

A short autobiography

Here is a little bit about me.

I was born in North Shields, the only child of Billy and Jennie Sharp of 76, Cleveland Road. Sadly, my Mum died when I was four years old.

One of my Dad's older sisters, Auntie Lil, gave up everything and came to live with us until I was eight. She was a Christian Scientist and used to take me to her church in Whitley Bay where I attended the Sunday School. I was baffled by the "Statement of Being" read at the end of each service which stated that "man is not material, he is spiritual". Auntie Lil was a big influence on my life. She was always cheerful, and every day looked for demonstrations of God's love. She also made hearty meals!

My Dad was a physics master at Wallsend Grammar School. He lost any faith he had when my Mum died. He described himself as a Humanist. He cycled to work on an old bicycle with a child's seat attached to the rear. I used the same man's bike, with rucksack in the child's seat, to ride to the stables when my love of horses and ponies dominated my early teens.

Dad was very strict and ensured that I applied myself to my studies. I am grateful to him for that as it paid off!

I was educated at Spring Gardens Junior School, which is still thriving, and Tynemouth High School which no longer exists as a school. I made lasting friendships – three of whom came to my wedding to Terry Stevens in November 2021 – but I am jumping ahead!

My best friend, Anne, was in the Brownies and, as I joined, and the pack was affiliated to the Parish Church, we were both confirmed there. I took confirmation seriously but must admit that my friend

and I used to get the giggles during the long prayers and were often admonished by a very stern Deaconess.

After qualifying MB ChB at Liverpool University in 1968, I had a fulfilling career in general practice in Liverpool. I married Peter Cotton in July 1970 and our son, Keith, was born in 1973.

As a GP I was frequently exposed to the harsh realities of life and death and to the role stress plays in illness, both mental and physical. I became interested in “whole person medicine” and Healing.

I used to indulge in writing when time allowed - I suppose I was trying to make sense of the world and process my thoughts. None of it was intended to be shared.

In May 2002 Peter and I moved to Cranfield as Keith had settled in St Albans. I was fortunate to be offered a part-time partnership in the village practice with Dr Regina Reddy. We became good friends, and she was an inspiration- always prepared to go the extra mile. It is now ten years since her untimely death. She is still so missed.

Peter’s health deteriorated and I had to give up practice in May 2005 to be at home to care for him. We had acquired an adorable black Labrador puppy about that time.

It was during this time that, after writing an article on Christian Healing for Cranfield Express, the monthly free village newspaper, the editor, Peter Hinson, asked if I would like to write a regular “God Slot”. It is these articles, and others written for the parish church newsletter, which were compiled into the first book “Reflections – a Spiritual Journey”. This is still available as a soft back book.

Perhaps the word “spiritual” might put some people off. Perhaps I don’t fully understand it myself! People may put their own

interpretation on it. It is not the same as “spiritualism” or being “psychic” but is more about reaching for the meaning of life and rising above the mundane into the realms of the way, the truth and the life through Jesus, who leads us to the Father.

I continued to write for the Cranfield Express until January 2015. My articles were becoming more like sermons, and I felt it was time to hand over the “God Slot” to the ministers of our three churches in the village.

I kept the articles and was going to throw them away. I started to reread them and decided that “More Reflections” needed to be published in the hope that they might inspire or even bring someone to faith.

However, my writing didn’t stop! My dear friend, Roy Philips, and I visited the battlefields, war graves and memorials of the First World War in Belgium and France in spring of 2015. I was overwhelmed by the scale of the carnage. On my return, I was inspired to find out more about those named on the War Memorial in Cranfield. I was fortunate that Lee Hall had already done some research, although she hadn’t found details of them all. She persevered and soon the list was complete. The book, “Cranfield Remembers the Fallen of the Great War of 1914-1918” was born in 1917, in time for the centenary of the war.

Although, thankfully, there were fewer named servicemen killed in the Second World War (9 as opposed to 43) their stories and the memories of those in the village who had lived through the war, as well as the history of RAF Cranfield, grew into “Lest We Forget Cranfield’s Second World War of 1939-1943”, published in 2019.

Both books are still available in hardback either from me or from Cranfield Newsagents. All proceeds from the sale of these books goes to the Royal British Legion which supports war veterans. There is no charge for any e books.

Meanwhile, life went on. In December 2016 I had a heart attack and gave myself, family and friends a bit of a fright. It was too soon to leave this world. There was too much left to do!

I lost my dear Labrador, Ben, in August 2017. He was 12 years old and had been a constant companion through Peter's illness and since.

In October 2017 my aortic aneurysm was fixed using an endoscopic procedure. Another hurdle.

My dear friend, Roy, died in October 2019.

Although my son, Keith, stayed when he could, I decided to look for another dog.

If I had realised how wonderful greyhounds are I might have had one years ago! Adam is a dream. He is an ex-racer and was 4 years old when I adopted him in February 2020. This was before "lockdown".



He was a “life saver” through lockdown. Keith moved in. We loved walking across the fields past Moat Farm and had Adam’s calm company.

Sadly, lockdown saw the death of the Cranfield Express.

It was through Adam that I met Terry Stevens. We used to walk our dogs at the same time and got chatting, as you do.



We were married in November 2021.



Terry sadly lost his German Shepherd, Ted, in June 2023, but we still have Adam and Roxy.



Roxy is a dear little Jack Russel/ Pug cross and is the boss!



As Terry's roots are in Methodism, we have become members of Kempston East Methodist Church, where we have been warmly welcomed and encouraged to take a more active part in worship.

The journey continues.

It is a privilege to be able to share my writings. I hope that the War books are interesting to those old timers and those new to the village.

I also hope that the Reflections may encourage others to reflect and to grow in faith.

Marjorie Stevens

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