

## Chapter 72

### Giffnock - Spring and Summer 1968

In the winter term from January to Easter, 1968, we took in a lodger who was housed in the spare bedroom of our Giffnock home. He was one of my school pupils, a delightfully well-behaved ten year old, Martin Purvis, whose parents had been called abroad for work reasons. He also needed English/Maths. tuition, evening meal and breakfast, so his parents' reimbursement of our expenses (*plus*) brought much needed additional income into our fairly impoverished household accounts. In addition, as I had done in Stirling, I took on two paid evenings of adult swimming classes, this time in nearby Nitshill. So, with Olive helping me with Martin's homework, and Evan showing great promise with his reading and numbers, before bedtime school-homework for our two boys, and then sing-song-story-time for Evan, had to be done quite early if I was to be allowed out to rugby training on a Tuesday, as well as to night-school during two other week-day evenings.

We soon got fed-up with the temperamental Corsair ... it having stranded me a few times on my winter evening sorties ..... so we traded it in for a small second-hand Singer Chamois ... and it proved both 'nippier' and more reliable.



Then, just before Easter, Mr Bond informed his school staff at Belmont that he was going to retire in the summer from head-mastering and spend more time with his family in his home area in Southern England. This 'bombshell' caused me a deal of thought as I felt that I had been working more for him than the School. Thus, quite quickly thereafter, Olive and I decided that, with a clear scarcity of men wishing to take rural primary headships in Scotland, I should try my luck by applying for such posts in the North-East, preferably on the coast. Fortunately, Mr Bond approved of this venture and promised to furnish me with a very favourable testimonial for any job that I might seek.

The first advertisement that attracted us in April was for my becoming a dominie in Kincardineshire, *just above Angus and below Aberdeenshire*, either in Auchenblae PS, inland, or St. Cyrus PS, on the attractive coastline a few miles north of Montrose. In due course, I was called up to Stonehaven for an interview – a traumatic first experience of such 'soul-bearing'! Travelling up in the

morning in the Chamois, we immediately fell in love with St. Cyrus and its school house. Thus, if I was offered a position, we hoped against hope that it would be St. Cyrus.

It so happened that the pleasant, but clearly dominant, Chairman of the Appointment Committee was a retired Sea-Captain James Davidson .... and he lived in St. Cyrus near the schoolhouse! As he told me later, “You were very nervous during the interview, but I liked what I saw, as well as your exceptional academic and sporting accomplishments, and I told the committee that you were the person that our village needed .... So you got the job!”



St. Cyrus Beach and Primary School



So, after only one year in Giffnock, we had to arrange to sell 10 Graffham Avenue, and then, during July, 1968, take up occupancy of the ‘tied’ rented Schoolhouse, St Cyrus. The financial implications were very appealing – exchanging a £26 per MONTH mortgage payment for a £23 per YEAR rental. We soon made a £2000 profit on the sale of the Giffnock semi-detached villa, and for the first time in our married life, we had some real money to spend and invest!

There was also the joy of following in my father's footsteps as a village dominie. He had been 36 when getting his first headship at Banknock PS in 1944; now I, a mere 29 year-old, admittedly in a less competitive market, was matching his ambitions! Dad was 'over the moon' at our prospects. "Great place to raise a family," he remarked after he had surveyed the village and its advantages. He, like the rest of the family, knew that with God's blessing, Olive would give birth to a second child in the coming October. Poor Olive, her second flitting while pregnant, but at least this time comfortably six months along the weary trail to motherhood!

Aunt Neta Henderson joined us for both the removal, and the furnishing of our new home. Thus we were blessed with the help and company of a wonderfully, loving and competent lady during a very hard-working time for all. The greatest service that Aunt Neta gave was her care of Evan in order to keep him as well clear as possible from all the upheavals ....but as you can imagine ... this 5 bed-roomed, 2 living-roomed, kitchen and bathroom 'mansion' took a great deal of 'doing-up' ... and thus a lot of our profits from the previous sale went on carpeting and furnishing it .... *not to mention our 'blood, sweat and tears'* .... but not before we had spent £750 on a new Ford Escort motor car!

Our first visitor on our arrival day was the local church minister, Rev. Norman MacLean. He greeted us very warmly, but soon proceeded to tell me, "I know from Capt. Davidson that you are a churchman ... so the whole village expects you to become, not only an Elder on the Kirk Session of Garvock-St. Cyrus Church of Scotland, but also its Session Clerk and Parish Registrar .... knowing that you will be able to take, and write-up, the Minutes of Kirk Session meetings! Also, I am aware that both of you are musical ... the church choir will no doubt benefit from your presence among them each Sabbath?" ... Our village work started from Day One!