



SPRING 2018

ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

THE BOOK OF MARY

MMHS RESIDENT REV D MARY RANDLE HAS PUBLISHED HER LIFE STORY – AND SHE'S GIVING THE PROFITS TO THE SOCIETY. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY...

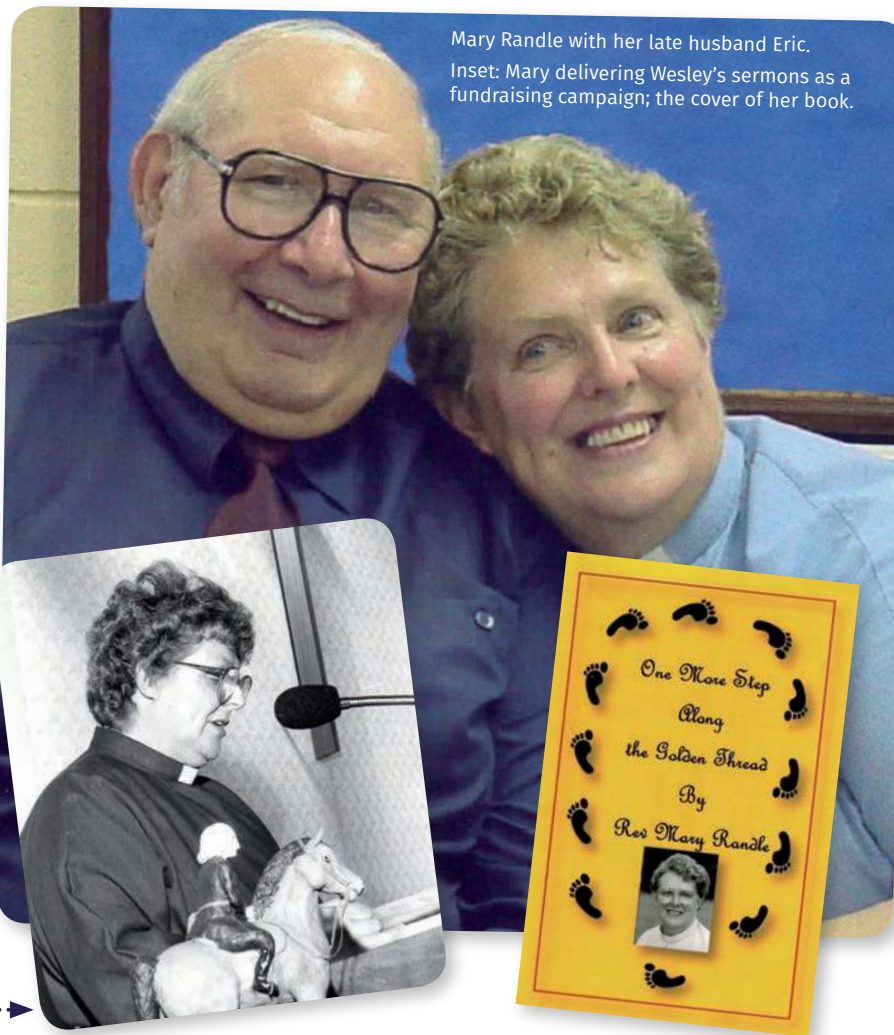
A shotgun blast changed life forever for young Jack Forster and the family he would raise.

The teenager and his brothers were shooting birds on their Warwickshire farm. The gun went off by accident. Jack survived, but his sight didn't. Yet that didn't stop him from visualising his future.

He set up his own basket making business. One day, a young woman, Elsie, saw him trying to cross the street. She offered her hand to help Jack avoid the traffic. The two stepped onto a road of romance. They married in 1937.

Their moving story starts off a beautiful book by their daughter, MMHS resident Revd Mary Randle.

One More Step Along The Golden Thread is her home-grown, humble and heart-warming account of growing up with a disabled parent, working in prisons and social services, and later being ordained ...



Mary Randle with her late husband Eric. Inset: Mary delivering Wesley's sermons as a fundraising campaign; the cover of her book.

Photo: ronstik



GAS SAFETY CHECKS ARE VITAL!

For your health, safety and comfort, MMHS services your boiler and carries out a gas check on your home once a year.

However, you can play a part in making sure that process is carried out. There are some simple steps you can take, to ensure these vital checks are done:

- 1 put a note in your diary to remind you of when the next check should be done;
- 2 checks happen on a ten to 11-month cycle, but if you haven't heard from British Gas before the anniversary of

your last check, phone them and book one (tel 0800 107 7798 – if the line is busy, choose the 'call back' option, or you may be charged);

- 3 if you cannot get in touch with British Gas, or you don't receive a call back, contact the property team at the MMHS office (tel 020 7467 5270).

Boilers must be serviced regularly. A faulty boiler could waste you money on energy – and might even start leaking toxic fumes. So it's vital that we ensure boilers are serviced and gas installations are checked.

A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



My job takes me on some interesting journeys. Recently I had the pleasure of learning about the life-enhancing interplay between music and dementia. What a privilege it was to hear experts talk on the subject at the House of Lords – and at a subsequent celebration in the House – listen to a wonderful choir of dementia sufferers singing their socks

off led by Dame Lesley Garrett.

Music brings dementia sufferers to life. It allows many to relax and communicate with their carers and families for the first time in years.

I shall end with a quote from a freelance opera singer, Demelza Stafford, who for more than ten years has sung therapeutic concerts in hospitals and care homes: 'As we perform, we see reactions from visitors and carers too, often completely overwhelmed at seeing loved ones interact in ways they haven't for months, years even.'

'Carers are often moved to tears when residents who can't usually engage or speak, manage to sing every word, tap a toe or even find their way to their feet to dance.'

A full report can be seen on our website.

Happy Easter!

• **Mairi Johnstone** CEO

THE BOOK OF MARY

as a Methodist minister. She has lived in her MMHS property in Lancashire since 2001. 'I have two sons,' Mary told us, 'and one of them said a few times, "Mum, you've done a number of things – why don't you write it all down?"' She laughed it off.

When her own husband Eric went into a nursing home in 2016, Mary thought again about the book idea. 'I'm not very good with a computer,' she admitted. 'So I actually wrote it out three times – longhand! It took me a long time.'

Thankfully, church steward Pauline Griffiths came alongside to help Mary with the electronic part of the process. Through an item in the *Methodist Recorder*, Mary learned about an online publisher called FeedARead.

It was a nine-month journey to arrive at her finished book. Most generously, Mary is giving MMHS profits from what she calls her 'little paperback with a nice cover'. She said, 'It's about my life. It's about the way I've been encouraged

'People said I wouldn't last five minutes'

in my life to do lots of things. I was taught and shown how to care'.

Without giving away too much of her story, Mary's father came from a farming background. She was brought up in a council house. 'It was hard work,' she recalled, 'we hadn't got much money.'

Mary had been dedicated as a baby at a Baptist church. But their nearest Sunday school was at Whittleford Methodist Church. So she attended there.

'Someone said, "What are you going to do, Mary?";' she recalled. 'Deep down I wanted to do something to care. The idea of working with prisoners came to me. I didn't even know what the nearest prison was!' So in 1961 she started working at Strangeways, Manchester. 'People said I wouldn't last five minutes,' Mary remembered, 'but I did!' She spent seven years in the prison service.

Mary worked in Manchester, Styal and Redditch. It was an impressive sweep of prisons across England. Then she met Eric, who was working for British Leyland. They married in 1968. Sadly, Eric died recently, just as we were putting together this edition of *Roof 'n' Roots*.

SOLACE AND SOLAR

ROS PEEDLE IS ONE OF OUR LONGEST SERVING BOARD MEMBERS, AND OUR MOST RECENT CHAIR. WE ASKED HER ABOUT HER JOURNEY TO MMHS – AND ABOUT OTHER PROJECTS WITH WHICH SHE'S INVOLVED.

How did you first hear about MMHS and its work?

I was a 'cradle Methodist', so had been aware of MMHS for many years. I'd also helped find a care home for a minister friend who could no longer live independently in one of our houses.

How would you describe your journey to becoming a board member?

When I saw the advertisement, I gave the position much thought and prayer, speaking to my minister and other friends, who encouraged me to apply.

Can you share one of the highlights so far?

Among the highlights are the friends I've made among board colleagues. Another has been to watch MMHS grow from strength to strength, and the occasional contact with residents as I've travelled around the country.

Does your work as a pastor give you a particular perspective on the work of MMHS?

As Local Preachers' Pastoral Secretary of the Circuit, I've had opportunities to visit the homes of two of our residents, and have seen how much they've appreciated the Society's care. My work as a Lay Pastor also brings me into contact with older people. Their situations give me insights as to how MMHS might further help some of our older and frailer residents.

Tell us about your Forget Me Not Group, for people living with dementia...

The Forget Me Not Group was the brainchild of members of the little chapel in North Norfolk where I am Lay Pastor. The chapel needed much redevelopment to be fit for purpose, both as a centre for worship and as a building suitable for the local community.



Outgoing Chair Ros Peedle receives a bouquet from our CEO Mairi Johnstone as a 'thank you' for her contribution to the board.

We prayed hard, worked hard and smiled hard! We raised and spent more than £60,000 on a new roof, new floors, refurbished kitchen, toilet suitable for people with physical and mental disabilities and installed solar panels to reduce our carbon footprint. We're currently working towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Church.

Last June, five years after the original

vision, the Forget Me Not Group for people living with dementia and their carers was opened, and now serves local people. MMHS board members supported us in prayer and practical ways. My colleague and friend, the late Revd Alan Ashton, came to the chapel to conduct our Harvest Festival Service last year.

WATER MESS IN YOUR GUTTERS!

Gutters take the rain off your roof and send it down the drain. But if the gutters are blocked, where does the water go?

Of course, water stays in the gutter, cascading over the edge, possibly affecting the fascia boards and walls of your home. So it's important to get your gutters checked and cleared – and to get it done now. Here's how:

- hire a local contractor, to clear debris out of your gutter;
- ask them to check if any repairs are needed to the gutters;
- pay them and send the invoice to MMHS for reimbursement – remember



there's a £100 limit for general repairs that don't require prior approval. Let us know if any further repairs are needed.

You may find cleaning services advertised in your local newspaper, but word of mouth is even better. Ask your neighbours if they can recommend a reliable contractor.

'Gutters should be cleaned once a year,' said our Project Surveyor John Bailey. 'That's usually done after Christmas while all the leaves are still off the trees. But better late than never!'

'If gutters aren't cleared out, that leads to blockages,' he warned. 'It's important that your gutters are free-flowing. Then the water won't come over the top and ruin your fascia boards.'

'Your home will make a sweet, satisfying sound as all the water flows off your roof, along the gutters and down the drainpipe – where it should go!'



Mary with her book

We'll leave Mary's story there. There's so much in *The Golden Thread*, you'll want to keep dipping into it.

So how did the title come about? 'That came at my interview to go into the ministry,' Mary recalled. 'I felt like it was God's initiative and he'd been leading me along this golden thread.'

Copies of *One More Step Along The Golden Thread* cost £4.50 each. For orders, phone Revd Mary Randle on 01257 793076.



METHODISM IN OUR MADNESS

ARTS AND CULTURE BY CLIVE PRICE

Masters of melodic pop The Carpenters were cradled in the Methodist Church and saw that as a place where they belonged.

According to *The Life Of Karen Carpenter* (Omnibus), their father Harold was born in China in 1908, as the eldest son of missionaries. He met wife-to-be Agnes in the USA, and they married in 1935 at Catonsville Methodist Church, Maryland.

Richard was born in 1946, Karen in 1950. Music was the family focus. Loathing the cold New England winters, Harold decided to move the family to California in 1963.

Richard was appointed to play the organ for services and weddings at Downey Methodist Church. According to several sources, he would blend in Beatles songs and 'church them up' to keep things interesting! Karen sang in the choir, possibly noting the tricks her elder brother was playing.

The local paper ran a story on the creative young organist at Downey Methodist. The Carpenters' rise to stardom is now the stuff of legend, recently celebrated with a boxed vinyl reissue of their albums.

When asked about church affiliation, Richard responded on his website, 'Though not regular churchgoers, we belonged to the Downey United Methodist Church'. Karen's funeral was held at their home church 35 years ago. More than 1,000 mourners passed through to say goodbye on 4th February 1983.

Photo of The Carpenters taken from their album *Gold*

HOME TRUTHS

REFLECTION BY ALAN ASHTON

What was your most frightening ride in a fairground? Were you frightened by the dodgems? The hoopla stall? For me, the most frightening experience was riding the Big Dipper.

I remember that old roller coaster. There were instructions preparing us for the ride. It said, 'Sit in the seat'. I thought that was a foregone conclusion. 'Hold onto the rail'. Hold on to the rail? I thought my knuckles were going to come through the skin!

Jesus provides a similar notice for us today. We can face an ending, physically, knowing that we can find new life when we have faith in Jesus. And the journey to Calvary isn't easy, but beyond it there is resurrection. Behind the tomb, like Lazarus, we can step out and find new life.

'Death is just one of those things about life that we have to cope with'

That's an easy sentence to use, post-Resurrection Christianity. It's a totally different ball game if you're a follower of Jesus in the first century, where you see things happening that don't seem to fit together.

I suppose death is just one of those things about life that we have to cope with. I've got a friend who's got this attitude – 'Death is never going to get me'. And perhaps we sometimes feel like that.

When people die young, for example, through sickness, sometimes we're left asking why God didn't answer our prayers. Why didn't Jesus, through someone, come and touch the one we loved? Why didn't the Holy Spirit breathe new life into the person? This echoes 'If only you had been here Lord...' which people said to Jesus after the death of Lazarus.

Like me, perhaps you've encountered so many people devastated by God's apparent absence in their crisis, pain and grief. You may have had that experience of a friend saying, 'If only you'd been here it would have made it so much better. The ending would've been the same but you would have been



here, with me, to support me'.

Sadly, that's been inflicted by the Church. The Church has taught people over the years, how God makes and breaks, gives and takes, has our lives all planned out like a little road map which takes us from A-Z and we can't do much to change it.

But if we look beyond that image – I think a false image of a precise God who has complete control over everything that happens – we find the image of a God who searches for the lost, embraces us in love when we return home after squandering our wealth – Prodigal Son and all of that.

'Jesus doesn't stay away because he's too busy. He reaches out to us from a distance, with a deep compassion'

The message that Lazarus was ill was heard by Jesus, like all our prayers. But there wasn't the immediate response that everyone hoped for, simply a few prophetic words in John 11:4, that this happened for God's glory to be seen.

God doesn't ignore our prayers. Jesus doesn't stay away because he's too busy. He reaches out to us from a distance, with a deep compassion.

This article is taken from a sermon given on Passion Sunday 2017 by the late Revd Alan Ashton, a faithful member of the MMHS board, who died just before Christmas 2017. The full sermon can be heard at: <http://histonmethodist.org/2017/04/sermon-recording-revd-alan-ashton-2-april-2017>. This extract is a tribute to Alan's friendship and inspiration, and is published with his family's permission. Alan is greatly missed.

