what his country, England had done in Ireland over the centuries. Although not in the habit of doing so, he decided on this occasion to issue the sermon to the press and it was widely reported in newspapers across Ireland.

Canon Baker followed this initiative by arranging a series of monthly lunchtime meetings in St Margaret's church at which he invited well-known historians to give lectures on Irish history and Anglo-Irish relations. In response to an invitation from Fr McCarthy, who had earlier travelled to London to meet him, Canon Baker was the guest preacher at Clonard church in Belfast, during the week of prayer for Christian unity and a very large congregation turned out to hear him. This was the first of many such visits that John Baker paid to Belfast and he also visited Dublin, where he was interviewed on RTE television. During these visits to Belfast, he met and conferred with politicians and church leaders from all the different parties and denominations.

On one of his visits, John Baker went to the Short Strand housing estate in east Belfast. This estate is much in the news today due to the murder of Robert McCartney and the campaign waged by his sisters to have his murderer brought to justice. The McCartney family live in the Short Strand, which is a tiny Catholic housing estate surrounded by the predominantly Protestant east Belfast. The residents over the years have suffered discrimination, since the large Sirocco engineering factory was situated across the road from the Short Strand but no Catholics were employed there. Consequently, the area was largely controlled by the IRA.

The purpose of Canon Baker's visit was to keep a promise he had made earlier to a Catholic woman who lived there. Her husband, a talented artist, was on the 'blanket protest' in the Maze, where the prisoners were refusing to wear prison clothes, in protest against the British government's refusal to recognise them as political prisoners. Earlier, the woman had heard that Canon Baker was sympathetic to their cause and together with an English writer she had befriended, they went to Westminster to meet the Canon. On that occasion, he told his visitors that he would do what he could and assured the woman that he would visit her home when he next came to Belfast.

Fr Christy arranged the visit to the Short Strand through contact with the local priest and a young man was sent to Clonard to accompany the Canon and his driver into the housing estate. Later, Fr Christy, with an infectious smile, commented to Canon Baker, 'Think of that, you had a real live terrorist with you in the car!' As the car drew up at the woman's house, another man appeared at the end of the street; clearly, a close watch was being kept on the strangers in the street and at the end of the visit, the same young man accompanied the car out of the area and back to Clonard. In the course of the Canon's visit, the woman took him upstairs to see the water leaking from the roof down the bedroom walls. Since then, the estate has been rebuilt and indeed, has won a European prize for its design and amenities.

### **Visitors at a Consecration**

When John Baker was consecrated Bishop of Salisbury in Westminster Abbey in 1982, Fr Christy and a group with him from Belfast received invitations to attend the ceremony. Fr Christy and I found ourselves sitting right beside the statue of the second Marquis of Londonderry, who had helped to secure peace in Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, following the Battle of Waterloo. But as Lord Castlereagh, he was one of the architects of the Act of Union between Ireland and England in 1800 and before that, had gained gruesome notoriety as the Chief Secretary of Ireland, in the bloody suppression of the 1798 rebellion. Some lines by Percy Shelley reflect this reputation:

*I met murder on the way –  
He had a mask like Castlereagh,  
Very smooth he looked and grim,  
Seven bloodhounds followed him.*

The magnificent pageantry of the ceremony was perfection and as the Bishop and priests processed through the Abbey to take their places before the Archbishop of Canterbury, Fr Christy leaned over and whispered to me mischievously, 'We'll have a job re-consecrating that lot, when the time comes!'

### **The Bishop visits Belfast**

As Bishop of Salisbury, John Baker was again invited to preach in Clonard church. However, on this occasion, the authorities in Church House in London expressed serious misgivings, as they feared that the presence of an English Bishop in Belfast might provoke riots by the extreme Protestant elements. The Archbishop of Canterbury had experienced serious disturbances on one of his overseas visits and naturally, they didn't want such a situation to be repeated. Some of us flew over from Belfast and accompanied Bishop Baker to Church House, where we assured the authorities that the Rev Paisley would never dare to enter the Catholic Falls road in west Belfast to provoke a riot, as it would certainly not be safe for him to do so. This satisfied everyone and the visit was duly authorised. The Catholic Primate, Cardinal Tomas O Fiaich, also invited Bishop Baker to preach at St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, the first English Bishop ever to do so.

When the Bishop and Mrs Baker were staying as guests of George and Ruth Dallas, George invited Andy Tyrie and John McMichael, the leaders of the UDA, the Protestant paramilitary organisation, to come and meet the Bishop. While the men were conferring, Ruth Dallas and Jill Baker prepared supper for the guests in the kitchen and when it came time for refreshments, the two ladies entered the sitting room rather nervously and served the guests at arms length. Clearly, as far as the ladies were concerned, these two men were un-convicted murderers! When the guests had departed the Bishop took the two ladies to task over their behaviour and told them, 'I have seldom seen two more disapproving women than you two.'

### **Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland**

On one of our visits to Canada, George Dallas was a guest in the home of a Swiss Canadian couple in Montreal, Professor Gustav and Ida Morf. Professor Morf was a psychiatrist who worked for the Canadian government, specialising in the psychology of terrorists. He interviewed young Quebec separatists who were in prison for committing acts of terror

A young Swiss lady, Ruth Mathys, was also staying with the Morfs, and George was smitten. Obeying the maxim 'nothing venture, nothing win', George proposed. He was accepted and they were married on the 29th December 1973 in Switzerland. Ruth came to live with George in strife-torn Belfast: it wasn't long before she discovered that nothing worked in the well-ordered Swiss fashion. I met her one morning in a fury at a plumber who had faithfully promised to come that day and hadn't turned up!

For quite some time, Bill and Muriel Porter, Eric Turpin and I were regularly invited to Sunday lunch with the newly married couple. Ruth was a cordon bleu cook and we looked forward to each Sunday with anticipation.

George, while appreciating the culinary talents of his wife, was also keen to probe the relationship between his Presbyterian community and the Church of Ireland, the old Ascendancy church. We four guests were southern Anglicans, all graduates of Trinity College Dublin and now living in the North. We liked to see ourselves as tolerant and moderate. However, we soon discovered that was not the way George, as a Northern Presbyterian, saw us. To him, we were superior, arrogant and thought we were better than everyone else. Ellie McDermott once remarked to me, in her direct Northern manner, ‘You think you have a civilising mission up here.’

A lesson I learnt early on about Northern Ireland was that George, as a Presbyterian in the North, reacted to every situation quite differently to how I reacted to the same situation. George’s reactions would be typical for every other Northern Presbyterian and would apply to many Northern Church of Ireland members, too. As a result, George never felt he could fully trust anyone from the Church of Ireland, especially those who came from the south.

### **A radical change**

The Northern Protestant community is tightly knit and breaking ranks is the ultimate act of betrayal, punishable by ostracism and in certain sections of the community, by death. So it is extraordinary to be able to record that George Dallas had a complete change of outlook on how he saw his Presbyterian community and Northern Ireland.

A conversation with a Catholic friend from Clonard Bible study group remained with George to the end of his life. It caused him to break down and weep bitter tears. He wrote about it thus:

For me the most devastating experience was when one of our new friends told me how his life was made hell every day at work by a bullyboy who also intimidated other Protestant fellow workers. Ironically our friend was not seeking sympathy or even understanding but he deplored his own lack of Christian forgiveness for his persecutor. A dozen such bullyboys can terrorize a large factory and make it impossible for Catholics to work there. I realized as never before the injustice of our dominance, which at all levels depends ultimately on the threat of sectarian murder. About the same time, having begun to understand more about what we needed to repent for, and a little about repentance itself, I began to think of what repentance must mean for our community in relation to Ireland. Surely it must mean a humble and glad acceptance of ourselves fully as Irish people, as we were meant to be, not Irish and British as well, or any other formula that allows us to go on feeling superior. Unless our community finds this kind of repentance and learns to care for all the people of Ireland, there will always be violence in this country.

George was one of those people who found it difficult to articulate verbally what he felt about his community and country; the way he managed to

do so most effectively was with his pen. His articles over the remaining years of his life appeared in many magazines and periodicals. I was asked by his wife Ruth to give the address at his funeral and later to publish a short biography of his life and to include some of those articles. The booklet 'The Second Conversion of Dr George Dallas' was launched in the Presbyterian Church House in Fisherwick Place, Belfast in 1999.

The outreach of George's change of heart touched many unexpected people. At one point, Fr Christy brought the Bible study group down to Armagh to visit Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich. The Cardinal immediately recognised George as the patient who had been in the same ward as his own brother, Patrick, many years before when George was in Foster Green hospital with tuberculosis. From this meeting at Armagh, a unique friendship developed between the Cardinal and the Presbyterian doctor. I remember one afternoon with George and Ruth in their home when the Cardinal arrived and spent the afternoon with us.

On another occasion, the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, John O'Connor arrived in Ireland with half a dozen American Archbishops and Bishops. Tomas O'Fiaich invited George, Jim Lynn and myself to come down to Armagh to have dinner with his guests. When we arrived at Ara Coeli, the official residence of the Archbishop, we found Fr Clyne, the Cardinal's assistant, rushing around trying to deal with an electricity blackout, with the house having to be lit with candles. The visitors had not yet returned from some outing or other. The lady housekeeper, who must have looked after many Archbishops in her time, was a wonderful soul and took the crisis in her stride, producing a lovely meal. We got to know her well on our several visits there. At this dinner, I found myself sitting beside the formidable Cardinal O'Connor, who struck me as being the very epitome of the classical image of a Prince of the Church.

Dr Martin Mansergh held George in very high regard. He wrote in a Dublin daily newspaper:

George Dallas, a Belfast Presbyterian consultant, has in a number of public contributions undertaken extremely courageous and forthright criticism of negative aspects of Irish Protestantism. In some ways Dallas is the most radical Protestant voice in Northern Ireland today.

Dr Mansergh, who advised Charles Haughey, Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahern on Northern Ireland, arranged for George, as a Northern Presbyterian, to be invited to present his views to the New Ireland Forum, which was set up in Dublin in 1983. I drove George and Ruth down to Dublin Castle so that George could attend and make his contribution; he was one of only a few Northern Protestants who had the courage to go to Dublin to take part in the Forum.

Tom Hartley, a Sinn Fein Belfast City Councillor and George Dallas were the most unlikely of friends. In a strange way, they hit it off from the first moment they met; they had an instinctive respect and trust for each other, despite

coming from such different backgrounds. Tom is from a middleclass Catholic family; one brother is a Benedictine monk in Glenstall Abbey and his sister Frances is a social worker. He has been a close advisor of Gerry Adams for many years and he invited George to write an article for an important Sinn Fein publication, which George was happy to do.

### **The Protestant Ascendancy**

When the conflict in the North was in its ninth year and at the time we were learning all these points from our relationship with George and the Presbyterian community, Fr Christy remarked to us, ‘You say things to me about the behaviour of your church in the history of Ireland but I have never heard you say them publicly.’ This was a challenge to us, from both the Presbyterians and the Catholics.

By chance, the Role of the Church Committee of the Church of Ireland had just issued a statement, part of which read:

Given penitence, honesty, realism and a determination to face radical change, there is still time for the churches, governments and others to make a positive contribution to the creation of a society for which we all long.

The quartet mentioned above that had met regularly for Sunday lunch with George and Ruth Dallas, decided that this needed teeth to make it real and also, this might be an opportunity to rise to Fr Christy’s challenge to us. So we drafted a statement in which we outlined briefly the history of our church, apologising for the wrongs our people had perpetuated against our fellow Catholic countrymen. The statement read in part:

The Protestant Ascendancy that ruled in the Dublin parliament was the ascendancy of the Church of Ireland. So the penal laws were to some extent applied to Presbyterians also. They, like Catholics, could not hold office under the Crown. They, like Catholics, were forced to pay tithes to help finance the Church of Ireland. For these and other reasons tens of thousands of Presbyterians migrated to the United States. In the war of Independence they helped to form the backbone of Washington’s army.

The fact that we had expressed this meant a great deal to George. Before issuing it publicly, we decided to consult with our Bishop, the Rt Rev George Quin, the Bishop of Down and Dromore. Mrs Ellie McDermott arranged a coffee morning in her home for us to meet with the Bishop and his wife, who was a doctor specialising in haematology at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast.

Dr Quin opened the conversation by describing an episode that had puzzled her. This concerned her son, a student at Queen’s University, who on the previous day in college had been accused by fellow students of being a ‘souper’. Mrs Quin, born and brought up in Northern Ireland, knew no Irish history; however, her husband, who grew up in Co. Laois, was well aware of what the expression meant. In the 19th century, at the time of the potato famine, there was

- 1 Ruth and George Dallas  
(centre) with Leslie Fox



- 2 Jimmy McIlwaine (left)  
and Tommy Elwood,  
engineering shop  
stewards

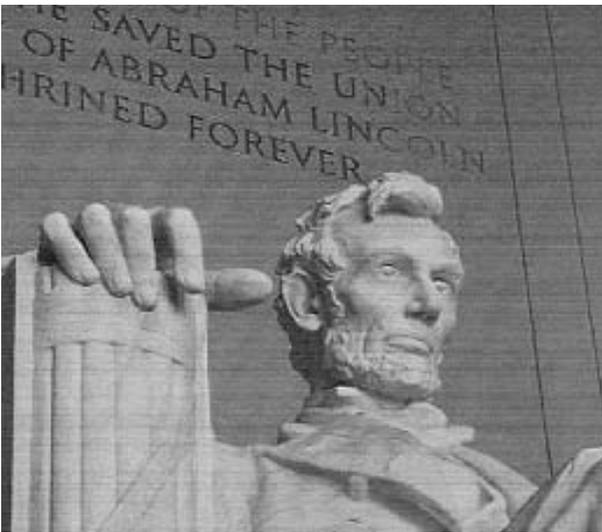


- 3 Tommy Elwood and  
Jack Lavelle, a Catholic  
from Turf Lodge





4 Billy Childs, crane driver



5 The Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC



6 Archbishop George Simms (right) with Eamon de Valera

- 7 Fr Christopher McCarthy, C.Ss.R.

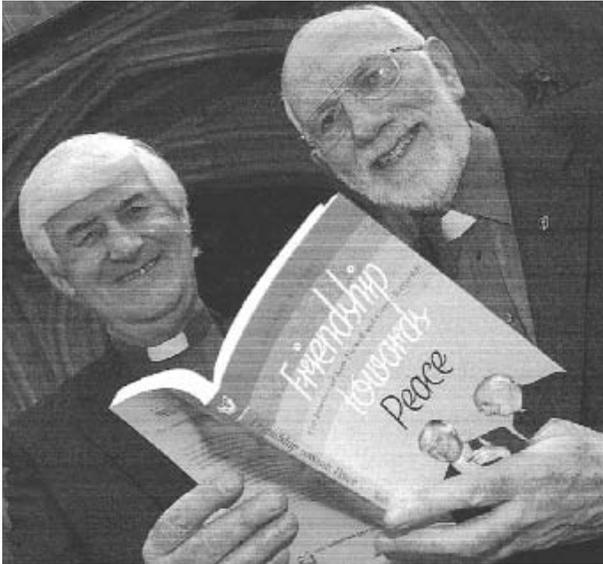


- 8 Canon John Austin Baker (left front) with the High Sheriff of Belfast, with at the back (l. to r.) Mrs Baker, Fr McCarthy, the High Sheriff's secretary and Mr Leslie Fox

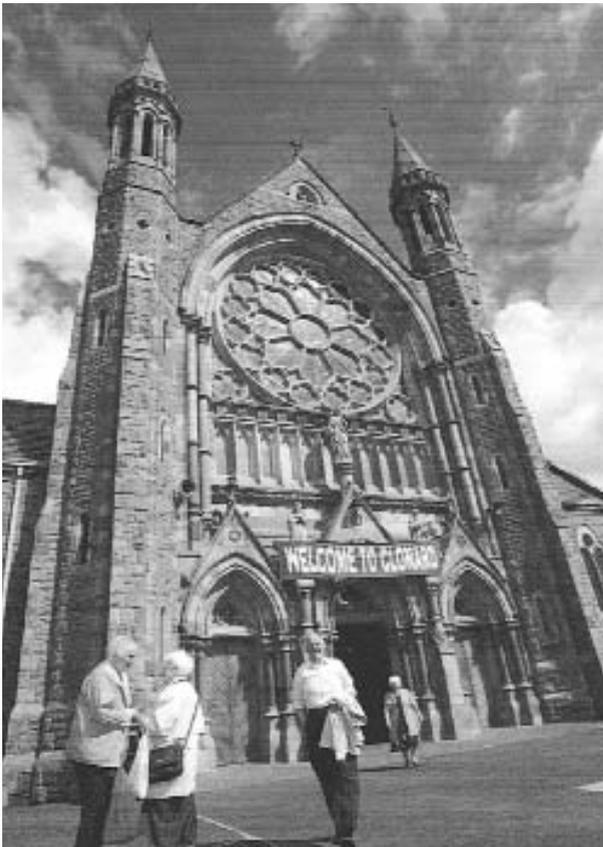


- 9 Paddy Lynn (left) shortly before he died, with his brother Jim





10 The Very Rev Ken Newall (left) and Fr Gerry Reynolds, C.Ss.R.



11 The church of the Most Holy Redeemer, Clonard monastery

a Protestant crusade in Ireland, mainly promoted by the zealous Dr Alexander Dallas of Exeter Hall in London, an Evangelical Protestant institute. It is widely believed in rural Ireland, especially in the west where the famine was most severe, that many people became Protestants in return for soup. The surname Quin is spelt with one 'n' when used as a Protestant name and with two 'n's as a Catholic name. It was assumed by the students in Queens that the son who spelt his name Quin must be descended from a Quinn who had taken the soup.

This conversation prompted the Bishop to enquire if the purpose of our meeting had to do with history, which was our cue to present him with the statement we had written. He read it carefully and then put it down on the table, where it remained untouched for the rest of the morning. It had all the attributes of a snake lying on Ellie's coffee table! The Bishop then delivered his verdict: under no circumstances should we publish this document, as it would do more harm than good, adding with considerable conviction, 'We are not responsible for the deeds of our forefathers. We must forget the past. We are all to blame and we must look to the future.'

Bishop Quin then admitted that he was one of those who had written the statement made by the Role of the Church Committee. The conversation ranged to and fro for the remainder of the morning and before leaving, we asked the Bishop to pray for us. In his prayer, he repeated a number of times that we are not responsible for the sins of our forefathers. We assured the Bishop that we would consult George Simms before issuing our statement. This seemed to afford him considerable relief.

Later, when we arrived at Dr Simms's home in Armagh, it was clear that Bishop Quin had already notified the Archbishop that we would be bringing him a subversive document! George Simms glanced briefly at the statement and then handed it to his wife, Mercy, for her considered opinion. Mercy Simms, a distinguished historian and scholar, read the statement through carefully, queried one small point, was satisfied with the answer, then said forcefully, 'This statement should have been issued years ago - and it should have been done officially by the Church.' Then she asked rhetorically, 'Why is it necessary now? Because our attitudes haven't changed and given the opportunity, we would do the same things all over again.' She advised us, 'You must issue this publicly and you should do it on the opening day of the General Synod - that pagan jamboree!'

By coincidence, a few days before that year's General Synod was to be held in Dublin, there was a conference at the Westminster Theatre in London, on the subject of the British Commonwealth. We decided that this would be the suitable occasion to issue the statement to the media. So, on behalf of the four of us who had signed it, I read it out from the platform at the conference. I don't think many of those who were there that afternoon understood what it was all about, but no sooner I had left the platform than Ulster Radio asked to speak to

me on air. I have to say, I was caught rather by surprise and didn't make much of a fist of the interview, but the Irish daily newspapers carried reports the next day, including *The Irish Times*, which placed it in the centre of the page devoted to the opening day of the 1977 General Synod.

### **Dublin's two Cathedrals**

As I wrote earlier, Pope John Paul II made an historic visit to Ireland in 1979. As our statement pointed out, after the battle of Aughrim in 1691, the English King William III offered Irish Catholics the free exercise of their religion, half the churches in Ireland and a moiety of their ancient possessions. But the parliament of Dublin, at that time controlled by the Protestant Ascendancy, reversed the King's promise, so all the churches were retained by the Protestants. Today, the Anglican Church of Ireland still owns both ancient Cathedrals in Dublin, while the Catholic Church has to make do with a Pro-Cathedral in a side street. We felt that the visit of the Pope to Ireland would be an appropriate moment for the Church of Ireland to give back one of the Cathedrals to their fellow Catholic countrymen. We discussed this with Father Christy, who suggested that the most significant Cathedral would be the oldest, Christ Church, so we agreed to make enquiries to see if the Church of Ireland would consider returning this Cathedral to the Catholic Church.

With this in mind we went to see the head of the Representative Church Body that runs the properties of the church, John Briggs, in his home. John, who like me was an old boy of The Kings Hospital School, promised us that he would raise the matter with the standing committee of the RCB and let us know what they thought. In due course, John reported back that the standing committee reply was an unequivocal 'No', best summed up by two words, 'vehemently opposed'. In the course of a lengthy letter published in the weekly Church of Ireland Gazette, I wrote:

The return of Christ Church Cathedral, apart from being an act of Christian restitution, would have the additional non-spiritual merit of considerable financial saving. The upkeep of two Cathedrals so near to each other in the same city is a heavy burden for a small community to bear.

### **Two brothers from Belfast**

Jim and Paddy Lynn, friends of mine for many years, grew up on the Falls Road, Belfast. They had both been members of Father McCarthy's men's confraternity at Clonard monastery.

As a young man, Jim's father sent him to Nottingham to study to become a watchmaker. His father's reasoning was that Jim, as a Catholic, would have little hope of a job if he remained in Belfast. Jim became a really good watchmaker and because of his skill was employed by a watch company back home in Belfast.

Some years later, Jim applied for a post as a technician in the electrical engineering department at The Queen's University in Belfast. An Englishman, Professor Hilary Frost-Smith, was head of the department and Jim got the job. All the other technicians were Protestants and when Jim joined them, it became their immediate business to discover Jim's religious affiliation.

Having the surname Lynn was not a defining factor, as Lynn could be either Catholic or Protestant. However, his initials were J K and so they had to find out what the K stood for. Jim's K was actually Kevin, which would have been a complete give away, so Jim calmly informed his new colleagues that the K stood for Kitchener, the name given to him by his father, whom he said had served as batman to Lord Kitchener of Khartoum.

One of the other technicians, Victor Hunter, held rabid anti-catholic views and was determined to discover if Jim was telling the whole story. Victor was one of those strange products thrown up by the Protestant community, with a complex mixture of attitudes. He was a Church of Ireland Sunday school teacher and three of the boys in his classes were later ordained clergymen. It was not long before Victor discovered what the K really stood for and from that moment on, he used every means possible to make Jim's life in the department unbearable and even dangerous. Once he deliberately switched off the master switch in the workshop while Jim was using a lathe; this could have resulted in a very severe injury to Jim.

Later, Jim received a warning from a friendly source that he was on a death list and should take extra precautions, so Jim varied his route to work each day. At home he slept with a loaded shotgun beside the bed and always laid the hallstand across the staircase so that any noise at night would awaken him in good time to face any intruders at the top of the stairs, shotgun in hand.

Jim was well aware of the risks to his life. When the streets around the Monastery were being burnt down by Protestant mobs at the beginning of the troubles, Jim and his wife were ordered out of their home by men pointing a gun at her abdomen; the Lynns had to leave their house and all their possessions behind. Jim and his wife put the family into their car, telling the children they were going on a holiday. A Protestant neighbour came across the street, weeping and with much sadness in her voice said, 'I'm very sorry.' This was in August 1969 and the Lynn family were now homeless – sad!

The other technicians in the department liked to use texts from the Bible, both to annoy and embarrass Jim, knowing full well that in those days, Catholics did not read or know the scriptures. To counter this, Jim bought himself a Bible and a number of Barclay's commentaries and decided to challenge these people at scripture. Each lunch and tea break consisted of Biblical discussion. Then, one fateful day, while getting the better of a scriptural question, Jim suddenly realised that he was using the Bible as a weapon and not for what it stood for, a Book to

bring people together. Jim says in his own words, ‘I closed the Bible and promised God I would never again use His Word to be the cause of division.’

### **Paddy Lynn’s story**

Jim’s brother Paddy Lynn was a hard man. He had been a logger in Canada and a merchant seaman and at the time I knew him, he worked for the Belfast Gas Company as a lorry driver. One afternoon in the early days of the conflict, following a meeting with his brother Michael, who had been seriously wounded by an unknown gunman, Paddy was feeling deeply burdened and hopeless, not only for himself but about the whole situation. As he threaded his way homewards through the street of Andersonstown, he sat down on a street wall for a rest and continued to nurse his desolation.

All of a sudden, the British army and an IRA unit opened fire on each other, with bullets flying in all directions. A woman opened her street door to urge Paddy to seek shelter in the safety of her home. But Paddy continued to sit there in his misery, not caring if he lived or died. Later, as he made his way home, he passed the open door of St Oliver Plunkett’s church and decided to go in for another rest.

As Paddy sat in the silence of the church, he suddenly felt a Presence engulf him and he heard a voice distinctly saying, ‘Paddy I have work for you to do.’ Paddy walked out of that church a different man. Describing this experience later, Paddy told his brother Jim, ‘It was like walking on a beach beside the sea on a sunny day. Then a soft summer breeze touched me and passed on.’

Some weeks later, when Paddy was attending a function held in the parish hall attached to Clonard monastery, Fr McCarthy, completely unaware that anything had happened to him, sought out Paddy, ‘What do you think we should do in the present situation in Belfast?’ asked Fr Christy. ‘You should begin a Bible study group,’ Paddy replied. ‘We will have our first one next Thursday evening here in Clonard,’ Fr Christy responded immediately. So began those Thursday evening meetings under the guidance and direction of Fr Christy, who appointed Jim Lynn to chair the occasions.

A little later Fr Christy asked Paddy to come and see him and when Paddy arrived, Fr Christy told him, ‘I have a friend upstairs, whom I would like you to go up and meet; please tell him what happened to you.’ This friend was Father Aidan Cusack, OCSO, a monk from Mount St. Joseph’s Cistercian Monastery, in Roscrea. After talking with Paddy, Fr Cusack told Fr Christy, ‘I agree that what Paddy has told me is a true experience of the Holy Spirit.’

Fr Cusack had some interesting family connections. His father Dr Cusack was at one time the doctor in Nobber, Co. Meath. Fr Cusack, who became a good friend, told me that his family had taken in and reared the young Ruairi Brugha when his father, Cahal Brugha, was shot dead near the Gresham Hotel during the

civil war in 1922/23. Cahal Brugha had been Minister of Defence in the Irish Provisional government and had voted against the Anglo-Irish treaty in the famous debate on the treaty in the Dail in January 1922. His son Ruairi later married Maire MacSwiney, the only daughter of Terence MacSwiney, who as Lord Mayor of Cork, died in Brixton Prison in London on hunger strike in 1920, at the height of the Anglo-Irish war. Both Ruairi and Maire have been constant supporters of all that we were doing in Belfast and Northern Ireland over the years.

Later, Paddy Lynn and his wife Mary left Belfast and moved with their family to Sutton Coldfield in the English midlands, where Paddy became involved in Bible prayer groups. Sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer and died two years ago after a short illness. His brother Jim, who attended the funeral service, was amazed at the large congregation that had turned out to pay tribute to Paddy for all he had done for people in Sutton Coldfield. Three priests concelebrated Mass for Paddy and his own priest, Fr Carrick, spoke of him with great warmth and affection, opening his remarks with:

Paddy was a very ordinary man, with an extraordinary gift – the gift of the Holy Spirit. He was a man whose prayer life was outstanding and he had a great love of the Holy Spirit. He changed the lives of everyone he met. I had the great privilege of speaking with him many times and he was always a great help to me.

Paddy Lynn's continuing influence in that part of the English midlands was illustrated recently by the story that follows, which his brother Jim sent me:

A few weeks after Paddy's funeral, I had occasion to speak to his wife Mary and she told me this very interesting story, which I feel needs to be put down on paper.

One morning, when Mary was waiting for her daughter Carol so they could both visit the cemetery where Paddy was buried, there was a knock on the front door. When Mary answered it, a West Indian woman was standing there. Mary asked her what she wanted and the woman asked Mary if she was Paddy Lynn's wife. Mary said she was and invited her in. The West Indian woman then told Mary why she had called so unexpectedly at her door:

'I have been trying to find where Paddy is buried so I can pay my respects to him. Two years ago, I was at rock bottom, with no hope for the future and no prospects. Life had been very cruel to me. I went into the local church and just sat down, with nothing to say to God and I wept. At that point, Paddy, whom I didn't know, suddenly approached me. He asked what was wrong and wondered if he could help me. I poured out my troubles to him and he listened until I had finished. Then he told me of his own life experiences and said that sometimes we have to reach a certain point in our lives before we are ready for God to show us His plan for us.

I don't remember how long we spoke together but Paddy was so sure of what he was saying that I drew new confidence from him and we ended up by praying together. I decided to join a Bible prayer group and my life was changed completely. I feel I am now a very successful woman, thanks to your husband Paddy.'

At that moment, Carol came in and the three of them went up to the graveyard, where the West Indian woman produced a beautiful bouquet of flowers, which were placed on Paddy's grave. Mary tells me that whenever she and Carol visit Paddy's grave, there is a fresh bouquet of lovely flowers on it.

My brother Paddy was a soul surgeon, something everyone can become.

### **'Something quite unthinkable'**

Returning to the Clonard Bible study group: quite unexpectedly, one Thursday evening Fr Christy announced to Jim, 'I cannot be with you next week but you take over,' adding, 'and by the way, I have invited some Protestant friends to join you.' Jim was flabbergasted: this seemed to him to be something quite unthinkable. In his own words, Jim describes this first make-or-break meeting:

Using Barclay's commentary, I worked for the rest of the week carefully preparing the Bible text chosen for that evening. The Protestants duly arrived: Bill and Muriel Porter and Eric Turpin. Unknown to me, what was about to happen was the beginning of a journey with Protestants, seeking God's plan, not only for ourselves, but also for both England and Ireland. This journey was not without its problems. The first arose that night, when during the Bible study, Eric Turpin spoke about the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. I, being chairperson, was left to speak for the group of Catholics present, which included lay people but also sisters of religious orders from that area.

This was indeed a very critical moment. I spoke and said that, whilst I respected Eric's views, we Roman Catholics do not believe that the Son of God has any brothers and sisters. This met with quiet approval from the religious sisters. Then occurred one of those wonderful moments when one sees a little inspirational dart of the Holy Spirit pierce a man. Eric replied, 'we will let the theologians deal with this, Jim. We have more here that unites us than divides us.' From that time on, the Bible Study increased in numbers and became very fruitful, as history has shown.

### **The Middle East and Northern Ireland's 'troubles'**

In the course of my travels, I was often asked about what was happening in Northern Ireland from 1969 onwards. To illustrate this I am going to go backwards in time, to the two occasions I visited Iran, the first being in the mid 1960 (I have never kept a diary, so cannot be sure of the exact date) and the second visit was shortly after I had returned from Asia to live in Belfast.

On the first occasion, I was accompanying and looking after the medical care of a group of young Indians, who had produced a musical entitled 'India Arise'. They were on their way from India to Europe, where they were to present their show. On the journey, we had stopovers in Tehran, Malta and the South Tyrol.

In Iran, the Shah was still on the Peacock Throne. When we were leaving Tehran, the Shah's brother arranged for an Iranian Air Force plane to take us on to Malta. The owner of the Tehran hotel where we had stayed presented us with several pounds of Caspian Sea caviar. Eating caviar on its own is not to be recommended at the best of times and since we ate it on the flight to Malta, my recollection of this particular delicacy was that it is a somewhat overrated luxury!

Our final stop was in the South Tyrol. This province of Italy was once part of Austria, known as the Alto Adige. During the Paris Peace negotiations in 1919, following the First World War, Austria, as a defeated nation, was compelled to cede the province to Italy, one of the victorious allies in the war. When Mussolini came to power in Rome, he pursued an aggressive programme of italianising the South Tyrol by moving in thousands of Italian settlers. During our visit, there were signs of serious unrest brewing between the Italians and the Germans living there.

Around ten years later, I was invited to join a small party of British and American friends who had arranged a visit to the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean countries of Iran, Turkey, The Lebanon, Cyprus and Greece. Our first port of call was Iran, where our small party travelled around much more than on my previous visit, so we saw quite a lot of the country. One morning when I was having breakfast in a hotel in the city of Esfahan, another of the hotel guests came up to me: this was Dr Dennis Burkett, who had spotted my Trinity tie. Dennis had been at Adelaide as a student and was now a world famous doctor, noted for several medical discoveries, including the need for plenty of roughage in our diet. He was lecturing in Iran and I asked him if he had a supply of bran with him, to which he replied that he had some in the back of his car!

In Tehran we were treated to a private tour of the Majlis, the Iranian parliament. In a room previously reserved for the Shah whenever he visited the parliament, a beautiful Persian carpet covering the entire floor, which we were told had taken eighteen years to weave. In the debating chamber a member of parliament standing beside me pointed to a particular seat and told me that he had been in the chamber the afternoon Muhammad Mossadeq rose from the seat to announce the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian oil company. This was in the early 1950s.

When Mossadeq was elected to head an Iranian nationalist government, London immediately sent a diplomat to Washington, seeking help. It was at a time when communism was the big bogeyman. The diplomat succeeded in persuading the Americans that Mossadeq was a communist and that Iran would

shortly slip behind the Iron Curtain. Washington ordered the CIA to orchestrate a coup d'état in Iran and the CIA team, headed up by a grandson of former President Roosevelt, used money to stage anti-communist riots in Tehran. The Mossadeq government was toppled and the oil company was duly denationalised.

However, on that 1970s tour, it was what was happening there and then in Northern Ireland that everyone we met wanted to know about, in country after country. As I was the only Irish person in the group, I did the best I could to explain the complexities of it all. The Iranian Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, received us and as soon as he heard that I came from Belfast, he quizzed me in detail about the situation. Sadly, only a short time later Hoveyda was one of the first victims of the Ayatollah Khomeini revolution; while we were there, a senior official had taken me aside and warned me that Iran was on the edge of a political explosion.

After Tehran our next stop was Ankara, the capital of Turkey, where the President received our party in the Presidential Palace; once again, the topic of conversation was Northern Ireland.

Something that is a 'must' in Ankara is a visit to the home of Ataturk, a museum housing the memorabilia of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. Another memorable sight is the magnificent cathedral of St Sophia (Aya Sofya, the Church of Holy Wisdom), built in the 6th century by the Roman Emperor Justinian. 10,000 men took five years to build it on the site of a wooden church built by Constantine in 325 AD. In 1453 the Turks captured Istanbul (then Constantinople) the capital of the Byzantine Empire, usually now referred to as the Golden Horn. At that point, St Sophia became a mosque and today it is a museum.

A memorable event in Istanbul was to be taken out to lunch by a remarkable journalist, Ahmed Yalman, editor of the Turkish newspaper, *Vatan*, who took us to the Topkai Seraglio, which once housed the harem of the Ottoman Sultans. We lunched in the open in the restaurant, enjoying the magnificent view of the shining waters of the Bosphorus. A former Turkish Prime Minister had falsely imprisoned Yalman because of something to do with Turkey's bad relations with Greece, I think. He later became reconciled with his adversary.

The timing of our visit to the Lebanon turned out to be on the eve of fifteen years of bloody civil war in that country. France had held the mandate for the administration of Syria and the Lebanon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The situation in the Lebanon was similar to that in Ireland at the time of partition, where the British had favoured the Protestant minority, while in the Lebanon, the French favoured the Maronite Christians, who were a minority in the midst of a Moslem majority.

Our visit to Cyprus was prior to the invasion of the north of the country by the Turkish army in 1974, so we were able to visit both north and south of the island, something not possible today. I had lunch with Ruaf Denktash, the leader of the Turkish community in Nicosia. Again, events in Northern Ireland were the subject of conversation and as we finished lunch, Denktash asked me to dinner that night to meet his executive committee, so I had another session with him and his council on the situation in Belfast.

Finally, we went to Athens, where I stayed with Tass and Elizabeth Gianikas: she is my cousin. One of our hosts in Greece was a daughter of General Metaxas, the Prime Minister when first the Italians and then the Germans invaded Greece in the Second World War. She took us to see Marathon, the scene of the battle in 490 BC, where the Greeks defeated the Persian Emperor and his army. A runner - the first marathon, brought the news of that victory to Athens.

### **To Southern Rhodesia**

In May 1975, Tommy Elwood and I were invited to address an MRA conference at the University of Rhodesia, in the city that was then known as Salisbury. Tommy was a flamboyant character who was raised in East Belfast by his grandmother without knowing who his mother was. He had little education but was blessed with a high IQ.

Tommy was invited to stay in Salisbury with friends from Belfast and Frank and Perella Holmes invited me to their home. Frank was head of the government Public Works department and one morning showed us over the site of a large hospital being constructed by the Irish company, Sisk. Many people from Northern Ireland had immigrated into Southern Rhodesia when Ian Smith declared UDI in 1961, where they had set up small manufacturing firms at a time when the country was subject to trade sanctions.

The conference at which Tommy and I were delegates opened with a large public meeting in the university. Speaking from the platform, Tommy announced that on the evening before he left Belfast, a leader of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) had spoken to him at a Tenants Association meeting and asked him to convey a message to the Rhodesian Prime Minister to the effect that 20,000 UDA men stood ready to support him, should their help be needed. Even before Tommy had left Salisbury, this statement had already circulated throughout Belfast but unfortunately for Tommy, he was misquoted in the Rhodesian press as offering Ian Smith 20,000 IRA men. Tommy was in deep trouble when he got home and it took many communications between Belfast and Salisbury before the mistake had been corrected.

The Prime Minister and his wife gave a reception at Government House for the conference delegates. As Tommy and I rendezvoused before going in, Tommy pulled up his trouser legs and showed me a pair of union jack socks he

was wearing. These Tommy showed off proudly to the Prime Minister, while declaring that his people in Belfast were more British than the British themselves, a sentiment Ian Smith heartily concurred with. Tommy then rounded up the Prime Minister and Mrs. Smith and handing his camera to his son, Alec Smith, Tommy stood between them for a photo, a trophy to show to all his friends in Belfast.

Some of the conference delegates then travelled north to the town of Victoria Falls, which is situated on the banks of the Zambezi beside the famous cataract. Tommy and I joined the party that was staying overnight in the local hotel and the following morning the rest of the delegates went to see the falls, but Tommy would have none of this. He and I set off for a craft village run by a man called Cyril Forrest. Cyril had a brother, George, who as an Ulster Unionist MP at Westminster, was noted for never having made a single speech in the House of Commons. It was a very happy meeting with Cyril, as he and Tommy swapped many yarns together. Cyril then put a car and a driver at our disposal to see all the sights. Tommy spent all of ten minutes viewing the Victoria Falls - enough time to be able to say he had at least seen them!

We had lunch, followed by a short siesta before returning to the craft village. Tommy was there to make his purchases to take home, while I was left outside as the serious business was conducted behind closed doors. Presents bought, we set off for our hotel. Each craft shop we passed on the way, Tommy went in to look around. I knew what he was doing: comparing prices and finding how much discount his friend Cyril had given him!

Our final visit in Rhodesia was to the southern city of Bulawayo, where we were guests of a surgeon, Senator John Strong, a member of Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front Party. It was a weekend visit and the Senator took us on the Saturday to the Matopos National Park, where there was a fine statue of Cecil Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia. I wondered to myself how long that statue would remain there, when the transfer of power from white to black in Rhodesia took place; it seemed to me on my brief visit to the country that the change would not be long in coming. However, the white ruling class appeared to believe that such a change would never happen; clearly they were living in cloud-cuckoo land.

On Sunday morning, the Senator and his wife invited Tommy and me to his home, where he had invited Paddy Shields, the Rhodesian Front M.P. for Bulawayo, to meet us. The M.P. was a train driver, originally from Larne in Co. Antrim. Tommy and Paddy spent some time weighing each other up. Tommy had realised immediately that Paddy was a Larne Catholic and Paddy saw Tommy as an East Belfast Orange man. However, it was soon clear that they were on the same side as far as Rhodesia was concerned: they were both keen supporters of Ian Smith and UDI and from that point on, it was a jovial two hour exchange of views and stories.

As we were saying goodbye to Senator Strong and his wife, Paddy Shields invited Tommy and me to his home that evening, to meet the Bulawayo Irish Association. As soon as we entered the sitting room, Tommy knew we were meeting with a roomful of southern Irish Catholics. However once again, as far as Rhodesia was concerned, the issue was white and black, not Catholic and Protestant, so it turned out to be very convivial evening.

At about midnight, Paddy took us to visit the railway marshalling yard where he had worked. It was crowded with monster locomotives, upwards of 225 tons weight and each engine with a cowcatcher attached to it's front; they hauled the trains loaded with copper from the mines in Zambia down through Biet Bridge in Southern Rhodesia to the South African factories.

### **A visit to Switzerland**

On another occasion, an invitation arrived in Belfast for us to attend an international Moral Re-Armament conference at Caux in Switzerland, to address the delegates about Northern Ireland. Fr Christy, always eager to investigate anything new, accepted and I accompanied him, along with Winifred Hind and a lady companion and helper. Also with us were Billy and Mima Childs. Billy was a crane driver in the Port of Belfast and chairman of the union; he was an Orangeman, and also belonged to a higher Orange order, the Black Preceptory. His wife Mima was a teacher and both were keen Methodists.

The conference itself did not particularly interest Fr Christy but a visit to the Swiss Canton of the Jura did catch his interest and we spent a few days there, cared for by a Swiss couple. At that time, the French speaking people in the north of the Canton felt both discriminated against and treated as second class by the German speaking peoples of the south, who were supported by the German speaking Canton of Berne, seat of the Swiss government. Political agitation was growing and violent incidents were increasing: we found the Jura a replica of the situation in Northern Ireland, except that there was no outside power involved as in Northern Ireland, so the dispute was entirely a Swiss problem.

One afternoon, Fr Christy and the Childs met with some of the French separatists at a hotel. These men and women were keen to hear about Northern Ireland. Billy and Mima, speaking as Protestants, presented their view of how good things had been under a Protestant government. Fr Christy, knowing that what the Childs had said was one sided, decided he had to risk his relationship with his companions, so he began by asking Billy, 'Is the Orange Order not fundamentally anti-Catholic?' He then told the French speaking audience about the discrimination and injustice the Catholics had endured under that same Protestant government.

During the long drive back to the conference centre at Caux, not a word was spoken; complete silence reigned in the car. The next day, Billy and Mina

did not appear. However, a day later the Childs came to Fr McCarthy and told him that they wished to speak at the conference with him. It was a telling and moving occasion and Mina ended what she said by quoting some lines of the poet W. B. Yeats:

*Out of Ireland have we come,  
Great hatred, little room,  
Marred us from the start.  
I carry from my mother's womb  
A fanatic heart.*

Some years later, the Swiss created two Cantons in the Jura, a French Catholic Canton in the north and a German Lutheran Canton in the south, with Delemont as the capital of southern Jura and Porrentruy the northern capital. The people of the north told us when we were there, 'We have five roads here leading to France and only one road leading to Switzerland.'

The dispute in the Jura was settled satisfactorily and all is quiet and peaceful now. Why were the Swiss able to resolve a linguistic and religious conflict with partition, while this has not been possible in Northern Ireland? Perhaps history offers some clues. When Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, the victors held a conference in Vienna in 1815. The defeated French nation ceded the French part of the Jura to Switzerland. France has honoured that concession since that time and has never attempted in anyway to interfere in the region, with the result that today, the French-speaking people of the Jura regard themselves as Swiss citizens and not French.

Why has this has not happened in Northern Ireland? I think it is because British governments have always exercised a controlling influence in Ireland. From the earliest years, the possibility of the continental powers of Spain and France gaining a foothold in Ireland represented a threat to England's security. Later it was the danger of Germany and then the threat of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The result of this continued involvement by London has prevented the Protestant people of Northern Ireland from becoming Irish like the French in the Jura have become Swiss.

### **Irish in America**

In the 1970s, while serving at Villa Nova University in Philadelphia, Fr Christy had established a link with the Irish Northern Aid (Noraid), a group of Americans who supplied money and materials over a number of years to the IRA in Northern Ireland. He felt that the church should try and bring its influence to bear on this group.

On one of our trips to North America, he arranged for our party to have an evening with this Noraid group and this turned out to be an eventful occasion.

One amusing incident occurred before the meeting: prior to leaving Belfast, Fr Christy had decided to get himself a smart grey suit, a style not normal for a Catholic cleric. His friend who had arranged the meeting was aghast when he arrived in this new grey suit. 'Father', she remonstrated, 'you look like an old Protestant clergyman!'

Several years earlier, Eric Turpin had established links with the dockworkers of the American ports, including Teddy Gleason, the long-time President of the Longshoremen's Union. One of Eric's friends, Fred Small, who was a black American union official, decided to join us in Philadelphia. He arrived from New York with a bodyguard, as American blacks and American Irish were at daggers-drawn over housing and jobs.

The meeting was held in the Holiday Inn hotel. We showed the assembled members of Noraid the film 'Belfast Report' and the trade unionists from Belfast spoke about how they viewed the situation in Northern Ireland. It had been arranged that we would be guests overnight in the homes of Noraid families but at the close of the meeting, it was discovered that we were four beds short. Fr Christy made an appeal to the audience for beds and a man who had heckled from the back row for most of the evening raised his hand and said, 'Sure, I'll take them'. This turned out to be a Mr Danaher and on our arrival at his home he immediately went upstairs, obviously to consult his wife, who was in bed. Happily, all was fixed up and we stayed.

Before retiring we were entertained to late night refreshments; one of those also present was the local sheriff. At one point in the conversation, I asked Mr Danaher, who was a port worker in the port of Philadelphia, if he ever sent guns to Northern Ireland through the port, to which he replied that he had, in the trunk of his car. Then he told us that one day there was a new guard on the entrance gate who asked him what he had in his car, so he told him guns. 'OK' said the guard and waved him on!

Mr Danaher informed us that he and the sheriff had to leave early the following morning but that his wife would take good care of us. Sure enough, I met her making coffee for breakfast. There was a large pile of clothes on the floor of the sitting room, so I asked her what they were for. She replied, 'Oh, those are for the prisoners in Long Kesh.' I then asked her how she managed to have them transported. 'Teddy Gleason will take care of that,' she replied. Apparently, Aer Lingus had helped them, until a gun was found in one of the parcels! Later, she made another interesting comment when she remarked that the family were considering selling their house because 'blacks have moved into the street.'

Travelling on to Washington, we visited the State Department, where we met around a boardroom table with the heads of the British, Irish and European Desks. They were keen to meet people from the grass roots, whom they described as the 'nuts and bolts' of the situation in Northern Ireland. One of these

State Department officials took Eric aside and told him, ‘we have received good reports of your visit to Philadelphia. Should you not maintain a presence there?’

At that meeting, Jack Lavelle, a republican from west Belfast, took the opportunity to vent Catholic anger at the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’ in Derry. His Protestant colleagues became more and more incensed as no mention was made of ‘Bloody Friday’ and they felt Jack was hogging the occasion. Billy Childs was especially furious and decided there and then to take the next flight home. After leaving the State Department, we went for a short walk to the Lincoln Memorial. There, the life-like figure of Abraham Lincoln is seated reclining in a chair and his Gettysburg speech is inscribed on the wall. This begins ‘With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right...’ When Billy had read it right through, he found his anger and hatred of Jack had melted away.

### **Father Christy and the Charismatics**

Fr Christy had a keen interest in the Charismatic Movement and wished to meet the spiritual director, Bishop McKinley of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Before leaving Ireland he had written to the Bishop and sent various messages expressing his desire to meet up with him while in America. However, as the Bishop failed to reply, Fr Christy inferred from this that the Bishop didn’t want to see him: he had long held the view that if Bishops didn’t wish to see you, they never said no, they just didn’t reply. Although no communication from the Bishop seemed ominous, Fr Christy decided to make the journey to see Bishop McKinley and risk a rebuff.

A kindly American, Bob Duffin, drove Fr Christy and two other friends on the long journey to Grand Rapids. Arriving early on a Sunday morning, Fr Christy took his three companions to Mass in the Cathedral. As they left the service, there was Bishop McKinley standing at the door waiting for them. Apparently, during the Mass, someone had told the Bishop that there was a ‘Protestant Minister’ at the service, probably because Fr Christy was wearing his smart new grey suit! As they met, Fr Christy introduced himself, to which the Bishop exclaimed, ‘I’ve been trying to reach you all over America.’ He then invited us all to be his guests, adding, ‘It’s my housekeeper’s day off but we can surely find something for lunch in the kitchen.’

As they sat eating lunch prepared by the Bishop, Fr Christy broached a subject that was dear to his heart: he suggested to the Bishop that MRA and the Charismatic Movement would be a perfect complement to each other. However, the Bishop swiftly replied, ‘Everyone is trying to use the Charismatic Movement.’ Instantly sensing the situation, Fr Christy back-pedalled furiously, which one of his friends later described as ‘being like the reverse thrust of a jet plane coming in to land’. ‘Yes,’ replied Fr Christy, ‘I distinctly heard the death rattle.’

The Propeller Club in Grand Rapids is an exclusive club for businessmen, one of whom had invited Fr Christy to visit the club that afternoon. Undaunted, he invited the Bishop to accompany him; this was the first time the Bishop had been inside the club's premises, as no one had ever invited him there before. The following day, Bishop McKinley escorted Fr Christy and his companions to meet with the Charismatic movement at its world headquarters in Ann Arbor. This turned out to be an encounter that didn't seem to appeal to Fr Christy after all.

Our final engagement on that visit to America was an invitation from the British Minister at the United Nations to dinner at his beautiful apartment on Park Avenue in New York. The Minister and his wife were very hospitable hosts and I have a suspicion that his wife cooked the delicious meal. For most of the evening, Fr Christy sat on a sofa chatting with the Minister. Afterwards, as those of us who had been at the meal were standing together on Park Avenue waiting for a taxi, Fr Christy suddenly turned to us and asked, 'That *was* the British Minister at the United Nations I was talking with this evening, wasn't it?' We confirmed that indeed it was and Fr Christy then remarked, 'you know, Noraid had planned to shoot the Minister but I managed to persuade them it would not be a good idea. Do you think I should go upstairs again and tell the Minister this?' We suggested that perhaps it might be just as well not to and at that moment a taxi pulled up alongside us and we made our way back to our hotel.

### **Americans in Ireland**

About this time, Teddy Gleason decided to conduct the negotiations between his union and the ship owners in Dublin. It was as cheap to fly everyone to Dublin as it was to hold the conference in Miami. The union negotiators, when they finished their business with the ship owners, planned to head for Killarney and later Bunratty Castle for a little holiday.

Eric Turpin invited his friend Fred Small, who had come over from New York for the occasion, to visit Belfast and to spend three days with us, rather than going to the southwest with Teddy and the party. It was dark by the time we drove north from Dublin and Fred was sitting beside Eric, who was driving. As was the custom at the time, a soldier stopped us at the border and asked for our identification papers. Suddenly, the soldier caught sight of a set of white teeth in the black space beside Eric. He jumped back in alarm and asked angrily 'Who's that?' Fortunately we had a photo of Fred that had appeared that morning in *The Irish Times* with a story about the Longshoreman's conference in Dublin; when we showed this to the soldier, it seemed to satisfy him that we were respectable and he waved us on. Fortunately, before we had left Dublin, we advised Fred to leave his handgun with the luggage, to be taken south with the other delegates, as it could have been very awkward if it had been discovered on him at the border.

We introduced Fred to a wide cross section of people in Belfast and he experienced several bomb blasts in the city. Eric and I then drove Fred back down to Limerick, calling in on my brother Neil and his wife Joyce at *Clontail*, who kindly gave us lunch.

Teddy Gleason had arranged for all his men to put up in a brand new hotel, Clare Inn, close to the airport, which had not yet been officially opened, so the Longshoremens were the only guests staying there. As we entered the crowded lobby, I immediately recognised several members of the army council of the IRA, such well-known people as Joe Cahill, David O'Connell and Sean Keenan. The latter had previously met Eric in Derry and he came over and asked him what we were doing there. So Eric quickly introduced him to Fred. Sean went back to join his colleagues and we saw them conferring. He then came back to us again and asked Eric where he was living now. Eric told him he lived in Belfast, but was going to Canada the following week, a spontaneous but true reply! I think they suspected we might be British intelligence agents. However, having Fred with us seemed to confirm our bona fides and the IRA men shortly departed from the hotel by car.

Before saying goodbye to Fred, we asked him to look out from the front door of the hotel to make sure their cars had gone, just in case they might be waiting for us around the corner. When he gave us the all clear, we sped off for a few days golf, to recover! Later when visiting New York, Eric met Fred again, who told him that he had been relieved to return to the relative safety of the Brooklyn Mafia! He added, 'you know Eric, I learned more about race relations in those days in Belfast than I did in all my years in the USA. I thought prejudice was colour.'

### **Clonard in retrospect**

I will conclude this story of my travels by returning the reader to the city of Belfast, which has been my home for the past thirty years or so. Before signing off, I want to take a retrospective look at a place that has played a key role in events, not just for the period of the 'troubles' but for the hundred years of its existence, namely Clonard monastery, just off the Falls Road in the heart of Catholic west Belfast.

It has been my privileged to know Fr Alex Reid, one of the Redemptorist priests at Clonard. He is a very private man who first became widely known when photos appeared in the world press as he knelt beside two British soldiers, praying over them and reciting the last rites. These two men had accidentally strayed into a funeral procession on the Falls Road and been killed. A few months ago, Fr Reid received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Dublin City University. The citation at the conferring ceremony stated in part:

Father Reid has been acclaimed nationally and internationally for the crucial role he has played in the peace process. He was the key person in ensuring that dialogue was initiated between various parties at critical stages in the development of the peace process. It has been said that the peace process would not have been what it was, were it not for him ... The driving force for Father Reid in all of his actions is his belief that the role of the servant of Christ in a situation of conflict is to be the pastoral agent of the Holy Spirit ... in a desperate situation, Father Reid was known to proclaim 'We will need the Grace of God to get through this.'

About two years ago, I received a phone call from an American history professor, Ronald Wells, attached to Calvin College, at Grand Rapids, Michigan. He asked if he might come to see me; I invited Jim Lynn to meet him also, so that together we might assess the purpose of his visit. We discovered that Professor Wells had written an article in an American periodical about the award of the Pax Christi International Peace prize jointly to Clonard monastery and Fitzroy Presbyterian church in Belfast. Professor Wells wrote that this was the first time that the prestigious Pax Christi Peace prize had been awarded to any person or institution in Ireland. As a result of the article, Professor Wells had been commissioned to write a book and had arrived in Belfast to do some research on the circumstances behind the award.

Twenty years earlier, Fr Christy and Jim Lynn had visited Rev Ken Newell at Fitzroy Presbyterian Church. Since that time, Clonard and Fitzroy churches have developed ever closer relations. Fr Gerry Reynolds invited me to attend the Pax Christi award presentation in 1999 in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin. Rev Ken Newell (who has recently completed his year as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) arrived at the hotel with a busload of members of the Fitzroy congregation.

This group included Dr William Rutherford and his daughter-in-law. William Rutherford was a few years ahead of me in Trinity and on graduating, spent twenty years as a surgeon in a Presbyterian mission hospital in India. He returned home to Belfast principally for the schooling of his children and took a job as casualty officer in the Royal Victoria Hospital on Grosvenor Road, Belfast, just as the conflict began in the early 1970s. In the following years, he pioneered advances in the treatment of traumatic surgery that are now standard in the rest of the world.

The Columba Press in Dublin has now published Professor Wells's book, 'Friendship towards Peace'. The author had my permission to reprint passages from a booklet I wrote a couple of years ago. Another recently published book, 'One Hundred Years with the Clonard Redemptorists', also by Columba and written by James Grant, commemorates the founding of Clonard monastery in Belfast in 1896. Chapter 11 in this book tells of the conciliation work of Frs

McCarthy, Reid, Reynolds and others, including a detailed account of Bishop Baker's several visits.

Anne Cadwallader, a feature writer for *Ireland on Sunday*, published an article on 12th December 1999 headlined, 'Cradle of the Peace Process', with the sub-heading, 'A place which played a vital role in the North's long and winding road to democracy'. Her article reads in part:

Although the public pageantry of the peace process has taken place against the splendour of Stormont, its birthplace and cradle was Clonard monastery in west Belfast, now celebrating a century's work in the midst of the troubles. Clonard, whose high altar is just one hundred yards from the Falls/Shankill peace line and whose walls bear silent witness to the pogroms of the 1920s and the burning of Bombay Street in 1969, has more than earned its place in the hearts of the people across Ireland.

The monastery, dedicated to the Most Holy Redeemer, was built in just three years, paid for by the public subscriptions of the poverty-stricken mill workers who lived around it in the early years of the century. So it was perhaps fitting that its walls witnessed the first meetings between Gerry Adams and John Hume, brought about by Father Alex Reid, one of the Redemptorist priests of the monastery, to talk about building peace, as long ago as 1988. Another of its priests, Father Gerry Reynolds, is a pioneer of cross-community work and on the 30th November this year received the Pax Christi Award in Dublin, jointly with his friend, Presbyterian Minister, the Rev Ken Newell.

Anne Cadwallader concludes her article by quoting John Baker, Anglican Bishop of Salisbury:

How wonderfully God draws us here to the Falls Road, to learn more of what it means to be a Christian and to pledge ourselves, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, Anglican to live our Christianity together.

It was more than coincidence that led us all those years ago to Fr Christopher McCarthy and Clonard and to the heart of the process that led to the Good Friday Agreement. The implementing of that Agreement has travelled a mighty rocky road since it was signed and endorsed in national referendums North and South. But in my opinion, there is no question that the future history of Ireland has been changed as a result. Good Friday 1998 was a watershed in history; it could offer hope for other intractable conflicts in the world.