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Introduction

At the beginning¹ of this period Molly and I were married and made our home in Aldershot, first in Tresco, Highfield Gardens and then in 4 Arthur Street. Up to August 1955 I worked at the RAE; Molly had two part time jobs as a bookkeeper during the first two or three years. Janice was born in March 1955 and Molly had a miscarriage in March 1957. My mother died in September 1957. I was a ministerial theological student at Richmond College from September 1955 to June 1958.

During the first three months of 1952² I maintained my habit of writing a diary but from then until the beginning of 1954 there were few entries. From January 1954 to December 1958 I kept a diary and had diaries for appointments. From 1959 onwards I kept only appointment diaries. I now regret not having kept personal diaries. But fortunately I have done quite a bit of journalling from 1964 onwards.

Outline of Significant Events; February 1952 – August 1958

To my surprise I have experienced difficulty in getting a clear picture of the first two years of my life in Aldershot and the sequence of events mainly because my diaries do not help me to be certain about key dates: but even though I cannot establish some dates, I am very clear about key events and the pattern of developments in relation to my religious and vocational life. The following brief outline gives the overall shape of their period as an introduction to a fuller description of it.

Quickly Molly and I became deeply involved in the life of the Methodist Church first in Grossman Road and then in the Aldershot and Farnborough Circuit and remained so throughout the whole time we lived in Aldershot.

Some three months after we were married I became seriously ill with a duodenal ulcer which was gradually neutralized by diet and medication.

Started preaching in the circuit in August 1952

Flew to North Africa in connection with my work at the RAE on the 3rd November 1952 and returned seriously ill with an ulcer.

¹ 15.3.11

² I kept a diary from 1st Jan – 17th March and then nothing until 9-10 & 16-17 August and 3 November. On 16 August I say I regret not having kept up my diary. My 1953 diary is sketchy.

Conducted a mission campaign at Ash Street Methodist Church and local neighbourhood 12th March – 4 April 1953 with Alan Cox which culminated (I believe) with a service at Ash Street Church on the 5th April at which I had a healing experience and heard/received a call to ordained ministry. It was Easter Day!

Incredible healing took place and was confirmed medically.

Became an accredited local preacher in December 1953.

Candidated for the ministry 1954 – 55 and was an accepted candidate in 1955.

Clearly these different aspects of my/our lives from 1952 – 1955 were completely unrelated. As described they could appear separate whereas they were all of a piece. Here I focus on the essential content of each strand, cross referencing as necessary without making any attempt at presenting a holistic picture or attempting to follow through the chronology in detail – some things were happening at the same time and in the same period.

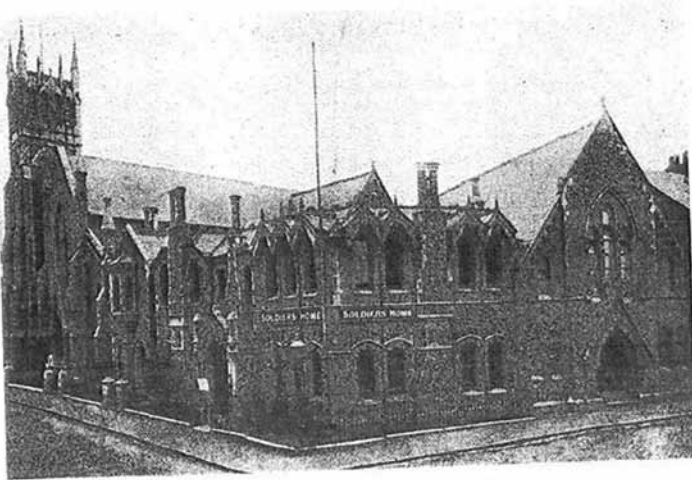
Life in Aldershot and Farnborough Circuit, February 1952 – August 1953³

These three years at the beginning of our married life were extraordinary ones: they were exciting and foundational. Molly and I threw ourselves enthusiastically and unreservedly into the life and work and worship of Grosvenor Road Methodist Church and gradually into that of the Aldershot and Farnborough Circuit. During this period a radical change occurred in the nature and direction of my vocational life. In February I resumed my career as an engineer at the RAE committed to it and its development. (My diary records that I started a course of lectures on aerodynamic structures on the 7th March '52' determined to further my education in my engineering subjects. 'It will be hard work', I noted, 'but it must and will be done'). As earlier notes shows, I worked hard at my experimental research work and produced several reports.

Just over a year later I was utterly convinced that I had had a non-negotiable call to ordained ministry (full-time) and Molly and I were committed to pursuing it. Consequently during the first part of this period I was one engineer who was also an active Christian layman and preacher; during the second part I was an engineer preoccupied, increasingly so, with qualifying to entering a training collage for Methodist ministers with



*Grovenor Rd. Methodist Church, Aldershot 1954.
(See re-opening brochure in Aldershot - Farnborough file.)*



WESLEYAN CHURCH and SOLDIERS HOME

a view to ordination; gradually my engineering career was eclipsed by my aspirations for a ministerial vocation as this period unfolded; and as it closed in August 1955 my ministerial vocation had superseded my engineering career.

This transformative transition was heady and challenging; it was exciting

and charged with high minded spiritual energy. Bit coming to terms with its implications was problematic as will become clear. Molly had married an engineer and was to become the wife of a minister of religion which had never occurred to her or to me on the 16th February 1952 when we were married!

Also, during the first part of this period there were sustained spells when I was seriously ill – my weight fell from 8 to 7 stones in a week when I had the first round of illness with my stomach ulcers.

And in the middle of my candidature, fifty-six years ago today, Janice Anne was born to our great joy.

Grosvenor Road Methodist Church

Grosvenor Road was a thriving church with large congregation. It was the circuit church but it was also associated with the Army chaplaincy so chaplains preach regularly and from time to time there were parade services. Some of the chaplains were outstanding ministers and preachers. E.H. Metherill and Harry Breakspeare (we got to know his sisters when we were in Sydenham, they were very keen member) we got to know very well. Then there was a brilliant young chaplain who greatly inspired me, The Rev Wolsey Gilbert. He then become Secretary of the Royal Navy, Army and Air Force Board. They helped me greatly. The Rev Charles E. Deakin was the minister of Grosvenor Road and the Superintendent throughout our time in Aldershot. He was a great Methodist minister. Devoted entirely to local and circuit work. He was a good but not outstanding preacher Charles Deakin – always Mr Deakin to us- was the most assiduous minister I have ever known. A dedicated pastor, he made more visits than any minister I have met. Incredible. They were short visits generally. He gave us a great welcome and working untiringly for my candidature. I owe him a great debt.

We had some lifelong friends, Jack and Phyllis Gerrard and Alan Cox and during this time we developed our friendship with Norman Heaps. (Interestingly Peter Harper was a National Serviceman in Aldershot and attended Grosvenor Road, but we do not remember meeting him. He is a good friend in Lidgett along with his wife).

Besides worshiping Sunday by Sunday (two services and the ‘Happy Hour’ of fellowship and singing and refreshments in Wesley Hall after the evening service) we were involved in a young people’s fellowship and Sunday School and Molly was in the Choir – an excellent one. We attended Billy

Graham rallies and other special events – a rally in Woking addressed by W E Sangster and we went up to town to hear Soper & Weatherhead. Life was very full.

Methodism was literally alive. The church had many able lay people. And there was a very fine supernumerary the Rev. S S Dabill.

Norman Heaps and Moor Park College: Formative Influences

Two of the powerful formative influences of this period were my dear and much lamented friend Norman H (he died prematurely of lung cancer on the 26th June 1986, aged 58) and Moor Park College.



Lieut.-Colonel P. G. Idle, the architect for the new Ash Road Methodist Church, Aldershot, is joined by three ministers, the Revs. A. Hearn, C. E. Deakin and D. S. T. Izett, who took part in the dedication ceremony last Saturday, to try out the new organ. (Report on page 9) (NF666)

*I include this because of the pictures of
the Revs C E Deakin & D S T Izett
who played such an important
part in my development whilst
we were in Egypt.*

A copy of the address I gave at the Memorial Dinner to Norman at Liverpool University follows: it describes my relationship with him and expresses what I felt about them; I cannot improve on it here.

Three things in particular bonded us at this time. First, we were both deeply concerned about the vocational direction of our lives. Norman was unhappy and unfulfilled at the RAE. Original breakthrough work had had done on swept back aircraft wings was blocked by his superior which meant that American's published before he did.⁴ At the same time I was wondering whether my engineering future was in teaching or experimental research and then came the bombshell of my call to the ministry. Endlessly, daily, over lunch we discussed in depth and

4 Civil Service Commissioning turned Norman down yet again for promotion to scientific officer grade (SO) Norman down turned Norman (14 September); I suggested an interview to Dr Walker; got an interview, Dr W advised N to leave which he did on 9 November (21 September and 9 November). See Box File for subsequent career.

detail the issues we shared and those which were unique to both of us. For both of us, these conversations were very important.

Second, we were both exploring the meaning of Christian for us with engineering / mathematical backgrounds. Third, we were both caught up with the thinking of Professor T E Jessop and Moor Park College.⁵ We spent some memorable, exciting and mind blowing weekends there. (For these points see my Address pp2 to 3).

Norman left the RA in 1954, I think but we kept in touch and visited each other often throughout his life. I miss him greatly still twenty five years after his death but I am thankful to God and to Norman for what we meant to each other.

⁶Reading through my 1954 diary I discovered just how close our relationship was during that year: we went to lunch on most days: N was a regular visitor at our house/flat; we went to Moor Park and to WEA lectures on economics; he came over weekly at one period 'to study' whatever that meant: he gave me math's tuition (see diary of 14th October 1954); and so much else. (See 20 and 25 February, 18 March, 21 September, 14, 22, 23 October, 4, 7, 9 November et al diary entries).

⁵ Brochures appended, see also o

⁶ 30.3.11

The Rev Charles E Deakin

MR 21.1.82

The Rev Charles E Deakin died peacefully at Westhaven hospital, Weymouth. News of his passing will stir many grateful memories for the many who valued his pastoral ministry.

He was born in November 1900 at Brownhills, Walsall, Staffordshire — the son of dedicated Methodist parents. He was educated at Queen Mary's School, Walsall and surprised his parents by offering for the Wesleyan ministry instead of taking over the family business as expected. After a pre-collegiate year in the Marazion circuit, Cornwall, he trained for the ministry at Didsbury College, Manchester. He then served in West Bromwich (Hill Top); the North of Scotland Mission; Stourport; Kidderminster and Bacup (Mount Pleasant).

At the outbreak of war in 1940 he became a chaplain to the Army and was in charge of the first evacuation camp at Aldershot when the evacuation from Dunkirk took place. For this work he was mentioned in dispatches. His service in England was followed by 18 months in the Sinai desert among men suffering from mental and nervous conditions as a result of their experiences at Alamein. He was again mentioned in dispatches and, when he left the army at the end of 1945 was made an Honorary Chaplain to the Forces.

On his return to the civil ministry at Wellington (Salop) he became keenly involved in the social and caring work of SSAFA. He was delighted to be asked to return to the Aldershot circuit where he could combine his civil and military interests and become superintendent of the circuit. This period of ministry involved chap-

laincies to hospitals and prisons including the large Brookwood mental hospital and Broadmoor. He served as a member of the Aldershot Military Trust and on the Army and Navy Board.

His final period of circuit ministry was as superintendent of the Weymouth Circuit. There he helped to integrate two societies and became widely known for his caring ministry far beyond the membership of the Church. He retired in 1967 after forty-four years in the active ministry.

He will be remembered gratefully for his phenomenal visiting. On his retirement he calculated that he had visited 171,000 people during his civil ministry. The elderly and sick members of the churches in his care received a regular weekly visit and those in hospital were often visited daily. All other members and many without any church links received regular visits.

He said he 'believed in getting a little mixed up with other folk' and was involved in various civic and welfare organisations in a way that made his preaching relevant and followed through his emphasis on Christian service. On his retirement he became president of Weymouth Rotary Club and helped to pioneer a project to provide Pilgrim House, a social centre for the elderly. He was chaplain to the British Legion and vice-chairman of the League of Friends of the Weymouth hospitals. Such an active ministry was only possible because of the home in which he could relax, provided by his wife Laura and daughter Enid.

His death followed four years in hospital after a stroke and has set him free to serve once more. — John D Walker.

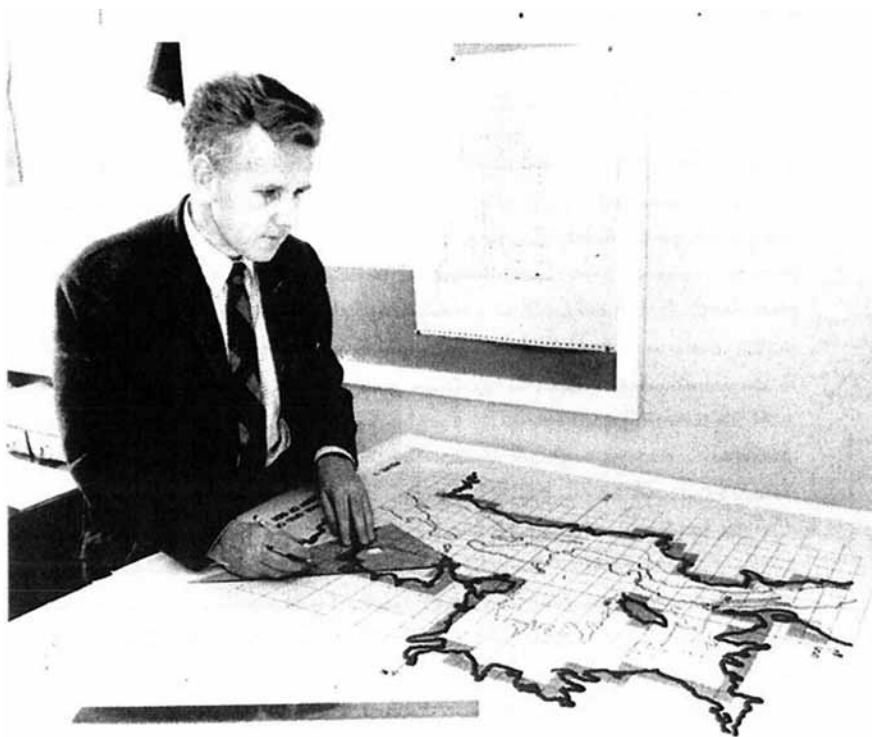
For limited circulation

Norman S. Heaps : A Unique and Beloved Friend

(Copy of the manuscript from which the Rev Dr George Lovell spoke at the Memorial Dinner to Dr Norman Stuart Heaps on 24th Oct. 1986).

[The original is in NH's file].

First let me say that I deeply appreciate the invitation to be here on this occasion and to give a memorial address. Thank you. As I respond I feel honoured, unworthy and inadequate to the task. Deep emotions surge through my being: I am thankful for Norman and his friendship and love; I am proud of what he was and what he achieved and like us all I bask in his reflected glory: I grieve for him; I am sad, frustrated and angry at his early and untimely death; I yearn to see him again and I believe I shall.



Original in Norman's box file.

Perhaps these feelings and emotions are essential qualifications for giving this address but they do not make it easy. Norman would understand these emotional storm surges and the effects they have upon us as they pound over the shallow shelves of our mortality just as he understood other storm surges. Continuously he studied and modelled both kinds of surges in life and in nature. To do so he used his humanity to the full through the apparatus of science and spirituality. Therein was his greatness, his humility, his winsomeness and his attractiveness - the sheer humanity of the man.

Beginnings of a Friendship

I first met Norman Heaps on a Saturday evening in September 1949 at a television demonstration in a shop in Farnborough. A small group of us who had just started work at the Royal Aircraft Establishment had been invited to view a TV programme at a shop as part of the post-war drive to get a set into every home. Norman was in digs, the rest of us were in the hostel. He was waiting for us at the shop, he joined us diffidently and took up a place on the fringe of the group. I was attracted to him, gravitated towards him and started talking to him. I was not happy with the hostel accommodation, he was not too happy with the digs. Immediately and naturally we made a comparative analysis of the merits and de-merits of the two forms of accommodation. We order and weighed the points and the options and then went to look at each others rooms. Both of us stayed where we were! During the discussion we discovered we worked in the same building, howbeit in different departments (Norman was in 'Structures', I was in Mechanical Engineering), that we were both from Lancashire, and that we were both Methodists (he was a committed member, I was a casual adherent). He was a young mathematician analyzing problems of swept back aircraft wings; I was a young engineer working on problems of escape from aircraft. A friendship was born which proved to be one of the most significant of my life. It grew, deepened and flourished over a period of 37 years and after his death it still continues to yield a rich harvest. I will miss him until my own death.

Foundations and Substance of a Soul Friendship

Six months later due to a bureaucratic error I was conscripted to do two years national service. During that period I met him only once by pure chance on a train to London, I was going on embarkation leave.

Our friendship was taken up again in 1952 as though there had been no break in our association, and that was always to be the case. By now I

was married to Molly. During the next two or three years Norman and I saw a lot of each other, we lunched together each working day and he was a frequent visitor at our flat. What we did together during this period, the substance of our friendship as it were, was important to us both and I need to describe it briefly, although I would much prefer to speak just about Norman but I cannot do so without distorting the reality of the friendship and its interdependent nature and the points I wish to make about him. So I turn to the substance of our friendship.

First of all it was about our respective careers. Neither of us was settled at the R.A.E., we were struggling to determine what we should do next. In addition to the reasons given by Eric Jones, Norman was unsettled because he could not get into a grade which would give him the status commensurate with his ability and because the bureaucracy of the scientific civil service denied him the academic freedom he needed and for which he hungered. Undoubtedly some of the problems he encountered were in part attributable to his lack of social skills and graces (unfairly so) and the poor impression he made in meetings. But we will return to this later. I was considering responding to a call to the ministry, I had been converted in the army!

Secondly we were working hard at contemporary issues and the essence for us of Christianity. Norman was very keen on the W.E.A. (Workers' Educational Association). He attended classes in German, musical appreciation and economics. I attended the ones on economics with him and still have the notes. Norman regularly glossed and simplified the formulae, I recall. Two pieces of music which greatly impressed Norman at this time were Belshazzar's Feast and The Enigma Variations.

Thirdly, two stalwarts of the W.E.A., Canon Parsons, (an Anglican Priest) and Professor T.E. Jessop (a Methodist layman of the primitive Methodist kind and at that time Ferus Professor of Philosophy and Psychology in the University College of Hull) were establishing a college for adult Christian education in the area at Moor Park, Farnham. We were fans of Jessop. He was brilliant. We had never encountered such erudition on the philosophy of life and Christianity. Jessop's analyses were ruthless and exciting. His lectures were performances. No notes but impeccable logic and order, his being and the tempo and mode of his speech bodying forth the intellectual excitement and the emotion he saw in the subject matter. When I wrote this and recalled what Eric Jones had said about Norman's lecturing I wondered if he had modelled himself, howbeit unconsciously, on Jessop. Jessop commanded large audiences of Christians and non-Christians at lectures arranged by the Christian Union. They were events always held

on Friday evenings. We attended them all. Then on Saturday we went to Moor Park where small groups of people with Jessop and people like him examined things with an openness we had not previously experienced. Over Norman's suffering and death I have had cause to remember Jessop. After one of the lectures to which I have just referred he was asked a question about suffering. He said that he had just returned from a visit to Calcutta and he had found himself wanting to go and bang on the gates of heaven and cry out to God, "Why? Why? Why?" I have used that to express some of my anguish and anger about Norman's death.

All this encompassed our basic life interests. Pursuing it I now realize made us into what some have described as 'soul friends' and laid foundations for three decades of soul friendship. It was marked by the acceptance of the reality and validity of our own experience and ideas and the deep desire to understand them and to work at them critically and creatively in relation to any other relevant experience and ideas that we could properly process.

One of the things that Norman had to work hard at was the development of what are commonly referred to as one's social skills and graces. And he did so to enormously good effect. I remember when I first introduced him to my wife. Again it was on a Saturday night after the opening of a new chapel in Farnborough. I introduced them and excused myself to get my coat with the idea that we would walk part of the way home together. When I returned two minutes later there was Molly but no Norman. She said that as soon as I left Norman became most embarrassed, he blurted out that Saturday night was his bath night and he was off with incredible energy and speed. We did not catch up with him! For the first six months or so that he came to our flat he never addressed Molly directly, only through me! I compare that with some wonderful evenings we have had with him and members of our family and friends over the past few years when he has set everyone, young and old alike, at their ease and been the life and soul of the discussion. That transition must have cost him much, I know of part of the cost from our discussions. It was a natural change, the gradual working out of the implications of embarrassing moments. The result was a most attractive and winsome eccentricity epitomized by a cloth cap; by an old 'mac'; by adding to the acceptance of every second portion or cup of tea, "if you can spare it"; by the watch in the top pocket of his jacket and the way, as Eric Jones says, he used and fondled it. But for me it was the combination between his erudite and idiosyncratic behaviour and the interface between them that endeared him to me. At his funeral I illustrated that by a story from a walking holiday that I had with him but I could not finish it on that occasion, I will try to do so now. At the beginning

of the week he asked if I would like him to produce alternative suggestions for the walks. I readily agreed. Each morning at breakfast he produced his ideas for my consideration. There were always alternatives with the advantages and disadvantages of each clearly enumerated in relation to places of interest, distances, whether the direction of the wind would help or hinder us, the possibilities of rain and the position of the sun. Never have I had walks planned around so many variables! (Norman did this again in the summer of 1985.) Then we would go to the bakery to get something for lunch. Norman insisted on taking his turn to buy something. He caused chaos and congestion in the shop. He did not seem to know the names for most of the things, he sought definitions, explanations, greeted each bit of new information with an ‘o’, ‘um’ or an ‘ah’ prevaricated and jumped to a decision. Towards the end of the week I noticed that as we approached the shop all but the strongest of the shop assistants took one look at us and fled.

By the by, that holiday was the only occasion on which I saw him get really angry. I do not remember the detail. We walked a short stretch of the Pennine Way and came to the crossing of many paths. He could not tie up what was on the ground with what was on the map. He walked round and round. He turned the map this way and that. Until in utter exasperation and anger he said, “It must be possible to solve this one. I cannot now but I will come back and sort it out”. And stomped off. He returned to it until I was weary of the subject!

What Bidston and those Associated with it Gave to Norman Heaps

Let me jump from all that to what Norman received from Bidston and those associated with it. Mr Eric Jones has described much of what Norman contributed to Bidston and to Oceanography and the academic acclaim he received. Three things he got from Bidston I want to highlight here tonight.

1. You gave him the sense and assurance that he was needed and wanted here and in the study of oceanography. This was very important to him. In 1961 when I was considering leaving a situation in which I had been happily accepted he said in a very solemn manner, “George, it is very important to be wanted”. A letter I have from Norman shows that it was an indication that he was really wanted here that made him reverse his decision not to accept the post.

Let Norman speak for himself;

“I was offered the job at the Tidal Institute after an interview on February

5th. Before this meeting with the Selection Committee, I was shown round the Institute, and quite honestly, was very disappointed with the building, staff accommodation and amenities. This are no better, and in some respects worse, than those at my present College. Another fact that worried me was that, at the Institute, I could expect my work to be directed, i.e. do this, do that, work on this, etc. Taking the job would therefore mean a certain loss in the academic freedom which I now possess. Also, holidays would come down to about four weeks per year!

Since there was also a considerable cut in salary, I decided after a few days consideration, not to accept the offer. I wrote to the Dean of the science Faculty informing him of my decision. In his reply the Dean said that they were sorry about it, and asked me whether I would accept the post at an increased initial salary. This reopened my thinking. It became clear that they really wished me to take the job. After another week of deliberation I decided to accept the post.“

This was not an easy decision in view of the snags I have already mentioned. Although, in a sense, I am pleased, I still have my fears. But I have not committed myself and must go through with it whatever the consequences. I can only hope that this plunge from my present happy position will lead to further happiness. Much, I suspect will depend on the attitude of the Director of the Institute. If I get on well with him, all will be well; if, however, he exercises a strict control over my work and movements, then the move to the Institute could prove to be a truly disastrous one.”

Letter dated 10:3:62

2. You gave him a place in an effective and affective scientific community and a patriarchal role in a particular family in that community. He valued and treasured that. Just how much he would miss it became apparent when some years ago he had extended discussions with me about what he would do when he had to retire from the Institute when he was 60. Regrettably he never had to solve that problem.

3. You gave him the promise that the work to which he had given himself would continue, develop and extend. I remember several conversations in which he said how exciting, fulfilling and humbling it had been to see members of his section developing their field of research and realizing their potential. He rejoiced greatly in that and was thankful for any opportunity to promote the work of younger men. He saw them clearly and with joy in a future beyond his own. Then he discussed his retirement with me he was assured the work would go on and in some ways he felt better than he could do it.

All this and more accrued from a post he took up with some doubts because the promise of it could so easily be thwarted. You created an

atmosphere, an intellectual and human community of serious work and fun in which he could flourish. On behalf of all who knew him I thank you.

Norman Heaps' Creativity

After Norman's funeral Dr David Prandle posed the question to a small group of us, "What made Norman Heaps such a creative thinker?" The question has stayed with me. The answer is that I do not know but there are one or two hints that come from reflecting and re-reading letters. Norman has written to me over the years. I thought I would share them with you.

Three of them I link together. They were his powers of observation, concentration and mental and physical absorption. They were quite remarkable. I remember him coming to tea one Sunday afternoon in 1953. He walked from Farnborough to our flat in Aldershot along a road a mile or so long flanked by the most magnificent Chestnut trees, Queen's Avenue. On entering the flat he said how wonderful it was to see the basic shapes of the trees now that they had shed their leaves and wasn't it marvellous the way in which all shapes were made up of straight lines. I do not think he greeted us in other than a perfunctory manner. There were three of us and we were completely bemused. He was very excited by this 'fact' and saw it to be a profound discovery. We simply said a lame 'Yes', without conviction or understanding. Throughout the afternoon he was almost totally occupied with his own thoughts and every so often he would make a comment about his latest thoughts about straight lines and tees. How difficult it was to move him from a line of thought that had galvanised him; how difficult to get him to pursue a line of thought that had not galvanised him no matter how important to you! How marvellous to be immersed in thought with him.

Then again he had an enormous inward mobility and speed and he knew the contours and landscape of his own thinking. Listen to this written to me on Christmas Day 1963. (He wrote to me regularly on that day; how I will miss not having one this year.) It was a response to a chapter entitled the "depths of existence" in a book I has sent him for Christmas.

"To a certain extent, I appreciate the important fact that we exist, in our thinking, on 'different' levels - from the surface inwards. In fact, looking back on my own experience, I find that I have actually taken decisions on different levels. Decisions taken on the surface are easy to make and flow for our day-to-day living supports them. But when important, far-reaching, decisions have to be taken, e.g. changing one's job, I have found it necessary to go down more deeply. Then, at the different levels of thought, we may find different answers to our question. This problem of deciding which

answer is to be acted upon has been, for me, one of the most difficult. The easy way out is to follow the answer produced by our surface thought - but this is wrong. Deep thinking certainly gives rise to internal conflict!!”

From this it is clear that he knew his way around his own mind and how to use it. I wish he had written more on this, perhaps he has.

Thirdly, he was continuously maintaining and developing his own thinking framework. Listen to this written in 1977. The problems to which he refers are not specified.

“It seems you are involved in a lot of organizational work at present. As you indicate, it is very demanding (have you forgotten what it is all about, yet?). During the last two years, more of my own time has been spent with people and their problems, rather than with myself and my problems. There is much reward in such a change in working emphasis, however there is always a danger of pushing it too far - to the extent that your own thinking matrix may not be maintained sufficiently to cope with new problems”.

The problems to which he is referring are not specified. The context suggests they are academic ones. Subsequent conversations, however, would indicate that he would say something similar about personal problems.

Another characteristic was his courage. Commenting in 1971 on a big step that I was about to take he said, *inter-alia*:

“The main point is to move along with the challenge always”.

I believe he did so in his thinking, in his living and in his dying. In yet another letter I came across this, it sent a shudder through my being:

“Three weeks ago, Audrey’s father (Mr Dutton) who you met when staying here for the Liverpool Conference, died a most terrible death from cancer. He suffered appallingly - the nearest to hell on earth - and this upset my father very much”.

That letter was written on 4th September 197? He must have recalled that. What courage he showed in the last year and particularly in the final few weeks.

Fifthly he made enormous use of his own experience, ideas and insights. He trusted them. He saw them to be valid and real. He drew upon it. So the lessons he learned from working on his own career and mine in those early days were used, modified, used, modified. Rarely do I meet anyone who is able to make such use of their experience or to think so much from first principles and the barest of facts. That was part of his genius.

Sixthly, he made all kinds of lateral connections. My own relationship with him was a living experience of this. Between our careers and our lives whenever we met there were creative lateral connections. It was amazing.

My last point is that he committed himself bodily to his engagement with his subject matter. The phrase comes from Prof. David Snail (*Illusion and Reality: The Meaning of Anxiety*). He suggests that “one earns through committing oneself bodily to an engagement with the world, and the very structures of one’s body are changed thereby”. You could see some of the indications of Norman doing this: the way in which he threw himself forward as he walked towards some things; the puckering of his mouth; the twitching of his nose and the prodding forward of his hands with his pen poised for action. The whole of his being was involved and its total creative powers brought to bear. There is a story from Islam of a person on the side of a lane trying to fill a wicker basket with water. A prophet came along, asked the obvious question, “Do you want to fill the basket with water?” In response to the answer “Yes”, he took the basket and threw it into the lake. Norman’s bodily involvement in the subject matter had a similar effect.

A Tribute from the Heart

How does one draw this to a close and a conclusion? I will attempt to do so by paying a two-fold tribute and expression of gratitude.

First of all I want to thank you here at Bidston and beyond. You have contributed much to the healing of the wounds of grief. The funeral service and then the conversations afterwards really did help. The atmosphere was so supportive. Thank you for that from my heart. It was an incredible experience to be part of the putting together of the parts of Norman’s life. It was like transforming the urban men with separated roles and functions to different people with the rural man with their numerous and multiple role relationships.

Second my tribute to Norman. I can do no better than repeat what I said at the funeral. It is but the profile of a tribute.

He always worked from first and basic principles in all my dealings with him, he was most at home with them.

He searched and stretched for fundamentals in all aspects of human life and he invariably found and grasped them.

His concentration was nigh on total.

His loyalty was utter.

His devotion and dedication to what he chose, that in which he chose to invest himself was amazing.

He was prolific in thought and output.

He always took the long view.

He was humble and thankful to the end.

During his illness we discussed the mortal danger that he knew he was in. Continuously he said that you have to take the long view. When I asked him to explain he said that he had had 25 years when he had been able to pursue his career without interruption and distraction. His mother had kept home and he had given himself to his work. Those were idyllic years for him. He was grateful for them. One of the great pains, and my God I felt this for him, was the thought that he had not finished his work, “I haven’t finished my work, George”, is a heart rending sentence and especially when it was said quietly with great pathos. Then I had the temerity to talk to him about the long-view. Through it all we grew closer and the way he began to say, “Hello, George”, I will never forget. The pain of the loss is great. A belief in the resurrection reduces it only slightly. But I would not have missed those 37 years for anything. I will bear the price of the sense of loss, bereavement and grief as gladly as I can because I/we have been privileged to walk some of the stretches of this life with a great man.

Norman I thank you for being you and for not letting them/us make you into anything else.

Norman I salute you for your intellect, your achievements, your humanity and your spirituality.

Norman, friend, I hold you in honour, love and respect.

Norman I will continue to walk the hills with a thousand precious memories of you till we meet again.

Norman Heaps this was and this is your life in us, we follow you as we often did and are compelled to let you go on ahead.

CALL TO THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

⁷On the 3rd November 1952 I flew out to Idois, North Africa, as a member of a team carrying out live trials on free-fall fun aircraft in very high flight. Earlier I have outlined the nature of [this project](#). I had two problems. I contracted amoebic dysentery which was debilitating. And I had some relational problems with the team leader, Squadron Leader John Harvey. Taking what I considered to be a moral and religious stand as a witness to my Christian principles, I refused to attend meetings in the bar late in the evening to discuss tricky issues about the project and to make decisions which could be a matter of life or death for the parachutist, Major Williams, with whom I shared a room. I did not think it was the hour of the context to pursue such business when those engaged in the discussions had been drinking alcohol. I am sure I appeared somewhat sanctimonious I regret to say. This didn't go down well. Alongside this I got involved with a group of American Christians a few miles away and spent at least one evening addressing a meeting and preaching at a service. Mixing Christian lay ministry work with my work was to say the least unwise. I should not have done it. Colleagues could have accused me of neglecting my work by becoming preoccupied with religion rather than experimental matters – and they probably did and they were right to do so. My stance on the meetings and my visit to the American Christians combined to make me appear as a religious watchdog. A consequence of this was that it had deleterious effect upon my relationship with Harvey who was quite blatantly having an affair with a woman team member who made it clear that she did not like me. I felt very bad about this affair not least because Harvey's wife was unwell after a difficult hysterectomy. I did not confront them about the affair but I have no doubt that my disapproval was communicated, non-verbally. After about then days or so Mr D.G.A. Rendell came out to see how things were going (he would be a PSO or SPSO) as the head of our section. Soon after he arrived he drew me aside and said 'you will be returning with me on my plane to the UK tomorrow'.

I cannot remember whether he said then or later that it was because I had been uncooperative. I had no redress. We got as far as Malta and an engine caught fire causing the pilot to make an emergency landing. As he ran across the runway to get on another flight he called over his shoulder, 'make your own way home'. That seemed to go for another chap who was flying with us. We had little money but somehow or another we managed to get an RAF flight back to the UK two or three days later!

There wasn't much natural justice in all that although I probably brought some of it onto myself. The dysentery led to my ulcer flaring up again. When I went to my GP he said that the RAF doctor saved my life by sending me home; he did nothing of the kind, he just gave me some medicine. Rendell's decision saved me – that is if my GP's prognosis was correct.

What had happened went before me and cast an unpleasant shadow over the next eighteen months or so. Gradually I regained my reputation and Keiller, Rendell and Clothier apologized to me.⁸ But it was an object lesson to me about challenging and witnessing! Since then I have tried to avoid presenting myself as I did on those trials. Remember *For The Term of His Natural Life!*

Although I was ill and wondering whether what the doctors had said when I was first diagnosed with an ulcer that I would not be able to work very hard and certainly not able to do any serious study or intellectual work again was a sound prognosis, I undertook a strenuous mission with Alan Cox centered on Ash Street Methodist Church (no longer there I am sorry to say).

⁹Alan Cox was a National serviceman permanently posted in Aldershot in order to be readily available to play football for his Regiment and the Army. He was a Methodist from Bromsgrove and a local preacher who, having had a call to the ministry, was considering candidating for the Methodist Ministry. A really deep friendship between the two of us developed very quickly and continued throughout his life and with June who became his wife. Alan spent most of his spare time with us – he helped us to decorate and move into 4 Arthur Street. In summertime we spent idyllic evenings with Alan, Molly and Janice at the Aldershot Lido. We collected blackberries together with talked endlessly and tirelessly about Christianity, Methodism, preaching, ministry. Our spare bedroom became his. Our approaches to life and to Christianity were complementary even though we were quite different. I remember an evening service at Ash Vale which we conducted together and June (she visited from time to time) and Molly sang a duet; 'To God to the Glory great things he has done....' (Hymns and Psalms, 463).

8 This, I think, can be attributed to two things: the quality of my subsequent work and working relationships and the reports I published and my seniors became aware of what really happened on the trials that I was not as culpable as they had previously thought. Harvey lost some status.

9 21.3.11

Alan was an incredible athlete. On the 1st August 1955 Molly and I went to the Annual Summer Fete at Upper Hale on a glorious summer's day. On impulse he had an irresistible urge to join the 100 yard race when he saw the athletes in running shorts and shoes gathering for the start. He kicked off his shoes, joined them to run in stocking feet and long trousers. They looked at him with disdain and smirked at each other. Even at such a disadvantage he took the second prize narrowly missing the first! (See my diary).

[When writing this I had great difficulty in establishing the date of the service when I had this incredible healing/calling experience. Since then I have come across a diary entry for the 7th December 1954 which reads:

In the evening I sent to see the doctor about the medical report for Rev A.N. Rose. (This was required for my candidature to the ministry.) I saw Dr Jean Hodgson who was a little surprised that I was going into the ministry. I told her of my experience at Ash on the 22nd February 1953 and was not over surprised and thought that what I said was plausible and the root cause of the trouble [i.e. my ulcer]. Her attitude rather surprised me but I was pleased that she took the sensible view. (The last statement seems more than a little arrogant of me!]

This was one of the possible dates of the event that I had established before. I had dismissed it in favour of the other date, 5th April, because I remember the event followed a visiting mission and the dates in my appointments diary for visiting are in March 1953.

(For several years around this period I kept a personal and an appointments diary. Most unfortunately I do not have a personal diary for 1953. I do not know whether I kept one or not or whether it is lost. I hope I find it). The evidence that I have suggests:

- The event did occur on the 22nd February 1953, (this ties in with my clear memory that I was preaching in Farnborough in the morning. My diary says Peabody Road with Jack Clennell. Had the event occurred on Easter Day not only would I have remembered this but made much of it as a metaphor for rising to a new life. But as I say across I have no memory of this. It ties in with the X-ray dates of the 9th March – which showed no ulcer but a scar where there had been one).
- Then there was more visiting than I thought, some before the event of the 22nd and some after associated with an extended campaign which culminated in an open air service on Passion Sunday 22nd March and an afternoon service on Easter Day 5th April – all services of Ash Street.

Whatever the chronology it is beyond doubt that: I was seriously ill for a prolonged period; was saved possibly from death by being ordered back from North Africa in disgrace; haemorrhaged the afternoon of the healing, calling service; had a profound healing and calling experience during a service at Ash Street, x-ray evidence of healing; healing or calling ratified by the doctors and the Church – and by going on for sixty subsequent years of university and still counting!].

The mission consisted of discussions with the church leaders and minister and door to door visiting of people all around the Ash Street Church. It culminated in a service in Ash Street after weeks of campaigning. I believe it was on the 5th of April ¹⁰, an afternoon service. I was far from well; I weighed about 7½ stone. As I recall it we, Alan and I, had taken a service in Farnborough in the morning and had to run to catch a bus home for lunch. This caused my ulcer to haemorrhage. Determined to take the service with Alan as planned, I went to bed until it was time to leave. To our joy and amazement the church was packed. The church had a central pulpit large enough to take two of us comfortably. Alan was to start the service so I sat down. Normally I would be nervously tense especially on such an important occasion with such a large congregation when so much was at stake. Strangely, I was calm and collected, a profound quietness and peace suffused me. Charles Wesley's words 'silent am I now and still'¹¹ describe the feeling. There was no mystical voice but I felt as though physically and spiritually I was re-shaped, re-modelled. It was as though 'someone' had 'integrated my being, my personality, character and desires in a new way'¹².

10 It was Easter Day if I have my dates right and I think I have. Strangely though, I had not associated the event with Easter Day. It was from this very pulpit that I heard the Rev Dr J. Alexander Findlay preach on a Good Friday afternoon. He was an old man then. Two things I remember: his reading of the crucifixion story from the Gospels. It was not a reading or a recital but his own free flowing extempore translation from memory of the Greek text. That was an incredible experience. The other thing is, that his wife was sitting behind me. After preaching we came down to her and she said are you alright, that must have taken a lot out of you!

11 Hymns & Psalms, 540 v2. I have had other such experiences of 'quietness' over the years. An outstanding one occurred whilst I was on retreat at St Beuno's in 1993 and is recorded in notes I made at the time, book I, p21.

12 The event and my description of it is imprinted on my memory, indelibly I hope, and runs deep into my psyche. But there is a note which appears at the end of this section. Unfortunately it is undated. My memory and the handwriting suggest that it was the note from which I gave my testimony at my pre-ordination service on the 3rd May 1960 at Newport. I hope to come across other such notes as I proceed to sort out my papers.

Theologically or biblically speaking it was a moment when I become a new creation.

The strange thing was that I felt I knew that it was happening. As this was happening I became conscious, quietly so, of two predominant thoughts, ‘This is what you are to do’ (which I understood to be ministry) and ‘you will be well’. They came to me not through a mystical voice speaking to me but as though they had been put into my mind. I had no doubt then nor now, was that all that happened to me in that moment of time an experience of God – of his healing and recreating activity and his calling.

The mission to the church and neighbourhood housing estate and the service achieved much that we had hoped and prepared for. As I got into bed at the end of a momentous day, weak and deeply but satisfyingly tired, and still quiet, I said to Molly, ‘I am going to be well and I feel called to the ministry’. I was too tired to pursue it any further but I knew something had happened that would change our lives. This was the first time I said to anyone else about what had happened in that pulpit.

Three weeks later an X-ray showed that I had a scar but no ulcer. Three months later my weight had doubled to 15 stone! Visiting Lancashire I was sitting next to a man who used to live across the back to us, Frank Edmondson. I used to travel on the same train to work with him for a couple of years or more and with whom I had camped. He said, ‘I am E... and who are you?’ When I said my name he instantly recognised me from my voice and was visibly shocked!

In the next section I describe what was involved in working out the implications of this experience. Before turning to that formidable task I find myself reflecting on the experience as I so often have in the past. Undoubtedly it was a cathartic experience. It definitely resolved a long process of reflecting on what was my vocation that grew out of my conversion to Christianity: Was it in engineering? Was it in engineering in a missionary context? Was it in engineering education in the UK or overseas? Was it in lay preaching? Was it in full time lay ministry? The inner conflict and disturbance had, I feel quite convinced, contributed to developing an ulcer.

My spiritual unease led to my physical condition or my illness was a symptom or an expression of my inner psychological conflict. The resolution of the irrational issue led to or went together with my feeling. The call has never left me. The healing was permanent. I have been able to do a prodigious amount of intellectual work. The experience inaugurated my ‘second journey’, as I moved from an engineering career to a ministerial vocation.

So to my second journey ... ¹³

Local Preaching

¹⁴I am not sure when I started preaching in the Aldershot and Farnborough Circuit, but on the 17th August 1952 I preached a ‘trial sermon’ at Ash Road – that could have been to qualify to go on ‘note’ or ‘on trial’ . ¹⁵ I suspect the latter because in the afternoon I spoke at the young peoples’ fellowship and in the evening took a service at Farnborough Street. In October (16 & 17) 1953 I took and passed the compulsory written examinations in Old and New Testaments and Christian Doctrine. My results were not very good but they were apparently well over the average. Having satisfied the Circuit Local Preachers at my oral examination, I was admitted as a preacher on full plan and commissioned in a service probably in December 1953. Two things I remember about the service which was in Wesley Hall, Grosvenor Road. The lights went off due to a power cut at the beginning of the service and came on as it was concluded! The service was conducted in candle light. The second thing is that the ‘charge’ was given by a senior, deeply respected local preacher, Mr E.H. Pierce. Some years later he kindly sent me the script of his address (at the end of the section). It is not difficult to imagine the response of the congregation to the following statement as they sat in candlelight.

We who dwell in the darkness at atomic night still have the light that lightens every man, available to chase away all darkness. (P2 of the script).

My preaching records show how actively I was engaged in preaching during this period and subsequently.

Initial Responses

¹⁶Not having a personal diary for 1953 nor any contemporary notes ,

¹³ For the concept of second journey see J. Collins, Gerald (1978, 87 & 95) *Second Journey: Spiritual Awareness and the Mid-Life Crisis* (Gracewing). This had a considerable influence on me and my consultancy work from the 1980s onwards.

¹⁴ 16.3.11

¹⁵ Examining some of the pages I had in a file, it seems that I started to do a correspondence course on local preachers’ studies whilst I was in Egypt, probably in November or December 1951. But I think I lapsed and took them up with the same tutor in March 1953. I completed the studies in eleven 11 fortnightly instalments of OT, NT & CD from the 9th May to 26th September.

¹⁶ 1.4.11

I am entirely dependent upon my memory for the responses during the remainder of 1953. But I do have personal and appointments diaries for 1954 and 55 which cover the period when key decisions were made about my vocational future.

My dramatic healing and return to robust health was, of course, a course of much rejoicing and joy amongst my friends and relatives. Molly was greatly relieved and overjoyed. She accepted my call as part of the whole experience that had brought me back to life and given me a new sense of purpose. Her dominant response, as I recall it, was that she had no tenable option as a devout Christian but to accept what she believed to be a genuine call of God that I received. To do otherwise, she felt, would put her in an untenable position: she said that she felt that she would find it difficult to live with herself if she sensed that she had gone against God's will or us. Nonetheless, in fact all the more, she felt as I did, that the prospect of all that could be involved was challenging and overwhelming if not daunting and frightening.

At the same time there was a sense of adventure and excitement associated with going out into the unknown as we made the transition from my engineering to a ministerial vocation. And of course, there was much spiritual kudos in receiving and pursuing such a call in Christian circles. I am forever thankful that Molly decided to stand by me and to help me to respond to the calling and that she has continued to do so through all the years. At times it was very costly for her to do so especially during the time when I was a Richmond College even though it has been richly rewarding in many ways for both of us.

Responses from the close circle of friends in Aldershot – Norman, Alan, Jack and Phyliss (Gerrard) and others – were encouraging and supportive: they were very pleased and thought it was a genuine call. They rejoiced in my healing and affirmed up in our thoughts of going forward to pursue the implications.

With the loss of the 1953 diary (if there ever was one!), much of the detail of the developments during the next few months is not clear, beyond recall. It seems that the call was quietly accepted and gradually internalized and possibly tested out privately. Certainly we did not rush headlong into seeking to enter full-time ministry.

Theoretically, I could have candidated during the 1953-54 Connexional year but I did not do so until 1954-55. It seems from the evidence I have that I did not start to explore seriously the possibilities of candidating for the

Methodist Ministry and pursuing other forms of ministry until the beginning of 1954. (Nor did we have discussions with our parents about full-time ministry until 1954/55).¹⁷

However, I think I must have had discussions with my minister, The Rev Charles E. Deakin about what had happened to me at Ash Street on the 22nd February 1953. Candidating was in all probability discussed along with the difficulties of my doing so and the possibility of becoming a lay pastor under the aegis of the Home Mission Departments Lay Pastorate. From the beginning his advice was that I should candidate no matter how difficult that impulse. Two things happened which would naturally follow from such a discussion. First, I intensified my application to my Local Preacher's studies and exams and all that was involved in becoming accredited as a preacher. And, in fact I became fully accredited in December 1953. (So technically I could have candidate in 53-54 but, for reasons I do not remember, I did not do so). Also, I became much more active in preaching and addressing various kinds of groups throughout the circuit and beyond. Both of these developments are described in the next two sections. All this indicates the upward new energy.

Second, I made enquiries about the possibility of becoming a lay pastor. In June 1953 I wrote to the Rev Ernest Odell, one of the secretaries of the Home Mission Department seeking information and advice. I have a copy of his reply but not my letter: he said he 'should be glad to see [me] for a few minutes.....'. The interview was as condescending as the letter. I told him about my experience and my personal situation and opened my heart to him thus making myself vulnerable. He was impassive, distant and unresponsive. In the short time he gave me before standing to dismiss me he made me feel a charlatan, a fraud, cheap. He advised me quite curtly to stay in my profession. As we stood just before I left I said to him that I felt he thought I was seeking a soft option. He indicated without saying as much, that that is what he did think! ¹⁸ Perhaps he was trying to test and challenge me. As we will see he was a little more affable in January-March 1954 but neither Molly nor I warmed to him.

17 5.4.11 Since writing this I have come across a letter from the Rev Leslie J Webb that I had forgot about dated 18th June 1953. This shows that I had made serious enquiries about the possibility of candidating. Webb sets out the difficulties. It seems I/we did not pursue the possibility further because it all seemed do daunting but I did apply myself to preaching and qualifying as a preacher!

18 See his letter to me 8.6.1953 and my letter to him 22 January 1954. Correspondence in Candidating file (?)

Circuit Wide Lay Ministry

From the summer of 1952 I was greatly privileged to exercise a lay preaching and speaking minister, throughout the Circuit until we left in 1958 and beyond in other circuits and churches (see preaching records) and through the chaplains to groups of soldiers. This was a new and enriching experience to which I cannot do justice here, I restrict myself to some highlights.

Especial relationships evolved with some churches and people. Farnborough Street was one of the churches with which I had a close relationship and Horace Mudge and his wife. Then there was Cove Methodist Church and Mr & Mrs Rickett's and the flourishing youth fellowship; Mrs R was an extraordinary woman, saintly. They visited us in Wales. Hawley Lane was yet another and North Camp with Mr Jack Amos and a preacher I love, Mr Tom Mason (his son became a minister). And of course, my home church, Grosvenor Road. So many memories but I have been trying to identify just what these people and churches – and many more of course – meant to me and did for me apart from showing me Christian love and enfolding me with rich fellowship. By valuing and getting something from my preaching (Mr Southern who sat in front of us in Church at Grosvenor Road, an elderly devout Methodist, said of me, 'You don't know him until you have heard him preach') they affirmed me and my call to preach and to the Methodist ministry. They believed in me. They willed me to minister. They created opportunities for the extension of my preaching university by inviting me to speak to young people and conduct special services. They were 'there for me', prayed for me, supported me, reinforced me and made me feel good. I thank God for them.

1954: Overflowing with Energy and Living a Balanced Life

¹⁹Reading through my personal diary for 1954 I was amazed at the enormous amount of energy and drive that I had. My work at the RAE was of itself very demanding in experimental work, tests and report writing. I took GCE A level examinations and those required for my candidature; I had a very heavy preaching and speaking schedule sometimes three appointments on a Sunday and a math's exam in the morning and addressing a men's forum in the evening. At the same time we had a very full social life with Norman, Alan Cox, the Gerrard's, the App's, Cottains' and others and we went to the theatre frequently and outings of one kind

and another. Norman and I and sometimes Molly went to Moor Park College and I was active in the Sunday School at Grosvenor Road and the Christian union at the RAE. I was impressed by the fullness and the balance in my life. Where did I get all the energy from and how was I able to get through so much academic work and the endless discussion and meetings about my future? What a contrast to my condition in 1952 when the doctors said that I would not be able to do any serious work or study for the remainder of my life!

Sadly, I do not think I have ever lived such a balanced life since!

Decision to go for full-time ministry: 12th January 1954

²⁰After the first round of responses to the call I received in February 1953, described earlier, Molly and I did not pursue things further. Following my abortive discussions with Odell about the lay pastorate, I settled down to qualifying as a local preacher and did so in December. By this time it was clear that I had been healed so one aspect of the experience at Ash Street had been fulfilled and seen to be so. Molly and I had what proved to be a definitive discussion about my entering full-time ministry going on

20 4.4.11

Methodist
Recorder
Nov 9th 1978



Pictured at the Lynchford Road centenary are (left to right): the Rev Peter Fry; the Rev and Mrs Bryan Spinney; Mr and Mrs Jack Amos; and the Rev Wolsey Gilbert.

I included because: Wolsey Gilbert was a chaplain when we were in Grosvenor Rd, Jack Amos was very active & Bryan Spinney & Peter Fry were in Richmond when I was, a year ahead of me.

for a year after receiving the call, This happened on the 12th January 1954 when I returned from taking the evening fellowship meeting at Ash Vale. My diary records that 'providing we will have a house and an income Molly is willing to go with me'. Thank God for this great mercy because I must try everything and that is my calling. I am going to make more extensive enquiries in places other than Methodism! This we both reaffirmed my calling which has never left us. Although we faced enormous difficulties and much heart searching and some family opposition, we never went back on that decision we made on the 12th January 1954.

Immediately after this discussion I corresponded with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, The Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Rev E.W. Odell of the Home Mission Dept of the Methodist Church. Also I have discussions with the Rev C.E. Deakin and through him with Rev A.N. Rose and with the Rev E.H. Metherill.²¹ The result was that I was urged and encouraged, led and drawn to candidating for the Methodist ministry. And that is what happened.

CANDIDATING FOR THE METHODIST MINISTRY: JANUARY 1954 – JULY 1955

Procedures set out in 'Manual of Directions', 1952. Copy in file.

In June 1953 I had pursued the possibility of candidating as is clear from the letter from the Rev J Leslie Webb who was the Connexional Candidates Secretary, see above. This letter sets out the difficulties starkly. So, when Molly and I decided to pursue this course we were fully aware of the problems involved in doing so. Webb's letter sketches the baseline from which we started our providential pilgrimage in January 1954. In February 1954, discussions opened up between the Rev Charles Deakin, the Rev A.N. Rose, General Secretary of the Ministerial Training Department,²² The Rev Leslie Webb and myself about the possibility of my candidating. On the 13th April I went to see Rose and Webb. My diary entry records

21 My intention at the beginning of these discussions as stated in a letter to Odell 22.1.54 was to secure a lay pastorate in the Methodist Church with a view of ordination if I prove worthy. (I think this is what Alan Cox did). If this fails my plan was to pursue a similar course in the Baptist or Congregational unclear. This I intend to do because the feeling of a call is so strong!

See correspondence in the 'Candidating File' and diary entries list at the end of this section.

22 See my diary for 7 & 14 February and 13 April.

that I thought that Mr Rose had a wonderful disposition; that they put the case at its worst and that I put mine 'very frankly indeed'; that they said my case was unprecedented but that they would do all that they could for me but they would not promise me a minimum of two years in college and a manse afterwards, that they left me with the worst side but that 'I thought it would work out better than that'.

[I should have noted that Mr Deakin had received a letter which he shared with Molly and I after my recognition service as a local preacher on the 12th February 1954 from Mr Rose. He was much more understanding and cooperative about my candidature which he saw as possible! How meaningfully coincidental and percipient and prophetic is that! I observed: 'Molly and I are, thank God, very much one on this subject and are closer in our lives then we've ever been. The way seems to be clearing and opening and direction given. I am even sleeping sounder now. ²³]

23 Diarv 13 Februarv 1954.



Mr. Tom Mason

week there is to be a film. The title? "Who Cares?"

Never mind, Mr. Fairhurst, "Look" cares!

The Desert Shall Blossom

TEN years ago Tom Mason took over the job of putting right a plot of land around the North Camp Methodist church, in Farnborough, Hampshire. The grass was waist high, and the whole place was very untidy. Now many people are attracted to the church he loves and serves in this way, because the gardens look so beautiful.

'I make friends while I tend it,' says Tom Mason. 'A lot of people stop to admire it and then go

inside the church to look around — and before you know it they are in the congregation.'

One young bride wanted to be married in the church because of the flowers which surround it. She came back after her honeymoon, and now is a member.

Mr. Mason is a local preacher, helps with the cleaning of the church, and finds time to do a bit of carpentry too.

His job? A refuse van driver. There's a moral there. And a sermon in his smile, I'd say. Look at his picture again.

Stop to Think

The problem of Christian unity will not be solved by a "return" to some former age or situation for history is irreversible. The precise conditions prevailing at the points of separation of the Churches can never be repeated.

William A. Norgren.

John Drew

I loved this man and greatly admired him. He was a saint with a wonderful spirituality. He was an enormous support to me, encouraging me enormously. He had a son in an university but sadly I never knew him. I think we met once or twice.

M.R. 29 Oct 1964

Returning to the interview with Rose and Webb, I found very rough draft notes in my file from which I think I wrote a letter to them.²⁴ They are undated. I note that I have delayed my response until I had discussed what emerged with Molly and Mr Deakin and praying about the whole situation. After thanking them for giving me so much time and for discussing the issues involved in my candidature frankly, I itemized the following points:

- As the whole of my progress cannot be planned at this stage, each obstacle must be met and tackled as it appears;
- in spite of the high initial hurdles, ultimately it will be more beneficial to my wife and myself to stay in the Methodist Church if that is at all possible;
- I believe I can expect a sympathetic hearing from the Methodist Church if my capabilities bear out the calling I know I have;

[This point was undoubtedly based on my experience of the interview and particularly the impression Mr Rose made upon me].

After careful consideration, I conclude the notes/letter, 'I have decided to candidate in the normal manner following your advice and discussing frankly my circumstances at each committee that interviews me'.

Once the decision to proceed was taken I was absolutely determined to do my very best to candidate successfully and to qualify for entry to University theological education should I be accepted for training. Overall, this involved the following discrete but clearly interdependent courses of action:

1. qualifying for University entrance;
2. studying for and passing the set candidates exams;
3. going through the hoops of the candidating process;
4. exploring ways and means of securing the finances necessary to sustain us a family during my training;
5. family discussions.

These four demanding streams of action overlapped each other. They had to be pursued in my leisure time during a busy personal life and alongside a full time professional job in engineering. The first of these was self imposed but unexpectedly it made a major contribution to funding my life in college, the second and third were required and the third was a sheer necessity.

24 Having transcribed them here I have destroyed them.

THE METHODIST CHURCH

MINISTERIAL TRAINING DEPARTMENT

I. CENTRAL BUILDINGS - WESTMINSTER - LONDON, S.W.1.

Rev. ARTHUR N. ROSE, M.A.

General Secretary.

Tel. ABBey 2806

Rev. J. LESLIE WEBB, B.A.

Candidates Secretary.

JW/FB

18th June, 1955

Dear Mr. Lovell,

Thank you for your letter.

Mr. Deakin is right in saying that it is not impossible for you to become an ordained minister in the Methodist Ministry, but I think I should make it clear to you that it will be very difficult. The Conference regulation is that married men are only to be accepted as candidates for the Ministry if they are exceptional men and possessing unusual ability. Probably your modesty would prevent you from thinking that you are exceptional enough, but I suggest that you should consult your minister about this matter.

If you were accepted, you would be expected to go to college for training for three years, and then you would have a further three years' probation living on a probationer's stipend and possibly in lodgings because it is very doubtful whether a house could be found for you. Would you be in a position to maintain yourself and your wife during the three years in college and during those further three years on a not very high stipend?

You say nothing in your letter about your education. I should like some information about this.

I have written quite frankly because I do not wish to encourage any false hopes. If you are to enter the Methodist Ministry in this country the hurdles are high and it will be far from easy to clear them.

If I can be of further help please write again. Also if you would like an interview, I should be very glad to give you one.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Connexional Candidates' Secretary

1. Qualifying for University Entrance

The possibility of my taking a BD was considered in discussions between The Revs Rose, Webb and Deakin in March 1954. Rev Webb corresponded with me about this and established that I was not entitled to entrance at a university. To qualify for entrance I took GCE examinations at A Level: two papers in pure and applied maths in November 1954; two papers in engineering drawing in December 1954; three papers in religious knowledge in June and July 1955.

[On the 19th October 1954 I record in my personal diary “In the evening I tried to do some mathematical problems from the 1950 papers and I couldn’t do one! It is very disappointing. Thank Goodness Molly is so comforting. “You have probably picked all the hard ones” she said.]

Preparing for the maths I found hard work.²⁵ Frequently my diary notes my getting stuck on specimen problems and not being able to solve some of them! Norman gave me some private lessons (see diary for 14 October 1954; is that what references in my diaries to study with Norman refers to?). The first paper I record was not too bad, the second was awful and add or was it me or better (diary 22nd & 23rd November 1954). Somehow or another I managed to get a pass which was all I needed. The drawing exams did not present much revision and were not too difficult. The exams did not present much revision and were not too difficult. The exams were tedious; one was a four hour exercise in drawing! Again, I gained a pass. The religious knowledge studies involved a lot of work and they were soon after the July Committee.²⁶ The second paper was on my birthday, my 26th. My diary entry reads: “What a birthday present I received. When I got into the examination room I found... that the syllabus had been changed in such a way that had I to do ‘authorship, composition and date of the Gospels’ instead of ‘the Gospels in their general relationship to each other’ (for which I had prepared).

This was not too bad but I am now short of a subject for Tuesday (the next exam, five days later). I will have to revise ‘life and teaching of St Paul etc’. This means quite a lot of work but I am determined to attempt it. The weather has been glorious”. Somehow or another I managed to get another pass and so qualified for university entrance just in time!

25 See personal diary entries for 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20 November 1954.

26 The dates are listed in an appendix to this section.

2. Studying for and passing the set candidates examinations

²⁷Candidating involved, inter alia, taking three papers which I did in February 1955 and passed them. They were three hour papers: Biblical; Theology; Final literacy examination (essay, English language: general knowledge). As far as I can remember, I prepared for them as far as it was possible by working on previous papers privately. They were nowhere near as onerous as the GCE A Level studies.

3. Going through the hoops of the candidating process

The procedures are set out in 'Manual of Directions', 1952. Copy in file (pp11-13). Here I make notes of some of the highlights. Rev C. E. Deakin told the Local Preachers meeting of my intention to candidate (13 September 1954). On that day I told Mr D that we were expecting our first child. This complicated things further. I record in my diary that he was visibly shocked but then he pulled round.

On the 8th December the Circuit Quarterly Meeting in session at Grosvenor Road enthusiastically and unanimously nominated me as a candidate and recommended my to Synod. In doing so they also said that they were willing to help us in every way they could; an interesting birthday present for Molly.

Having completed my written examinations in February 1955, I preached my pre-Synod **trial sermon** at Stoughton Methodist Church, Guildford²⁸ on the evening of Thursday 17th March at 7.30 p.m. - or thereabouts. The arrangements were unsatisfactory and unfair. My diary entry says that there was no 'atmosphere at all'. Mr Deakin asked me how I had fared and was so concerned that he asked me for a note about it which I did on the 29th March. He asked me to set out the 'facts' that I had told him. The note read:

- There were either 14 or 15 people present including the examiners. At 7.29 p.m. the superintendent looked in the church and found only one other person besides the organist present. At that time there were three of us in the vestry.
- The organist told me before the service commenced that she had

²⁷ 6.4.11

²⁸ Stood at junction of Stoughton and Grange Road

never played the organ before. That was at 7.20 p.m., at which time she was the first arrival with the superintendent.

- On the previous evening there was a circuit rally at North Street Church, Guildford when the guest speaker as the Rev Dr Eric Baker [who would attract a large congregation].

You can easily assess, I continued, the difficulties that these factors introduced especially when combined with the facts that I was off work ill and that Molly gave birth to Janice on the previous day. Thank you for all your encouragement and help.²⁹

I end my diary entry thus: 'However, I am beginning to see how typical it is and why Christianity is in the state that it is'. But I was not put off candidating and possibly challenged!

³⁰I did not encounter any problems in my oral examination before the District Examination at Tooting Central hall, Tooting Broadway on the 21st April 1954. I was interviewed by the Rev Erastus Evans, a well-known scholar/minister after giving a brief account of my call. My diary records that although my time with the Committee was no more than 8 mins – they were running late! On the 5th May I appeared before the London SE Synod meeting in New Malden Church, Kingston Circuit. The candidates gathered at 2 p.m. and we sat around a large vestry, there could have been twenty of us. I sat beside Eddie Roos who became a fellow student at Richmond and a life-long close friend. At one point Dr Sangster, one of the most outstanding and charismatic ministers of the day who was minister at Westminster Central Hall and having an incredible ministry, put his head round the door to have a word with 'his' candidate. Eddie said, 'Who is that?' I have teased him about it since.

I was the last candidate to be summoned before the Synod at 4.30 p.m. after almost three hours of tense waiting. There were 95 ministers in the Synod, amongst them some leading Methodists including Sangster.

First, I gave my testimony and call to preach. That was fine and very well received – my diary says that I was asked 'to give my spiritual experience'. Then some of them gave me a very hard time about my finances and ability to sustain Molly and Janice and in part myself through three years of training. My diary says that they 'were not very nice at all'. What threw me was that it was no other than Leslie Webb who started this

²⁹ Copied from a poor carbon copy which I have now destroyed.

³⁰ 7.4.11

line of questioning immediately after I had given my call. Throughout my previous discussions I had been told that the official policy and procedure of the Methodist Church was first to decide whether or not a candidate was acceptable and then, then only, explore how his (they were all males then) training should be funded when they had decided what training was required. I think I made this point. To my utter confusion A.N. Rose who sitting just in front of me and of course facing me alongside (Webb), said nothing and neither did Webb came to my defence or support. Several others, and particularly a suave ex-army officer who had gone to college as a married man after the war, Ronald Douglas Redman, pressed me with very personal questions for what seemed an interminable time (possibly 20 minutes). Redman who was at Richmond from 1947-49 spoke at length about the difficulties. It was the Rev Dr Harold Roberts, principal of Richmond College to which I eventually went as a student, who saved the day. I can see him now two thirds of the way back at a pew on the left, he stood up and in his inimitable voice and manner said quite simply, "Mr Chairman, I thought that we were examining Mr Lovell for his suitability for our Ministry, not his financial viability", and sat down.

Rudland Showell, the Chairman, replied, 'You are absolutely right Dr Roberts, are there any more questions?' There weren't. The Chairman, a gracious man, than apologized to me for the intrusive questions and said I was free to go.

I noted in my diary that I was convinced that Webb did not want married men to enter the ministry. But I think this was unfair. He was not the most gracious of men but he did help later and see his very positive letter of the 9th May.

Notwithstanding all that happened the Synod recommended that I be accepted as a candidate.

³¹My post synod trial sermon (interesting the emphasis was upon the sermon and not the service although candidates were required to take the whole service as well as to preach the sermon and the literature said, 'Sermon preached in the District of report to 'July Committee') was preached on the 12th May 1955 in a small chapel, Cambridge Road, in the Richmond and Barnes Circuit in the evening. (It is interesting how many significant events in my life centre on Richmond!) This proved to be a much better experience than my previous one. My diary records that 'the ministers and people were much friendlier and helpful than (those) at Guildford. There

were about 20-30 people present but that made a nice congregation in a small chapel. I was not as free as I sometimes am but that is not surprising'.

(Frequently in my diaries of this period I write about being 'free' or not 'free' as the case might be in preaching. It is not a term I use these days. Being 'free' meant that I was able to express myself fully and that my delivery flowed from deep inside myself and that I had the wonderful experience of being heard, of communicating and of being in rapport with the congregation and sensing that through existential feedback – a mystical experience. Theologically speaking, it was an experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit. A wonderful exhilarating experience; the obverse is awful). Then, in addition, I had to submit a manuscript sermon. All of this was reported to the July Committee.³²

The July Committee, named after the month when it originally met even though it now took place in June, was the consummation of the extended candidating process. This two day event of oral and medical examinations reported to Conference: candidates whom it recommended unanimously (classified as "A" men) were usually accepted without question. Others were considered case by case by conference. The final decision always rests with Conference but the Committee's recommendations carry much weight. The Committee I attended met at Handsworth College, Birmingham which is now incorporated into Queens College which is ecumenical.

The medical was fine, see the notes. The 'stomach and duodenal cap appeared to outline normally. No ulcer crater seen' was the report of the specially required x-ray because of my medical history.

My diary records that 'I felt extremely depressed' when I arrived and entered through 'the tradesmen's entrance'. (As I read and wrote this, I suddenly realized that this symbolized so much of what I felt about my duty to the ministry – and before that into education – it was through the tradesmen's entrance, the back door, not through the main entrance. My status as a married man with a child meant that I was an abnormal not normal candidate. My lack of a grammar school education meant I did not qualify for university entrance. So I felt the/an odd man out. This was how I felt and my feelings were real. Against this, the Methodist Church has a long history of accepting candidates from a wide range of social and educational backgrounds; it looked for a genuine call and real potential that could be realized through training. As to be fair my candidature was being

32 [The Rev George Cornforth examined me at my post-synod service or was one of them. I think it was in his circuit. Diary 15.11.55.]

taken seriously even though it caused problems for the Church as well as for Molly and me – and the Conference did accept me. Nonetheless I did feel depressed and knew I was swimming against a strong current. However, I note that I soon found someone I knew – Bernard Dowding who also went to Richmond and become a life-long friend even though we did not meet often – and ‘felt much better’.

On the second day, I had to appear before a sub-committee as did everyone else. My diary reads:

At 3pm I eventually went before the committee and I had a hard time. It was a fight every minute of the twenty that I was in there. I had not to wait for the full-committee for which I was thankful.

Candidates have to go the full committee when the sub-committee have not come to a definitive conclusion, so I was either to be recommended or rejected, I suppose.

An abiding memory of the interview, relates to the chairman of the sub-committee. He was seated at a table with the other members; I was on the opposite side facing them all a short distance from the table in an exposed position. At one point the chairman asked me what I would do if I was not accepted as a candidate. I said I would apply to other nonconformist denomination and if they concluded that I did not have a call or was not acceptable I would consider an engineering teaching career and continue to pursue my call to preach as a layman. At least that is what I thought I would do. My reply caused him to get very animated and possibly a little angry. Infuriated or indignant, he said to me angrily in a loud voice, ‘Mr Lovell, are you or are you not called to the Methodist ministry?’ As he spoke he waved his arms and legs; he was a short man and his legs did not rest on the ground; he moved his legs backwards and forwards at a great rate like the pistons of an engine. All this I could see clearly. Somehow I managed to contain my amusement: it was a very serious encounter for me. And I said, ‘I have received a very deep call to ministry, ordained ministry, which I find compelling and irresistible even though it is going to be difficult for my wife and I if I go to college. If you convince me that I have misunderstood that call, I will not proceed. If you do not accept me but do not prove that I do not have a call, I will be bound to pursue it in other ways. But I would prefer to do so through the Methodist Church. I am a Methodist by conviction and so is my wife.’ My stopped pumping his legs!

On the 23rd June I received the following letter which I say in my diary ‘I hardly dare open’ but ‘I stood in the passage reading it and to my joy found that I’d got through. Molly was pleased as were Jack and Phyllis,

who came down in the evening were as well. Deakin was ‘thrilled to bits’. Webb’s ps meant that I was, in fact, an ‘A’ man, i.e. I got a unanimous recommendation to Conference.

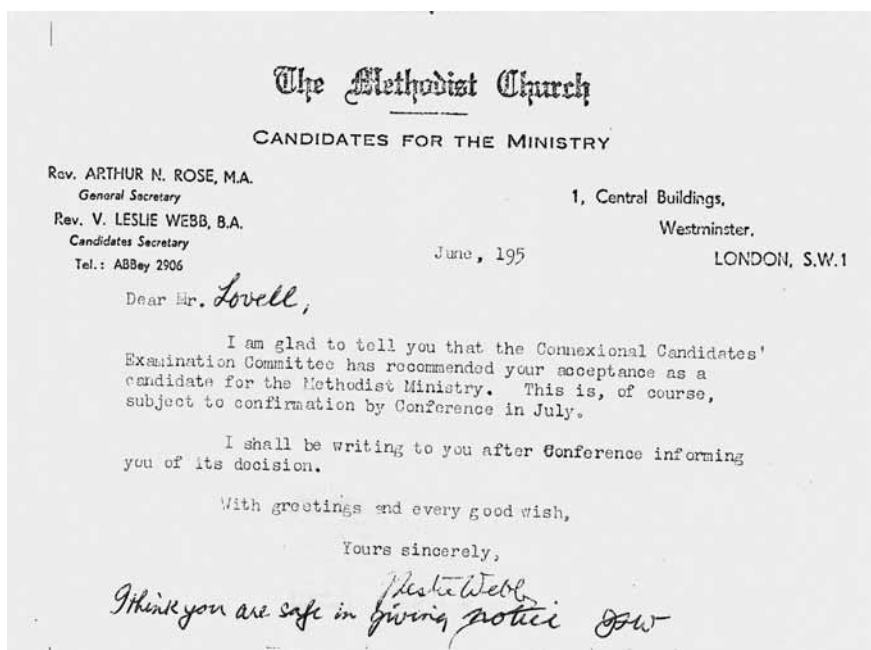
Anecdotes of the July Committee come to mind. My bed for the night faced a large window from which the curtains had been removed presumably at the end of the academic year for cleaning. I awoke very early in what proved to be an east facing room to the most glorious sun rise which flooded the room with light and colour. A wonderful spiritual experience enveloped me accompanied by a deep sense of well being and assurance.

Another incident occurred during the evening of our arrival. Dowding and I were strolling in the garden and we met Leslie Davison, at the time I think he was Home Missions Secretary. Immediately he entered into conversation with us saying that he had just returned from a meeting in North Wales about the work in that principality and that he was deeply troubled. He feared that the non-conformist strap hold was under threat from the Roman Catholic Church. At a time when non-conf. purity was in crisis, the Roman Catholic Church he said was flooding the area with some of their best young priests who had learnt to speak Welsh if they were not native Welsh speakers. This of course was an integral feature of their missionary work world-wide and they were treating Wales as a missionary zone. The incident epitomized the ecumenical climate of the time rivalry! Eight years later as President of the Conference he had an amicable audience with the Pope himself and was seeking ways of furthering the ecumenical cause. In ’62 or 63, his presidential year, I heard for address the London SE Synod proclaiming with much excitement that he had found a way round the impasse about the use of alcoholic wine at communion which was a problem in the Anglican/Methodist Conversations in his discovery of de-alcoholised wine! (Or was it later because he was a member of the London SE Synod when he lived in Upper Norwood!)

Then there was one of those unexpected incidents which stay in the mind. It is of standing near a small group of which Norman H. Snaith, the great O.T. scholar. He put his hand on a colleague’s shoulder in order to support himself as he struck a match on the sole of his boot and lit his pipe. It characterized him for me – his primitive Methodist background and his tendency to unrefined behaviour possible to shock some people!

4. Acceptance

I was in fact accepted as a candidate for the Methodist ministry to my great relief when I received the following letter.



5. Exploring ways and means of securing the finances necessary to sustain us as a family during my training

³³Immediately after the Synod recommended me to the July Committee the Revs Leslie Webb and Arthur Rose took up the vexed question of financing my time in college much more seriously. After the July Committee this intensified and A.N. Rose came up with an arrangement in Chalfont St. Giles which proved to be unacceptable. (See the correspondence in the file). Molly reminded me that Mr Deakin secured sponsors, but strangely I have only the vaguest memory of this. In fact the Connexion did not solve the problem; it was resolved by my gaining a County Major Award. (A.N. Rose's letter of the 29th August was much more specific and business-like than anything that had been done up to that point). The details of the final arrangement is beyond my recall. What I do remember, however, are the discussions with the Hampshire Education Committee. They were very positive. The members of the Committee and the secretary were very kind and sympathetic and bent over backwards to find ways of helping me. At the interview they told me that they regretted that their regulations

presented them from contributing to the maintenance of Molly and Janice. The inference was that they regretted this. They repeated this over and again during the interview and called me back to ensure that I understood this. Again in the offer of the grant, they made the same point. Then after I been at college a month or so, they wrote saying that they were now able to make a small grant of £50 a year towards the support of Molly and Janice providing that none of this money was given to the Methodist Church! In the end I think we had some £300/year to live on during the three years we were in college. But the drama and difficulties of funding my time in college did not end there and the promise of accommodation in Richmond was never realized. I take that up later.

6. Family Responses

When first we discussed the possibility of entering the ministry with our parents we had quite good responses. (See my personal diary for 7-9 March 1954). Molly's father gave us his blessing and my father wished us good luck but was concerned about the financial implications. Later Molly's father told me that my father was 'afraid of my becoming poor particularly for Molly's sake'. (Diary 26 July 1954. My parents had had a particularly bad experience of a local minister pleading poverty and getting more money from them for a funeral than he was entitled to. However, my parents felt about my entering my ministry I was quite moved to read in my diary that they invariably supported me whenever I preached in Rishton by attending the services. For instance on the 7th March 1954 I note that I preached at Mary Street in the morning and that 'Aunties Addie, Louie and Molly and my Dad were in the congregation'. It seems I spoke on 'what it means to me'. That must have taken some courage.

On the 29th December 1954 there was an awful argument with my mother about my going into the ministry which it pains me to think and write about it. How I wish I could talk to her now. It was with my mother rather than my father although he supported her but not with the anger and bitterness she showed. As I write it occurs to me that his responses and feelings must have been influenced and tempered by his upbringing and his deep love and profound respect for his mother. He must have known how she would have responded with joy and rejoiced over my candidature. To return to my beloved mother, the references are brief in my diary of the 29th and 30th. The argument was, of course, on Ruth's birthday. I can see her now when she was in full flow of the argument going backwards and forwards to and from the living room and kitchen about one chore or another as she was want to do making one point after another. It was

Mr. George Lovell, aged 26, of 4 Arthur Street, Aldershot, who is at present working as an assistant experimental officer at the R.A.E., has been accepted into the Church by the Methodist Conference, and will enter Richmond Theological College in September. He has been a qualified local preacher for several months, and before that acted as preacher while serving with the Forces overseas. He decided to train for the Ministry and took the examinations recently.

Mr. Lovell, who was born in Lancashire, came to Aldershot three years ago. He is married, with one child.

Lancashire Evening Paper, (Hutch), 'The Pick' ?

they have achieved and their secular professionalism (she would not have used these words but she made this point). People take more notice of a successful engineer speaking about religion than a minister – they know they are sincere because they are not paid for it.

This was a powerful case from a very intelligent and perceptive but uneducated mother who was deeply anxious about me and Molly. She did not think highly of some ministers but she had had some good experiences of them. This was an unforgettable explosion of anger, deep emotions and a conviction that I was doing the wrong things. Undoubtedly I put my own side of the story but I cannot remember doing so – and in any case, one can only testify to a call, not prove it. And many of her points were difficult to gainsay. I doubt whether she expected to be able to make me change my mind – indeed she might have felt guilty had she done so. She needed, as she would have said, to ‘get it off her chest’.

As far as I can remember my mother never argued with me again about any radical career/vocational change nor, to her great credit did she score any points or thing things more difficult for us. Quite the opposite she supported us personally and materially. Soon after the incident our relationships were back to normal and became much closer when Janice was born. Mother and I became very close during what provide to be her terminal illness in 1957. My father told me that my mother had said that he must send for me in times of difficulty in early 1957. She had been unwell for some time. At the time of the argument I had noted in my diary that she was ‘awfully bitter and I think that is the cause of much of her illness’ (stomach ulcers). (Diary 30.12.57). Had she a premonition, I wonder, that she would not live into old age – she was psychic and said she could ‘smell death’ in a house when there was no evidence of it.

I think there was also a feeling that I was imposing my will upon Molly and that she had little option but to agree. Auntie Constance came to stay with us. She told me afterwards that one of her reasons for coming was that she wanted to ensure that Molly was all right and not under duress. At first Auntie told me that she was uneasy but after discussing the situation

THE METHODIST CHURCH

MINISTERIAL TRAINING DEPARTMENT

1 CENTRAL BUILDINGS - WESTMINSTER - LONDON, S.W.1

Rev. ARTHUR N. ROSE, M.A.
General Secretary

Tel. ABBey 2906

Rev. J. LESLIE WEBB, B.A.
Candidates Secretary

AMR/ED

.. 15th July, 1955

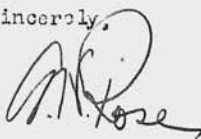
Dear Mr. Lovell,

I am passing on to you the official news that Conference has accepted your offer as a candidate for the Ministry. We have allocated you to Richmond College and shall be proceeding with arrangements for Mrs. Lovell and your child. I expect that I shall be hearing from you when I get back to the Office.

I shall be at Westminster all next week. Would it be possible for you to come up and have a chat about arrangements? This would really be much more satisfactory than correspondence. I go for my annual holiday on the 28th of July and should like to get something arranged, if possible, before I leave.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Mr. George Lovell,
4 Arthur Street,
Aldershot
Hants.

with Molly she was convinced she – Molly – was a willing party to the decision.³⁴

³⁵[Reading my 1956 diary through in preparation for writing about my time in Richmond College. I came across entries about my Mother's health. As early as March 1956 it was suspected that she had an ulcer and that she was suffering greatly. I note that I was very upset to discover this. (Diary 27.3.56) That is eighteen months before she died from complications that followed an operation to remove it. She looked a bit worse in August when I saw her (28.8.56). Molly and I discussed her health in September with Peter and Eric (4.9.56). On the 6th I discussed my concerns about my Mother with her GP, Dr Robson. He assured me that, whilst they had suspected malignant growths, x-rays and examinations had shown that that was not so. She was suffering from a duodenal ulcer and he said that the surgical removal of it would work a cure.

He further assured me that if she worsened he would try to get the operation done sooner – there was a waiting list of 1,200! (6.9.56). I discussed with my mother her diet and 'running around' (10.9.56).

There was an awful poignancy for me in the nature of my Mother's illness. My duodenal ulcer had been healed through my experience of being called into ministry. I do not know whether my Mother knew this. In agony of spirit I wrote: 'O God please show me how to tell my Mother that it is her way of life that must be turned to Thee. I do not know how I can but please show me. If only I could show my Father'. (27.3.56) I did not find a way, I deeply regret. I can only hope that my assumption that my Mother's ulcer was caused psychosomatically was incorrect.

At this point I broke off to check the dates of my mother's operation and untimely and unfortunate death. I am glad that I did because I discovered that I had a detailed diary for 1957 which I had long forgotten. Reading the account of her time in hospital was overwhelming: a deeply moving experience which deepened and changed quite radically my perspective on the events of that time and brought me closer to my mother than I have been for many years. It was a traumatic period.

Briefly, mother went into hospital for what we thought would be a

³⁴ Discussing this with Catherine when we were at East Wittering at the beginning of June 2013, I remembered another strand in her argument: my Mother and Father had sacrificed to enable me to have an engineering education; going into the ministry would squander their costly investment in my training (20.6.13)]

³⁵ 20.5.11

routine duodenal ulcer operation on the 22nd July. (How strange that she should have the same complaint that I had but with such a different outcome: she died; I found my vocation). I can hardly bear the thought that has come unbidden that my candidating had contributed to the worry and stress that led to an ulcer; God grant that it was not so. But I may well have been so especially in view of my comment above about her bitterness. The thought that what led me to life might have had some part in her death is extraordinarily painful, almost unbearable. It makes what follows more significant and remarkable and the all-round reconciliation more wonderful; it was spiritual healing from God. I have never thought like this before, it just poured into my mind. Back to the sequence of events before reflecting on them: Mum's first operation was on the 24th July. Gradually she became seriously ill. On the 31st we were called to Lancashire because of my mother's condition and because Molly's grandmother was dangerously ill. We travelled to Lancashire eagerly on the 1st August. Mother had a second operation on the 2nd August. She was seriously ill afterwards but by the 14th August she was sufficiently well for us to return to Aldershot and to go on holiday with Jack and Phyllis Gerrard to the New Forest. My father wrote to us on the 23rd saying that Mother was much better and saying:

You may not know but you helped us all a real lot when Mum was having her crisis. You certainly did a great deal for Mum and myself and I just say a sincere thank you and God bless you.

On the 26th August I was sent for and returned immediately (meeting Bryan Walker en route for the last time) because Mother's condition was critical and deteriorating quickly. A third operation on the 28th on her bowel intestine was unsuccessful and she died on Friday 6th September 1957 at the all too early age of fifty seven. At the request of my father I took a memorial service for her at Mary Street Methodist Church on the evening of the 8th September.

My diary gives a graphic account of the heart breaking pathos of these events and continuous rising and falling of our hopes for Mum's recovery as she struggled through one crisis and set back after another. Working over that again here is beyond me. What I can and want to do is to draw out some of the things that have impressed and moved me as I have relieved the events through the promptings of my diary and the things imprinted upon my memory indelibly.

One of the first things Mum asked me to do was to pray with her. She told Dad and me that a minister had prayed with her before her second operation and asked me to do so. Then she asked me to pray with her. I

did so and we said the Lords prayer together and I said the benediction. I record that I said 'a simple prayer' and thanked God for this moment. (3rd August diary entry). On the 4th August Mum had a relapse at about 6 p.m. and by then had a touch of pneumonia. When we visited in the evening Dad went into see Mum first on his own. He said to me afterwards that she had asked for me to go in and say a prayer with her. I note, 'Oh, thank God I was able to do that'. At another time, which I do not record but which had a profound impact upon me, she was very weak and hardly able to speak she asked me to say 'that the timing about the shadow of death'. The 23rd Psalm must have impressed her at some point. She was very quiet and peaceful as I repeated it as best I could. (See also 28 August diary entry).

Reading about and recalling all this had a great impact upon me. We had never prayed together before. It has to be understood against the background of the argument in December 1954. The depth and intimacy of the relationship between my mother, father and me at this time were a gift from God and from each other which I never expected to have and enjoy. Sadly my mother died but it was a parting gift to me.

Then, immediately after Mother had died the family were gathered together at my sister Ruth's house and my father asked me to pray. I did but with some difficulty and much emotion. When I had done so my father said that he had not realized that it would be so difficult and costly for me to do that and if he had known he would not have asked me. But he was glad I had done so.

My father also asked me to conduct a memorial service at Mary Street on the 8th September, two days after Mum had died. I record, 'there were a lot of mourners but few other worshippers. God gave me great strength and I preached from my heart in the strength of the Spirit. I was moved but I did not break down, thanks be to God'. How I managed to do this, I have no idea. As I sort through my papers I hope I will find the notes from which I spoke. I must have been exhausted. For almost two weeks I had had little sleep and for several nights I had sat up with my Mother alternating with Frank, I think, to keep a vigil by her bedside. During one of these vigils when she was very weak she told me how she had been to the funeral quite recently, I think one of her aunts.³⁶

36 I think it would be one of my Grandfather Fletcher's sisters, Alice or Ellen. Mum did name which one. They were maiden aunts to Mum who greatly helped to bring her up after her Mother died. She loved them and visited them often especially in their old age. They lived in Great Harwood. Lovely old ladies, very kind. I think they were devout Anglicans.

She said that the minister (he would be an Anglican Priest) had worn a long black thing like a dress (she was finding it very difficult to find words and to speak but she was of course referring to a cassock). “I liked it”, she said, “it was right and proper”. The meanings were clear and it was dignified and she would like me to dress like that. For me it was a moving moment when I knew she was endorsing my ministry; she had accepted it; we were reconciled over that issue. It was some time, a year or two or possibly more before I told my Father about this exchange. He said I should have told him before and he immediately insisted on my buying a very good quality cassock which I still have but no longer wear.

One of the things that stood out for me as I read the diary entries was my Mother’s enormous courage, determination and dogged will-power combined so graciously with her winsomeness. On the 31st August I note that she was ‘winking at us all in turn and trying her very best to smile’ when other forms of communication were nigh on impossible for her. She must have known then – and possibly long before – but she had not long to live. One of the consultants – a lovely Asian lady call Miss Master whom we all love and was a rock of strength and comfort to us all – said that my mother must have discussed that the end was imminent because before she went down for her third operation she had said to Miss M that she ‘was very tired but had tried awfully hard for the sake of the family’ (Diary August 29th). I never heard her complain. She accepted her lot without anger or fear. I was and still am very proud of her and love her deeply.

Reflecting on all this I have seen its significance in ways I have never seen before and been humbled by what I have come to understand. I had always thought that the cassock incident was a wholehearted endearment by my Mother and then by father of my entry to the ministry. Whatever had gone before they now accepted my call to the ministry and approved and supported it. What I had not seen was that by sending for me and asking me to pray with her and to stay with her hour after hour my Mother my inviting me to minister to her, to be her minister. Similarly, when my father asked me to pray with the family and to conduct not only Mother’s memorial service but also her funeral service, he was asking me to minister to him, my Mother and the whole family: to be their minister. The significance of this is overwhelming and so humbling. They showed enormous generosity of spirit and graciousness. This was endorsement par excellence. I am so privileged. Why have I not seen the deep significance of this before? I thank my Mother and Father and I thank God.

³⁷[Whilst reading through my diaries in preparation for writing about my time at Richmond College I found I received a telegram from my Mother and Father during the afternoon of the day on which I preached my college trial sermon in the evening. It read:

Best wishes for tonight will be thinking of you. God Bless. Diary 24.1.56

I noted in my diary 'I could have cried'. Clearly I was deeply moved as I should have been. Reading about this incident which I had completely forgotten has shaken me. How could I have forgotten this and grievously nursed the earlier references to my entering the ministry? How could I not have read off the implications – that they reconciled to my vocation and really behind me with good will and support? How could I not have moved on with them? I do not know. I am heartily ashamed. Lines from *The Divine Office* came to me:

The love that we have wasted,
O God of love renew (Vol III, [301]).

I am deeply disturbed by the thought that there is deep in me a propensity to harbour the hurt in life and at the expense of extolling the love and allowing it to heal the hurt. How much damage have I done to myself and others as a consequence? God only knows. What I can glimmer and bear to face is deeply upsetting. Writing these notes is going some way to redeem things. Even at this late stage I pray:

Grant us the power of your Spirit
to repair our damaged lives – may we
turn decay into growth.
The Divine Office II p700]

There was one other incident to which I will return later. Near to Mother's ward either in the corridor or the side room where I spent so much time, there was a Lowry print. I had not seen any of his work before and it greatly impressed me. Seeing it day after day and night after night led to a profound spiritual experience: I became utterly convinced that my ministry must centre on cities and industrial towns and people in great need of help. I have never lost the power or influence and vision of that experience even though I have not lived it out as thoroughly as I would have liked.

So, paradoxically, in the providence of God what was a painful, sad, heartbreaking time ending in the loss of my Mother prematurely at the

hand of an incompetent surgeon was strangely a very creative time. Relationships of renewed kind were forged with my parents and I received an orientation to my minister. Mystically and strangely that experience has the power still to create deeper relationships and produce new insights through reflection and research. Thanks be to God.

7. A Radical Transition

One of the effects of all this upon me was that I had the radical transition from being an engineer aspiring to be a minister in the Methodist Church as an accepted candidate designated for training in ministry and theology a student minister who had been an engineer. From this point onwards I have been entirely focused on my ministerial vocation: my engineering career was virtually ended.

RICHMOND COLLEGE , SEPTEMBER 1955 – JUNE 1958

³⁸I plan to start this section with an attempt to identify some of the characteristics that defined me as I entered Richmond College³⁹ as a

38 19.4.11

39 At the time Richmond was one of six Methodist Colleges in England training men (only men at that time) for the ministry. It was opened in 1843 and had a distinguished history of training missionary in its earlier years. A history of the first hundred years is on my shelves: *Richmond College, 1843-1943*, Edited by Frank H Cumbers, The Epworth Press, 1944. Sadly it closed in 1971 and was sold. It is now 'Richmond, The American International University in London'. It is situated in Richmond Hill, Richmond-Upon-Thames, hard by the main gates to Richmond Park. It is in a glorious and privileged setting. See the brochure for the present institution in the Richmond file.

Whilst browsing through my diaries for 1955-58 yesterday evening I came across an entry for the 2nd December 1956 which recorded that Molly had said to me that she wished that I could have entered more deeply into the fellowship of the college. I was moved at the time even more deeply moved now when I think what it cost her to allow me to spend as much time as I did in college and the preaching appointments out of town. It indicates the depth of her love for me and the measure of her support and commitment to my further education and ministry. I wish she were here now so that I could tell her how deep and profound is my gratitude to her.

Background Papers

Some appended.

theological/ministerial student in September 1955 and to end it with a similar piece about the characteristics which defined me as I left to become a probation minister. Between these book-end sections I wish to reflect on those things which I think/feel influenced and formed me and my beliefs and my approach to my vocation and ministry.

Throughout this period I kept personal diaries which I read through in preparation for writing these notes. As I did so I made an index of things that stood out for me. This is appended.

Unusually, due to my circumstances, I was given a choice of which college I wished to attend. We chose Richmond because it was the nearest to Aldershot.

I. Starting Points

1. A self-profile, September 1955

Much of what I wrote in Section 6 about my approach to work, time and people, my language and speech and my class location and reactions to people of other classes and cultures remained true of me.

God's calling me to the ministry was my most dominant characteristic. It suffused, inspired, drove me and quite physically had remade me; it gave me my vocation and my purpose for life and my destiny.

The nature of it and the way I had received it gave me high spiritual status not least because it was authenticated by my healing, by medical evidence and judgment and by the Church which, after examining it critically, had endorsed it. All this gave me confidence in myself and my ability that I not known before. I may not have had a classical education but I had classical call, a model of its kind in which I rejoiced, humbly not arrogantly. Such a profound sense of my vocational destiny, seemingly unassailable, gave me an inner security that I desperately needed because many of my old educational and class insecurities remained and would face new challenges.

Essentially, the call was a 'call to preach'. That was at the heart of it. And

File: Lovell, George: Education and Training Richmond College.

Personal diaries. 1955-1958

Copies of *The Old Chariot: The Magazine of Richmond College*. Shelves.

this was something that I had a gift for. Preaching was a costly but wonderful experience for me. Inwardly I was rewarded with deep satisfaction when it went well and angst when it didn't; outwardly my preaching was generally and widely well received and occasionally acclaimed. This too gave me new confidence and a personal sense of security and, of course status. But, I never became over-confident, proud or presumptive. The enormity of the task and my nervousness ensured this. I approached it then and now with apprehension, awe and humility shot through with excitement – or is the other way round excitement and thrill and wonder shot through with apprehension etc? I think so, but possibly my experience alternates between me and the other mode. More of this when I come to reflect on my preaching ministry.

Undoubtedly the notes of the sermons or the kinds of sermons I preached will illuminate what kind of a person I was at this time. Perhaps that too will emerge later.

So, central is my being at this time and my confidence, status and security were my call to preach and my ability to do so. Through them I was reborn spiritually and physically. I had a story to tell.

Alongside this my working class background and my industrial and army experience meant, as I have already stated earlier, that ordinary people felt that they could relate to me because aspects of their lives and mine overlapped.

Whilst I was articulate and love to write about things as my diaries of the time indicate, I did not write well: I lacked a good style. Moreover, as the reading list at the end of this section indicates, I was not very well read, in fact badly so.

What made life enormously difficult and challenging for me was that I did not have the kind of education and training best fitted to the BD course. Nor did I have the gift for acquiring languages and the natural ability to study the technical aspects of language.

Combined with this my memory was such that I did not readily retain accurately poetry, biblical texts and book verbs and vocabulary. Consequently I found myself at an enormous disadvantage. My mind-set was that of an engineer/scientist not that of a classicist or historian; my field was roughly speaking in the physical sciences rather than in the humanities. (I later find that I had some natural gifts related to the behavioural sciences, but I was not aware of this at the time). What all this cost me will become apparent later in this section and subsequently I discussing my ministry.

I was an eager student, hungry to learn and quite excited about the course of study. I had an open and receptive but not uncritical mind to new insights, ideas and experiences. I knew I had a lot to learn and could benefit from a disciplined course of biblical, historical and theological studies. I was focused, possibly narrowly so, determined, very disciplined, vocationally ambitious and very hard working. Moreover, I had great stamina and much energy. I was a man of deep faith, strictly moral, devout and with an evolving spirituality. Probably, I thought of myself as a liberal evangelical and a middle of the road churchman but possibly a little pious!

Professor Jessop had so many of my mentors, not least Garfield Elaas, had helped me to be reasonable and rational about Christianity, evangelism and education and inclusive rather than exclusive in my approach to life and religion.

2. ‘My Year’ and the Student Body

My year 1955-50, comprised twenty-one diverse men from different backgrounds united by their sense of call to the Methodist Ministry. They were much of an age, early twenties; I was the eldest and the only married man. The student body was sixty three in total. During the three years of my studentship, Richmond had one hundred and ten students altogether. Consequently, I was privileged to get to know, interact with, study with, live in a religious community with a wide range of ministers in training some of whom had distinguished ministries and some extraordinary and outstanding. (See the appended list of students). Detailed accounts of how most of my year spent their ministries are contained in the notes prepared for the reunion we had in 2005 to celebrate the fifteen anniversary of the year we entered college. (See appended notes).

3. The Staff

⁴⁰During my time in College the staff members were:

- The Rev Dr Harold Roberts (Principal. During my final year he was the President of the Methodist Conference. He taught theology, philosophy of religion, pastoral theology, ethics, the study of religion. He did not lecture during his Presidential year.)
- The Rev S Clive Thexton (Resident Tutor. He had responsibility for college life, discipline of the students and college buildings. He taught: Hebrew; Old Testament Studies; general psychology and

psychology of religion.)

- The Rev Norman P Goldhawk (He taught church history, homiletics, English literature, historical theology, history of Methodism.)
- The Rev A Marcus Ward (He taught Greek, New Testament Studies, Hebrew and some theology.)
- The Rev Amos S Cresswell (Assistant Tutor During my first year. He taught Greek grammar, textual criticism of the NT, some NT studies, history of the canon of the NT, Plato's Republic.)
- The Rev Michael Newman (Assistant Tutor during my second and third years. (During my second year he taught the same subjects as Amos, during my third year he also taught history of philosophy and Greek text in the absence of Harold Roberts.)
- The Rev Robert W Fulcher (A PhD research student from Australia he taught Greek grammar and texts, Plato's Republic and the study of religions.
- Mr Michael Prior (A visiting tutor from Oxford who gave training in elocution and pulpit behaviour. He attended preaching services conducted by students and afterwards coached them in private group tutorials.

Also during the third year we attended lectures in the University of London, Old Testament (Professor Hardy) and Philosophy of Religion (Professor H D Lewis). (see appended timetable.)

⁴¹In the main these ministers staffed the courses competently and conscientiously both academically and pastorally. They were good men, traditional Methodist ministers. **Harold Roberts** stood head and shoulders above them all intellectually. He was an outstanding if not great minister as can be seen from Leslie Weatherhead's profile of him just before he started his presidential year, 1957-58. (*Methodist Recorder*, July 11th, 1957, copy appended.) He was an international statesman in the Methodist Church and the World Church. I held him in the highest regard. He was enormously supportive to me personally in my candidature and throughout my time in College. **Clive Thexton** was intellectually very bright and lectured well but he was somewhat laid-back – too much so for me – and I felt he did not achieve his academic potential partly because of the time he gave to administration and maintenance of the college fabric.

Norman Goldhawk was very competent and worked hard. He was an enthusiastic Methodist minister, probably the tutor most in touch with the realities of circuit life and ministry in the 50's. **Marcus Ward** came to Richmond from twenty five years in Church of South India in 1955, i.e., at the same time that I did. His ministry in India was outstanding in theological education at Bangalore and in the formation of the CSI. He did not inspire me as a teacher. I found him a little pompous and possibly proud of belonging to the academic elite. He did not rise to the same heights in British Methodism that he did in the CSI nor in the missionary movement. (But see John Newton's hagiographic autobiography of him.) **Amos Cresswell** was/is extremely clever and scholarly. He was inclined to cover this by acting as 'one of the boys' and to be funny. More often than not I felt this did not come off, and, for me, he lost some of his dignity and made himself look foolish and at times vulgar. I used to think of him as something of a buffoon. But he was a good and conscientious teacher. **Michael Newman** was academically able and worked hard. He was devout and spiritually minded if highly strung; he was precise and pedantic; he was somewhat overbearing and paternalistic; but he was a good teacher. **Robert (Bob) Fulcher** was a fellow student researching world religions. He was senior to us being ordained and avant-garde in some of his thinking. In my third year I must have attended lectures he gave on the study of religions but I have no recollection of them. He was a very warm open Australian minister. **Michael Prior** was a little pompous but very helpful and concerned to be so.

More about relationships with the staff and various members later.

4. Over Three Years? A Stressful Start

⁴²During the first few weeks Molly and I had to make a very difficult unforeseen major decision which had far reaching implications and consequences: it was an awesome experience to be confronted by Clive Thexton with it. It was whether I should do one year in college which Thexton insisted would mean I did not take up the County Major Award funding or three years with it. The first choice would mean finding alternative funding; the second, taking the risk of Molly and I staying in Aldershot because there was no guarantee of finding suitable accommodation within our means in the Richmond area. That was a hard call because Molly and I were finding the weekly separation a considerable strain.

To add to the pressure, I was finding the transition in disciplines from

engineering to biblical and theological studies difficult, in fact very difficult. Academically my greatest difficulty was to learn Greek and Hebrew in the same week when I had not previously studied any other language and my grasp on English grammar was shaky! I was overwhelmed and quite out of my depth.

Deciding whether I should do one or three years was, not surprisingly, a traumatic experience which made great demands upon our emotional and spiritual energy and our vocational commitment. Thexton did not help because I experienced him as aloof, matter of fact and even hard apparently unaware or indifferent to our difficulties, feelings and turmoil. We were taken by surprise and quite unprepared. Up to this point Molly and I, as far as I can recall, had a tacit understanding that if circumstances demanded it – inadequate funding or accommodation problems – I would do one year in Richmond during which time I would do the inter-BD and then go into circuit where I would complete the BD. But we had not worked this up into a clearly formulated action plan or strategy, nor could we have done, of course.

Ultimately we decided to go for the three year option. It was an act of faith made in the hope of getting accommodation in or around Richmond.⁴³ But it did not work out that way unfortunately. The cost to Molly proved to be enormous and in a different way as a consequence to me. To this day she has not come to terms with the experience and the ineptitude of the Methodist Church in general and the College staff in particular. And for all that I carry deep regrets. But I am also deeply thankful to Molly for ‘allowing’ me to continue at College, costly as it was for her. It was for me a deeply enriching experience which played a critical part in my theological and ministerial formation. I am only sorry that Molly paid such a price. May God reward her greatly.

II Overall Impressions from 2011!

1. Richmond, a rich experience

My overarching impression of my time at Richmond is that it was rich and intellectually, spiritually and theologically exciting and fulfilling. All in all it was a good sound preparation for my subsequent ministry even though it was deficient and dysfunctional in respect to ways and means of working with people for human and spiritual development in church and community contexts, as will become clear in the reflections on my ministry

⁴³ See my diary for 13, 17, 22 and 27.9.55

from the mid 60's onwards.

Undoubtedly it was profoundly formative in a biblical and classical approach to the theology and praxis of traditional of the word and sacrament in the Methodist Church in particular and nonconformist churches in general in the 19th and 20th centuries. And I can say this although I had great difficulties with Greek and Hebrew and moving from the praxis of engineering to that of ministry and, as will become clear below, I regret the devaluing of my engineering expertise and experience. A thorough-going induction into the classical approach to Christian theology and Biblical study was essential and proper. Acquiring some ability to think and work in this discipline has been a bedrock foundation for my ministry. My only regret is that I did not become more proficient and that I did not keep up my Greek as Marcus Ward continuously and passionately begged and encouraged us to do! (I did for several years but then the pressure of other studies prevented me from doing so.) Later, I acquired knowledge of and ability in two other disciplines: community development and work consultancy. These disciplines supplemented and complemented that of ordained ministry – as eventually did fundamentals of my formation as an engineer: in no way did they eclipse or replace it; they enriched and facilitated it. From the beginnings of my college life to this day, the praxis of ordained ministry has been my substantive discipline; the others have been allied disciplines relevant aspects of which have been theological and integrated into it.

My deep and abiding regret that Molly found and still finds the cost of this was high. This was/is a heavy burden for her and for me and casts a shadow across the period.

2. Benefits received

⁴⁴Richmond gave me an intensive, rich and invaluable experience of living, studying, worshipping and working in a disciplined, structured Methodist community with my 'own year' in the context in toto of four other years. Each year one intake left and another entered. Consequently the relational shape and ethos changed even though the overall size and the basic pattern remained fairly constant. Each of the three years was a community in its own right, much the same but subtly different with its own personalities and stars. Here I focus on the non-academic benefits that I gained as a consequence of being a member of these groups and communities. To my frustration, I cannot find a word or phrase which

encapsulates this cluster of personal, psychological and spiritual benefits. I will attempt to describe them, some are easier to do so than others. I will start with these!

3. Friendships and learning to live with people who differ significantly

Forming personal friendships with others was an outstanding benefit and blessing. Bonds were formed which meant I was able to pick up friendships after years of not meeting. Some men became life-long and soul friends particularly Bernard Dowding, Bob Forrest, Eddie Roos, Colin Lake and Bryan Walker. Another benefit was that college life introduced me to a representative sample of the wide varieties of people, personalities, callings, ability and theological/spiritual stance to be found in the Methodist Ministry, 'our ministry'. Some I related to naturally and happily. Others I found difficult and some very difficult to get on with or to tolerate for different reasons: I disagreed with them on important issues; their approach to ministry was unacceptable or anathema to me; I was envious or jealous of them or intimidated by them. College was a place where I learnt much about how others experienced and coped/dealt with such interpersonal problems; it was a place where I struggled to find ways in which as a Christian minister I should/could relate to people with whom I differ significantly. An art I have never mastered. Such spiritual and personal relational problems have dogged me all through my ministry, at some periods more acutely than at others: they do not diminish or die away; they simply change the ways and situations through which they manifest themselves. I still struggle with them fifty-six years later! Relationally, therefore, it was a creative and challenging time in relations to friendships, socializing and forming networks. It was also a period when I came to realize that we were an imperfect group of men, each of us flawed in one way or another – and yet called of God to a ministry of the perfect Christ. Of itself that is a miracle of Grace and that it achieves what it achieves is a wonderful human/divine mystery.

4. Entering into the fellowship (koinonia) of the Methodist Ministry

Other inestimable benefits for which I am deeply grateful are much more difficult for me to describe. Encapsulating them in a word eludes me. They are to do with becoming a member of the ministerial community of the Methodist Church which is a 'goodly fellowship', (koinonia a body of men (and now women thankfully) formed into a presbyteral communion.)

Richmond facilitated my psycho-spiritual entry into this mystical dimension of this corporeal body, this beloved ‘connexion’. What I value is the existential affective knowledge that I am an integral part, a member systemically associated with all the other members by psycho/physical/spiritual bonds. Deep down in my inner being, my soul, I know this just as I know that I am a member of the Lovell family. These feelings, the affective aspect of my belonging to the Methodist Ministry, were engendered in the first instance, through complex processes of interaction in a community of ministry in training. They were not orchestrated, they just happened through the multifaceted interpersonal interaction between us, the Holy Spirit and our great heritage. At times we were highly conscious of the communion of saints not least through the list of names of early missionaries to West Africa, ‘The Gold Coast’ or the boards in the entrance hall. Many of them died with months of arrival.⁴⁵

That feeling and knowledge that I was a member of a blessed and privileged body of Christ’s presbyteral servants has remained, fed and sustained me throughout my ministry. In due course this inner conviction was regularized and sealed when the Church ordained me and Conference accepted me into ‘full connexion’, another way of describing the rich bonding in the Methodist Church and ministry. Whilst these public events confirmed and enhanced what had already been conceived within me, they did not create them: that had already happened.

So, Richmond gave me the beginnings of my acculturation into the Methodist ministry and my ordained identity. In this way it played a key role and made substantive contributions in my transition from a local preacher to an ordained minister.⁴⁶ My life as a minister would have been immeasurably the poorer and problematic had I not found the bedrock security of my ministerial identity at this stage. Had I not gone to college at all or stayed only one year, I fear I would not have found my identity and felt, as I had felt so often up to this point, excluded or on the margins or an outsider to the normative training of the period.

By the very nature of the work and life of a minister, this ordained community is normally dispersed. Nonetheless, the bonds and the ‘we’ feelings are felt in dispersion. They surface in large and small gatherings

45 It is said that when it was announced in the dining hall that a missionary had died, as the ‘governor’ left the hall there were several men holding on to his coat tails offering their services and pleading to be sent out to replace their dead brother minister

46 Cf what I wrote in *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching* pp 37f

of ministers. We form a ministerial order with a basic discipline. During 1992-4 when I worked with the Methodist Diaconal Order on questions related to them becoming an order of ministry *and* a religious order⁴⁷, I was deeply attracted to this dual concept. They were/are a small enough number to meet annually and give visible tangible expression to their being a religious order. I found myself wanting to belong to a religious order and wishing the Methodist ministry was one as well as an order of ministry. Being a deacon seemed very attractive. (I plan to discuss this later because so much of my ministry has been diaconal).

Two of the many occasions when I was moved by memories of my Richmond days were at the reunion of some members of my year in 2005 ie on the 50th anniversary of our entry and on the 'final' reunion of Richmond students in 2007 (see appended papers).

5. The Three Years

See my diaries for this.

My personal diaries of my time in College record my experiences of college life, how I felt and the issues about which I was concerned. The indexes I made as I read through them as I prepared to write this section drew out things of significance to me – then and now. Before I get into some of the detail of main themes I am going to attempt to highlight major features of the years.

The first year was dominated by the problems of our weekly separations/and how we could cope with them and trying to find accommodation in Richmond. All this cast a long shadow over our lives and remained unresolved at the end of the years. Then there was my difficulties with Greek in particular and classic studies in general.

Throughout the second and third years I had health problems: sinuses; teeth; deflected septum operation; slipped disc, manipulation and surgical belt. I was in hospital over Christmas 1956 with suspected typhus. My diaries continually report and complain of tiredness and on one occasion of being depressed. (See indexes of diaries on my health).

During the long vacation between my second and third years my mother was seriously ill and to our deep sadness and grief she died. I have written

⁴⁷ See *A Process Model for the Development of Individual and Collective Vocations* by George Lovell, Jane Middleton and Hilary Smith, *Methodist Diaconal Order, Occasional Paper No 1* - 1996

about this already (see, 8.40-44). I spent much of the time with her during the final weeks for which I am so grateful. I returned late. This and my father's grief and resulting bad tempered behavior cast a long shadow over my final year. I grieved deeply for her and still do. I regret more than I can say that she never saw me established in ministry.

During my third year the Maynards came to live nearby in Aldershot. This eased things greatly. We acquired a car and I passed my test! But then in March 1958 Molly had a miscarriage.

All in all it was a tough and trying time. Thank God we not only survived but I got on top of my studies and passed my BD degree.

III Problems for Molly and Me in Living in Aldershot and Studying in Richmond

My diaries tell the story in some considerable detail of the ups and downs for Molly and for me of the three years of my being a student at Richmond and the index of them points to key events. (See 'Molly and me in College'). At this point I cannot face rehearsing those events, it would be too distressing. Time and again the weekly partings were extremely painful for all three of us. Clive Thexton's attitude was of itself most problematic. It added to my anxiety and distress and deeply disturbed Molly. During the early years particularly he was at pains that I spent as much time as possible at college. He was parsimonious in granting me permissions to leave early on a Friday or arrive back later than Monday. Seeking permission for any extensions could be painful. I would state my request and then there was invariably a long silence – on one occasion I timed it to be 15 mins! During such silences I found myself feeling pressure to modify my request and as I did so I felt an equal and opposite one to stick by it when I thought of Molly's reaction if I did so! However, on one occasion when he put his feet up on the desk and was clearly going into one of these silences, I suddenly said, 'Mr Thexton, I can see that you need time to think about my request, I will come back later! and got up to go. He immediately said, 'No, that's all right'. Thereafter he never hesitated. As he taught some psychology, I had the feeling he knew what he was doing through his silences and that annoyed me or rather upset and disturbed me. As I went through my diaries, I was surprised to find that at the beginning of my final year to find that he said that his policy was to give me as much freedom to go home as conducive to my studies (16.9.57). I had long forgotten this and it indicates a change from how he dealt with me most of the time when he was obsessively concerned about creating 'precedents' – that was his much

quoted position. Also, I was reminded that he arranged for Molly and Janice to go to Scarborough (a conference for ministers) in February 1958.

We both had health problems and Molly had a miscarriage in March 1958. But our life was far from all problems and pains – although we had our full share of these – Molly made many positive responses to the situation (see my index of diaries for references) and there were the long vacations when we spent more time together than we did when I was working at Farnborough. We lived a full social life. We had lots of visitors, as I read through my diaries I was amazed how many. We saw a lot of Richard and Margaret Burgess who lived round the corner and from whom we bought our first TV and car. We went to church regularly and to the Farnham Theatre. Bryan Walker spent time with us. Financially we did not do too badly, Molly managed our finances superbly. Life for Molly and for me was infinitely better in our final year when Eric and Doreen Maynard came to live a couple of doors away in Aldershot. Eric had a motorbike and sidecar so we travelled to and from College together. Molly and Doreen met up daily and spent a lot of time together. (See index for ‘people’) My lasting regret, as I fear I have already said is twofold: the cost to Molly; the scars it has left because she has not been able to forgive the Church for how it treated her.

Why we never got accommodation near Richmond is a long story to me. The blessing of remaining in Aldershot was the enormous support from Charles Deakin, Grosvenor Road Church and the Circuit.

The accommodation was basic: a nice sized kitchen; toilet in boxed off corner of the kitchen; large lounge/dining/living room; two attic bedrooms; clothes line on pulleys between toilet window and chimney stack; piped cold water with tap in the kitchen but no hot water; a tin bath kept on top of the toilet boxed in ceiling (we heated the water for our weekly baths in the gas wash boiler!). It was adequate, just about. The most embarrassing thing was the toilet and washing ourselves in the kitchen sink. The saving feature was the rent 15/- a week ie 75p!! How on earth we managed to do so much entertaining and overcame the embarrassment I do not know! We lived there in this second floor flat in the centre of Aldershot conveniently near the bus and railway station for six years.

IV My Student Life

⁴⁸Whilst I was able to study at home and at College, it was much easier

to do so in College and when I was in Aldershot much of the time was spent with Molly and Janice and domestic duties and preaching. Also, as I read through my diaries I was quite amazed how much we socialized, got around and about and got involved in pastoral relationships. Consequently, quite consciously and conscientiously I spent as much time as possible on my studies. I may even have been obsessive about the use of every possible minute – but as will become clear I gave myself to people with problems unreservedly and to my preaching. There are various references in my diaries to my dislike/irritation/hatred of frivolity and wasting time (cf 27, 31.10.55). That has remained with me to this day: I am never happier than when using my time creatively and productively; I abhor wasting time and laziness. Perhaps there should have been a better balance in my life between devotion, work, leisure/pleasure. However, contradictory as it may seem, I was struck as I read my diaries at the balance I did achieve during these years. The daily structure of College life prayers-lectures in the mornings; exercise and relaxation in the afternoons and some pastoral writing; private study in the evenings; prayer; fellowship in tea clubs – did suit me. Except that I took up much of the afternoons in private study! And indeed my life in ‘retirement’ at the present is prayer and work in the mornings; other activities and exercise in the afternoons; work in the study again in the evening!

Several times already I have mentioned my difficulties with Greek (and Hebrew!) and the transition from engineering to classical studies. This was so, but it is far from a rounded picture of my ability as a student. I did get a working knowledge of Greek – and the other subjects. My all round average marks were in the mid 60’s. But I never became fluent in Greek. I passed all my exams. For two and a half years Eddie Roos and I helped each other with our Greek studies (13.2.58). For one of my probationer’s examinations – I think the Greek text of Revelation, I got over 90%! In March 1958 I wrote in my diary: ‘During the evening I had a very happy time with my Greek. It is beginning to come to life for me after much hard work I was thrilled by it! But to my deep regret I have lost most of it. It started to slip away from me in the sixties when I put an enormous amount of energy into studying how to use community development and a range of allied subjects in local church and community work. As my work in this field escalated, my biblical and Greek studies declined. Unfortunately this was part of the high price I have paid (had to pay because I had not the ability and energy to keep up everything?) for gaining so much of great value in relation to working with people for human and spiritual development.

I have enjoyed studying in spite of the fact that I had to work hard at most

of the subjects, most of which did not come easily to me. Thinking came naturally to me as I have indicated earlier. I always enjoy it. I get excited by all kinds of ideas and concepts and especially those related to people and the human and spiritual condition. Without much conscious effort I retain ideas and concepts once I have grasped them and can communicate them in my own words and thought forms. I remember conversations – at one time, in fact for most of the time up to the mid 90's, I could go through the discussions in a group meeting of two or three hours in my mind and write them down quite accurately for some time afterwards. Memorizing of the kind required for learning languages and preparing for exams was extraordinarily difficult for me: committing to memory poetry or biblical passages, extracts from books, or rules and regulations, etc etc was really hard. In short remembering and recalling the exact words of a text was difficult. Remembering my understanding and interpretation of it was natural. Possibly this indicates the way my mind works as I am reading/studying – it is trying to understand and to encapsulate in my own thought forms what I am studying/hearing/seeing rather than to remember the form in which it is being presented. Maybe? Possibly, it is significant but at the end of my first year I was awarded to my great surprise the Junior Davidson Theological Prize (diary 7.6.56)!

During my college life I was greatly influenced by Harold Roberts, Martin Buber, and Ernest Wright, Bryan Walker and Donald Rutherford. Their thinking stimulated and excited me enormously.

In spite of everything, I became reasonably competent in the art of taking examinations and passed all of them and gained my BD, howbeit a pass degree but that was some achievement given my starting point.

I did not emerge as an academic but I became a serious student of Christian ministry. I have applied all my mental faculties as best I could to my work as a Methodist minister throughout my whole life and still continue to do so. Establishing me in this mode of a scholar preacher and minister is the great gift of Richmond.

V. College Life and Traditions

⁴⁹The daily round of College life is set out in the appended sheet, 'College Routine', which was handed out to all students. Notes I prepared, probably in the late 1950's or early 60's, from which to address Church groups about the life of a ministerial student, put some flesh on the routine. (Appended). The chapel was a very special and sacred place for me. It

had a beautiful stained glass window, 'The Ascension Window'. The black and white photograph that I have shows the settings and detail but omits the glorious colour brought out magnificently. Prayers and services were most important to me. (I used to sit in the second or third pew on the right hand side habitually. My place was quite near the wall.) I have had some moving spiritual experiences in that holy place. (I wish I could find a colour photograph. During my time in College Raymond Hutchinson wrote a meditation on this window in the Old Chariot for the Summer Team, 1956. (Copy attached). Some years ago we had a reunion in what is now the 'Richmond the American International University'. The staff were very hospitable and gave us a conducted tour. As we were taken to the Chapel I was filled with great expectation at the thought of seeing the Window again. When our guide opened the chapel door I was shocked and distressed: the chapel had become a games room; the organ had been removed and all the pews; but worst of all the window had been replaced by plain glass. I was deeply upset and wished I had not seen what was for me an act of sacrilege. I would love to be able to revisit the college chapel as it was and sit and reflect on what has happened to me over the years. Perhaps I can do it virtually.

One of the occasional services I came to value was Compline, with the opening prayer, 'May the Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen'.

One of the traditions of Richmond was the college cry or the war cry (an awful title). I am still moved by it and story behind it as told by Bertram Clogg in the appended article which he wrote in 1927, two years before I was born almost! To share in this responsively at midnight with subdued light in the hall with its impressive staircase and statue of John Wesley on special occasions. We stood on the stairs and in the well of the hall. One cried Ω συμπολιτες (O fellow citizens) and the others replied Χαίρε νικησούμε (rejoice we conquer.) And the sound reverberated down the lower corridors and the upper landing we dispersed deeply moved. We certainly did this at the ceremony of rolling men off to go overseas and probably at induction ceremonies.

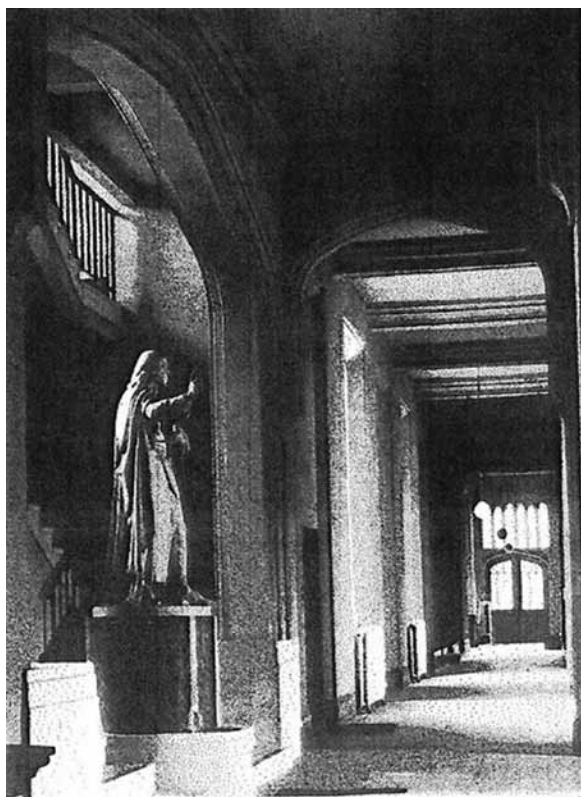
Another feature of college life was practical ministerial work we did through what were called 'mission bands'. The one to which I belonged throughout my time at Richmond was involved in pastoral visiting in the Star and Garter home for ex-servicemen who were seriously disabled or ill. It was situated quite near to the College in a commanding position by the Park Gates and with a stunning view of the Thames, reputedly Constable said it was the finest view in England and painted a famous picture of it.

This is the view from Richmond Hall but not quite the perspective from which Constable painted it.



I visited two or three people but only one stays in my mind, Sydney Arthur. My memories of Sydney are vivid. Sydney had Parkinson's Disease and could not normally speak. On my first visit I quickly ran out of things to say because it was a monologue exchange, not a dialogue. One thing I said to him that it was warm in the room – when he was up he sat in a chair by a radiator – and that it contrasted with the College which was very cold. I returned a week later somewhat apprehensive about what to say, I had prepared by thinking of topics. I need not have worried. He was beaming all over his face when he saw me and with some considerable difficulty he moved his shaking right hand towards the radiator and looked me in the eye. It was the beginning of my understanding of his sense of humour and real communication between us. After a while I asked him if there was anything he would like me to do. He would like me to read the Bible. 'What part?' I asked him. With a mischievous twinkle in his eye he somehow told me that he would like to read Psalm 119; it has 176 verses! In May I arranged to take him to the College Garden Party. As soon as we got into the lift he started to talk, fluently and eloquently. It was an enormous shock. Apparently he could only speak when he got excited about something. The next time this happened I think was when he and Cathie Dawe a nurse in the Home fell in love. This resulted in long conversations with them and correspondence with Cathie. They got engaged and planned to marry but I do not think they did.

Missions were another of the practical activities. Each student was required to go on a 'campaign' for a week's mission – or was it longer. In my second year I went on one to Southend which focused on Chalkwell Methodist Church. Molly and Janice went with me and we stayed with Mr and Mrs Goodman. It was in April 1957. Details of what happened are in my diary for 6 – 15th. One thing which made a lasting impression upon me was the conversion of a lady called Mrs Jones. She came to a film show we had early in the campaign and said that the only way she could explain the experience that she had was by saying that she fell in love with Jesus in much the same way that she fell in love with her husband. Having no experience of the Church or any religious teaching she was both excited and disturbed by what had happened to her. She knew from the literature about the campaign and what we had said on the film evening, that the members of the Team were available each morning. She came a couple of times to the door of the Church but her courage failed her. One of us saw her on her third visit when she was about to go away again and got into conversation with her. I am not sure whether it was me or not. The feelings of loving Jesus had not gone away. Wonderful as it was, she felt that to have such feelings was wrong and had a sense of guilt about them. We helped



E. W. Tattersall

THE ENTRANCE HALL

I thought I had a better picture of the entrance hall than this. It is reproduced from *Richmond College, 1843-1943*, opp p42. The staircase on the left behind John Wesley statue is a double flight spiral from the ground to the first floor.

her to see that they were legitimate and great religious feelings and that he had had a conversion experience. With great courage she came forward during the final service of the campaign and was lovingly embraced into the fellowship. Throughout my ministry I have cherished that story as epitomizing a high doctrine of Christian conversion: falling in love with Christ and hopefully into his church. And that brings me naturally to the inscription on the College chapel Communion table fall, pro Christo et Ecclesia.

Quiet days were a new experience for me. I think there was one a year. They were, in fact, a short retreat guided by a visiting minister. I took to them immediately, got a lot from them and came to value them greatly. Some did not like them however and tended to spoil them for others. That annoyed me. (See diary refs 6.3.57; 19.2.58)

VI Formative Experiences

In this section I reflect on some of the experiences which significantly affected my formation as a human being and a minister.

1. Three Embryonic Movements for Radical Change

⁵⁰During my time in College significant drifts were beginning to manifest themselves which variously impacted upon me. Forces and movements for radical and fundamental change were operative as were those resisting them. It is only in retrospect that I can discern these objectively, see where I was positioned in relation to them and examine and interpret in a more rational and creative manner my responses and reactions to them and their long-term effects upon me and my ministry. It has led me at this late stage in my life to conceptualize them differently and so to see them in a new light.

Married Candidates

One of them resulted from the emergence of married men (it was only men who were eligible at that time) feeling called to and offering for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. I believe I was the first. After the 1939-45 war some married men were accepted for training especially those whose candidature had been rudely interrupted by their conscription

or volunteering. By 1955 they had all passed through the colleges which had reverted to the pre-war model and became established communities of single men. That was the norm, preferred, desired and scrupulously defended and maintained by the staff. It was into that community that I had to fit, to take my place, with the absolute minimum of concessions for my marital status – a married man with a child. Clive Thexton, as resident tutor, was the rigorous custodian of the tradition: he was ever vigilant that he did not allow anything that would create an undesirable ‘precedent’—that was his word and criterion rather than my needs and those of Molly and Janice. (Possibly that is a little harsh but he was only concerned about ‘precedent’. It was invariably his opening comment in response to a request but see below.) This situation caused Molly and me enormous difficulties which I will discuss later. But, the movement was of God, vigorous and unrelenting: Colleges and training college communities are now more inclusive and heterogeneous than anyone could have imagined at that time. In my first year I was the only married man in college, in my second there were two plus one nonresidential and in my third, there were three plus one non-residential students.

Theological Training Challenges

A second movement related to Richmond’s ministerial/theological education/training programme. Two people were challenging the system. Bryan Walker⁵¹ found himself deeply disturbed and near to a breakdown by convictions that the course in which he was engaged was overly and dangerously dysfunctionally academic. He was academically very able and Dr Roberts predicted he would get a first in the BD examination. But he could not go on with the course and would not take the examinations because he did not intend nor want to be an ‘academic’ in ministry. Donald Rutherford⁵² was concerned about the bias of the curriculum towards biblical studies (language and text), church history, Christian theology at the expense of other key subjects related to the study of the human condition, development and education. He was critical of the educational methods used in the College: he was an extremely able educationalist: widely experienced in teaching and researching it. (I may well be misrepresenting their thinking. In fact in writing this I have concluded that I cannot now

51 See diary refs: 22.9;2,12,19,23.10.56; 28,3, 15.4.57; 21,22,28,29,30,31.5.57;3,4,6,8,10.6.57; 17, 18.9.57, 26.8.57. Also a file of my correspondence with Bryan.

52 See my diary for 7,8,12,13.11.57. Donald sadly left our ministry. I last met up with him at Westhill, Birmingham where he was Head of the English Department. He wrote an interesting autobiography: *A View from the Hill: Looking Beyond Retirement* (Souvenir Press, 1987)

adequately represent their thinking and I have no inclination or desire to do so. My diary sheds some light on the issues as does my correspondence with Bryan. Fortunately I do not need to in order to make the points I wish to.

For my own part I accepted the course, struggled with it and benefited from it. I had neither the academic ability of Bryan and Donald nor the formal education that they had. I did not want to challenge the course – indeed I was not in a position to do so. I found myself being judged by the course, tested by it, rather than judging it. But I saw the significance of the points they were making and deeply sympathized with them. My instinctive response was to enter into personal supportive and pastoral relationships with them. This was especially so with Bryan. I spent an enormous amount of time with him working through the issues and their implications at some cost to my own studies. In no way could I neglect Bryan and his needs. By and large the help was proffered in private: Michael Newman and possibly others approached me about what Bryan was doing but I did not engage with the staff or engage in a public campaign. Entering into such pastoral, supportive and consultative relationships has been a significant and continuing feature of my life and ministry. Somehow I attract people who, in one way or another, don't fit in to the system, are legitimately (often creatively) at variance with things of cardinal importance, trying to change things for the better... This was an early introduction to a theological ferment that I worked in during the period of my ministry for the 1960's onward and the methodological revolutions working with people that I shared in.

Challenge to Authoritarianism

This takes me to the third movement which emerges from the both of those I have mentioned which operated in hierarchical and authoritarian contexts. Dr Roberts and the staff responded in an authoritarian way to both Bryan and Donald. I was treated in an authoritarian way. All three movements challenged the status quo. They were about relationships in a modern educational Christian community. They were about the movement from an authoritarian to an egalitarian community, an open rather than a closed society, adult relationships, egalitarian participation. This movement to interpersonal and working relationships that has transformed every aspect of secular and religious life in the past fifty years.

My college life was lived out at the interface of these three movements. In the first I was a member of the minority – in my first year I was the minority of one. In relation to the other two I was the soul friend of those who composed the minority. Being at the cutting edge of these movements

brought out and helped to hone and form aspects of my psycho-spiritual constituent which I value: the ability to identify, support and work with people trying to change things in church and society for the better; the desire and commitment to do that wherever possible, the desire and ability to be a critical analytical pastor soul friend to such people; the ability to work from the margins in minority groups on things not considered important by the majority. So, this was important to my training and formation.

⁵³With reference to the first of these movements my own experience was supplemented vicariously by my association in my second and third years with Eric and Doreen Maynard and Keith and Mary Thompson. Both these couples faced enormous difficulties. An incident in relation to K and M was searing and telling. One evening I went to see Keith in his study and found him distraught, sobbing away. Mary was living in a bed-sit at the bottom of Richmond Hill and working as a secretary. She was deeply depressed and losing her faith in God (newly found I think through Billy Graham Campaign) and her respect for and trust in the Methodist Church through the way in which Clive Thexton was insistent that Keith sleep in College during the weekend, his response to Keith's request that under the circumstances he be allowed to sleep in the bedsit: "All over the country" he said "there are commercial travellers in hotels whilst their wives are at home alone". The inference being that they manage and so should you. Mary's reasoning was that no good employer would treat their staff in this way and so the Church was cruel and it was God's Church therefore he must be cruel too and she was feeling she didn't want to belong to either and in danger of becoming clinically depressed. I suggested that the response to Clive's preposterous analogy was that if a traveller was staying in a hotel at the top of Richmond Hill and his wife in their house at the bottom of the Hill there would be ructions! Whether he used this to argue with Clive or not, I do not know. I encouraged him to go home without permission and I was sure he would have the full support of the student body. I don't think he slept in College again – with or without permission I know not. Thank God, his action saved Mary and their marriage. I lost contact with him after he transferred to the Australian Methodist Church. A few years ago, by very strange coincidence, a lady (Mair Pinnell) who sits behind me in Church at Lidgett was in Australia visiting family. She went to Church on the Sunday and spoke to the visiting minister (or supernumerary afterwards). In passing he mentioned that he had trained at Richmond. She remembered I had and asked him if he knew me. It was Keith Thompson. He and his wife were well and had had a wonderful ministry together for over forty years. For a time we corresponded joyfully.

Over the time of my ministry I have seen radical changes mostly but not entirely for the better in relation to all three of these movements that were embryonic in my time at Richmond – changes beyond everything that I could have anticipated. I had to be content with small but highly significant changes such as getting the College authorities to agree that wives and fiancées to attend the Commissioning Service at the end of our time at College. (see diary references to this 23, 25.4.58; 2, 22.5.58; 6.6.58)

2. Visit of Professor Josef, 11th October 1956

Professor Josef was the Principal of a Theological Institute/College in Hungary, I think it was Lutheran. He addressed the College at a special evening's meeting. The room was packed. He described the situation and the serious socio-political situation in which they found themselves. I still have some sketchy notes I took at the meeting but they tail off at the stage of the meeting which left an indelible impression upon me. It was during the question time that we pressed him somewhat arrogantly about the stance that the church was taking in relation to the Communist party which was in power. Whilst we were sympathetic to their plight in persecution we suggested or implied that they were tolerant and accommodating to the political movements rather than challenging. I shudder to think how superior and judgmental we were in our theological comfort. Professor Josef was humble and patient. I do not think he was defensive and was aware of the issues we were raising, acutely so. Towards the end of the meeting as Dr Roberts was about to bring it to a close, Prof Joseph said with tears streaming down his face, "Pray for us brethren, we are naked before the Word of God." The atmosphere changed instantaneously. We were moved, subdued, rebuked, and our hearts went out to him in deep humble Christian love. Reality broke through the abstract and idealistic fervour of our questioning. We closed in prayer, deep moving and sincere cries for the soul not the theological niceties and superiority of our previous words. This was a salutary lesson about differences of great significance between the church, classroom and world's workplace in which ministry and mission are carried out, differences between thinking and doing and doing and being. [As I write I am reminded of a saying of my Father's, "Everyone knows how to deal with the Devil until he knocks at the door."]

Twelve days later the Hungarian Revolution or Uprising occurred on the 23rd October. The revolt began as a student demonstration which spread quickly across Hungary. The revolt against the government of the People's Republic of Hungary and its Soviet-inspired policies lasted until

10th November 1956; it was brutally crushed over 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviet troops were killed in this bloodbath and 200,000 Hungarians fled as refugees. Public discussion about it was suppressed for over 30 years. (See Wikipedia, the free Encyclopaedia). When this was broke we realized that Prof Josef had a premonition if not some knowledge that something like this was about to happen: he was reading the signs of the time accurately and we were all upset and shocked. Snippets of information gradually reached us from the Professor. As I remember it some of his students were involved in the uprising and a few were killed. What a rebuke to our previous condescending superiority. God forgive us.

What I have learnt from this and other things over the years is to listen with great attention and empathy but not uncritically to what people are saying, feeling and thinking about the actualities, the experiential/existential realities, of the situations and relationships within which they are living and working. That is, as Batten repeatedly said, pay rapt attention to the authority of the working situation. The efficacy of any advice or action plans depends upon it: the effectiveness of behaviour is closely related to the accuracy of the reading and interpretation of the critical material and human critical situational factors. Getting this right involves, *inter alia*, observing non-verbal communications and the ability to ‘stand in other people’s shoes’ – and so much more that I have written about at length elsewhere!

3. Manipulation and Deception

After dinner, the midday meal which was the main one of the day, it was customary for there to be a meeting of the student body. It was called ‘seats’, and as part of our informal training we took turns in chairing it. At the beginning of each academic year what was known as a ‘mock debate’ was held. The nature of this was a closely guarded secret from first year members. A debate was staged on a topic about which most students would feel deeply. Those who spoke from the second and third years made outrageous and offensive statements and took up positions which most students would find untenable and possibly blasphemous in order to provoke first year members to make impassioned speeches about deep inner and personal convictions and beliefs – or to side with the outrageous statements of senior students. Whichever way they exposed themselves and made themselves vulnerable. A mock debate was a hoax in the worst possible taste; an irreligious and immoral prank; an act of deception that hurt and inspired people to break down trust and relationships. I was adamantly against this highly manipulative custom from the beginning

as I had been in relation to similar secular practices at Accrington Junior Technical College, at Cherry Trees Foundry, and in the Army. On the 7th May 1958 we debated a motion in seats disapproving of the practice. The motion was carried, 27 for and 20 against. Not a very good majority, it shows a substantial minority do not see anything amiss in engineering situations in which people can be humiliated and worse.

To my surprise because I had long forgotten the incident, my diary entry for the next day records something of my difficulty in refusing to participate in a ‘mock trial’. The pressure to conform must have been enormous. Times without number, people have tried to persuade me to take part in sketches and concerts. I refuse. It is enormously painful for me to participate doing anything like that. Acting seems to undermine my preacher’s role.

I am and always have been adamantly against all forms of manipulation and deception: it is the antithesis of proper respect for people. It is one of the reasons why the nondirective approach to working with people became so important to me.

4. Behavioural Variations

Reading through my diaries I was struck by the highs and lows of moral behaviour and standards and challenged by them, that is by my own and that of others. In my going down speech I referred to the lows in this way:

Throughout my working life I have been amongst men who used the foulest of language and filthy talk. I never expected to find either bad language or smutty stories when I came here. I found both. I have not found it easy by any means to live with it. The [toilets] are ill named as the ‘Temple’ and I hate the use of [that title]. I remember.... sitting in the gallery and seeing men hardly able to contain themselves as one brother read Isaiah 6. That sublime piece of scripture has been marred ever since for me. I hope this practice will discontinue one day soon.⁵⁴

I could well have added that I used that kind of foul language whilst working in the foundry not least to be acceptable through conforming to type. Some regularly used sexual innuendos. Whilst my responses to this kind of behaviour were genuine and expressed my revulsion and the feelings that such behaviour was entirely inappropriate to Christians in general and ministry in particular I wonder now if I was a little pretentious.

I noted that there were changes for the better in the moral atmosphere at the beginning of my third year. (cf 20.9.57; 23.9.57 diary entries)

54 Cf diaries 9.5.56; 21,24,28.2.57; 5,7,11,27.3.57; 4.5.57; 17.5.57

Describing painful moral flaws as I saw them at the time in the moral character of the student body – and indeed in the behaviour of the staff – is much easier than sketching a realistic picture of the moral character of the college community. That task seems beyond me. All I feel able to attempt is to note some commendable moral traits to counterbalance those which I considered undesirable. Notwithstanding the smutty stories there was a strict code of sexual behaviour as indicated by the response to one of the students who got his fiancée pregnant. It was with enormous sadness and much emotion that Harold Roberts told the gathered community what had transpired and the action to be taken: he was to marry and seconded to the Canadian Conference. There was no trace of censoriousness, great sadness and compassion and loving concern. Seconding him to Canada was seen as a solution acceptable to the man himself and not as a punishment. Whatever we may think of the whole incident in the sexual permissiveness of the 21st century and the way in which it was dealt with – and I have reservations and criticisms, everything as I recall it was done with dignity and decorum, love, sincere moral and spiritual compassion in the conviction shared by staff and students that it was essential to maintain in the ministry and the Church the highest possible standards. (See diary entry 14.2.57). Another incident indicates high principles. Some people had strong feelings that Dr Roberts was giving too much information about the contents of examination papers. I was pressed to second a motion in seats censuring Dr R. I didn't want to get involved and charged myself at the time with moral cowardice. (Diary entries 7th- 8th March 1956). Without wanting to defend my behaviour and I don't remember the outcome, I held Dr R in high regard and I needed all the help with exams!! Similarly there were strong feelings about Dr Ward's incompetence. (Diaries 15, 16.5.57).

Then there were strong feelings about the invasion of Egypt by Anthony Eden which led to some people joining protest marches in London, I remember Bryan Walker doing so but I didn't. The debates about contemporary socio-political events showed high moral principles.

Daily the moral fibre of the College was played out pastorally by staff and students: together they formed a deeply pastoral community and that endows any group of people with high moral status; they were pastorally concerned and active for each other, their extended Methodist family, their social contacts and for society generally. In spite of my criticisms of Clive Thexton, he was extremely kind to me, as was his wife, and to Molly when I was ill in hospital during Xmas 1956. And Harold Roberts gave me permission to sleep in his lectures after my operation on my nose. (At the beginning of an interview with the staff about my studies – everyone had

one – he asked me how I was. I told him that I had to clear my sinuses every couple of hours day and night. He looked very disturbed, said nothing else throughout the interview until the end when with great concern and kindness he said, ‘I hope you are soon better Mr Lovell, but whilst you are not sleeping well, I will understand if you fall asleep in my lectures.)

⁵⁵Preparing for and writing this section has prompted me to reflect on the changes in my moral outlook and stance over the years that passed since my college days. My reflections have not yet matured but I feel I must make one or two notes of thinking in process. Developments, I believe, have occurred in relation to some aspects of my morality. One such area is that of human relations and relating and ways of working with and ministering to people for human and spiritual development. My respect for human freedom has increased and my understanding and ability to help people to promote their own growth and development. This I value and rejoice in and am proud and glad of. On the other hand there have been changes for the worse which I regret in relation to sexual morality and mores. Undoubtedly the permissiveness of the 1960’s and 70’s had bad effects upon me and my behaviour which took me by surprise and which I cannot fully explain. It led to enormous sense of guilt and inner moral conflicts and struggles. Getting back on to a more even moral keel took considerable effort. Inwardly I still struggle with these things. I hope at some stage to be able to explore this more adequately.

5. Fernhill Secondary School, Farnborough, 12th June to 26th July, 1957

⁵⁶The second academic year of my course at Richmond finished in time for me to do a half-term’s teaching which I was fortunate enough to obtain (see diary May 6th 1957). Achieving a post at Fernhill Secondary School, Farnborough enabled me to meet two objectives. First, it enable dme to earn much needed money to boost our finances for the long vacation. Second, it allowed me to do this purposefully in relation to my training for my ministry. It gave me an opportunity to pursue my interest in education and young people and what was involved in working with them and to have direct experiences of trying to teach nonacademic people in the setting of state secondary modern schools.

A day by day account of the seven weeks I spent in the school is given in my diary for this period. For the main parts it was very hard going and

55 25.10.11

56 27.10.11

at times painful and depressing. Mr Walker, the headmaster had told me he would support me all that he could but that did not prove to be the case. He gave me an extremely difficult class of 14 – 15 yr old boys and girls who were to leave school at the end of term and go to work. They were known, I discovered, throughout the school to be a class with a number of ill-disciplined and extraordinarily difficult pupils. Little seemed to hold their attention for very long and disruptive behaviour quickly erupted which frequently I could not control adequately. What few powers of restraint and punishment at my command were ineffectual; they simply didn't care about bad reports and detentions; they were leaving the educational system they detested for good; they were demob happy! When things got too bad I did what the Headmaster had instructed me to do, I took the main culprits to see him. I only did that once, I think. His opening words were "Well, Mr Lovell, I see you are unable to control this class and these boys!" Sniggers all round! In a sentence he had reduced my authority and dignity to an even lower level.

A male teacher in the next classroom always had perfect silence and order. He was tall with a commanding presence with many years experience. When he came into my class there was immediate silence and order. One day I asked him how he managed to do this. His reply was something like this, "from the first day I put the fear of God in them. I want an easy life, they are not going to mess me about, but it is not a good educational silence. A real creative silence is one generated by rapt attention, concentration on the subject and genuine interest. That is hard to achieve with these kids and I don't bother to try to get it." I knew then that I did not want to be involved in the silence of fear, which is what Billy Shaw generated. I desperately wanted to create or engender or induce the other kind, a learning silence and a silence of learning but I did not know how to do it.

Amongst the many things that I learnt from that experience one or two need to be mentioned here: I wanted to acquire more learning skills; it was of enormous importance that the Church reached these kinds of young people; I did not want to be engaged in teaching people (or trying to do) who did not want to learn in a school setting but I did want to enhance my ability to stimulate people to want to learn; I learnt in so many situation you had to rely on yourself and not to trust the Walkers of this world.

⁵⁷Reflecting on what I have written here about my time in this school I feel it does not give a rounded account of my time there. Certainly it is a reasonable description of the overall impression and impact that it had

upon me. I came to a point of dreading going to the school. Perhaps it is not possible to give a more balanced account now. I taught more than one class. This piece reflects the class with which I spent most time and which gave me most trouble. Also I taught several subjects: English, maths, religious instruction and technical drawing. (Also I supervised a cricket session for which I was quite unqualified!) I suspect I had most trouble when teaching religious instruction and English – subjects which some of the pupils would consider useless and boring!

6. Convictions about Religious Capacity

⁵⁸To my surprise I have just discovered that I did not include in this list a note about deep convictions I came to about the varieties of religious experience and the variations in religious capacity from person to another. I have mentioned [this earlier](#). I described how I came to this conclusion in a sermon I preached in Lidgett entitled: ‘Scepticism: Acceptable and Redeemable’ (5th August 2007, Sermon 506) in the following way:

Against stereotyping Religious Experience

“Not infrequently” says Addison G Wright in a commentary on Ecclesiastes, “the rhetoric of the believing community creates the impression that all the faithful should be experiencing certain kinds of personal religious experiences and that they are in some ways at fault if they do not” (*Jerome Bible Commentary* 490f)- This danger was exposed to me vividly during the early days of my college life in the summer of 1956 when I devoured William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience* written in 1900. It proved to me what I instinctively knew, that our personalities and natures variously determine or condition the ways in which we experience religion - just as they do with other human and interpersonal experiences. It was the days of Billy Graham. How well I remember going to my psychology tutor and arguing with indignant moral fervour that Billy Graham had no right to claim, as he repeatedly did, that everyone could have a particular kind of dramatic personal spiritual experience of conversion. There were those who simply could not/did not and some of those were psychologically and spiritually tormented and damaged as a consequence of being promised what they could not have. They felt cheated. They could, of course, have their own experience of Christ, which was more real and valuable than a stereotyped norm.

The tutor’s [The Rev Clive Thexton who taught psychology of religion and Hebrew] response astounded, offended and angered me - and still does over 50 years later. He said that Billy Graham was justified because some, if not

most, could have the evangelical experience, it was therefore acceptable to put the minority at risk! In my view there is never a time or place for dealing in half-truths of this kind especially when they hurt a significant minority of vulnerable people.

The Preacher had found what was thought to be standard religious theory, theology and wisdom does not tie up with his experience - in fact it is foolishness or meaningless! (cf Jerome p491). Sound theory does tie up with experience and experience informs and is informed by it (cf Jerome 490)

In fact [i.e. Ecclesiastes, my text was 1:2-4] the Preacher is another religious voice, speaking about forms of religious experience different from the norm. The Bible spans a variety of religious experiences. Ecclesiastes indicates that standard religious theory/theology does not always tie up with experience — in fact it can be foolishness. Therefore, the presence of this book in the Canon is tremendously important. It validates the critical assessment of conventional theology and other voices of scripture in relation to the varieties of human experience and the widely different ways in which people try to make sense of them through

- scripture,
- theology,
- conventional and folk wisdom,
- folk religion and spirituality.

Such critical thought is not an optional extra but a constant necessity if theology is to be in touch with reality.

And such assessments must be conducted as a dialogue between human equals who properly respect each other and their convictions. It must not simply be the use of other views as Aunt Sallies. Nor must they be crude exercises in Empire building. The Christian Empire concept must give way to the commonwealth of all religions - indeed as it is doing - if we are to discover the fullness of truth and find peace amongst the religions, which is a prelude to peace amongst the nations.

This indicates a propensity towards, a groping after a nondirective concept of human relating and a nondirective approach to working with them. Not surprisingly, when I came across this approach some ten years after this event in Richmond I embraced it enthusiastically and committed myself totally to its praxis.

Prior to preaching this sermon, I had preached another one on, 'Towards Accessing God'(Sermon 502). (Again at Lidgett on the 3rd December 2006.) It was in response to a TV series in which John Humphrys explored

accessing God. It was on BBC4 and entitled 'In Search of God'. Humphrys himself is genuinely searching:

I want to believe. I have opened my heart ... I've gone on my knees night after night and I have tried to talk to God and I have failed ... you have faith, lucky chap, and I want it perhaps as sincerely as you do, but I am denied it. (Interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury.)

The greatest issue for me is why some have the gift of faith, and it is not given to people like me. (An interview with Catherine Pepinster about the series in *The Tablet* 26th October 2006 p10f.)

Humphrys is not alone. Most of us grapple with ongoing problems of accessing God. I do. Christianity is my principal pathway to God but it is not without difficulties. One of the points I made related to another breakthrough in my understanding of religious experience through reading a remarkable book by Fraser Watts and Mark Williams, *The Middle Way of Religious Knowing* in 1990 or thereabouts. That helped me to see that the pathways to and from God are also related to a person's psychological and emotional nature and constitution and are as infinite as the varieties of religious experience. Watts and Williams advocate a Middle Way of Religious Knowing which is apposite to any religious constitution. It is reproduced here:

Display: The Middle Way of religious Knowing

Fraser Watts and Mark Williams (1988) *The Psychology of Religious Knowing* (Cambridge University Press) p153

With religious knowing, it is always necessary to find a middle way:

- it requires seriousness of purpose, but lightness of touch;
- it cannot thrive either when peoples' emotions are uninvolved or when they are unrestrained;
- it requires a sense of relatedness to God that is neither one of identification with Him nor of alienation from Him;
- it is a matter neither of pure faith nor of pure reason;
- it is not independent of observation, but neither does it follow straightforwardly from it;
- it inhabits the realms, neither of private fantasy nor of external reality, but a space between;
- it is a creative act, that goes beyond the "given but must be faithful to it;
- it shows a capacity, in myth and sacrament, to make connections that

are more than merely symbolic representations of literal truths, but without going so far as to confound the symbol with the symbolized;

- it depends on the combination of both genuine personal experience and the effort to articulate it, for neither alone can lead to knowing;
- it requires the intellectual effort and clearheadedness to reach towards religious knowledge wherever possible, but also the recognition that there is a time for silence and not-knowing.”

VII Preaching

As I read through my diaries several things impressed me about my preaching life during this period i.e. the time that I was in College:

- I did an enormous amount of it in the Aldershot and Farnborough Circuit and far beyond. Amongst other things this involved much travelling by public transport. I have not quantified the amount but that would not be too difficult.
- For the main part it gave me much deep satisfaction, pleasure and joy. One of the ways in which I assessed a preaching experience was as to whether I felt ‘free’ or not. More often than not I felt free. By this I think I meant the preaching flowed and I was able to express myself fluently. On such occasions I felt the congregation was open to what I was saying, deeply attentive and consequently drawing the sermon out of the depths of my being.
- From time to time preparing sermons was a struggle but then things would come together suddenly – what is new! See *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching*
- Whilst I did not normally count the congregations, the impression is that some were large 200 plus and that normally they were substantial. Children or young people were normally present in good numbers – and sometimes large numbers. I noted with surprise when there wasn’t any. How different today. Over most of my time in Aldershot I had a privileged and deeply satisfying ministry to a large group of young people through Mrs Ricketts at Cove. They met as a fellowship on Sunday afternoon. My ministry at Cove Methodist Church which had a large congregation was extremely well received. (The fellowship was part of Cove’s youth work.) (See Diary 10.8.58).
- By and large my preaching was well received and I note that at the Rivercourt Church on 1st July 1956 I was ‘complimented to a point of embarrassment.’ (But see below about a salutary incident.)
- A high note in my preaching career was when I was asked by the

Church, North St in Guildford, via Dr Roberts to substitute for him at an Anniversary Service from which he had had to be asked excused. I agreed but noted it was a bit near to the examinations. (Diary 7 and 24.6.56). I think I was gaining a reputation as a good preacher.

Undoubtedly preaching was central to my call and I saw it as the core activity of my ministry.

A few anecdotes conclude this section presented in the order that they came to mind. The **first** is about an incident that occurred when I took the morning and evening services at Alton, Hants on the 9th June 1957. During the afternoon I had a very interesting conversation with my host, Mr Hardy (like Dorothy he had only one arm), about the church and the ministry. He was a church and I think a circuit steward. With some feeling he said that he experienced the structures of the Methodist Church and the ministry as an inverted pyramid pressing down heavily on local congregations and the members from whom heavy demands are made. We discussed this at length. I was deeply concerned. The pyramid should be the right way up the ministry and the regional and national structures supporting and facilitating local churches and members. Throughout my ministry I have not only remembered this but worked to see that this was the case as much as I was/am able.

The **second** occurred at the Rivercourt Church which had given me such a warm and appreciative welcome on the 1st July 1956. There was a large congregation of 200 plus I should think. They all sat in the main block apart from an old unkempt man of the road who sat on his own on a left side block. I felt I was preaching well and had the total attention of the congregation. As I was making my final point, passionately and to good effect, the old man shattered the atmosphere with an enormously loud snore and almost like a tennis audience many if not most people turned to look at the man. At a stroke the atmosphere was shattered and I was deflated. To add insult to injury, after the service he begged 5/- from me to get some food!

The **third** anecdote is about one of those meaningful events in life. On one occasion when I was preaching at North Camp Methodist Church in Farnborough I was astounded to find Mr Thornber in the congregation. Mr Thornber was a lecturer at Burnley Municipal Technical College whilst I was studying for my Higher National Certificate. I knew he had joined the staff of Farnborough Technical College and I think he had some links with

the RAE. He was an excellent teacher; a master of his subjects; I remember he taught me strength of materials and possibly some mathematics. But I had no idea that he was a Christian let alone a Methodist. I was strangely moved by this loop whereby lecturer and student became preacher and congregational member. It spoke to me of my journey. I think I saw him on that one occasion only.

The **fourth** incident occurred at Cove Methodist Church on the 29th July 1956. The previous week I had preached at North Camp and had in my congregation Dr Sutton, a deputy chief or chief scientist and a local preacher. I found him a little intimidating although he was humble and self-effacing. North Camp was ‘his church’. To my horror I found him the congregation at Cove and I was preaching the same sermon that I preached the previous week at North Camp! I struggled through. In conversation afterwards I gather he lived near to Cove and it was more convenient for him on that day to worship at Cove. I apologized to him for preaching the same sermon. His reply confounded and deflated me, “Oh, did you.” He hadn’t even noticed!!

⁵⁹The fifth anecdote is about an encounter with the formidable Mrs David Lewis. It happened after a service I had taken at Farnham Methodist Church on 5th August 1956. She approached me as I was shaking hands with people at the end of the service. Mrs Lewis was, I believe, the first lady vice-president of the Methodist Conference. She was tall, extremely well-dressed with a large hat and had a commanding presence. As she approached me she said in a loud voice, ‘Young man, where about in Wales are you from?’ All those around stopped talking, turned to us and listened: she commanded attention. Knowing who she was, I replied, “Mrs Lewis, I am not from Wales”. She repeated her question emphatically ignoring my answer. I repeated my reply, adding for further clarification that I was a Lancastrian. In her imperious voice and manner she said, ‘Young man, do not return until you are proud of your (Welsh) origins! Mrs Lewis could not be wrong or admit to being so! How arrogant. (5th August 1956).

Sixthly and finally two further anecdotes relating to North Camp Methodist Church, Farnborough. One of these occurred early in my days as a local preacher. I arrived very early for an evening appointment. Eventually a steward came and opened the door and told me in a brusque manner that I would have to wait outside until nearer the time of the service as he had things to do. When he came to let me in I asked him where this vestry was as I was the preacher appointed to take the service. “Oh”, he said,

“in that case you are welcome”: An apology of a welcome but no apology for his extremely inhospitable behaviour. The other incident recurred at a service on the 3rd March 1957. After the service had begun a lady in her mid forties I guessed entered the Church and sat in a pew right under the pulpit from which, as was customary in those days, I was conducting the service. She was extraordinarily well dressed in which appeared to be very expensive clothes. From the outset her behaviour was out of the ordinary in a Methodist Church. On entry she knelt to pray. During much of the service she sat when others stood and stood when they sat for the gospel for instance. I became somewhat apprehensive as did one of the stewards who was watching her closely. She punctuated my intercessory prayers audibly with pleas such as ‘Yes Lord’, ‘Please God’ and longer ones which I cannot now recall. As she left she greeted me very warmly and in her American accent thanked me sincerely and profusely for the service.

VIII My Inner and Devotional Life

My diaries are quite revealing about what I thought of my inner life and particularly the negative aspects. I considered myself variously: bad-tempered (19.7.58); censorious (13.12.57); needed affirmation; not easy to live with (27.5.57); sinful (4, 6.4.58); jealous (29.2.56) superior (12.12.57); unbelieving (15.5.58). What impressed, challenged and rebuked me in equal measure was my approach to my spiritual and devotional life: it was extremely important to me; I gave myself to devotional practices with great seriousness; I lamented and berated myself about my failure to maintain the high standards I set myself and to grow spiritually; I knew the land. Undoubtedly I had profound mystical experiences and knew and valued greatly my experiences of the real presence of the Lord. Martin Buber had far reaching effects upon me through his writings which Harold Roberts introduced me to (I remember him bringing a copy of *I and Thou* to my study after I had shown an interest in what he had said about Buber in a lecture) and then through seeing him in the flesh. One effect was upon the way in which I viewed, approached and treated people. I was enormously privileged to hear him lecture at King’s College London one evening. His lecture was not easy to follow; he spoke in deep guttural English strongly accented. I cannot remember anything he said. Perhaps there are notes somewhere still to be unearthed! What I do remember was the question time. He left the lecture platform and stood before each questioner in turn and answered them directly and personally – ‘I and thou’ in action. I was deeply moved and excited to see this old, stocky, heavily bearded shortish man time after time going through this cycle – how I wish I had had the courage and presence of mind and confidence to ask him a question and

have him come and speak to me! The Dean tried unsuccessfully to bring the question time to an end saying that Professor Buber had had a long busy day, must be tired and it was getting late. Buber insisted on continuing. As the Dean left the lecture theatre with Dr Buber I followed them as closely as I could until they disappeared behind private doors simply to be near to this extraordinarily great Jewish mystic and scholar. I would have loved to have been able to touch the hem of his garment. This incident has influenced the way in which I answer questions after I have spoken to groups of people – I try to make it an I–Thou moment with each questioner.

To return to my inner life upon which Buber also had a great influence. For some time when in college as I prayed kneeling by my bed I persevered until I had a I–Thou prayerful experience with Christ/God. Sometimes this was at 2 or 3 am especially when I was having late night sessions with Bryan Walker during his time of troubles. Eventually I gave up the practice because I felt I was in danger of continuing I–Thou experiences and at times possibly I was.

College was undoubtedly a time of spiritual devotion and experiment. My inner life was intensive. For some time Bryan Walker, Colin Lake, Bob Forrest, Eddie Roos and I met for prayer at 7.30 am, I think weekly rather than daily. First we read the Bible and then we prayed. There was one rule; prayers must be in response to what had been read or prayers that were said. Again an existential approach which came into my life and influenced my devotions and the way I relate to people.

IX Convictions and Thoughts About My Ministry

During the early part of my College life I was very interested in spiritual healing. This is not surprising given the nature of my call and the healing I experienced in relation to it. Privately I read through Leslie Weatherhead's magnum opus on the subject, *Psychology, Religion and Healing* (some 544pp). In fact I made a careful study of it and found it convincing. In November 1955 Jack Gerrard and I went to a healing service in Guildford held by Dr Elliott. I had been to one of his services before but I do not seem to have a record of it. I remember this occasion. I was sitting near the front and he said in the earlier part of the service that he could see an 'aura' around me. Dr Elliott focused on a blind man laying his hands on him. The result was amazing. My diary entry reads, 'I will never forget the look of joy on the blind man's face when he could see the light and the movement of a hand in front of his face! Jack and I were deeply impressed and were quite

convinced of the efficacy of Elliott's healing ministry. (Diary 4.11.55)

A year later I joined healing ministry group in College. Several meetings are mentioned in my diary. These led up to the laying on of hands on a man who could not walk. Arthur Spencer officiated as a small group of us stood around him and prayed. I record, 'I felt the Presence of God in such a powerful, striking way (that) when Arthur laid hands on Frank my hands stretched forth and (I) felt as though power was flowing through (my) being and out through (my) hands. So powerful was this that my right hand actually ached.' Whilst Frank did not stand up and walk, this did not cause an anticlimax (Diary 24.11.56)

[See also 23.10.56; 9.11.56. 13, 15, 21, 23, 25.11.56]

At this time I felt that spiritual healing was going to be a significant part of my ministry. This never happened. I do not mention it again in my diaries. I am at a loss to explain this. To the best of my knowledge, I did not make a conscious decision not to pursue this form of ministry.

On the 21st September 1955, that is, nine days after I had started the College course, I was amazed to find Dr Ward at my study doors. He had come on a pastoral visit about my Greek studies. He cut quite a figure having an enormous scarf wrapped around his neck a couple of times. He said that he had come because in the lectures I had look worried about or by the Greek and he wanted to make sure I was not too worried. My verdict on the meeting then was, 'It was very decent of him to come and see me ... I did appreciate it very much. I felt better about things after I had spoken to him. He is a very spiritually minded man indeed'. (Diary 21.9.56). Strangely I did not refer to something he said which disturbed me at the time and has rankled ever since. It was that he had thought long and hard about my place in the ministry seeing that I was obviously finding the study of Greek and Hebrew so difficult. His conclusion was that there would probably be a ministerial job I could do and therefore a place in the ministry.

At the time and throughout my life at Richmond I suppressed this comment, dismissed it to my unconscious, because it was too painful. It surfaced once I was confident that I had a secure place in the ministry and a significant contribution to make and that I had acquired (through determination and hard work) an adequate grasp of the language for my purposes and to pass the exams. Over the years I have variously felt that it was condescending, patronizing and arrogant of him to make such an unwise judgement after knowing me for such a short time and

on the basis of my performance at such an early stage in one subject of the many required of a Methodist student. It demonstrates that he was utterly convinced that a facility for Greek was utterly essential for ministry and that the quality of one's ministry depended entirely upon it. How wrong he was when he thought he was right. Undoubtedly he meant it as an encouragement – a confirmation that without this there would be a place for me. It was and it wasn't. It wasn't because it implied that I would be a second class minister, a handicapped one, a minister without at least one of the essential tools. And that was the last thing I had wanted to be. From the time that I failed my 11 plus I had felt that: marginalized; outside of the top stream of scholarly life; of a lower order of being. At its lowest it was bad psychology, a misplaced understanding of ministry, an inadequate approach to educational encouragement. Through the grace and providence of God the course of my ministry has proved him wrong for which I am eternally and profoundly grateful. But I wish I had kept up my Greek which Marcus Ward continually encouraged us to do because it is a useful but not essential tool to effective ministry.

Writing this has been hard—painful in fact. It has stirred deep emotions. Incredibly the 11 plus trauma runs so deep and in part remains unhealed despite all my journalling about it and my subsequent academic successes. I despair of it being completely healed. Please God help me and also help me to forgive Marcus Ward. He meant well and like me he was a man of his time and culture.

An incident already mentioned cast further light upon my approach to ministry and the convictions modifying it. During the time that my mother was dying in Blackburn Royal Infirmary I was profoundly affected by a Lowry print of a typical working class urban scene. Ruminating on it and my early life and the needs of working class people and communities that nurtured me led me to the conviction that my ministry must focus and centre on the needs of such people in cities and industrial towns. On my return to College I told Clive Thexton about this experience and asked that it be taken into account when I was stationed as a probation minister the following year. He could have been in no doubt of my deep feelings, fervour, sincerity and my conviction that this was a call of God to me. (As I read through my diaries I was interested and surprised to come across an all too brief reference to a discussion with Norman Goldhawk on the 10th October 1957 that is the month after my conversation with Thexton, about feeling a call to a particular field of work. I do not go into any detail and I have long forgotten the conversation. Whatever transpired I record that he was very nice and helpful. My hunch is that I was concerned

about how seriously I should take the call via Lowry and feeling that I should make myself available to go anywhere and that he advised me to take my call seriously but that the Church would station me as it felt for my first appointment. Thereafter I would have more freedom to follow inner promptings. And in the event that is what happened but I am now ahead of my story!)

The list of our first appointments went up on Wednesday 19th June 1958 in the Hall, the day before my OT exam for my finals! I was posted to Carmarthen. At first I thought someone was playing a joke on me because my preferences were known. Realizing it wasn't, I remember running down to Clive Thexton's study in high dudgeon and bursting into his study without ceremony and saying, "Don't you remember what I told you about feeling called to work in cities? You have stationed me in Carmarthen!" "Yes," he said, "I remember very well. We decided that while we have control of your stationing that it would be good for you to have a different kind of experience of ministry so we stationed you in West Wales. We know that as soon as you have any say, you will follow your conviction!" Strangely, that does not feature in my diary, but that section was written ten days later by which time I had come to terms with the posting and so had Molly. It was not until Friday that I was able to discuss it with her. Initially, to my surprise, she had been disappointed mainly and typically because everyone she had spoken to about it had frowned upon the idea. We both came to see it had advantages: I was very pleased and fortunate to have Dr Maldwyn Edwards as my first Chairman; I was thrilled to find that I was to be chaplain to a teacher training college, something I had long wanted to do. But there wasn't much time to think, the BD exams went on for a further 5/6 days! (Diaries 18, 20.6.11 et al)

As it transpired and will become clear, Carmarthen gave me an ideal start to my ministry. After four years I was convinced it was time to leave. With much difficulty I resisted a very tempting initiation to go to the Gower feeling I must go to a city and ended up in Sydenham and Penge, deprived South London areas. How right Thexton had been and Goldhawk too!

X A Self-profile, August 1958

Having immersed myself in my diaries for the period I feel I have been transported back to 1958 in as much as it is possible to do that and therefore in a position to make a reasonable attempt even at this distance in time at profiling my main characteristics at the end of this long period of transition. I am going to do it in bullet points because this emphasizes I am profiling my characteristics in relation to my forthcoming ministry rather

than describing my ministerial characteristics.

- Academically, I felt I was well prepared having pursued diligently a good all-round theological/biblical/philosophical course and gained a BD, howbeit a pass degree. And indeed I was. I was thankful for the training, glad I had done three rather than a one-year course and humbly proud of what I had achieved with God's help.
- Biblical theology, existentialism and other religions were of particular interest. Theologically and ecclesiastically I was main stream. I had an interest in spiritual healing and a growing inclusive approach to and understanding of the wide variety of religious experiences that people do have and the limitation of those that personal and cultural factors have upon the kind of experiences that people do and can have.
- Three years at Richmond had confirmed my call. I was convinced that my vocation was ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. A broad based ministry to Church and community.
- I was excited at the prospect of resuming normal family life and starting my ministry in Carmarthen.
- My high spiritual and moral aspirations were grounded in the knowledge of my limitations and sinfulness.
- I was entirely committed to local pastoral ministry and to pursuing my vocation in such work. Whilst I had high hopes for my ministry, I do not think I was career minded.
- Preaching was enormously important to me. It was central to my vocational call and I wanted to excel at it. I knew that I was already a good and acceptable preacher for which I thanked God because it was his gift to me but about which I was in no way conceited.
- My health was getting better, there was no recurrence of the ulcer even though I had lived under great pressure and stress for three years, and worked very hard over long hours and days. In fact I had enormous reserves of energy and stamina.

My going down speech gives insights into how I felt as I left College. A copy is presented in the next few pages.

All in all, therefore, I felt suitably endowed, well prepared and, above all, called of God to what I considered to be a high vocation, ordained ministry. I was raring to go.

Notes of My Going Down Speech 6 June 1958

One of the things that have struck me most about the leaving speeches is that they have so often revealed to me something of a man's character which I had not realised before. I have seen the man in a new light and I have wished that I had seen him so before. Suddenly I have seen the man in a new light and I have wished that I had seen him in this way before. The inner side of what I have witnessed from the outside has suddenly come to my view. So I see a leaving speech as having great value for the future as well as for the past.

I want to say that amongst many, many difficulties my time here has been a thrilling one and thrilling is a carefully chosen word.

1. It has been thrilling because I have been able to find out an awful lot more of what God has called me into the ministry for. When I came here I thought I understood my call to the ministry that had come to me. But when I was confronted with the syllabus of my studies and found my limitations in dealing with them, I had to start to pray and to think again. As a result of much prayer and thought I came to see the difference between a minister and a scholar. My immediate reaction to the syllabus had been to think that it demanded of me to become a scholar and of that I am incapable. But this does not mean that I turned my back on academic pursuits. It meant rather that I had to approach my studies as a potential minister of the Gospel. In fact I had to learn how to use the findings of scholarship to interpret to my people the Gospel I had been called to preach. And it came to me at that time how much it was like my previous work of a research engineer, standing between the scientist and the workshop floor. I had to interpret the findings of the one in terms of the other and here I stand between the scholar and the ordinary church member learning to interpret to the one the findings of the other.
2. Once I had realized this I found the encounter with theology thrilling. I have not a memory which can retain details but I have been gripped and transported by ideas. This to me is study to make myself a minister. Not becoming a theological tabulating and analysing machine for London University.

It was not easy for me to come here at all. In fact when I came it was only for one year but in my first week here I had to decide whether I

was going to do one year with no grant or three years with a grant. It was as tortuous decision for my wife and I to make. At times we have wished we had said only one year because the promise we were given of accommodation in Richmond never materialised. So I must say that for me I am greatly indebted to my wife for this great gift of allowing me to come here and her gracious help whilst I have been here.

For a long time now I have wanted to say something to all the many college office bearers. I have felt guilty very often that I have not shared more the burdens of this place. On not a few occasions I have felt troubled when I have seen how much work some of you have been involved in by virtue of your offices. I have tried to think how the work could be reduced but with no success. However, you have all been good to me helping me in every possible way. I will never forget the kindly consideration of the plan secretary in my first year – his attitude symbolizes the kindliness of all college office bearers.

Life has been made much easier this year by the fact that my wife has had the company of Mrs Maynard. My mind has been much relieved.

Throughout my working life I have been amongst men who used the foulest language and filthy talk. I never expected to find either bad language or smutty stories when I came here. I found both. I have not found it easy by any means to live with it. The toilets in the basement are ill named as the “Temple”; I hate the use of this title. I remember ... sitting in this gallery and seeing men hardly able to contain themselves as the brother read Isa 6. That sublime piece of scripture has been marred ever since for me. I hope this practice will be discontinued one day soon.

3. If there is a difference between theology and spiritual encounter I have been thrilled by my spiritual encounter. One of the most releasing moments came, strangely enough, through a Jew, Martin Buber. I read his book. I went to listen to him lecture. I marvelled at his patience long after the Chairman had lost his patience. I walked down the corridor by this great man. I had been introduced to existential theology and as a result my private devotional life took on a new existence.
4. And of all this I have been able to discuss with men preparing for the ministry. I have misunderstood them and possibly they have misunderstood me. I thank you who have helped me to a greater experience of my faith. You who will not be with me when these ideas and the memories you have given me; to you I say thank you.

I am glad to leave to resume normal family life and to launch into the work for which I have been preparing. Thank you all for the share I have had in your life and the one you have had in mine.

May God greatly bless your studies and ministries.

I have learnt when God calls he provides.

XI From College to Circuit

From College to Circuit was a happy period even though it was financially stressful. It is well documented in my diaries so here I restrict myself to highlighting aspects of it.

Spending the time together as a family made it a happy time and knowing that this would be how we would live for the foreseeable future gave us a real sense of domestic security. Molly was pregnant and we were

1. Difficult coming here. Thanks to wife.
~~Sorry~~ couldn't come earlier. Life much easier then.
 2. Thanks to office bearers
 3. Sweating
 4. leaving speeches revealing
 5. Almost many days thinking time
 - ① More able call studies ministries. Previous work.
 - ② Theological encounter.
 - ③ Spiritual encounter.
 - ④ Discussion of all this with other men.
 6. Glad to leave. God will sustain
 God Bless studies ministries.
- Gave some speech, criticism for which I probably spoke.

about to live in our first house with all mod cons after six years of marriage and the privations of Arthur St: understandably we were full of hope and much joy. Having a car meant we could get around so much easier. We visited various people and stayed with them for short periods: Jack and Phyllis Gerrard in Cheadle Hulme; family and friends in Rishton; Auntie Constance in Derby (we stayed with her before travelling to Carmarthen and she insisted in filling the small car to the gunnels with supplies including a large number of cans of food for our larder), Manchester to see Uncle Clarence. And we had a short holiday at Lytham St Annes where we saw quite a lot of Norman Heaps.

On the negative side we faced grave financial problems. Soon after leaving Richmond I got a supply teacher post in a primary school for two weeks.⁶⁰ Then I got a second job in a Roman Catholic School and we thought our financial problems for the summer were going to be fine. Sadly it proved to be a false start, the person who had gone sick returned.⁶¹ Try as I did, I could not get any other work. Financial survival came in two ways: through living on furnishing allowance I had received, £75; through asking Norman for a loan of £10 that we were still short – he sent us £20 bless him. Having exhausted all our savings we started circuit life in a poor financial state. Not a good way to start! (I think we got a little money from selling some furniture we did not want and bits and pieces to the ‘chop. shop’, 9.8.58 but that would be a small amount.)

Packing up was a tedious job. Eventually we moved out on the 11th August and started the very part of our travels, motoring 186 miles to Jack and Phylis’ where we stayed for a short time.

On the 1st September we left Leylands (where Auntie Constance was Matron for many years) fully laden for Carmarthen. We broke our journey at Llandovery where we stayed at the Dyffri Hotel. An interesting incident occurred in the evening when the three of us had our evening meal. The dining room was full, everyone speaking in Welsh. Janice, who was normally very talkative fell silent looking around the room completely baffled, her mouth open in amazement: everyone talking and she could not understand a word they were saying. A phenomenon she had never experienced previously left her dumbfounded and shocked. She didn’t know what was happening and could not begin at three to explain her thoughts and feelings. We were strangers in a strange land! That was our first night as a family in Wales at the beginning of a new life.

60 27/6. 11.7.58

61 15.7.58

