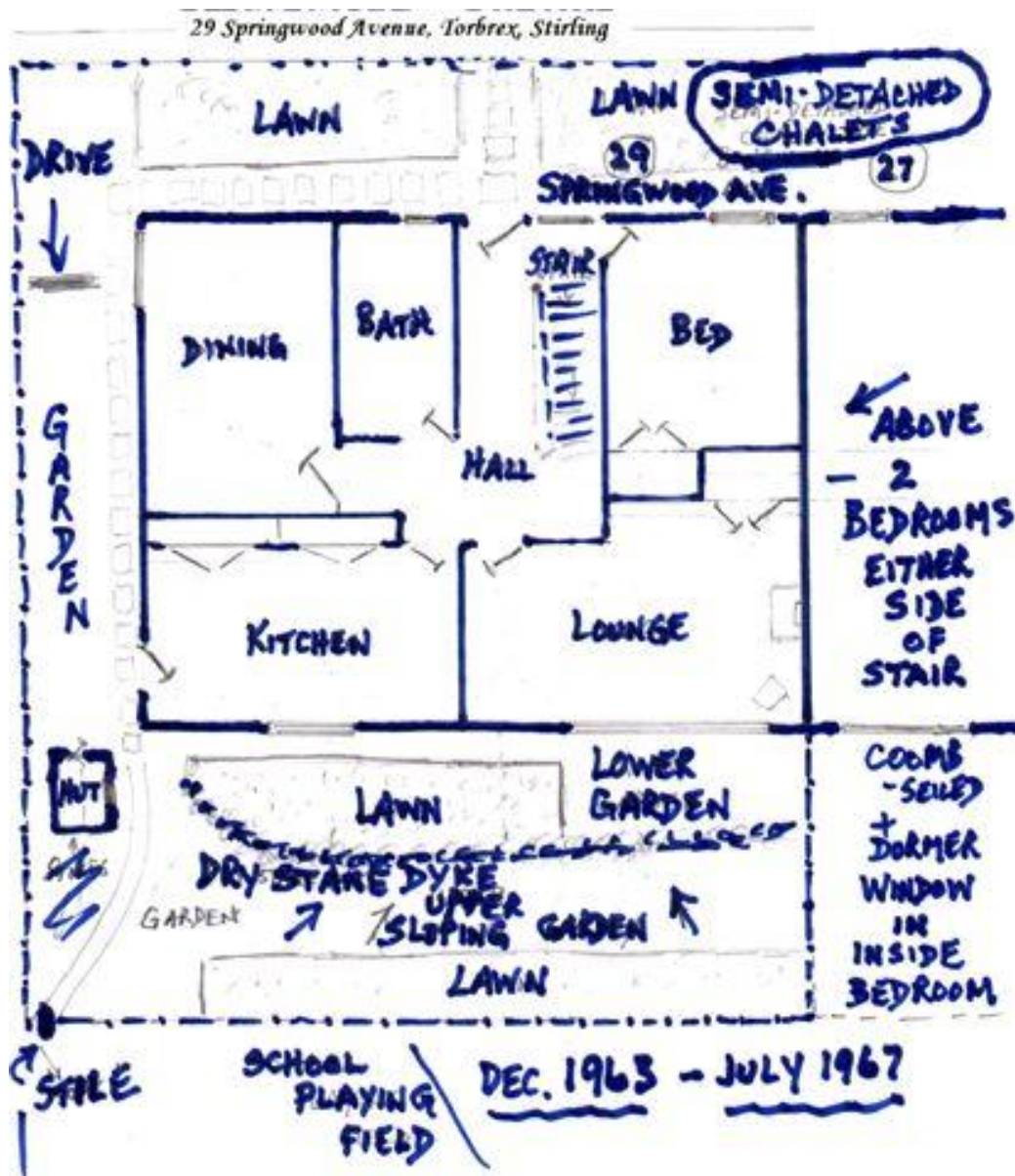


Chapter 67

Spring – Summer 1964

Quite naturally Olive had a period of convalescence through January, 1964, but despite that, she supervised all the remaining carpeting of the house. This essential expense emptied the coffers of our meagre savings to the extent that we were unable to afford any form of central heating or insulation in the small roof spaces of our chalet. Thus it was a coal fire in the lounge and an electric convector for elsewhere ... except for a single bar heater in the kitchen. No warmth rose to the upstairs bedrooms, so a heavy quilt and an electric blanket were our night-time comforters.



As soon as the weather relented a little, I used what spare time I could get away from day-school/night-school commitments, Saturday school and college rugby, to tackle the severely sloping 15 x 10 yard back garden area in preparation for top-soil delivery in the Spring. Essentially, because it was dark from 4.30pm until 8am until March, this meant going hard at it on Sunday afternoons after church. Dad was

a great help manually and together we tried to carry out Olive's designs for the siting of the old 1934 hut, and the building of a dry-stane dyke to hold back most of the slope of sub-soil that ran up to the school playing-field fence. This latter job was planned in order to leave a 'well' type area for a lawn outside the kitchen and lounge windows. Finding big stones around the building site was relatively easy .. but their carriage there-from, and subsequent fashioning into a strong, stable dry-dyke, required not only strength, endurance and skill, but also patience (a commodity that Dad and I were well known not to possess to any great extent!).

Olive's other major activity, apart from keeping warm and doing much appreciated household chores and cooking, was chasing up the site-foreman to improve/replace many of the 'snags' that were cropping-up in the early days of living in a newly built house. And there were plenty, despite the age that completion had taken. The worst turned out to be the poor workmanship revealed by the appearance of damp patches on the main wind-rain-snow-suffering north and west walls. But a call to my rugby pal from Howe of Fife, surveyor Ken Crichton, who had just opened a new service outlet in Stirling, resulted in the removal of three bricks for inspection purposes and the discovery of, not only an inferior quality cement mixture, but also of cement-clogged 'ties' across the cavity wall gap. These of course had been, and were, transporting moisture to the interior plaster boarding. In fact little short of dismantling this grey-bricked 'un-harralded' [un-pebble-dashed] quarter of the house could have repaired the damage already done ... so interior remedial protection was offered and reluctantly accepted. The resultant annual sight of white 'furring' on that dining room wall still haunts me today. However, when we eventually sold the house in summer 1967 to move to Glasgow, we were fortunate that this weakness was not too apparent because of the annual spring-time brushing-down and repainting that we had been forced to undertake.

With this, and other normal day-to-day eat, sleep, work and play matters, not least the ever-growing reminder of a baby now due in June, life tended to be hectic ... to put it mildly! But with great efforts by me [with difficulty!] to continue, as we had decided before marriage, to share the load of housework et al as equally as possible between us, we were in effect a very happy and compatible couple indeed. And of course the excitement of the imminent arrival of our first child just increased our togetherness.

It was the night before the close of the summer school term in the last week of June that Olive suggested that I get her to Maternity at Stirling Royal Infirmary pronto. This we accomplished and I returned yet again to an empty house to await developments. No news had come next morning, nor by lunchtime when I hurried home after school closure. So I put on the TV and started to watch the tennis from Wimbledon ... and fell asleep in the chair! I woke-up a while later with a start looked at the clock and saw it was into 'visiting-time' at Maternity ... rushed over there got to the ward .. and there they were .. mother and son both well.