

A Moment I'll Never Forget



October 2005

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September 2005

November 2005

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Mum & Dad with we three boys

As my Dad (Grandad Arthur) was in the RAF we 3 children went to boarding school. Peter and I started in the summer term of 1952 at St Peter's Court Prep School in Burgess Hill, Sussex.

I remember our first trip by train from Victoria Stn, down to Burgess Hill. Peter was only 5 whilst I was 7, Mum (Granny Joy) saw us off from the station and we were with several other St Peter's boys whose parents were seeing them off from Victoria.

We enjoyed the trip down,, heads out of the window watching the mileposts flash by and smelling the steam from the engine as it wafted by.

I think one of the masters met us at Burgess Hill Stn. and took us to school. Unfamiliar as boarding life was at first we soon got used to the routines and started enjoying it. Though still a little sad, perhaps, at not being with Mum, Dad and our new baby brother (Paul) --our weekly letters home were filled with what we were doing at school and about our friends at St. Peter's.

Peter stayed on at St Peter's Court whilst I moved at aged 11 to King Alfred's and then Brentwood. Peter came on to Brentwood at 11 and Paul joined Middleton Hall - Brentwood Prep. school- in 1960 (I think)

The house I grew up in.



In Bristol with my Dad

Not an easy question to answer for me as there were many different childhood homes. First was in Bristol where I was born on 5th June 1945 and lived (I believe it was in Linden Park) for a year or so. I don't remember asking Mum or Dad about what it was like though a childhood story that I inherited made it seem like a flat one or two storeys up.

Story was of me leaning out of window trying to reach a balloon that had floated out and was disappearing downwards.

Mum rushed across to scoop me , hanging by my feet out of the window trying to reach the ballooon, and pulled me in

-and , so I understand, gave me a good smack because she was so frightened.

Dad was in the RAF and so there were several childhood homes aftere Bristol.

Today (June 2025) we are living in my 36th home--that's including the 3 boarding schools (St. Peter's Court in Burgess Hill, King Alfred's in Wantage and Brentwood in Essex)

The Adventures of My Childhood Friends

What a difficult question to answer as the family moved quite a lot during my childhood. I'm taking childhood up to leaving school (18) so many of the friends were at the 3 boarding schools. I did go to various day schools before boarding-5 I think- in WestonSuper Mare/Bristol and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where I do remember one special friend called John Lanning at the RAF Station where my Dad was serving (RAF Heany) Boarding:

1.St. Peter's Court (1953-57)

We seemed to call each other by surnames and looking at an old framed school photo of 1956 (I think) I can name many of the boys and many of the masters. So, for example,, I am 4th from left on 2nd to back row alongside Faraday and Jay Jones on my left. I am standing in front of my brother Peter who is in the back row.

2.King Alfred's (1957/8)

As I was only there for 4 terms before Mum & Dad took me away - as did several other new boy's parents because the school was rather brutal - I can't remember any names clearly.

3.Brentwood (1958-63)

I hope I can find some old school photos and will write when I have found them. However the school has now an 'archive' to which I have subscribed -

<https://www.oldbrentwoods.com/pages/archives>

The Toy I Cherished Most

I really don't remember though have some memories of a pickup truck and dinky toys. I think there were also cuddly toys and I do remember loving books-especially the Arthur Mee bible albums. There are some odd memories too -of seashells etc when we lived in Weston-Super-Mare. Also an oft repeated story from RAF Heany where Peter and I were playing quietly outside and came in excitedly to tell Mum we were enjoying playing with the 'Crabs'-- Mum rushing out and taking us away from the 'scorpions den' that we had disturbed.

Growing Up with My Siblings

I was born on 5th June 1945, Peter on 24th November 1947 and Paul on April 18th 1952. Dad, Arthur Carvosso, was an RAF Officer and so we all three went to boarding schools.

I was at 3, Peter was at 2 and Paul was at 1. We all went to early schools before boarding.

So school holidays were a real treat for us as we were at home with Mum & Dad and with each other. So, for example when we lived in N.Ireland (Dad flew Shackletons for Coastal Command from RAF Ballykelly) we had our 'gangs' cycling round the RAF Married Quarters.

Being both RAF children and boarding school 'brats' we were all quite used to making friends fairly easily and quickly and together.

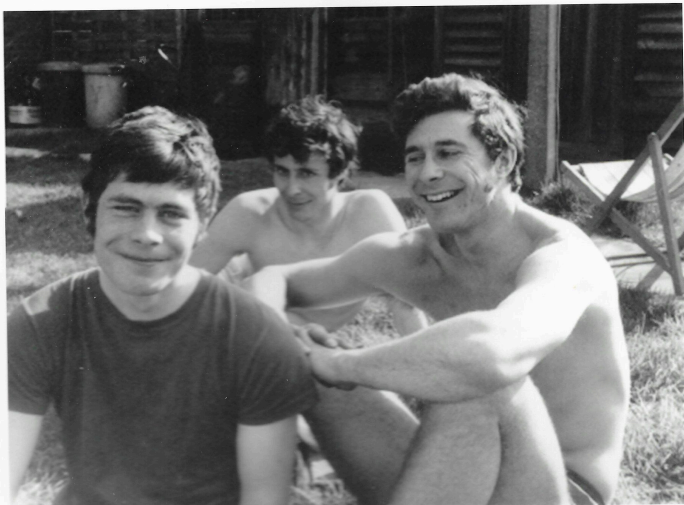
I don't remember too many squabbles though an angry Peter asking Mum to tell me off (for taking his girlfriend out) sticks in my memory. Peter was 13 and I 15 I think

We both rather doted on Paul and remember his first days at school.

Paul is our family 'genealogist' and when Peter was really ill with Motor Neurone in 2014 – dying in January 2015 –

(<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/distinguished-journalist-peter-carvosso-67-dies-1.2072520>)

made a beautiful pictorial book which he named "We three brothers." I was able to visit Peter in Blackrock Clinic, Dublin twice and it was both a deeply sad time and a happy memories time with the book.



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My First Day of School

I don't remember which was my first school but presume it was Nursery or Playschool when we lived in Bristol. Sadly I don't have the dates of when we moved from Bristol (where I was born on 5th June 1945)

I do remember being at a school in Brean and In Weston-Super-Mare (One called Walliscott Road which Mum told me I really didn't like)

So first really 'stand out' school was St Peter's Court Prep. School in Burgess Hill and I do remember 1st day there especially because I had to be responsible for younger brother Peter. Must have been sometime around May 1953

The Teacher Who Made a Difference

Several really good teachers and some who didn't help me at all. Especially good was Mr. Porter at St Peter's Court prep school. He taught us history and made it such fun learning so much so that I both loved history and now, as an 80 year old, describe myself as a Lifelong Learner.

Mr Porter was Australian and interested us in Tennis as there were two young 18 year olds, Ken Rosewall & Lew Hoad who were Wimbledon champions -singles and doubles

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lew_Hoad

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Rosewall

So Tennis has been a lifetime sport (Cpt. of 2nd 6 at Brentwood etc) and interest in Wimbledon.

Subjects I Shined In

I enjoyed most of the subjects we studied at school though was not especially good at any . At Prep school we had a very good Australian History teacher (Mt Porter). He made History fun and so I have always liked it. At King Alfreds (1957/8) a really rather unhelpful Maths teacher did not inspire --had a rap on the knuckles if you got a sum wrong etc
Strange I ended up with my first job as a trainee accountant. Ruth/Mum/Nana and I were asked by Rachel & Tim when they were younger to tell us about our school reports. I seem to remember that whilst Ruth's was rather glowing mine was not.

Beyond the Classroom: My Extracurricular Adventures

At the various schools I went to (7 day schools up to aged 7-then 3 boarding schools to aged 18) whilst the main learning went on 'in the classroom' life lessons also, of course, developed through the other parts of school life.

There was naturally more of these 'extracurricular activities' in the three boarding schools as we were there all the time for a term at a time.

So I especially remember the friendships -at the three boys boarding schools mainly with other boys though we had limited links with girls (I dated one or two during term time, including Susan Brooks - one of the Master's daughters at Brentwood).

Then all the different 'clubs & societies' -book club, drama club (acted in 3 school plays), CCF(RAF section) with at least two visits to RAF stations for 'camps', scouts with weekly troop meetings and regular camps during the school holidays. I went to 3 in Switzerland - one after I had left school when I was invited back as Quartermaster.

BRENTWOOD



SCHOOL



STANDING

WHITESIDE

CAROSSO

ROTHON

SOLE

SITTING

FRANCIS

BULL

TEE

BRANE

LINTNER

School: A Joyful Journey or a Tough Challenge?

Generally , I think, a joyful journey though there were some difficult times –especially at King Alfred’s School , Wantage which was a little ‘brutal at times’

Caning was the norm in those days – on bottom & hands depending on the teacher & severity of offense/reason for caning. Friendships were very important and I remember some other boys as good friends. Even got back in touch recently with some from Prep School and formed an old boys Facebook group. (St Peter’s Court)
Generally enjoyed the lessons though never excelled.

The Moment I Discovered Parenthood

It was such a sense of happiness –especially as Ruth had had a miscarriage in 1977– and thanks, to God, for what was to come. Our dear Rachel was born on 21st August 1978 and our lovely Tim just under two years later on 10th July 1980.

Both at Queen Charlottes Hospital when we were living in Chelsea during my curacy.

What an adventure parenthood is – ongoing too, of course.

So many happy memories mixed with a few hard times along the way.

We never had much money (clergymen rarely earn much) but we tried to use it the best way we could for our daily living, their schooling and our short family holidays.

I'm sure we weren't always the best of parents but always we tried to be loving, kind and guiding into God's plans for their lives.



Baby Rachel in our Flat garden at Chelsea

Facing My Fears of Parenthood

I really don't remember but assume they would have been about what it would mean for us (Ruth and I) and how to be a parent-- perhaps with differing experiences of our own growing years. I think when our two wonderful children were born we learnt as we went along and it depended on the needs of each of them. Fears of 'not being a good parent' were there probably as we made mistakes and I'm sure that we sought advice from grandparents and other family and friends. I think we always tried to be loving and kind. I remember we sometimes got rather frustrated and unnecessarily cross with Rachel & Tim from time to time but my memories are predominantly of the joy of being a parent. As they say 'the proof of the pudding' and we are immensely proud of our two children in who they have become.



An Unforgettable Parenting Moment

What a difficult question to answer as there were so many and so to pick one out would be rather invidious. Two of the special moments though may give a flavour of the enjoyment of all of them.

The birth of both Rachel & Tim were both so memorable for me as an amazed Dad (at the wonder of childbirth and such thankfulness to Ruth – and God – for such a wonderful gift)

An unusual memory of holding Rachel, shortly after her birth, at the window of the delivery room in Queen Charlotte's hospital and explaining to her some London landmarks we could see from there,

Then Tim's 4th birthday at Tawstock at his party, with friends from the parish, when he was playing with them out in the garden and I was roped in to give him (and several of his friends) wheelbarrow rides around the garden at the Rectory.

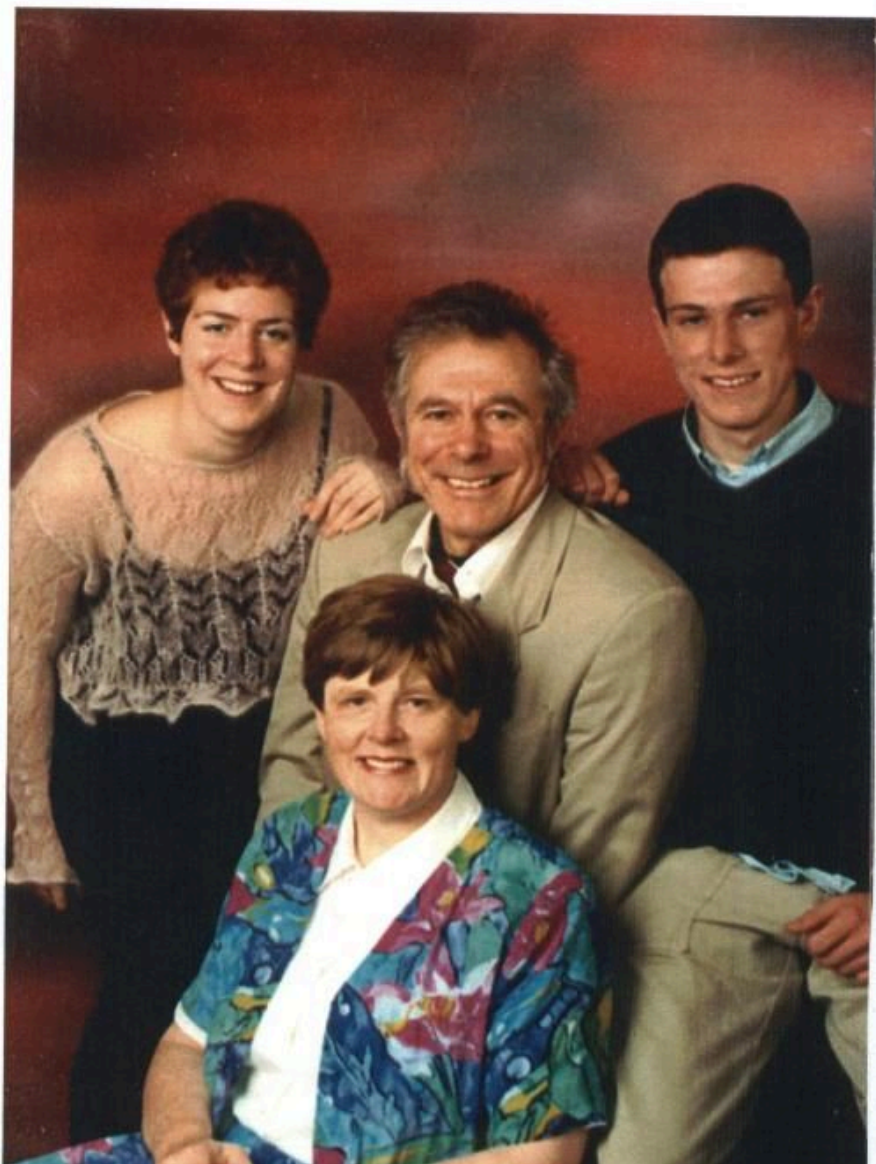
It all makes me nostalgic and maybe wanting to write a notebook of many others.



Instilling Core Values in My Children

Our two children, Rachel & Tim, are now in their mid 40's so we hope the values they learnt as they were growing up (from us, other family members – grandparents, uncles/aunts +) and their own contemporaries through school & University life etc are now helping them with their own families.

We tried to help them to be loving, kind, caring and respectful towards themselves and others. I expect we made some mistakes but, as they both now seem to embody those values, we are very proud parents.



The transformative journey of parenthood.

Maybe this question could be answered more objectively by those who know me best. First my parents and then Ruth.

Subjectively I think the main change has to have been in responsibility. So firstly in falling in love with Ruth and getting married – at South Baddesley in 1975 – and learning how to care for her. Then as Rachel and Tim came into our lives we had to learn how to be parents and this ,of course, was both an enjoyable and hard learning journey. Our own parents were there whilst they were growing up and so we had some advice/help in visits and holidays in Lymington with Granny and Granpa Leech and Rustington with Grandad Arthur; Granny Joy – who had divorced him in 1976 – was living close to us in Chelsea when they were born.

This responsibility has , I think, helped me to become more caring as a person and now at 80 to look back with thankfulness for those 20 years from that great day in 1975.

Now as the saying goes 'we are growing old gracefully' together and happy with what our two lovely children have become.

Subjectively again and as part of my Christian/spiritual journey perhaps I have always tried to seek God's guidance – though sometimes still trying to my own way – because I know it is always the best. One of the best ways to grow into that guidance/trust has been through accepting/enjoying these new responsibilities.



The house that built my childhood memories.

I'm not quite sure how to answer this as there were quite a few (Dad being in RAF all my childhood) and they were each home at the time. Perhaps the longest were the three boarding schools as each RAF posting, & hence Married Quarter for that RAF station, were for a maximum of 3 years.

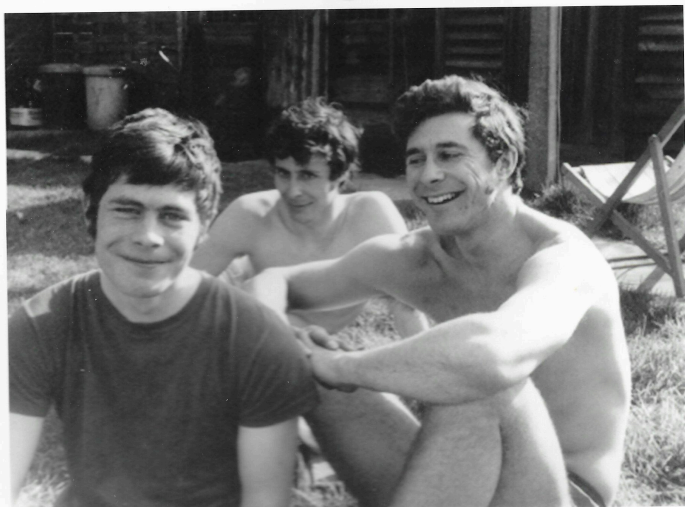
So during holidays from those 3 boarding schools I remember RAF Hornchurch, RAF Brampton, RAF Marham especially.

Boarding school years were

St Peter's Court, Burgess Hill from 1954/57

King Alfred's , Wantage for 13 months I think during 1957 & 1958

Brentwood 1958 to 1963



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Paul, Peter & me in garden at RAF Stanmore

The Essence of Family

For me Family has been and is the bedrock of my life.

There are many ways of understanding what family actually is but for me it contains all those 'family members' who share their lives with me.

I am now a Grandad and have learnt , during my 80 years, through the different family roles I have experienced what 'childhood' means with loving parents to help and guide the young John as he grew up to through teenage years into young adulthood.

These lessons Jesus told us are crucial to being part of the Big Family – with God our parent and many, many brothers and sisters.

Then as a young man leaving family and learning to be more independent at work and with new friends/acquaintances. A preparation to meet and fall in love with that one special person who will be both a companion for life and share the joys (and occasional sorrows) of bringing a new family into being.

In the process of all this the very heart of 'family' is, for me, learning to love and share so that I may become the person God designed me to be.



Ruth, toddler Rachel, baby Tim & Grandad Arthur

The Pillars of My Family

What a difficult question and my answer is all are important and maybe at different times too.

When I was young, for example, my Mum (Granny Joy) was the first who was important – vital as she brought me into this world as my first contact with it. Then fed me and loved me into a toddler. My Dad (Grandad Arthur) was also very much there to help nurture the young John Charles.

Then of course my two brothers – Peter as only two years younger was a constant companion and playmate. Younger by 7 years, Paul, was first a baby brother to care for before a companion/playmate like Peter.

Then meeting Ruth and starting our own very special family life with both Rachel and Timothy being born and having their very early life in Chelsea.

So the circle turns and we are the 'oldies' and grandparents to Tim & Hannah's two wonderful children, Arthur & Alice.



Dad & Mum with their 3 grown up sons

Treasured Family Traditions

I am finding this question rather difficult because I'm not sure what makes a 'tradition' and how/when does it become one? Thinking about things we value/valued as a family, then, maybe a clue for me is – things 'spiritual and kind' . Within the family and going beyond the family.

So worship – showing the worth-ship of – God by daily prayer and weekly church . And expressing this in the way we live and in our relationships. So plenty of forgiveness and new beginnings and trying to allow the Fruit of the Spirit as Jesus shows especially in the Sermon on the Mount and Paul summarises in Galatians (Ch. 5 v.22...)

I would hope that respect and listening to each other can become central and vital to our relationships, for them to flourish and grow deeper.

Sharing stories – from books , on the Radio/TV/You Tube etc – is and has been really important.

As a child I very much enjoyed our regular moving and meeting new people. 3 boarding schools and 5/6 earlier schools and now over 30 different homes and neighbours.

Was this a family tradition – it certainly was what we knew because of RAF life.

Family gatherings have become treasured whether they are planned or unplanned. Planned include holidays with parents (grandparents to Rachel & Tim); family baptisms, weddings and funerals,

Recently, for example, at Angmering for Anne Carvosso's funeral (May 2026)



Tim & Hannah's Wedding on 15th May 2010

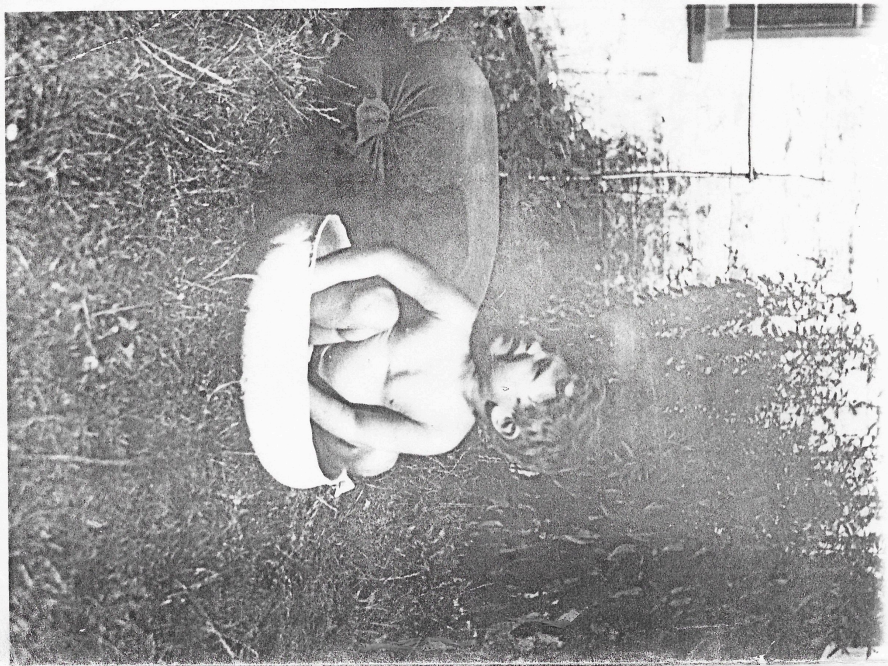
Unforgettable Family Adventures

In my birth family we had a major family adventure when we travelled over with Mum to join Dad in his new RAF posting at RAF Heany in Southern Rhodesia. I was just over 5 and Peter 3 . We travelled by boat(Union Castle Line) from Southampton to Cape Town and it took 3 weeks.

In our family perhaps it would be best to ask our children Rachel & Tim which they especially enjoyed – visits to Ruth's family and visits to mine: holidays to Butlins (2 to Minehead and 4 to Bognor) For me all were enjoyable because they were holidays from the busy-ness of Parish Life and we had quality time together.



Young Peter on trip over to South Africa



Baby John at 60, Selsdon Rd. & young John on board ship to S. Rhodesia

Friends

The old aphorism says 'If you want a friend Be a friend' and have tried to live up to this in my life.

There are some helpful Bible snippets about this – in the book of Proverbs(17:17 & 18:24 & 27:17) – and of course the famous parable of Jesus – when asked 'Who is my neighbour' – called the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)

It has been hard at times, of course, but I know it to be important personally and so value the joy friendship brings with it.

A Journey Through My Oldest Friendship

I don't have any particular 'old' friendships though there are quite a few that have lasted through many years and several that can be re-alighted when circumstances bring us into contact again.

An example of old friendships is one that now continues through Zoom each Tuesday at 1200 for an hour – and a once a year visit. We were all youth group members 60 years ago (Fellowship of Youth of Presbyterian/URC churches)

So shared many weekends/youth camps ++ over those teenage /early 20 years.

Our particular FOY group has gradually dwindled in number over the last few years and there are now 4 of us left.

I do feel blessed to enter into 'friendships' fairly easily and quickly. Maybe RAF childhood, with constant moving of house and groups of people around, has something to do with this as we would have to make friendships quickly before the friend and their family moved on.

Boarding schools also helped I'm sure though I haven't kept up with many from those years.

Of course family friendships are often the closest and most enduring.



Family friendships

Cultivating Lifelong Friendships

I'm not sure about 'lifelong' but I enjoy the company of most people I meet and keep this 'friendship' for as long as I can. They might choose not to and that's OK too.

Being interested in the friend is, to me, the key to cultivating this friendship and it develops naturally as time and circumstance allow.

I actually call lots of people 'my friend' because I am happy to be their friend if they choose.

The aphorism, oft quoted, is If you want a friend be a friend and I just found this interesting and helpful website when remembering this

<https://www.jollynotes.com/joyful-living/if-you-want-friends-be-friendly/>

A Friend in Need

In 1963 I started as an articled clerk with a firm of Chartered Accountants called Stanley King & Co. (in Gt Portland St, London). The articles were for 5 years and alongside the daily work (0915 to 1700 (Mon-Fri.) I had to study at night using a correspondence course from Ffoulks Lynch.

Not the best student I kept failing the exams (Intermediate /Finals part 1 (Twice) & Finals part 2 (Twice)

My good friend , Malcolm Brownlie- a top class student -kept me studying "You can do it , John"

Thank You good friend (still now 50 years later)



Malcolm Brownlie, me, John Brownlie

The Traits I Cherish in a Friend

For me these 4 qualities in a friend are the most important

Listening – respect – kindness – honesty.

So I must live them too.

I do like to be as friendly as I can with everyone and often meeting someone for the first time will call him/her 'My Friend'

What a challenge and responsibility each of us has to share the gifts of friendship in & to our world.

Some helpful Biblical guidelines :-

St. Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit as

Love/Joy/Peace/Patience/Kindness/Goodness/Fairhtulness/Gentleness and Self-Conrol – Ch.5 v22

Jesus told the crowds that came to hear him – and still says the same to us today –

You are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)

You are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:12)

My working career

When I left Brentwood School, in July 1963, I had no career in mind so my Dad (Grandad Arthur) took me to see the Public Schools Appointment Bureau. After completing their 'aptitude tests' the advisor said that I had two main career paths open to me – some sort of social work or one of the professions. Knowing little about 'the professions' apart from my reading in Dickens about Accountants Dad then took me to Stanley King & Co. in Great Portland Street where I had an interview with Mr Apps (junior partner) and with Dad signed for 5 year articles.

It was a really enjoyable training (though I actually took 8 years to get qualified): a very good friend in the firm (Lal) and interesting and varied work.

I learnt a lifelong skill in accounts & tax. Also enjoyment of work, whatever it was.

Driven by Passion: My Career Motivations

I have had several careers during my 80 years.

1. After leaving school in July 1963 my Dad (Arthur) took me to talk with the Public Schools Appointments Bureau to decide what career to pursue. There I was given a fairly extensive test and interview about what things I enjoyed.

The results were that I could either try a 'Profession' or some sort of helping profession.

As I had only any experience of Accountancy (and that mainly from reading novels, by Charles Dickens and others, featuring Accountants) and not Law – that was my choice.

Dad took me to Stanley King and Company in Great Portland Street (London) where we signed 5 year articles,

I studied at night for my Chartered Accountancy exams (taking 8 years to qualify)

I worked for 4 firms of Chartered Accountants between 1963 and 1974 ending up as Tax Manager of Neville Hovey and Gardener in Hove.

2. I received God's call to the next stage of my career whilst at Neville Hovey & Gardener and went to Theological College (Oak Hill in North London) in 1975.

3. Before going to college I had to be sponsored by the Diocese of Chichester as I was living at home with Mum (Joy) & Dad in Rustington, West Sussex – Dad was manager of the RAF Convalescent Home called Princess Marina House.

But as the Archdeacon of Chichester was unwell I worked at St Richards and Graylingwell Hospitals in Chichester. for 8 months until he was able to interview me before the Diocese could sponsor me.

There I met Ruth, who worked at St Richards as a Radiographer. We fell in love and married in 1975 so were able to go to Oak Hill

together.

4. After three years at College I started my Church of England ministry as a curate in Chelsea. Rev. John Smith was my 'training' vicar and he was so gentle, challenging and encouraging.

Then a short service commission of two and half years as an RAF Chaplain and as a Vicar in Tawstock for 26 (1984-2010)

5. After retiring from Tawstock I had another 15 years helping out in various other churches (3 inter-regnums)

What motivates me is both the enjoyment of the job/work and the people I am privileged to work with.



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March 2006

May 2006

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At Tawstock – Mum, Rachel, Ruth, me , Sarah – with 'Fred'

My Dream Workplace.

What a strange question and it depends what is understood by work. In my life there have been many different types of workplace (places where I have been involved in all sorts of work) including the home/school/office/other people's homes/the stage/the great outdoors ++

Work is what I consider everyday living to be. Sometimes it is a formal set of tasks such as at school or in the office. Mostly though it seems to be informal and often unscripted/unexpected such as home/other people's homes/the great outdoors.

All are, I'm blessed and happy to say, places of fairly enjoyable experience and so while not called 'Dream Workplaces' are the right place for the work involved.

Managing Work Stress and Pressure

Although retired now (80) I still try to follow , as far as possible, the helpful advice once given by a parishioner. 'Do what you can, when you can and try to stay calm about what you can't do'

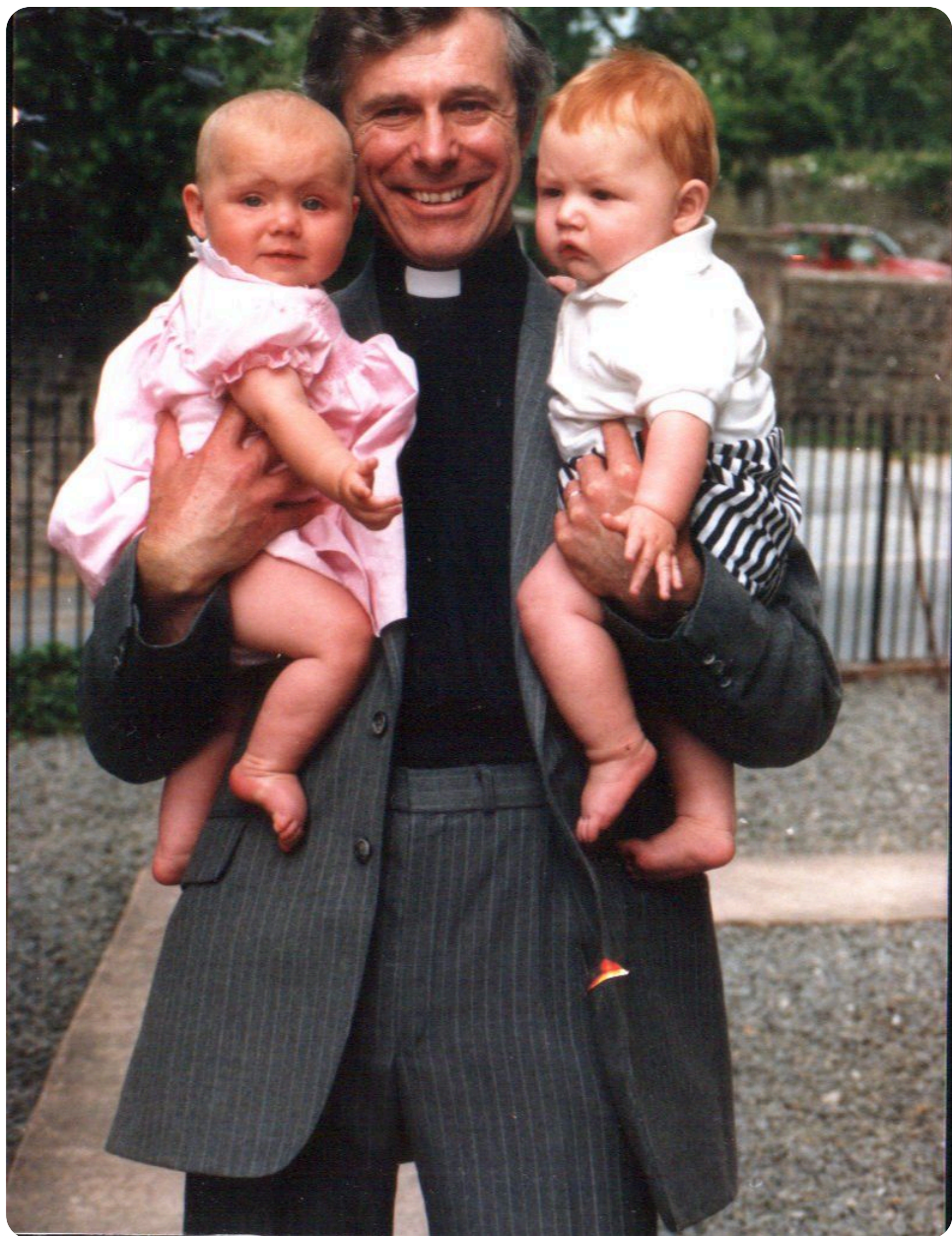
Looking back there are several times I felt stressed by trying to do 'everything'. Now as the aging process naturally slows me down it's quietness and listening which are the things that are so attractive. Learning more about Being – a favourite Bible verse, for example is Ps. 16 verse 10

'Be still and know that I am God'

One of the old familiar hymns I find myself humming quite often is 'New Every Morning' and the verse which reads

'The Trivial Round, The Common Task , Will furnish all we need to ask.'

I incorporated this into the title of my memories website
www.trgow.net



A Bishops Tawton Baptism photo - ? Davies being baptised (little boy was Sam Rose)

A Defining Career Milestone

Maybe two as there have been two careers. So to finally becoming a Chartered Accountant after 8 years studying and mentoring in 1971 - I carried on for another 3 years before applying to become a Church of England clergyman and after 3 years studying at Theological College was ordained into the Church in 1978 at St Paul's Cathedral in London.



Graduation from Oak Hill College - 1978

The Joys of My Hobbies and Passions

Hobbies are more sedentary these days (15 years into retirement) though I still enjoy a daily walk of at least 4000 steps using the Pedometer challenge--708 day streak of 4000 or over today (2.2.2026)

As I'm an avid Lifelong Learner there are always about 2 courses running concurrently. I use 6 different learning platforms(Great Courses, Audible, Sounds True, The Shift Network, Wisdom for Life, The Food Revolution). The variety is so enjoyable.

Whilst I was working, one very enjoyable weekly hobby was belonging to the Barnstaple Amateur Operatic Society. I was both a chorus member and treasurer for around 5 years. A weekly singing evening leading up to intensive rehearsals and finally the productions at the Queens Theatre.

So I sang and acted in 4 Gilbert & Sullivan operettas (Mikado, Pirates of Penzance, Iolanthe and Trial by Jury) . We also produced Die Fledermous --lovely music and show but not 'box office'. In retirement I kept up the singing in a choir called 'The Slightly Different Choir' and acting with a Torrington based group called SAPTA (a contemporary dance group for older folks.)

Ruth reminds me that I have seemingly 'blanked out' a life-long passion for collecting books which eventually resulted in joining Barry Evetts (the founder) in a literacy charity called Book Relief in 2006. We started in Appledore and moved to Bideford 12/13 years later. The Bookshop in Mill Street is now definitely thriving. We had several overseas projects in the early Years (Project Pearls and Books by the Palletload for African Children being perhaps two of the most memorable) and now focus on UK schools and libraries by giving substantial grants.



SDC at Atlantic Village

I cannot remember when I first started walking – a favourite hobby – but it must have been in Bristol that Mum & Dad taught me. Now (at 81) it's an enjoyable daily routine to use my Pedometer for the regular 4,000 steps – often more – around the Torrington Commons where this picture was taken. The quietness, birdsong, beauty of trees and flowers, and thinking/praying time – essential in a noisy and needy world. I'm not very good at personal gardening (and luckily we have smallish front & back gardens – but do enjoy pottering and seeing other gardens. RHS Rosemoor is nearby for an inspiring outing.

i



Wonderfully green walk

The Evolution of My Hobbies and Passions

Evolution is a helpful word – to apply to hobbies and passions – as it underlines both their changing nature as well as their variety over the years.

So , for example, a younger John had many outdoor hobbies (gliding, sports – especially tennis – scout camping in UK and Switzerland etc) whilst the older John outdoors is slower and often walking with a trusted stick.

In earlier years I enjoyed school plays, school dances & choirs and latter years have enjoyed contemporary dancing with SAPTA as well as singing/acting with the Barnstaple Amateur Operatic Society.

I have always enjoyed reading and that has now evolved to both listening to books on Audible and being involved with a literacy charity (<https://www.bookreliefuk.org>) since 2006.

Perhaps my major hobby/passion is/has been Christian living/work. Some of the things I have been involved with are on my memoroes website(www.trgow.net)



Karaoke in Japan with Rachel



Atherington Reunion (2002)

Balancing Time for My Passions

I have just been doing some computer housekeeping and noted in desktop file **My Hobbies which include**

Lifelong Learning (over 200 courses still to complete)

Singing & acting (SAPTA/BAOS/SDC +)

Listening & Talking (Zoom has been & is so helpful too)

I often remember the words from C.Ralph Allison (Brentwood School Headmaster) as robes of office were given to prefects.

'Whatever you find to do, do with all your might, for the good of your house and the good of the school, without selfishness & without fear'

So trying to use my Time wisely is really important and I am still learning how.



Tawstock Study



Brother Peter's Wedding to Gemma

Journey of a Lifetime

Very difficult to pick one because there have been many memorable journeys over the years,

So, for example in the 50's – train journey from Cape Town to Southern Rhodesia after the sea crossing from UK to the tip of South Africa.

In the 1960's scout camps in Switzerland with Brentwood School scout group and again to Switzerland to stay with Swiss friends living just outside Geneva.

In the 70's highlighted by honeymoon trip to Tiree and in the last 5 years of the decade trips to our families with our two young children.

In the 80's & 90's maybe our regular Butlins holidays with Rachel & Tim (Minehead and Bognor Regis) together with visits to Ruth's parents in Lymington & mine in Sussex.

Perhaps the three major personal trips were 1. Hiking with my FOY friend Malcolm Brownlie to stay with Swiss friends Heidi & Erwin Eggenburger in 1972 and 2. Holiday in Israel with Torrington Methodist Church in 2015. 3. Visiting Rachel in Tokyo (sadly Ruth didn't want to come)



In Tokyo visiting Rachel

A Journey That Changed My Life



Holy Land visit

So many enjoyable travel experiences from my childhood trip with Mum & Peter to South Africa to join Dad in his posting to RAF Heany in Southern Rhodesia and then holidays from Boarding School at various RAF stations (and one with the Headmaster's family at Oyle's Mill, Lyme Regis)

Then my 4 trips to Switzerland - 2 on school Scout camps and two to visit the Eggenburger's in St Gallen. The first hitch-hiking

with Malcolm Brownlie for a visit and the second on my own to join them on a Swiss family holiday.

Next with Ruth, and later Rachel & Tim, on visits to our parents in Rustington and Lymington. The Rustington ones usually coinciding with my Butlin's chaplaincy duties.

I must finish this brief round up of holiday experiences with my 'bucket list' trip to the Holy Land with the Torrington Methodist church shortly into our retirement.

The Destination of My Dreams and Its Significance

My first reaction to seeing this question was 'heaven' but I suppose that this may mean different things to different people. So perhaps a more general (more earthly?) is to be where I am loved and valued for being 'me'. There I feel at home, relaxed and able to enjoy the company, the place, the conversation ++ There are , very fortunately for me, quite a few places which I count as being somewhere I want to be. Family homes are perhaps the most prominent (Rachel & Niumaia in Japan, Tim, Hannah, Arthur and Alice in St Albans) Ruth's brother and sisters, Anne (my Dad's widow) Cousin Elaine and many other family members.

Of course, too there are quite a few friends –especially now in Devon where we have been for the last 44 years now).

Perhaps the place that I love best , on earth, is here in Torrington with my wonderful Ruth.

Aren't I so fortunate ?



On Saunton Sands

Travel and holidays

Getting better and less forgetful (Or maybe not so worried about forgetting 'things') as the years and holidays progressed.

Usually have travelled by car but occasionally by train – though usually on 'solo' trips (Conferences +)

There have been some particular holidays over the years that I especially remember and many regular holidays that I don't especially but were also much enjoyed both for being together with family and friends as well as where we travelled to.

Particular ones were

When Tim & Rachel were young to Parents in Rustington and Lymington. Often the Butlins holidays – Bognor – included Rustington too.

Then further 'family trips' for Ruth and I to parents and then Tim, Hannah, Arthur & Alice.

Rachel has been in Japan now over 20 years and I visited in 2017 – she has been back to us several times and since being married Niumaia has been able to join her. Notably for our Golden Wedding in 2025 and my 80th.

Memorable holidays for me have been to Switzerland (twice) in early 70's and Holy Land in 2014.



Various holidays

Cherished Family Traditions

As a child the family traditions that were important to me were varied. So I enjoyed both the daily relationships with my two brothers Peter and Paul both at home and away together at boarding schools (Brentwood being where we all went together but St Peter's Court where Pater and I went before that) And the times with Mum & Dad – often on different RAF stations in UK and Southern Rhodesia (1951/2) – talking, learning, holidaying, having friends round. I wish I had a clearer memory of much of that time.

Then our own family with such enjoyment and some challenging times as Rachel & Tim grew up. Earliest days for them in Chelsea, then the two RAF stations of Cosford and Chivenor until they were 6 and 4 when we moved to Tawstock, and finally their school and young adult years at Tawstock in North Devon. Holidays were shared between visiting grandparents (Lymington & Rustington) and Butlins (Minehead and Bognor).



With Arthur and Alice at Rosemoor

A Memorable Childhood Celebration

Several family celebrations during my younger years were especially memorable. Perhaps seeing my two baby brothers for the first time though I can hardly remember Peter's first homecoming in November 1947 (born on 24th)

I do remember Paul's in Southern Rhodesia (RAF Heany) in April 1952 as I was nearly 7.

We sailed back to England from Cape Town shortly afterwards – quite a celebration in itself especially crossing the Equator! Holiday time from Boarding school involved our railway journeys back to wherever Mum & Dad were the living. The holidays went too quickly and then we were back on the school run from either Victoria Stn (to St Peter's Court 1953/57) or Liverpool St. (to Brentwood 1958/1963)



Peter and Paul

The Cultural Tradition That Shaped My Life

Probably the RAF way of life. Experienced first as an RAF child (Dad joined up in 1942 and retired as a Wing Commander in the 1970's). So we were at many RAF stations during my childhood and young adulthood.

Then I had a short-service commission as an RAF Padre from 1981 to 1984 serving on 2 RAF stations - Cosford with senior padre's Sirr and Noble & then as Stn Chaplain at RAF Chivenor) The ethos of the RAF was all around me and has no doubt profoundly affected me - especially perhaps in making quick friendships: even though , as in the RAF, often temporary.





Marking Milestones and Achievements

An example of a very special lifetime milestone was our Golden Wedding last August when we had two lovely family events. A meal out with Tim , Hannah , Arthur and Alice. We went to the Royal George in Appledore for a delicious meal together. Then Rachel came over from Japan in May to visit family. and friends. Niumaia joined her during his school holidays and we had another celebratory meal – this time in Westward Ho. Another special wider family gathering was at St Alban's Rugby Club to share a short 'wedding blessing' service for Rachel and Niumaia and have a family party/meal in the Old Albanians Sports Club afterwards. These reminded me again how important family gatherings are and of those when I was young at Selsdon Road (my Granny Lily and Grandad Charlie's house)



Golden Wedding celebration at Pier House, Westward Ho!

The Role of Spirituality in My Life

Since I was 6 or 7, living in Southern Rhodesia where Padre Cook was our RAF Stn padre, I remember that the Bible was important to me. The other day I found a New Testament that he gave to me as one of his Sunday School pupils.

So learning that God loved me and had a special purpose for my life began to become important.

I had polio while at RAF Heany and through the skill of the doctors & nurses and Mum & Dad's prayers I believe He saved me.

Now, 70 years later, I am realising what this all meant.

1. A loving and nurturing family whilst growing up
2. Happy school career
3. Enjoyable and challenging young adult years
4. Very interesting first career in Accountancy
5. Meeting and marrying such a lovely wife in Ruth- now over 50 years ago
6. Then being called by God to serve in His church. What a privilege and joyful (with tears sometimes too) 32 years
7. Having two amazing children in Rachel & Timothy and now Tim & Hannah's two children & our very special grandchildren -Arthur and Alice.

All this, and more, has been part of a spiritual journey which is what Jesus called 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)

Oh yes, also the three colleges which helped consolidate my Christian faith. The first two full time and the third home learning with some residential weekends.

Christian Life College (1970/73)

OakHill College (1975/78)

Sarum College (1990/95)



Ruth and me sharing Christingles at Tawstock one Christmas

A Profound Connection Beyond Myself

I love my daily walks – trying to keep to at least 4000 steps a day – and especially because there are many quiet moments for ‘communing’ –

with God: with my inner ‘me’ : with the birds/flowers/trees..

So usually my hour’s walk is so refreshing and brings this ‘connection beyond myself’ .

I also gratefully notice these moments in unexpected moments – usually on my own but sometimes in the middle of conversations with Ruth or others.

Often my response is one of tears at the ‘transcendence’ of that moment but always of deep contentment/joy too.



The Evolution of My Spiritual Journey

At the age of writing (80) and within the confines of what a lovely Bible verse describes as 'Now I know in part..(1 Corinthians 13:12) my spiritual journey seems to me to have developed through several frames of reference.

I need to use semi-theological terms – without explaining them in depth – that to me summarise 3 distinct 'stages'. They are, of course, still part of the wholeness which deepening spiritual understanding can bring.

1. Evangelical & Charismatic – epitomised by 2 periods of training within these 'frames of reference'. at Christian Life College in Dorset and then Oak Hill Theological ordination training in Southgate, London. Both were 3 year courses.

2. Liturgical – mainly as a priest within the Church of England for 47 years. Conducting services , preaching and pastoral visiting has been the bedrock of my Christian Ministry. It has also encompassed worship and preaching within other Christian denominations especially Methodist and Baptist churches.

3. Mystical and inward – part of this journey was a part-time course at Sarum College (Christian Spirituality) over 5 years whilst I was at Tawstock. Learning about the mystics of our faith was a bedrock to continuing practice of the 'inward relationship with God' and is especially now within the 'inner stillness' which I find daily to be essential, and formally so in Meetings for Worship within the Quakers where I now go most Sundays.



Defining Spiritual Experiences

The earliest sense of 'beyondness but also within-ness' – which is a rough definition, for me, of spirituality – was being in hospital in Southern Rhodesia with polio. Mum and Dad (also, no doubt, Peter) along with many other family and friends were both **caring** for me in hospital and **praying** for my recovery.

Then at school (Brentwood) when helping the chaplain at Holy Communion services seeing a sense of '**longing**' in many as they received the bread and wine.

I was also going to Sunday School at RAF Heany and still have the New Testament given me by Padre Cook. So these things helped a growing longing for this reality of God which I would now describe as His Transcendence and Immanence. Then 47 years (1978–2025) as a working Priest within the Church of England – 32 as a full-time curate/vicar and 15 in retirement helping churches without a full-time vicar.

So, using a Biblical idea (from 1 Corinthians 13 verse 12) I am looking forward to the realities, which I have been 'glimpsing' during my journey of 80 years, when I am called home to the One who has been the constant source of spiritual joy (with some sorrow too) as the motto on our gravestone reminds me.

In His Presence is fullness of Joy (Ps.16v11)

Turning Failure into Wisdom

I have often acted too fast and should remember my Mum & Dad's advice – Engage brain before speaking/acting or , in the words of the lovely old hymn

Take Time to be Holy – Speak oft with Thy Lord

But I am learning

So hopefully the wisdom of listening (to my heart/to God) is growing with it's lovely results of caring and acting with deeper love and compassion.



August 2005
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
 22 23 24 25 26 27 28
 29 30 31

July 2005

September 2005
 1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
 26 27 28 29 30

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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Loving parents (Joy and Arthur) with baby John

Strength Through Adversity

None especially stand out but there are & have been several difficult experiences that have been 'triggering' and I hope helped me to grow in understanding, wisdom & compassion.

Perhaps the most difficult have been within family relationships (and to a lesser extent relationships with friends)

Usually my 'ego' (sense of self) has, it seemed to me at the time, needed to be defended.. I learnt more about this 'triggering' through taking a very challenging course called 'Quantum Living'. So I ended up by both saying sorry – or rather, as often was the case being 'spoken to by The Holy Spirit within' enabling me to have the grace to apologise – and relishing the trigger the next time it came around and I could recognise it before it reaped it's destructiveness.

Sometimes I have been so wrongheaded – an example was in the parish when the PCC had to bring in the Archdeacon to adjudicate my wrong decision – and it's good to have family and friends to help me see this.

Embracing Growth Beyond Comfort.

When I retired in 2010 I had 3 things on my 'bucket list'. The first – to go to the Holy Land – was realised with a wonderful trip with Torrington Methodist Church in 2014.

The second was 'to do something outside my comfort zone' and serendipitously in 2014 a contemporary dance group for the elderly was beginning at the Plough in Torrington/ SAPTA met weekly in the dance studio at the Plough for 5 years and our choreographer, Cathy Richards, reassured us when we started. 'This is just for you , so don't worry about others seeing what you are doing'. Whew! what a relief .

But then Cathy started encouraging us (there were 6 ladies and 2 men) by saying we were progressing well and might consider showing our families and friends how we were enjoying this new challenge.

So eventually we did 2 shows (one at the Plough and the other at Queens Theatre, Barnstaple) made a film and danced with some local children in a wood outside Umberleigh ('Ode to the Ash')

It was such an enjoyable 5 years.

I have some of the videos on my memories website (www.trgow.net) and we created a SAPTA facebook page There is a link to this on the website.

I have ,temporarily, forgotten what the third bucket list challenge was – though I think it is till awaiting completion.

Ruth's addendum – ?learning the piano?



Pirates of Penzance (BAOS) 2005

Navigating Decisions in Uncertain Times

There is certainly so much of both (fear and uncertainty) around – in our world and sometimes personally – it seems very much part of everyday living.

I know that often I am too quick to make decisions based on ‘gut reaction’ and am trying to be more ‘measured’ in my responses.

Prayer – seeking to hear God’s voice – and silence are ways I continually try to use for help in decision making.

Saying sorry for wrong decisions is quite often part of ongoing relationships these days.

I am grateful for the interesting aphorism for us oldies – Older and Wiser. So perhaps that’s part of the answer to this interesting question too.

The Power of Resilience and Perseverance in Achieving Success

I always try to remember what my Dad impressed on me when starting schools: 'Work hard and Play hard' and interpreted it for myself as 'always do your best'.

So I hope this has been one of my guiding principles – I'm sure there have been some giving up times too.

An example of perseverance must be spending 8 years to get qualified as a Chartered Accountant (5 being the normal as 'articles' lasted for 5 years).

Alongside this work ethic has been doing what my heart told me was right. A favourite prayer is

'Teach me, My God and King, in all things thee to see
And what I do in anything to do it as for Thee.'



Resilience in the Parishes

Applying Past Lessons to Present Decisions

This is my last (52nd) question for the generous and interesting MLiB present that Tim , Hannah, Arthur & Alice gave me for my 80th birthday. So at 81 on Friday it has been an enjoyable look back over my life since 5th June 1945, I hope that , as the saying goes, I have grown older and wiser as the years have passed.

It certainly has been both an exciting and a joyful life and it seems such an appropriate quote on the grave at Tawstock where I shall eventually be buried and enter into 'fullness of Joy'.

So some lessons

1. Try to be interested in all who I meet.
2. Try my best in everything I am called to do.
3. Say sorry and mean it when make mistakes. Try to put things right , if possible.

Perhaps that's enough reflection – after all it's how others see my life that will give it especial meaning.

My daily prayer has been the same for some years and , as God loves all equally, I am called to reflect that love through my life:

Teach me , my God & King, in all things thee to see
And what I do in everything to do it as for Thee.



What a happy photo of Rachel, Hannah, Tim, Ruth and me at their wedding.

What's it all about.



The 1990 Wedding Reunion at Tawstock Church

It's been an exciting, challenging and nostalgic looking back through this book and what has struck me most is how Love has been an unspoken(unwritten!) theme.

So many others have been my co-travellers – family, work colleagues , friends. Thank you all for sharing your love, interests, questions, excitements, sorrows with me on my own journey. And now , on the cusp of 81, what's next – the answer to that must be, for me 'Love knows'. I call that Love by the name that I have so often used at the beginning of Wedding Services – GOD.

God is Love

and those who live in Love

live in God

and God lives in them.

(1 John 4 verse 10)