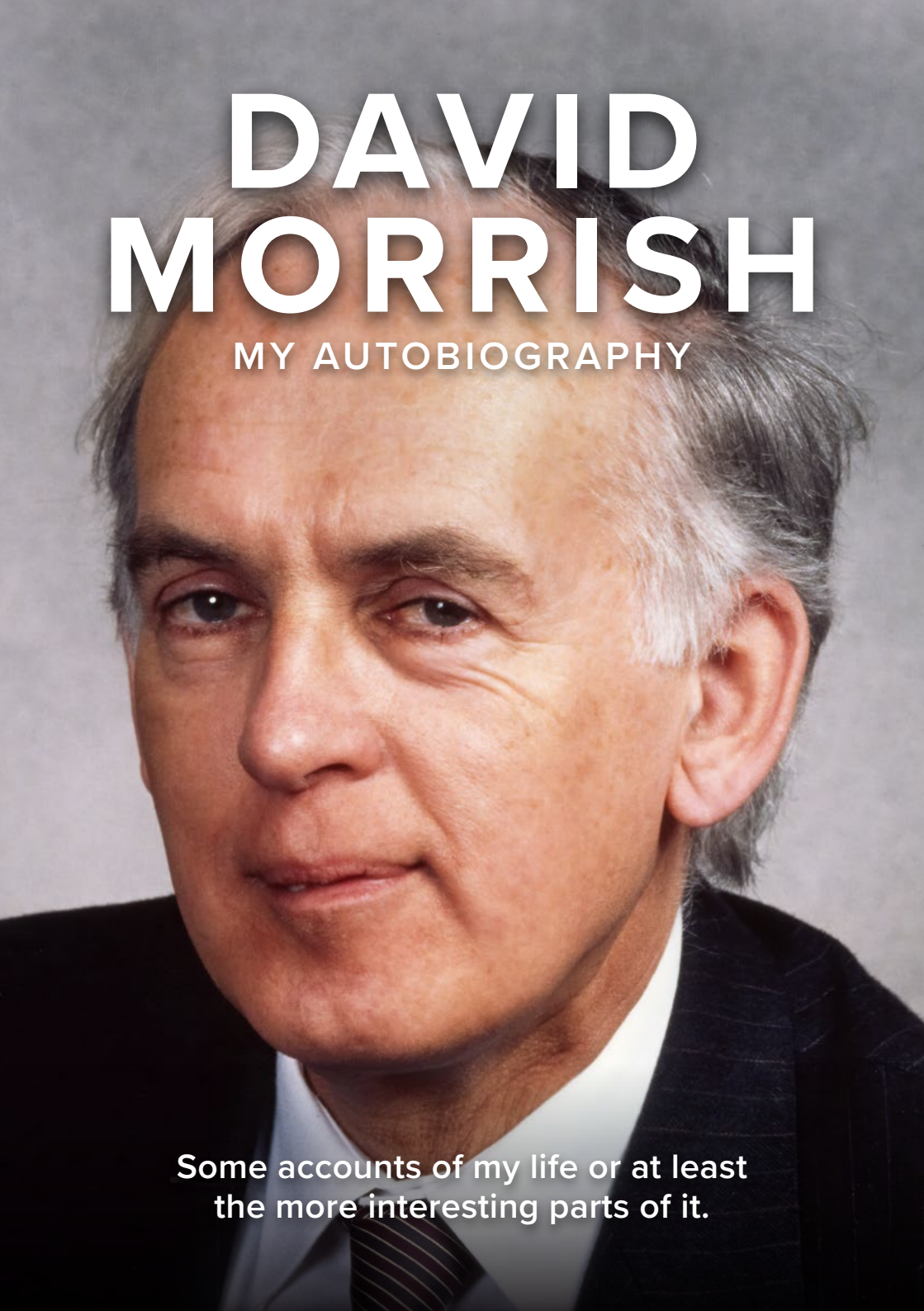
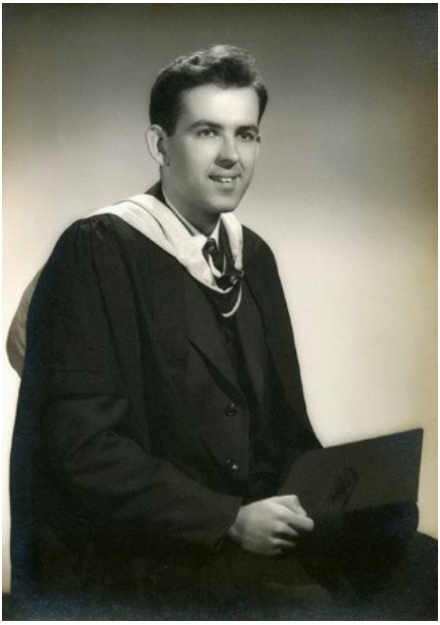

DAVID
MORRISH
MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Some accounts of my life or at least
the more interesting parts of it.



Top: David with his parents Frank and Gwendoline

Left: Graduation Day

Right: David and Joan 1959

DAVID MORRISH

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Some accounts of my life or at least
the more interesting parts of it.

Foreword by Claire

I can recall my Dad in his study slowly putting his autobiography together typing one finger at a time on his manual typewriter. Unfortunately, he never completely finished his autobiography due to ill health. I have therefore tried to do some final editing touches for him using his draft notes and the voice recordings that we did together.

I am sure if you read through his autobiography, you will like me, still be able to hear the echoes of his Devonian voice talking to you. My Dad, was a great debater and orator and whenever I went to the many liberal assemblies and meetings as a child, everyone always looked forward to when he spoke. He was also very much a man of principle and I remember him saying to me on many occasions that when he went to his first council meeting, that he was told not to speak nor to challenge anything the mayor or other councillors said but instead to just listen. My Dad of course did both!

As a councillor he would steadfastly put his words and promises into action whenever he was able and I think his long service as a councillor for more than 50 years, says it all. He was, I know very committed, always making sure that the local residents of Heavitree and Wonford were listened to and represented. From a very early age, I was given strict instructions on how to answer the phone when it rang and told to make sure that I took down full details. Many calls were related to housing concerns, so it is no surprise that I ended up in a career in housing! When elections came round, I can remember my Dad (and my Mum) made sure that every door was knocked on whatever the weather. Even when he was in a nursing home and no longer a councillor, I can vividly recall that he persuaded the care staff to take him round to every residents' room in his wheelchair just before election day so he could make sure everyone was aware of

the importance of voting, saying "You have been given the right to vote, so it is very important that you try and use it"

Happy memories Dad and I do hope anyone reading about your life will enjoy it as much as I have. Last but not least many sincere and kind thanks to Lesley Dalladay and Philip Jones of Exeter who kindly helped my Dad with all the typing when he got too poorly to do it all himself.

Some Further Reading / Notes:

- *David Morrish Obituary, The Guardian 30 April 2018*
- *David and Joan Morrish Obituaries, The Liberator, August 2018*
- *Devon Live, Principled Former Exeter Councillor David Morrish dies after long illness (Feb 2018).*
- *The History of Parliament Online, From the Grassroots Interviews with David and Joan (2014) www.historyofparliamentonline.org*
- *Devon Record Office, various documents deposited there by David on Exeter, the Liberal Party and other local issues which he thought may be of interest to others in years to come.*
- *Exeter City Council planted 2 Oak Trees in Heavitree Pleasure Ground as a living memory to Joan and David's long public service to Heavitree, Exeter and Devon (Nov 2018)*
- *Heavitree Local History Society, Newsletter No 73 June 2018*
- *Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive, Oral History, David Morrish, Catalogue No. 10116.*

My Early Years In Plymouth

Hello! I'm David Morrish. I was born in Plymouth more particularly, Devonport on 17th May 1931. My father was Frank Sidney John Morrish, a shipwright in H.M. Dockyard in Devonport. My mother, Gwendoline May Morrish, before she married worked in a stationer's shop run by Wood and Tozer in Fore Street, Devonport.

My grandparents on my father's side were living in Plymouth and were obviously called Morrish. My father was one of seven boys. On my mother's side my grandparents were also living in Plymouth, but originally came from Cornwall. They were called Opie on my mother's side and on my paternal grandfather's side they were called Rapson. A mixture of West Country names, part Cornish, part Devonian.

My family occupied a variety of properties in the Ford and Keyham districts. Frequent changes of accommodation usually went with an improvement in family income but it was always rented. First of all, I recall living in Cotehele Avenue (a basement flat), two properties in Station Road (first floor flats), a house in Cambridge Road (a whole house). And then just before the war we moved into one of three terraced houses at 2 Julian Place. Julian Place had a through side corridor from the front of the pavement to the back yard, which was much cleaner for the delivery of coal, so when messy deliveries of coal were required (we all had coal fires in those days), the dust didn't blow into the whole house. All these moves in less than 10 years, my family seemed to be always on the move!

My schooling started off at Ford Infants' School and then Ford Junior School. At the latter school I was entered for the scholarship test for the Grammar School but I failed by a wide margin as did almost all the other kids in the area. Ford was not seen as a likely area for Grammar School entrants and all this was not helped by the fact that bombs were falling all around us during the Plymouth blitz. An abrupt end came in 1941 when our house was wrecked by bombing with the

salvageable contents going into a warehouse at Saltash. Ford Junior School was devastated; my father was sent to join the dockyard in Gibraltar and my mother and I went at first to Elburton, then we moved again with me joining a school down in St Austell. That for me was going to prove a very significant move.

I joined a school which had been organised for evacuees from London. It was an all age school from ages 5 to 14. The Head teacher was a Miss Mitchell, who like myself was from Plymouth and I would guess there were about 50 children in the school. We sat at a long trestle table and my clearest memory of it is of the long hours spent making raffia mats. The day arrived, however, when Miss Mitchell called three of us aside and said that she had been sent forms from London to enter those children who might attempt the London scholarship examination for the grammar school. She said that she thought the three of us could do it, but we'd have to stay and put in some extra work outside school time. And thus, by the chance of war and evacuation and the commitment of Miss Mitchell, I was given a second chance at what we now call the eleven plus.

Mother and I had rather cramped accommodation at Poltair Road and there wasn't much for a youngster to do in wartime and blackout St Austell. I therefore stayed on after school and worked my way through IQ/intelligence tests. That's basically English, Arithmetic and General Knowledge. Eventually the exam results arrived and to my surprise, I was at the top end of the list!

Where to move to now was the next question. The blitz on Plymouth had led to the partial evacuation of pupils from Devonport Boys' High School who went to Penzance, with the boys from Sutton High School, going to St Austell. Having met so many of the Sutton boys in St Austell, I opted for that school, expecting to transfer to accommodation in the same town. But, once again, other events were to take over. Father had been unwell in Gibraltar and had returned to Devonport, so

mother and I moved back. We were uncertain about where we might live.

There was an acute shortage of housing in Plymouth, so much having been blitzed. A number of people had left their houses in Plymouth to find safer accommodation outside the city. Their houses became unoccupied, but the City Council had wartime powers to requisition such properties. The owners either putting their furniture into store, or into one of the rooms in the house. We had in succession two such properties. The first was at 70 Pemros Road. The second we shared with my mother's sister Gladys and her husband whose home had been very strongly fire gutted, this was at 28 Vicarage Road both in St Budeaux. Vicarage Road was on the main approach way for the gathering of troops which were being prepared for the Normandy landings and D-Day. For several days and nights there was a non-stop procession of men heading for the landing craft. We were all issued with special passes to be checked through as we went to and from our homes. The road was renamed later Normandy Way in recognition of its part in the landing of troops in France.

Meanwhile I had to be found a school, as the start of the school year for Sutton High School was still several months away. So, another junior school this time Victoria Road Junior School in St Budeaux. This was a rather bleak period of my education. The teaching was somewhat boring, and I must have been very inattentive for all the canings I received. Eventually I entered High School. The rump of the non-evacuees from Sutton and Devonport had all been merged into the Sutton buildings, under the rather unimaginative name of the Emergency High School. But perhaps the name was a fair reflection of the state of affairs in Plymouth.

Eventually the war was over in 1945. We celebrated with a street party in Vicarage Road and put whatever flags we could find on display. And soon after this, there was another move for the family. We moved

to one of the new prefabs that had been rushed into production after the war, from factories that had been previously making aircraft (they both used a lot of aluminium) Our prefab was at 30 Brierley Crescent at Kings Tamerton and this home was to remain my parent's home for many years. We now had a modern bathroom, refrigerator, inside toilet, a fire with a back-boiler for hot water, which would come through a tap. There was also a fair size garden back and front. In many ways we seemed to be making a new and more promising start.

University and Travels in My Early Twenties

Exeter University College of the South West

After leaving Sutton High School I went off on a scholarship to Exeter University, though at the time it was called Exeter University College of the South West. There I studied Geography (main) with Geology for a degree, a B.Sc. (London External) with accommodation at Mardon Hall. In Geology I really enjoyed all the laboratory work and field studies in many parts of Devon. I can recall that we went on a field trip to Pembrokeshire in Wales identifying rocks and putting together geological maps. My practical examination was held in Kensington London which involved fossil and rock recognition. My career intention was to become a teacher so when I obtained my degree I then commenced a one year programme to achieve my Post Graduate Certificate in Education which qualified me to become a teacher. During this time, I had periods of teacher training at schools like Broadclyst Primary School and then Tiverton Grammar School. Following this, I did a two-year research programme in Geography at Exeter University College to get an M.Sc. My research thesis was “A Geographical Study of the results of British Parliamentary Elections from 1868 to 1910”. Whilst I studied for my M.Sc, I lodged with a teaching professor and his wife at Prospect Park, Exeter and remember their wonderful meals. In those days I sent all my washing down to my long-suffering mother in Plymouth by weekly parcel! A return parcel had copies of the Evening Herald. This then made in total six years studying at Exeter University College, which was, on reflection, quite a long time.

“Go West Young Man” — The Rotary Year

In 1953, I was again thinking that this must be the time when I would commence my national service obligations. Once again, the unexpected was to intervene. I was awarded a Rotary Foundation Fellowship, combined with a Fulbright travelling scholarship, which took me to America. The award was established by United States

Senator Fulbright. It all sounded very attractive, and students would be expected to “sing for their supper” by going out to speak at Rotary Clubs in the area of study. I went to study at Wisconsin University in the mid-west of America for a year, studying Geography there. Before leaving I had to obtain a visa and a sworn (affirmed in my case) declaration that I was not a communist.

My parents took the news quite philosophically. I think they had almost given up trying to understand where I might be heading. There was Joan to consider too. Our relationship was fairly new but at least from my part increasingly serious. My parents regarded Joan as something firm that would eventually haul me back to base in Devon.

Going out to America was quite an experience, because I went out on the great Cunard liner, the Queen Elizabeth, to New York. As a kid in Plymouth there had been many times when I had stood on the Hoe and seen the great liners coming into the Sound. As they left the port I would only wonder if there would ever be a time when I could travel to sea on one of these great vessels. I could now live my dream. Mother and father came to see me off. At that time travel security was fairly relaxed and they came on board before the ship departed. Cunard offered a rigid system of class segregation but on Sundays we were allowed into the first-class accommodation and lounge for the Sunday service. Arriving at New York and seeing the great harbour and then travelling out to Madison by train, in a sleeper. When I was at Wisconsin University I travelled with other students, mainly hitch-hiking, across America to the southern states, to the Mississippi, out to the West coast to San Francisco and up to Canada. Father had cousins in Canada, and I hitch-hiked over there. Eventually, I had to get back to Britain at the end of my course. I went back on another Cunard liner, the Scythia, sailing out of Quebec. It was the first time I saw icebergs. It was the time of year when the ship took a more northerly route and when the icebergs were breaking up and calving. In later years when I crossed

the Atlantic by air, I realized that it was a poor substitute for travel by sea. We have paid a heavy price in our desire to do things quickly.

Friends Ambulance Unit

When I got back to Britain, I had to do my National Service. Before I could do this, I had however to go before a tribunal to establish my credentials as a conscientious objector to military service, as I was a Quaker. It wasn't all that difficult, because at that time there was no fighting going on and, as the judge said at the tribunal, well I could have stayed in America, the fact that I'd come back to face the tribunal, was some evidence of my sincerity. In particular, I was not saying I would not do any National Service, I merely said I wanted to do it in the Friends Ambulance Unit and this the Judge allowed.

Therefore, I joined the Friends Ambulance Unit, the FAU as it was called, and I undertook a number of what you would call work placements these days. I worked as a nursing auxiliary at St Wulstan's hospital in Malvern mainly for people who had TB and miners' lung. That was a good experience as when working with various medical professions I learnt a lot about nursing and nursing care. I also worked with refugees who were fleeing Hungary at the time of the uprising in 1956. The refugees wanted accommodation and contact with people who could speak Magyar, a rather difficult language to learn. We had a warehouse on the Isle of Dogs in East London where clothing for refugees arrived and it had to be sorted out. One of my jobs was to oversee volunteer workers helping them to sort out and distribute the much needed clothing.

After this the FAU informed me that they had been asked to send somebody out to Persia, to Iran to work with the United Nations out there. That would mean extending my National Service beyond the two years if I wanted to work in Iran, but the idea of working in Iran I thought was very exciting.

By this time Joan and I were engaged, and we expected to get married at some time soon. Joan wasn't therefore so sure about me

going to Iran, but I said that when I returned that we would definitely get married. So, I went to Iran to work and that was a great experience. I was mainly based in Tehran, but also when I was there, I worked in various other places, such as Isfahan and Shiraz and we travelled out to the north coast of Iran, to the Caspian Sea. We were there working with people and helping them to organise their own activities. For example, there was all sorts of work that had to be done about encouraging people to go out and teach at schools, particularly for children who were blind or had a sight impairment from working in the many carpet weaving factories in the desert. One of my tasks was trying to get the Iranian Ministry of Education help and support in the schools, particularly the schools that were run by the Christian Church in Iran and that kept me very busy.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Iran and meeting the Iranian people. I also worked with the Christian Church as well, although I was officially with the United Nations. At the end of twelve great months I came back to Britain. My journey out to Iran and my journey back was all done by air travel. I hadn't been in an aircraft before in my life and going out to Iran was altogether a novel experience. These were not jet aircraft we see in our skies today, but the old-fashioned propeller type of aircraft.

I returned late December 1958 and I couldn't escape Joan and our getting married any longer. On the 1st January 1959, a day after I got back from Iran, Joan and I were married at the Methodist Church in King Street, Plymouth. We didn't have time for any real honeymoon. We simply had to get back to London to do some work. While I'd been away, Joan had thankfully found me a teaching job at Bromley Grammar School and had completed all the necessary paperwork with the Education Authority at Bromley in Kent; as well as of course preparing and organising all of our wedding arrangements.

My Early Interest in Politics

My early interest in politics started when I was still at school and I have a clear recollection of the General Election of 1945, although I was too young to vote. Both my parents were quite interested in politics, though not taking a particularly active part. The election of 1945 was very keenly fought in the Devonport constituency, between Leslie Hore-Belisha MP, whose name became rather famous, because it was connected with the belisha beacons at traffic crossings. He had been the Liberal MP for Devonport but at this election he was standing as an Independent and he was being opposed by Michael Foot who was later to become a very well-known politician and leader of the Labour Party.

My mother was a very keen supporter of Hore-Belisha and when my father went to work in the day, in the front room she put up a poster for Hore-Belisha. When my father came home, because he was supporting Michael Foot, that poster came down and one for Michael Foot went up in its place! So, there was always this very keen, but quite friendly rivalry in our house between mother and father, one supporting the Liberal party and one supporting the Labour Party. So, with that said, I couldn't hardly avoid becoming involved in politics.

As a sixth form student, I enjoyed debating as there was a parliamentary debating society which met at Swarthmore Hall on Mutley Plain. We set up a kind of mock parliament and I joined as the member for Penryn in Falmouth, which was the parliamentary constituency from which my mother and her family hailed in Cornwall. There was a constituency of that name in the House of Commons but this was the nearest I was to get to it despite later attempts! It was here that on one occasion I met Nancy Astor, or Lady Astor, who had herself been a Conservative MP at one time in Plymouth. After I spoke one evening, she came over to me and said, "David, I think you'll make a good future in politics, but you'll have to have some sense and join

a bigger party than the Liberal Party that you're now in". That sparked an interest for me in politics, which later was to flourish in all sorts of different directions.

There was an active regional structure provided by the Devon and Cornwall Liberal Federation which had its Young Liberal counterpart of which I was for a time the chairman. There was always the energy to celebrate in grand style the anniversaries of past events. One such occasion was the centenary of the birth, in 1853, of Herbert Asquith (Prime Minister 1908-1916). A formal dinner was held at the Duke of Cornwall Hotel in Plymouth on 27th March 1953. I had a top table place and sat next to Mrs Isaac Foot. The principal guest was Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Asquith's daughter. Lady Violet and Isaac Foot autographed my menu card, one of my souvenirs which has survived various spring cleaning episodes. My mother and father attended too as they had become active in the Liberal Party.

Meeting Joan

I had an interest in the Liberal Party and it was through this that I met Joan in April 1953. The Liberal Party was holding its annual assembly, or conference and it was in Ilfracombe. I was attending as a representative of the Young Liberals and there happened to be there a young lady called Joan Squire, who had been given a lift to the assembly by a man called Frank Holman from Plympton. Joan was representing the Young Liberals in the Tavistock constituency. I knew about her vaguely, but I hadn't actually met her. Frank Holman was probably a bit of a matchmaker and he introduced me to Joan Squire as she then was, at the Liberal Party's annual assembly at Ilfracombe.

Delegates at the meeting told Joan that I was only interested in politics and academic work and I think that only encouraged Joan to see if that were the case. Soon we met up again and our relationship grew. I remember one occasion when I was in London, I sort of arranged with Joan to meet up. I said "I'll meet you under the clock tower at Charing Cross Station". Bit of a joke that really, because Joan stood by the clock tower for some time, watching me, sizing me up, actually considering if she wanted to meet me again. But as I was going to take her out for a meal, she didn't want to miss a good meal and so eventually she popped out of the shadows of Charing Cross Station and came over and met me!

So our courtship started and that was to end up with our getting married. But of course, at that time I was in the Friends Ambulance Unit and there were parents to meet too. I did meet her parents. She invited me out to Ford Farm in Holbeton and I think the excuse and pretext was that I wanted to go out to see if her father, who was a farmer, was able to provide some vegetables from the farm, which we could put on our stall to sell at the Liberal Party's Christmas fayre. So, then I met her parents, John and Bessie Squire and her brother

Leslie and sister Mary. All of whom I was to get to know very well later on. But this was the first time we were formally acquainted.

Eventually of course we were to get engaged. We got engaged before I went to Iran actually. I didn't suppose Joan would let me loose to do any more travelling unless she tied me down with an engagement ring! Ultimately, that engagement was to lead to a wedding the day after I got back from Iran on 1st January 1959 at King Street Methodist followed by a reception at the Duke of Cornwall Hotel.

Moving to Exeter and Starting a Family

I really expected to stay at Bromley Grammar School for some time actually as it was a good school. However, I received a message from Exeter inviting me to teach as a geography tutor in what was then called St Luke's College, a teacher training college (later becoming part of Exeter University), where in fact I stayed until I retired. I didn't expect to go back to Exeter at all — at least not that quick. But I did, so I went down to Exeter from Bromley Grammar School and at that time I also had Joan with me and her teaching career for us to consider too. Joan had been teaching in London at Sedgehill Comprehensive and we had all the business of finding accommodation in Exeter. We found accommodation at 7 Whiteway Drive, which we were very fortunate in finding fairly quickly. And then Joan had to find a school to teach in and she went to teach initially at the Episcopal Girls School. Later, she taught at St Thomas High School as a Head of History and then became a Deputy Head. So, a lot of activity until we settled down. We moved homes three times, first to 107 Sweetbrier Lane, then to 38 Birchy Barton Hill, and finally to Pegasus Court but all our homes were within a mile of each other and all were in Heavitree.

Also of course at that time the question of starting a family came along. Joan and I both hoped to have kids to go with our family. And soon arrived our first child, Alison Jane. Alison Jane unfortunately did not live very long. She died soon after birth on 16th July 1960. All very sad and all very tragic. Alison Jane carried the names of our grandparents. But not long after, we had another child and that was fortunately someone who is still with us now Claire Elizabeth.

My Life As A Councillor

My life as a Councillor has been rather interesting in many ways. I never really had any intention of becoming a Councillor. When I came to live in Heavitree, there was a small Liberal party group and they asked me to join the Liberal Party. I was a Liberal and so I did. And then they said, "We would like you to stand for the Council elections." "I haven't got time for all that" I said. "I have just moved into a house and started a family. I've not got time to do all that sort of thing." "Well," they said, "this is a safe Conservative seat and you haven't got any chance of being elected. So, it'll be quite safe, you won't be elected, you've got nothing to worry about." "So," I said, "On that condition, if you can guarantee that I won't be elected, then I'll have a go."

That was back in 1960 and I did stand and very much to my surprise and indeed to the surprise of the Conservatives I came within about 100 votes of winning. That was for the Heavitree ward of Exeter City Council. So the next year they said would I stand again and I thought that I couldn't quite say no, having got so close last time. So, I said yes, and I stood and I was elected. And the subsequent elections that I fought there for the City Council and for the County Council — one of my records was that I always got elected.

The City Council, when I joined it, was what was called a County Borough. It did everything, there was no other council, housing, planning, education, social services, transport, you name it —the City Council had the responsibility. Very early on I became a member of the Education Committee. I suppose as they thought I was working in education that I might know something about it. If I look back on what I did on the Council, I think sometimes that, apart from looking after people's personal problems, my work in education was perhaps one of my main achievements, which I had to fight the hardest for and which I think I was most proud of.

At that time education in Exeter at the secondary stage was divided between girls and boys. Girls went to girls' schools; boys went to boys' schools and schools were also divided by a test in terms of what was called the eleven plus. Children who were very bright and might go on to university usually went to a grammar school and the other children went to what was called a secondary modern school. It was a big battle to try to get these things changed. First of all to make sure there was only one school for boys and girls, co-educational and that we won. And also, for the test to be abolished, so that in fact there would no longer be this dividing off between grammar schools and secondary moderns. That was not done without controversy. Many people however were strongly in favour of change and I think, certainly until recently, it has withstood the test of time.

Another contribution which I made which I felt very happy about was in terms of what could have become potentially a very nasty racial situation. There was in Exeter at that time a very small Sikh community. They had purchased a small house in the Newtown area of Exeter and they wished to use that house, without too many changes to the external appearance as a Sikh Temple for Sikh worship and to do that they had to get planning permission from the planning authority for which there was much controversy. The Council Planning Committee initially refused their application on the grounds that their worship would disturb the local residents. I felt this decision was very unfair so I went there on a Sunday myself, when they had their worship and I didn't hear any noise. The only noise I heard came from people outside washing their cars and doing their daily activities. So, by a majority of just one vote, I managed to get the full City Council to reverse their decision which I thought was indeed very important and the right decision to make.

Later local government re-organised itself and Exeter was no longer a council organising all its own affairs. It was divided with the County

Council taking over many responsibilities of the old City Council and Exeter became part of the Devon County Council. I had a decision to make. Did I carry on or did I stand for the County Council. The decision I made was to stand as a County Council candidate for the same area more or less as I represented on the City Council. I wasn't expected to win — it was thought that the Labour Party would win the seat .

Surprisingly I did win and I was now on the County Council. On the County Council I was the Leader of the Liberal Party. Subsequently in fact, by a change of political fortune, I became the Leader of Devon County Council and that opened up a vast new range of activities and where I remained again for a very long time.

In between all this, the Liberal Party asked if I would stand for parliament. I was interested in parliament and so I stood. This was June 1970. This was the first of a number of times I stood for parliament in Exeter. Subsequently, I also stood in the Tiverton constituency and I was asked at different times to stand elsewhere, but I always refused. On one occasion for example, there was the death of a much-loved Liberal, David Penhaligan, who was the MP for the Truro constituency who sadly died and there was to be a new election and it was suggested that I should move myself to Truro to become the candidate for the Liberal party. If I had done that it would have been a major disruption for my family. Joan was involved in her school and Claire was at school, and I thought that was an unreasonable thing to do. Had I become the MP for the Truro constituency, who knows what might have happened after that. I was not to do that, but my parliamentary interest nevertheless remained strong, but I was never elected an MP. In 1987, I opposed the merger of the Liberal Party with the Social Democrats and I have remained in the somewhat smaller old Liberal Party ever since. I even had offers in the past from a few well known labour ministers to become a Labour MP, but I never was really able to accept their offer — as it would go against my liberal

views of being able to decide for oneself how and what you should vote for.

And all of this was then brought to an ultimate culmination, when eventually after 50 years, I sadly stood down from the Council, not having lost an election. The people on the Council suggested that I might take all sorts of honours and privileges, which I was always against and some of you may now know that I turned down a Knighthood in 1986 when it was offered to me. The Council, however, finally persuaded me to accept becoming a Freeman of the City of Exeter having done 50 continuous years as a councillor. I was assured that I wouldn't have to put on any funny robes but to just turn up for a simple ceremony. There weren't many people, maybe just three or four, who were Freemen of Exeter at that time. So, on 31st May 2011 there was a ceremony in Exeter Guildhall, where I became a Freeman of the City of Exeter. I think technically it means I have got the right to drive sheep down the High Street something that's unlikely to happen!

In many various ways, I suppose you can say that I've been involved in politics for a large part of my life, first becoming a councillor back in 1961. Joan joined me as a city councillor after she retired from teaching and later on she also became a county councillor. At the time I am putting all this together, which is October 2011, Joan is still an active member of the Exeter City Council and so she has in many ways kept on this family tradition.

Becoming A Quaker

The Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers — how did I become involved?

Well, I began my church attendance as a young Methodist, because that's what my family were when we lived in the locality of Ford in Devonport. When I was quite young, my parents transferred to the Church of England. I never quite knew why, but I was about eight or nine at the time and I naturally went with them to the Church of England. On Sundays we always went to church.

So, I began as a young Methodist and then became a young Anglican and I was very committed to church attendance. In fact, I became quite active in the Church of England. I was confirmed and regularly took communion and became a Sunday School teacher. So, I might have stayed that way for a very long time, had it not been for the incidence of National Service, where young men had to be registered to go into two years of military service, war and peace not dividing it which I became increasingly concerned about it. I began to think how I could, as a young Christian, get into the situation where I had to go to war and fight other people. I became increasingly uncertain about the whole business and that is one reason I think why I postponed it by going to University.

Well, it was while I was at the Exeter University College of the South West, where I became a member of the Student Christian Movement, the SCM, that I increasingly found that I could not go on being a committed, sincere member of the Church of England. I was having doubts about the formalities of priests and doubts about the celebration of the sacraments, the bread and the wine. I was particularly also having doubts about the whole question of where we stood in relation to the issue of peace and war.

So, I went to the meeting of the SCM one day and there was a series of talks called 'These Denominations' and I thought that looks

interesting, I'd better go along to that. One of the young members there, we were all about the same age, all youngsters of 19, 20, said all sorts of things that I felt I agreed with. Well, I went and talked to her afterwards and said "What do you belong to?" And she said "I'm a Quaker". At that time I'd only ever heard of Quakers as that rather quaint chap on the porridge packet and I knew about them vaguely in history — William Penn in Pennsylvania. I didn't know much, it was simply to me an aspect of history without much contemporary relevance. So, I said "What do you do?" "We meet for silent worship." "Where do you go in Exeter?" I said, "and can I come?" "Oh yes. Anybody can come." And so, on one particular Sunday sometime in 1952, I went to the Quaker Meeting House in Wynards Lane in Exeter and I've been going to Quaker meetings ever since and most recently in Exmouth.

Subsequently, of course, I visited America, but before I went to America, I did something quite definite and thought, well I've dithered with this for a long time. I'd been what is called in Quaker jargon an Attender, so I was attending their meetings without being a Member. And I put in an application to become a Member of the Society of Friends and after going through due process of interviews etc, I was accepted into Membership in August 1955. So, when I went to America, to Wisconsin, I went as a young Quaker and over there I attended Quaker meetings.

And then when I came back of course I had this issue before me. There was no way of avoiding it, except going to a Tribunal where they would make a decision as to whether or not I could do my military service as I wanted, as a member of the Quaker Friends Ambulance Unit. Well, I went to the Tribunal, there was no war on at the time and I was pretty carefully quizzed. I don't think I was given too rough a ride and so I signed up for the Friends Ambulance Unit and that's what led me to Iran.

I have never regretted my change of religious membership. To me, religious attendance on Sunday is so very important. I don't hold any particular fundamental disagreement with Methodists, Anglicans or any other faiths for that matter, but I personally feel most at home in the setting of Quaker silent worship.

Family Holidays

A very important part of our life was picking out the time that was available to go on holiday as a family. And inevitably, because I was a Geographer, I used to link this up with my geographical interest. In fact, Joan very often used to say I was treating every holiday as another geographical field trip! Perhaps there was some truth in that. Initially our holidays were simply taken locally because there wasn't much money to go very far but eventually we did venture further afield, to a variety of places.

One such place was to Ireland, Southern Ireland County Cork where we stayed in a self-rented villa right on the beach. That was near Clonakilty, where we had the most beautiful food. Joan in fact cooked the meals for us in the chalet and we all had a wonderful time. Then of course our journey was all done by boat. We took the boat across to Ireland from Fishguard to Rosslare with the car, so when we got there, we just drove the car off. We went back to the same place for our summer holidays at least a couple of times.

Other holidays were taken even further afield. For example, we went to Brittany. We hired a car and again self-catered. One time we took our car across on the ferry boat from Plymouth to Roscoff. Great holidays, like those in Ireland. Although I never was a great swimmer, I used to like being in the water and Claire, when she was young, certainly liked swimming too and we all loved tasting new food especially crepes for Claire, and artichokes and shellfish for me.

Of course, a very big holiday for us was when in 1970 we went over to Canada. This was an opportunity for me to revisit some of my haunts from my earlier days as a student in North America and we stayed in university accommodation at Toronto. I'd been asked to go back over there to teach a course in the summer at the University of Toronto in Peterborough. Happily, the income I received paid all the bills and in

fact I didn't pay any tax on the money I earned so long as I spent it all in North America. So, I went ahead of the rest of the family and organised the accommodation and hired a car. I teased Claire a bit saying it was an old broken-down car I had and when I turned up at the airport in this rather posh Ford car they were all rather surprised. I rather surprised myself too by driving down the multi-lane highway on the wrong side of the road, as I thought of it, because of course the driving's on the opposite side from us — from Toronto airport to Peterborough, where I was based, was over 80 miles. We had a grand time there and Claire made friends with other children who were staying at the university accommodation. I can recall travelling up and down the St Lawrence River and we had some wonderful travels and glorious food.

While we were in Canada, we made good use of an ideal swimming opportunity, because around Toronto are the Great Lakes. Lake Huron for example, was a favourite place of ours. We swam there a lot, parking our car directly on the beach and we greatly enjoyed that. We also took the opportunity of visiting some of the many historic sites. The Canadians, like the Americans for that matter, make a great effort to present their historic sites well to tourists and in Canada one of these was the reconstructed historic site at Upper Canada Village. All in all, it was a pretty exciting and very memorable family holiday. Before leaving I got offered a permanent teaching post at the University but I took and made the decision to return home.

But of course, there were also opportunities for holidays in Europe as well and one of those that we did more than once, was to take the train from the station at Exeter St David's to Rome and go out on the overnight train — the couchette, a very comfortable and virtually non-stop journey from Exeter. You had to get off the train at Dover to go on the boat of course and it was non-stop from there to Rome overnight and that gave wonderful, spectacular views of the Alps early morning and we had enjoyable visits to Rome and other parts of Italy.

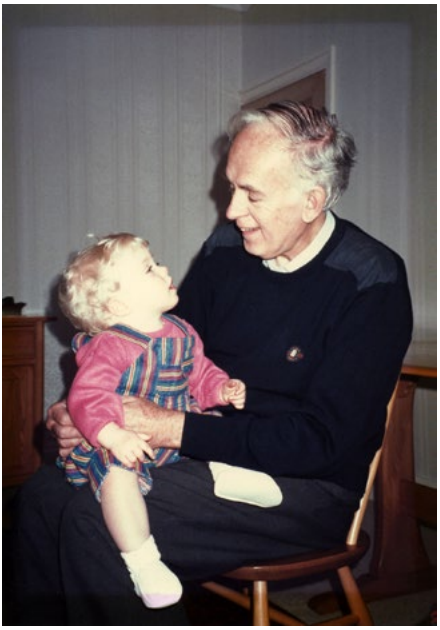
Then of course, there were many more parts of Europe that we hadn't seen. One country was Spain and I drove down to Spain in my car crossing France and the Pyrenees staying in accommodation at Calpe. As a family we can recall that Joan's map reading wasn't that great, particularly when we were crossing the Pyrenees but because of this, we discovered by chance some very beautiful and off the beaten track villages that otherwise we would have missed. Once in Spain we had the opportunity to visit the sort of places I like, for example Granada. I realised when I was there the connection between Granada and the writings of Exeter based Richard Ford who wrote the book — 'A Handbook For Travellers to Spain', who in fact came back and redesigned his garden at Heavitree House in imitation of the gardens at Granada.

In a variety of ways as a family we travelled around quite a bit and perhaps because I was a Geographer, I did a bit more travelling than might otherwise have been the case. But I always tried to work into that an opportunity to enjoy myself and for Claire to enjoy herself and Joan as well and I think we did actually — it was great fun to go travelling at that time. And, of course, later Claire got married and went off and did her own travels with her family. Although I have to say, when in fact I retired, we rather picked up the thread again. After I'd retired, we began to share family holidays with Claire and David and Emma, but those were rather different from what we'd had before as cruising became the norm.

Amongst that particular collection of holidays there were some very notable ones. In more recent years Joan and I have taken a liking for holidays in the Northern Arctic parts of the world and travelled to Greenland and more recently to Spitsbergen and to the Faroe Islands. Also of course on many of those trips there was an additional special passenger and that was our granddaughter Emma who came with us. And she had especially great fun in the Arctic region when she

met up with us for a summer holiday to Spitsbergen. We also had the opportunity to sail on the Queen Elizabeth around the Mediterranean in 2008 (one of her last voyages). Not the old Queen Elizabeth that I went on to America as that had long since burnt out, and now at rest at the bottom of Hong Kong harbour. This was the modern QE2, a very spectacular boat and very different from the Queen Elizabeth that I travelled on when I went to America in the first place. Of course, at that time I wasn't married and there was no opportunity for anyone else to come with me.

And perhaps the last one to mention being spectacular and the last big holiday that we were able to do for my health reasons was when we all went to Russia (summer of 2009) and sailed up the Baltic as far as St Petersburg. We went to the opera there and that was the famous occasion when I didn't feel very well. I thought I was feeling dehydrated and I just wanted some water. But I semi passed out and Claire managed to get me into a Russian taxi, which took us to the port and then by wheelchair to the gangway of the ship. When we got there, the ship's doctor came down the gangway and took one look at me and said "You are very ill. You are now in Russia. You will be taken to a Russian hospital." And it was very strange that when he mentioned that, I suddenly felt all the better actually. So, up the gangway I went and had some food to eat and I felt not too bad at all, though my family said that I had had another TIA and were more than relieved once we arrived back in Southampton. That was our last family holiday together — not the last, but it was the last at that point as I never say anything's the last, I never say never.



Top: General Election, Exeter 1970, David with Joan and Claire

Left: David with granddaughter Emma

Right: Holiday to Ireland 1960s

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