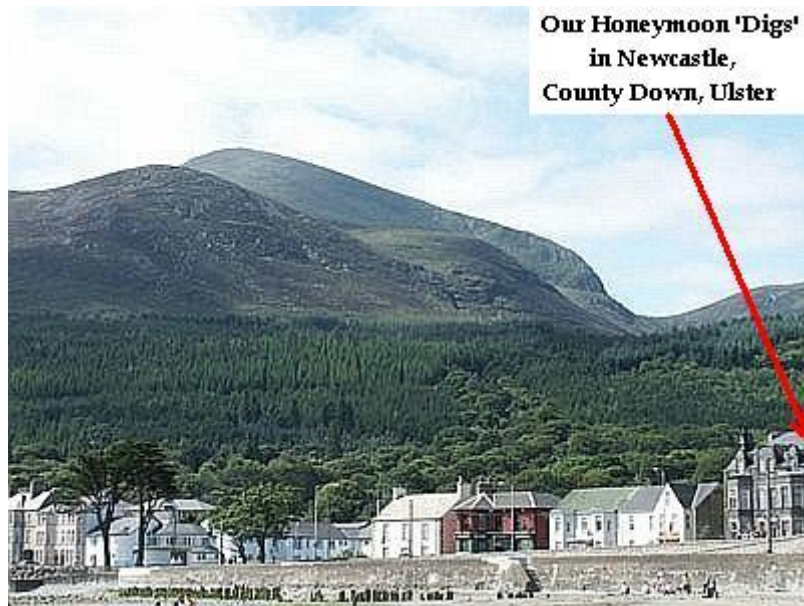


Chapter 66

Summer and Autumn 1963

The ten days or so that we spent on our honeymoon in Newcastle, County Down, Ulster were not blessed with good weather. Strong winds and rain that most of the time swept down off the local mountain, Slieve Donard, saw to that. The sea, just a stone's throw across the park from our digs, was so cold that not even a paddle was ventured in it!



Our accommodation was comfortable - a little room on the ground floor, and the food, provided as half-board, was very reasonable and always substantial. Our hostess was friendly and our fellow guests, all more elderly adults, were nice people too. However, they also had their children with them who seemed to be drawn to us like magnets! Teacher rapport, I suppose? But all five, of about upper primary age, were very biddable and not without interests that we could share with them. And the predominantly wet weather meant we saw a lot of them in the lounge where our introducing them to various board games and the like went down a treat.

When we did get out and about, Olive and I walked around the town, window-shopping etc. but normally finished up at the public park and its excellent putting green where we endeavoured not to fall out too often during our closely fought daily rounds – when I was more often than not the loser! Worship on the Sabbath, unlike our accustomed Mission experiences, proved to be a rather dreich affair in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland service that we chose to attend. Then like good tourists we opted for organised bus trips up into the hills, around the many bonny loughs, and finally a disappointing visit to drab and dreary Dundalk just over the border into Eire.

Slieve Donard's ever present influence intrigued us for days until we drummed up enough energy to follow the hill-runners' trail in an attempt on its lofty summit. However, we did not escape the children for

this adventure! They got wind of our intentions and pleaded with us and their parents until they were allowed to join us. Just like a school outing it became as we ensured beforehand that all were suitably clad for the elements, and then en route were provided with the necessary cajoling and humouring when the going got steeper! But the kids had guts and did well - even when a violent storm nearly blew us off the summit ... the huge cairn thereon saved our bacon. The following photograph shows what an apparently fine day it was for most of the ascent and descent. However, it belies the dangers that the unprepared might have suffered from.

View East from 'Slieve Donard' over Newcastle, County Down, Ulster



But soon it was time to return to Scotland and the anti-climax of ‘auld claes an purridge’. The realities were – **firstly**, our new home being as yet unfinished in Torbrex and thus our being forced temporarily to share my parents’ home in Schoolhouse, Bannockburn; **secondly**, with Bannockburn as our base, both resuming teaching careers - me back at the High School, and Olive taking up a new appointment at Fallin Primary School in a mining village about three miles east of Stirling; **thirdly**, the frustration of having to store all our wedding presents, and the boredom for me (at least), [while the women folk were in their element], trekking round stores to choose, and then order, all necessary furniture and fittings for our still unready semi-detached five-room and kitchen chalet at 29 Springwood Avenue. Stability problems for sewage and drainage pipes down in the red-sanded depths of the avenue outside our home was the major delay - we dubbed it ‘The Grand Canyon’! - ironically there were no problems with the house itself which was in ‘walk-into’ condition by October !

A Christmas entry was eventually promised ... but not before we had unexpected drama at Schoolhouse, Bannockburn in mid-December. Prior to that however, our several existences, away from thoughts of our chalet, followed routine lines at home, work and play. With Olive sharing my enthusiasm for

rugby football, the play aspect was not only a good opportunity to get away from it all, but a chance to stay some week-ends in Ruchazie with her parents.

I was in good form with the boot that Autumn as the following Fixture Card shows,

1963/64

1st XV

Played 26
3 144 Scored 144
Total now 707 in 130 games

26P = 88
30
196

1st XV					2nd XV				
Date	Opponents	F	A		Date	Opponents	F	A	
1P Sept. 14	Allan Glens	A	11	8	3	Sept. 7			
2C "	Howe of Wite	H	16	0	4	" 21			
2/26 3P/26	Aberdeen Gram. F.P.	H	34	9	19	" 28			
3P/26	Boroughmuir	A	6	0	3	Oct. 5	Greenock Wanderers	A	
2P/26	Gala	A	19	16	10	" 12	Gordonians	A	
1P/26	Gordonians	A	22	12	10	" 19	Allan Glens	H	
3C "	Kilmarnock	A	14	6	5	" 26	Perthshire Acas.	H	
1P/26	Perthshire Acas.	H	20	0	6	Nov. 2	Shawlands 1st XV	A	
3C "	Dunfermline	H	22	0	7	" 9	Greenock Wanderers	H	
1P/26	Trinity Acas.	A	16	0	4	" 16	Gordonians	H	
2P "	Gordonians	H	9	0	3	" 23	Perthshire Acas.	A	
3P "	Perthshire Acas.	A	15	0	6	" 30	Victoria Dr. 1st XV	H	
1C Dec. 7	Aberdeen University	A	15	1	9	Dec. 7	Aberdeen University	A	
" 14	Greenock Wanderers	H	10	3	0	" 14	Glasgow Acas.	A	
" 21	Ayr	H	10	3	1	" 21	Hillhead H.S.F.P.	A	
" 28	Greenock Wanderers	H	16	3	1	" 28			
1C Jan. 4	Glasgow University	E	11	5	2	Jan. 4	International		
1P/1C	Hawick	A	11	17	8	" 11	Rolls Royce 1st XV	H	
2P/1C	Hutcheson Gram. F.P.	E	—	—	—	" 18	Stirling County	E	
" 25	Glasgow Acas.	H	3	8	1	" 25	Old Grammarians	H	
Feb. 1	Aberdeen Gram. F.P.	A	0	15	X	Feb. 1	Aberdeen Gram. F.P.	H	
2C/1P	Glasgow H.S.F.P.	H	14	9	7	" 8	Victoria Dr. 1st XV	H	
1C "	West of Scotland	A	5	17	2	" 15	Ayr	H	
" 22	Langholm	H	X	X	—	" 22	St. Mungo F.P. 1st XV	A	
" 29	St. Andrews Univ.	A	6	0	1	" 29	Old Aloysians 1st XV	H	
3C Mar. 7	Kelvinside Acas.	A	18	7	6	Mar. 7	Jordanhill Sch. F.P.	A	
1P/1C	Allan Glens	H	14	6	5	" 14	West of Scotland	H	
2P/1C	Jedforest	E	13	0	3	" 21	International		
1/23	Jordanhill Sch. F.P.	H	23	0	1	" 28	Kelvinside Acas.	H	
1P Apr. 4	Ayr	A	11	3	3	Apr. 4	St. Mungos F.P. 1st XV	H	
2P/3C	HITCHIE	A	30	0	11	" 11	Old Aloysians 1st XV	A	
2P	HITCHIE	A	9	16	1				

Season 1963 - 1964

Not only were there no defeats in the fourteen matches I played in up until I sustained an ankle injury on the 7th of December, but also I acquired another 88 points to raise my then tally to 651 points in 118 matches for the College since 1958. This injury may have been a portent of what was to follow in the succeeding weeks!

Getting off the bus as usual opposite the Schoolhouse on the evening of Friday the 20th of December after attending the School After-hours' Debating Society, I spotted a familiar car at our gate. Beside it stood our family physician, 'Doctor John' (McFadyen). When I had crossed to where he was opening his car door in an obvious hurry, he paused, and said, "Well young man, Olive has an obvious appendicitis, and an ambulance has taken her to the infirmary so you just go and get your dad's car and follow it there." I felt numb, but did as I was told. When I arrived in the ward, Olive was being prepared for surgery. The operation was successfully carried out by Mr Reid that evening, and, on the morrow, all was well in our world again ... but no home Christmas for Olive in 1963! However, all the family rallied round to help me have our new house all set-up and spick an span before the New Year for, as the inimitable **Dougie Scott** always called his friends' spouses, 'The Bride', on her release from hospital.